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The Role of Housing in a Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Abuse

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Abstract

This thesis explores the contribution of social housing providers within a coordinated community response to domestic abuse. Housing has often been overlooked in favour of a criminal justice dominance, however there is increasing attention on the role of housing, for example Walby (2018) argues that minimum standards for access to housing may be more important than increasing criminalisation of domestic abuse. This thesis seeks to explore existing good practice in the housing sector, examine the experiences of women accessing support from their housing provider and of men receiving wraparound support from housing provider, Gentoo as part of the Big Project, a Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme (DVPP).

A multi-method research approach was adopted; comprising four data sets, namely an anonymous questionnaire to housing professionals with 233 responses and nine in-depth interviews with housing professionals. Seven in-depth interviews and a group interview with victims of domestic abuse took place in addition to five in-depth interviews with perpetrators.

The research found that whilst housing providers have an established role in a coordinated community response in relation to anti-social behaviour (ASB) this is not replicated in relation to domestic abuse.

The research found examples of good practice in housing providers' responses to victims of domestic abuse but a gap in responding to perpetrators. Findings in relation to perpetrators' of domestic abuse accessing wraparound support from Gentoo as part

of the Big Project suggested cause for some optimism in the role of housing in providing support for men to address their abusive behaviour.

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Statement of Copyright

I confirm that no part of the material presented in this thesis has been previously submitted by me or any other person for a degree in this or any other university. In all cases, where it is relevant, material from the work of others has been acknowledged.

Signed: Kelda Henderson

Dedication

In memory of and dedicated to V – your inspirational life greatly influenced my path.

A life cut short by male violence.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank so many people for their support throughout my research journey. Firstly, I am indebted to participants who took part in the research. I am honoured that they took the time and I am immensely grateful to the women who shared such intimate details of the most traumatic time in their lives.

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From my work world, I am eternally grateful to my DAHA Co-founders and hope this research adds to our mission to improve the housing sector response to domestic abuse. Thanks to Wearside Women in Need and Gentoo, in particular my Manager, Michelle Meldrum and my brilliant colleague Lisa Smith and her Team, who went out of their way to facilitate finding participants. To the lovely Nicola Walker who provided me with so much encouragement and support and made me laugh when I didn't want to! To colleagues at the Chartered Institute of Housing namely, the inspirational Alison Inman and Yoric Irving Clark for his support, listening and advice. Lastly, thanks to my parents and my husband, Neil for everything.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Thesis

1.1 Introduction

Over the last forty years there has been increasing awareness of domestic abuse as a social issue (Pizzey; 1974; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Walby 2002). It is widely acknowledged that feminists have worked tirelessly to transform domestic abuse from a 'private matter' into a social issue which now is to varying degrees on the agenda of local, national and international governments (Hague and Malos, 2005). One of the concerns of the feminist movement in the 1970s was the need for safe, emergency accommodation in recognition that domestic abuse was a legitimate reason for homelessness (Morley, 2000) and that housing was a particular issue to women fleeing domestic abuse (Binney, 1981; Mama, 1989). This continues to be an important issue today. Whilst housing is understood to be a key issue for victims, much of the discourse and research has focused on safe, emergency and ultimately temporary accommodation to enable women to leave abusive homes with little discourse on permanent homes or the role of registered providers in recognising and responding to domestic abuse.

Housing is an important factor in responding to domestic abuse in a number of ways. For example, at crisis point in providing emergency safe accommodation, housing providers understanding the signs of abuse, to the impact on feelings of safety, feeling settled and the impact this can have on recovery. Whilst there is now some awareness of the role of housing in responding to domestic abuse, it remains the case that many interventions over recent years have tended to focus primarily on the criminal justice system. However, Harne and Radford (2008) point out that the needs of victims of

abuse are multi-faceted with only a few of those needs falling into the remit of the criminal justice system (CJS); whilst Holder (2001) highlights that legal sanctions alone are not the answer, arguing that the CJS whilst is a resource is not a solution.

The cross Government Violence against Women and Girls Strategy (2010) and Action Plan (2013) highlighted four key areas of focus to the Government's cross cutting response to Violence against Women and Girls. The focus being on Prevention, Provision, Protection and Justice outcomes in tackling violence against women and girls. The Plan set out clear actions for a range of sectors including the criminal justice and health sectors; but included none for the housing sector. In fact, the whole of the twenty-seven page document makes only one passing reference to housing, in the context that many victims do not report to police and may want to access support from other sources; including housing. This strongly suggests the wider role of housing was certainly overlooked at that time with no convergence of the two policy areas. The updated Violence against Women and Girls Strategy (2016-2020) does at least make reference to housing as part of the chapter entitled 'Partnership Working' (p.38). Regrettably improved access to housing and an improved recognition and response to domestic abuse by housing providers is still not highlighted as one of the outcomes for 2020 despite over nine million people living in social housing (over 3.9 million households) in England alone (English Housing Survey, 2016/17).

Research has consistently shown that housing is a key resource enabling women to end violence from partners and ex-partners, and that a major reason why women stay in or return to violent relationships is lack of access to safe, long-term, independent,

affordable accommodation (Pahl,1985; Mooney, 1994; Morley, 2000; Malos and Hague, 1993; Charles; 1994). For Dobash and Dobash (1992) housing is crucial:

> ‘The importance of housing cannot be overestimated it ranks as one of the crucial factors affecting women’s ability to find viable alternatives to a violent relationship.’ (1992, p.61).

Additionally, the position of social housing within the welfare state has become increasingly ambiguous over previous decades with an ideological shift from public to private. The increasing residualisation of social housing as defined by Malpass and Murie (1990), has resulted in public housing providing a safety net for those because of poverty, age or infirmity are unable to secure accommodation that is suitable in the private sector meaning that it is often seen as the tenure of last resort. Linking this concept of the tenure of last resort for victims of domestic abuse further reduces their ‘space for action’ (Kelly, 2003) and makes it crucial that housing providers are able to recognise and respond to domestic abuse effectively to support women to stay in their home or move to a new home or place of safety that meets their needs. Research has shown (Saunders, 1995; Abrahams 2007) that women and children often feel reluctant at having to move home away from family, schools and other support networks into temporary accommodation and frequently to a new area because of the perpetrator’s behaviour. On this theme, Bossey and Coleman (2000) found that women and children are reluctant to leave their family home and feel a sense of injustice at contemplating such a move as a result of their partner’s abusive behaviour. This consequently impacts on women who may already face financial barriers meaning that housing choice is an issue of real concern – in some areas the scarcity of social housing means

the possibility of losing or have to relinquish a social housing tenancy to move to safety (refuge) is a key concern. This scarcity of social housing in some areas of the country (i.e. London and the South East) further compounds the problem resulting in some cases of women fleeing domestic abuse living in sub-standard temporary accommodation (O'Campo et al, 2015). Whilst previous studies (Change, Justice, Fairness, Scottish Women's Aid, 2015 and Finding the Cost of Freedom, Solace Women's Aid, 2014) have primarily focused on women presenting as homeless as a result of domestic abuse and on help seeking they have not focused specifically on their experiences of support or help seeking from a housing provider. This study seeks to highlight women's experiences of support from their housing provider and thereby contributes to knowledge in this area.

1.2 Research Rationale and Aims

This research aims to examine the role of housing in relation to a coordinated community response to domestic abuse (defined later in chapter 3). It will explore (1) how social housing providers identify and respond to victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse and (2) will examine what good practice currently exists in the social housing sector and what potential there is for development. It will finally consider how wraparound support provided to men on the Big Project (DVPP) is viewed by the men receiving it (3).

1.3 Definition of Domestic Abuse

The current cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse (2013) is:

> ‘Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:
>
> - Psychological
> - Physical
> - Sexual
> - Financial
> - Emotional’

Whilst the current definition focuses on a *pattern of behaviour*, the Government proposes to not limit the definition so that a single incident could prevent action being taken in what appears to be a one off incident. The current definition defines controlling behaviour as:

> ‘Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour:

> Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim'.

Whilst establishing the gendered nature of domestic violence in the Strategy and subsequent Action Plan (2010 and 2016); the current Government definition (2013) of domestic violence and abuse is very wide ranging and sidesteps the gendered analysis of male violence against women. Despite the current Government definition including coercive control and the term 'pattern of behaviour', it fails to recognise the distinct differences between intimate partner violence and family violence. It appears there are no moves in the current Government consultation to address this important distinction. The assumption that family violence (for example between brothers) can be categorised in the same way as intimate partner violence fails, according to Kelly and Westmarland (2014) to understand that cultural norms about masculinity and femininity and cannot be simply applied to other relationships where the issues of gender and sexuality play out differently. Given this problematic definition this research will focus on men's violence to intimate female partners (or ex) in its definition of domestic abuse.

1.4 Background and Positionality of the Researcher

An important element to this thesis is my positionality as a researcher currently employed within the housing sector in a domestic abuse strategic role. My personal experiences and positionality have very much informed this research. I have therefore taken the decision to reflect this personal experience and to write in the first person. I have first-hand experience of the links between domestic abuse and housing. As an undergraduate placement at a women's refuge I had a role in accompanying women to present as homeless (as a result of fleeing domestic abuse) at the local authority and supporting the woman at the interview. Some twenty years later, in the role of Domestic Violence Co-ordinator I hosted a Home Office focus group with women at a local refuge on barriers they had faced in accessing support or help when experiencing domestic abuse. The women's comments were mostly favourable in relation to the police and courts based on their experience, but their experience of social housing was the most varied: from those who had an excellent response from their housing provider to the other end of the spectrum where women detailed appalling practice and a total lack of understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse by the housing provider. Having personal experience as a housing officer, I had a clear understanding of this role and what would constitute good practice. In addition to this the personal experience of accompanying someone close to me in viewing a property to flee domestic abuse and being party to them considering their safety and whether to give up a loved home to move to a new area full of uncertainties has left an indelible memory and driven my research to a large extent. These professional and personal experiences have given me insight across a wide spectrum in relation to domestic abuse and housing and the impetus to make a contribution to knowledge in this area of research.

1.5 The Gentoo Approach to Domestic Abuse

I am employed in a strategic domestic abuse role by Gentoo; a housing organisation in the North East of England with over 29,000 properties that takes a proactive multi-faceted approach to domestic abuse across a number of themes. I have an instrumental role in the strategic approach that Gentoo takes in relation to domestic abuse and as such this focus plays an integral part in this research. The theoretical framework of this research is discussed later in this chapter, but it is first necessary to outline the approach of the organisation I am employed by.

The Gentoo approach understands that housing has wide a range of information about its customers at its disposal and is ideally placed to tackle domestic abuse both in terms of responding to victims and perpetrators but also taking a proactive and preventative stance. The organisation takes a partnership approach in actively supporting and seeking to add value to the women's sector as opposed to seeking commercial opportunities in competition with the women's sector. As a member of staff at Gentoo, I have been central to developing this approach to domestic abuse. Gentoo also have a commitment to increasing knowledge in this area, co-funding this PhD research (with Durham University).

1.6 Gentoo's approach has four main strands:

1.6.1 The critical importance of 'Repairs Data'

In an attempt to identify victims of abuse earlier, Gentoo developed its 'Cause for Concern' initiative after analysing repair histories of victims of domestic abuse. Typically, victims had a pattern of specific repair requests including lock changes, damage to windows. Contact Centre and front line staff taking calls from customers for repairs are trained to report requests for specific repairs to the Neighbourhood Safety Team. If the repair request highlights a cause for concern, a specially trained officer will visit the property in an attempt to investigate discretely if there is cause to suspect domestic abuse. The reason given to the household for the officer's visit is to carry out a satisfaction survey on the repair or to ascertain residents' views on a particular topic.

In addition to highlighting trends in repair requests, Gentoo sees its Trades staff as key, given the nature of their role crucial in spotting potential signs of domestic abuse. It has been noted that people do not see Trades staff as official as perhaps a Housing Officer, so often do not alter or mask behaviour to the extent they might if a Housing officer was at the property.

To enable Trades staff to voice any concerns they can press a button on their hand held machines detailing work to be carried out. Many operatives had previously highlighted they felt nervous about raising concerns in case they were actually unfounded and caused unnecessary problems for a family if the concerns were not founded or that the customer would know the referral had come from them.

The ‘Something Not Quite Right’ button allows them to document what they have witnessed or something they feel uneasy about. This subsequently sends an email with the information to Gentoo’s Neighbourhood Safety Team who follow up the information and feed back to the operative if they have requested feedback and where it is appropriate to give it.

1.6.2 Domestic Abuse Awareness Raising and Training

Gentoo invests a considerable amount of time into staff training so that its staff have a clear understanding of domestic abuse. Training has taken place for all front line staff on the dynamics of domestic abuse with a training package entitled ‘Why don’t they just leave’ given this is a common, often recited question. The training highlighted coercive control and aimed to give staff an understanding of the difficulties facing a victim leaving an abusive relationship so staff can better respond to victims. I also secured a screening of the BAFTA nominated BBC film based on a true story, ‘Murdered by My Boyfriend’ accompanied by a question and answer session with the Film’s Director. The screening gave staff further insight into the dynamics of domestic abuse and after the event a number of staff disclosed that certain elements of the film had made them realise that they were experiencing or had experienced domestic abuse. In addition, Gentoo are committed to extending the customer offer to its staff and hosted the launch of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner’s Domestic and Sexual Violence Workplace Strategy for housing providers across the North East of England region to encourage them to adopt the approach and introduce Workplace Domestic and Sexual Violence Champions. Gentoo has over thirty specially trained Domestic and Sexual Violence Workplace Champions across the organisation providing support and signposting to staff who may be experiencing domestic abuse.

Executive Team members and all managers across the company have attended a half day domestic abuse dynamics session which included a presentation from campaign group, Justice for Jane, who outlined the experiences of their daughter Jane who was murdered at her place of work whilst the perpetrator was on bail for her rape.

Gentoo is involved in one of the three Women's Aid Change that Lasts pilots. According to Women's Aid; the programme is a 'strengths-based, needs-led' approach that supports domestic abuse survivors and their children to build resilience, and leads to independence. Gentoo are part of the 'Trusted Professionals' element of the pilot which is aimed at front-line practitioners working in the public and voluntary sectors who may be in contact with victims of domestic abuse. I was able to successfully make the argument for front line housing professionals and the Local Housing Authority to make up the first tranche of training to promote a shared understanding of domestic abuse by Gentoo front line and the City Council's Access to Housing (Homelessness) front line staff.

1.6.3 Perpetrator Programme – The Big Project

Gentoo formed a partnership with three charities (Barnardo's, Impact Family Services and Wearside Women In Need) in 2015 to respond to domestic abuse in a pro-active way. Previously, there was no voluntary Perpetrator Programme in Sunderland (where Gentoo operates) meaning that perversely males who wanted to address their abusive behaviour could only access support when they entered the Criminal Justice System and were mandated to attend a Probation Programme (i.e. Building Better Relationships or Solo).

The programme developed, the Big Project, is available for men over 18 years of age who wish to address their abusive behaviour. Gentoo employs Positive Engagement Officers to engage with customers who perpetrate anti-social behaviour often due to substance misuse and/or mental health. The role of Positive Engagement Officer provides a high level of support to customers and acts as a conduit to specialist support agencies to address issues and behaviours with a view to reduce anti-social behaviour and maintain tenancies. Gentoo have trained key staff on working with perpetrators of domestic abuse and are using this model to provide high level support to men on the Big Project. In addition to making referrals to the programme, Positive Engagement Officers also take part in the initial assessment undertaken by the Programme Manager to assess suitability of men to engage with the programme. The role of the wraparound support provided by Gentoo is to support men to remain engaged in the programme by addressing any barriers the men may suggest. Gentoo staff originally only provided the wraparound support to Gentoo customers (or partners of a Gentoo customer), however, it was felt that providing support to all men on the Programme would ultimately benefit Gentoo customers and that the programme should not offer extra support to only some men. Given Gentoo are the largest landlord in Sunderland and a perpetrator of domestic abuse successfully addressed his abusive behaviour this could positively impact on Gentoo customers.

Since the programme commenced in June 2015; a total of 36 men have completed the 26 week Programme. The programme has recently added a second day meaning that two groups a week run (Thursday evening and Saturday morning).

1.6.4 Customer Survey

Neighbourhood Coordinators (Housing Officers) have on average a patch size of 350 properties to manage; which is typically smaller than many housing organisation's patch sizes. The reason behind the smaller patch sizes at Gentoo is that it gives the Neighbourhood Coordinator the opportunity to ascertain and understand the support needs for every family on their patch. To ensure that no household 'slips through the net' every Neighbourhood Coordinator has a responsibility to undertake a 'survey' annually; which is in fact a conversation with every household to understand any support needs customers may have. Previously a customer might only have come to Gentoo's attention if they were in rent arrears or there were other tenancy breaches. As part of the 'survey' the Neighbourhood Coordinator (NC) would look for any signs of domestic abuse during the survey visit and consider the whole picture including repairs undertaken and any rent arrears. Any support needs would be referred to the relevant team or external agency. In the case of domestic abuse, the NC would make a referral to the Support Team and/or local domestic abuse charity, Wearside Women In Need (WWIN).

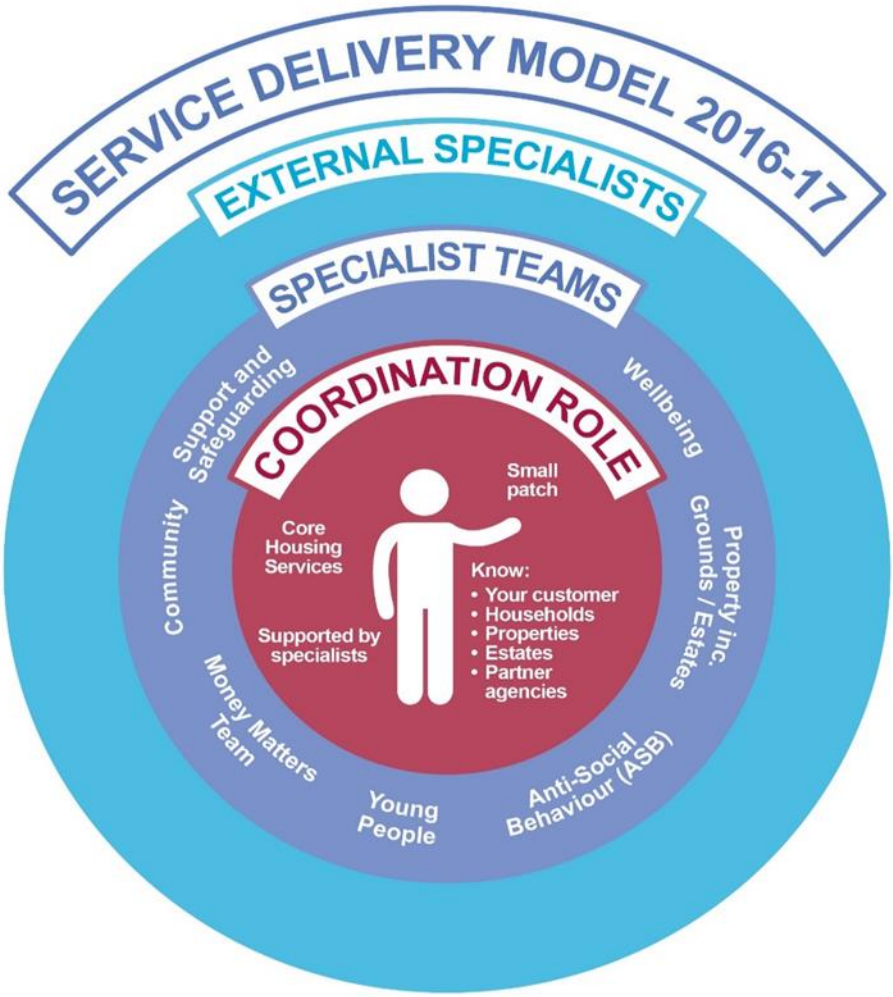

Figure 1: Gentoo Delivery Model

1.7 Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA)

Another key influence central to this thesis is my role as co-founder of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA). It is a partnership between three agencies; Gentoo, Standing Together Against Domestic Violence (domestic abuse charity) and Peabody (London based housing provider) all who have a longstanding commitment to tackling domestic abuse, working in partnership and developing good practice and innovation in the field. Launched in 2014, DAHA's mission is to improve the housing sector response to domestic abuse via three main ways:

1 Lobbying Government and the housing sector

2 Providing an Accreditation Service for housing providers

3 Disseminating good practice and undertaking research.

1.8 Theoretical Framework – Feminist Action Research

This research is guided by feminist research principles in that it sets out to make a positive impact on the lives of women by setting the case for housing providers to improve their practice in relation to domestic abuse. Feminist theory asserts that gender inequality is the cause and consequence of women's inequality. Men's abuse of women according to Mullender (2002) can only be understood in the wider concept of all of its forms in a social system of male control of women (Stanko,1985). In understanding the wider concept; this research sees that this is reflected by power and

control and the regulation of a woman in the household. In his explanation of coercive control Stark (2012) argues that it exploits and reinforces sexual inequalities in larger society.

