

# **Pan-Sussex Strategy for Domestic Abuse Accommodation and Support 2021-2024**



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## Foreword

The Pan-Sussex Strategy for Domestic Abuse Accommodation & Support 2021-2024 sets out how we will help and protect survivors of domestic abuse in safe accommodation, in line with our new duties under the national Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Tackling domestic abuse is everyone's business, and we welcome the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and its aim to end the post code lottery of support for anyone affected by domestic violence and abuse.

The new Pan-Sussex Domestic Abuse Board will bring together a diverse range of stakeholders who will play a critical role in delivering the vision of the strategy.

We are committed to working with our partners and communities to ensure that victims and survivors are not only able to access the high quality support they need but also the justice they are entitled to, and to make Sussex a safe place for everyone. The support provided will include work to allow victims and survivors to remain safely in their own homes or in safe accommodation.

We have committed to a range of new interventions including co-locating Independent Domestic Violence Advisors in Housing Options teams, as well as new schemes which aim to enhance and increase the support in safe accommodation for all victims and survivors of domestic violence and abuse across Sussex.



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Joint Chair of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture  
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Cabinet Member for Adult  
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## Glossary of terms/acronyms

**BME:** Black and Minoritised Ethnic

**CoE:** Council of Europe

**CYP:** Children and Young Person

**DAHA:** Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance

**DAPN:** Domestic Abuse Protection Notices

**DAPO:** Domestic Abuse Protection Orders

**DASH RIC:** Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment Risk Indicator Checklist

**D & B:** District and Borough

**DLUHC:** Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

**GRT:** Gypsy, Roma and Traveller

**HCLIC:** Homelessness Case Level Information Collection

**IDVA:** Independent Domestic Violence Advisor

**ISVA:** Independent Sexual Violence Advisor

**LGBTQ+:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and + to include other gender identities and sexual orientations

**MARAC:** Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference

**MCN:** Multiple Complex Needs

**NRPF:** No Recourse to Public Funds

**PRS:** Private Rented Sector

**RtS:** Routes to Support

**SEND:** Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

**SLCN:** Speech, Language and Communication Needs

**VAWG:** Violence Against Women and Girls

**WHA:** Whole Housing Approach

## Introduction

### Local authority areas

Local authorities like Brighton and Hove City Council, East and West Sussex County Councils are responsible for a range of services for people and businesses in their defined areas and are governed by councillors who are elected by the public in local elections.<sup>1</sup> Providing provisions for those affected by Domestic Abuse is one of those legal obligations.

Sussex, a largely rural area with over 150km of coastline, has a combined population of over 1.6 million<sup>2</sup>. West Sussex accounts for approximately 50% of the total population of the county, East Sussex 30% and Brighton and Hove 20%.<sup>3</sup>



### Brighton & Hove

- The population of Brighton was estimated to be 290,395 residents in 2017.
- Brighton & Hove is the 131<sup>st</sup> most deprived local authority in England (of 317).
- One in five people (19.5%) are from a Black or Minority Ethnic Group (14.5% South East, 20.2% England).
- Between 1,500 and 2,500 trans adults live in Brighton & Hove, with many more who visit to socialise, study and/or work.
- Our best estimate of lesbian, gay and bisexual residents is 11% to 15% of the population aged 16+.

### East Sussex

- The population of East Sussex was estimated to be 558,852 by ONS mid-year estimates in 2020.
- East Sussex has a much older age profile compared to England and the South East.
- 91.7% of the county's population identified as White British, compared to the regional average of 85.2% and the national average of 80.5%.

<sup>1</sup> [What is local government? | Local Government Association](#)

<sup>2</sup> [\[ARCHIVED CONTENT\] Census 2011 result shows increase in population of the South East - ONS \(nationalarchives.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Sussex-Peoples-Panel-Membership-Demographics-JAN-20-v2.pdf \(sussexhealthandcare.uk\)](#)

- In the 2011 Census, 52% of the county's population was estimated to be female and 48% male, similar to the national split
- Local projections suggest that by 2032 there will be over 130,000 people with a disability in East Sussex.

## West Sussex

- The population of West Sussex was estimated to be 858,852 in 2018.
- There is a roughly equal split between men (48.6%) and women (51.4%).
- Of the West Sussex population: 20.3% are aged 0-17 years, 56.9% are aged 18-64 years, 22.7% are aged 65+.
- 50-70% of the population live in rural areas, with 31% located in Horsham and Chichester.
- 84.5% of the population is White British. 3.3% were born in the UK but had an ethnic minority background.

### Strategy context

#### ❖ Domestic abuse context

*"Whoever you are, wherever you live and whatever the abuse you face, you will have access to the services you need to be safe."*<sup>4</sup>

Whilst this Strategy has used the local needs assessment to assess how many people are affected by domestic abuse and the gaps in support in Sussex, it should be recognised that:

*"Evidence shows that the majority of those accommodated in refuges will be from out of area - for many survivors fleeing domestic abuse, their immediate safety from harm will be dependent on access to a safe, secret space outside of the local authority where they are usually resident. Local refuges need to be linked into a national network of provision, as well as being repositories of local knowledge and expertise."*<sup>5</sup>

In July 2021, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner started to map domestic abuse support services nationally. The information from this mapping, as well as the findings from each local authority area needs assessment like this one, will inform an understanding of service provision across England and will help government in its decision-making around future funding.

Participating in this national mapping exercise will enable Sussex to better understand and compare local needs with those victims/survivors fleeing and requiring support from outside of Sussex, so that ultimately there will be comprehensive provision of services across the whole of England and Wales.

<sup>4</sup> [Domestic abuse: PM vows to end 'postcode lottery' for victims - BBC News](#)

<sup>5</sup> Home Office. (2016). *Violence Against Women and Girls Services: Supporting Local Commissioning*. Available at: [VAWG commissioning toolkit \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#), p.16.

Wider preventative work, such as healthy relationships programmes in schools and early intervention work with families, is fundamental in reducing domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). However, the scope of the Strategy is limited to accommodation and support within accommodation for victims/survivors of domestic abuse, in line with Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The Strategy outlines the priorities and recommendations for domestic abuse accommodation and support. Action plans are under development locally to guide the implementation, delivery and monitoring of these priorities and recommendations. The *Pan-Sussex Domestic Abuse Accommodation and Support Strategy 2021-2024* must therefore be considered as one part of a wider and ongoing response to domestic abuse across the county.

This Strategy has been informed by and builds upon previous strategies, consultations, reports and ongoing VAWG work (please see *Appendix 1*) being developed by Tier One local authorities in Sussex, including:

- ❖ Pan-Sussex Strategic Framework for Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse.<sup>6</sup>
- ❖ The Safer West Sussex Partnership County Community Safety Agreement 2021-2025.<sup>7</sup>
- ❖ Brighton & Hove Community Safety and Crime Reduction Strategy 2020-23.<sup>8</sup>
- ❖ Brighton & Hove Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025.<sup>9</sup>
- ❖ East Sussex Safer Communities Partnerships Plan 2020/23.<sup>10</sup>
- ❖ Developing A Joint Domestic Violence and Abuse, Sexual Violence and Violence Against Women and Children Strategy for Brighton & Hove and East Sussex: A Consultation with Adult Victims/Survivors, Perpetrators and Professionals.<sup>11</sup>
- ❖ West and East Sussex District and Borough Councils Homelessness Strategies.

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<sup>6</sup> East Sussex Community Safety Partnership. (2020). *East Sussex Safer Communities Partnerships Plan 2020/23*. Available at: [East Sussex Safer Communities Business Plan 2020 .pdf \(safeineastsussex.org.uk\)](https://www.safeineastsussex.org.uk).

<sup>7</sup> Safer West Sussex Partnership. (2021). *The Safer West Sussex Partnership: County Community Safety Agreement 2021-25*. Chichester: Community Safety & Wellbeing Team

<sup>8</sup> Brighton & Hove Community Safety Partnership. (2020). *Community Safety and Crime Reduction Strategy 2020 – 2023*. Available at: [Brighton & Hove \(safeinthecity.info\)](https://www.safeinthecity.info).

<sup>9</sup> Brighton & Hove City Council. (2020). *Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025*. Available at: [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk)

<sup>10</sup> East Sussex Community Safety Partnership. (2020). *East Sussex Safer Communities Partnerships Plan 2020/23*. Available at: [East Sussex Safer Communities Business Plan 2020 .pdf \(safeineastsussex.org.uk\)](https://www.safeineastsussex.org.uk)

<sup>11</sup> Against Violence and Abuse. (2018). *Developing A Joint Domestic Violence and Abuse, Sexual Violence and Violence Against Women and Children Strategy for Brighton & Hove and East Sussex: A Consultation with Adult Victims/Survivors, Perpetrators and Professionals*. London: Against Violence and Abuse.

## ❖ **Local housing context**

In developing housing and accommodation options for victims/survivors of domestic abuse and the need to provide move on from safe accommodation, it is pertinent to note that the housing market, both private sector and social housing, is a very challenging environment across Sussex.

Private sector rents and property prices have been driven up considerably by the influx of working professional households from metropolitan areas following the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, reflecting new home working arrangements and a desire for more space. This has priced out of the market large numbers of households reliant on the benefit system to meet part or all of their rental costs due to insecure, erratic employment.

In turn, the pressure on social housing has risen, with numbers on local housing authority Housing Registers increasing significantly as vacancies have fallen, meaning an increasingly lengthy wait to obtain a social housing property.

It will therefore take considerable innovation in the delivery of this Strategy to effectively increase the housing and accommodation options available to victims/survivors of domestic abuse, nevertheless exploratory work as part of the strategy Delivery Plans will be commenced to better understand how to improve the current offer.



## Understanding domestic abuse

The Government's definition of domestic abuse 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 sexuality.'

In addition to the above, following the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children that witness, hear or experience domestic abuse are also now recognised as victims in their own right for the first time.<sup>12</sup>

Abuse can take many forms such as:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional, or other abuse
- Digital abuse

"Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, sexuality or background."<sup>13</sup>

In line with the statutory definition, this Strategy recognises that anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse and for this reason adopts the inclusive terminology of 'victims/survivors.' However, it must be recognised that domestic abuse is a predominantly gendered crime and should be understood in the wider context of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). In the majority of cases, domestic abuse is experienced by women and perpetrated by men.<sup>14</sup> Women are more likely to experience different types of abuse, multiple incidents and to be the victim of a domestic homicide.

*42% of domestic violence victims/survivors have been victimised more than once. Victims/survivors experience an average of 20 incidents of domestic abuse in a year.<sup>15</sup>*

*Domestic abuse is rarely a one-off incident and it is the cumulative and interlinked types of abuse that have a particularly damaging effect on the victim.<sup>16</sup>*

### ❖ National picture

Between March 2019 and March 2020, an estimated 2.3 million adults living in the United Kingdom experienced domestic abuse and one in five children were identified as living with domestic abuse.<sup>17</sup>

Domestic abuse is however, a largely hidden crime that is under-reported to the police. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for 2017/18 found that only 17% of those who had experienced abuse in the last 12 months reported the abuse to the police.

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<sup>12</sup> [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>13</sup> [Domestic abuse: how to get help - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

<sup>14</sup> [What is domestic abuse? - Womens Aid](https://www.womensaid.org.uk)

<sup>15</sup> Walby, S. (2004). *The cost of domestic violence*. Women and Equality Unit: University of Leeds. Available at: [Layout 1 \(lancs.ac.uk\)](https://www.lancs.ac.uk)

<sup>16</sup> [Domestic abuse | The Crown Prosecution Service \(cps.gov.uk\)](https://www.cps.gov.uk)

<sup>17</sup> [About us - Domestic Abuse Commissioner](https://www.domesticabusecommissioner.gov.uk)

<sup>18</sup> Therefore, data held by the police can only provide a part of the picture of the actual levels of domestic abuse experienced.

Despite the under-reporting of domestic abuse incidents, the police in England and Wales receive over 100 calls every hour on average relating to domestic abuse.<sup>19</sup> Domestic abuse-related crime makes up 15% of all crime recorded by police in England and Wales and 35% of all recorded violence against the person crimes.<sup>20</sup>

*On average, victims at high risk of serious harm or murder live with domestic abuse for 2-3 years before getting help.*<sup>21</sup>

*85% of victims sought help from professionals an average of five times in the year before they got effective help to stop the abuse.*<sup>22</sup>

*Every day almost 30 women attempt suicide as a result of experiencing domestic abuse and every week three women take their own lives.*<sup>23</sup>

This Strategy must also reflect on the impact Covid-19 had on domestic abuse and support services. During the pandemic, it was reported nationally that there was an increase in risk, an escalation of violence and an increase in demand for domestic abuse support services. The National Domestic Abuse Helpline reported that between April and June 2020 there was a 65% increase in contacts logged, compared with the first three months of the year.<sup>24</sup> Similarly charities reported a 200% increase in calls and people accessing webchat services since the first lockdown.<sup>25</sup> We will explore in a later section whether this increase was encountered in Sussex and how support provisions have evolved to meet the changing requirements.

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<sup>18</sup> [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk)

<sup>19</sup> Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). (2015). *Increasingly everyone's business: A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse*. Available at: [increasingly-everyones-business-domestic-abuse-progress-report.pdf \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/increasingly-everyones-business-domestic-abuse-progress-report.pdf), p.28.

<sup>20</sup> Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). (2021). *Review of Policing Domestic Abuse During the Pandemic*. Available at: [Review of policing domestic abuse during the pandemic: 2021 \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/review-of-policing-domestic-abuse-during-the-pandemic-2021).

<sup>21</sup> [About domestic abuse | Safelives](#)

<sup>22</sup> [About domestic abuse | Safelives](#)

<sup>23</sup> Walby, 2004.

