

**Cambridgeshire and Peterborough  
Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence  
Partnership  
Safe Accommodation Strategy Report  
2021-2022**



**Cambridgeshire  
& Peterborough**  
Domestic Abuse & Sexual  
Violence Partnership

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July 2022

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## 1. Introduction

This report will present the outcomes of the Safe Accommodation Strategies in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough between April 2021 and March 2022. 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, which will be reviewed in 2024.

## 2. Context

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 set in statute that Tier One authorities must prepare and publish a local strategy based on a robust needs assessment that sets out the ways in which provision for 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 strategy set out the overall, holistic approach to deliver a rounded offer of support to victims in safe accommodation.

### **3. Funding for the strategy**

The statutory requirements (Domestic Abuse Act 2021) led to a grant for the provision of specialist support with regards to safe accommodation of £1,140,318 for Cambridgeshire and £477,374 for Peterborough. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities have confirmed funding in 2022/23 and 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; 102 women in the refuges, 1,900 supported by outreach and the housing IDVAs, 120 adults received counselling, 495 homes were better secured by the Bobby scheme and 250 children received therapeutic interventions.

### **4. 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](https://www.cambsdasv.org.uk/web/strategic_documents/380451)). A range of responses are required to meet the varied needs of clients, 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 women 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

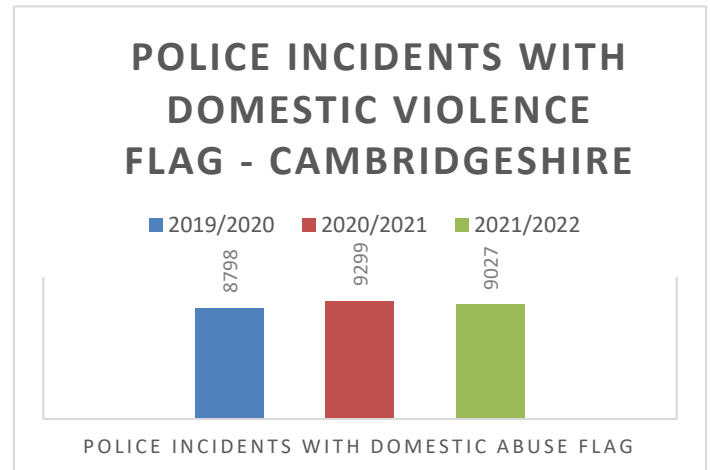
#### 4.1 Local Need in Cambridgeshire

Headline Figures from April 2020 to March 2021:

- Police Incidents with a domestic abuse flag: 9,299 - up 5.7% on 2019/20 (8,798)
- Outreach Support: 1,779 referrals
- Domestic Abuse victims supported by the Victim and Witness Hub: 621

Headline Figures from April 2021 to March 2022:

- Police incidents with a domestic abuse flag: 9027
- Domestic Abuse Victims supported by the Victim and Witness Hub: 950
- Reported Sexual Offences: 1719 (12% increase across the force from 2020/2021)
- Reported Serious Sexual Offences: 1398 (31% increase across the force from 2020/2021)



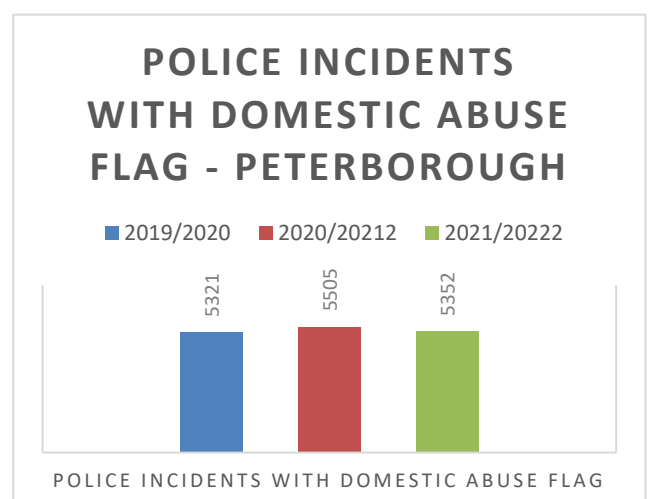
#### 4.2 Local Need in Peterborough

Headline Figures from April 2020 to March 2021:

- Police Incidents with a domestic abuse (Peterborough Only): 5,505- up 3.45% on 2019/20
- Domestic Abuse victims supported by the Victim and Witness Hub: 621

Headline Figures from April 2021 to March 2022:

- Police incidents with domestic abuse flag: 5352
- Reported Sexual Offences: 836 (12% increase across the force from 2020/2021)
- Reported Serious Sexual Offences: 685 (31% increase across the force from 2020/2021)
- Over 800 referrals to Peterborough Women's Aid.