The starting point of this thesis is an acknowledgment of that, the social housing sector mirrors wider society in that it implicitly accepts male violence, that it does not robustly respond to perpetrators of domestic abuse and at best; only provides a patchy response to male violence and in some cases limited support to victims. As Butler (1988, p.522) argues:

> ‘feminist theory has sought to understand the way in which systemic or pervasive political and cultural structures are enacted and reproduced through individual acts and practices, and how the analysis of ostensibly personal situations is clarified through situating the issues in a broader and shared cultural context’.

Hess-Biber (2007) argues there is not a single methodology of feminist research, rather there are multiple lenses. Lather (1991) notes that feminist researchers consciously use research to help participants understand and change their situations, whilst Reinharz (1993) argues research should be judged on the effect it has on improving women's lives. The ultimate aim of the research is to improve the lives of women and children by thematic analysis of two areas of research – namely domestic abuse and social housing.

This research seeks to increase knowledge and understanding of social housing providers in identifying and responding to victims and perpetrators. Whilst this research takes a feminist perspective in seeking to positively impact on the role of women and children in social housing; it will also draw on my dual role of researcher/practitioner as highlighted earlier in this chapter. Burrell and Morgan (1979) argue that the type of data collected is more subjective where the experience and insights are of a unique and personal nature. Burrell and Morgan (1979) assert that what people say and how it is interpreted, what they do and say are important for an action researcher for knowledge creation. The dual role as a researcher and practitioner and the desire to improve the housing sector response to domestic abuse consequently means that this research is, in essence, framed as feminist action research.

Action research is often cited as originating from social psychologist, Kurt Lewin (Adelman, 1993). Lewin is thought to have first used the term ‘action research’ in 1944 and used it again in 1946 describing it as ‘a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action’. He is quoted asserting that ‘research that produces nothing but books will not suffice’ (Lewin 1946, p.35) and this resonates with my drive to influence the housing sector in relation to domestic abuse and reflects the principles of feminist research in judging the impact research has on women’s lives. One of the key points about Lewin’s approach to research was his consideration of the integration of theory and practice (Kolb,1984, p.9). Coghlan and Brannic (2014) make an important point in defining action research as the focus being on research *in action* rather than research *about* action. Levin (2012) suggests that action research has a ‘Janus face’ in that it is a head which faces in two directions where one face is concerned in addressing specific

issues and the other is to be rigorously scientific is how these issues are investigated and addressed. This highlights the complexities of researcher/practitioner values in researching a field which the researcher is invested in.

Kincheloe (1995) makes the point that researchers should embrace this exchange between personal and practical values and that critical action research does not intend to merely set out to understand or describe the world of practice, but in fact to *transform* it. The researcher's role in practice in this action research is key in *understanding* the sector and thereby has a view in transforming it. Meyer (2000) points out that the *strength* of action research is in producing solutions to actual issues and that such research has the opportunity to *empower* practitioners within their role in engaging with the research and the potential of the outcomes that have potential to be implemented as a result. This study is concerned with empowering housing providers to improve their practice which in turn, has the potential to have a positive impact on their customers and hold perpetrators to account. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) suggest that in studying practice means to change it and that in turn practice itself is actually changed in order to study it (Waterman et al., 2001). In empowering housing providers, this dual role represents an opportunity to influence practice via my role as a housing professional and co-founder of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance giving me the opportunity to share the research with fellow housing practitioners.

In action research the role of researcher is obviously key, as Guba and Lincoln (1990) assert, a consideration of the philosophical stance or worldview is important. In this thesis I am clear that my worldview is from *within* the sector and the raison d'etre of the research is to improve the housing sector response to domestic abuse from within.

On completion of this doctoral thesis, I will take the opportunity to reflect on the practice identified and seek to implement any changes to practice for the organisation I am employed by. Koshy (2010) suggests, reiterating Meyer's point, that action research is a method used for improving practice, involving not only action, but also evaluation and critical reflection. This dual role of practitioner and researcher in action research and its complexities is discussed in more detail in chapter five. The action part of this research is discussed in the conclusion in relation to findings and the action deriving from them.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has set out the research questions and introduces the context for the research which is set against the backdrop of my dual role as practitioner/researcher and is guided by feminist principles. This research is categorised as feminist action research as it is an attempt to create a social action in the housing sector to improve the sector response to domestic abuse.

1.10 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprises ten chapters. Chapter one has set out the aims of the research, its guiding principles and provides some context as to the policy backdrop it is set within. In addition, it highlights my positionality as a researcher. Chapter two provides a summary of the emergence of social housing and examines the factors that led to its focus on anti-social behaviour as a core housing issue. Chapter three examines the wide ranging inter-facing issues of housing and domestic abuse including homelessness, housing instability, tenancy agreements, perpetrators and economic abuse in relation to housing. Chapter four examines the origins of the coordinated

community response how this is translated in the UK and questions if the term is actually relevant to the UK.

After setting the context in chapters one to four, chapter five discusses the methodology used. The chapter outlines the mixed methods approach used including in depth interviews with housing professionals, women who have experienced support from their housing provider in relation to domestic abuse and men who receive wraparound support from housing provider Gentoo. It also details the use of an anonymous questionnaire to housing professionals. This chapter also examines the ethical issues associated with the research design.

Chapters' six to nine examine the findings from the interviews with housing professionals, the anonymous questionnaire to housing providers, interviews with victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. These chapters discuss key themes identified and consider how these findings fit with existing research.

Chapter ten draws together the main findings in answering the three research questions, considers the contribution to knowledge the research makes, highlights scope for further research and how the findings have been used in relation to action research. Limitations of the research are also considered here.

Chapter 2: Housing Policy

2.1 Introduction

This thesis argues that the focus of social housing is around anti-social behaviour and as such it is often not equipped to recognise and respond to domestic abuse. It further contends that when it does respond to domestic abuse it is often framed within an anti-social behaviour response.

In order to examine the role of social housing in relation to domestic abuse it is necessary to understand the origins of it and the factors that have influenced and shaped its current position. Fitzpatrick and Stephens (2007, p.23) define social housing as having two essential characteristics: ‘housing normally let below market rates’ and ‘allocated by administrative process’.

This chapter firstly discuss the origins of social housing before moving on to discuss the changing role of the state in housing provision and the where it fits into welfare provision. Lastly it will examine the moral panic around social housing which has led to its singular focus on anti-social behaviour (ASB) and the subsequent quasi-legislative framework in which to accommodate it. Whilst this chapter does not set out to offer a full appraisal of housing policy it seeks to examine the key factors that have influenced its current focus as centred round ASB.

2.2 The Origins of Social Housing

The origins of social housing are commonly traced back to Octavia Hill and her efforts around the London slums. Her overall aim was to make 'lives noble, homes happy and family life good' in this, one of the most notorious London slums, known as 'Little Hell.' (http://www.octaviahill.org/about-octavia-hill/early-social-reform-influences/social-housing/)

Her moralistic, paternalistic approach was that properties should be let to tenants in a high standard and; in return, tenants would be expected to 'moderate' their behaviour. This approach is still in evidence today, Carr et al. (2007) see crime control in relation to housing as a new problematisation of the housing crisis, adding that this has echoes of the foundations of housing policy in the nineteenth century with concerns around pauperised deviance (Cowan and McDermont, 2006).

The Housing and Working Classes Act (1890) empowered local authorities in London to build housing for poorer communities and charge reasonable, fair rents. This was the first time the state played a role in the provision of housing to a noticeable extent. In clearing away slums, councils had to re-house a least half of the people displaced by slum clearance. A decade later the Housing of the Working Classes Act (1900) extended the 1890 Act to areas outside of London and allowed councils allowed to buy land outside of their own district. This led to the roll out of the subsequent 'Homes fit for Heroes' (Yorke, 2017) via the Housing and Town Planning Act (1919) which introduced a national housing programme that highlighted the shortage of good quality homes for men returning from World War One. Burnett (1993) argues it was pivotal in terms of post war social policy where there was an acceptance for the first time that

private enterprise would not be able to produce enough quality homes at affordable prices and that the state had a role. Ironically, this very issue is reflected in the current debate around housing supply some hundred years later. The idea of the state having a role has overtones of ‘deserving’, for example those returning heroes, seeing desirability as central. The idea that the market could not provide homes for all led to a safety net of the state to provide for those who were unable to access the market. The Beveridge Report (1942) established the backdrop to the welfare state, and introduced the concept of a state safety net to protect its citizens from the five giant evils in society, namely, squalor, ignorance, want, idleness, and disease from the cradle to the grave. The subsequent Welfare State brought about a raft of acts to protect its citizens.

2.3 Housing Policy and Legislation from 1950s onwards

Home ownership rates increased from the 1950s, and Tucker (1966) argued that the high volume building for slum clearance did not have the earlier post-war commitment on building quality homes. This resulted in both the standard and status of social housing falling. However, at the same time the link between housing and its impact on all areas of life was established. Housing was promoted as a crucial political issue; the manifesto on which the Conservatives fought the 1951 election, which stated that:

> ‘Housing is the first of the social services. It is also one of the keys to increased productivity. Work, family life, health and education are all undermined by crowded houses. Therefore, a Conservative and Unionist Government will give housing a priority second only to national defence.’ (http://www.conservativemanifesto.com/1951/1951-conservative-manifesto.shtml)

Those who could afford to do so were encouraged to move out of council housing. Ideologically, this could be seen as the beginning conceptually of social housing as the tenure of last resort often evidenced today.

Despite seeing housing as second only to national defence in the 1951 General Election, the Conservative Macmillan government of 1957-1963 was the first to challenge the post-war consensus by questioning the mass provision of housing by the state. Housing is often cited as ‘the wobbly pillar’ under the welfare state (Torgerson, 1987, pp. 116-126), because of the partial extent in which it has been considered as a responsibility of government and of social policy.

This ideological debate about the state’s role in mass housing provision and the encouragement of those who could do so to move out of social housing was twinned with the fact that social housing was becoming less easily available. Local authorities were encouraged to allocate council housing on *need* rather than desert following the Cullingworth Report (1969) meaning that the essence of social housing was essentially changing. This was further entrenched by the Housing Act (1977) under which local

authorities were obliged to secure accommodation for ‘unintentionally homeless’ households and those in ‘priority need’, such as families with dependent children and vulnerable adults. This resulted in an increased focus on those on lower incomes who were unable to afford adequate housing in the private rented sector. The language used at the time suggested that homelessness was the fault of the individual and whilst although there had been moves to encourage those who could afford to move out of social housing; it is worth pointing out that social housing was not purely focused around low income households at this time. In 1979; 20% of families in the top decile of income distribution lived in social housing (compared to almost zero by 2004/05).

2.4 The Conservative Government’s Commitment to Market Provision of Housing

Writing at the height of Thatcherism, Gough (1980) argues the ideological attack on welfare was firmly cemented by the Thatcher Government; although he suggests this was largely initiated by the Labour Governments of Wilson and Callaghan in 1975. He further argues that the qualitative shifts in social policy were aimed at reasserting individualism, promoting self-reliance and family responsibility, and to ultimately dismantle the ideology of the collective social provision of the post-war era. The Conservative mantra focused on setting people free from Government constraints on their lives by rolling back the state. The Conservative Government re-emphasised a commitment to market provision of housing, promoting a revival of the private rented sector and a belief in extending home ownership with social housing being aimed at those who could not compete in the market. Clarke, Gerwitz and McLaughlin (2000) argue there was a permanent revolution initiated in this period impacting on the scale, forms and social relationships of welfare.

A major policy highlighting this approach was the Government's preferred tenure of home ownership was depicted in the Housing Act (1980) which introduced the Conservative flagship 'Right to Buy' policy; whereby local authority tenants could purchase their property at a discount. The policy proved extremely popular with voters and has never been repealed by successive governments of either party in England; although the Housing Act (2004) introduced stricter regulations including a tighter time frame in which tenants could sell after purchase and with less discount to buy. Interestingly, the Scottish Government have ended the policy and the Welsh Assembly passed a Bill in 2017 to end it in a bid to protect social housing stock from further reduction and ensuring the state was able to provide safe, secure accommodation to those who are unable to buy or rent their own home.

The Right to Buy policy removed much of the most desirable and sought after stock from the social housing sector, without replacement building (Forrest and Murie, 1988). This point is borne out by Manns (2017) who stated that since the introduction of the policy, it is estimated that over two million properties (The Guardian 11.10.17) have been moved into the private ownership. This depletion of stock has an adverse effect on women fleeing domestic abuse and is discussed in the following chapter. It also served to deepen the divide between owner occupation and social rented sector. Lund (2011, p.142) argues that Right To Buy and other policies resulted in a concentration of low income households in the social housing sector with those accessing social housing increasingly people in the greatest housing and social need (Lee et al., 1985). Social housing was becoming more synonymous with welfare and a clear polarisation of the housing market was established. Hills (1997) argued that housing policy hardly

existed any more but survived within the welfare state: ‘mainly as an adjunct of social security (through Housing Benefit) or as part of wider city regeneration policies’ (Hills 1998 p.13).

Gough (1980) argues that the emergence of neo-liberal policy represented a sea change in the ideological approach to welfare and housing. Hayek’s economics of neo-liberalism (The Road to Serfdom, 1944) argued for a reduced state and increasing market freedom. This can be seen as the beginning of the residualisation process but had not gained full traction. Residualisation is defined by Malpass and Murie (1982 p.174) as:

> ‘The process whereby public housing [and other social housing] moves towards a position in which it provides only a ‘safety net’ for those who for reasons of poverty, age or infirmity cannot obtain suitable accommodation in the private sector.’

The Conservative Government continued its relentless repositioning of state-controlled housing out of the Government arena via the Housing and Planning Act (1988*)* which gave councils the option of transferring all or part of their housing to another landlord, such as a registered social landlord. The 1988 Act allowed council tenants (as a whole) to choose to transfer their existing homes to another landlord. The Government stated:

> ‘The effect will be to open up the closed world of the local authority housing estates to competition and to the influence of the best housing management practices of other landlords’. (Secretaries of State for the Environment and Wales, para 1.16, op. cit.)

2.5 Anti-social Behaviour

The idea that the current housing model was not working coincided with the rhetoric of anti-social behaviour and social housing began to gain more traction. This section will outline some of the key legislation and policy directions that cemented anti-social behaviour as a core housing issue. Field (2003); Pawson et al. (2005) argue there was a growing perception amongst politicians and social landlord practitioners that anti-social behaviour was an escalating problem and was causing much distress to local communities.

Whilst anti-social behaviour was an issue that was gaining more attention, it can be argued there was an element of moral panic to this. The term moral panic was coined by Cohen (1972) who illustrated how reactions to mods and rockers in the 1950s influenced the formation and enforcement of social policy and law, and how a society perceives threats. Cohen argued that labeling deviants could actually serve to amplify deviance. Drislane and Parkinson (2016) further argue that moral panics attract people to them as they connect with people’s fears using specific events or problems as symbols of what many feel represents all that is wrong with the nation. Crossley (2017) on his research on the Government’s ‘Troubled Family’ programme highlights the conflation of poverty with criminality arguing it serves to draw a line between them and

us. Crossley draws heavily on the work of Bourdieu (1984) who argues that symbolic power is granted to those in authority such as politicians who can construct a reality where they can shape other people's perceptions of the world and create a vision of division.

In responding to the increased rhetoric of anti-social behaviour, the Housing Act (1988) gave power to local authorities to deal with it. Rose (1999) and Field (2003) argue that the political rationalities around anti-social behaviour are encapsulated within the wider politics of behaviour seeing that anti-social behaviour as 'fundamentally caused by a lack of respect for other people' (Home Office, 2003, p.7). This perceived lack of respect was key to the government's approach.

In the case of ASB; the focus on social housing tenants and their children as the source of the problem enabled the introduction of further legislation giving more power to social landlords to counteract ASB. Cohen (1972) argues that the threat to social norms of society drawing on existing stereotypes and the relationship between state officials and the media is mutually beneficial in that politicians and law enforcement need such communication channels to share their rhetoric.

The focus on anti-social behaviour did not pay heed to the structural inequalities in society and largely framed social housing as the problem. Watts (2018) argues that successive UK governments have pursued increasing conditionality within social housing tenancies in a bid to influence the behaviour of those households considered 'anti-social', 'welfare dependent' or otherwise 'deviant' (Flint and Nixon, 2006)

reflecting the original approach of Octavia Hill at the turn of the century where a condition of renting a property was dependent on behaviour modification.

The Housing Act (1988) introduced the power for local housing authorities to obtain injunctions against the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour, with a power of arrest to be attached to injunctions where there was actual or threatened violence. Social landlords could apply to court to demote an assured tenancy on the grounds of ASB whereby:

> ‘Conduct that is capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to some person (who need not be a particular identified person) and that directly or indirectly relates to or affects the landlord's housing management functions’. (The Housing Act, 1988, Chapter 50, Schedule 2, Part 1, Ground 7A).

This cemented anti-social behaviour as impacting on housing management functions and has resulted its continued focus since. In an attempt to further regulate anti-social behaviour, the Housing Act (1996) also introduced a regulatory framework for registered social landlords and gave local authorities discretion to use introductory tenancies for all *new* tenants which made it easier for councils to evict tenants who exhibited anti-social behaviour within the first year of their tenancy. There was no reference to domestic abuse within this.

2.6 Housing Policy and Legislation from 1997

This focus on anti-social behaviour continued under the new Labour Government. One of the first actions of the newly elected Government in 1997 was to establish the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) in its first few months in office. They defined it as:

> 'A shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown.' (SEU, 1997, P.1).

The approach arguably linked housing policy into the wider welfare agenda than had been previously seen. Tony Blair on his first morning as Prime Minister from the Aylesbury (social housing) estate spoke about 'the poorest people in our country [who] have been forgotten by government' (BBC News,1997). There seemed to be some recognition that previous housing policy had resulted in polarising communities, with policies impacting on neighbourhoods fragmented with little buy in from local people.

Whilst there was some attempt to address structural issues, and an awareness of the impact of social exclusion and neighbourhood regeneration, the focus strongly remained on anti-social behaviour and its effects on the community as a whole. The introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) defined ASB as behaviour that causes 'harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as the person' (Home Office,1998). The Act introduced the Anti-social Behaviour Order (ASBO) which became synonymous as defining the state of modern Britain (Squires, 2008).