<sup>24</sup> [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk)

<sup>25</sup> [Extra £40m to help victims during pandemic and beyond - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

## ❖ Sussex picture

- An estimated 7% of women and 4% of men experienced at least one episode of domestic abuse in the last year (6% of population).<sup>26</sup> In Sussex this equates to 45,800 females and 21,800 males (67,600 adult victims in total).
- One in five children are identified as living with domestic abuse.<sup>27</sup> In Sussex, this equates to 60,000 0-15 year olds.
- 19% of estimated victims were known to Sussex Police in 2019.
- In 2020/21 Sussex Police recorded 20,800 domestic abuse crimes (18% of all recorded crime, 38% of all violence against the person). 13,700 victims were identified, 12,000 suspects and offenders.
- 28% of homicides in Sussex are flagged as domestic abuse.
- The rate of domestic abuse incidents and crimes per 1,000 population for Sussex (17) is lower than that for the South East (18) and England and Wales (23).<sup>28</sup>
- Sussex has the third highest arrest rate per 100 domestic abuse offences (50) in the country.<sup>29</sup>
- An estimated 5% of domestic abuse crimes in Sussex result in prosecution (4% conviction)
- In 2020/21 around 3,500 cases were heard at MARAC in Sussex.<sup>30</sup>
- Compared to 2019, in 2020 there was a 58% increase in ongoing support and a 24% increase in referrals to domestic abuse services funded by the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, highlighting the potential impact of Covid-19 in Sussex.

**Table 1: Number of victims per year based on ONS estimates and population**

	<b>Female 16-74</b>	<b>Male 16-74</b>	<b>Children 0-15</b>
Adur	1,688	782	2,377
Arun	4,227	1,939	5,213
Brighton & Hove	8,203	4,188	8,950
Chichester	3,195	1,471	4,023
Crawley	2,934	1,454	4,995
Eastbourne	2,683	1,279	3,553
Hastings	2,486	1,182	3,437
Horsham	3,860	1,810	5,271
Lewes	2,722	1,279	3,515
Mid Sussex	3,994	1,890	5,980
Rother	2,512	1,171	2,900
Wealden	4,336	1,990	5,528
Worthing	2,943	1,380	3,916

<sup>26</sup> [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/people-in-the-uk/domestic-abuse-and-violence-in-the-home/articles/domestic-abuse-victim-characteristics-england-and-wales-2019)

<sup>27</sup> [Child abuse extent and nature, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/people-in-the-uk/children-and-family/articles/child-abuse-extent-and-nature-england-and-wales-2019)

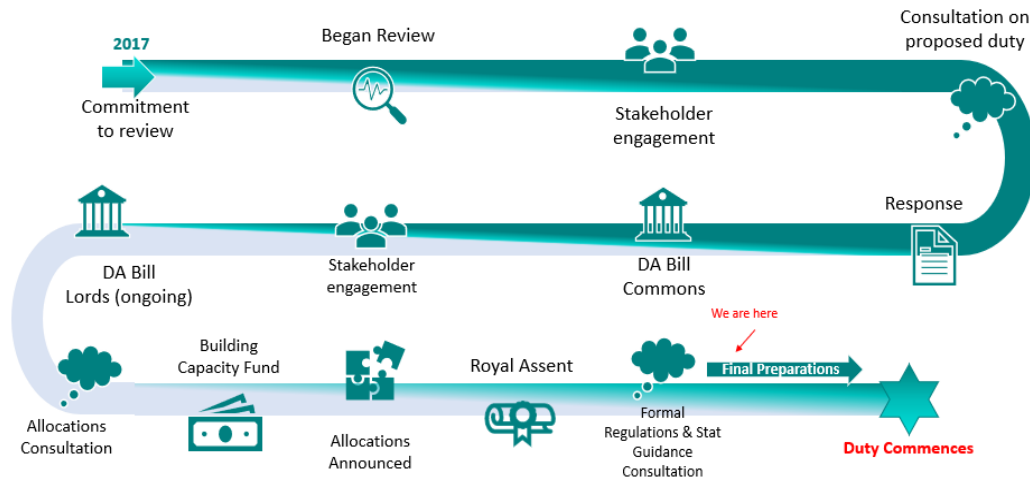
<sup>28</sup> [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/people-in-the-uk/domestic-abuse-and-violence-in-the-home/articles/domestic-abuse-victim-characteristics-england-and-wales-2019)

<sup>29</sup> [Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system – Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/people-in-the-uk/domestic-abuse-and-violence-in-the-home/articles/domestic-abuse-and-the-criminal-justice-system-appendix-tables-2019)

<sup>30</sup> Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference: a regular safety planning meeting for high-risk victims/survivors of domestic abuse, including police, independent domestic violence advisers, adult and children's social services, health and other relevant agencies.

## Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Domestic Abuse Bill was first introduced in the House of Commons in the 2017-19 parliamentary session. Following the 2019 General Election, the Government re-introduced the Bill on 3 March 2020 and it completed its parliamentary stages on 27 April 2021 and received Royal Assent, becoming law, on 29 April 2021.<sup>31</sup>



*"This landmark piece of legislation steps up the response to domestic abuse at every level – giving victims more support than ever before while ensuring perpetrators feel the full force of the law."*<sup>32</sup>

The Domestic Abuse Act has been designed to provide further protections to those who experience domestic abuse and strengthen measures to tackle perpetrators. Please see *Appendix 2* for a more detailed list of the measures introduced by the Domestic Abuse Act.

The following definitions of safe accommodation and support are included in the Act:<sup>33</sup>

**Refuge:** "a refuge offers single gender or single sex accommodation and domestic abuse support which is tied to that accommodation. The address will not be publicly available. Victims, including their children, will have access to a planned programme of therapeutic and practical support from staff. Accommodation may be in shared or self-contained housing, but in both cases the service will enable peer support from other refuge residents."

**Specialist safe accommodation:** "specialist safe accommodation offering single gender or single sex accommodation, alongside dedicated domestic abuse support which is tailored to also support those who share particular protected characteristic(s) and/or who share one or more vulnerabilities requiring additional support. Accommodation may be in shared or self-contained housing, and the address will not be publicly available."

<sup>31</sup> [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>32</sup> Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland, [Landmark Domestic Abuse Bill receives Royal Assent - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

<sup>33</sup> [Delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

**Dispersed accommodation:** “safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse), self-contained accommodation with the same level of specialist domestic abuse support as provided within a refuge but which may be more suitable for victims who are unable to stay in a refuge with communal spaces or for victims who may not require the intensive support offered through refuge but are still at risk of abuse from their perpetrator.”

**Sanctuary Scheme:** “a survivor-centred initiative which aims to make it possible for victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes, where it is safe for them to do so, where it is their choice, and where the perpetrator does not live in the accommodation.”

**Support:** “the expert help provided to victims by the specialist staff in domestic abuse safe accommodation support services ... some support is directly provided by staff on site (e.g. within refuges), whereas other support will be provided to victims through a support worker visiting them, including in their own homes in the case of a sanctuary scheme. However, in all cases, support is provided to victims who reside in relevant safe accommodation.”

#### Local authority duties

The primary duties that relate to this Strategy are highlighted below:<sup>34</sup>

#### **PART 4** Local authority support

#### **Section 57 Support provided by local authorities to victims of domestic abuse**

(1) Each relevant local authority in England must -

**(a) assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for accommodation-based support in its area**

✓ **(a)** Using a proportion of the capacity funding provided by the government, Brighton & Hove, East and West Sussex County Councils commissioned a project team to complete a Sussex-wide needs assessment of accommodation-based support.

**(b) prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support in its area**

✓ **(b)** In consultation with the Pan-Sussex Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and over 70 key stakeholders, a project team prepared this Strategy to provide an overview of the needs assessment findings and make recommendations for commissioning new and additional services to improve access to support in safe accommodation for anyone experiencing domestic abuse.

**(c) monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy**

✓ **(c)** At a minimum, Brighton & Hove City Council, East and West Sussex County Councils will report on the progress of implementation on an annual basis and a needs assessments refresher will be conducted every three years.

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<sup>34</sup> [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

## Section 58 Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Boards

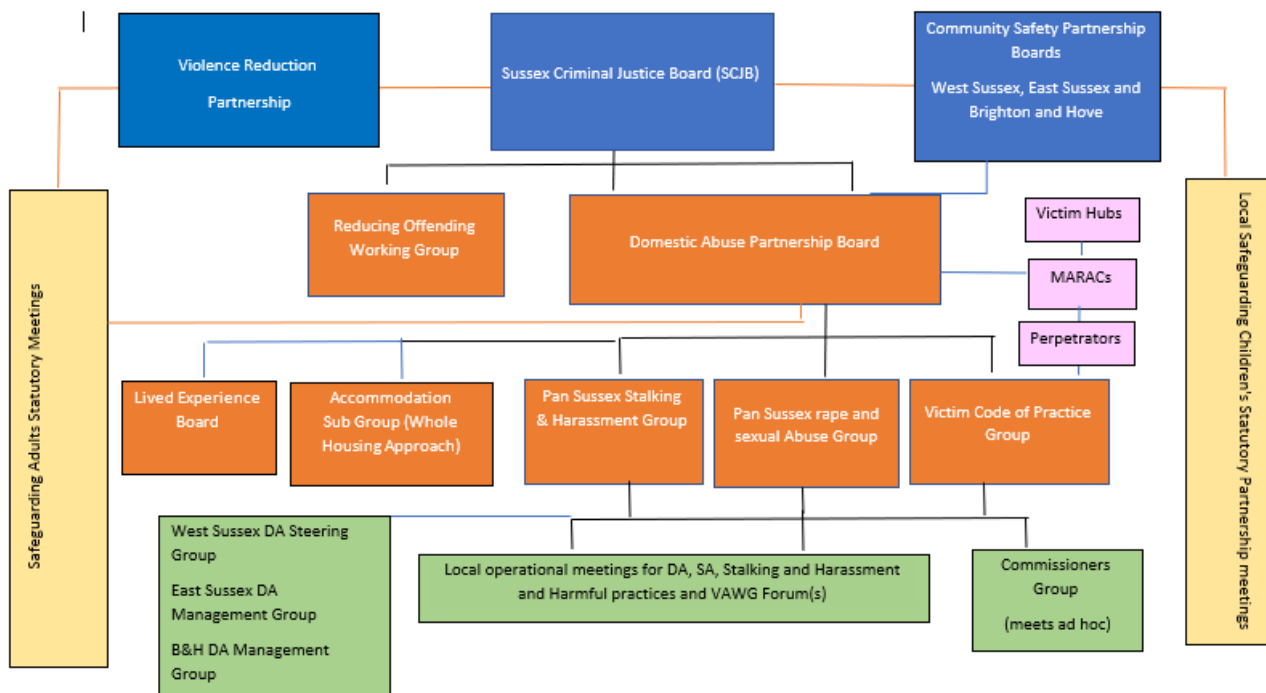
(1) A relevant local authority in England must appoint a domestic abuse local partnership board for the purposes of providing advice to the authority about—

(a) the exercise of the authority’s functions under section 57, and

(b) the provision of other local authority support in the authority’s area.

✓ In Sussex, the three Tier One local authorities agreed to establish a Pan-Sussex Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board with an independent Chair, which is currently meeting on a monthly basis and in future, will meet on a quarterly basis. Please see Appendix 3 for details of the objectives, role and membership of Local Partnership Boards.

Diagram of how the Partnership Board currently fits into the existing governance frameworks in Sussex



## 59 Annual reports

(1) As soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year, a relevant local authority in England must submit to the Secretary of State an annual report in relation to the exercise of the authority’s functions under this Part during the year.

✓ The intention of the annual report is for authorities to provide assurance to central Government that they have been monitoring and evaluating their compliance with the new duty and that they are addressing the needs of victims and survivors identified in the needs assessment. This will be managed by the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board.

It is also worth acknowledging in this Strategy, the amendments introduced under Part 7 of the Act, to recognise the impact that this will have on victims/survivors being able to access the support they require.

## **PART 7 Homelessness**

### **Section 78 homelessness: victims of domestic abuse**

This Section amends s.189(1)(e) Housing Act 1996 so that a person has a priority need if they are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse. This means victims/survivors are automatically in priority need and do not need to be considered vulnerable in order to meet accessibility criteria.

#### **Funding**

To assist with the implementation of the new Local Authority duties, the Government has provided the following funding:

##### **1. Domestic Abuse Capacity Fund**

In October 2020, a £6 million Domestic Abuse Capacity Building Fund was announced as part of a series of steps the government took to ensure local authorities could prepare for the duty proposed under the Domestic Abuse Bill. The funding was to help local authorities undertake early planning and preparation work ahead of implementation of the new duty.

The fund was allocated equally across Tier One local authorities in England. This meant that East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove Councils all received £50,000 each.<sup>35</sup> A proportion of this money was utilised by employing an independent project team to complete the needs assessment and draft this implementation Strategy on behalf of Sussex.

##### **2. New Burdens Funding**

In February 2021, it was announced that following the outcome of the Spending Review, £125 million 'new burdens funding' would be allocated to local authorities to cover the costs of meeting the new duty for the provision of support within domestic abuse safe accommodation services for 2021-22.<sup>36</sup> The additional funding is intended to help ensure that victims and their children are able to access lifesaving support in safe accommodation.<sup>37</sup> Local authorities must not divert funding from existing community based-services in order to meet their duty to provide support in safe accommodation.

Under Part 4 of the new duty there is also an obligation on Tier Two, district and borough councils to cooperate with the Tier One authorities "so far as is reasonably practicable"<sup>38</sup> and so funding has been provided to support their ability to contribute to this process.

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<sup>35</sup> [Domestic abuse capacity building fund for local authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

<sup>36</sup> [Funding allocation methods: new domestic abuse duty - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

<sup>37</sup> [£125 million allocated to councils to support domestic abuse victims and their children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

<sup>38</sup> [Draft statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Although the below table reflects the funding allocations Sussex authorities have been given for 2020-21, the government has committed to longer term funding beyond this period and the amount subject to the Government’s Spending Review.

**Table 2: Sussex new burdens funding breakdown**

	<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse Duty 2021/22 allocation</b>
<b>Tier One</b>	Brighton & Hove	£606,288
	East Sussex	£1,069,272
	West Sussex	£1,498,174
<b>Tier Two</b>	Adur	£32,529
	Arun	£32,105
	Chichester	£34,060
	Crawley	£35,672
	Eastbourne	£32,736
	Hastings	£31,843
	Horsham	£34,005
	Lewes	£32,839
	Mid Sussex	£33,632
	Rother	£32,450
	Wealden	£32,355
	Worthing	£32,749

Due to the number of gaps identified through the 2021 Sussex needs assessments, the breadth of recommendations made in this Strategy is an acknowledgement of the longer-term funding commitment. The implementation and delivery of the recommendations will be explored through localised action plans which will support the duration of the 2021-24 Strategy and be funded by future Spending Reviews.



