

Domestic violence and housing associations

Introduction

This Sector Study looks at the role housing associations (HAs) play in providing housing and support to people experiencing domestic violence.

It provides data on the national incidence of domestic violence and highlights some of the effects it has on households experiencing it. Using Housing Corporation Continuous Recording of Lettings (CORE) data for the period from 1997/98 to 2001/02, the report profiles the characteristics of those housed by HAs as a result of domestic violence, in both general needs and supported housing. Literature and recent research on domestic violence are also explored to discuss how housing and support fit into the wider picture of assistance to people experiencing domestic violence.

Domestic violence affects HAs as landlords, as local authority partners and as employers. This report concentrates on the landlord role and aims to provide a useful reference tool for HAs on recent trends in domestic violence and good practice in assisting those in housing need as a result of it. However it does not provide detail on legal remedies for domestic violence.

The bibliography identifies useful publications for HAs to use when devising strategies to respond to domestic violence.

Key findings

- **Over 54,000 households were housed by HAs as a result of domestic violence between 1997 and 2002¹, an average of almost 11,000 households per year. Ninety-five per cent of these households were headed by a female and 61 per cent included children.**
- **Much domestic violence goes unreported, so it is likely that some**

of the 46,000 households housed by HAs following a relationship breakdown may have experienced domestic violence.

- **HAs play an important role in assisting local authorities and other agencies in the housing of households experiencing domestic violence. Over half of all those housed in general needs housing due to domestic violence are local authority nominees, while one in three referrals to supported housing due to domestic violence are from a statutory or voluntary agency other than the local authority.**
- **HAs also respond to their own tenants or the tenants of other HAs who experience domestic violence. Thirteen per cent of those housed in general needs housing due to domestic violence between 1997/98 and 2001/02 were internal transfers or from other HAs.**
- **Support at the point of moving in can improve the quality of life for households experiencing domestic violence and help them sustain a new tenancy. All households accommodated in supported housing receive support, with the majority (92%) receiving low level support, typically in the form of counselling or intensive housing management.**

The national picture

HAs need to be aware of the scope and nature of domestic violence, in order to tailor their services accordingly. A starting point for this is the Housing Act 1996, which defines domestic violence as:

'Violence or threats of violence from a person who is associated with the person under threat.'

Physical assault, sexual abuse, rape, threats and intimidation can be forms of domestic

¹ The figure is for lettings between 1997 and 2002 and there may be double counting of households housed more than once in either general needs and/or supported housing over that period.

violence, as can other kinds of intimidation such as degradation, mental and verbal abuse, humiliation, deprivation, systematic criticism or belittling (Home Office, 2000).

Recent years have seen an increase in the percentage of people reporting domestic violence. The British Crime Survey 2002/03 shows that the reporting of single incidence domestic violence has increased to 56% from 44% in 1999. While this could indicate that domestic violence has become more widespread, it may also point to the success of campaigns to raise awareness, making people more readily able to recognise domestic violence as unacceptable and therefore, to report it.

Conversely, the percentage of reported domestic violence incidences of a multiple (three or more) nature has decreased from 30% to 23% over the same period. This does not necessarily indicate a decline in domestic violence or multiple incidence of violent events. It could be indicative of a continued problem regarding under reporting of multiple incidence of domestic violence. However, it could also be that raised awareness of domestic violence means that potentially more cases are being dealt with at an earlier stage, before repeat events occur.

Domestic violence can happen in any household, on any income level and in any tenure. Ninety-five per cent of reported domestic violence is committed against a partner, ex-partner or immediate family member (Metropolitan Police Service, 2001). Over half of all rapes on women occur between those who are or have been in a relationship with the perpetrator (Mirrlees-Black, 1999). However, Moroney (1997) suggested it is important not to stereotype abusers.

Almost a quarter (23%) of women experience domestic violence (Mirrlees-Black, 1999). However, domestic violence is also experienced by almost one in every seven men (Social Trends 30, ONS, 2000) and HAs have also assisted male headed households experiencing domestic violence. Between 1997 and 2002 over 1,300 male headed households were housed by HAs due to domestic violence.

Domestic violence can also occur in same sex households. In these cases, men experiencing domestic violence from a male partner are more likely to have experienced at least one other previous incidence of violent behaviour than those where the perpetrator is a woman (Scottish Executive Central Research Unit 2002a). However, this is not to say that domestic violence between female partners does not occur.