The Anti-social Behaviour Act (2003, Section 12) amended the Housing Act (1996) and placed a duty on social landlords to publish their anti-social behaviour policies and procedures (which came into force in 2004) so that tenants and members of the public could have information about the measures that landlords will use to address anti-social behaviour issues in their properties. ASB was accepted as part of the language with housing becoming increasingly part of the apparatus to deal with ASB and seen as visible authority figures along with Police. The Government also established the Home Office ASB Unit (2003) with the aim of establishing policies and tools to tackle the issue. The following year the Government launched the TOGETHER campaign in England and Wales describing it as 'a stand against anti-social behaviour and puts the needs of the local community first' (Millie et al., 2005. p4). The campaign included an ASB helpline for the public and an ASB academy of practitioners. Blair (2003) stated: 'We've given you the powers, and it's time to use them.' (Millie et al., 2005, p.5).

Hills (2007) in examining the future role of social housing makes the point that over a fifth of social tenants reported the presence of drug users or dealers as a serious problem and a fifth of social tenants report as a serious problem the general level of crime, fear of being burgled, vandalism and litter, with 18% of social tenants stating they felt unsafe alone even at home or outside in daylight. This feedback led to Labour MP Frank Field to coin the term 'Neighbours from Hell' – a term which has become an everyday phrase, with a plethora of TV Programmes and media stories further demonising social housing tenants and portraying them as feckless. Cooper (2005), following on from Cohen described this as labelling those as 'other', as deviant and outside of societal norms. Crossley (2017) argues there is a committed othering of

poor people linked to moral inferiority. He raises the point that Cameron (2014), on the back of the 2011 riots said that most of the rioters came from post war social housing estates.

Haworth and Manzi (1999) assert that housing management has always played a role in monitoring conduct of tenants and it can be argued that there is a link to the concept of the deserving and underserving in the case of social housing. On this theme, Flint and Nixon (2006) note that discourses on anti-social behaviour in the UK are embedded within a wider politics of conduct, steeped in concepts of 'Citizenship, self-regulation, welfare conditionality, obligations to communities and rights and responsibilities' (pp. 939-955).

Sampson (2004) and Atkinson (2006) see the centrality of the citizen in dealing with anti-social behaviour pointing out that the language of anti-social behaviour is readily understood by the community. Arguably, this forms an important part of a coordinated community response (in relation to ASB). Driver and Martell (1997, p.27) see this focus on community in dealing with ASB as New Labour's hangover cure to the Conservative focus on individualism. Home Secretary, Blunkett (2004) stated:

> 'Communities are empowered when they play an active role in establishing the boundaries of what is acceptable. The law-abiding majority is put at the heart of the solution, not just at the receiving end of the problems.' (Cited by Millie et al 2005, p.33.)

Flint (2010) argues that discourse concerning the governance of anti-social behaviour in the UK has emphasised the spatial concentration of disorder on particular social housing estates. He maintains the policy response to this has been to devolve management of the processes of social control to local neighbourhoods. In this devolution of social control, Brown (2004) makes the point that the concept of anti-social behaviour is in essence a product of housing management with social landlords replacing the police as the main agency of social control in relation to incivility. This can be viewed via the strengthening of original powers of the Housing Act (1996) in the Anti-social Behaviour Act (2003); which stipulates that housing providers must publish their anti-social policy and procedures.

Flint and Nixon (2005) suggest there has been significant realignment in the roles of various actors in policing residential areas and they argue this raises fundamental questions about the link between conduct, citizenship rights and the scope and ambition of governance interventions aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour at individual and community levels. This change has resulted in social housing playing a central role in what they term the contemporary ‘governance of incivility’ in the UK. This point was further demonstrated by Brown (2004) and Burney (2005) who found that ASB interventions were disproportionately applied against those who resided in the social rented sector highlighting the apparatus firmly established in the social housing sector to see it as core business.

Burney (2005) sees that New Labour’s approach to ASB was a right idea that went wrong from the start. She is critical of the manner in which the Labour government created and developed the concept of anti-social behaviour. Arguing that scapegoating

individual perpetrators of neighbourhood disturbance and destruction she argues, gave authorities a way to avoid the acknowledgment of the social and economic decline of such neighbourhoods, of which such behaviour might be seen as a symptom or a response to decline. She suggests the introduction of the term ‘anti-social behaviour’ came into usage in terms of public order enforcement as result of the New Labour government of 1997 and the moral panic created with newspaper coverage of ‘yobs’ on social housing estates that police could not charge with criminal activity as they were not by definition doing anything specifically criminal. She argued that there was a real enforcement message entrenched with rhetoric that continued to give the impression that country was seriously afflicted by anti-social behaviour. The re-elected 2005 Labour Government reasserted its stance on ASB stating it as a particular priority for the Government.

> ‘By making anti-social behaviour into a major social policy problem, and by giving it sustained high visibility attention, Labour has made a small problem larger, thereby making people more aware of it and less satisfied with their lives and their government.’ (Tonry, 2004, p.57).

As well as the focus on ASB, Malpass and Victory (2010) argue that the trajectory of welfare reform continued under the Labour Government. Whilst there was recognition that welfare and housing policies needed to be better aligned, Pawson and Mullins (2010) argue that New Labour perceived council housing as a ‘redundant project’ with low demand, poor quality stock. New Labour saw the issue through the lens of poverty and limited life chances and opportunities, not merely as a matter of giving tenants more choice of landlord. Labour recognised there was a stigma attached to the

widening difference between home owners and those living in estates with low demand and poverty, with the term ‘sink’ estate becoming used by many commentators.

Tony Blair stated in ‘Bringing Britain Together - a national strategy for neighbourhood renewal':

> ‘Over the last two decades the gap between these worst estates and the rest of the country has grown…It shames us as a nation, it wastes lives and we all have to pay the costs of dependency and social division.’ (1998, p.1).

The stigmatising of social housing tenants and the individual impact was outlined by Hanley in her experience of growing up in social housing and the impact it had on her life.

> ‘Estates is a bruise in the form of a word: it hits the nerves that register shame, disgust, fear and, very occasionally, fierce pride.’ (2005, p.20).

She goes on to summarise the feeling of social exclusion in social housing for many:

> ‘Estates mean alcoholism, drug addiction, relentless petty stupidity, a kind of stir craziness induced by chronic poverty and the human mind caged by the rigid bars of class and learned incuriosity’ (2005, p.7).

In conjunction with stigma of social housing put forward by Hanley there is also the juxtaposition of its scarcity.

> ‘The truth is that council housing is a living tomb. You dare not give up the house because you might never get another, but staying is to be trapped in a ghetto of both place and mind.’ (Hutton, 2007) http://www.open.edu/openlearn/people-politics-law/politics-policy-people/sociology/problem-populations-problem-places/content-section-3.4

Mullins et al (2008) argue there has been much repositioning of the sector over the last twenty years or so, largely through regulation. New Labour recognised the need to improve the housing product on offer. The Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) (2000) Housing Green Paper, ‘Quality and Choice: A Decent Home for All’ aimed to bring all social housing into decent condition by 2010. It required authorities with remaining stock to undertake option appraisals to identify how they would secure resources to meet the new decent homes standard. For many; the only option in raising funds to improve homes was to consider a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT).

New Labour continued the Conservative approach of removing housing from the public sector arena with almost a million homes were removed from local authority ownership via LSVT from 1997 to 2009 with registered social landlords formed to manage the stock continuing the Conservative approach of removing housing as an area for state intervention. New Labour reflected some of the Conservative approach in that it saw the state in an enabling role in relation to housing around as opposed to necessarily providing and managing it.

Malpass and Victory (2010) provide a useful and concise summary of the discussion on the change in social housing since the 1970s. They assert there are two distinct housing models which can be used to define the journey of social housing. Firstly; they argue the social housing model in the mid-20th century was classified as a *public housing model* and the model seen today as a *contemporary social housing model*. They argue that modernisation is defined as the process of moving from one to the other. Malpass and Victory (2010) further outline that each model has three elements: the role played by social housing in the wider housing system and provision and consumption. Overall, the move has been a change which they argue is a migration from the public sector towards the private market.

In describing this migration, they reference the terms residualisation (Forrest and Murie, 1983a, 1988b; Malpass; 1990), privatisation (Forrest and Murie, 1983a, 1988b; Ginsburg, 2005), transformation (Hickman and Robinson, 2006) and restructuring (Pawson, 2006) which they see used as descriptors as what they reference as ‘a discourse of decline’ in that social housing become more focused on housing the least well off (Malpass and Victory, 2010).

2.7 Housing Policy from 2010 Onwards

The drive to further marginalise social housing continued under the Coalition Government from 2010. In a piece for the *Sunday Times* (10.01.16) David Cameron outlined them as ‘cut off, self-governing and divorced from the mainstream’. Crossley (2017) states that Cameron had a view to rid sink estates. He makes the point that Cameron’s focus was on buildings as the problem as opposed to the issues being

around the Government's welfare policy and its approach to socio-economic challenges faced by some communities.

> '2013 is the year to tackle the tyranny of sink estates, no-go neighbourhoods and child poverty. Look a little closer at such neighbourhoods, and we see something deeper than physical dilapidation. Behind the front doors are far too many broken and chaotic families.' (Guy, 2013, p.10).

2.7.1 The Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act (2014)

HouseMark (July 2012) estimated that social landlords in England and Wales dealt with around 300,000 reported cases of anti-social behaviour in 2011/12 at a cost of £300 million. The numbers and costs were not determined for specifically for categories of ASB, it is however, possible that cases of domestic abuse were included within it. This spending on ASB provided a backdrop to the introduction of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014) giving housing providers more powers.

The Act allowed housing providers to utilise the Part One Injunction (replacing the Anti-Social Behaviour Injunction). A Court may grant an injunction against a person aged 10 or over if two conditions are met:

1 That the court is satisfied, on the balance of probabilities that the respondent has engaged or threatens to engage in anti-social behaviour (ASB).

2 That the court considers it just and convenient to grant the injunction for the purpose of preventing the respondent from engaging in anti-social behaviour (ASB).

ASB is defined in the Act as:

- Conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person;

- Conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or;

- Conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person.

The Injunction can require the respondent to do anything described in the injunction (positive requirements). It can also include the power to exclude persons from the home in cases of violence or risk of harm regardless of tenure. A range of agencies can apply for an injunction including a local authority and a housing provider and a chief officer of police for a police area.

The injunctions allow landlords to work closely with their tenants by imposing positive requirements as injunction terms, which can enable landlords to take effective action to address behaviour. Positive requirements may include attending a substance misuse treatment organisation for assessment and support and could include a requirement to attend a domestic abuse perpetrator programme for assessment of

suitability for the programme. A local authority or housing provider may apply for an injunction against a perpetrator which contains a positive requirement to engage in a programme to address their behaviour.

Breaching the terms of the injunction may result in a mandatory ground for possession of the property. The Court expects that informal approaches have been initiated before court action is taken; the legislation recognises that where professionals get to the point that formal action is necessary, they should have the ability to take that action quickly. The injunction means that breaches do not need to be tolerated and that there is a real risk of eviction if the requirements of the injunctions are not adhered to. The Injunctions rely on a civil burden of proof.

Disappointingly, social landlords in the main have not utilised the powers afforded to them in the Act in relation to domestic abuse. There is a real opportunity to use the injunction in the case of perpetrators of domestic abuse to mandate them to attend an assessment for a perpetrator programme. Failure to attend or to engage with the appointment could put the person's tenancy at risk.

2.8 Current Regulation of Social Housing

It is important to understand the history that led to the regulation in relation to anti-social behaviour. Social Housing (in England) is regulated by the Regulator for Social Housing (established in 2018 from what was previously the Homes and Communities Agency). The body regulates social housing and continues to monitor the economic and consumer standards that social housing providers must adhere to via a statutory Regulation Committee. There are four consumer standards:

1. Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

2. Home Standard

3. Tenancy Standard

4. Neighbourhood and Community Standard

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard covers how registered providers deal with anti-social behaviour. This standard does not require registered providers to resolve all instances of anti-social behaviour, only to work in partnership with other agencies in an attempt to do so. There is no reference in relation to domestic abuse in any of the other three consumer standards meaning that there is no regulatory requirement for housing providers to recognise or respond to domestic abuse.

The regulator makes no reference at all to domestic abuse in the two page document that sets out expectations in relation to the Neighbourhood and Community standard. The Guide establishes that registered providers must publish an ASB policy and how they work in partnership to prevent ASB:

> ‘Registered providers shall keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that they own clean and safe. They shall work in partnership with their tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is

effective to do so'. (Homes and Communities Agency, Neighbourhood and Community Standard, 2012, p.1).

As highlighted earlier in this chapter, the duty for social landlords to deal effectively with anti-social behaviour was introduced via the Housing Act (1996). This was later amended under Section 12 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act (2003) which placed a duty on social landlords; including local housing authorities and housing action trusts to publish anti-social behaviour policies and procedures so that tenants were informed about the action and measures their landlord could take.

As outlined earlier in this chapter the regulatory process and associated powers in social housing have historically had a strong focus on ASB which has meant that providers are well versed and accomplished in dealing effectively with ASB. Conversely, housing providers have never been mandated or regulated in relation to domestic abuse, consequently, they often fail to have the same level of confidence in recognising and responding to domestic abuse. The focus can be described as being concerned with outside space and the impact on the community, i.e. the housing function, rather than being primarily concerned with individuals safety per se. Consequently, this legacy means that when housing providers do take action in relation to domestic abuse it is often done so with a view on impact to the community as opposed to a tenancy breach which impacts on an individual.

Since commencing this research the issue of social housing and its links to inequalities and vulnerability has gained momentum as a concern that needs urgent attention. Following the Grenfell Tower human disaster public and political opinion has raised

social housing as an issue that governments must seek to address. Questions around scarcity, quality of housing and tenants having a voice have all become much more prominent and amplified the structural inequalities in society.

There is consensus between Malpass and Murie (1987a, 1989b) and Harloe (1985) that in the long term social housing is likely to be predominantly residual, providing for those low income and vulnerable households. The availability of safe, affordable accommodation is a key determinant of women staying or leaving abusive homes. Housing providers are not regulated in their response to domestic abuse and there is no requirement to produce and publicise a domestic abuse policy so that tenants have a clear understanding of the response they can expect. Whilst the Government's consultation on the forthcoming Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill makes reference to housing providers having a role in identifying domestic abuse, it will be interesting to see if the Bill paves the way for any mandatory measures imposed on housing providers' reflecting those in place in relation to anti-social behaviour.

The recently published Government Social Housing Green Paper 'A New Deal for Social Housing' (2018) is underpinned by five key principles: a safe and decent home; improving how complaints are handled; empowering tenants so that landlords are held to account; tackling stigma and lastly building social homes. MHCLG are publishing a 'Call for Evidence' alongside the Green Paper which will inform changes within the regulatory framework. The Green Paper announced that it is considering introducing a new key performance indicator to help tackle anti-social behaviour but makes no reference to regulation in relation to domestic abuse throughout the whole document.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has detailed the origins of social housing in the late 19th and early 20th century which were paternalistic and concerned with the moral welfare of its tenants. The post war consensus saw that the state had a key role in housing and it was to some extent viewed as a form of welfare. The largest shift in ideology from 1979 *w*as the Conservative Government's Right to Buy policy which was emblematic of this shift and successive governments have seen a marked move from the concept as the state as a key provider in relation to housing. This chapter has examined the framing of social housing as synonymous with anti-social behaviour (Hanley; 2005) which has resulted in housing providers becoming an integral part of the legislative process with a greater role in its management becoming housing core business – in effect being part of a coordinated community response in relation to ASB. With no regulatory requirement to recognise and respond to domestic abuse, often where housing providers do respond, they do so framed within an ASB response.

The next chapter will examine key issues women face in relation to housing and domestic abuse.

Chapter 3: Housing and Domestic Abuse

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss housing in relation to domestic abuse across the spectrum of housing related issues women experiencing domestic abuse encounter. Historically, there has been some domestic abuse work within local authority Housing Departments, however the shift in housing policy and changes in how housing is provided this focus has been lost. Moreover, a body of research has focused victims of domestic abuse in relation to homelessness there has been little emphasis on the role that housing providers can play in recognition, help seeking, early intervention and prevention.

3.2 Social Housing Providers Recognition of Domestic Abuse

This section will examine the ways in which housing providers can recognise domestic abuse particularly through housing management functions. Given the longstanding commitment to tackle ASB and enshrined in regulation, it can be suggested that housing providers are in the main, confident in their role in responding to anti-social behaviour (ASB), they are not always well equipped to understand what might not be ASB but where domestic abuse is actually the underlying issue. A point demonstrated by Jackson (2013) who, in her study of one Welsh housing provider found that 9% of all tenants had ASB complaints made against them compared with 40% of tenants who were experiencing domestic abuse had ASB complaints made against them. The same study found that 15% of all tenants had rent arrears to the Notice of Seeking Possession (NoSP) stage compared to 63% of those tenants who were victims of domestic abuse.

Whilst rent arrears and ASB complaints can be used to identify potential links to domestic abuse, some housing providers (Gentoo) use repairs data to investigate if the repairs could point to underlying domestic abuse (discussed in the Introduction to this thesis). Gentoo is now developing their approach so that certain repairs automatically are routed to the Support Team to check for any signs of domestic abuse. Previously, staff would have to look through repair history to see if a number of similar repairs had been requested before making a referral to the Support Team.

SafeLives (2017) on analysing repairs data from Gentoo found that approximately 13% of all repairs jobs and a fifth (21%) of all repair costs were potentially related to domestic abuse, costing Gentoo £8.4 million annually. The analysis compared schedule of rates codes for repair jobs that were typically found in households where there had been a record of domestic abuse.

3.3 Help Seeking of Women

Grigsby and Hartman (1997) and Nicarthy (2004) assert that victims of domestic violence are often isolated from others with their ability to seek solutions controlled by the perpetrator. Data from SafeLives (2015) illustrates that eighty-five per cent of victims sought help up to five times in the year prior to receiving support to end the abuse. Well trained housing providers can provide a much needed lifeline to women by eliciting a disclosure and providing support and signposting to specialist agencies. Monckton-Smith et al. (2018) state that professionals such as health, the courts, coroners and housing have an important part in safeguarding and support work and that it is not simply a police issue.

Whilst formal help-seeking has been shown to be helpful (Liang, Goodman, Tummala-Narra and Weintraub, 2005) most women who experience abuse use informal social support networks (Beeble, Bybee, Sullivan, and Adams, 2009; Bosch and Schumm, 2008; Feder et al., 2011).

Research indicates that only a third of domestic abuse victims tell someone in an official position with only a quarter seeking support from a specialist agency. Studies on women seeking help cite embarrassment and shame as barriers to help seeking (Enander, 2010; Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001). In addition to these barriers, Bowker (1984) suggests that tangible support is needed for women who are seeking to leave and that emotional support alone is not enough.

In acknowledgement of the difficulties of seeking help, the then Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) in its guidance on sanctuary schemes stated that victims needed to have the opportunity to ask for help from well-trained staff and the opportunity to speak to a same-sex housing officer in a private space so that sensitive issues can be discussed. A point echoed by Robinson (2006) who stated the nature of the response is important in supporting a successful, safe move away from a violent relationship.

Websdale and Johnson (1997) highlight the effects that appropriate services and support can have a positive impact on women's abilities to end abusive relationships, whilst Macy, Nurius, Kernic and Holt (2005) assert that women often seek help from many informal and formal networks without necessarily disclosing their victimisation. Levison and Kenny (2002) highlighted that access to available support was not always

straightforward for victims of domestic violence citing that many did not receive sufficient support, or if they did it was not soon enough. Zweig and Burt (2007) found that women felt services were more helpful when they experienced positive staff behaviour meaning that women felt in control in their interactions with staff making the case for housing providers being trained to recognise and respond to domestic abuse.