## Needs assessment process

This Strategy was written by a commissioning project team at the Office of The Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner (OSPCC) working on behalf of the Tier One local authorities in Sussex: Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council. The project team consisted of a Project Manager and two Programme Support Officers.

### ❖ Focus and approach

A needs assessment was completed individually for each Tier One local authority area in Sussex to assess the needs of domestic abuse victims/survivors and demand for services. The needs assessment used the template provided by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), collecting and evaluating data from a wide range of sources. To effectively understand the current provision, needs and demands, a mixed method approach was used, including both available data and interviews with practitioners working in front-line services and with people with lived experience of domestic abuse.

### ❖ Data timeframes and sources

Data was collected from a range of teams, partners and providers to inform the needs assessments. Please see *Appendix 4* for a list of the data sources used and stakeholders engaged with.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of need and reduce the influence of Covid-19 on true data, where possible the last three financial years (2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21) were assessed. However, due to resource issues or the way the data is recorded, it was not always possible to secure this information.

Multi-agency analysis was a challenge when comparing information from numerous services, all operating different case management systems and having varying reporting requirements. Referral and outcome information was also often contained within individual case files and not easy to get through the case management systems. In some cases, particularly when local authorities and partners had limited capacity in the government's timeframes, the data submitted was the result of dip sampling rather than a complete overview.

To address the numerical gaps and inconsistencies of submissions, wide stakeholder feedback was gathered. The information in this Strategy should therefore be viewed as only part of the picture with some areas still unknown in year one of the assessment process.

The needs assessment process highlighted that greater consistency in gathering and recording data is essential to better inform future needs assessments, ultimately providing a stronger evidence base for the commissioning of accommodation and support provision across Sussex.

## Strategic priorities

The findings of the needs assessment shaped six strategic priorities to ensure that Sussex will improve provisions for victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

### **Consistent and Collaborative**

Promoting partnership working and co-production with survivors to ensure consistent support across Sussex

### **Diverse and Appropriate**

Providing a wide range of appropriate safe accommodation and support options

### **Accessible and Inclusive**

Ensuring services are accessible to all victims/survivors and meet the specific needs of those with the full range of protected characteristics

### **Responsive to Multiple Disadvantages**

Establishing specialist provision to support victim/survivors with specific needs, including multiple complex needs

### **Person-centred**

Empowering victims/survivors to remain in their own homes through choices, where safe to do so

### **Trauma-informed**

Embedding trauma-informed practice in services and processes through training and specialist knowledge

## Summary of recommendations

The recommendations made throughout the Strategy have been summarised below. The delivery of these recommendations will be subject to the ongoing availability of New Burdens Funding.

### Consistent and Collaborative:

1. Inconsistencies and gaps in service provision across Sussex should be addressed to reflect local demand and needs and in line with national policies and initiatives.
2. The consistency and quality of data collection must be improved across all services by establishing clear reporting requirements, unique client identifiers and pragmatic data sharing agreements.
3. Housing Teams must be regularly represented at MARAC, alongside other relevant organisations.
4. Sussex local authorities should promote collaboration in the development of procedures and service models, including move-on pathways and co-located IDVAs. Wherever practical, Sussex authorities should jointly commission domestic abuse safe accommodation and support, to ensure consistency and value for money.
5. Victims/survivors must be able to actively participate in the design and commissioning of domestic abuse safe accommodation and support services, for example through the Lived Experience Board.

### Diverse and Appropriate:

6. Sussex local authorities should provide more domestic abuse accommodation spaces for women and their children, according to the Council of Europe's minimum standards.
7. A broader menu of domestic abuse safe accommodation options, in line with a Whole Housing Approach, should be developed in Sussex. Consideration should be given to reflecting rural and urban community needs in any service design and that all accommodation options are appropriate and quality assured.

### Accessible and Inclusive:

8. Sussex local authorities should ensure that every form of domestic abuse safe accommodation that accepts children is suitable for their needs, offering dedicated, personalised and holistic support for children and young people, including those with disabilities and protected characteristics.
9. Specialist safe accommodation and support for victims/survivors aged 16-25 should be established and be culturally appropriate for anyone fleeing forced marriage and so-called honour-based violence, including couples accommodation where needed.
10. Offers of support should be tailored more directly to older people across Sussex, including more generic language, broader promotion of support, linking in with other support services and targeted training for front-line professionals who routinely come into contact with older people.
11. All victims/survivors and their children in safe accommodation in Sussex should receive a minimum standard of care and support, to include legal aid, move-on assistance and longer-term IDVA and psychological support.
12. Sussex local authorities will explore options for the provision of specialist, dispersed and self-contained units of safe accommodation that can accommodate male victims/survivors of domestic abuse.
13. Sussex local authorities should increase specialist floating support and dispersed and self-contained units of safe accommodation that can accommodate LGBTQ+ victims/survivors and invest in LGBTQ+ awareness training for frontline practitioners.

14. Support and accessibility for disabled victims/survivors in safe accommodation should be improved, by introducing multi-agency in-reach teams where needed, developing new facilities or adapting existing facilities, with measures such as installing ramps, increasing ground-floor and step-free units and installing visual fire alarms to assist deaf people.
15. Housing application processes should be accessible for those with disabilities, including those with special educational needs or speech, language and communication needs, and include optional in-person appointments and interpretation for a range of languages, including British Sign Language.
16. Sussex local authorities will investigate specialist safe accommodation options for victims/survivors from marginalised ethnic groups, including Black and minoritised ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and those with No Recourse to Public Funds.
17. Cultural and immigration rights awareness training should be increased for frontline staff and commissioners to better understand the needs of marginalised groups. Training packages must acknowledge the intersection of race, class and gender, amongst other protected characteristics.

#### **Responsive to Multiple Disadvantages:**

18. Sussex local authorities, specialist domestic abuse accommodation providers and support services should holistically support victims/survivors with multiple complex needs and ensure accessibility of services by providing both remote and in-person assessments and support.
19. Accommodation and support options appropriate for the needs of domestic abuse victims/survivors with multiple complex needs will be explored, including short-term respite facilities, specialist housing, move-on pathways and long-term floating support.

#### **Person-centred:**

20. Victims/survivors should be able to remain in their home if they choose to, and it is safe to do so, by ensuring Sanctuary Schemes are available in all local authority areas as part of a wider support and safety package.
21. Sussex local authorities will explore options for the re-housing of perpetrators and enforcement of loss of tenancies, alongside promoting domestic abuse perpetrator behavioural programmes.
22. Awareness and availability of Whole Family interventions should be increased in Sussex.

#### **Trauma-informed:**

23. Ensure that consistent domestic abuse and trauma-informed practice training packages are developed for frontline practitioners within housing authorities, housing associations and registered social landlords, with an aim to deliver the offer more widely.
24. Each local authority area will explore the potential of a single point of contact approach or introduction of a directory for victims/survivors accessing different services.
25. Sussex local authorities will consider co-locating housing specialists within domestic abuse safe accommodation and support services, where required.

## Consistent and Collaborative

*Promoting partnership working and co-production with survivors to ensure consistent support across Sussex*

The need for improved consistency in service offers, approaches and data collection across the county, as well as the benefits of multi-agency collaboration, were common themes discussed by stakeholders. Creating a more consistent offer of services across England and Wales is also a key priority of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Nicole Jacobs:

*"The (DA) Act sets out my legal powers which I will use to support all victims across England and Wales by first tackling the 'postcode lottery' of services."<sup>39</sup>*

The key inconsistencies and gaps identified throughout Sussex are summarised in the table below and will be discussed in more detail throughout the Strategy.

**Table 3: Inconsistencies and Gaps in Sussex**

Service Provision	Inconsistency/Gap	Local Authority Area
Refuge	Refuge considering referrals from survivors with multiple complex needs	West Sussex
	Refuge with disability support, including wheelchair access and equipment for deaf survivors	Pan-Sussex
	Refuge considering referrals from survivors with No Recourse to Public Funds	West Sussex
	Refuge considering referrals from transgender survivors	West Sussex
	Refuge accommodating larger families	Pan-Sussex
Specialist accommodation	LGBTQ+ specialist accommodation	East and West Sussex
	Male domestic abuse specialist accommodation	Pan-Sussex
	Specialist accommodation for survivors with multiple complex needs	Pan-Sussex
	Specialist accommodation for survivors from minoritised ethnic groups	Pan-Sussex
Other accommodation options	Dispersed/Self-contained accommodation	Pan-Sussex
	Sanctuary Scheme	Brighton & Hove
	Short-term respite accommodation	West Sussex and Brighton & Hove
	Appropriate move-on accommodation	Pan-Sussex
	Perpetrator accommodation	Pan-Sussex
Support	Floating support	Pan-Sussex
	Children and young person specialist worker	East Sussex
	Whole family intervention	East Sussex and Brighton & Hove
	Availability of in-person assessments for housing and support services	Pan-Sussex
	Availability of interpreters and British Sign Language easily available for housing and support services	Pan-Sussex
Training	Trauma-informed approach training	Pan-Sussex
	Awareness training on marginalised groups, including No Recourse to Public Funds	Pan-Sussex

<sup>39</sup> [Landmark Domestic Abuse Bill receives Royal Assent - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/landmark-domestic-abuse-bill-receives-royal-assent)

- ▶ **Inconsistencies and gaps in service provision across Sussex should be addressed to reflect local demand and needs and in line with national policies and initiatives.**

The needs assessment highlighted inconsistency in case management systems and data collection. At least six different case management systems are currently used by district and borough councils in Sussex. This made it challenging to easily compare and fully understand service provision and demand in Sussex. Data on referrals was often contained in individual case files which needed a manual check. There was also a lack of available data relating to domestic abuse from health partners.

To improve future needs assessments and provide a stronger evidence base, more standardisation in data collection is required. Establishing clear reporting requirements, including the collection of data on protected characteristics such as LGBTQ+ and disability status, introducing unique client identifiers and developing information sharing agreements would assist in both improving consistency and monitoring victims/survivors as they move between services.

- ▶ **The consistency and quality of data collection must be improved across all services by establishing clear reporting requirements which include protected characteristics, unique client identifiers and pragmatic data sharing agreements.**

Stakeholder engagement reinforced the benefits of collaboration and partnership working in improving consistency and ensuring a holistic approach to supporting victims/survivors of domestic abuse. In Sussex, arrangements for the provision of domestic abuse and sexual violence services are currently managed in partnership by Brighton & Hove and East Sussex local authorities but co-commissioned with the Police & Crime Commissioner and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). West Sussex County Council commissions refuge services but does not commission a community service, as this is provided 'in house'. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) commissions many services on a pan-Sussex as well as individual basis, including stalking and sexual violence service contracts. The joint delivery of this Strategy by the OSPCC, the Tier One and Tier Two authorities in East and West Sussex reflects the importance of partnership working for the benefit of victims/survivors across Sussex.

Partnership working and collaboration is seen operationally through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) held regularly by each Tier One local authority in Sussex.

*"The MARAC leads multi-agency safety planning for high-risk victims of domestic abuse. It brings together the police, independent domestic abuse advisers, children's social services, health, social landlords and other relevant agencies. They share information and write a safety plan for each victim and family, which may include actions by any agency present. The housing authority should be consistently represented at the MARAC and encourage relevant social landlords to also be represented."<sup>40</sup>*

Feedback indicated that in East Sussex, housing authority representatives do not regularly attend MARAC, although they do attend when cases known to them are discussed. In Brighton & Hove and West Sussex, housing representatives attend each MARAC for the whole duration of the meeting. To be consistent and ensure that expert housing advice is available when it is needed, housing officers should attend each MARAC.

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<sup>40</sup> [Chapter 21: Domestic abuse - Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities)

► **Housing Teams must be regularly represented at MARAC, alongside other relevant organisations.**

Collaboration is also fundamental in the development of procedures and service models to ensure they are efficient, consistent and led by expertise. Specialist domestic abuse services told us that the quality of response to domestic abuse is highly varied between housing teams across Sussex, with some areas creating artificial barriers for victims/survivors in accessing support. This finding highlights the need for collaboratively agreed and actioned processes or approaches, which will be supported by the creation of the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board.

One example of collaboration in Sussex is the development of a consistent and trauma-informed move-on procedure between East Sussex housing authorities and Refuge, which ensures the best outcomes for victims/survivors leaving Refuge. Sussex is also in the process of co-locating Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) at housing authorities to promote more collaboration. IDVAs and housing officers may still disagree about whether a victim/survivor should remain in area or move away, but overall, this measure would ensure dedicated domestic abuse knowledge is available during the housing application process.

In a bid to promote a more holistic approach, under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act, local authorities must also have regard to other related areas of work, such as community safety, safeguarding, housing and homelessness and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), to name a few.

In Sussex, there have been several recent joint funding applications to promote the safety of and reduction in violence towards women and girls including the government's Changing Futures programme and Safer Streets Fund round 3. Please see *Appendix 1* for more information about these bids.

► **Sussex local authorities should promote collaboration in the development of procedures and service models, including move-on pathways and co-located IDVAs. Wherever practical, Sussex authorities should look for opportunities to jointly commission or align the commissioning of domestic abuse safe accommodation and support, to ensure consistency and value for money.**

Partnership working and collaboration must include the voices of victims/survivors themselves, ensuring that their feedback and experiences are incorporated at all stages of service design, delivery, implementation and monitoring. As a first step, Sussex local authorities have recently recruited a Community Development Officer who will be responsible for developing a joint Lived Experience Board to meaningfully engage with, and advise, the Pan-Sussex Domestic Abuse Partnership Board. This Lived Experience Board must incorporate the experiences of victims/survivors from a range of backgrounds and with varied protected characteristics.

► **Victims/survivors must be able to actively participate in the design and commissioning of domestic abuse safe accommodation and support services, for example through the Lived Experience Board.**

## Diverse and Appropriate

*Providing a wide range of appropriate safe accommodation and support options*

This strategic priority is informed by the demand on and current provision of safe accommodation in Sussex. These factors highlighted the need for a more diverse and appropriate range of safe accommodation and support options, a common finding throughout the needs assessment and stakeholder engagement.

