



Safe Accommodation Strategy Report 2022-2023

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership

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**Cambridgeshire
& Peterborough**
Domestic Abuse & Sexual
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Context

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 set in statute that Tier One authorities (Unitary Authorities and County Councils) must prepare and publish a local strategy based on a robust needs assessment that sets out how accommodation-based domestic abuse support will be developed, commissioned, and delivered.

Accommodation-based domestic abuse support includes provision of support to victims and their children in a range of settings, including:

- Refuge accommodation
- Specialist safe accommodation
- Dispersed accommodation
- Sanctuary schemes
- Move-on or second stage accommodation

Alongside provision of safe accommodation, the following types of domestic abuse support have been provided:

- Advocacy support - development of personal safety plans, liaison with other services (for example, GPs and social workers, welfare benefit providers)
- Domestic abuse prevention advice - support to assist victims to recognise the signs of abusive relationships, to help them remain safe (including online) and to prevent re-victimisation
- Specialist support for victims with relevant protected characteristics and / or complex needs (for example, interpreters, faith services, mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support, and immigration advice)
- Children's support - including play therapy and child advocacy
- Housing-related support - providing housing-related advice and support (for example, securing a permanent home and advice on how to live safely and independently)
- Counselling and therapy for both adults and children

The safe accommodation strategies for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough set out the overall, holistic approach to deliver a rounded offer of support to victims in safe accommodation.

This report will highlight the outcomes of these Safe Accommodation Strategies between April 2022 and March 2023. Two strategies were produced for the two councils respectively and these sit parallel and broadly cover the same range of provisions, services and goals. This can be found on the DASV website [Cambridgeshire County Council DASV Partnership \(cambsdasv.org.uk\)](https://www.cambsdasv.org.uk) alongside the required Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment. An overall VAWG Needs Assessment will be published in Autumn 2023 which will inform strategy in the coming years.

Funding

The statutory requirements (Domestic Abuse Act 2021) led to a grant for the provision of specialist support with regards to safe accommodation of £1,143,474 for Cambridgeshire and £478,695 for Peterborough.

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DHLUC) have confirmed funding for 2023/24. In future years this will be incorporated into the overall grant from the government to the Tier One local authorities.

Across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, there were almost 3,000 individuals who received support via this funding stream; 128 women in the refuges, 1,900 supported by outreach and the housing IDVAs, 120 adults received counselling, 508 homes were better secured by the Bobby Scheme and the new target hardening service, 24/7 Locks (from January 2022) and 215 children received therapeutic interventions.

Local headlines

- There was an almost 9% reduction in calls to Cambridgeshire Constabulary regarding domestic abuse incidents in 2022/23 compared to the previous year.
- Police reported incidents of domestic abuse in Cambridgeshire 2022/23: 8247
- Police reported incidents of domestic abuse in Peterborough 2022/23: 5045
- Referrals to the IDVA Service 2022/23: 3186 (26% increase on 2021/22)
- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference cases - 1077 cases heard in 2022/23 (7.8% increase on 2021/22)
- Mobile Advocacy/Outreach Support for those subjected to Domestic Abuse - 881 referrals 2022/23
- Victim and Witness Hub supported 964 victims of crime where there was domestic abuse.
- Domestic homicides - 3; 2 of which were familial homicides of men
- Suicides where domestic abuse was a factor - 3; 2 women and 1 man

Identification of local needs

During April - June 2021 agencies provided data to inform the needs assessment (https://www.cambsdasv.org.uk/web/strategic_documents/380451). A range of responses are required to meet the varied needs of survivors, dependent on their risk, household structure, occupation, and tenure of property. Services need to ensure there is a focus on meeting the needs of those who have been subjected to abuse, which can include having staff who can communicate with survivors in their native language, ensuring services reach older people and provide an accessible service which meets specific needs.

Identified Key challenges for the Domestic Abuse system were:

- provision of easily accessible accommodation to those at risk of abuse and their children, but where it is safe to stay within the county if provided with additional support
- provision of therapeutic support to victims and their children who have experienced domestic abuse
- ensuring greater support is provided to the housing sector to improve awareness and support to those experiencing domestic abuse
- ensuring a consistency of support across both urban and very rural areas.