Looking at the local need more specifically, in Peterborough there is a large Lithuanian population. Since 2011, half of all the Domestic Homicide Reviews in Peterborough have been Lithuanian women, and a Lithuanian speaking IDVA was employed within the IDVA service to work specifically with Eastern European victims, in particular Lithuanian women. In 2021/22 she supported 116 individuals.

#### **4.3 Joint Statistics 2021/22**

- Number using the four refuge services (across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough) – 102 adults, 2020/21 90 adults and the majority of victims came from outside Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, mainly from the East and South East of England.
- Number using the local Sanctuary Scheme (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough) to increase the security of their home, in conjunction with domestic abuse support – 495 in 2021/22, 331 in 2021/22, compared with 293 in 2019/20.
- Cases referred to the Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor (IDVA) Service: 2520 in 2021/22, 8% increase from the previous year (2324)

#### **5. 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. It also outlines the outcomes achieved through the Safe Accommodation work and how they have impacted upon service users.

For the purpose of anonymity, all names have been changed in the case studies/feedback used in this report.

## **6. Refuge Support**

In Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, support costs are provided for four refuges, equating to space for 40 women and up to 72 children at any given time. Last year 102 adults used the refuges.

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. Children's support workers are funded within each refuge and residents can also access talking therapies.

In addition to this, refuges have access to "Flexible Funding", to support those moving on from refuge, who will need resources to support their new home. All refuges are expected to be as accessible as possible to those with additional support needs, in line with "Refuge for All" principles.

Prior to 2021, support in refuge accommodation was funded by the core County Council budget, and in Peterborough through Housing Related support budgets. The additional funding has enabled the establishment of a Health IDVA Team who work in hospitals, GP Surgeries, across mental health and substance misuse services. It is well documented that many people who have been subjected to domestic abuse do not seek support from the Criminal Justice System but do seek access universal healthcare. Domestic Homicide Reviews have evidenced the importance of health settings identifying those who have been subjected to domestic abuse, therefore this is a vital collaboration, which should ensure we are able to support people earlier in their journey, reducing harm to the individual and their children, as well as saving costs to the public sector overall.



## Case Study

Maia had been found by her perpetrator and needed to move immediately in order to be safe. She was very isolated, and had no supportive family and friends close by. English was not her first language, which made it difficult for her to understand and communicate with services. She was frightened and unsure how to navigate complex systems to get her needs met.

Our multi-agency links, breadth of knowledge and flexibility as a charitable organisation meant we were able to support Maia with many different aspects of her situation:

- We supported her to engage with social care and shared our understanding of her experience of domestic abuse with her social worker, in order to improve the quality of support she received.
- We used interpreters extensively, and quickly found her some language classes. We did everything possible to remove the barriers for her so she could access these classes, including negotiating with social care to provide funds to cover her travel costs, and using charitable donations to pay for childcare.
- We helped her to access debt management support, for debts incurred due to financial abuse.
- We supported her through court by helping her to identify a solicitor who could support her and providing a space for them to meet along with a professional interpreter. We attended hearings with her, which helped her to overcome her fear and to secure a good outcome.
- We supported her with accessing healthcare, by providing childcare so that she could attend appointments, and attending appointments alongside her.
- We organised getting her children into school and helped her to understand and communicate with the school successfully. We offered financial support for getting school uniforms and school equipment and paying for activities and clubs for her children. We were also able to offer counselling for the children.
- We helped her to understand her housing options and navigate the housing system. We helped her to furnish her house and get items for her children by applying for external grants, giving her donated items and using our own charitable funds.