### ❖ Demand in Sussex

Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC) collects homelessness data and indicates the level of demand on local housing authorities. The following table, largely based on H-CLIC submissions, shows the number of households owed either a prevention or relief duty where the reason for the loss of their last settled home was domestic abuse.<sup>41</sup> Where data is missing, figures for the whole year could not be obtained from the relevant council in the timeframes and so totals are likely to be higher than stated here. As identified under the consistent and collaborative priority, data reporting must be improved to capture an accurate picture of demand on housing authorities for future refreshes of the needs assessment.

**Table 4: Homelessness data for 2019-20 and 2020-21**

Local Authority	District/Borough	2019-20	2020-21
East Sussex	Eastbourne	53	-
	Hastings	104	120
	Lewes	24	-
	Rother	54	-
	Wealden	57	59
West Sussex	Adur	10	26
	Arun	33	49
	Chichester	17	-
	Crawley	49	83
	Horsham	26	12
	Mid Sussex	50	47
	Worthing	46	49
Brighton & Hove	Brighton & Hove	11	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>Sussex</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>498</b>

Another component of analysing service demand is looking at out of area referral numbers. Victims/survivors moving between areas is a common response to abuse. For example, over a 12-month period, 72% of refuge referrals where a postcode was provided were from out of area in East Sussex and 85% in West Sussex. This figure was 64% in Brighton & Hove for a three month period. Service providers and housing authorities also provided anecdotal evidence about people from other areas outside Sussex, approaching them for help with housing due to domestic abuse. With national and local evidence highlighting this common trend, Sussex must consider the demand of out of area referrals when commissioning future services.

<sup>41</sup> A prevention duty refers to individuals who are at risk of homelessness and a relief duty refers to those who are already homeless. If an individual is found to be owed either duty, that person is eligible for housing support from the local authority. Source: [Prevention and relief duties | Westminster City Council](#)



## ❖ Provision in Sussex

According to national refuge referral mechanism for women, Routes to Support (RtS), as of 1 September 2021, there were eight providers offering domestic abuse services in Sussex.<sup>42</sup> This figure refers to the biggest commissioned and non-commissioned services. There are many smaller organisations also working across Sussex - please see *Appendix 5* for a full service list.

Single sex, women's refuge is the principal safe accommodation option in Sussex, other than four specialist LGBTQ+ dispersed safe accommodation units in Brighton & Hove. The remit of refuge accommodation is to provide a safe place for a victim/survivor to receive emotional and practical support and to start their recovery. Interviews with survivors at a Sussex refuge suggested that staff can have a positive impact on a victim/survivor's recovery and that peer support is also a valuable component of having shared facilities.



### Case study

A refuge referral was received from London for a woman with two young children. Due to coercive control and emotional abuse from her husband, the woman had very low confidence in caring for her children.

Refuge staff worked to support the client in establishing routines and preparing meals. The children received dedicated support from the refuge's children's workers. Refuge staff supported the client with linking her up with other support services and to find school and nursery places for the children. The client attended the Freedom Programme.

The client and her children received specialist support and began to recover from abuse. The client grew in confidence in herself and in her abilities as a mother.

There are 90 refuge spaces in Sussex; 72 of these spaces (80.9%) are commissioned, 10 spaces (11.2%) are not commissioned, and data is unknown for seven spaces.<sup>43</sup> In West Sussex, all properties have shared facilities. One East Sussex refuge has a self-contained unit, the remaining four only have shared facilities. The Brighton & Hove and East Sussex refuges can accept teenage sons up to the age of 18, when safe to do so. West Sussex refuges do not accept male children over the age of 12. The largest proportion of referrals to Sussex refuges were self-referrals: 60% in Brighton & Hove, 40% in East Sussex and 34% in West Sussex.

The Council of Europe (CoE) recommends that there is at least one specialist violence against women shelter in every region and one family place (victim/survivor and their children) per 10,000 of the local population.<sup>44</sup> The CoE advises that these spaces may be dispersed and must be able to support those with additional needs. For Sussex as a whole, an estimated 171 spaces for women and their children are needed to safely fulfil this standard. The breakdown of current and target totals of refuge spaces are provided in the following table.

<sup>42</sup> Women's Aid. (2021a). *Sussex: Profile of Domestic Abuse Provision*. Bristol: Women's Aid, p.4.

<sup>43</sup> Women's Aid, 2021a, pg.16.

<sup>44</sup> Council of Europe. (2008). *Combating Violence Against Women: Minimum Standards for Support Services*. Available at: [cover\\_en.cdr \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/en/csr/cover_en.cdr(coe.int)). Strasbourg: Council of Europe, p.18.

**Table 5: Breakdown of current and target totals of refuge spaces across Sussex**

<b>Local authority area</b>	<b>Current total</b>	<b>CoE target based on local population</b>
East Sussex	47	56
West Sussex	24	86
Brighton & Hove	19	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>171</b>

► **Sussex local authorities should provide more domestic abuse accommodation spaces for women and their children, according to the Council of Europe’s minimum standards.**

A key finding of the needs assessment and engagement was the need for a more diverse and appropriate range of safe accommodation and support options. Stakeholders emphasised that traditional refuge is not always suitable for a wide variety of victims/survivors, including older people, those with care, support needs or pets, and people with Multiple Complex Needs (MCN) as will be discussed in a following section.

Traditional refuge can be considered unsuitable for a variety of reasons:

- ❖ Shared facilities were frequently named as a reason that victims/survivors do not access or maintain their stay in refuge. For individuals with certain mental health conditions, such as Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder; cultural differences from other residents, for instance, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) victims/survivors; transgender women, or those with teenage sons, shared facilities can be a major barrier to accessing or settling into refuge.
- ❖ The strict house rules, while important for safety reasons, can often be difficult for individuals to adjust to and victim/survivors told us the rules can often feel unfair. One specialist stakeholder shared an example in which the refuge required children to be supervised at all times and when the resident left her children briefly to use the bathroom, she was told off by refuge staff. These sorts of rules can act as barriers to victims/survivors maintaining their stay in refuge.
- ❖ Victim/survivors told us the rules can be challenging for those who may have just left the controlling environment of domestic abuse. This setting can also hinder independent living.
- ❖ An eviction or early departure from one refuge can mean that victim/survivor is then barred from other local refuges, reducing victims/survivors’ choices even more. However, such a departure is often due to a lack of specialist support within the refuge, such as substance misuse or culturally specific support, rather than that individual being a risk to other residents.<sup>45</sup>
- ❖ Refuge is often unaffordable for working victims/survivors, who do not have access to Housing Benefit to contribute to the costs of supported living.
- ❖ Provisions for larger families are limited. The largest number of refuge rooms have two beds (29 rooms, 32.6%). Only eight rooms in Sussex refuges have four beds and no rooms in Sussex have five or more beds.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Women’s Aid. (2021a), p.26.

<sup>46</sup> Women’s Aid, (2021a), p.24.



### Case study

The client self-referred via a domestic abuse helpline. An outreach worker visited the woman in West Sussex. She is a Gypsy woman with seven children. The client disclosed that she had previously experienced domestic abuse from a former partner and had recently experienced physical abuse from her current partner. She was scared and wanted to leave the privately rented property they shared.

The outreach worker spent a day contacting refuges across the country for the client and her children. No refuge across the United Kingdom could accommodate the client's seven children. The outreach worker continued to contact the client and to look for alternative forms of safe accommodation.

After a week, the client disengaged and contact with the service ended. The client left the private rented property. It was suspected that she was travelling with her partner and the children elsewhere in the country.

Another frequent finding was the lack of choice that victims/survivors are presented with when they access domestic abuse support. Survivor engagement found that either victims/survivors frequently did not know what their options were, or that refuge was their only option. Sussex refuge residents provided feedback that if their choices had been explained more clearly, they might have made different decisions. One woman shared that if she had known how long schools' waiting lists were, she would not have moved to Sussex. Feedback suggested that providing photos of available rooms would also make the process more honest and accountable.

*"It is sink or swim - if you don't take what is offered to you, you don't get any help" - one resident interviewed at a Sussex refuge*

If refuge is not suitable or available, or there are limited other accommodation options, victims/survivors in Sussex are often placed in temporary or emergency accommodation, including Bed and Breakfasts. These sorts of placements are often mixed-gender, with no specialist support offer in place, and so are not considered appropriate domestic abuse accommodation. Although it is acknowledged that housing teams sometimes have no other option, their use for domestic abuse victims/survivors should be reduced.

Sussex should provide a more diverse and appropriate range of choices by expanding the current offer of safe accommodation. With more options, individuals will feel more empowered as they are able to select the offer that best suits their and their family's needs.

Rather than considering different housing options in isolation, Sussex must adopt a Whole Housing Approach (WHA) when commissioning more diverse and appropriate options. A WHA is a "framework for addressing the housing and safety needs of victim/survivors"<sup>47</sup> and considers all the main housing tenure types and the pathways to maintaining or accessing safe accommodation.

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<sup>47</sup> [What is the Whole Housing Approach? - daha - Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance \(dahalliance.org.uk\)](http://dahalliance.org.uk)

The expanded range of offers should include:

- ❖ **Dispersed, self-contained accommodation:** Such accommodation provides safe spaces to start recovery while living independently. These units must be fully furnished, accessible and varied in size to accommodate larger families and able to accept pets. This type of accommodation would also better meet the needs of various groups for which shared facilities would not be suitable or appropriate, including women with teenage sons. Support services will be linked up with these units, which should be spread across the county to ensure equality of provision, including around Crawley where there is currently a lack of domestic abuse safe accommodation.
- ❖ **Specialist safe accommodation:** The need for more specialist safe accommodation will be discussed in a following section. Specialist services should be accessible to male victims/survivors with and without children; LGBTQ+ victims/survivors; and victims/survivors from Black and minoritised ethnic groups, GRT communities, those with multiple, complex needs, and those with no recourse to public funds.
- ❖ **Short-term/respite accommodation:** East Sussex is currently developing a 12-month respite accommodation pilot with DLUHC funding, for women who are, or at risk of, rough sleeping. Such provision is limited elsewhere. Brighton & Hove and West Sussex will increase respite accommodation that can accommodate victims/survivors in need of short-term care and support, whether in crisis due to MCN or short-term gaps in housing.
- ❖ **Sanctuary Schemes:** Schemes which allow households to remain safely in their own homes will be discussed later in the Strategy but should be included in a broader menu of safe accommodation options. Sussex will continue to invest in and raise awareness of these schemes that can enhance an individual's physical and perceived safety in their own home.
- ❖ **Move-on accommodation:** Sussex will improve the offer of move-on options for when victims/survivors are ready to leave safe accommodation. Current options are limited, slowing down individuals' journeys into recovery and independence from services. By linking up refuge and other safe accommodation with appropriate move-on options, Sussex will ensure more cohesive accommodation offers.
- ❖ **Second-stage accommodation:** Such accommodation could be used for those who have already fled abuse and are in a place of relative safety, and as such would not require a room in a refuge, but still require support.
- ❖ **Better Private Rented Sector (PRS) options:** PRS is the most common move-on option in Sussex. PRS options for those leaving safe accommodation will be high-quality, affordable and linked up with support services.

- ❖ **Appropriate and accredited accommodation options:** Registered social landlords will be encouraged to take a Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Health Check and work toward DAHA accreditation to improve their response to their residents who are victims/survivors. All accommodation units will be appropriate and quality-assured by meeting Women's Aid,<sup>48</sup> Imkaan<sup>49</sup> or Male Domestic Abuse Network quality standards<sup>50</sup> and where relevant, the Government's National Statement of Expectations for Supported Housing.<sup>51</sup>
- ❖ **Flexible funding:** Sussex will develop a flexible fund to be utilised for one-off housing and support costs in emergency situations.
- ▶ **A broader menu of domestic abuse safe accommodation options, in line with a Whole Housing Approach, should be developed in Sussex. Consideration should be given to reflecting rural and urban community needs in any service design and that all accommodation options are appropriate and quality assured.**

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<sup>48</sup> Women's Aid. (2018). *National Quality Standards*. Available at: [National-Standards-2018.pdf \(netdna-ssl.com\)](#). Bristol: Women's Aid.

<sup>49</sup> Imkaan. (2014). *Summary: Imkaan Accredited Quality Standards*. Available at: [Commissioners Pack Single Parts.indd \(netdna-ssl.com\)](#).

<sup>50</sup> [Service Standards - Male Domestic Abuse Network \(mdan.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>51</sup> [Supported housing: national statement of expectations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## Accessible and Inclusive

*Ensuring services are accessible to all victims/survivors and meet the specific needs of those with the full range of protected characteristics*

This Strategy is committed to ensuring that individuals with the full range of protected characteristics have equal access to safe accommodation support services, as outlined in the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.<sup>52</sup> The Duty requires public bodies to consider the needs of and impact on, all individuals when delivering policies and commissioning services. The Equality Act enables public bodies to deliver specific and dedicated services where these would meet the needs of different groups of victims/survivors, including single-sex services.<sup>53</sup>

Sussex local authorities recognise that individuals can have multiple protected characteristics, and these can intersect to form additional barriers to accessing support. Having safe accommodation services and staff that can respond to such intersecting issues is essential.

As is reflected nationally, the local needs assessment highlighted that domestic abuse disproportionately affects women. However, there was considerable feedback from groups that have traditionally been excluded from refuge regarding the barriers they faced. This Strategy aims to highlight these gaps in provision, to enable consideration around how to ensure that all victims/survivors have access to accommodation and support that suits their needs.

### ❖ Age

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There were 117 Children and Young People (CYP) living in Sussex refuges during 2020-21. Only four refuges have dedicated CYP workers. East Sussex refuges are lacking this kind of specialist support.

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Since children have now been recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right under the Domestic Abuse Act for the first time, local authorities are required under law to provide them with appropriate support. Current provision of dedicated workers for children and young people in safe accommodation is lacking in East Sussex. Introducing CYP support workers within existing refuges should be a priority; providing dedicated and personalised therapeutic, psychoeducational and emotional support for the duration of a child's stay in safe accommodation. As soon as a wider range of safe accommodation options is available, floating dedicated CYP support should also be included in the service offer to people accommodated in the additional units. These floating CYP workers should link up with wider social services to ensure that longer-term support for children is in place, beyond their stay in safe accommodation.