The availability of safe, affordable and stable housing has been shown to make a difference to the ability to escape an abusive partnership and remain safe and independent (Menard, 2001; Morley, 2000). Housing providers have a vital role in ensuring their staff are well trained to provide an effective response should they receive a disclosure or a request for support and they can recognise domestic abuse and respond effectively. Research by SafeLives (Insights data set, 2015) highlighted that victims of domestic abuse accessing support from housing provider Gentoo had on average experienced abuse for three years prior to engaging with the service, compared with four years on average in the national data set (the national data set is made up of forty services which are largely specialist domestic abuse specialist services). It can be argued that this demonstrates the unique position of housing providers being ideally placed to respond to victims of abuse. Figure 2 highlights the high proportion of self-referrals into the specialist domestic abuse support service.

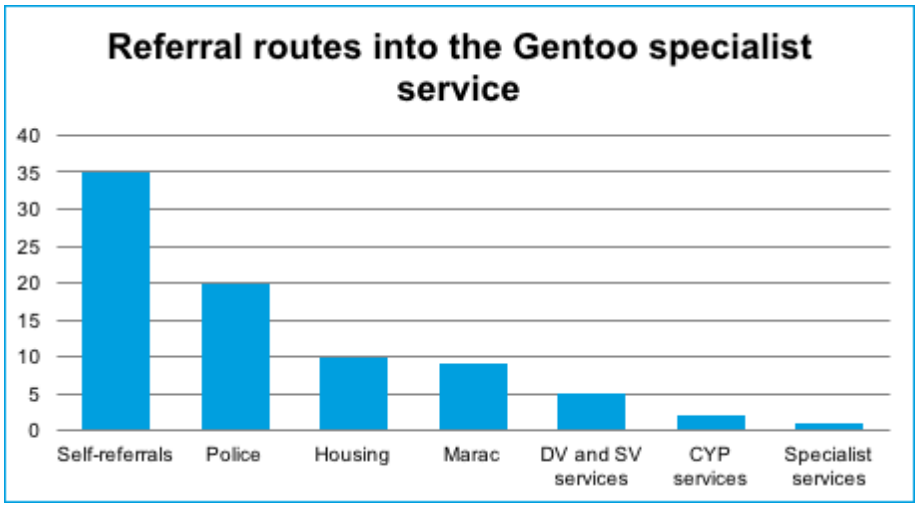

Figure 2: Referrals into Gentoo Support Service - Source Gentoo/SafeLives (2017).

3.4 Domestic Abuse and Homelessness

It is well documented (Tomas and Dittmar, 1995; Baker, Cook and Norris, 2003) that domestic violence is among the leading causes of housing instability, including homelessness for women and children and that safe and appropriate housing and the economic resources to maintain it are key concerns for women wanting to escape domestic abuse (Chung, Kennedy, O'Brien, and Wendt, 2000).

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Ending Homelessness (July 2017) found that:

> 'In 2016, 90% of women in refuges were reported to have housing needs and in 2015/16, 6,550 people became homeless because of a violent relationship breakdown, accounting for 11% of all homeless acceptances. In 2015, 35% of female rough sleepers left their homes due to domestic violence' (2017, p.3).

The figures do not show a gender breakdown for homeless acceptances due to violent relationship breakdown. These figures could be the tip of the iceberg given many women stating other reasons when presenting as homeless. St Mungo's cited 32% of women they worked with in 2013 said domestic violence as a factor contributing to their homelessness, compared to just 8% of men. Women also stated they had slept rough to escape domestic abuse, 35% of women who had slept rough had done so because of domestic abuse (Women Rough Sleepers Project – Daphne, 2002).

Women who had been made homeless due to domestic violence interviewed for research conducted by Pawson et al. (2007) referred to the difficulty of accessing housing and other types of support. Mullins and Niner (1996) highlighted some of the difficulties that illustrated a gap between policy and practice which in turn would impact on homeless acceptances. For example, many housing authorities had homeless policies which did not require proof or evidence of domestic abuse having taken place and stipulated taking the person's word. However, in practice this was not always the case. They found that many women presenting as homeless had been asked to provide high levels of proof, a point also found by Kelly et al. (2014).

Pressures in local housing authorities (Homeless Teams) were referenced by Rashleigh (2005) who surveyed housing officers and found that 66% felt under pressure to minimise homeless acceptances (gatekeeping), the majority felt the pressure emanated from Central Government. Echoing this Burgess, Clarke, Lyall and Grant (2011) in their research into domestic abuse assistance for adults without children found evidence of gatekeeping by local authorities (whereby a local housing

authority does not accept a homelessness application and/or provide accommodation when they have a legal duty to do so). They found people were being directed to other local authorities and being advised that they were safer if they moved away. This was often without reflection of the individual circumstances, with women in some cases being advised to do so at the reception desk without any consideration under homelessness legislation. They also found that 25% of housing authorities said that a quarter of homeless acceptances were due to domestic abuse and that refuge interviews illustrated that 80% of women in refuges apply to housing authorities as homeless. The study found that women had often tried other solutions before approaching the housing authority as homeless. More recently, Dispatches (2017) carried out an undercover investigation in relation to gatekeeping by local authorities and found this happening in practice illustrating this is a long standing problem. Women (undercover) presented as homeless stating they were fleeing domestic abuse and were asked to provide evidence that they had reported the abuse to Police (broadcast 8pm, 13.02.17).

The case of Yemshaw V Hounslow (2011) demonstrates the lack of understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse that victims can encounter. When presenting as homeless, Yemshaw disclosed she was experiencing verbal abuse and was worried that her partner would use violence against her. Despite the duty they had given she was threatened with violence Yemshaw was advised to come back once she had experienced physical violence, highlighting a clear lack of understanding in relation to their duty or the dynamics of domestic abuse.

On this issue of understanding the dynamics of domestic abuse, Mullins and Niner (1996) found discrepancies in domestic abuse training of housing authorities. They found nearly 75% of Housing Authorities stated that staff had undergone training on domestic abuse; however, when asking refuges on housing staff who had undergone training only 29% concurred.

As well as the lack of understanding from staff in the dynamics of domestic abuse when women present as homeless, Kelly (2014) found that many women reported that housing officers were unsympathetic and seemed 'uninterested' in their domestic violence histories; or in some cases did not understand and/or assumed that women were lying.

More recently, Scottish Women's Aid (2015) found that over half (58%) of staff agreed that some women claim domestic abuse when they have not experienced it. A point that was felt by some victim interviewees in terms of them not being believed when presenting as homeless. This theme was further demonstrated by Women's Aid (2017) who found that local housing authorities prevented almost a fifth (19%) of survivors in their study from making a valid homeless application. Reasons given for being prevented from making a valid homeless application involved in some cases being given *more than* one reason for refusal. In 17.95% of cases women were advised to call the National Domestic Violence Helpline instead with no activity to assess their homeless presentation. The joint second highest reasons (15.385%) for being prevented from making a homeless application were that they *did not* have a local connection (which is not required in cases of domestic abuse) and linked to this;

women being advised to submit an application at another borough. Shockingly, in 10.26% of cases women were told to return to the perpetrator.

The established link between homelessness and domestic abuse has long since been referenced in Scotland, where there is a requirement introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act (2001) for local authorities to produce homeless strategies which could effectively be integrated with their domestic abuse strategies. Unfortunately this has not been replicated in England.

Where women were able to make a homeless presentation, the experience of presenting as homeless was highlighted as a distressing one made worse by a lack of privacy.

> ‘Trust is a big massive thing as well. You don’t want to go to the council and say, ‘Oh hi hen’ in the office here everybody can hear you or somebody hears office workers discussing your case when they’re not meant to either. Not enough private confidentiality things with that.’ (Scottish Women’s Aid, 2016, p.38).

This lack of privacy in making a homeless presentation is commonplace with some local authorities directing those presenting as homeless to a telephone line in an open plan office. They are asked a series of questions by a person from a Contact Centre to establish if they are actually eligible for a homeless interview.

The Homeless Reduction Act (2017) came into force in April 2018 placing a duty on housing authorities to work with statutory and non-statutory service providers to identify groups at particular risk of homelessness. It stipulates that all eligible people who are found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness are entitled to more tailored support from the housing authority, whether they are in priority need and regardless of intentionality.

3.5 Affordability and Housing Instability

The issue of affordability of housing is a barrier in women fleeing domestic abuse. Connected to this is housing instability meaning that affordability is not the sole issue in women seeking alternative housing. Clough, et al. (2014) point out that few studies examine the interaction between domestic abuse and housing instability (See also Burman and Chantler, 2005; Pavao et al., 2007; Rollins et al., 2012). They define housing instability as:

> ‘Difficulty paying rent or a mortgage; being denied housing because of past credit or rental history problems; eviction threats or notices; moving frequently; living in over-crowded conditions, or ‘doubling-up’ residence with family or friends’ (Kushel et al., 2006, p.673).

Studies of women’s experiences of domestic violence have consistently shown that a major reason why women stay in, or return to, violent relationships is lack of safe, affordable, independent accommodation (Morley, 2000; Aguirre,1985; Horn, 1992; Shepard and Pence, 1988). Fitzpatrick and Pawson (2016) argue that radical welfare

reform and housing agendas from 2010 have weakened the safety net role that housing benefit and social housing used to offer.

Whilst domestic abuse is experienced across all social classes (Holtzworth-Munrow et al., 1997) the issue of intersectionality whereby gender, sexuality, race and social class combine to cause multiple levels of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989) is an issue for women accessing social housing. Browne and Bassuk (1997) argue there had been little research into the prevalence of poor women and children and research into homeless women found many had experienced domestic abuse where the lack of economic resources exacerbated their situation and this is still the case today. Fahmy, Williamson and Pantazis (2016) argue that women experiencing domestic abuse often become single parents with limited capacity to earn independently. They are more likely to experience financial difficulties compounded by continuing financial abuse from abusive former partners by withholding child support payments. They further assert economic insecurity creates patterns of interpersonal dependency and thereby traps people in abusive relationships, and places a financial penalty on those escaping domestic abuse.

Towers (2015) argues there is a connection between economic inequality and domestic abuse against women, concluding that access to economic resources is an important risk factor. She found that women living in households with low incomes had 3.5 times higher odds of reporting domestic abuse in the preceding year compared to women living in high income households. This thesis is not suggesting that domestic abuse is a phenomenon of social housing and thereby adding to the existing negative discourse on social housing tenants, but acknowledges that domestic abuse is a factor

in all tenures and social classes. Towers (2015) makes a crucial point that economic inequality is an important factor in terms of barriers to leaving an abusive relationship. Her findings can perhaps be partially explained in that those living in low income households had less resources at their disposal to leave an abusive relationship than those with resources so consequently had higher odds of experiencing domestic abuse.

Walby and Towers (2017) point to the resilience of victims of domestic abuse being compromised due to lack of access to structural and in particular, especially economic, resources (Walby et al., 2016). Using data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales they highlight the relationship between violence, economy and society arguing that the more serious forms of domestic violence are impacted by the 'the lesser resilience' of the victim and in particular their lack of economic resources. They found that in relation to repetition of domestic violent crime and economic inequality; two-thirds of domestic violent crime victims lived in rented accommodation (social and private rented); compared to one-third (34%) of the population (owner occupation). They observed that as the number of repeated domestic violent crimes increased, the percentage of female victims living in rented accommodation also did (66% for a single crime, to 67% for two to ten crimes, and rising to 84% for more than 10 crimes). Walby and Towers (2017) found that for both employment status and housing tenure status, victims of domestic violent crime were more likely to have access to fewer economic resources compared to the overall population. In essence, they found the *economic resilience* of the victim as a more important source of variation in the frequency and seriousness of domestic violence than the gendered motivation of the perpetrator. Put succinctly, housing is a key resource affecting rates of domestic abuse (Walby, 2018).

Walby (2018) makes a crucial point arguing that minimum standards for access to housing as more important than increasing criminalisation of domestic abuse. She suggests the evidence (Walby, Towers, Francis, 2018) challenges perspectives focused on perpetrators and is consistent with perspectives focused on the material situations of victims (Dugan, 2003).

Some twenty years previously, Pascall and Morley (1996) argued that women without men are disadvantaged in access to housing with many unable to afford owner occupation meaning less housing choice. Pascall and Morley's arguments can be further demonstrated by figures from the Fawcett Society (2012) indicating that that women experience a full-time pay gap of 14.9% and citing 64% of low paid workers are women meaning that housing costs can be a barrier to women leaving abusive relationships and having the opportunity to seek a variety of housing options.

The English Housing Survey Report (2016-17) showed that the social rented sector accounted for 3.9 million households or 17% of all households. Among those social renters, 43% were working, with 29% in full-time work and 13% in part-time work. One in five (21%) social renters were classified as 'inactive' (including those who have a long-term illness/disability and those who were looking after the family or home).

As the above figures suggest, the economic resources at the disposal of many women in the social rented sector are already narrow meaning that options for women to readily access other housing options to escape abuse are limited. Given this, housing

providers need to be better equipped to recognise and respond to victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse.

More recently, Quilgars et al., (2018) for Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) found that 43% of social renters were in poverty after housing costs, compared with 29% before housing costs. They make reference to Stephens (2014) who found that people with settled social renting housing pathways experienced much higher rates of chronic poverty than those with other pathways. These factors can present further barriers to women attempting to leave an abusive relationship. Quilgars et al. (2018) found that half of the social renters in their study, across all age groups, had moved *into* the sector as a result of one or more significant adverse life events, including domestic violence. Whilst there has been an increase in people renting privately, increasing from 8% to 19% with rent increasing by up to 33% (IFS 2017), this twinned with the insecurity of the private rented sector means that social housing is very often the only option available for some women fleeing violence. As well as the impact affordability has on tenure choice, Bell and Kober (2008) found whilst the act of leaving the relationship meant that victims were no longer experiencing the violence; leaving their home, re-establishing their family and furnishing a new home, placed considerable strain on often financially limited resources. Sharp (2008); Bell and Kober (2008) argue that many women encounter further hardship and have had to give up employment and some may have debts incurred from financial abuse within the past relationship.

> ‘It changed my whole life, I found it very difficult to pack up everything I had for so long, move it all and start afresh, this was very hard emotionally mostly due

> to the fact that I was already stressed due to abuse but that I had to start again decorating a new place and buying furniture with very little money.'
> (Scottish Women's Aid, 2016, p.47).

SafeLives (2017) cite Wendt et al. (2015) who found that immediately after leaving an abusive relationship, 49.6% of women lived in temporary accommodation and that the rest moved in to rental accommodation (26.7%) or stayed with friends/family (33%). They state that for the majority of women (67%), housing costs increased after separation.

O'Campo, Dunn et al (2015) and Ponic (2007) highlighted in their research on housing instability that many women stated that their housing was stable in terms of things such as being at risk of eviction or arrears in mortgage and rent payments; but that it was actually the *violence*, and associated *consequences* that made housing unstable for them. Women said they felt trapped, isolated or controlled in their homes which in turn made their housing psychologically unstable (O'Campo et al., 2015).

Research by O'Campo et al. (2015; p.7) included one woman's experience of economic abuse which had included lies about finances and resulted in her and her partner's eviction.

> 'I'll never forget the day that I found out that we were evicted. I found the eviction notice in the glove box. He had been lying to me since October that he was paying the rent. We were in March. He got the eviction notice back, I believe it was end of February or early March. I got the letter like March 5.'

For those women who are employed or have some financial means, securing accommodation may have less financial impact but for those women who need to access a refuge for their safety can often find that the high cost of living in refuge accommodation mean it is not financially viable as an option.

Clough et al. (2014) found women who had experienced domestic abuse referred to the lack of housing resources in their community as having some impact on their ability to leave or stay safe from their abusive partners. More recently, Daoud et al. (2016) argued that domestic abuse has been demonstrated to increase women's risk of housing instability. The impact of domestic abuse on employment can in turn impact in housing choices:

> 'Thinking I could continue working was really not a good idea. There was an altercation and I wasn't offered any assistance, there was a scene, just walked out of the grocery store and couldn't come back. From that point on, ah, employment was more than difficult because of moving to so many different places.' (O'Campo et al., 2015 p.10).

O'Campo et al. (2015) argue their findings highlight the importance of the psychological aspects of housing instability and that studies of domestic abuse and housing regularly ignore such connections (see also Pavao et al., 2007). In addition to the psychological aspects of housing instability, Alves et al. (2017) contend that perpetrators of domestic abuse can exploit a woman's vulnerability by limiting the use

of financial assets as part of coercive control. Pavao et al. (2007) found in their study of housing instability that domestic abuse was also an important predictor of:

> 'Difficulty paying rent, mortgage, or utility bills; frequent moves; overcrowded living conditions; doubling up with family or friends; and having to live somewhere that they do not want to' (2007, pp. 43-46).

This body of research makes an important point that for many women it is not simply a case of finding a new home.

3.6 Post Separation, Recovery and Safety

The importance of access to settled housing for those who have left their homes because of domestic violence has been shown to be key to their recovery (Menard, 2001; Morley, 2000). Whilst there has been much focus on women's experiences of interventions at the point of crisis, less is known about the process of moving on. Kelly, Sharp and Klein (2014) tracked 100 women and their children who had used a range of domestic abuse services over a three year period (2011-2014) with a view to understanding the process of rebuilding lives post violence and identifying longer term support needs.

Based on themes identified in the research, Kelly et al. (2014) argued that for women and children their home and rootedness (or not) in local communities, was critical to their (un) safety and freedom. In addition to the violence they have experienced, the loss of home is a serious part of the trauma that women in a violent relationship suffer.

The loss of a home can be further compounded by the uncertainty of re-housing if they decide to leave.

3.7 Tenancy Agreements in Social Housing

Tenancy agreements in social housing (local authority and housing association) often highlight domestic abuse as a breach of tenancy and are thereby grounds for eviction. The grounds in most cases do not rely on criminal proof but are based on civil grounds which use the balance of probability. In scenarios where this is not an express term of the lease, there will be implied terms for the tenant to *not* act so as to cause nuisance or annoyance to others and to behave in a tenant-like way during the term of the lease. In the context of some forms of domestic abuse, a housing provider may argue that such behaviour breaches those implied terms too.

3.7.1 Joint Tenancies

A joint tenancy means that both parties have individual and joint rights and responsibilities under the terms of the tenancy agreement. The joint tenancy means that *both* tenants are responsible for paying rent and adhering to conditions of the tenancy agreement. In a joint tenancy both parties have the right to stay in the home and one party cannot make the other party leave or change the locks. It is important that rent is still paid whilst decisions are made as to ending the joint tenancy as this could affect a future tenancy if rent arrears are incurred. If just one joint tenant gives notice to the landlord, the agreement will be ended for both tenants.

In cases of domestic abuse, a joint tenancy can be used by the perpetrator to control the victim on a variety of levels. For example the perpetrator could end the tenancy, which in effect ends the tenancy for both parties, thereby rendering the victim homeless. Given that both tenants are responsible for paying the rent; if a perpetrator ceases paying the rent then the rent arrears would be pursued against *both* tenants, which could lead to eviction action. Rent arrears and having an eviction order granted against a person can cause problems in securing another social housing tenancy and checks made by private sector landlord could mean that a tenancy in the private rented sector would also be difficult to acquire. Tenancy breaches other than rent arrears are also problematic in joint tenancies. Where one party could breach the tenancy agreement, for example through anti-social behaviour, action would be taken against both tenants and not just the tenant breaching the tenancy agreement. Again, where enforcement has been taken in cases of a joint tenancy this could provide problems for either tenant securing a future tenancy. Whilst housing providers may seek to support a victim of domestic abuse in a joint tenancy they are not required to specifically enquire around domestic abuse when a joint tenancy ends or when pursing rent arrears action, missing an opportunity to recognise and respond to domestic abuse.