Domestic violence tends to consist of systematic and repeated abuse, with only around 10 per cent of cases involving a single incident (Metropolitan Police Service, 2001). Sustained violence generally has a negative impact on an individual's mental, if not physical, well-being. Long-term effects can include low self-esteem, guilt, shame, depression and stress. It is important for HAs to provide access to support services for households who have suffered domestic violence. Emotional upheaval and fear can mean that even where people seek assistance they do not follow advice to leave the home in the first instance (SFHA, 1999)². In addition, a lack of choice of alternative or safe housing can influence whether a victim of domestic violence returns to the perpetrator.

Half of all reported incidents of domestic violence involve families with children (Mirrlees-Black, 1999). Children in households where a family member is experiencing domestic violence are at risk of abuse themselves. Evidence shows that half of male perpetrators of domestic violence had also been physically abusive to children in the family (Metropolitan Police Service, 2001). Children escaping domestic violence need support and HAs need to consider their role in providing a supportive environment to both tenants and their children. Humphrey (2000) suggests that, in addition to protecting children from domestic violence, it is important to work with them on prevention.

HAs could consider joining local multi-agency fora that aim to:

- develop perpetrator programmes;
- enhance public education through campaigns; and
- develop education packs for schools.

² SFHA (1999) 'Good Practice in Dealing with Domestic Abuse', Scottish Federation of Housing Associations

Domestic violence is an under-reported crime. In 1999/2000 under a third of incidents are thought to have been reported to the police. Nevertheless, it still accounts for almost a quarter (23%) of reported violent crime (Home Office, 2002). Under-reporting is influenced by stigma and shame — less than a third of those raped or sexually victimised by a partner or ex-partner told someone at the time of the abuse (Myhill and Allen, 2002).

There are issues around the perception of domestic violence as a crime and education as to what constitutes domestic violence. For example, women abused by their partner commonly do not define the abuse as an actual 'crime' (Home Office, 2002). Similarly, research with young people showed that one in two boys and one in three girls thought it 'OK to hit a woman or to force her to have sex in certain circumstances' (Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2002).

Housing association activity

Between 1997 and 2002, HAs provided accommodation to over 54,000 households experiencing domestic violence. Most households (39,000) were housed in supported housing where a range of support services are available. Supported housing includes women's refuges and hostel accommodation and is usually intended to be temporary accommodation. Since many people fleeing domestic violence are homeless, and two thirds of women's refuges in England are owned by housing associations (ODPM, 2002a), most were housed in supported rather than general needs housing.

It is possible that these figures include some double counting, as some households experiencing domestic violence may have been housed by HAs more than once over the period. For example, a victim may return to an abusive partner on one or more occasion, so may have stayed in a women's refuge several times. Similarly double counting can occur where households are housed in supported accommodation before being offered permanent HA accommodation.

The proportion of households housed into HA accommodation due to domestic

violence has remained constant at around 2% of all general needs lettings and 12% of all supported housing lettings. However the actual number of households this represents has decreased over the past five years. In 1997, 3,622 households experiencing domestic violence were housed in HA general needs accommodation; in 2002 the number was 2,763.

However, this does not mean that incidence of domestic violence is decreasing. The emphasis on preventative work by the police, local authorities and other partners, including HAs, can impact on the number of people housed in the sector as a result of domestic violence. Preventative work focuses on minimising disruption for the victim and their family, which can include looking at ways the household can remain in their home. For this reason figures showing a decrease in the numbers housed due to domestic violence should be read with caution and viewed within the wider context of local strategies that may reduce the need for new HA lettings. Research into factors influencing the HA role in the housing of people fleeing domestic violence and the impact of local intervention strategies on the need for HA housing in these circumstances would be useful. In addition, it would be useful to explore the relationships between local authority nomination procedures and local protocols.

Given the under-reporting of domestic violence, it is possible that some general needs and supported housing lettings could be to households where domestic violence has played a part in their need for housing, but has not been recorded as the main reason for being housed. Between 1997 and 2002, HAs housed over 46,000 households in general needs housing due to relationship breakdown. Research suggests that in cases of homelessness due to relationship breakdown, over two-thirds involve violence (ONS, 2002). In addition, where relationships are breaking down, and where there are unresolved housing problems, this can increase the risk of domestic violence (LRC, 1999).