During interviews with survivors, refuge residents shared that there were not enough suitable provisions for children, including toys and garden equipment. Children at one refuge said that having a good Wi-Fi connection was an important feature for them.

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<sup>52</sup> [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>53</sup> Government Equalities Office. (2011). *Equality Act 2010: Public Sector Equality Duty What Do I Need to Know? A Quick Start Guide for Public Sector Organisations*. Available at: [equality-duty.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk), p.9.

- ▶ **Sussex local authorities should ensure that every form of domestic abuse safe accommodation that accepts children is suitable for their needs, offering dedicated, personalised and holistic support for children and young people, including those with disabilities.**

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Victims/survivors aged 16-25 represented 19% of all Sussex Police domestic abuse incidents in 2020-2021.

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Young adult victims/survivors (16-25) may face specific experiences of domestic abuse, including digital abuse and coercive control using technology.<sup>54</sup> Younger people are also less likely to understand their experiences as domestic abuse and may be less willing to seek support, than adult victims/survivors.<sup>55</sup> With some harmful practices, such as forced marriage and so-called honour-based violence more likely to take place at a younger age, service provision must respond to the specific cultural challenges faced by younger people from some BAME communities.<sup>56</sup> Specialist support for victims/survivors aged 16-25 would help Sussex better respond to a particularly vulnerable group of people.

- ▶ **Specialist safe accommodation and support for victims/survivors aged 16-25 should be established and be culturally appropriate for anyone fleeing forced marriage and so-called honour-based violence, including couples accommodation where needed.**

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People aged over 65 represent 25% of the Sussex population, but only 6% of police domestic abuse incidents. In 2020-21, 260 people aged 65 and over were referred to Adult Social Care services across Sussex due to domestic abuse. Only 5 people aged over 65 were living in Sussex refuges in 2020-21.

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A specialist service for older people advised that very few domestic abuse safe accommodation and support providers have specific policies for older people. Creating such policies would enable services to better understand the particular needs of older victims/survivors and any barriers they may face in seeking support.

Stakeholders told us that older people often do not see themselves as victims of domestic abuse, due to the longer-term experience of often decades of abuse and would not consider specialist domestic abuse services as suitable for them. Offers of support must therefore be more generic rather than framed as 'domestic abuse' and promoted in places older people are more likely to attend, including GP surgeries and befriending services. Service offers must also be longer-term for older people in order to combat the longer-term dynamics of abuse, although this may require contract variations in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove, where provision is currently commissioned for a maximum of six months.

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<sup>54</sup> [Domestic abuse: draft statutory guidance framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/domestic-abuse-draft-statutory-guidance-framework)

<sup>55</sup> [Domestic abuse: draft statutory guidance framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/domestic-abuse-draft-statutory-guidance-framework)

<sup>56</sup> [Harmful traditional practices - Gender based violence - Health topics - Public Health Scotland](https://www.healthscotland.com/topics/harmful-traditional-practices-gender-based-violence)

Domestic abuse support must be linked in with other services, including Adult Social Care and Health, due to the frequent overlap in older people's needs.

- ▶ **Offers of support should be tailored more directly to older people across Sussex, including more generic language, broader promotion of support, linking in with other support services and targeted training for front-line professionals who routinely come into contact with older people.**

#### ❖ **Gender identity and sexual orientation**

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In 2020-21, women represented 71% of police domestic abuse incidents, reflecting the gendered nature of domestic abuse. Men represented 29%. Non-binary and transgender people represented 0.02% and 0.11%, respectively. There is no specialist male safe accommodation in Sussex or the South East. Brighton & Hove safe accommodation providers are currently able to accept referrals for transgender women. Clarion Housing Group in East Sussex will accept and assess referrals from transgender people and will seek the most appropriate accommodation for them, including self-contained units.

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This Strategy acknowledges that gender identity and sexual orientation are separate characteristics and would be worth discussing in isolation. However, due to the frequent cross-over in support services for people in the LGBTQ+ community, these characteristics have been discussed together.

Women are the primary victim/survivors in cases of domestic abuse and are more likely to experience repeat victimisation.<sup>57</sup> Women have the greatest need for domestic abuse safe accommodation and support, a trend reflected in the needs assessment findings. Most services in Sussex are accessible for women and girls, but improvements to service provision can still be made. Existing safe accommodation providers must ensure that therapeutic, holistic and trauma-informed support is readily available for women, both individually and in groups. Any new safe accommodation services that are introduced in Sussex should also include specialist support offers.

The needs of women and girls must continue to be met alongside the needs of other groups for whom services are currently lacking. Funding for current and future services for women and girls must be sustainable, long-term and independent from the funding for the other specialist services identified within this Strategy. New funding will not be used to replace existing investment into domestic abuse services and local authorities will continue to provide single-sex provision.

- ▶ **All victims/survivors and their children in safe accommodation in Sussex should receive a minimum standard of care and support, to include legal aid, move-on assistance and longer-term IDVA and psychological support.**

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<sup>57</sup> [Delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/delivery-of-support-to-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services)



Research shows that male victims/survivors of domestic abuse are often under-represented in the data.<sup>58</sup> Stakeholders told us that male victims of domestic abuse do not often seek alternative accommodation and they often become homeless to escape abuse at home.<sup>59</sup> This may be due to the lack of specialist male safe accommodation locally and men not knowing where to seek support. Despite almost one third of police incidents involving male victims/survivors of domestic abuse in Sussex, there is no specialist male safe accommodation across the South East. To fill this regional gap, Sussex should explore options for specialist safe accommodation for male victims/survivors. Stakeholders told us that dispersed, self-contained units would be most appropriate, with an offer of floating support and provision for children if required. Support offers should acknowledge that the needs of men can be different, for example some male victims/survivors have reported that they may prefer 1:1 support to group settings or not be placed in refuge type accommodation.

► **Sussex local authorities will explore options for the provision of specialist, dispersed and self-contained units of safe accommodation that can accommodate male victims/survivors of domestic abuse.**

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In 2020-21, 74% of victims/survivors residing in safe accommodation in Sussex identified as heterosexual. 1% identified as gay/lesbian and 3% identified as bisexual. Data was unknown for 22%. One Sussex refuge has an LGBTQ+ specialist worker role. There is one LGBTQ+ specialist dispersed accommodation in Brighton & Hove. Funding has been secured to recruit additional LGBTQ+ IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advisors) in West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex.

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Research has shown that LGBTQ+ individuals are historically under-represented in data and reporting, particularly around violence and abuse.<sup>60</sup> The low numbers of LGBTQ+ individuals within the needs assessment may also reflect this under-representation, and low figures do not mean that abuse is not happening. A recent LGBTQ+ Public Health survey conducted in East Sussex found that 4% of respondents have experienced bi/homo/transphobia in the home in the past 12 months – while this figure is also low, it represents a higher number than was captured in the needs assessment and indicates that more must be done to reach these groups.

Stakeholders have highlighted the importance of good quality data analysis and LGBT Foundation guidance recommends consistent use of inclusive questions so that comparative data becomes more available.<sup>61</sup> As an example, the ONS has been flagged as not having a succinct way of collecting data on non-binary people as this is not recognised in legislation. Likewise, other statutory services, for example the police, also

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<sup>58</sup> Mankind Initiative. (2021). *Making Invisible Men, Visible*. Available at: [Making-Invisible-Men-Visible-Guide-Final.pdf \(mankind.org.uk\)](https://mankind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Making-Invisible-Men-Visible-Guide-Final.pdf), p.2.

<sup>59</sup> Mankind Initiative, p.3.

<sup>60</sup> Stonewall. (2018). *Supporting Trans Women in Domestic and Sexual Violence Services*. Available at: [stonewall\\_and\\_nfpsynergy\\_report.pdf](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/media/1000/stonewall_and_nfpsynergy_report.pdf). London: Stonewall, p.6.

<sup>61</sup> LGBT Foundation (2021) *Good practice guide to monitoring sexual orientation and trans status 2021*. Available at: [If%20We%E2%80%99re%20Not%20Counted,%20We%20Don%E2%80%99t%20Count%20FINAL.pdf \(dxfy8lrzbpwv.cloudfront.net\)](https://www.gbt.foundation.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/If%20We%E2%80%99re%20Not%20Counted,%20We%20Don%E2%80%99t%20Count%20FINAL.pdf (dxfy8lrzbpwv.cloudfront.net))

struggle to collect data on Trans, Non-binary, Intersex (TNBI) communities and often are categorising equality and diversity data by sex, not by gender identity.

This reportedly leads to people within the community having to categorise themselves as the sex they were assigned at birth, not their gender identity and leaves individuals feeling overlooked and underreported even when they are coming forward for support.

There are four LGBTQ+ specialist accommodation units in Brighton & Hove, important given the large LGBTQ+ community in the city.<sup>62</sup> However, via this Strategy, more such specialist accommodation should be provided in East and West Sussex. Such accommodation units would benefit from being dispersed and self-contained, with an offer of floating support included. Dedicated support for children should be included if required.

*"Victims/survivors need to know that a service will understand them and their identity, will be able to cater to them as an individual, and that they will be accessing a service that is safe." – specialist IDVA*

Service provision for LGBTQ+ victims/survivors should also extend to increased awareness training for housing officers and other frontline practitioners, including intersectionality awareness. East and West Sussex will explore recruiting specialist LGBTQ+ support roles within existing safe accommodation and support services.

- ▶ **Sussex local authorities should increase specialist floating support and dispersed and self-contained units of safe accommodation that can accommodate LGBTQ+ victims/survivors and invest in LGBTQ+ awareness training for frontline practitioners.**



#### Case study

Following an incident in which the police attended, Mike (not real name) contacted support services. Despite being the victim and on a joint tenancy, Mike had been removed from the property and supported to make a homeless application immediately so had already been placed in emergency accommodation in another local authority area.

Unfortunately, Mike experienced significant homophobic abuse from other residents. This had a major impact on his mental health. Mike suffered from PTSD and night terrors exacerbated by the abuse and his current living situation. He also had mobility issues due to a knee injury. Mike was moved into safe emergency accommodation in his original local authority area. Mike was assigned a Homeless Prevention Officer who supported him to find private rented accommodation through the Direct Lets Scheme and began to view available properties. Unfortunately, despite looking, Mike was unable to secure accommodation in the time but was thankfully provided with long term temporary accommodation. Mike was pleased and felt safe being in his own place. He continued to receive support to find more permanent housing and was closed to the service.

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<sup>62</sup> Brighton & Hove City Council. (2009). *LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Trans) People's Housing Strategy*. Brighton. Available at: [Microsoft Word - LGBT Housing Strategy Final Draft Oct 2009 .doc \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](#).

## ❖ Disability

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People with disabilities represented 10% of police domestic abuse incidents in 2020-21. Data for disabled people living in Sussex safe accommodation was limited. Five Sussex safe accommodation facilities do not have wheelchair access or any other kind of disability support, including specialist equipment for deaf people. Two of these units were in East Sussex, two were in West Sussex, and one was in Brighton & Hove.

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The Equality Act defines disability as “a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on one’s ability to do normal daily activities.”<sup>63</sup> “Substantial” is defined as “more than minor or trivial,” and “long-term” is defined as longer than 12 months.

The limited accessibility and disability support currently in Sussex refuges is a clear gap in service provision. Equipment for deaf victims/survivors is lacking in refuges and the whole housing system is often inaccessible for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN). Sussex should consider adapting and extending service provision for disabled victims/survivors to reflect a range of additional needs. Introducing specialist teams with varied backgrounds to support staff, adapting existing units and sourcing more accessible accommodation would transform current and future offers and ensure that safe accommodation is accessible for everyone who needs it.



### Case study

Stan (not real name) is a 45-year-old TNBI (Trans, non-binary, intersex) disabled person. They had an adapted council flat, which was solely in their name, and they lived there with their non-binary spouse, Jordan (not real name). Stan contacted the service as they had fled their property after 4 years of domestic abuse. Stan was currently staying with a friend in the local area but could only stay there for one more night. Stan had been in touch with a local housing authority, but they said they don’t have a duty to help them. Later that day, Stan was offered an alternative accommodation place, but it was a ground floor flat out of area that hadn’t been adapted. Stan was not offered any way of getting to the property or any way of collecting their possessions.

The following day, Stan was informed that Jordan had been hospitalised overnight after a visit from the crisis team. Stan was then able to return home and inform the hospital that Jordan could not be discharged there, Jordan was then supported to approach the council for emergency accommodation.

- ▶ **Support and accessibility for disabled victims/survivors in safe accommodation should be improved, by introducing relevant training, multi-agency in-reach teams where needed, developing new facilities or adapting existing facilities, with measures such as installing ramps, increasing ground-floor and step-free units and installing visual fire alarms to assist deaf people.**

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<sup>63</sup> [Definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/definition-of-disability-under-the-equality-act-2010)

- ▶ **Housing application processes should be accessible for those with disabilities, including those with special educational needs or speech, language and communication needs, and include optional in-person appointments and interpretation for a range of languages, including British Sign Language.**

#### ❖ **Race and Ethnicity**

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In 2020-21, 77.1% of victims/survivors in safe accommodation in Sussex identified as white; 9.1% identified as Black or Black British; 5.8% identified as Mixed or multiple ethnic groups; 5.1% identified as Asian or Asian British; 2.5% identified as "Other" and 0.4% identified as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT). There is no specialist safe accommodation for Black and minoritised women in Sussex, although there are community-based services, including a specialist BME IDVA in Brighton & Hove and a new specialist service, Hersana, is being established in Sussex, based in Crawley. Six safe accommodation providers in Sussex can accept women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and four cannot (three in West Sussex, one in Brighton & Hove). 15% of national domestic abuse helpline calls to Friends, Families and Travellers (a national organisation advocating for GRT communities) come from Sussex.

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Black and minoritised women can access community-based support and can access existing refuges should they need to do so. However, the lack of specialist and culturally-specific refuge is a gap in provision across Sussex. Such safe accommodation would ensure that victims/survivors receive the specific support they might need for their particular life experiences. Stakeholders suggested that this accommodation should be composed of dispersed units that can accommodate various cultural needs, including proximity to cultural centres or places of worship, with outside space more suitable for GRT families, which a specialist stakeholder advised would be more suitable. These accommodation offers should include wraparound specialist support with interpretation services if required.