Independent survivor feedback

It is vital to hear the feedback from those who have been subjected to domestic abuse about their experiences of support services, not just specialist domestic abuse services, also generic services such as police, housing, education, or social care. The project is there for feedback from both adults and children who have been victims of domestic abuse.

This service is delivered by SADA, a Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Service, who liaise with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough residents and feedback to the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategic Board each quarter to ensure the victims voice is at the forefront of the meeting.

In 2022/23 the project spoke with over 80 individuals about their experiences.



Whole Housing Approach to domestic abuse

The Safe Accommodation Strategy is based on a Whole Housing Approach model. Cambridgeshire County Council/Peterborough City Council and partners were one of the key delivery systems in developing and adopting the Whole Housing Approach (WHA), with funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) from 2018 to 2021, (now DLUHC).

This approach is endorsed by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Nicole Jacobs, as well as being highlighted as good practice within the Domestic Abuse Act Guidance. The approach has enabled victims of domestic abuse to access safe accommodation regardless of the tenure of property and enables specialist domestic abuse staff to offer a range of flexible options with regards to increasing the safety of those suffering domestic abuse and their children.

A whole system approach is required to effectively address the key issues and barriers experienced by survivors, and to ensure they have access to a safe place to call home. The WHA model offers a framework for the domestic abuse and housing sectors to work together to address the immediate and longer-term housing needs of survivors. The model incorporates the experiences of survivors, the expertise of system leaders, and established, evidence-based practice.



How we are addressing local needs in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - what are the outcomes?

The following sections describe the services and interventions that have been commissioned to meet the objectives of this strategy. They describe the outcomes achieved through the Safe Accommodation work and how they have impacted upon service users.

To ensure anonymity, all names have been changed in the case studies/feedback used in this report.

Refuge support

In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the DHLUC Safe Accommodation Funding support costs are provided for four refuges, equating to space for 40 women and up to 72 children at any given time.

During 2022/23, 73 women accessed refuge accommodation.

Refuges are available to those fleeing from out of area, and within area if there is a significant distance and this is deemed to be safe. All refuges are expected to be as accessible as possible to those with additional support needs, in line with "A Refuge for All" principles (Shaping Our Lives, 2016).

Local refuges provide safe and stable refuge accommodation for women and children fleeing high risk domestic abuse potentially at risk of homicide. They offer specialist trauma informed domestic abuse support to survivors, provide access to talking therapies and have trained children's support workers working within the refuge.

They support the women living with them to move on from the refuge when that person is ready to take that step. Women can stay for a few nights or many months and during their stay the refuge workers provide advocacy for the women, liaise with other services working with the women and their families and support them to heal, feel safe and able to live without fear when they move on from the refuge.

Local refuges have access to the Flexible Funding provided by the Safe Accommodation Strategy, (flexible is detailed further in this report) to support those moving on from refuge, who will need resources to support their new home. Flexible funding allows survivors to identify what the need, rather than be told what they can have.

Two case studies from local refuges

Case Study 1

"I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for all of the help and support I have had during my time in refuge, both in Fenland and Mid Cambs. I will remember each one of you that I've had the pleasure of working with. I can't say it's always been easy, but I got there in the end!"

"Sadly I can't add another Keyworker here as she's no longer at refuge. I am so grateful though to her even if I can't tell her to her face. She was the first person to show me kindness and to give me the support I desperately needed."

"Without refuge I would have probably been murdered, or I'd have killed myself because it seemed so hopeless at that time in my life. I'd given up on myself way before I'd gotten to refuge and had no reason to fight, I never had the strength to change my life back then. You guys helped me in ways I'd never have thought possible prior to coming. With help and support I found myself and I became a whole person. I am so grateful that I didn't end up just another sad statistic."

"I've gone from being completely lost, broken, and not understanding who I was, to a confident woman with a bright future."