If one person wishes to end the tenancy and the other joint tenant wants to stay in the property, the housing provider may:

- give the remaining tenant(s) a new tenancy at the same property

- not give them a new tenancy, whereby the property could be offered to someone else (i.e. a family);

- if joint tenants can't agree on who gets the tenancy, a Court can decide this.

3.8 Occupation Orders

In cases where joint tenants cannot agree and in cases of domestic abuse, an Occupation Order is an Order made by the Family Court which sets out who can live in the family home (available across all tenures). The Order must be requested by a tenant or (joint) owner and is not open to social or private landlords to pursue. The property in question must be, have been, or have been intended to be the home of the applicant and the other party. The person who is seeking to occupy the property in the short or long term makes an application to the Family Court to enable them to have control over and live in the property. Whilst an application can be made on an emergency basis, without giving notice to the other party, the Court is very unlikely to make an Emergency Order and will further consider matters at the next hearing, of which the other party will have adequate notice. It is only once both parties have had an opportunity to put their cases before the Court that an Order will be made.

Orders are usually for a set amount of time and can be granted as a temporary measure until housing options are explored, although permanent Orders can also be made which prevent one party from returning to live at the property or entering/attempting to enter it without the other party's consent.

The outcome of Court proceedings for Occupation Orders can vary greatly depending on the facts of each case. The fact that one party has been violent or abusive to the other may not in itself mean there are adequate grounds for a final Occupation Order and the Court has a delicate balancing exercise to carry out depending on the circumstances. Victims of domestic abuse may not be in a position to pursue such an order where they do not qualify for Legal Aid or do not have the financial resources to pay a lawyer. In the case of victims of domestic abuse living in social housing it is crucial that landlords equip themselves with the skills and knowledge to support a tenant.

3.9 Maintaining Tenancies and Tenure Security

Women who have fled abuse and secured a refuge space often give up a tenancy where they may be the sole or joint tenant. Scottish Women's Aid (2016) asked women who had fled violence if they felt they had a choice about remaining in their home or moving out, with 84% stating they had no choice.

Kelly, Sharp and Klein (2014) found in their study of 100 women (in London) that housing providers were in practice often reluctant to remove perpetrators. They argued that the scarcity of social housing in London meant that women placed housing above their own safety. The lack of action against perpetrators with a view to remove them

from the property can mean that the only option is to secure refuge accommodation, notwithstanding the previously highlighted limited refuge spaces. If women were fortunate to access a refuge space, Kelly, Sharp and Klein (2014) found that women lost security of tenure when moving to a new home from a refuge. Of the 121 women who came into and exited Solace refuges in 2015; 22% had a secure tenancy on arrival whilst only 13% did on departure and 87% of those women left the refuge for *continued* temporary accommodation.

In recognition of this issue, the Secure Tenancies (Victims of Domestic Abuse) Bill was introduced by the government in 2017. It requires local authorities in England, when re-housing an existing lifetime tenant who needs to move from or has recently moved from their social housing home to escape domestic abuse, to grant them a lifetime tenancy in their new home. The Bill is in response to the Housing and Planning Act (2016) which established plans to offer fixed term tenancies only. Concern was raised as the Bill made its passage through Parliament that victims of domestic abuse would be less likely to leave their homes if this would result in an offer of a tenancy with reduced security of tenure.

> ‘This short, targeted Bill is an important part of the Government’s wider aim of supporting victims of domestic abuse to leave their abusive situation, and ensuring that they and their families are provided with the stability and security they need and deserve.’ (Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, 2018)

Whilst the Bill is welcomed it does highlight the gap in awareness of housing and domestic abuse given this was not a consideration in the Housing and Planning Act (2016) in the first place.

3.10 Refuge and Temporary Accommodation

Access to settled housing is often secured after accessing emergency accommodation such as a specialist refuge at the point of crisis. Fitzpatrick (2003) commented on the value of specialist refuge provision in meeting the needs of households escaping domestic violence. However, many women state that specialist refuge accommodation is not always available. Women have reported differing experiences in terms of the ease of refuge or other specialist accommodation not been able to access provision immediately, for example, Quiglars and Pleace (2010) point out one woman in their study said that she had tried to leave a violent situation previously but was unable as she could not access a refuge place to stay (access to specialist refuge accommodation can provide an essential safe space to start recovery).

This woman's experience is by no means rare. The Women's Aid Annual Survey (2017) suggests that refuge provision is extremely stretched, with community-based services that responded declining roughly one in five referrals to their service in 2015-16. Only a quarter of women attempting to access a refuge space were accommodated in suitable refuge space. The Women's Aid *Nowhere to Turn Report* (2017) found that some women give up looking for a refuge space and remain with the perpetrator (7%). The Women's Aid *Nowhere to Turn Report* for 2018 highlights that one in ten women slept rough while waiting for a refuge space and that 60% of referrals to a refuge were turned away in 2016/17. The report also highlighted that the number of places in

refuges that offered 24 hour staffing had had fallen from 796 to 737 in 2016/17. The Government has provided three funding opportunities in relation to refuge accommodation (£10 million in 2014/15, £3.2 million in 2015/16 and £20 million for 2016-18). The uncertainty of refuge funding has caused much concern across the women's sector with suggestions from the Government that it may remove refuge funding from the welfare system. The Government announced in August 2018 that it would keep housing benefit in place for all supported accommodation including refuges.

The Bureau for Investigative Journalism (BIJ) found that funding for refuges has been reduced by local authorities by a quarter since 2010 (from £31.2 million 2010/2011 to £23.9 million in 2016/7). For example, Chelsea and Westminster Council have cut the budget for refuge accommodation by 45% since 2010 (BIJ). Not surprisingly, such funding reductions are seeing refuges having to increasingly turn women and children away. *Women's Aid Nowhere to Turn Report* (2017) found that for one day in 2016 a total of 78 children and 78 women were turned away from refuges. Women's Aid state one fifth of specialist refuges have closed since 2010. In Sunderland, where Gentoo is based, the specialist refuge for women with mental health or substance misuse issues closed some years back. The report makes a clear case that difficulty finding refuge space when women had higher specialist support needs. Disabled women (28%), and women with mental health support needs (26%) feature highly amongst the women supported by the caseworkers rather than being accommodated in a refuge.

Whilst some local authority areas have Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Commissioners in place, local commissioning of refuge accommodation has in some

cases been problematic given the process is often undertaken by generic commissioners with no understanding of domestic abuse, resulting in non-specialist, generic organisations being commissioned to operate domestic abuse refuges and services. The importance of refuges and safe housing in relation to women's safety when fleeing domestic abuse can be demonstrated by figures from the Femicide Census. It identified that 62.7% (586) of women killed by men from 2009 to 2015 were killed by a current or former partner. Of the 200 women known to have been separated before they were killed, 76% were killed within the first year that followed their separation and sixty-five women were killed in their own home or the home they shared with a partner. Unfortunately, the Femicide Census does not include the housing tenures of the women or perpetrators. Whilst the Census details key recommendations for agencies, such as the UK Government, to place reducing femicide at the centre of its work to reduce violence against women, such as Police, judiciary and employers, there are no specific recommendations for housing providers or local housing authorities.

Research has also found that the experience of living in refuge or temporary accommodation can be stressful and stigmatising for both women and children (Abrahams, 2007; Fitzpatrick, 2003; Jones et al., 2002). Fitzpatrick (2003) highlighted some of the tensions involved in the provision of shared accommodation, particularly where there is a shortage of move-on accommodation. In addition to the tensions involved in living in shared accommodation, Hague and Malos (2005) comment that refuge accommodation can merely be a charade if there is no permanent safe accommodation afterwards for women to rebuild their lives. For some women accessing refuge accommodation is not a viable option and given the scarcity and

uncertainty of securing accommodation in an area they want to be in, it is perhaps understandable why this is not always the most suitable choice. Families who are forced to flee domestic violence often have to leave the home without their personal possessions, which can exacerbate the stress and difficulty of trying to resettle (Pleace, 2008).

> 'I had to leave all my possessions and friends I feel as if I have lost everything and am struggling with the isolation of living in a strange area, away from all my supports.' (Scottish Women's Aid, 2016, p.48).

Domestic abuse is a key feature in the homelessness of women, Pawson (2001) argues it is a major factor for people who experience repeat homelessness. In addition to settled housing, outreach and resettlement support has been shown to play an important role in preventing recurrent homelessness for victims of domestic abuse (Pawson et al., 2007). This can take the form of financial and legal advice, support with claiming welfare benefits, and help with accessing educational courses or entry into employment.

Moving home is one of a limited number of options available, for some women staying in their home is important as it means they have existing support mechanisms around them and it means not having to uproot children from schools. For many, moving to another area without their existing close community ties would further increase their isolation. Kelly (2014) asserts that for over four decades women's organisations have advocated for re-housing rights and interventions which might enable women and children to stay 'at home' safely, citing Hague and Malos, (2005). Whilst there can be

obvious benefits to staying in their home when the perpetrator has left, post abusive relationship has been identified as a time of particular danger and vulnerability for women, with many suffering post-separation violence (Humphreys and Thiara, 2003). Flasch et al. (2015) state there has been very little research into recovery process of survivors following domestic abuse. She adds most literature focuses on the immediate needs of women such as refuges and agencies focused on safety and crisis management (Allen and Wozniak, 2010). Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) argue it is well documented that survivors can often endure long lasting trauma from abuse that can be both physical and mental that have negative career and educational outcomes with an increased risk of experiencing additional abusive relationships. Allen and Wozniak (2010) stipulate that recovery after an abusive relationship is 'a social, spiritual, cultural, and psychological process.' (2010, p.37).

3.11 Sanctuary Schemes

One option utilised to make women safer in their own homes has been the introduction of sanctuary schemes which were promoted in many areas as an alternative to refuge accommodation or moving home. A sanctuary scheme is a victim-centred initiative which aims to enable those at risk of violence to remain safely in their own homes with the installation of a range of target hardening measures ranging from window locks to a safe room to create a sanctuary in the home and supporting the household. The option of a sanctuary scheme is an important alternative to refuge for many women. Mullender et al. (2003) found that the move from home to refuge could involve leaving family, friends and changing school, sometimes on many occasions. She further argued this was a case of sacrificing the very things that gave their daily lives structure and meaning in order to be safe.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) Guidance on establishing a sanctuary scheme suggested that they could result in significant cost savings using estimated cost of providing emergency accommodation and housing for victims of domestic abuse at over £150 million a year (Walby, 2004). DCLG statistics show that there were over 5,000 sanctuary prevention measures for domestic abuse which allowed families to stay in their homes in 2014/2015.

Nottingham Council (2007) calculated the costs of domestic abuse and the potential cost savings using formulae developed by Stanko et al. (1996) and Walby (2004) which made Sanctuary Schemes an attractive option to many housing authorities and housing providers. Whilst Jones et al. (2010) found that schemes were generally accessible to all types of households, Quiglars and Pleace (2010) found geographical differences in scheme provision, finding them lacking in rural districts or those with lower population density.

There can be obvious benefits to using sanctuary schemes in providing an alternative to those who want to remain at home and in giving victims another choice in planning their safety. A High Court ruling (claimant A, February 2016) highlighted the impacted affordability in relation to the Spare Room Subsidy. In the case of A the judgment ruled against the Government who had deemed a sanctuary room as a spare room meaning victim was subject to the spare room subsidy charge. The judgement highlighted the importance of victims of domestic abuse not being penalised for a safe room which would have decreased the option for many where affordability is of concern.

3.12 Domestic Abuse Perpetrators and Housing

Whilst the issue of victims and housing is under represented in domestic abuse literature, the issue of perpetrators and housing is an even greater neglected area and presents a clear gap in knowledge. Many housing providers indicate that they do not tolerate domestic abuse and stipulate it as a breach of tenancy agreement. However, action is not instigated in the same way as taking action on the grounds of anti-social behaviour and other tenancy breaches. Scottish Women's Aid (2016) found, in their research into Fife Housing Partnership, that two thirds of service providers did not know if housing services could take action against a perpetrator of domestic abuse and 28 out of the 80 staff surveyed stated that they did not consider it their job role to take action against a perpetrator of domestic abuse. Nearly half (47%) of service providers said they were not confident about giving information about how to exclude an abusive partner, or what action could be taken against a perpetrator. Whilst its worth acknowledging in some cases a decision is taken not pursue action in accordance with the victim's wishes, the response of housing providers and other agencies is often to move the woman and children into refuge accommodation or a new tenancy leaving the perpetrator in the family home.

In their research on perpetrators and early intervention Westmarland and Gangoli (2006) identified housing in relation to perpetrators as a gap. Workers who were interviewed highlighted that most often the woman who goes into refuge accommodation as there is nowhere suitable for the perpetrator. Another worker identified that often the housing needs of the perpetrator can be the reason some women stay in the relationship because the perpetrator has nowhere else to go. Perpetrators of domestic abuse will not usually meet the criteria for a duty to be owed

under homeless legislation. The Housing Act (1996) sets out that if a person has public funds, a local connection and is unintentionally homeless then they will be considered to be classed as statutorily homeless. The priority need element includes set criteria of vulnerability including 'other special reason'. However, as the assessment takes sequential steps, perpetrators of domestic abuse are unlikely to meet the criteria of unintentionally homeless as it will be considered their actions have made them intentionally homeless.

A client who is a single homeless person with no dependent children is unlikely to be seen to be in priority need, unless they are deemed particularly vulnerable. While some categories will automatically meet the test, others will need to show that they are *vulnerable* in some way in order to meet the criteria. The test commonly used to establish if someone is vulnerable and, therefore, in priority need has become known as the Pereira test. The Court of Appeal, in Pereira v Camden Council, (1998) held that a person is vulnerable if their circumstances are such that they would suffer more when homeless than *'the ordinary homeless person'* and would suffer an injury or other detriment that the ordinary homeless person would not.

The issue of vulnerability has been the subject of more recent case law where the Supreme Court Judgment (2015) considered three cases and has not removed the need for a vulnerability decision to be made, but has clarified that vulnerability should be judged against an 'ordinary person' becoming homeless, not an 'ordinary homeless person'. This ruling means that a person's individual circumstances should be considered in their entirety when a local authority makes an assessment of vulnerability.

The threat of homelessness has been consistently identified as a barrier that prevents victims from leaving an abusive relationship, homelessness of the perpetrator can also be a risk in exacerbating domestic abuse. The Australian Royal Commission on Family Violence (2015) cite the case of Greg Anderson who was homeless when he killed his eleven year old son, Luke, in 2014. Police argued that Anderson's homelessness made him difficult to track down.

Clarke and Wydall (2015) highlight the importance of housing for perpetrators suggest that re-housing perpetrators can have positive outcomes for both perpetrators and victims in their study of the Making Safe Project which provided support and alternative housing for perpetrators of domestic abuse. They found that in addition to the respite from the daily fear and anxiety caused by the controlling presence of the perpetrator by re-housing women found the period of perpetrators living in alternative housing as providing the men with an opportunity to illustrate they could address their problems and change their behaviour. This is turn gave women the feeling of being in a stronger bargaining position than previously.

The same research also illustrated the positive impact of perpetrators being housed as for some men who wanted to be part of a family, and to return to family home, they had to make the necessary changes within themselves and that space was instrumental.

‘Because if I did have a big argument with her I just go back to the flat and I’m by myself, you know, and I don’t want to die a lonely man. So yeah, I do want my family. It is up to me . . . it is my choice’. (Foundation Housing tenant: A)

3.13 Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPN) and Orders (DVPO) and Housing

DVPN/DVPOs were introduced by the Crime and Security Act (2010) enabling Police to put in place protection for a victim in the immediate aftermath of a domestic violence incident.

A Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) is a notice served by the Police against a person who is aged 18 or over, where the police reasonably believe that he or she has been violent or threatened violence against a victim and the victim needs to be protected from them. The law allows the Police to serve a DVPN on the alleged perpetrator even if the victim does not agree to it. DVPNs are authorised by a Police Superintendent (or above). The effect of the Notices is that they exclude the perpetrator from the address for 48 hours.

A DVPO is an order applied for by the Police and made by Magistrates Court within 48 hours (excluding Sundays and bank holidays). The Order can be granted even if the alleged perpetrator does not attend Court and if the victim does not want the Order. Under DVPOs, the perpetrator can be prevented from returning to a specified property and from having contact with the victim for 14 days (minimum) and up to a maximum of 28 days. If appropriate, the process can be run in tandem with criminal proceedings.

Once granted the terms of the DVPO cannot be varied or revoked. If a DVPO is breached the perpetrator is liable to be arrested, brought before a Magistrates Court within 24 hours and can be fined up to £5,000 or given a custodial sentence of up to two months. A notice of the hearing is given to the alleged perpetrator.

Whilst there is currently no research on the number of men who are homeless or permanently removed from their homes due to domestic abuse; Kelly et al. (2014) undertook an evaluation on the pilot of Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) on which concerns were raised about increased demand on homeless services. Whilst the evaluation did not specifically measure the impact on homeless services, no specific issues were highlighted with stakeholders interviewed.

Gentoo have also secured an agreement with Northumbria Police to be notified of every Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) and Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) served in the City. Gentoo carries out checks to see if they are a Gentoo tenant, living in a property with a Gentoo tenant or applying for housing. By receiving notifications staff who work in neighbourhoods can be vigilant and can report any sightings of a person who has been issued with a DVPN/DVPO thereby taking the onus from the victim to report any sightings or harassment.

3.14 Local Housing Allowance

The Government had originally planned to cap social housing tenants benefit at the Local Housing Allowance rate, which is used to set the benefit level for private rented sector tenants. Tenants aged under 35 were only able to claim the rate for a room in a shared house and therefore would have had difficulty in accessing social housing.

The policy would have resulted in benefit being capped in the case of supported housing. Rent paid in supported housing also includes a charge for support services and is therefore usually above the private rental rates. This would have caused a shortfall meaning tenants would have to find the shortfall themselves. Figures from Women's Aid (2016) show that the income of one refuge in England would reduce from £300 to £60 per room per week if the Government had included refuge accommodation within the cap. Women's Aid estimated that 67% of refuges likely to close, with 27% unlikely to be in a position to continue. In response to the uncertainty Minister Damian Green (15.09.16) stated that the Government would transfer money to councils to top up supported housing and the 8% rent reduction would continue to apply to supported housing for the three years up to 2019/20 with an exemption would continue throughout this period for refuges. The Government had stated they would work on additional protections for shorter term accommodation such as refuges and hostels, and have suggested they might have a different funding mechanism with a consultation planned. Refuges only make up 1% of the supported housing sector.

3.15 Universal Credit

Universal Credit (UC) is a single benefit paid to households as opposed to individuals and replaces previous multiple benefit claims with the aim is to simplify the benefits system. The single benefit replaces individual claims for:

- Housing Benefit
- Child Tax Credit
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Working Tax Credit.

The national roll out of the single benefit has been subject to problems in terms of the length of time recipients are waiting for the benefit to be processed and paid. In many cases it is taking up to six weeks for a payment to be made although in some cases this has been months (Hickman et al., 2018). Housing associations see welfare reforms as being one of the important challenges they face (Mullins and Jones, 2015; Gibb et al. 2016). In light of this, Hickman et al. (2017) and Power et al. (2014) suggest that housing providers are changing their operational practices with the onset of UC in regard to income management. The desperate state that UC has presented for residents has resulted in many housing providers forming closer relationships with local food banks (Hickman et al., 2018, p.66).