- ▶ **Sussex local authorities will investigate specialist safe accommodation options for victims/survivors from marginalised ethnic groups, including Black and minoritised ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and those with No Recourse to Public Funds.**



#### **Case study**

The client was moved to a town 1.5 hours away from her friends and family, resulting in her feeling like she had been separated from her culture and the support system she had. She felt she could not eat her traditional foods or engage in cultural traditional practices with anyone. The client felt isolated and did not feel like the service providers understood her feelings or took her seriously.

Training on the specific needs of various ethnicities and marginalised groups, including how experiences can intersect, would enable staff to better understand the particular barriers certain communities might face. Specific immigration rights awareness training would allow frontline practitioners to feel more confident in seeking Destitution Domestic Violence Concessions and supporting particularly vulnerable victims/survivors.

- ▶ **Cultural and immigration rights awareness training should be increased for frontline staff and commissioners to better understand the needs of marginalised groups.. Training packages must acknowledge the intersection of race, class and gender, amongst other protected characteristics.**

## Responsive to Multiple Disadvantages

Establishing specialist provision to support victim/survivors with specific needs, including multiple complex needs

A prominent theme throughout the stakeholder engagement was the current lack of domestic abuse accommodation and support provision for people with specific needs, including the protected characteristics mentioned above, care leavers, ex-service personnel and their families, but particularly those with multiple complex needs (MCN). Therefore, this section focuses on the identified gap and need for a responsive approach to MCN.

Fulfilling Lives South East (FLSE), an organisation working with women with MCN across East Sussex and Brighton & Hove, stated that "MCN has a variety of meanings in services and third sector organisations, depending on the needs of the client group. In general, MCN includes people on the edges of society who are often excluded from or who cannot access mainstream services due to the complexity of their lives. For FLSE, MCN means a person who is experiencing 3 out of 4 of the following:"<sup>64</sup>




Through this Strategy, Sussex local authorities recognise the intersectionality between domestic abuse and MCN. FLSE reported that 93% of their clients have experienced domestic abuse.<sup>65</sup> Stakeholder and survivor feedback noted how in some cases victims/survivors with MCN may have to prioritise addressing other needs in order to be ready to receive support for domestic abuse.

<sup>64</sup> Fulfilling Lives South East. (2021). *Reflecting on the Needs of Women with Multiple and Complex Needs who are at Risk of /or Experiencing Domestic Abuse, August 2021*, p.2-3.

<sup>65</sup> Fulfilling Lives South East, p.3.

With the Covid-19 pandemic increasing the use of digital and remote services, MCN specialists highlighted the accessibility issues faced by homeless and disadvantaged individuals in relation to housing and support assessments which are solely completed over the phone. In-person support and physical safe spaces are particularly important in ensuring accessibility for this cohort.



**Case study**

Alex (not her real name) is homeless and experiencing domestic violence. As the only route into specialist services, she was referred to the local commissioned domestic abuse service; a service that delivers support initially via the telephone to take forward referrals and assess support needs. However, the client was homeless and did not have a reliable phone or a private space to take a call and so she was unable to respond to the calls from the service, and the case was closed.

► **Sussex local authorities, specialist domestic abuse accommodation providers and support services should holistically support victims/survivors with multiple complex needs and ensure accessibility of services by providing both remote and in-person assessments and support.**

Women’s Aid Annual Audit 2021 stated that there are only two refuges in England exclusively for women with substance use needs or complex needs, accounting for 13 bed spaces.<sup>66</sup> The following table illustrates which refuge services across Sussex consider referrals from women with named support needs.<sup>67</sup>

**Table 6: Referrals considered from women with named support needs in Sussex refuge provision (September 2021)**

Refuge service	Will consider referrals from women:				
	With mental health support needs	With drug use support needs	With alcohol use support needs	With previous refuge evictions	Who are ex-offenders
Refuge - Eastbourne	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Refuge - Hastings	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Refuge - Lewes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Refuge - Rother	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Refuge - Wealden	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RISE - LGBT Service	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Safe in Sussex – Amber House Community Refuge	No	No	No	No	No

<sup>66</sup> Women’s Aid. (2021b). *The Domestic Abuse Report 2021: The Annual Audit*, 2021. Bristol: Women’s Aid. Available at: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/The-Domestic-Abuse-Report-2021-The-Annual-Audit-Revised-2021.pdf> Bristol: Women’s Aid.

<sup>67</sup> Women’s Aid, (2021a), p.27.

<b>Safe in Sussex - Chichester</b>	No	No	No	No	No
<b>Safe in Sussex - Worthing</b>	Yes	No	No	No	No
<b>Stonewater – Brighton Refuge</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Although the above table suggests referrals for women with MCN are considered in several refuges across the county, the lack of provision for this cohort in West Sussex is evident. Additionally, Housing Option teams and outreach support services repeatedly expressed concerns over accessibility, even for those refuges alleging they consider referrals from victims/survivors with MCN.

The needs assessment showed that in 2020-21, of those **denied access to or deemed ineligible** for accommodation services across Sussex, an estimated **52% had mental health issues, 40% had alcohol misuse problems and 27% had drug misuse problems.**

Stakeholders reinforced how individuals with MCN present the highest vulnerability and risk, but also have the lowest possibility of gaining access to safe spaces and are often marginalised by services. Organisations that do not hold a statutory duty to do so, reported on multiple occasions having paid out of their own budgets for Bed & Breakfast accommodation to house survivors with MCN in the short-term, due to a lack of appropriate and accessible accommodation options. This is a prominent gap in the provision of domestic abuse accommodation and support in Sussex.

The needs assessment highlighted that mental health issues, as well as alcohol and drug misuse, were amongst the most common reasons for denying a space within or evicting someone from a refuge. Referrals may be declined due to the complexity of their needs, unsuitability of facilities and the lack of specialist support. Even where spaces are provided, they are often challenging for victims/survivors with MCN to maintain due to the mismatch between strict accommodation rules and their complex lifestyles.

Feedback from complex needs IDVAs and mental health professionals suggested that traditional refuge provision is not the most appropriate setting to support women with MCN. Shared facilities, strict rules and 9am to 5pm staffing can all be problematic factors for victim/survivors experiencing complex lifestyles. As women with MCN commonly have children removed from their care, the presence of families within refuges can also be highly re-traumatising. Feedback proposed that traditional refuges should be adapted to better accommodate victims/survivors with MCN. The following case study reinforces the difficulties faced by women with MCN within refuges, in addition to the lack of alternative options available to them.





### Case study

Jude (not her real name) is female and has experienced significant childhood trauma and was moved around through the care system. As an adult Jude's life has been defined by domestic abuse, self-harm, and poly drug use. DA incidents have become increasingly severe recently – some were reported to the police and her case was heard at MARAC several times. Although Jude was allocated a place in refuge, she was quickly evicted following an argument with another resident despite there not being an investigation where Jude was able to share her account of events or reflect on ways to resolve the conflict with the fellow resident.

Jude had no option but to return to the local area either living where she experienced significant childhood trauma or staying with the alleged perpetrator, as she was not allowed to move to other refuges across the local area and did not have any other housing options available to her.

When victims/survivors with MCN are denied spaces in refuges, they are often placed in temporary or emergency accommodation. Stakeholders told us that these forms of accommodation are unsuitable for MCN due to being mixed gender, with shared facilities, strict tenancy agreements and little-to-no specialist support provided. If victims/survivors are placed in these forms of accommodation, in-reach specialist teams, floating support and IDVAs should be in place to support them.

In order to meet the needs of individuals with MCN, accommodation should be flexible, longer-term, staffed 24/7, with limited shared facilities and continuing specialist wraparound support for mental health, alcohol/substance misuse and offending. This form of accommodation would reduce evictions and consequently also reduce homelessness, disengagement with services and the risk of returning to perpetrators.

To better understand the needs, in September 2021, East Sussex County Council hosted a partnership round-table event, inviting partners and providers to discuss safe accommodation options for those who experience multiple disadvantages.

Concerns around limited and unsuitable move-on options for victims/survivors with MCN were also raised. FLSE highlighted the benefits of adopting a 'Housing First' model, paired with specialist domestic abuse wraparound support, in ensuring accommodation is appropriate to MCN and simultaneously provides a long-term housing solution.<sup>68</sup>

"Housing is seen as a human right by Housing First services. There are no conditions around 'housing readiness' before providing someone with a home; rather, secure housing is viewed as a stable platform from which other issues can be addressed."<sup>69</sup>

- ▶ **Accommodation and support options appropriate for the needs of domestic abuse victims/survivors with multiple complex needs will be explored, including short-term respite facilities, specialist housing, move-on pathways and long-term floating support.**

<sup>68</sup> Fulfilling Lives South East, p.5.

<sup>69</sup> [Housing First in England The Principles.pdf \(homeless.org.uk\)](https://www.homeless.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Housing-First-in-England-The-Principles.pdf)

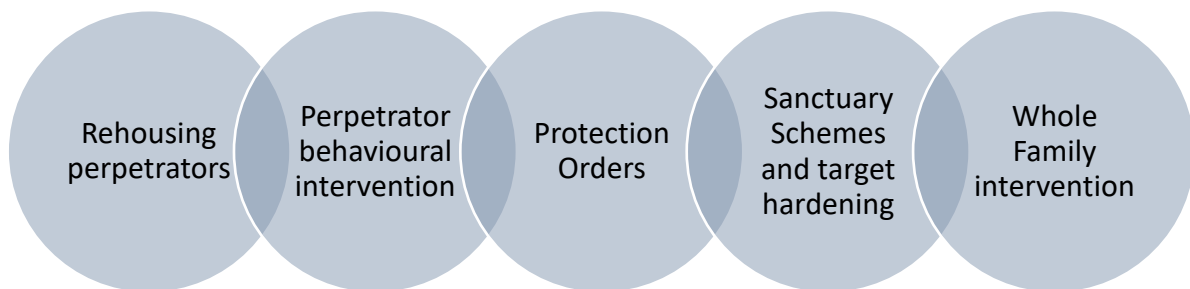
## Person-centred

*Empowering victims/survivors to remain in their own homes through choices, where safe to do so*

There is a common concern amongst stakeholders and survivors, that the current domestic abuse accommodation and support landscape in Sussex prevents victims/survivors from making independent decisions and relies on the expectation of them fleeing their home. Provision should better reflect complexity of domestic abuse victim/survivor and perpetrator dynamics, including recognition of the protective factors in relationships and the barriers and difficulties in leaving perpetrators, as well as the cycles of re-victimisation and re-offending.

*"Why should I move, give up my job, take my children away from family and friends, have no support network... Why should I be punished for what they have done to me?" – victim/survivor*

Feedback highlighted that although many survivors choose or are required to leave their area to increase their safety, this should not be their only option. Where safe to do so, victims/survivors should be ~~being~~ effectively supported if they choose to remain in their own homes and therefore the following measures may only be appropriate for cases that are not assessed as high risk:



The measures should be delivered alongside wider educational and preventative work, such as the healthy relationships programmes in schools. The above options would minimise the impact on victims/survivors and increase perpetrator accountability, whilst ensuring safety planning is in place. They reduce the requirement to flee out of area which can impact employment and access to key services and existing social networks which facilitate support and recovery. Where the victim/survivor has children, these options would also provide stability in relation to their schooling.

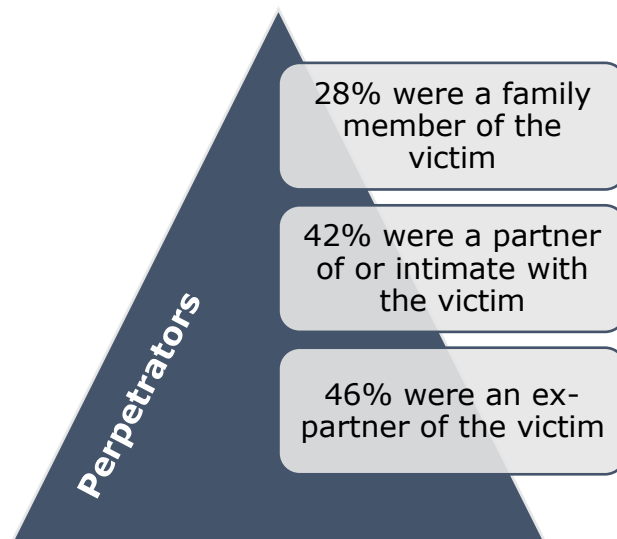
While the measures do not remove the need for emergency accommodation, as mentioned in earlier sections of this Strategy, Sanctuary Schemes are an alternative form of safe accommodation for cases which are medium or standard risk. Measures include the provision of safety locks, security lighting, panic alarms and CCTV. Police can also provide other options, although this is often short-term compared to provision from Sanctuary Schemes. This police provision is also currently only available to victims/survivors at high risk, even though Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) and Safeguarding Practice Reviews (previously Serious Case Reviews)) highlight that medium risk cases are often likely to escalate to more serious harm and tragic outcomes.

Although data was not easily obtained from case files, feedback from Housing Options teams suggested that Sanctuary Schemes are an effective intervention when implemented as part of a wider safety and support package. For example, they can be used alongside Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) and Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPNs), as introduced by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, strict bail conditions,

and IDVA support. Nevertheless, there was some lack of awareness regarding this option amongst wider partners, which suggested further promotion of Sanctuary Schemes might be needed to improve accessibility. Some stakeholders also expressed confusion regarding which tenure types the scheme was available for.

There is inconsistency in the provision and promotion of Sanctuary Schemes across Sussex. The organisation Safe Partnership is commissioned by districts and boroughs to deliver Sanctuary Scheme measures across East Sussex. Brighton & Hove City Council and the majority of West Sussex County Council do not have formal Sanctuary Schemes in place. Brighton & Hove suggested a lack of awareness, and consequently uptake, led to the closure of their scheme. Other than Crawley Borough Council that has a Sanctuary Scheme in place through Crawley Homes the districts and boroughs in West Sussex independently provide target hardening measures on a case-by-case basis.