Characteristics of households housed due to domestic violence

Between 1997 and 2002, 95% of those

housed by HAs due to domestic violence were female headed households and commonly were lone parent families (accounting for 61 per cent of all households housed for this reason). Around three quarters of all lettings made following domestic violence were to households under the age of 35, as Table 1 illustrates.

Over the period, more than a quarter of households housed in general needs housing due to domestic violence were under 25 years old. In supported housing the proportion rose to a third, reflecting the need for support by the household along with availability of accommodation. The trends identified in Table 1 support other evidence, such as Pritchard (2000), who found that people in their 20s and 30s are more likely than the over 60s to experience domestic violence.

The chance of being a one person household housed due to domestic violence increased with age — households over 50 years old were the most likely to be a lone person. Seventy-four per cent of the households over 50 were one person, compared to 27% of 36 to 49 year olds. Differences also occurred at the younger age range, where perhaps unsurprisingly, the chances of being a single parent were

less for younger households. Forty-six per cent of households under 18 years old were single parent families, compared to 74% of 18 to 24 year olds and 83% of 25 to 35 year olds.

Almost three quarters (70%) of those housed by HAs in general needs housing as a result of domestic violence were lone parent households (Table 2). This mirrors evidence from ODPM (2002a) which found that 72% of women in refuges were lone parent families or pregnant. Between 1997/98 and 2001/02, 65,857 children were housed in HA general needs and supported housing because of domestic violence.

As with trends among HA tenants in general, few households experiencing domestic violence were working (16%) at the point of being allocated an HA home and this was even less likely for those in supported housing (6%).

Black and minority ethnic households

Domestic violence can happen to anyone and evidence shows that around a fifth of all lettings to households fleeing domestic violence in 2001/02 were to BME households, as Table 3 shows. This is higher

Table 1
Households housed because of domestic violence by age (1997/98 – 2001/02)

Age of head of household	General needs housing (%)	Supported housing (%)
Under 18	3	9
18 to 24	23	26
25 to 35	48	43
36 to 49	21	19
50 to 59	4	3
60 and over	2	1
Base number	15,155	39,049

Source: General Needs and Supported CORE 1997/98 to 2001/02

Note: Percentages may total more than 100% due to rounding

Table 2
Household type of those housed in HA accommodation due to domestic violence (1997/98 – 2001/02)

Household type	General needs housing (%)	Supported housing (%)
Single older person	2	1
Single adult	21	39
Two adults	1	–
One adult & children	70	60
Two plus adults and children	2	–
Other	4	–
Base Number	15,155	39,049

Source: General Needs and Supported CORE 1997/98 to 2001/02

Table 3
Ethnic origin of households housed due to domestic violence (1997/98 – 2001/02)

Ethnic origin of households	General needs housing (%)	Supported housing (%)
Asian	6	9
Caribbean	6	3
African	2	2
South East Asian	1	2
White	80	78
Irish	1	2
Other	2	2
Mixed	2	1
Base number	14,690	35,169

Source: General Needs and Supported CORE 1997/98 to 2001/02

than the proportion of all HA general needs lettings to BME households, which is currently around 15%.

Therefore it appears there is a higher incidence of housing of BME households due to domestic violence than within the general population. It would be useful to carry out research into the factors influencing the housing of BME households experiencing domestic violence. Are BME households at greater risk of domestic violence than white households, and if so, why? Alternatively, are HAs, local authorities and support agencies particularly responsive to the needs of BME households experiencing domestic violence? Or are BME households at greater risk of losing their home due to domestic violence, and less likely to benefit from the positive preventative strategies adopted by local authorities and others, which can help them to remain in their family home?

While figures are small and should be read with some caution, they do indicate that Asian households housed due to domestic violence tend, on average, to be younger than White households. For example, 31% of Asian households were under 24 years old when allocated general needs housing, compared to 24% of White households. White and Irish households housed due to domestic violence were more likely than other ethnic groups to be over 50 years old.

National guidance published by the Metropolitan Police Service³, recognises there may be groups within the community that are less likely to report domestic violence, leading to under-reporting by

some groups. It sets out how to help people to report domestic violence, including advice on promoting reporting among BME communities. Under-reporting can be attributed in part to the isolation of some communities, a lack of awareness of how to report incidents or lack of trust in the authorities. It can also be influenced by the cultural pressures against admitting domestic violence within some communities.