When she left the refuge, she was rehoused in suitable permanent housing, her children were in school and thriving, she was receiving the medical attention she needed for health issues, and she was continuing English lessons. Since she left we have continued to support her with ad hoc advice and reassurance, and by passing on Foodbank items. She knows that she can always call us if she needs help. We're still available to her as a trusted sounding board, and she sometimes gets in touch for a chat about small issues that come up.

Overall, we were able to look at her situation holistically, and work quickly and flexibly to bring the right resources into her life at the right time.

## **7. Dispersed safe accommodation**

This will increase the options and choice for survivors across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The accommodation is primarily for residents in this area who are being abused. It will provide access to safe accommodation for: victims/survivors and their children who are not able to live in a communal facility; people who need a carer; large families; those with disabilities; people with pets; male victims; families with teenage boys (many refuges will not allow boys over the age of 12); people from the LGBT community; and BAME victims whose needs are not met with traditional refuges.

Being supported in this accommodation may mean the survivor might not have to give up their job; this 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 who will support them to move back to their own homes with all 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.

Homes will be sought from housing associations. The properties will be furnished and available across the county, with the aim of a minimum of two properties per local authority area (12 in total across Cambs and Peterborough). The cost of the rent is either collected by Housing Benefit payments if the client is in receipt of Universal Credit or by direct payments if they are working.

The dispersed accommodation element was put out to competitive tender in May 2022, however, there were no suitable providers, therefore individual Registered Social Housing Providers will be approached to have dedicated units of accommodation for this purpose.

## **8. Housing IDVAs**

Across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, a team of four Housing IDVAs are able to offer a direct service to victims/survivors who attend a housing advice service. They are partially co-located in the housing advice teams and support victims/survivors, offering advice on safety planning and risk management. They also offer case management support and deliver awareness raising training and advice to staff based in these departments. They also offer support to those in temporary local authority accommodation who have suffered 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. They are seeing clients at the housing office and supporting the wider IDVA service when IDVAs are wanting information in regards housing in their areas. The Housing IDVAs receive regular referrals from housing teams, including referrals for clients who have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRTPF) (deemed ineligible for housing) 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. It is expected that all the Housing IDVAs will be co-located at least one day a week in a housing office by Autumn 2022.

Housing IDVAs worked with 103 Peterborough residents, and 178 Cambridgeshire residents between April 2021 and March 2022.

#### Bella's Story:

The Housing IDVA worked very closely with Bella, who was looking to flee her husband after 30+ years. She was very fearful and the family dynamics with their older children was very difficult. Bella would not leave the home without her dogs. They were her only comfort/support. Housing advice initially said they could not provide temporary accommodation that would accommodate dogs (this is usual), but the Housing IDVA worked with the housing team, explaining why, due to the clients fears, age and the huge step the Bella was making, accommodation should be found that would accommodate the dogs. The risk to the Bella was significant and not accommodating her with her dogs would leave her at risk. The Housing IDVA's advocacy led to the housing team working with them to find accommodation where Bella could take dogs. The Housing IDVA then assisted with Bella moving from her home, as well safety planning with other agencies to her husband out of the house for a medical appointment so that this client could pack some things and leave property while he was away.

#### Clare's Story:

One of the Housing IDVAs worked with Clare, who had fled another area where she had been experiencing Domestic Abuse. Clare had experienced barriers and lack of confidentiality with statutory services; Family Courts, Children's Social Care & education and is required by law to take her children to school in another area, where the abusive partner lives. The Housing IDVA has advocated for her with Social Care, making a complaint on Clare's behalf when the impact of the domestic abuse on Clare and her children was minimised. The IDVA supported with their move from temporary to permanent accommodation and endeavoured to change the school arrangement. In a phone call with Clare, she said tot he Housing IDVA: "I never had an IDVA do as much for me. I can do anything with you by my side".

## 9. Housing First

The Domestic Abuse Housing First role focuses on those who have suffered domestic abuse, and who find it difficult to engage with standard support services due to multiple disadvantages and are homeless. This post supports those suffering domestic abuse where there is chronic exclusion, multiple difficulties and find it hard to engage with services. The post holder is a trained IDVA and links closely with the Housing IDVA Team.