"I'm going to miss everyone, but I will take with me everything that I've learnt, and I will always remember to keep myself and baby safe above anything else."

"I will always treasure my journey here because I learnt so many life skills that I will always carry with me through life. I am ready to be on my own with the support network I've been slowly building up. Thanks to the guidance and support from you I was able to re-establish some bonds with my family. I feel so

fortunate that I was able to put my past behind me and move forward.

"The work you do is so important, and it is life changing. Going into refuge was the scariest thing, but it was also the best thing that could've happened. I was given a safe space to grieve, to grow, to access support and to get the therapy I desperately needed, it was a long journey of healing, but it was all worth it. You were there every step of the way, there aren't enough words to express how much I appreciate it. Every one of you has given me something that will last me a lifetime. I will forever be grateful. Every one of you has impacted my life in such a positive way."

Case Study 2 - Trauma Informed Working

Anne is a young woman who was referred to Peterborough Women's Aid by a support worker at The Leaving Care Team.

Anne spent most of her childhood in care, in various foster homes. She was then supported to live independently, but was targeted and abused by several men she was in relationships with.

During these relationships, Anne also used cannabis and cocaine and became pregnant 3 times. Social services became involved with all 3 babies and due to Anne's lifestyle and risks her children would potentially be exposed to, all babies were removed and adopted.

3 years ago, Anne was subjected to coercive control, sexual and physical abuse from her partner. The perpetrator was a drug user and supplied her with drugs. He completely controlled her, including locking her in the home and isolating her.

Anne fell pregnant again and confided in her support worker, who helped her to go to a refuge. The perpetrator did not know she was pregnant. Anne's journey at PWA started when she was 3 months pregnant.

When Anne arrived at the refuge, she did not engage with any of the workers. Anne was very withdrawn and spent most of the time in her room. We left Anne to do this and remain in control of her journey as much as possible. We didn't ask her to complete any paperwork, we made sure her room was how she wanted it and provided her with some additional items. Anne chose to have minimal interaction with others for the first few weeks.

On week 3, Anne began to slowly talk to staff. We didn't ask her about the abuse she had suffered and therefore held off completing a DASH risk assessment. We did everything that Anne asked us to, explaining to her all the time what we were doing. We always waited for Anne to come to us and never told her what she should be doing.

When Anne spoke to us, we listened and empathised. We made sure we had time for her, no phones, no appointments, time for the support worker to focus on Anne and their time together only. There were times when Anne got angry or really upset at the smallest things. We let her experience these feelings. The more time we spent with Anne we were able to talk about triggers and how she could manage her body's reactions. We spoke with Anne about trauma and how it effects a person.

Over the coming months, she began to open up and trust the staff team at PWA. She agreed to have counselling and started a parent assessment instigated by her social worker. Anne however was still reluctant to bond with her unborn baby as she was convinced that social care would remove him at birth. We as a staff group learnt that Anne's trauma was being constantly triggered and related back to her past experiences.

In Autumn 2022, Anne was given the news from the Parenting Assessment that she could take the baby home from hospital when he was born. Her baby boy was born on and Anne brought him back to the Refuge, she has an amazing bond with him and is a wonderful Mum.

We continue to support Anne and the baby, by praising and encouraging her, supporting her to attend appointments, to trust and work with professionals and empowering her to make plans for a safe and healthy future for her and the baby.

Dispersed Safe Accommodation

Dispersed Accommodation increases the options and choice for survivors across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The accommodation is primarily for residents in this area who are subjected to domestic abuse and provides access to safe accommodation those who are not able to live in a "traditional" refuge, including people who need a carer; large families; those with disabilities; people with pets; families with teenage boys (many refuges will not allow boys over the age of 12); people from the LGBT community; and those who have no recourse to public funds.

Being supported in this accommodation may mean the survivor can retain any employment which is important for those who are homeowners and have a mortgage to pay. Survivors can still access their support network if safe to do so, and they will have regular support provided by the Housing IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advisers) who will support them to move back to their own homes with safety measures in place, for example Occupation Orders, Restraining Orders, and target hardening where this is safe to do so, or alternative accommodation if required.