ODPM (2002a) recognise there are gaps in service provision for certain BME groups who are experiencing domestic violence. These include appropriate accommodation that caters for cultural and religious needs, as well as sensitive advocacy and advice services, including translation and interpretation services.

As part of a commitment to race equality, HAs need to be aware of the cultural diversity in their tenants and potential tenants and review how current services meet the needs of all members of the community.

Previous tenure and referral routes

Domestic violence can occur in any household, regardless of tenure, as Table 4 illustrates. Housing associations have a role in housing households from all tenures including those from within the HA and local authority sectors. Supported housing appears to be a particularly important route for LA tenants fleeing domestic violence, with 34% of all those housed in supported housing due to domestic violence moving from LA housing. Unsurprisingly, general

³ Metropolitan Police Service (2001), 'Enough is enough — a domestic violence strategy', London, Metropolitan Police Service.

needs housing had a high proportion of tenants coming from temporary accommodation, while supported housing saw a higher proportion of tenants coming from the private rented sector.

While CORE provides a profile of previous tenure it does not provide information on the type of tenancy held by former HA or LA tenants. Some households now housed in general needs accommodation may have previously been in supported housing. Similarly households who are now in supported housing may have previously lived in permanent social housing but had to move as a result of domestic violence.

Households experiencing domestic violence are often at risk of homelessness. Local authorities and their partners are encouraged to work to prevent domestic violence, and reduce the risk of homelessness where domestic violence occurs. CORE shows that 52 per cent of all tenants housed in general needs accommodation due to domestic violence were homeless at the point of rehousing. Those at greatest risk of homelessness were lone parent families and one person households. There was a greater incidence

of homelessness among those housed into supported housing, accounting for 75 per cent of all those housed due to domestic violence. This reflects the nature of supported housing — including women's refuges — which tends to be used for emergency and temporary accommodation.

HAs work in partnership with local authorities to assist in housing those experiencing domestic violence, in accepting LA nominations for example. Table 5 shows that over half (54%) of all households housed in general needs accommodation due to domestic violence were nominated by local authorities. It also shows that in supported housing LA nominations were proportionally lower than for general needs, but other statutory agencies, such as the police and the health service, and voluntary agencies were more important referral routes.

Evidence of domestic violence in the HA sector is demonstrated by the 14% of lettings made to 'internal transfers' due to domestic violence over the past five years. Internal transfers were more likely to be allocated general needs rather than supported housing.

Table 4
Previous tenure of households fleeing domestic violence (1997/98 – 2001/02)

Previous tenure of household	General needs housing (%)	Supported housing (%)
Local authority tenant	18	34
Social landlord tenant	21	10
Private tenant	8	15
Owning or buying	5	8
Living with family or friends	15	19
Any temp accommodation*	28	–
Other	5	14
Base number	15,155	39,049

Source: General Needs and Supported CORE 1997/98 to 2001/02

* Supported CORE does not record 'any temporary accommodation'.

Table 5
Source of referral of households experiencing domestic violence (1997/98 – 2001/02)

Source of referral	General needs housing (%)	Supported Housing (%)
Nominated by local housing authority	54	24
Statutory agency (e.g. social services)	1	17
Voluntary agency (e.g. CAB, MIND)	3	13
Direct application to housing association	26	18
Nominated under HOMES mobility scheme	2	–
Internal transfer	12	2
Moving from another HA	1	1
Other	1	25
Base number	15,155	39,049

Source: General Needs and Supported CORE 1997/98 to 2001/02

Regional trends

The number of lettings made to households fleeing domestic violence in each region will be influenced by a number of factors, including the number of nominations and applications received, availability of suitable accommodation and in all likelihood, the local approach and extent of partnership working to prevent and respond to domestic violence.

Table 6 profiles lettings to households by region and shows that some regions provide proportionately more accommodation than others, and also that there have been some changes over the period. In 1997/98, 18% of those housed in general needs housing due to domestic violence, along with 20% of those housed in supported housing were within the London region. By 2001/02 this had decreased to 15% for both housing types. The South West however, saw an increase in the proportion of lettings due to domestic violence over the period, in both general needs and supported housing.

However, HA regional lettings trends do not mirror trends in the number of households accepted by local authorities as homeless due to domestic violence. Research indicates that 45% of homeless acceptances due to domestic violence are in London boroughs, with a further fifth in the South East (ODPM, 2002a). This is significantly higher than the CORE figure of 15% housed by HAs in the London region, demonstrating the role of other housing providers in meeting the housing needs of those experiencing domestic violence.