This post has enabled intensive support of 5 women, their difficulties included:

- Poor mental health
- Alcohol Misuse
- Drug Misuse
- History of Rough Sleeping
- Learning difficulty

### Sally's Story:

Sally experienced trauma from a young age which made her vulnerable to abuse from family and close relationships. She has experienced repeat homelessness and the usual homeless housing options had not worked for her. She has multiple complex needs including poor mental health and drug and alcohol addictions.

Sally separated from a controlling long term partner and became homeless. A year later she was being violently abused by her partner who was a serial perpetrator. Through support she was able to leave him, find a new tenancy and safety plans were put in place, alongside regular professionals' meetings involving multiple agencies.

Sally was subjected to abuse from subsequent abusive and controlling men. She was assisted to apply for information about their history of abuse through Clare's Law Applications and was supported to leave relationships.

With support and practical assistance Sally has been able to look forward and has begun to recognise abusive behaviours earlier. Sally has ongoing support to help to build understanding of healthy relationships and healthy boundaries.

### Poppy's Story:

Poppy was abused by her partner who lived in the same block of flats. Services have found it difficult to maintain contact and engage with Poppy due to her alcohol use and memory impairment. She has experienced trauma, poor health, recreational drug use and long-term alcohol addiction which impact her behaviour and make her vulnerable to financial exploitation, harassment and aggression from other people in the village.

The perpetrator, although no longer in an intimate relationship with Poppy, regularly sees her and knew when money was coming in. He was also able to pick locks to the post box and brings other abusive people to Poppy's door.

Assistance and support have been given around accessing correct benefits, resetting all security to the bank account, replacement key safe and ongoing safety planning with the client. Help has been given to Poppy to attend her probation appointments and access medical support.

Whilst Sally was previously hard to engage, she has found the flexible approach of Housing First to be beneficial and she is able to remember to attend appointments, working towards moving away from the perpetrator.

## 10. Sanctuary/Security

The Bobby Scheme works with domestic abuse specialists to enable households at risk of further 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.

### Ella's Story:

Ella's abuser returned from being out of the country. Whilst he was away, the Bobby Scheme visited and secured the property. He could not get in and was behaving aggressively so client called the police and he was remanded in prison. Not being able to get into the house has saved the client from serious harm and gave client a safe place to make that 999 call.

### Feedback from Gail, Helen and Ivy:

- "Thankyou, I feel safer. Excellent service."
- "Makes me feel very much at ease knowing my family is safe, thank you."
- "Went through thoroughly and gave advice. Told me all info I needed to know."

### Jess's Story:

Jess, a woman in her 30s with a young child was referred by an IDVA to get a RING doorbell. On attending the property they identified there was no Wi-Fi, and a dummy camera was fitted at back of house where the perpetrator had been seen trying to gain entry. Another visit was booked to fit the RING doorbell, once Wi-Fi was connected. In the meantime the perpetrator was seen approaching the property but ran off when he saw the dummy camera.

## 11. Flexible Funding

Flexible funding supports victim/survivors to achieve or maintain safe and secure housing. It is low-barrier and does not require victim/survivors to provide evidence of abuse and is not means tested but is available as part of an individual's domestic abuse support package. 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 will only be offered in conjunction with working with a domestic abuse specialist.

### Alice's Story:

Flexible funding was requested for Alice as she was moving out of refuge into a housing association property having made a homeless application with a Suffolk council.

The client was a single person and in receipt of benefits with no savings. Her move coincided with Covid restrictions and where clients could normally obtain second-hand furniture, the client was in a position where she had to buy new items. We were able to secure white goods through Citizens Advice. However, the client had no bed, bedding, sofa or other essentials.

Flexible funding enabled Alice to buy these items and made her move a positive one. Alice was extremely anxious about moving due to her financial situation and flexible funding really helped her.

### Daphne's Story:

Daphne has school aged children and a new baby.

Daphne had moved house due to the domestic abuse. She was still feeling unsafe, lacking in resources, had poor mental health, and was struggling to engage with professionals due to previous bad experiences. Referred to for Mobile Advocacy Support by another voluntary agency in April 2021. Cambridge Women's Aid worked with her on a regular basis to the end of 2021, stabilising her by helping her feel supported, comfortable, and safe. Amongst other support, flexible funding was obtained to provide emergency household items, which was particularly important when going out was very difficult for her.