The properties are furnished, with services connected and available across the county, with the aim of a minimum of two properties per local authority area (12 in total across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough).

Since the Safe Accommodation Strategy Report in 2021-2022, there are now four units of dispersed accommodation in Cambridgeshire, a mix of 2-3 and 4 bed properties. These are let in conjunction with SADA (Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse) and offer licenced accommodation, with intensive housing management from a domestic abuse organisation and ongoing Housing IDVA support to those occupying the accommodation.

The dispersed accommodation offered safe accommodation to a client and their children whose health issues meant that temporary accommodation and refuge accommodation would not be suitable.

They were supported to move onto a new safe home, target hardening was provided at their new home, the client has begun the Freedom Programme following an IDVA referral and has described the move as "the start of my life as me".

Dispersed accommodation is currently accommodating two families with 4 and 6 children respectively, who had not been able to access refuge and temporary accommodation options were limited due to the number of children. The clients had identified that one of the factors in them not feeling able to flee the domestic abuse they were experiencing was their fear around the type of temporary accommodation their family could have been offered, how their children would cope and the length of time they could have been in overcrowded temporary accommodation.

We are looking to source more units of dispersed safe accommodation through 2022-23 and are confident we will achieve our target of 12 units within this time; we will continue to grow on the successful partnership working we already have established with SADA. We are talking to local registered social landlords to identify properties that could be used for dispersed accommodation as well as working with a Domestic Abuse accommodation provider.

Independent Domestic Violence Advisors – Housing

Across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, a team of four Housing IDVAs offer a direct service to victims/survivors who attend a housing advice service or make disclosures of domestic abuse to their housing provider. They can also offer support to those in temporary local authority accommodation who have been subjected to domestic abuse. Referrals are accepted at any level of risk from housing professionals.

Housing IDVAs provide advocacy for clients with housing and other professionals, and support clients who are navigating the criminal justice system and can support through the process of the individual finding a safe home. Housing IDVAs can refer to target hardening services (24/7 Locks) and flexible funding as well as being aware of local support services that are available to clients and assisting with contact with these services. They meet with clients at the housing offices and support the wider housing teams with queries about domestic abuse, especially where a client does not want to work with another professional.

Housing IDVAs can be a valuable conduit between housing teams and survivors, assisting with housing teams understanding of domestic abuse and the impact of trauma. They can also assist with managing clients' expectations of housing journeys and the barriers and steps that need to be taken when making a homeless application or applying for an allocation of social housing.

They offer case management support and deliver awareness raising training and advice to staff based in these departments. During 2022-23 they have delivered information and training sessions to local Housing Associations and housing teams. They have designed a leaflet for housing professionals that explains the Housing IDVA Role and provides tips on how to respond to disclosures of domestic abuse.

Two of the Housing IDVAs are co-located in housing offices one day a week and has led to shared learning between the housing teams and the housing IDVAs as well as building strong relationships between the IDVA service and Local Authority housing teams to the benefit of our clients. The aim is for all Housing IDVAs to be co-located one day a week in housing advice teams across Cambridgeshire by Autumn 2023.

The Housing IDVAs receive regular referrals from housing teams, including referrals for clients who have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRTPF) and have been able to assist the clients with their Domestic Violence Destitution Concession applications and then once successful in gaining this, re-applying as homeless. These clients are particularly vulnerable due to their immigration status and the control exercised by the abusive partner.

During 2022-23 we have seen an increase in referrals from housing teams and providers and will continue to develop links and relationships with the Housing Associations and local authority Housing teams in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Housing IDVAs worked with 337 survivors across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough between April 2022 March 2023.

Feedback from Professional about Housing IDVA support

"I just wanted to say thank you so much for all the support and work you have undertaken with my client! It really is appreciated, and it is due to your hard work and knowledge that they are able to access funding and legal advice."