In terms of actual numbers housed due to domestic violence over the period, all regions except the South West and North West saw a decline in general needs numbers housed. The greatest reduction was in the East Midlands which housed 444 households in general needs housing due to domestic violence in 1997/98, falling to 227 households in 2001/02 (a reduction of 49%).

In supported housing the South East region saw the greatest increase in lettings to households experiences domestic violence, from 472 in 1997/98 to 843 in 2001/02 (an increase of 79%). The largest reduction was in the West Midlands (-44%) and London (-31%) regions. These changes are clearly influenced by a general reduction in the total number housed by HAs due to domestic violence shown in Table 6 and discussed earlier. The national reduction in numbers housed will clearly have influenced the regional changes observed during this period.

Research shows a higher rate of incidence of domestic violence in urban areas (Myhill and Allen, 2002). Differences between urban and rural incidence rates are likely to be connected to issues such as access to support services or the financial implications of fleeing domestic violence — such as transport costs or the cost of renting privately, which may be higher in rural areas. In addition, living in a close-knit community can also influence a person's willingness to seek help, as privacy may be difficult to maintain (COSLA, 1998).

Table 6
Households housed due to domestic violence by region (1997/98 – 2001/02)

Region	General needs Housing (%)		Supported housing (%)	
	1997/98	2001/02	1997/98	2001/02
London	18	15	20	15
South East	11	12	6	12
South West	5	9	3	5
East Midlands	12	8	10	12
East	8	9	5	4
West Midlands	15	18	16	9
Yorks & Humbs	12	8	13	17
North East	4	3	6	5
North West	10	14	16	15
Merseyside	4	4	4	6
Base number	3,622	2,763	7,419	7,173

Source: General Needs and Supported CORE 1997/98 to 2001/02

E-technology and local libraries can be used to reach people in isolated communities. This may mean physically isolated, such as those in rural areas, or culturally or socially isolated, such as BME groups or older people. Services and information could be made accessible via generic advice or resource centres, rather than specialist services in an effort to encourage people to come forward (ODPM, 2002b).

Legal remedies

HAs need to work in close co-operation with households and their representatives to provide support and take necessary action where required.

This report does not aim to provide detail on the legal aspects of domestic violence, but it does give an indication of the principal Acts that HAs should be aware of when dealing with it. The Housing Act 1996 is the primary tool available to HAs to evict perpetrators of domestic violence. The Act provides HAs with grounds for possession in assured and secure tenancies, where a spouse or co-habitee has left the HA property due to violence or threats of violence from a partner.

However, it is the Family Law Act 1996 and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 that provide remedies for individuals experiencing domestic violence.

The Family Law Act 1996 defines domestic violence more widely than physical abuse, to include emotional cruelty and financial deprivation. It covers issues around access to the home and sets out the circumstances in which it is possible to restrict who may occupy a shared home and in the longer term, how tenancies can be transferred.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 is available to remedy domestic violence, though is less well used than the Family Law Act. It creates four criminal offences: harassment; putting a person in fear of violence; breach of a restraining order; and breach of an injunction.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 also raises the importance of addressing domestic

violence via guidance on the conduct of audits of local crime problems and development of strategies required under the Act.

The legal remedies available to HAs and tenants are affected by tenancy type, marital status, sexuality of partners, and whether children are involved.

Policy development

Today domestic violence is:

- a priority need under homelessness legislation;
- an issue within crime reduction and anti-social behaviour strategies;
- an element to address within the Supporting People Framework; and
- an issue for inclusion in Local Strategic Partnerships.

One manifestation of progress is an extended duty in the Homelessness Act 2002 and the accompanying Priority Need Order 2002⁴. The Act increases the safety net for homeless households by requiring local authorities to provide temporary accommodation to 'priority need' and unintentionally homeless households until suitable accommodation is found. It also requires LAs to produce homelessness strategies, while the Priority Need Order 2002 extends the definition of 'priority need' to include those fleeing domestic violence who may not otherwise be deemed to be in priority need. Government funds are being allocated to help meet the challenges of the Acts, by extending the network of refuges and women's aid groups.

The *Homelessness Code of Practice* (ODPM and DoH, 2002) provides guidance to LAs on discharging their homelessness duties, including responding to domestic violence. Guidance on strategy development is given in *Homelessness Strategies: A Good Practice Handbook* (ODPM, 2002d). Both documents emphasise the need to work in partnership with local agencies, including HAs.