- **Victims/survivors should be able to remain in their home if they choose to, and it is safe to do so, by ensuring Sanctuary Schemes are available in each local authority area as part of a wider safety and support package.**



Source: Sussex Police data

Although DLUHC Domestic Abuse Act New Burdens funding cannot be utilised for this purpose, stakeholders reinforced the importance of developing perpetrator initiatives.

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham has adopted an approach which provides short-term housing for perpetrators, alongside an evidence-informed programme of behaviour change work.<sup>70</sup> While at face value somewhat contentious, enforcing loss of tenancy and rehousing perpetrators reduces risk of harm and enables victims/survivors to remain in their homes. The availability of housing for perpetrators of domestic abuse was identified as a gap throughout Sussex. Combined with this, proactive work with perpetrators is fundamental in attempting to break the cycle of re-offending and improve outcomes for domestic abuse victims/survivors and their children. Sussex is already delivering interventions to perpetrators which could be promoted alongside greater perpetrator housing provision.

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<sup>70</sup> [Barking and Dagenham Council – Giving victims and survivors control over where they live | Local Government Association](#)

### **Perpetrator programmes in Sussex**

- OSPCC and Sussex Police: High-Harm Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme
- Cranstoun: 'Men and Masculinities' 24 week rolling behavioural change

- ▶ **Sussex local authorities will explore options for the re-housing of perpetrators and enforcement of loss of tenancies, alongside promoting domestic abuse perpetrator behavioural programmes.**

Whole Family intervention is a more dynamic approach to tackling domestic abuse which reflects the complexity of victim/survivor and perpetrator relationships. It engages every member of the household, working together with victims/survivors and perpetrators, as well as any affected children, to tackle domestic abuse alongside any other needs. The West Sussex Connect SafeLives pilot is a key example of this provision in Sussex. Stakeholder feedback highlighted the benefits of this type of intervention, suggesting the need for increased awareness and availability throughout the county.

- ▶ **Awareness and availability of Whole Family interventions should be increased in Sussex.**

Where only an estimated 4% of domestic abuse results in a conviction, the availability of these alternative methods may increase confidence to report and improve outcomes for victims/survivors in feeling safe.

## Trauma-informed

*Embedding trauma-informed practice in services and processes through training and specialist knowledge*

The needs assessment and survivor and stakeholder engagement revealed that victims/survivors often described the process of seeking domestic abuse accommodation and support as re-traumatising. Victims/survivors highlighted that this was true for approaches to both housing authorities and support services, for the following reasons:



### Insufficient training



### Evidential requirements



### Re-traumatisation through repetition

Feedback found that housing officers often lack sufficient domestic abuse awareness training. Many cases of good practice were highlighted during the needs assessment - but without an in-depth domestic abuse training package - housing officers feel unsure of how best to respond to victims/survivors and therefore do not offer the right or appropriate service.

Engagement highlighted a clear need for a more trauma-informed approach to housing application procedures and training. Research shows that high numbers of people accessing public services have experienced trauma in their lives.<sup>71</sup> Trauma can have a significant impact on how individuals engage with services and is defined as resulting from:

"... an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being."<sup>72</sup>

Understanding responses to trauma allows professionals and services to work more closely with the reality of that individual and form more trusting relationships. Trauma-informed practice is shown to be effective and beneficial for both survivors and staff and is shown to better reach those that are not accessing traditional services. Trauma-informed training packages should be developed and designed with input from those with lived experience. Such training should include adequate supervision processes to account for vicarious trauma.

- **Ensure that consistent domestic abuse and trauma-informed practice training packages are developed for frontline practitioners within housing authorities, housing associations and registered social landlords, with an aim to deliver the offer more widely.**

<sup>71</sup> Grandison, G. and Homes, A. (2021). *Trauma-Informed Practice: A Toolkit for Scotland*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government. Available at: [Trauma-informed practice: toolkit - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultations-petitions/embedded/trauma-informed-practice-toolkit).

<sup>72</sup> Grandison and Homes, p.8.

Stakeholders told us that another re-traumatising element of the housing support application process is the requirement to provide evidence of domestic abuse. This obligation on housing authorities is explained below:

*"21.21 Housing authorities should seek to obtain an account of the applicant's experience to assess whether the behaviour they have experienced is abusive or whether they would be at risk of domestic abuse if they continued to occupy their accommodation."*<sup>73</sup>

Stakeholders suggested that evidential requirements can deter victims/survivors from seeking support. In some cases, evidence may not be produced as easily, for instance, in cases of coercive control. Victims/survivors of lower-risk abuse may not yet have accessed support services and so may not have this body of information to share with housing teams. This burden does not facilitate early intervention and prevention work.

Stakeholder engagement also revealed that the *kind* of evidence required can also be an obstacle. While the code specifies that:

*"Where an applicant's experience has been documented already by a domestic abuse service - where possible, housing authorities should utilise existing statements to avoid asking the victim to re-live their experience unnecessarily."*<sup>74</sup>

Local specialist domestic abuse services however suggested that this practice may not happen consistently within Sussex housing teams. Stakeholders shared that some housing authorities rely on police evidence rather than information from other services and victims/survivors themselves. This approach overlooks the reality of under-reporting to police and may deter many victims/survivors from seeking support, as they may not have accessed services or feel they have enough evidence. As discussed previously, housing IDVAs co-located within housing authorities would be able to complete DASH risk checklists with victims/survivors to meet evidence requirements and provide specialist support.<sup>75</sup>

*"Referring on to multiple agencies (whilst I understand its need) could be dealt with in a more delicate fashion as this would prevent the victim of having to repeat her story over and over which is traumatising in itself"* - public consultation respondent.

The above quotation highlights a common experience that was shared during engagement. The range of different services often used by victims/survivors, who may be dealing with other needs alongside domestic abuse, can be overwhelming. This feeling is likely to be increased when considering the impact of repeatedly sharing experiences of abuse and trauma. One refuge provider shared that staff develop documents with residents that can be shared with other services, to avoid the individual having to share their story more than once. This kind of approach can reduce the re-traumatisation often experienced by victims/survivors and should be adopted more widely. Similarly, adopting a single point of contact approach across the wider domestic abuse service network would reduce the burden on the victim/survivor. This Strategy acknowledges that victims/survivors have multiple journeys and entry points into services, so creating a single point of contact may be difficult. However, as much as possible, Sussex will adopt a holistic model of support in which victims/survivors do not need to repeat their stories.

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<sup>73</sup> [Chapter 21: Domestic abuse - Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>74</sup> [Chapter 21: Domestic abuse - Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>75</sup> Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and 'Honour'-based violence Risk Indicator Checklist (DASH RIC)

One current initiative is a Victim Hub model for domestic abuse and sexual violence services in Sussex. Four hubs are in operation: Eastbourne, Hastings, Horsham and Brighton and includes police, statutory agencies and commissioned specialist services. This model aims to streamline the victim/survivor's journey through different services, reduce duplication of work and ensure more co-ordinated working across the local authority areas.

- ▶ **Each local authority area will explore the potential of a single point of contact approach or introduction of a directory for victims/survivors accessing different services.**

Stakeholders reported that the housing system process can be difficult to navigate and time consuming. Refuge staff reported feeling overwhelmed with the administrative burden of completing housing applications for residents and that it was often to the detriment of being able to provide key support and therapeutic services. Co-locating dedicated support within or for safe accommodation or commissioning floating housing specialists would reduce the pressure on refuge staff and make expert housing advice more accessible for victims/survivors.

- ▶ **Sussex local authorities will consider providing dedicated or floating housing specialists to provide support within domestic abuse safe accommodation services.**

## What Sussex local authorities will do next

Publish the draft Strategy for an eight-week public consultation from 25 October 2021 and evaluate the feedback prior to final publication



Domestic Abuse Accommodation Subgroup to meet monthly to develop action plans to support the Strategy and address the identified local and Pan-Sussex needs and implement provisions, which will include Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)



Taking into account the needs assessment findings and public consultation feedback, commence commissioning activity to deliver additional safe and supported accommodation options for Sussex utilising the 2021-22 'new burdens' funding under s57(3) Domestic Abuse Act 2021



Incorporate the outcome of the government Spending Review's future funding decision into the Pan-Sussex Strategy and Delivery Plan



Quarterly needs assessment data to be submitted to the Accommodation Sub-Group as part of the s57(1)(c) Domestic Abuse Act 2021 monitoring process



DA Accommodation Sub-Group to submit an implementation progress report to the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board quarterly meeting as part of the s57(1)(c) Domestic Abuse Act 2021 monitoring process



Publish the final Pan-Sussex Strategy by January 2022



Completion of an annual needs assessment refresher in conjunction with DLUCH reporting requirements under s59 Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (*apart from in 2022*)



Review and refresh the Pan-Sussex implementation Strategy and Delivery Plan every three years



## Closing statement

Although funding has currently only been allocated to local authorities for one year, the government has committed to longer-term investment in domestic abuse safe accommodation and support. For this reason, the recommendations outlined in this Strategy will be delivered over a three-year period and needs reviewed in future refreshes.

This Strategy outlines the priorities and recommendations for domestic abuse accommodation and support. It represents a commitment that Sussex local authorities will consider and cater for the needs identified when making commissioning decisions around support provisions. The six strategic priorities should be used to ensure that future funding is spent in an inclusive, meaningful and sustainable way. Action plans alongside lived experience work are under development locally to guide the implementation, delivery and monitoring of the priorities and recommendations.

Thanks are extended to the various local and national stakeholders and professionals whose views and recommendations were vital to this process. We would like to thank the survivors of domestic abuse that generously shared their experiences and stories throughout the needs assessment process. Their suggestions formed the centre of this Strategy and their voices must be central in any future decision-making.

Sussex strives to be a safer place for everyone, where survivors feel believed, where funding for essential services is long-term and sustainable, and where everyone can access the support they need.

### In an emergency, always call 999

For specialist domestic abuse support and advice, the following services can help:

#### East Sussex

- ❖ **Change, Grow, Live Domestic Abuse Service:** Domestic abuse support service. Contact: 0300 323 9985 - [Domestic Abuse Service - East Sussex | Change Grow Live](#)
- ❖ **Clarion Housing Group:** Domestic abuse refuge service.. Contact: 0300 500 8000 - [Domestic abuse or violence | Clarion \(myclarionhousing.com\)](#)

#### West Sussex

- ❖ **WORTH Services:** Domestic abuse support service. Contact: 07834968539 or 033 022 28181 - [Local support for people being abused - West Sussex County Council](#)
- ❖ **Safe in Sussex:** Domestic abuse refuge service. Contact: 0330 333 7416 - [Home - Safe In Sussex](#)
- ❖ **My Sisters' House Women's Centre:** Domestic abuse support service. Contact: 01243 697800 - [My Sisters' House](#)

#### Brighton & Hove

- ❖ **Victim Support Domestic Abuse Specialist Service:** Domestic abuse support service. Contact: 0300 323 9985 - [Brighton and Hove Domestic Abuse Specialist Service - Victim Support](#)
- ❖ **Stonewater:** Domestic abuse refuge service. Contact: 01293 780419 - [Stonewater is a leading social housing provider.](#)
- ❖ **RISE:** Domestic abuse support service. Contact: 01273 622 822 - [Freedom from domestic abuse | RISE \(riseuk.org.uk\)](#)
- ❖ **LGBT Switchboard:** Specialist LGBT domestic abuse service. Contact: 01273 359042 - [Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard.](#)

#### Pan Sussex

- ❖ **Veritas Justice:** Stalking support and advocacy service. Contact: 01273 234773 - [Veritas Justice](#)
- ❖ **Hersana:** Specialist Black domestic abuse service. Contact: 07376 293 487 - [Support For Black Survivors Of Abuse | HERSANA. | England](#)
- ❖ **Opoka:** Specialist Polish domestic abuse service. Contact: 0300 365 1700 - [Opoka](#)
- ❖ **Friends, Families and Travellers:** Specialist support service for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities. Contact: 01273 234 777 - [Friends, Families and Travellers \(gypsy-traveller.org\)](#)

### Appendix 1: Wider partnership work

- **Safer Streets 3** - two recent successful bids by the PCC for the government's Safer Streets funding for tackling VAWG, will bring nearly £1 million into Sussex.<sup>76</sup> The funding will be spent on training, public awareness campaigns and physical safety measures, in conjunction with Sussex Police and the three Tier One local authorities, to make streets safer for women and girls in Sussex.
- **STAR** - Sussex have also recently been successful in securing £45,000 funding from the Police Science, Technology, Analysis and Research (STAR) Board to create an innovative safety app, designed to help people find safe spaces in emergencies and report directly to Sussex Police. This app will be free for use, but it aims to particularly help women and girls.<sup>77</sup>
- **Night Time Economy** - The PCC, in consultation with local specialist services, Sussex Police and Tier One local authorities, applied for the government's Safety of Women at Night fund. If successful, Sussex will be awarded up to £300,000 to promote the safety of women and girls at night and as part of the night-time economy.<sup>78</sup>
- **Changing Futures** - Vulnerable people across Sussex are set to benefit from the support they receive to rebuild their lives after the three Sussex councils were awarded £4.425m from the Changing Futures initiative. The joint bid was one of 15 chosen for funding, out of nearly 100 submissions across England. The funding will be used to help change and improve the ways vulnerable people access essential support and treatment to prevent them from crisis when they may be facing homelessness, substance misuse, poor mental health, domestic abuse or contact with the criminal justice system.