Flexible funding, alongside a range of support and interventions meant that at the end of the year she said she felt restored. She was grateful for all we had helped her to do. She was engaging with community activities and no longer felt afraid at home or outside. We supported her to buy Christmas presents and special food for her family. She wrote to CWA to say thank you and reflected that the year had been the best and most important year of her life.

## 12. DAHA Accreditation

The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance's (DAHA) mission is to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse through the introduction and adoption of an established set of standards and an accreditation process. The aim is for all local authority housing teams and all large housing associations to be DAHA Accredited by March 2023.

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. Currently, across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Cambridge City

Council, Cambridge Housing Society and Cross Keys Homes have gained accreditation. All other district councils in the area are working towards this, as well as the major housing associations.

### **13. Managed Reciprocals**

This is a mechanism whereby those suffering domestic abuse in a social tenancy can relocate to a different area whilst maintaining their security of tenure. This is delivered in conjunction with other resources such as the Bobby Scheme and specialist domestic abuse support. In 2021/22 there were 14 requests for the scheme, with two successful moves. Of the remaining 12, some were re-housed via other means, some clients left the service and no longer required the service, and some are still waiting for alternative accommodation to become available.

#### **Maisie's Story:**

Maisie, a white British woman in her 30s with 3 children of primary school age.

Her abusive ex-partner was on police bail at time of the application while domestic abuse and sexual violence offences were under investigation. Maisie had fled domestic abuse from another county and was rehoused in Cambridge City following a period living in refuge. Her ex-partner stalked her and found her current location and was being emotionally abusive and controlling. He turned up and refused to leave the property, assaulted her, and made threats of arson.

The IDVA provided ongoing emotional, practical and safety planning support, as well as target hardening with the Bobby Scheme and Fire Service visits to improve security pending the reciprocal move.

Maisie was initially offered a property in small Fenland village which she viewed and considered, although property met accommodation needs, she declined as she felt she and her children would be socially isolated as very limited local community amenities/resources and she has health related mobility difficulties and does not have access to vehicle. She was then offered the opportunity to view and consider the property in a South Cambs village, smaller than existing house but good public transport links and nursery and school to meet children's needs.

Maisie moved to new home and gave feedback that she's doing OK, happy with her new home Her house is a smaller but she feels safer as this address is not known to ex-partner. The village has good provision of shops, schools and local amenities and public transport links.

Home is now closer to a pre-school which feeds into primary school for her youngest child and is more convenient and easier for client to access than where they lived before (she had been paying for taxis due to mobility issues and distance/safety) and for her eldest child to attend the village college. Her 9-year-old, who has additional needs and special education provision, was able to continue attending the same school as before as he has EHCP, and education provided transport.

Kelly's Story:

Kelly is 18 and mum to a two-year-old.

Kelly was keen to move due to her abusive ex-partners continued attempts to contact from prison and repeated breaches of conditions when released from prison on licence. She was initially offered a property in a Fenland town in September 2021 but unfortunately this was a third floor flat and unsuitable but she was very quickly offered a property elsewhere in October 2021. This property was in a very poor condition and not suitable for client. However, a third property was offered in December 2021, and this was accepted. There was a slight delay in moving due to her family contracting Covid-19 but she then moved into the property in March 2022.

The communication was very good throughout the process, with the IDVA and Kelly kept up to date. Kelly commented that it was helpful to be able to select areas that she was happy to move to and she was very pleased with how quick the process was.

#### **14. Therapeutic Support for adults experiencing domestic abuse**

To provide specialist trauma informed counselling and therapeutic support for adults who are victims of domestic abuse. In Peterborough, 65 adults received counselling whilst 55 did in Cambridgeshire.

Lucy's Story:

"I'm not really sure if I can find the words to say how grateful I am for being given the recent counselling. It has changed my life immeasurably and got me through some really difficult things and thoughts. I have no idea how I would have got through it without the support I have received.

From challenging me on negative thoughts, helping me find hope and understanding, to encouraging me to take time out from work when I really needed it, I can't imagine how anyone could have done a better job.

Thank you. Through my counsellor, Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre have taught me how to trust when I didn't know how. Have shown me self-belief when all I could see was self-hatred. Have given me hope in a sea of despair. Counselling has changed my world."