The Supporting People programme overlaps with the Homelessness Act 2002, and aims to enhance services to vulnerable members

⁴ Known as *Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002*

of the community. ODPM guidance ⁵ provides information on how to identify domestic violence and advises what services can be funded through the Supporting People programme. Flexible and responsive services are considered key to successful implementation of Supporting People and the guidance states that services available to people fleeing domestic violence should be reviewed as part of LA Supporting People strategies. This includes resettlement services and floating support, both of which HAs have experience of providing.

Domestic violence is a form of anti-social behaviour and as such, it is one of the elements tackled through neighbourhood renewal (SEU, 2000). Anti-social behaviour strategies identify not only those experiencing domestic violence, but also those likely to be at risk and those who are potential perpetrators of anti-social behaviour. Good housing provision and management can help tackle crime and anti-social behaviour (ODPM, 2002c) and domestic violence strategies form a part of this.

Developing strategies and good practice

It is good practice for LAs to develop domestic violence strategies in conjunction with local partners, including HAs, and with reference to other local authority strategies such as the Homelessness Strategy, the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and the Crime Reduction Strategy. Many LAs do have domestic violence fora, and an accompanying strategy (ODPM, 2002a). However, the effectiveness of some strategies has been questioned due to evidence of inadequate policies and co-ordination, and lack of communication between departments and organisations.

While LAs take the lead responsibility in strategic development, HAs are guided by the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code ⁶ to establish their response to domestic violence. This is largely covered by the guidance in Section 3 of the Code, relating to the proper management of HA stock.

Housing associations can learn from research and guidance issued by various organisations. The Housing Corporation's Bank of Good Practice aims to provide HAs with details of new research and good practice on many aspects of their work. Over time this will pick up any relevant new research on domestic violence (www.bankofgoodpractice.org).

The potential needs of people fleeing domestic violence are also recognised in best value guidance (ODPM, 2001). The guidance suggests the support needs of people fleeing domestic violence should be recognised even though they may not fit into 'community care' categories. In common with best value in other service areas, reviews for domestic violence services should include obtaining feedback from those actually using the services.

The principles of partnership working and information sharing in cases of domestic violence are explored in most central government publications, including the Metropolitan Police Service's national Domestic Violence Strategy (MPS, 2001). This emphasises the importance of Social Services, housing and voluntary sector groups, such as Women's Aid, working together towards a more holistic and efficient response to victims' needs.

Similarly the Home Office's (2000) report *Break the Chain* provides detail on how domestic violence fits into the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and the criminal justice system. It also concentrates on inter-agency working and has a useful bibliography and index of good practice.

HAs can state and promote their view and response to domestic violence, which can be used to encourage those experiencing it to approach the sector for help (SFHA, 1999). Organisations without a domestic violence policy or a clear vision of how they deal with the issue, will be least able to respond to the needs of victims.

Moroney (1997) suggests that, due to the sensitivity and vulnerability of victims, it is good practice for HAs to refer to domestic violence in confidentiality policy statements.

⁵ ODPM (2002b) 'Supporting People — Guide to accommodation and support options for households experiencing domestic violence', London, ODPM

⁶ 'The Way Forward: Our Approach to Regulation', London, Housing Corporation 2002

If confidentiality cannot be assured people may be less inclined to use available services.

Conclusion

Domestic violence is an abuse of the individual. Where there are children, they too are at risk of abuse. It can affect people regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, location, income, sexual orientation, disability and tenure. It is widespread, and yet known to be under-reported.

The HA sector plays an important role in housing people who have experienced domestic violence in general needs and supported accommodation. They work in partnership with LAs and others, through the nomination and referral systems, in providing a range of accommodation for people with differing personal circumstances and household characteristics.

While HAs most commonly house female headed households who have experienced domestic violence, they also respond to male headed households in the same position. Similarly, while the most usual household type housed as a result of domestic violence has been lone parent families and those under the age of 35, HAs have also housed one person households and people over 50 years old.

The role of individual HAs in tackling domestic violence is influenced by their size, their main client base, the suitability of their stock and their position and influence in local strategic partnerships. HAs should aim to be part of a clear, comprehensive, seamless framework that responds effectively to domestic violence.