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<sup>76</sup> [SPCC - PCC welcomes Safer Streets funding \(sussex-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://sussex-pcc.gov.uk)

<sup>77</sup> [SPCC - PCC secures funding for innovative new safe space app \(sussex-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://sussex-pcc.gov.uk)

<sup>78</sup> [Safety of Women at Night Fund - guidance to bidders \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

## Appendix 2: The Domestic Abuse Act 2021<sup>79</sup>

The act will:

- create the first statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, controlling or coercive, and economic abuse
- establish in law the office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner and set out the Commissioner's functions and powers
- provide for a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order
- **place a duty on local authorities in England to provide accommodation based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation**
- prohibit perpetrators of abuse from cross-examining their victims in person in the civil and family courts in England and Wales
- create a statutory presumption that victims of domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal, civil and family courts
- clarify the circumstances in which a court may make a barring order under section 91(14) of the Children Act 1989 to prevent family proceedings that can further traumatise victims
- extend the controlling or coercive behaviour offence to cover post-separation abuse.
- extend the offence of disclosing private sexual photographs and films with intent to cause distress (known as the "revenge porn" offence) to cover threats to disclose such material
- create a new offence of non-fatal strangulation or suffocation of another person.
- clarify by restating in statute law the general proposition that a person may not consent to the infliction of serious harm and, by extension, is unable to consent to their own death
- extend the extra-territorial jurisdiction of the criminal courts in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to further violent and sexual offences
- provide for a statutory domestic abuse perpetrator strategy
- enable domestic abuse offenders to be subject to polygraph testing as a condition of their licence following their release from custody
- place the guidance supporting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme ("Clare's law") on a statutory footing.
- **Provide that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have 'priority need' for homelessness assistance**
- **ensure that where a local authority, for reasons connected with domestic abuse, grants a new secure tenancy to a social tenant who had or has a secure lifetime or assured tenancy (other than an assured shorthold tenancy) this must be a secure lifetime tenancy**
- prohibit GPs and other health professionals in general practice from charging a victim of domestic abuse for a letter to support an application for legal aid
- provide for a statutory code of practice relating to the processing of domestic abuse data for immigration purposes.

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<sup>79</sup> [Domestic Abuse Act 2021: overarching factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97222/Domestic_Abuse_Act_2021_-_overarching_factsheet.pdf)

### **Appendix 3: Domestic Abuse Act: Local Partnership Board:<sup>80</sup>**

#### Strategic objectives:

- To improve delivery across all agencies involved in supporting victims, survivors, and witnesses of domestic abuse so that they experience high quality services and are able to cope and recover from the impact of what has happened to them.
- To implement the new Section 58 duty in the Domestic Abuse Act, for local authorities and partners to establish a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board for the purposes of providing advice to the Sussex authorities about the exercise of their functions under Section 57 of the legislation.

#### Role:

- Take a multi-agency approach to delivering improvements for victims, survivors, and witnesses of domestic abuse as they enter, travel through and exit services in Sussex. All agencies play a crucial role in ensuring the 'victim and survivor voice' is at the centre of service delivery.
- Have strategic oversight and ultimate accountability for the delivery of actions that flow from the Sussex needs assessment to support commissioning of safe accommodation for those affected by domestic abuse, the Strategic Framework for Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse, community engagement work and the Equality Impact Assessments that accompanied the recommissioning of specialist services during 2019 and 2020.
- Ensure learning and practice recommendations from Domestic Homicide Reviews, and any other learning reviews in which domestic and sexual violence are a factor, are shared across Sussex.
- Include a focus on ensuring that people do not fall between the gaps in systems; collectively identifying pressure points and working collaboratively to ensure the system responds efficiently and proactively with a view to influencing structure and broader system responses to domestic and sexual violence and abuse.

#### Membership of the group

- Tier One local authorities (West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council)
- Sussex Police
- The Office of the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner
- Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
- Crown Prosecution Service
- Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service
- Citizens Advice - Witness Service
- IDVA Services and domestic abuse charities in West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton & Hove
- Specialist providers of accommodation-based services for victim/survivors of domestic violence and abuse in West Sussex, East Sussex, and Brighton & Hove
- At least one person to represent the interests of persons who provide, or have functions relating to, health care services in its area
- At least one person to represent the interests of victim/survivors of domestic abuse
- At least one person to represent the interests of children of domestic abuse victims/survivors
- At least one person to represent the interests of Tier Two local authorities in West Sussex and East Sussex
- Other partners invited specifically as appropriate by agreement with the Chair

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<sup>80</sup> [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

## Appendix 4: Data sources and stakeholder engagement meetings

Type	Source	Data
Quantitative	Sussex Police Corporate Development Department	Domestic Abuse (DA) crime statistics including incidents, homicides, and victims' demographics
	Sussex Police Citizen Focus Team	DA victim satisfaction survey results
	Office for National Statistics (ONS)	National and Local DA statistics
	Homelessness Case Level Information Classification (H-Clic)	DA Homelessness statistics
	OSPCC Commissioned Services monitoring data	Service outputs and victim/survivor outcomes
	MARAC	Referral numbers and demographics
	Specialist Service Providers	Service user statistics
	Local Authority District and Borough Housing Option Teams	Approaches and DA accommodation referral statistics
	Social Care (Adult and Child)	DA flagged case numbers and demographics
	Healthcare Providers	DA flagged case numbers and demographics
	Women's Aid	Purchased report outlining current service provision
Qualitative	Stakeholder engagement (see <i>below for full list of meetings</i> )	Observations around gaps, barriers, and solutions
	Fulfilling Lives	Lived experience report
	Public survey hosted on OSPCC website	Lived experience feedback
	Focus group questions to existing support groups	Lived experience feedback
Site visits	Emerging Futures, Worthing, West Sussex	Tour of facilities and focus group with residents
	Refuge, Brighton & Hove	Tour of facilities and focus group with residents
	Amber House, Littlehampton, West Sussex	Tour of facilities and focus group with residents

	Organisation
<b>1</b>	Adur and Worthing District Councils Housing
<b>2</b>	Age UK East Sussex
<b>3</b>	Arun District Council Housing
<b>4</b>	Brighton & Hove City Council Adult Social Care
<b>5</b>	Brighton & Hove City Council Children's Social Care

<b>6</b>	Brighton & Hove City Council Housing Options
<b>7</b>	Brighton Housing Trust
<b>8</b>	Brighton Women's Centre
<b>9</b>	CAPA First Response
<b>10</b>	Change, Grow, Live East Sussex Domestic Abuse Service
<b>11</b>	Change, Grow, Live East Sussex Domestic Abuse Service HIDVA
<b>12</b>	Chichester District Council Housing
<b>13</b>	Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance
<b>14</b>	East Sussex Adult Social Care Mental Health Team
<b>15</b>	East Sussex County Council Children's Social Care
<b>16</b>	East Sussex County Council SWIFT
<b>17</b>	East Sussex Housing Officers Group
<b>18</b>	East Sussex Refuge
<b>19</b>	Eastbourne Borough Council
<b>20</b>	Emerging Futures – <i>engagement meeting and site visit</i>
<b>21</b>	Empowering Communities with Integrated Network Systems (ECINS)
<b>22</b>	Friends, Families and Travellers
<b>23</b>	Fulfilling Lives
<b>24</b>	Hastings Borough Council Housing
<b>25</b>	Hastings Borough Council, Supported Accommodation & Refuges Virtual Team
<b>26</b>	Hersana CIC
<b>27</b>	Home Start East Sussex
<b>28</b>	Home Works
<b>29</b>	Horsham District Council Housing
<b>30</b>	Hourglass
<b>31</b>	Imkaan
<b>32</b>	Just Life Brighton
<b>33</b>	Lewes District Council
<b>34</b>	LGBT Switchboard
<b>35</b>	Mankind
<b>36</b>	Mankind Initiative
<b>37</b>	My Sisters' House
<b>38</b>	Oasis
<b>39</b>	Opoka
<b>40</b>	Optivo
<b>41</b>	Ottaway Strategic Management Limited
<b>42</b>	Paws Protect
<b>43</b>	Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
<b>44</b>	RISE
<b>45</b>	Rise Up
<b>46</b>	Rother District Council Housing
<b>47</b>	Safe Haven Sussex

<b>48</b>	Safe in Sussex
<b>49</b>	Safe in Sussex male IDVA
<b>50</b>	Sign Health, Domestic Abuse Service
<b>51</b>	Southdown Housing
<b>52</b>	Southdown Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Mental Health Support
<b>53</b>	Standing Together
<b>54</b>	Stonepillow
<b>55</b>	Stonewater
<b>56</b>	Survivors' Network
<b>57</b>	Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group
<b>58</b>	Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust
<b>59</b>	Sussex Police
<b>60</b>	The Believe Foundation / Believe Globally CIC
<b>61</b>	The Clock Tower Sanctuary
<b>62</b>	The Links Project
<b>63</b>	The Probation Service
<b>64</b>	The Rita Project
<b>65</b>	The You Trust
<b>66</b>	Turning Tides
<b>67</b>	University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust
<b>68</b>	Veritas Justice
<b>69</b>	Victim Support
<b>70</b>	Victim Support Criminal Justice IDVA
<b>71</b>	Victim Support LGBTQ+ Specialist
<b>72</b>	West Sussex County Council Adult Social Care
<b>73</b>	West Sussex County Council, Head of Strategic Housing
<b>74</b>	West Sussex MIND
<b>75</b>	WORTH and MARAC Lead, West Sussex
<b>76</b>	WORTH Family Support Leads and IDVAS
<b>77</b>	Yada



## Appendix 5: Service provision in Sussex

### ❖ Service mapping

The provision of domestic abuse accommodation and support has been identified via consultation with stakeholders and the Safe Space Sussex service directory.<sup>81</sup> Service mapping was completed in conjunction with Women's Aid, who hold the largest national data set on domestic abuse.<sup>82</sup> The below service list highlights the current provision of domestic abuse support services, domestic abuse safe accommodation and other forms of supported accommodation and support.

1. Amber House, Littlehampton: Public refuge run by Safe in Sussex. Five units, two of which can support single women.
2. Brighton & Hove LGBTQ Switchboard: Specialist service to support LGBTQ+ people in the city and link them up with other relevant services.
3. Brighton Housing Trust (Threshold): Provides a range of services to support the homeless, insecurely housed, and vulnerable men and women. The Threshold counselling service for women provides support around mental health issues and sexual/domestic abuse.
4. Brighton Women's Centre: provides services including drop-in sessions, Toybox crèche, foodbank, holistic therapies and self-improvement courses. BWC provide support for women involved with multiple complex needs and the Criminal Justice System through their Inspire Project.
5. Butterflies Child & Adolescent Counselling Service C.I.C.: Provides individual counselling, anger management groups, equine assisted therapy, and equine assisted learning.
6. Change, Grow, Live (CGL): provides a domestic abuse specialist support service across East Sussex, as well as substance misuse support treatment Pan-Sussex.
7. Emerging Futures: 20 dedicated female units of accommodation in Worthing. Provision extends and provides direct support to females impacted by DA.
8. Friends Families and Travellers: Support service working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. They provide advice and consultancy, promote health and wellbeing, work on research and policy, deliver training and much more, for issues including domestic abuse.
9. Hersana CIC: Specialist 'by and for' organisation for Black survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence. Hersana works across the UK but is setting up a Sussex service based in Crawley.
10. Home-Start East Sussex: Runs the Lotus programme, 6 weeks of educational and therapeutic sessions for women living in East Sussex or Brighton & Hove whose lives have been impacted by domestic abuse, but who are now safe.
11. Hourglass: Based in East Sussex, Hourglass is a UK-wide charity focusing exclusively on the issue of elder abuse and providing both emotional and practical support.
12. Just Life Brighton: Housing and wellbeing support for people in temporary accommodation. Works in Brighton and in Manchester.
13. My Sisters' House Women's Centre: Provides domestic abuse drop-in clinics, one-to-one sessions and casework, and group work, working across the coastal community of West Sussex.
14. Oasis Project: substance misuse and sex worker outreach project based in Brighton & Hove, also working in Hastings.

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<sup>81</sup> [Safe:Space Sussex \(safespacesussex.org.uk\)](https://safespacesussex.org.uk)

<sup>82</sup> Women's Aid, (2021a)

15. Opoka: Specialist DV Service for Polish Women, providing a helpline, crisis support, advocacy and outreach support.
16. Paws Protect - Cats Protection: Free and confidential fostering service, where cats are cared for until owners have escaped their abusive relationship and resettled somewhere safe.
17. RISE: Based in Brighton and operates in Brighton & Hove, providing information, support, advocacy and education around domestic abuse.
18. Safe Haven Sussex: A mix of shared and self-contained supported accommodation in Brighton. 60 medium support mental health accommodation places and 20 high support places.
19. Southdown Housing: not-for-profit specialist providers of care, support and housing services for vulnerable people working across Sussex, based in Lewes.
20. Stonepillow: Homeless charity and accommodation provider, working in Chichester and Bognor Regis.
21. The Clock Tower Sanctuary: Homelessness support and advice centre for young people aged 16-25 based in Brighton.
22. The Daisy Chain Project: Domestic abuse legal advice charity, providing pro bono legal advice, educating people about what constitutes domestic abuse. Based in Worthing but has a national reach.
23. The Rita Project: Based in Brighton & Hove, working in the city and in rural East Sussex, The Rita Project raises awareness and supports those experiencing domestic abuse. They run projects in schools and rural communities and with homeless people.
24. The YOU Trust: Delivering West Sussex Connect Service, which aims to fill identified gaps in service provision, helping to provide a 'one front door' access to domestic abuse support.
25. Veritas Justice: expert stalking advocacy and support service based in Brighton & Hove and working across Sussex.
26. Victim Support Brighton & Hove Domestic Abuse Support Service: Providing IDVA casework support, an IDVA based at the Royal Sussex County Hospital and a criminal justice DVA to support through the criminal justice system.
27. WORTH Domestic Abuse Services: Teams of IDVAs working across West Sussex who work to identify, assess, and assist people at risk.

### **Safe accommodation:**

1. Safe in Sussex: Based in Worthing, operates four refuges along the south coast of West Sussex: two are commissioned, two are funded independently.
2. Clarion: Five refuges in East Sussex: one in each of the five district and borough geographical areas, with 47 units in total.
3. RISE: Four units of specialist LGBTQ+ dispersed accommodation which can support three residents.
4. The Brighton Refuge - Stonewater: 15 units of self-contained accommodation and support for women and their children.

**National helplines used in Sussex:**

1. Karma Nirvana
2. National Domestic Abuse Helpline
3. National LGBT Domestic Violence Helpline
4. Mankind Initiative
5. Opoka National Helpline (Polish speaking)
6. Women's Aid Live Chat
7. The No Woman Turned Away Project
8. The Salvation Army Modern Slavery Adult Victim Care Service
9. Casework Service (Japanese speaking)
10. Respect Men's Advice Line (for male victims/survivors)
11. Respect Phoneline (for perpetrators)