## 15. Therapeutic support for children experiencing domestic abuse

It is important to provide specialist trauma informed counselling and therapeutic support for children who are victims of domestic abuse. Through Embrace, a charity dedicated to supporting children and young people who are victims of crime, 99 children and young people in Cambridgeshire and a further 43 in Peterborough have been supported through counselling.

### Rory's Story:

This referral was a self-referral received from children's mother just before Christmas. Her children had been affected by domestic violence and she had two non-molestation orders against the children's father. There were six children in this family. 3 were very young and did not need emotional support at that time. The other three did need emotional help.

Rory was 9. His assessment indicated he would benefit from counselling, this would include talking, drawing and play therapy. Rory was supported within the school setting. He was struggling to understand his emotions and had angry outbursts in and out of school. Rory engaged well within the first couple of sessions of his support he found it difficult initially to open-up initially. Once he felt comfortable within sessions, he started to learn and understand why he feels angry and how this impacts his school and home life.

Embrace worked through psychoeducation which included learning why it is important to build resilience through school and home. This young person reported feeling better able to cope as each week went on. By week 11 he was able to control his feelings of anger much more proactively.

Rory reported he had enjoyed engaging with the games and interactive worksheets. They had helped him understand why he becomes angry at home as well as within school. It really helped him to have someone independent from home and school.

Embrace recognised the struggles of this whole family and were able to by providing tickets to Legoland Windsor for the family. This gave them the chance to bond, away from school and home without the daily pressures they had all been under. All six children laughed and smiled, something they had not done for a long time.

Embrace also included the children in the Dear Santa Christmas campaign. The children all chose and received their choice of much wanted Christmas gifts, thus alleviating a financial burden for Mum.

The family continue to do well, they are all much more settled and the children are all engaging well with their schoolwork. Dad is not in contact with the family and the family has renewed confidence in their everyday living now.

## 16. Mobile advocacy outreach support

This is a direct service to victims/survivors, at location of their choosing including a range of community settings where the service can expand their access. Support is offered to victims/survivors to secure stable housing, which includes exploring and pursuing options for remaining in an existing property and relocating if needed for safety reasons. The specialist workers would have access to all elements within this strategy such as flexible funding, managed reciprocals and therapeutic support.

Supporting those who have been subjected to domestic abuse and are still living in their own homes, will continue to be funded with the Safe Accommodation Funding - this is currently out for competitive tender in accordance with procurement legislation. This will ensure parity of provision across the county, with a single service to be provided to all those who require it. This service will be open access for advice, information and support in a way which is needs led and supports the wishes of the person requiring support. This new service will begin on 1st October 2022.

### Olivia's Story:

Olivia and her children fled from London, she was working and privately renting. Olivia was given emotional support with her family court case regarding child contact. She had made an application for her parents to come to England and help her with the children, this had been denied.

Olivia was taken ill suddenly and was in hospital having tests, she paid for a nanny to come and look after the children. There were some safeguarding concerns from the school as nanny had arrived drunk to pick the children up. At this stage the client had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. The hospital let her out for a few hours, so we picked her up and took her to the house where the nanny was asked to leave. The nanny had stolen some property and had also found she had rung the abusive ex-partner and told them where they lived, and that client was ill. A complaint was made to the agency.

She spoke about a Living will for the children, and we supported her to do this via a charity. We arranged for a friend to come and pick the children up while client had to go back into hospital for chemotherapy. We helped her update her Universal Credit, applied for PIP under special measures and made sure that client was receiving all the money she was entitled too. We liaised with Marie Curie and did a referral on behalf of the client for some specialist support.

She was suffering so we spoke with the Home Office and followed this up with a letter, this was successful, and the grandparents came over and have been helping client with childcare. We supported her with the first family court hearing regarding child contact as well as a McKenzie friend that client paid for.

Currently, the client is receiving end of life care and her mother has recently passed away.

### Rachel's Story:

"I am a victim of a domestic abusive relationship, I was completely broken, lost all hope worrying where me and my children would be from one day to the next due to becoming homeless.

I rang up refuge, I was put in contact with someone there who was absolutely lovely, she was helpful in so many ways, and still continues to be. She took my calls and reassured me, reminding me that yes, I have children but it's okay to go through the emotions, it's okay to go at my own pace, also at the same time reminding me that there was no pressure.