HAs have a role in ensuring their staff and policies are geared up to best meet the needs, at a local level, of those who are

experiencing domestic violence. They can ensure they continue to provide suitable accommodation for those experiencing domestic violence by reviewing their general needs and supported housing developments.

HAs need to continue to work in partnership with other local agencies to ensure that appropriate support is provided to households fleeing domestic violence housed in their stock. There is a growing wealth of evidence and guidance available (as shown in the reference section at the end of this report) that can be drawn on to assist in delivering best value housing and support services to women, men and children who experience domestic violence.

With continuing emphasis on best value, multi-agency working, and most recently in the identification of additional funds for housing and support through the Supporting People programme and Community Safety Fund⁷ housing associations need to be sure to be aware of and responsive to the needs of victims of domestic violence.

Domestic violence is a real and widespread problem, but with sensitivity and strategic awareness, HAs are providing, and will continue to provide, solutions and support for those who are in housing need.

Additional information

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Further information on the Sector Studies series can be obtained from Siobhan McHugh, Sector Analyst, Regulation Division, on 020-7393 2024 or e-mail siobhan.mchugh@housingcorp.gsx.gov.uk.

⁷ The Community Safety Fund is a financial resource administered by regional Government Offices for community-based projects to develop problem-solving approaches to the crime and disorder problems that affect them locally.

Useful reading material

Belcher, Z & Field, S (2001) *Homes for London's women*, London, Greater London Authority

COSLA (1996) *Guidance on preparing and implementing a multi-agency strategy to tackle violence against women*, Edinburgh, COSLA

Department of Health (2000) *No secrets: guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse*, London, DoH

Home Office (2000), *Break the chain — multi-agency guidance for addressing domestic violence*, London, Home Office

Home Office (2002) *British crime survey*, London, Home Office

Housing Corporation (2002) *The way forward: our approach to regulation*, London, Housing Corporation

Humphreys, C et al (2000) *From good intentions to good practice: mapping services working with families where there is domestic violence*, Bristol, Policy Press

London Research Centre (1999) *Relationship breakdown: a guide for social landlords*, London, ODPM

LGA (1998) *Domestic violence and child abuse — policy and practice issues for local authorities and other agencies*, London, Local Government Association

Mirrlees-Black, C (1999) (2002a) *British crime survey self-completion report*, London, Home Office

Metropolitan Police Service (2001) *Enough is enough — a domestic violence strategy*, London, Metropolitan Police Service

Moroney, L (1997) *Relationship breakdown and housing: a practical guide*, London, Shelter

Myhill, A and Allen, J (2002) *Rape and sexual assault of women: the extent and nature of the problem — findings from the*

British crime survey, Home Office Research Study 237. London, Home Office

NHS Wales (2002) *Domestic violence: a resource manual for health care professionals in Wales*, Wales, NHS Wales and GIG Cymru

ODPM (2001) *Best value in housing care and support: guidance and good practice*, London, ODPM

ODPM (2002a) *The provision of accommodation and support for households experiencing domestic violence in England*, London, ODPM

ODPM (2002b) *Supporting People — Guide to accommodation and support options for households experiencing domestic violence*, London, ODPM

ODPM (2002c) *Effective housing strategies and plans, anti-social behaviour neighbourhood renewal, safer communities and supporting people*, London, ODPM

ODPM and DoH (2002) *Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities*, London, ODPM

ODPM (2002d) *Homelessness strategies: a good practice handbook*, London, ODPM

Office for National Statistics (2000) *Social Trends 30* ONS (2002) *Statutory Homelessness: England Fourth Quarter 2001*. Office for National Statistics

Pritchard J (2000) *The needs of older women: Services for victims of elder abuse and other abuse*

Scottish Executive Central Research Unit (2002) *Evaluation of the zero tolerance 'Respect' pilot project — summary report*

Scottish Executive Central Research Unit (2002a) *The 2000 Scottish crime survey*

SFHA (1999) *Good practice in dealing with domestic abuse*, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations

Social Exclusion Unit (2000) *The national strategy for neighbourhood renewal, report of policy action team 8: anti-social behaviour*, London, ODPM

Useful websites

Domestic Violence Data Source:
<http://www.domesticviolencedata.org/>

Women's Aid:
<http://www.womensaid.org.uk/>

Women and Equality Unit:
http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/domestic_violence/index.htm

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister:
<http://www.housing.odpm.gov.uk/information/domestic/index.htm>