Research by The Smith Institute examined the rent accounts for 775 social housing tenants in the Southwark and Croydon areas of London who had moved on to universal credit between August and October 2016. They compared them with 249 rent accounts of those tenants who were moved onto the traditional housing benefit system during the same period. Findings showed that 36% of those moving on to Universal Credit failed to pay any rent in the first week of the claim, accruing on average rent arrears

for every week of the next eleven weeks with total arrears rising by £89,000 over the period. Southwark Council pointed out that although 12% of their social housing tenants are on UC they had accrued £5.8m of rent arrears. Crucially, arrears were larger for those on UC than Housing Benefit (HB). By week 20, UC tenants were on average £156 in arrears. In cases of HB tenants overpaid by 4% of rent due. The report found that housing officers were one of the key support mechanisms for those moving to UC and in particular in supporting customers to manage rent arrears meaning they will be ideally placed to recognise and respond to domestic abuse.

Universal Credit payments are made to one person as a household. This twinned with the length of time it can take to receive a payment means that this can further trap women in abusive relationships. Sharp-Jeffs (2018) points out that the welfare system has potential to further entrap women in economic abuse, given that women are twice as likely to be dependent on social security as men. She further adds that 86% of net savings of Government cuts have come from women's incomes. The TUC and Women's Aid Report (2015) argued that monthly payments to a single claimant would be problematic in that it would give an abuser access to a large sum of money on pay day than they could have accessed previously. They carried out interviews and focus groups with women and found 73% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. The women surveyed worried that a single monthly payment would give them less flexibility in terms of managing their finances.

Payments can be made in cases of domestic abuse to two people in a household, but for this to be a viable option for victim of domestic abuse being in a position to request this illustrates the lack of understanding as to the dynamics of domestic abuse. Indeed,

85% of women surveyed by the TUC agreed or strongly agreed that if they requested this, the abuse would worsen when their abusive partner found out they had requested this option. Sharp-Jeffs (2018) points out that regardless of how sensitively a request for single payments is handled, actively challenging the control exerted through domestic abuse is dangerous and that when women experience economic abuse in the context of coercive control then they are at increased risk of domestic homicide (Websdale,1999). It is widely acknowledged that the system is problematic and there have been calls for it to be abandoned by the housing sector (National Housing Federation, 2018). To date there have been no moves to cease this problematic benefit meaning women are faced with further economic uncertainty.

3.16 Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined some of key issues facing women in relation to housing and domestic abuse. It has also highlighted some of the significant welfare reforms which can have a negative impact on women experiencing domestic abuse.

Chapter 4: The Role of Housing in a Coordinated Community Response

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the concept of a coordinated community response to domestic abuse, its origin; and how it is interpreted in the UK and consider the role of social housing providers within it. Firstly, it will outline how the coordinated community response developed before moving on to explore multi-agency working in the UK and lastly, it will examine how responses to perpetrator fit into this approach.

The Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP), formed in Duluth, Minnesota in 1980 is well documented as the originator of the coordinated community response. DAIP was the first programme in the USA to coordinate the activities of police, local courts and women's refuges in a bid to make victims safer and hold domestic abuse perpetrators accountable. Pence (1997) stated the Duluth project began with Cindy Landfried in 1978, who after being abused by her husband for three years, shot and killed him. Landfried was not charged with murder and her case led to a public debate on the responsibility of community services and the role of intervention in relation to domestic abuse and how agencies could cooperate more fully and consequently improve the community's ability to hold perpetrators to account (Pence,1997). Community Intervention Projects highlight it is the *community* and the *state* that should seek to positively address domestic abuse.

This coordinated community response model is commonly referred to as the Duluth Model and has become the leading community model worldwide for responding to domestic violence. The term 'Duluth model' has since become a generic term for a

coordinated community response to domestic abuse which can actually mean different things in practice.

DAIP identified eight key components to the Duluth Model approach (see figure 3). In essence; the approach is a philosophical framework to protect victims, hold perpetrators accountable and fundamentally is a drive to change the social climate which tolerates domestic abuse. The model considers the role of each agency and whether their actions either support or undermine the strategy. Key to its success; according to Pence and Paymar (1993) is that participants must not just *think* differently but must also *act* differently, in order to implement this they are guided by standards and protocols.

> ‘Legal remedies are not enough. A community needs to provide some basic resources for women, like shelter, long term housing, a decent income, a place to talk to other women in the same situation.’ Shelter advocate interview (page 120).

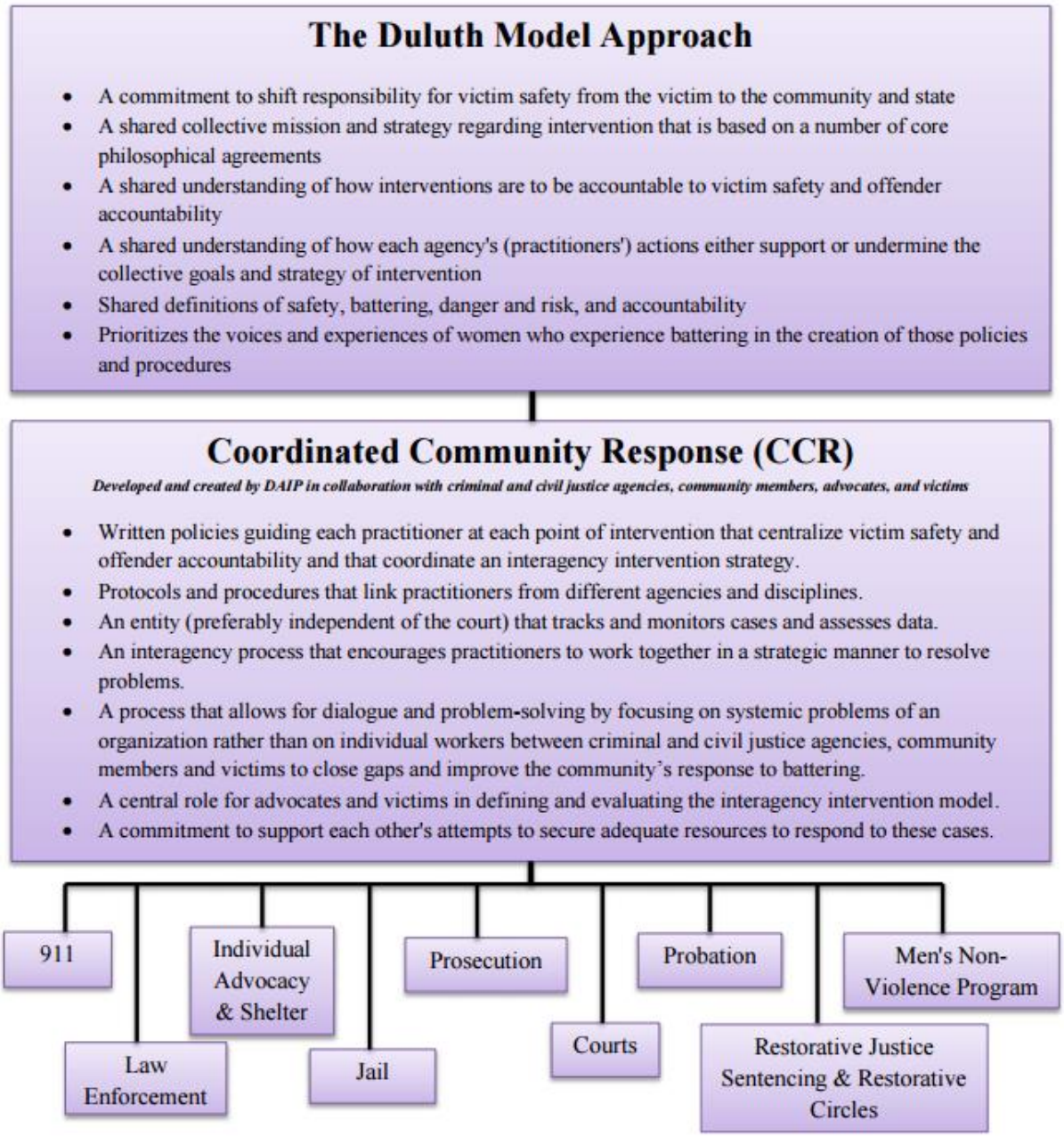

Figure 3 - Duluth Abuse Intervention Programme Model

Whilst the Duluth model (see Figure 3) is seen as the blue print for a coordinated community response (CCR), it can be argued that in the UK the approach has not mirrored its success. Whilst the UK has a history of developing a multi-agency approaches in relation to domestic abuse, for example Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), first introduced in Cardiff in 2003 and although many domestic violence forums in the UK claim to herald a multi-agency approach, this approach cannot be said to be truly reflective the Duluth model. The multi-agency response is often a catch-all term to reflect varying degrees of agencies working alongside each other with a common goal or a commitment to a multi-agency approach; but very few areas could be said to have a true coordinated community response as outlined in figure 3. Housing is not a key component in the Duluth Model and it is important that it is understood that social housing in the sense of the UK does not exist in the USA.

Shepherd (1999) argues that whilst initial efforts were concerned with reforming individual parts of the justice system, concerns about fragmentation and the absence of a shared vision and public accountability, led to this development of coordinated community responses to domestic violence (see also Hart, 1995). Shepherd (1999) further states that studies of the CCR have focused on individual components of coordinated intervention, rather than the entire community response. A view also held by Klevens, Baker, Shelley and Ingram (2008) who further suggest that research into the impact of the coordinated community response has largely been focused on individual case studies (Gamache et al., Danis, 2003;Tolman and Weiz, 1995). Shepherd (2005) argues that coordinated community responses where agencies act together to protect victims and hold offenders accountable can make a difference and that studies of interagency coordination and uniform policies and procedures

demonstrated increased rates of identification and intervention (Gamache, Edleson and Schock, 1988; Pence, 1985).

It is important we consider this in relation to the UK approach to multi-agency working if indeed agencies do act together to protect victims and hold perpetrators to account.

4.2 Multi-agency Working in the UK

The move towards multi-agency approaches in the community safety field has developed over successive governments particularly in the last forty years. Whilst Schucan-Bird et al. (2016) point out there are tensions and challenges inherent to multi-agency working citing Hester (2011), they argue there is a growing momentum behind it. In 1984 the Home Office Circular [8/84] 'Crime Prevention' suggested agencies should work together to develop strategies on crime prevention. A few years later, the Morgan Report (1991) instigated a move from crime prevention to the term 'community safety' representing a wider role for other agencies.

The 1997 Labour Government took this further placing great emphasis on local decision making (on many issues) via a wide range of local stakeholders to take responsibility for their neighbourhoods, with the intention of enabling a wider process of neighbourhood empowerment (Taylor, 2002). Blair saw the breakdown of law and order as linked with the breakdown of strong communities. New Labour argued that social issues were multi-dimensional and as such, no single agency could effectively provide a solution (Farrington, 1997) but rather there were multiple players and the response lay in local coordination.

The Labour Government introduced a legislative framework for this approach framed in Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), now amended by the Police and Justice Act (2006). The Act required 'responsible authorities' to consider crime and disorder (including anti-social behaviour and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment); and the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in the exercise of all their duties, activities and decision-making. Responsible authorities include Police, Local Authority, Fire Service, Health and Probation and as such there is scope to encourage a CCR approach and for those responsible authorities to be charged with implementing this approach within the legislative framework.

The Home Office spelled out the duty of each local authority to take account of community safety in all areas of its work. It stated that all policies, plans and budgets should be considered from the standpoint of their potential contribution to the reduction of crime and disorder.

A key element of the Act was the importance it placed on engaging hard to reach groups including those experiencing domestic abuse. In prioritising consultation with the community it sought to bring police and community closer together with an emphasis on identifying local problems and developing *local* solutions to *local* problems (Newburn, 2002).

In relation to responsible authorities, there is, however no specific requirement to include housing providers as a responsible authority which given housing providers are mandated to produce an anti-social behaviour policy seems to be a missed opportunity. In order to undertake the requirements, Section 5 of the Crime and

Disorder Act (1998) established Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, now known as Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in England. They have statutory responsibility for reducing crime and disorder, substance misuse and re-offending in each local authority area. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, many Domestic Violence Partnerships or Forums operate within the structure of the CSP as a sub group or thematic group.

4.3 Domestic Violence and Abuse Partnerships and Forums

Multi-agency work in the UK is often led by the local authority it is important to consider alternative partnerships that have arisen, why they have developed and their role in tackling domestic abuse. Whilst there is no formal requirement for local authority areas to form a specific domestic abuse forum or partnership in their areas, many have been established and operate as a stand-alone forum or as part of a sub group of the Community Safety Partnerships (CSP).

Hague (1997) argues that the multi or inter-agency response to domestic abuse became one of the principle planks in domestic abuse policy and practice. In relation to the police response to domestic abuse multi-agency working was also encouraged (Matczak et al., 2011). A point borne out by Davies and Biddle (2017) who argue that since the late 1980s partnership approaches were identified as an appropriate way to tackle domestic violence (see also Barton and Valero-Silva, 2012; Whetstone, 2001). Multi-agency work is widely accepted as the way forward in the UK with an acknowledgement that no single agency can provide a total response, given that domestic violence crosses the remits of many different services (Hague, 2001). This is not without issues, Davies and Francis (2015) point out that developing a partnership

with a range of stakeholders and interests can be particularly challenging. Davies and Biddle (2017) go further noting that the particular brand of localism promoted since 2010 is problematic in relation to domestic abuse and women's safety (see also Vanchelli, 2015).

Hague (2005) comments that whilst combating domestic abuse has moved from the margins to the mainstream, it is often accompanied by patchy service responses and precarious or inadequate resourcing. One of the issues of multi-agency working has been how various stakeholders measure the success of an intervention in domestic violence in different ways (Westmarland et al., 2010). Schucan-Bird, et al. (2011) suggest that 'multiple outcomes, including different levels and patterns of abuse, are the ideal' (Gondolf, 2004, p.608). This patchy service and often singular outcome measurement means that victims and perpetrators fall through gaps and ultimately results in an inadequate response.

Hague (2005) outlines the research undertaken to map out multi-agency approaches to domestic abuse covering in the UK, noting it was found the most important factor in determining how an initiative would develop was the nature of local conditions and circumstances. Whilst the forums were useful in terms of networking very often they could not always develop much into something more impactful. Hague found there was often a complex situation in grass roots organisations attempting to gain influence with statutory agencies at management and policy-making. Participants were not mandated to attend meaning that attendance was ad hoc, and housing departments were less active participants. Participants felt power dynamics came in to play pointing to the police taking over and refuge interviewees described feeling like 'lone troublemakers'

when raising the interests of women and children experiencing domestic violence in a woman-centred way (Hague, 2005 p.191-203). It was suggested that domestic violence services involvement provided a kind of 'moral' power and gave the partnership a sense of credibility as opposed to the services having any real decision making power. Arguably one of the most problematic issues identified was the difficulty in forums being able to reach agreement without resorting to a 'lowest common denominator' effect and consequently diluting ideas and innovations. It can be suggested this produced what Hague (2005) termed the smoke screen of forums that became little more than talking shops.

This study illustrated that multi-agency working is very different to a coordinated community response. In effect the multi-agency approach was operating against a backdrop where everything else remained the same. Harvey and Manzi (2005, p.87) highlight this point in their research.

> 'I went to a meeting yesterday with housing, they had written their policy on homelessness but didn't consult us at the multi-agency forum…still they have the culture that they do not want to consult with other agencies'.

In many cases the ambition of whole system change was not in view; as Pence and Paymar (1993) maintained a CCR requires participants to not just think differently but to *act* differently.

In an attempt to promote best practice in the area of domestic abuse the Home Office commissioned AVA (Against Violence and Abuse) in 2010 to develop a toolkit to

support local areas via Domestic Violence Partnerships (DVP) in developing a CCR with practical sessions to guide them. Despite this work and the best practice for partnership working, local authorities were not mandated to introduce a formal coordinated community response to domestic abuse. Rather, the focus was on highlighting best practice.

A Home Office survey into CSPs (2003) revealed that 59% of CSPs had access to a domestic violence co-ordinator with 70% of them working exclusively on domestic violence. The survey also found when asking participants to state which statutory sector and voluntary agencies were highly engaged with the work of the Partnership on domestic violence, 81% stated police and between 61% and 65% stating that local Women's Aid groups and refuges were highly engaged. In contrast, only 6% stated Local Criminal Justice Boards were highly engaged, illustrating the lack of multi-agency buy in from all agencies required to constitute a coordinated community response.

More recently, Standing Together Against Domestic Violence (STADV), in their work in developing good partnerships (A Guide to Developing Effective Partnerships – In Search of Excellence, 2013) reflect this view and see that buy-in from those missing partners as essential along with the *right* representation at the *right* level being critical to success. They state that housing *must* be part of the response, given the impact it has on women's safety and recovery and that the community is often the part that is missing in UK in effective domestic violence partnerships.

Unfortunately, despite the rhetoric, the role of Domestic Abuse Coordinator is now frequently subsumed into generic roles community safety within local authorities which have made staffing cuts under the current Government's austerity measures. Increasingly, those with some responsibility for domestic abuse coordination for their area do not necessarily have a background in domestic abuse or any specific knowledge and cover it in conjunction with other non-related areas of work.

> 'In the past, the Domestic Violence Forum (DVF) was too often the only body focused on the issue. When populated by front-line practitioners who lacked the means to create and deliver a strategy, change was slow to arrive. The effectiveness increased in those areas where a structure developed from the DVF to include strategic influence.' (STADV, 2013, p.9).

4.4 Policy Failings in Domestic Abuse Partnerships

This section will examine the difficulties encountered in multi-agency working around domestic abuse policy and practice. Harvie and Manzi (2011) argue that whilst partnership approaches can be deemed successful in tackling issues such as anti-social behaviour, the criminal justice-based approach to domestic violence is problematic (see also James-Hanman, 1999). In a ten year longitudinal study (1995-2005) of a London domestic abuse partnership, Harvie and Manzi (2011) noted a transformation in service delivery from an approach that was strongly influenced by feminist ideology towards one focused on legalism and bureaucratic politics. They concluded that although it was the Government's intention to empower the local community by their participating in local CDRPs, in practice such multi-agency fora led instead to a *reduction* in power of local women's groups.

Similarly, Hague (2005) argues:

> ‘Women's Aid groups and refuges attempted to work with statutory and voluntary agencies, often against the odds, to expand and improve the services offered to women experiencing domestic violence and their children' (1999, p. 2).

Lewis (1999) argues that Domestic Violence Inter Agency Forums were designed to address the inadequacies in service provision by promoting effective coordination between all those agencies which have a role to play in responding to domestic abuse.

> 'The approach is only worth pursuing if services for women and children experiencing domestic violence are improved and if their safety is enhanced - in other words, if things get better' (1999, p.13).

Welsh (2005) makes an important observation in the disassociation between domestic abuse service provision and multi-agency initiatives on domestic abuse highlights the consideration of whether it represents a multi-agency meeting or in fact is it multi-agency service provision.

In relation to the inclusion of domestic abuse within CDRPs, the Government produced the document ‘Domestic Violence: Break the Chain Multi-Agency Guidance for Addressing Domestic Violence’. It stated that it expected the partnerships set up under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) to identify the level of domestic abuse in their area and develop a strategy for addressing it as part of their wider crime reduction strategy

– this could have provided a framework to mandate an effective CCR to domestic abuse. However, by issuing guidance only didn't go far enough for a mandatory CCR. The document sets out that every local authority should publish a clear policy on domestic violence which is understood and complied with by all staff. It states that the policy should provide a framework of '*co-ordinated and measurable responses'* to domestic violence by all key departments, including social services, education, housing, and youth and leisure services. Whilst this cannot be said to be reflective of a CCR it did provide a foundation to build on.