She helped me understand I didn't have to allow my ex to still control me and manipulate me. I am able to smile again I still have bad days, when these days arrive I know I can talk with my friend at Refuge which really helps me remember how I've come from the shell of my former self I once was.

I was sleeping at my father's in a one bedroom bungalow with two children, with the help and support through the refuge this literally changed overnight I was so overwhelmed and grateful. I will forever be grateful for all support she has given and continues to give, it's still a long road ahead maybe with few more bumps along the way honestly as long as I have Refuge's number and support I know I will make it I've got this far already.

"Thank you to all support workers in house and behind the scenes you make such a difference."

### Nicky's Story:

Nicky came to England on a study visa, her husband and children also came. The abuse had been happening in the country of origin where it was deemed acceptable. The abusive partner rented a property for them to live in while client studied, and she worked when she could. He would put barriers up by not looking after the children so she couldn't work (she needed to pay for visas for herself and the children). He came and went and did not stay in the home.

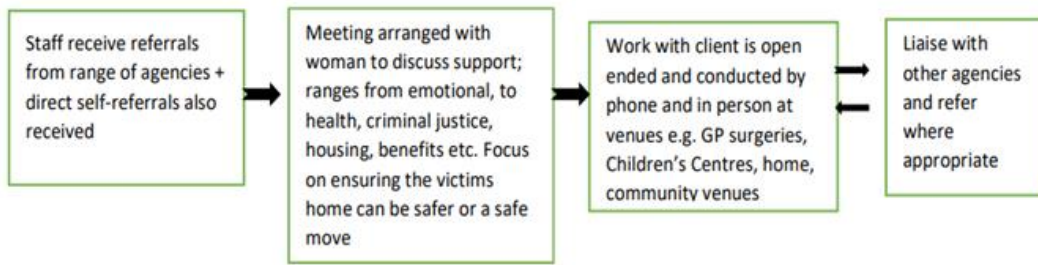
Nicky's study visa was running out, she wanted to flee to refuge, however due to her current immigration status she did not have access to public funds. The service signposted her to an immigration solicitor who would assist the application for her two-year post study visa.

She was offered a job and somewhere to stay in another area which client accepted, however, she was unable to work due to her immigration status, so had no money or anywhere to stay. We referred her to social services, and they funded accommodation for her and the children.

We liaised with the solicitor and gave a supporting letter for the client who then was able to work as the issues were resolved. She was then able to apply and pay for the two-year post study visa which has now been granted.

Nicky and the children are doing much better, her children are settled into their new school and she is able to work and provide for them.

## Process



### 17. Awareness of domestic abuse among social 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 awareness of how private landlords can assist where there is domestic abuse. This strand of work was not progressed and is a priority in 2022/23.

### 18. Sheltered Accommodation/Supported Accommodation/Hostels

All newly 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.

### 19. Victims with no recourse to public funds

The Housing IDVAs and Mobile Advocacy Support Workers will work with clients with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) status 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 strategy, with the exception of local refuge accommodation (if refuge is required, a placement would be sought elsewhere).

“Frankly even if you’re a British citizen if you don’t have a passport, you can’t get access to benefits because you can’t prove your immigration status [...] it happens for a lot for women because their partner takes their papers [...] the hostile environment effects anyone who can’t produce a British passport. The DWP [Department for Work and Pensions] will usually accept expired British passports, but expired passports from other countries, even if the person has an indefinite leave to remain stamp in them, causes problems.”

Although one family were funded to stay in a refuge due to exceptional circumstances.

This was indeed the case for one survivor in our Experiences of financial hardship whilst seeking a refuge report (Women’s Aid, 2022). Although she was a British citizen, she

struggled to access refuge for a long time because she had left her paperwork behind when she had fled her abuser.

This highlights the importance of the work we do with victims with no recourse to public funding – the Housing IVDA's and Mobile Advocacy Support Workers work with victims to secure funding through other streams set out in the Safe Accommodation Strategy.

### **Delivery**

This strategy has been overseen by the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and VAWG Operations Group, in conjunction with the Tier 2 Local Authorities as part of the "Sub-Regional Housing Meeting".