Joint working and outcomes from having Housing IDVA co-located in housing teams,

A Housing IDVA who was co-located in a housing office was on the telephone regarding a target hardening request they had made for a client. The client would have benefited from a Video Door Bell (VDB) but did not have access to the internet. A member of the housing team heard the call and suggested to the IDVA that funds could be found to provide the client with internet access. The IDVA was then able to provide the target hardening including a VDB in conjunction with the housing team. The two services coming together and providing a positive outcome for the survivor.

One co-located Housing IDVA was discussing a client's housing options and the client's experience of domestic abuse with members of the housing team in the office. Following discussions with the Housing IDVA the housing team contacted a partner housing service and agreed a special local connection for HomeLink allowing the client increased options to find safe accommodation in the area.

Henry's story

One of the Housing IDVAs worked with an older client who was experiencing domestic abuse from his same sex partner. The Housing IDVA developed a positive and trusting relationship with the client. They worked to reduce risk and safety planned with the client. The Housing IDVA supported the client with housing options and advocated for them when they chose to move to another area. They continued contact and support until a domestic abuse organisation in the new area started to work with the client.

Their voice:

"The local domestic abuse service is in contact with me. I understand that my case has gone to MARAC but I have not heard what they advise/suggest. They are certainly not as diligent at keeping in contact as you! Fortunately I do have additional security, including a police installed panic alarm. I can't thank you enough for all your help and support."

Housing First

A decision was made to change the way in which Housing First and County Every Adult cases are supported and the allocated post came to an end. The Housing IDVAs support clients with multiple disadvantages and work closely with these teams offering intensive support.

The Housing IDVAs continue to develop their knowledge and understanding of the multiple disadvantages the rough sleeping community experience and the complexities and challenges of supporting an individual in this community who is being subjected to domestic abuse.

Target hardening/Sanctuary scheme

Target hardening/Sanctuary schemes enable people who have been subjected to domestic abuse to remain in their own homes and reduce repeat victimisation through the provision of enhanced security measures. This is delivered in conjunction with working with a domestic abuse specialist and a safety plan and legal orders as appropriate.

During 2022-23 the Sanctuary/target hardening scheme went out to tender due to the ending of existing contract. 24/7 Locks have been providing target hardening for the IDVA Service since January 2023. We would like to thank the Bobby Scheme for all the work it has done for clients during 2022/23.

24/7 Locks work with clients referred to their service, they carry out inspections of a property and provide safety advice to households and install appropriate security aids . They respond to referrals swiftly and liaise directly with the individual to ensure that visits are carried out at a time that is best for that person.

During 2022/23, 508 survivors across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough were assisted by target hardening to help them feel safer in their own homes.

Feedback from an IDVA about impact of Video Door Bell for their client:

"I know the doorbells aren't cheap, however, for the client it has been invaluable. When they were away from home they were able to see the perpetrator at their door and would go to their mum's or stay in town instead of going home, it also provided the evidential support needed to charge the perpetrator with a breach of court order. The video doorbell gave them the protection they needed.

"As you know, the client struggles to safeguard themselves due to feelings of guilt and empathy for the perpetrators living situation and they are easily coerced or compliant. However the video doorbell gave them the protection they needed and its great to know that the IDVA Service enabled safeguarding by providing the doorbell."



Flexible funding

The Safe Accommodation Strategy provides flexible funding to support survivors to achieve or maintain safe and secure housing. It is low-barrier funding which is not means tested and is available as part of an individual's domestic abuse support package.

Local refuges in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the IDVA service and mobile outreach services can access Flexible Funding on behalf of survivors.

Unlike most other funding sources, there is no set list of what will be funded, and victims/survivors are able to access whatever will make the most difference to their housing situation and their lives, in order that the victim/survivor and their children can stay safe. This funding will only be offered in conjunction with working with a domestic abuse specialist.

The purpose of the funding is to enable someone to remain safe, have a voice in what they and their family need rather than being told what they can have and remove additional anxieties on the individual around their household income and limited financial resources, particularly when they are moving to alternative accommodation. This can then reduce the likelihood of reconciliation with an abusive partner due to financial pressures on the survivor.

This funding supported over 160 survivors in 2022-2023.