The role of housing, interestingly, is set out in the document and establishes what local authority housing department domestic violence / abuse policies should cover. In addition; the Government produced 'Relationship Breakdown: A Guide for Social Landlords' in 1999 which set out family and housing law in relation to domestic abuse.

Following this, the Home Office Violent Crime Unit published 'Domestic Violence Strategies – A Guide for Partnerships' in 2004; spelling out the specific expectations from Government as to how partnerships should approach this. Section three covered who should be involved in the partnership and set out a checklist. Although the importance of housing is referenced within this guidance and acknowledges the standard of service which survivors receive from their local authority and/or housing provider can make the difference between staying safe or not, there are no mandatory measures placed upon housing providers.

Government guidance documents in relation to the establishment of CSPs and their approach to domestic violence all highlight the importance of a multi-agency approach.

However, the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) whilst being the optimum legislative framework to enforce this, and subsequent guidance around it did not go far enough to ensure that a truly coordinated community response.

4.5 Housing Providers in Multi-agency Working

This section will examine the extent to which housing providers are involved in multi-agency working. With regard to representation at Domestic Abuse Forums or Partnerships, housing providers are not always invited to be a part of the strategic or operational approach in their area in the same way they are in relation to ASB. Operationally, certainly in the case of MARAC, SafeLives (2015) found that under 3% of MARAC referrals came from housing. Whilst this figure does not take into account the possibility of the original disclosure being made to a housing provider and subsequently referred to an IDVA/domestic abuse service, who in turn make the MARAC referral, it is nevertheless an extremely low referral rate.

Sharp-Jeffs and Kelly's (2016) research into Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) demonstrated the importance that housing could play if they were an effective part of the response to domestic abuse. Findings illustrated that information sharing was patchy in practice, partnerships were not well coordinated and active, and ultimately safe housing remained a key need for victims.

Ultimately, the UK response to domestic abuse cannot be termed a coordinated community response in the true sense of the concept, rather it rests within a multi-agency approach within which housing providers are frequently overlooked in terms of that response.

4.6 The Focus on Perpetrators within a Coordinated Community Response

To consider all components of a CCR, I now move on to look in more detail at Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes (DVPPs). DVPPs are an element sometimes missing from CCRs, in 2009 only one in ten Local authority had a community based programme (Coy et al, 2009) and now although the exact number of DVPPs is unknown it is thought they do not cover all areas in the UK, suggesting they are often seen as optional. In contrast they were core to the original idea of a CCR. The discussion of them is particularly important to this PhD given one of the research questions is 'The Big Project is unique in having wraparound support from a housing provider. How is this support viewed by the men on the programme?' Moreover one of the core components of the Gentoo approach described in the introduction is the provision of the DVPP and positive engagement.

Over the last forty years there has been increasing awareness of domestic abuse as a social issue (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). It is widely acknowledged that feminists successfully transformed domestic abuse from a private matter to an issue on the agenda varyingly at a local, national and international level. A large body of research and commentary has focused on the impact of domestic abuse on women, societal responses to it and the role of patriarchy within it. Men's violence had not been hugely researched in comparison.

Hester and Westmarland (2006) recognise that addressing the needs of male perpetrators is a controversial issue, particularly as service provision for the victims of male violence is already under resourced and the potential for programmes for male

perpetrators to be resourced at the expense of women's domestic abuse services (see also Eadie and Knight, 2002).

Since the 1990s, research has begun to explore a consideration of domestic abuse perpetration in an attempt to produce a multi-faceted understanding of the issue (see for example, Burton and Kelly, 1998; Gondolf, 2002). In developing a response to the issue of men's violence discussion has largely centred round the question as to the effectiveness of DVPPs with polarising views on the question what constitutes success and indeed the methodology used in evaluations.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the Duluth model founded in 1981, was and still is the most commonly known of approaches in trying to ascertain an understanding of perpetration. The Duluth model advocates a coordinated community response to domestic abuse with men's programmes as part of a whole system approach to tackle the issue. The Men's Programme developed by Pence and Paymar (1993) focused on accountability for actions, challenging beliefs and education as central to changing the violent behaviour of perpetrators. It was not designed to be used in isolation but part of the whole system approach – a coordinated community response to domestic abuse. The Duluth model is often seen as an exemplar of a programme of dealing with men who perpetrate domestic abuse. Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh and Lewis (2000) argue that the Duluth Model is one of the most successful, community based projects for dealing with violent men anywhere in the world.

Wydall and Clarke (2015) argue that in the UK there has been a tendency for victim services and perpetrator interventions to operate separately, failing to acknowledge

the interconnectedness between victims, perpetrators and their families. They add that operationally the challenge facing agencies is how to develop closer working relationships in light of this interconnectedness.

Whilst many see Duluth as the prototype to working with perpetrators, it is not without critics. Dutton and Corvo (2006) denounced the Duluth model of Batterer Intervention Programmes (BIPs), the term used in the United States as based on ideological and activist notions with oversimplified assumptions and devoid of research support.

Gondolf (2002) highlighted that it was the system the programme operated within that was key to its success. He asserted that a good enough perpetrator programme located in a strong community coordinated system, is likely to produce better results for women and children than an excellent programme working within an average system.

In terms of DVPPs, there was and still is a lack of consensus in what constitutes success or effectiveness (Muller, 1997). Much research had the problem of being small in size and a view that simple measures of reoffending / reports of physical violence were too narrow to be conclusive.

Other issues included the conflicting findings in length and type of programmes. For example, Taylor's research (2001) into programmes in New York compared different groups and found that whilst participants in the longer group were less likely to be re-arrested there was no statistical differences in victim reports of new incidents. In essence, it was difficult to suggest conclusive findings as there was multiple variables.

Conflicting research findings that found little, if any change to male violence led Feder and Duggan (2002) to stress that serious questions need to be raised about perpetrator programmes.

Gondolf (2002) conducted a multi-site long term research over seven years with a focus on long term outcomes. He (2004) notes the issues with evaluating the effectiveness of BIPS, a difficult and complex task that complicates the interpretation of evaluation results. In addition to the lack of agreement on a definition of success the determining of outcome measures presents further problems.

Gondolf (2002) further argues that very often evaluations are conducted by programme staff who are naturally biased towards demonstrating programme success. Subjectivity was also highlighted by Palmer, Brown and Barrera (1992) in research that relied on self-reports of change by men as outcome measures which may under-count re-offending or indeed minimise violent behaviour. Moreover, a common criticism of evaluating success in terms of physical violence is that it fails to take into account other forms of violence especially coercive control.

Whilst there has been an emphasis on American research regarding the development of Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes Phillips, Kelly and Westmarland (2013) recognise that the Change Conference (1992) in the UK brought together for the first time practitioners to share good practice. Whilst some DVPP practitioners struggled with engagement with women's groups, they struggled to establish a level of legitimacy. This conference was instrumental in developing a move to professionalism and standards with an increased analysis on sharing practice as to what works.

In the UK developing programmes to work with men and associated research into their success represented a shift. From the 1990s work with perpetrators was largely seen as a specialist area of work with programmes often running in isolation and not part of a multi-agency or coordinated community response. Dobash and Dobash (1999) highlighted problems with establishing projects working in conjunction with women's organisations; many of who felt it wrong.

Against the backdrop of ongoing research as to what works, Westmarland and Kelly (2006) argued for the need for agencies from criminal justice, health and social care to work together to develop coherent and coordinated approaches to perpetrators that focus on tackling men's violent behaviour. Westmarland, Kelly and Chalder Mills (2013) in their research on what counts as success in relation to DVPPs see benefit in working towards more nuanced measures of success arguing that there is a problem in using a sole definition of success. They argue that this narrow definition is problematic in terms of the success can mean different things various stakeholders. As an example, potential commissioners of programmes often have some difficulty with many existing research findings seeing in some cases that a cessation of physical violence is the only measure of success worthy of financing whereas Project Mirabal found that cessation of violence was not at the top of the list of success for victims. A common theme identified by victims in this study was the importance of an expanded 'space for action'.

It can be suggested that this was the first research to consider multiple measures of success, and it is worthy of note that Gondolf concluded that better measurement of

women's outcomes was needed rather than a strong focus on men's self-reports of their behaviour.

Westmarland, Kelly and Chalder Mills (2013) state the limited number of programmes can be linked to the scepticism of whether programme actually work. Often programmes' success has been analysed using quantitative data of re-offending such as police reports or men's self-reporting which can be minimised. The focus of what works has often been on cessation of *physical* violence without recognition without an acknowledgement that a reduction in physical violence does not consider other forms of violence such as coercive control.

By widening the parameters of what constitutes success has illustrated that physical violence is not always the most prevalent consideration for victims with issues such as enhanced parenting given as successful outcomes.

In its approach in recognising and responding to domestic abuse, Gentoo formed a partnership with three other charities to provide a Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme (DVPP) to address the male violence of their customers or customer's partners. At the time of undertaking this research no other social housing provider is actively involved in a DVPP. The approach from the housing sector in relation to domestic abuse where indeed there is one, has been largely one dimensional in that it has been predominantly victim-led. That said, the term victim-led is often a useful play on words in that it places the onus on taking action against the perpetrator on the victim as opposed to the provider using powers at its disposal. The approach of the

sector has been very much focused on picking up the pieces rather than using tools and powers to address their abusive behaviour in a proactive way.

In seeking funding for the Big Project one of the biggest issues highlighted by potential commissioners (albeit with limited understanding of domestic abuse) was the concern of commissioning a programme might be seen to ‘support’ perpetrators particularly at a time which was seeing cuts to domestic abuse services. It was felt that there was no need to commission a programme as men could be referred into the Probation Service ‘Building Better Relationships’ on arrest, thereby demonstrating the continued focus on the criminal justice as the only route for domestic abuse and an astonishing lack of awareness that not all domestic abuse is reported to the police. This view demonstrated the omission of the ‘community’ responding to perpetration.

The seeking of funding coincided with the publication of Project Mirabal research findings (2015) which covered multiple data stands and as noted previously and identified six measures of success in relation of DVPPs that the researchers felt pointed to positive steps to change. However, despite this being the largest UK study this was not seen to meet the level of ‘proof’ commissioners needed.

In their research into the MATAC process (see chapter three) in the Northumbria Police area, Davies and Biddle, (2017) highlighted the value of the MATAC partnership and its contribution to positive outcomes in relation to domestic abuse. The MATAC partnership involved partners in making decisions about the options available to the meeting to effectively respond to a perpetrator either by enforcement of rehabilitation such as referral to a DVPP with potential for additional agency support, for example

support to access housing. The research found that the partners had a good level of understanding about aims and objectives, 75% of respondents who completed a partner agency online survey stated they were ‘fully clear’ about the purpose of the project.

Whilst this perhaps represents a closer idea of a coordinated community response, Davies and Biddle (2017) found that whilst those surveyed felt clear about the project, those interviewed (MATAC police team and other partner agencies) shared concerns about the lack of engagement from some healthcare providers, National Probation Service and some of the local authority children’s services across the region. Non-engagement is linked not only to time and resource issues (a theme picked up in interviews with housing professionals) but also to concerns around information sharing and the non-statutory status of the project.

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the origins of the coordinated community response to domestic abuse and how little this has translated into UK policy and practice. It has considered the legislative framework in place for multi-agency working in the UK and issues connected to this. Lastly, it has considered the role of Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes and their part in a coordinated community response.

Chapter 5: Research Design, Methods and Ethical Considerations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the research methods used to undertake this research. The study is based on a feminist action research framework as outlined in the introduction to the thesis. A mixed method approach was undertaken using qualitative and quantitative research methods. The research methods were in depth interviews with victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse and housing professionals and an anonymous questionnaire to housing professionals. The research was undertaken in line with the British Society of Criminology (BSC) Code of Ethics which provides a framework of principles to assist the choices and decisions which have to be made in undertaking research. The BSC Code of Ethics highlights the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of an individual participating in research is not adversely affected by participation in the research.

After table 1 summarising the research questions and the data collected, the chapter goes on to describe each of the research methods, recruitment of participants, ethical considerations, analysis and reflexivity within the four strands of data collection.

5.2 Research Design

A mixed methods approach was chosen in order to address the research questions. Using both quantitative and qualitative research methods provides a more robust and sensitive approach to a nuanced examination of the research questions. Traditionally social scientists have often fallen into two distinct camps, employing either qualitative

or quantitative research methods. However, methodologists such as Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) highlight there is a third methodological movement, a mixed methods approach, a view mirrored by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) with their use of the term the third research paradigm. Using qualitative methods (in-depth interviews) as a researcher was important to me given their relationship to feminist research perspectives and I was keen to highlight the lived experiences of victims of domestic abuse and the motivations and experiences of perpetrators of domestic abuse. The in-depth semi-structured interviews with housing providers provided substantial insight into the organisation's approach to domestic abuse in a nuanced way that a questionnaire alone could not provide. Using quantitative methods, an anonymous questionnaire provided a wider view of the housing sector which in turn would provide a multi-faceted understanding. Greene (2007) exhorts that a mixed methods approach is one of multiple ways of seeing and hearing.

Qualitative research methods are often used by social scientists to understand the meanings that people attribute to their behaviour, actions, and interactions with others. Qualitative research methods provided rich data gained via interviews with victims, perpetrators and housing professionals. Hesse-Biber (2010) asserts that qualitative research methods illustrate 'values, opinions, behaviours and other different social contexts' (p455–468) of a specific population. This research seeks to provide an in depth understanding of victims, perpetrators and housing professionals. It was considered that their views, values and opinions were best elicited using qualitative methods.

Whilst qualitative methods were used to gain rich in-depth data, there was also an opportunity to reach out to the housing sector more widely to seek their views on the sector's role in recognising and responding domestic abuse. The use of an online questionnaire facilitated insight into views and perceptions from a considerable number of housing professionals eliciting 233 responses (see also Bachmann and Elfrink, 1996). Themes emerging from the anonymous questionnaire in turn informed the questions used in the semi-structured interviews with housing professionals.

Table 1: Research methods used to answer each question

Research Questions and Methods	
Research Question	**Method**
1. How do Registered Housing Providers identify and respond to victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse?	**233 completed questionnaires from housing professionals.** An anonymous questionnaire was used to ascertain a wide cross section of views of housing providers as to what support they provide for victims and perpetrators. It sought to understand the routes taken by housing providers in responding to perpetrators of domestic abuse. The questionnaire results assisted in the framing of questions for semi structured interviews with housing professionals. **Nine semi-structured interviews with housing professionals** The interviews with housing professionals focused on participants' views on what the role of housing to deal with more diverse issues, in particular perpetrators of domestic abuse.
Research Question	**Method**
2. What good practice exists with regards to housing providers' response to domestic abuse currently and what potential is there for development?	**233 completed questionnaire responses from housing professionals**. An anonymous questionnaire was used to ascertain a wide cross section of views of housing providers as to what support they provide for victims and perpetrators. It sought to understand the routes taken by housing providers in responding to perpetrators of domestic abuse. The questionnaire results assisted in the framing of questions for semi

	structured interviews with housing professionals**.** **Nine semi-structured interviews with housing professionals.** The interviews with housing professionals focused on participants' views on what the role of housing to deal with more diverse issues, in particular perpetrators of domestic abuse. **Seven semi-structured interviews and one group interview with victims of domestic abuse** in the North East and London to ascertain women's experiences of support from a housing provider in relation to domestic abuse. The group interview also investigated women's experiences of their housing provider and waiting for a new home.
3. The Big Project is unique in having wraparound support from a housing provider. How is this support viewed by the men on the programme?	**Five semi-structured telephone interviews with perpetrators of domestic abuse** to understand their experiences of receiving support from a housing provider on a Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme.

5.3 Questionnaire with Housing Professionals

5.3.1 Questionnaire: Research Design and Participants

To answer the research questions a questionnaire was the selected method to reach a high number of participants in a timely and inexpensive way. Participants were recruited through professional housing bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Housing, the Northern Housing Consortium, key academics and housing professionals on twitter. As well as being inexpensive to administer, the method has the advantage of avoiding interviewer effects and the respondent can answer it at their own convenience within the agreed timescale. I was keen respondents felt able to be honest in their responses so ensured the questionnaire was anonymous to complete. The questionnaire method was used to gather a number of opinions from the social housing sector in the UK and to identify themes to inform in-depth interviews with housing professionals.

This method was used as it represented a good value for money data collection method in gathering responses from across the sector. Consideration was given to the disadvantages of using a self-completion questionnaire, such as being unable to prompt the respondent if they are unsure of what a question means or if they needed some clarification. Two pilots were used to mitigate this issue, questions were tested on both non-housing and housing respondents to lower the risk of any confusion or misunderstanding of the questions. Additionally, mine and my PhD Supervisor's contact details were included in the introductory paragraph sent to respondents should they have any questions about the overall research or the questionnaire.

The first pilot involved number of PhD researchers within the Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse (CRiVA), none of whom were linked to the housing sector. They were asked to feedback on the questions, whether they were understandable and on the length of time it took to complete the survey. Feedback included re-phrasing some questions and suggestions for further explanation on some questions. Whilst this feedback was helpful, I did not accept all feedback offered given the participants were not from the housing sector and I felt some of their suggestions were based on their lack of knowledge of the housing sector and respondents would understand. However, some moderations were made and the revised instrument sent to the second pilot made up of housing professionals (eight people in various locations across the country). A link was sent in SurveyMonkey form it was planned to be sent to actual participants. They were asked to complete it and feedback on their experiences of completing it. Again, feedback was sought on the format of the questions, language used and length of questionnaire, the use of SurveyMonkey as a tool and on ease of completion. Suggestions included re-formatting some of the questions for clarity which were altered in response to this feedback. One of the questions asked participants to highlight the definition of domestic abuse their organisation used including the option to select Government definition. The questionnaire asked respondents to add the wording of the definition. Feedback suggested removing this but after much thought and discussion with my supervisor I decided not to amend the question as whilst some respondents stated they used the government definition they quoted something different or a variation of it highlighting for some a lack of understanding that would not have been uncovered if I had simply asked them to choose what definition they used.

The questionnaire sample frame consisted of housing professionals who were sent the questionnaire by email via a professional housing body. There was a higher number of responses to the questionnaire than expected, with 233 responses received. As previously highlighted, the questionnaire was anonymous to encourage respondents to be honest in their answers without fear of reprisals or negative publicity for them or their organisations.

Marshall (1994) highlights that typically postal or email questionnaires can have a low response rate and thereby result in skewed samples. Professional housing bodies were used to mitigate a low response rate with requests to circulate the questionnaire made to professional housing bodies including the Chartered Institute of Housing, Resolve ASB, the Northern Housing Consortium and the London Housing Coordination Network where I am known to them as a housing practitioner. In addition to using the professional organisations, snowball sampling was utilised by asking key housing and domestic abuse academics and practitioners via Twitter, email and Facebook to publicise the questionnaire.

An aim of questionnaire research is to collect data representative of a population, in this case the social housing sector. It would be difficult to generalise findings from the sample to the sector as a whole given the non-response bias must be taken into account as well as motivations of participants to participate in the study as both have the potential to skew results. Motivations to participate could include an interest in domestic abuse, personal experience of domestic abuse, it being part of their role or a concern that their organisation needed to improve its response. Another factor could be based on how respondents accessed the questionnaire. It was re-tweeted by some

high profile academics and senior figures in the domestic abuse and housing fields. A further motivation to participate could be attributed to the professional body sending it, meaning that respondents felt that as the professional body was promoting it gave it credibility.