Examples of flexible funding provided:

- removal costs
- emergency accommodation
- dash cameras in vehicles for clients experiencing stalking and harassment
- vehicle repairs following perpetrator damage
- flights to return to safe home in Europe
- fresh food for children and adults reliant on food parcels facing economic hardship or NRPF
- taxi journeys for safe travel to appointments - Court, GP, safe addresses
- installation of CCTV/Security Systems for high-risk clients
- clothing for adults and children needing to replace items lost or unable to retrieve after fleeing domestic abuse.



DAHA accreditation

The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance's (DAHA) mission is to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse through the adoption of an established set of standards and an accreditation process for housing providers. The aim is for all local authority housing teams and all large housing associations to be DAHA to working towards or obtaining DAHA Accreditation in 2023/24.

We are supporting local authorities seeking DAHA accreditation by auditing casework and advising on trauma informed ways of working with housing applicants and tenants who disclose domestic abuse.

Obtaining accreditation not only enhances how housing providers interact with victim/survivors. It also strengthens the local area's coordinated community response to domestic abuse across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Housing Associations and local Housing Teams accredited and working towards accreditation during 2022/23

- Cambridge Housing Society - recredited
- Cross Keys Homes - accredited
- Cambridge City Council - working towards recreditiation
- South Cambridgeshire District Council - accredited
- Working towards accreditation - East Cambridgeshire District Council, Fenland District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, and Peterborough City Council.

"Since its launch in 2014, the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) has driven forward significant positive change in the housing sector's response to domestic abuse. I am proud to have been one of the founding members of DAHA in my previous role as Chief Executive of Standing Together Against Domestic Violence, and I am pleased to endorse these new accreditation standards which I would encourage all local authorities and housing providers to adopt."

–Nicole Jacobs, DA Commissioner England and Wales

Managed reciprocals

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Housing Reciprocal agreement is a voluntary collaboration between local authorities and registered providers which allows tenants with a social tenancy at risk of harm from domestic/sexual violence, to move to another local authority area and keep their social tenancy.

A Managed reciprocal move can be an additional housing option for those subjected to domestic abuse in social tenancies to move to different local authority areas in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough without having to make a homeless approach or arguing for 'special circumstances' via HomeLink or Jigsaw.

They are a positive housing option for those survivors where the immediate risk of harm has been reduced, but because of the domestic abuse experienced in the property the survivor and their children continue to experience trauma and want to move away from the property and the area but may not be seen as an urgent priority for housing; or a survivor whose perpetrator is in prison but wishes to move before they are released.

The Housing reciprocal agreement demonstrates the positive collaborative work between local social landlords and IDVA Service in looking for housing options for those needing safe accommodation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Referrals are made by IDVAs and local domestic abuse support services for clients to be considered for a housing reciprocal move and those referrals are shared with local housing teams and housing providers. This housing option is delivered in conjunction with 24/7 Locks target hardening and ongoing IDVA support.

In 2022/23 there were 16 requests for the scheme, with eight successful moves. Of the remaining eight clients, two were re-housed via other means, and one is no longer working with the IDVA service while the remaining clients have specific requirements such as adapted properties or four plus bedrooms which are in short supply.



Mobile Advocacy Outreach Support.

This is a direct referral service for survivors across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, enabling survivors to access domestic abuse led outreach support. This service is open access for advice, information and support in a way which is needs led, trauma informed and supports the wishes of the person requiring support. Working with survivors at locations of their choosing including a range of community settings where the outreach service can develop links with other community organisations.

Support can be offered which includes safety planning, exploring and pursuing options for survivors to remain in an existing property and relocating if needed for safety reasons. Assisting, and advocating for survivors to secure stable housing, support with benefits and income management. Liaising with other agencies working with the client and their families. The outreach workers have access to all elements within this strategy such as flexible funding, managed reciprocals, and therapeutic support.

Following a competitive tender in accordance with Cambridgeshire County Council procurement legislation a new contract was awarded to DASS (Domestic Abuse Specialist Service) (Impakt) in October 2022. Impakt are now providing outreach support across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

941 individuals were supported by mobile outreach services in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in 2022-2023.

Survivor's voices

"When I was kicked out of my husband's family home, I had nowhere to go, I was feeling very low and weak, humiliated, but from the support I have had from IDVA and now the support of DASS, I feel strong and growing stronger every day. If I had not had this help and support, I would not be where I am today."

"I cannot thank you enough for listening, understanding, and organising the ongoing help and support for me. You have been so wonderful. I hope in the future that I might get to thank you in person - when my situation is very different to now! With heartfelt thanks and best wishes."



Awareness of domestic abuse for private sector landlords

Working with local private landlords and local Private Rented Sector teams in the Local Authorities to increase the awareness of domestic abuse and how this affects their tenants, and advise on what local support services are available to tenants experiencing domestic abuse. Informing private landlords of how they could assist a tenant who discloses domestic abuse or is working with a domestic abuse support service.

Raising awareness of domestic abuse in the private sector and building links with private sector landlords is vital. They have previously not been a 'voice' when domestic abuse strategies and Coordinated Community Response (CCR) to domestic abuse are discussed.

Landlords and letting agents may be the first and/or only community members who a survivor may talk to about their experiences of domestic abuse. Increasingly housing teams are looking to the private rented sector to provide housing solutions for those households experiencing homelessness due to domestic abuse. In 2021-22, the proportion of households with children 32% of private renters, 33% of social renters.

During 2022-23 the Housing IDVA team was developing links with private sector landlords. They have presented to Landlord forums and Private Sector Landlords steering groups and intend to develop further links with the private sector in 2023/24.



Sheltered accommodation/ supported accommodation/hostels

All newly Cambridgeshire County Council commissioned providers must have a domestic abuse policy for staff and residents. Ideally working towards or having DAHA accreditation, or "Make a Stand" accreditation from the Chartered Institute of Housing.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership have developed an older person's DASH Risk Indicator Checklist to better reflect the specific risks to victims age 60 and over, and have delivered training and information about the impact of domestic abuse on older individuals to professionals working with older residents of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Victims with no recourse to public funds

The Housing IDVAs, IDVA Service and Mobile Advocacy Support Workers will work with clients with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) to access the Domestic Violence Destitution Concession from the government where possible.

Where a client is not eligible for this, they would still be eligible for all the options outlined within the Safe Accommodation Strategy, except for local refuge accommodation (if refuge is required, a placement would be sought elsewhere by a specialist provider).

Using flexible funding, we have been able to offer short term stays in dispersed accommodation for clients of the IDVA service with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) who were applying for the Domestic Violence Destitution Concession. This group of clients are particularly vulnerable due to their immigration status, impact of their often very controlling relationships, language and cultural barriers and the lack of options for them to find safe accommodation.

We are currently supporting two women with NRPF and additional vulnerabilities in our dispersed safe accommodation while they proceed with their immigration applications.

Case Study

The IDVA service supported a survivor who had been referred to multiple MARACs. Their perpetrator used the survivor's immigration status to exercise control over them, repeatedly threatening to report them to the Home Office if they left and telling them they would be removed from the UK.

The client fled and returned to the perpetrator while safe IDVA support continued, until an assault left them in fear of their life, and they fled the marital home with nothing. There were no spaces available at refuges able to accept a survivor with NRPF.

The IDVA service, via flexible funding, were able to offer the survivor accommodation in dispersed safe accommodation while they applied for their DDV Concession.

Flexible funding was also provided to replace clothing and provide necessities. Housing IDVA support continued as the survivor came to terms with the domestic abuse they had experienced and provided advocacy for the client in their contact with services such as the DWP and medical services.

The client was empowered to take charge of their own life and believe that they were able to live independently in this country without having to suffer the perpetrator's abuse. The client often spoke of how they could not believe that support would be offered to them and that they never thought that they could find a place of safety away from the perpetrator.

Delivery

This strategy has been overseen by the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategic Board and Violence Against Women and Girls Operations Group, in conjunction with the Tier 2 Local Authorities as part of the Sub-Regional Housing Board.