Whilst the self-selection sample questionnaire responses meant it would be difficult to make a generalisation of the sector as a whole, the responses can be used to make inferences of the sector. In developing the questionnaire and following feedback from the two pilot groups, consideration was given as to the length of the questionnaire. Schuman and Presser (1996) point to questionnaire fatigue being an issue in lengthy questionnaires. I felt that respondents would be more likely undertake the survey if they understood it to be fairly brief to complete given that they worked in a sector with time constraints, facing considerable change and restructuring for many organisations. Bryman (2008) states that in the case of a self-completion questionnaire the research instrument must be easy to follow and its questions easy to follow. The questionnaire included a series of closed questions (using numerical coding) and in some questions an added text box allowed participants to give reasons for and expand on their answers. It was anticipated that this would allow themes to emerge which would inform the questions for the semi structured interviews with housing related professionals. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the use of a questionnaire had the advantage of omitting the interviewer effect and as it was anonymous gave the respondent greater opportunity to say less favourable things about their organisation than they may have felt able to if it was not anonymous or in a face to face interview. A point highlighted by Tourangaeu and Smith (1996) who when researching drug and alcohol use, said that respondents tended to report more drug and alcohol

consumption in self-completion questionnaires than in face to face interviews. Whilst this questionnaire was not focused on substance misuse it was useful to understand that respondents were more likely to respond more honestly in saying less socially favourable things in a questionnaire than in face to face interviews. Some of the responses from the questionnaire revealed some disturbing attitudes such as victim blaming that I do not think I would have elicited in if the questionnaire was not anonymous or in face to face interviews.

The anonymity of the questionnaire was useful so that participants had confidence to express their true feelings and comment without fear of reprisal. However, in the case of the negative comments I found disturbing and I would have liked to have probed further to understand the logic or thinking behind them. From the perspective of an insider within the sector it was disconcerting that such views would be given in a questionnaire on domestic abuse and housing and the fact the respondent went to the trouble of completing the questionnaire. As researcher it was interesting that the views were noticeably at odds from comments given by other respondents. I think the points would not have made in a face to face interview given the social desirability factor in face to face interviews.

The questionnaire had a dual role, to gather a large number of views and gave the opportunity to use some of the findings to frame the questions for semi structured interviews with housing professionals. Interviews alone would not have provided a wide enough insight into the views of housing professionals. The text of the email to potential respondents advised on the length of time it should take to complete questionnaire and that completing it had the potential to improve the housing sector

response to domestic abuse. The email contained a link to the SurveyMonkey questionnaire so that participants could click directly into it.

For those who decided to complete the questionnaire, a statement at the start highlighted their completion of it was their consent for the data to be used as part of the research. The questionnaire format largely used fixed choice closed questions with some including a 'please explain your answer box' option so that respondents could add more detailed qualitative responses that would further assist in developing themes for the in depth interviews with housing professionals.

The questionnaire was divided into 2 sections:

1 Domestic abuse questions – the organisation's approach to domestic abuse.

2 Socio-demographic questions – About the respondent and their role, such as geography of organisation, number of years in the housing sector and gender to highlight any differences in responses based on experience, gender or geography thereby allowing some inference to be made.

5.3.2 Demographics and Experience in the Housing Sector

The highest response rate came from the North East, London and South East areas of the UK, with a higher number of female respondents and from those who had worked in the housing sector for over 21 years. I am known as a housing professional particularly in the North East, London and the South East through my work with the

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance which may go some way to explain a higher response rate in these areas.

There was a higher response rate from those who identified as female than those who identified as male which reflects the sector where there is a greater proportion of females employed in the sector.

70.4% - Identified as Female
29.1% - Identified as Male
0.4% - Identified as neither Male nor Female

Respondents were asked to state which role best explained their job title or role from a list: 44.2% indicated Housing Management (operational) which would include the traditional Housing officer / Housing Manager role; 17.2% as Executive / Senior Manager; and Support / Community Safety as 15.4%.

5.3.3 Questionnaire Analysis

Analysis of the questionnaire was in two parts. Firstly, as some of the questions allowed respondents to add more detail to some of the questions if they wished I was also able to code such responses and the analysis of these responses was used to identify themes used to probe deeper in the semi structured interviews with professionals.

In the case of closed questions a percentage were calculated. For example, I was able to determine the percentage of responses who responded that domestic abuse was positioned within anti-social behaviour in their organisation.

I was able to determine the demographics of participants via the questionnaire which allowed me to cross tabulate variables such as the geographical location, the amount of time they had spent in the housing sector, with whether their organisation adopted the Government definition of domestic abuse. The findings are discussed in detail in chapter six.

5.3.4 Questionnaire Ethics

The research was undertaken in line with the British Society of Criminology (BSC) Code of Ethics which provides a framework of principles to assist the choices and decisions which have to be made in undertaking research. Participants completed the questionnaire anonymously so they could submit views without fear of reprisal. Before commencing the questionnaire, participants clicked that they understood the process before being allowed to go on to complete the questionnaire. Whilst some participants made reference to their organisation in their responses, I felt ethically I would not specify their organisation in my findings and would redact the organisation when using their data. Mine and my supervisor's contact details were added to the questionnaire should any respondent have any concerns or further questions about the process or how the data would be used.

5.3.5 Questionnaire Reflexivity

In analysing the responses to the questionnaire some participants specifically mentioned that they understood domestic abuse because they had personally experienced it. As previously mentioned in the Questionnaire Research Design section some respondents made negative reference to responding to victims and how other tenants should not have to 'put up' with the noise of hearing domestic abuse if the victim does not leave. Another made negative reference to a gendered understanding of domestic abuse as the norm and that women were automatically perceived as the victim.

From my perspective as a housing professional, and not a researcher, I was somewhat surprised by some negative view of victims singularly as a blatant housing management 'problem'. I felt powerless in this situation that these views existed and customers could be on the receiving end of them. This more than any other part of the research journey highlighted for me the difficulty in separating the role of researcher and housing professional and that my values as a housing professional were integral to me as a researcher.

5.4 Interviews with Housing Professionals

5.4.1 Research Design and Participants

Semi-structured interviews with housing professionals were chosen to explore views on the housing sector response to domestic abuse. Nine participants were recruited through my professional networks including my role as co-founder of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance, contacts via Twitter, the Chartered Institute of Housing and the Northern Housing Consortium. The questions for semi-structured interviews (nine

interviews) were largely informed by themes emerging from questionnaire findings I wanted to probe further.

This research seeks to understand the role of housing professionals in responding to victims and perpetrators of domestic violence so it was considered essential to draw the sample in a way that reflected the different regions of England and Wales. Participants were directly involved in their organisation's response to domestic abuse and were aged between 34 and 52, consisting of seven women and two men. Eight participants were white British and one was Asian.

Participants were selected by purposive sampling, a non-random method of selecting participants based on their knowledge on a particular subject (Bowling, 2002). I approached them to participate as I had heard about the participants' organisation's response to domestic abuse or I had worked with them as part of my role with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance which meant that I had a good understanding of their knowledge and a good professional relationship with them. The relationship I had with participants is explored in more detail in chapter seven. There was also the opportunity to use a snowballing sampling technique to gain participants to avoid any difficulties in obtaining suitable participants. Snowball sampling can be described as:

> 'A technique for finding research subjects. One subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on' (Vogt, 1999. p.1).

The interviews were recorded audio interviews with prior permission of participants. Some of the interviews took place face to face at the participant's place of work and some via telephone given the geographical spread of participants was wide. Two interviewees were London based, one in the South East, one in the South West, three were in the North East and one participant in Wales. Participants were contacted via telephone to explain the research and a follow up email sent with the research design approval to give them time to consider what the interview entailed so they could make an informed decision to participate.

5.4.2 Housing Professional Interviews: Analysis

In order to analyse data following the interviews I listened to the audio recordings of them, cross referencing with transcripts to ensure accuracy and listening to them on numerous occasions. This assisted greatly in identifying emerging themes by manually coding i.e. categorising key descriptive labels to transcriptions. Bryman (2008) states that coding is where data is broken down into component parts and given names. I attached a high level descriptive label to passages and from there referenced all relevant text from interviews pertaining to that descriptor together. From there I was able to further highlight sub sections for analysis. For example, respondents talked about having a victim focus which meant much of their activity was in supporting victims and in doing so gave me information that their training, campaigns aimed at customers in the main did not consider perpetrators of domestic abuse. As well as answering a series of set questions, the semi structured interviews included scope for participants to give their views as to what they would like to see in terms of the housing sector in relation to domestic abuse and this allowed for a wide scope of responses to be coded.

The use of coding was useful in seeking to clearly answer the research questions. Charmaz (2001) sees coding as the critical link between data collection and their explanation of meaning, while Bauer (2000) argues further that coding themes need to flow from the principles that underpin the research and the questions it seeks to answer. This method of coding was also used for interviews with victims and perpetrators.

5.4.3 Interviews with Housing Professionals: Ethics

Participants were recruited using a participant information sheet that gave all necessary information for them to make an informed decision whether to participate in the research or not. The interviews were anonymous and a pseudonym given to each organisation to enable participants to be completely honest without fear of any negative comments and observations being attributed to their organisation. Whilst most of the interviewees stated they would be happy for their name to be associated with the research, I felt this would not be ethical given any negative comments about their organisation's approach had potential to have a detrimental effect on them professionally. The ability for participants to be identified represents a breach of confidentiality. The example of Fisher Folk (Ellis, 1986) represents such a case; participants of a small village took part in research and once the research was published participants were able to be identified by neighbours. According to Allen (1997) such breaches can damage the public's trust in researchers. The Fisher Folk example served to heighten researchers' awareness of how they describe research participants in published work and reports. As a researcher it was essential that I did not put the participants at risk professionally.

5.4.4 Interviews with Housing Professionals: Reflexivity

In interviewing fellow housing professionals it was relatively straight-forward to establish a rapport given my role in the sector.

There are both strengths and limitations to being an 'insider' when undertaking qualitative research. Firstly, considering the strengths; Ganga and Scott (2006) argue that insider status has been 'viewed as the holy-grail for the qualitative researcher' providing a level of trust and openness that may not be otherwise attainable (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p.58). I found this to be the case in the interviews with housing professionals. Being an insider can according to Adler and Adler (1987) give the researcher legitimacy, whilst Chew-Graham, May and Perry (2002) found that in the case of General Practitioners interviewing fellow General Practitioners the findings were rich in detail.

My 'insider' role was essential in gaining information from participants, as DeVerteuil, (2004) points out the insider perspective as beneficial and believes the insider would gain more advantages if they are well informed about the topic and would get more information from the participants in the research. I believe that being a fellow housing professional, being well informed on housing and domestic abuse provided a definite short hand with interviewees which in turn elicited open discussion. My role at Gentoo is strategic whereas the participants I interviewed were employed in largely operational roles; for example Neighbourhood Safety/Anti-social Behaviour Teams. However, many had previously had experience in front line housing management roles, as had I, and I felt this experience helped greatly as I could understand the role and how it

related to specialist support teams. I also felt my role as DAHA Co-founder contributed to give me further credence as an insider.

McClintock, et al. (2003) argue that research should give various positive impacts to the researcher in terms of values and self-development, stating if a researcher chooses a topic which they are familiar with, they would benefit more from it. I immensely enjoyed the interviews and learned so much from them. I also felt enriched in having the quality time to discuss issues in depth with one person as my work role does not always lend itself well to this given most meetings and work based tasks have a reason and are outcome focused meaning that they must have a narrow agenda. I also felt positive researching a cross cutting issue that I already had insight into from both angles. Whilst I could not influence the tragic events that had led me to develop a passion in tackling domestic abuse I felt positive in highlighting the issue of domestic abuse to the housing sector and feel this could impact positively on other potential victims of domestic abuse. The experience of conducting interviews was fairly cathartic for me personally and I felt I could use the information to make a difference. Whilst I am proud to work in the housing sector I can often feel frustrated when I hear of a poor response, so from a housing perspective it was positive to hear good examples from housing professionals and even more rewarding hearing the positive experiences of victims in their experiences with housing providers. The negative experiences I heard about gave me confidence that the research must be used to inform future working practice of the sector I am part of.

Cotterill (1992) states there has been a view that many feminist researchers have attempted to make interviewing a much more interactive experience, with the

researcher being invited to bring their particular role into the research relationship by answering any questions a participant may have, to share their own knowledge and their experience, and where requested to offer support (Oakley, 1981). I felt my role was useful in participants feeling they could be open and consequently felt the responses I received were truthful and that interviewees cared about the subject and therefore wanted to honest about failings and areas for improvement as well as good practice. For example, one of the interview questions asked what they felt their organisation could do better and all participants answered it with suggestions with no sense in any interview that the organisation had everything right.

Whilst being an insider can be of value, consideration must be given in terms of how the researcher sees the world. Mansfield (2016) sees reflexivity as examining the filters and lenses through which we see the world. In discussing the role of the researcher and reflexivity, Malterud (2001) states:

> ‘A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions.’ (Malterud, 2001, pp.483-484).

As a researcher it was essential to consider my positionality in the research process. Whilst reflexivity is increasingly seen as a central part of the methodological process; as Seale (1999) asserts: ‘placing discovery of reflexivity at the centre of methodological thinking’ (Seale, 1999, p.60). Flood (1999) succinctly puts it ‘Without some degree of reflexivity any research is blind and without purpose’. (Flood, 1999, p.35).

Considering my dual role as a researcher working within the housing sector I did have some concerns about the power imbalance between researcher and participant. Feminist versions of reflexivity advocated by Wilkinson (1988) and Reinharz (1992) see collaboration of research and in terms of my interaction with participants I view the knowledge sharing and insight of the participants as co-collaborators in the research.

Whilst I have discussed being an insider provides obvious benefits it is not without criticism or negative elements. The dual role of researcher/practitioner can be problematic. As Maykut and Morehouse (1994) point out, the qualitative researcher's perspective is a paradoxical one:

> 'It is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others— to indwell — and at the same time to be aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand.' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p.123).

Whilst being an insider was beneficial on so many levels including legitimacy and the shorthand in the participants being able to explain certain nuances to someone in the field, it was necessary that I was aware of the counter-effects of being an insider. As Asselin (2003) suggests the dual role of researcher/practitioner can result in role confusion when the researcher responds to the participants or analyses the data from a perspective *other* than that of researcher. As I have already stated in gaining a rapport with participants it was beneficial to have the shorthand understanding of the sector but it was also important to remember my role as researcher throughout the

interview. Asselin (2003) further suggests that whilst role confusion can occur in any research study there is a greater propensity if the researcher is familiar with the research setting or participants through a role other than that of researcher.

A point that was also made by Kanuha (2004) who argued that questions about objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of a research project are raised if the researcher knows too much or is too close to the project and may be too similar to those being studied (Kanuha, 2000, p.444). It was important to remember the role of researcher when interviewing housing professionals and to question any assumptions I may have been tempted to make on my knowledge of the housing sector.

The role of an insider has also been criticised in relation to impacting on the information elicited; suggesting that participants and the researcher may assume a shared understanding and knowledge of issues without explaining and exploring particular experiences and beliefs and thereby miss crucial nuances (Chavez, 2008). In an effort to counteract this it was essential to ask participants to clarify points to mitigate the possibility of missing any crucial nuances.

Whilst there are obvious benefits in being both an insider in the housing sector and a researcher, Dwyer and Buckle (2009) suggest there is a space ‘in between’. Continuing this theme and citing Kanuha (2000) in seeking to research ‘at the hyphen of insider-outsider’, Dwyer and Buckle suggest researchers can only ever occupy the space in between whereby they are neither true insiders nor complete outsiders. A point picked up by Razon and Ross (2012) who refer to the fluidity of identities in the research encounter which they describe as a ‘dance in which both parties attempt to

size up each other'. Stockdale (2016) when considering her role as a researcher whilst simultaneously working as an Analyst at Durham Constabulary suggests that researchers are unlikely to fit into the neat categories of insider or outsider (see also Dwyer and Buckle 2009; Thomson and Gunter 2011; Berger 2015).

From my own research journey I can attest the fluidity of identities, the analogy used by Stockdale (2016) of the frequently visited 'roundabout' of the insider/outsider researcher whereby they enter, and often exit, each encounter in the field from different positions. I can echo Stockdale's experience of being a researcher whilst working in an organisation (and in my case the wider housing sector) you are researching. Across the sector I had great support from many people including the President of the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and a CIH policy officer who had completed a housing related PhD. Within the organisation I am employed I have had support from the Executive Team, felt fairly comfortable discussing my research and that it was valued by some in the organisation. I also had great support from Gentoo's Support Manager / IDVA and her team in accessing survivors. Along the research journey I did experience some less positive experiences and comments from housing professionals asking what was the point in my doing it. This made me feel uncomfortable when I was asked about my research when they were around meaning that I played it down and avoided discussing it until I was asked to present my initial findings to another organisation and the person who had previously made what I felt to be negative comments told me afterwards privately that they had not really considered what I was doing was that useful but they could now see the value it brought. The research journey whilst in full time employment was often a lonely one where I frequently felt pressures and frustrations of work related frequent travel, organisational and DAHA

commitments, where often tight deadlines did not always dovetail well with the role of researcher or rather the researcher I wanted to be! There was a sense of isolation to some extent of feeling no one could fully understand this situation twinned with a sense of guilt as I knew was very fortunate to be in the position to do both!

On being an insider, Ryan asserts that any attempts to clarify and qualify what is meant by insiders and outsiders (see also Chavez, 2008; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Razon and Ross, 2012) are problematic and suggests that the terms no longer serve as exploratory devices for researchers' and therefore should be abandoned. From my own experience, I feel the concept was useful to consider and is not a redundant term, but rather that I concur with Dwyer, Buckle and Kanuha in there being a space (or hyphen) in between and considering this space as essential to the research journey. Moreover, I was keen that my research would be used as a part of DAHA to make a material difference to how the housing sector recognises and responds to domestic abuse, so it was important that I had the understanding as an insider.

Connected to this, in terms of authenticity; the research was undertaken through a feminist perspective, in that it did not intentionally draw boundaries between those doing the research and those being researched (Lloyd, Ennis, and Atkinson, 1994). The research felt more equitable in that I was a fellow housing professional and created a different dynamic in the researcher / participant relationship. In considering the reasons as to why housing professionals took part in the research, I felt they were motivated to participate as they wanted to improve the housing sector response to domestic abuse and that their participation would go some way in doing that. Crucially, the approach taken was to view the housing professionals almost as co-researchers

given I was using their insights, knowledge and experience to develop the research. It is important to understand the power dynamic at the interview stage where as a researcher I was wholly dependent on the participants' willingness to share their experiences and thoughts about the housing sector response to domestic abuse (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009).

5.5 Interviews with Victims of Domestic Abuse

5.5.1 Research Design and Participants

Semi structured interviews were employed to interview victims of domestic abuse on a one to one basis and one group interview. I was keen to gather rich data and felt that semi structured interviews where the researcher uses a series of questions whilst allowing further questions based on the answers elicited would be the most suitable tool. All participants were contacted by their support worker or me in the first instance to outline the research and what the interview would entail so they could take time to consider if they wanted to participate. I had originally planned to recruit women solely from Gentoo but some of the women approached by their support worker felt they were not ready or not interested in taking part in the research. As I was keen that women's voices were heard in this research, I approached a London based housing provider who agreed to approach their customers to see if they would be willing to participate.

Two women who I contacted declined to take part after consideration and discussion on the research as they felt they had moved on in their life and in participating they felt it would re-open negative feelings for them which one of them felt could impact on her child who was also recovering. I could appreciate their points of view and had no desire

to cause harm in the interests of the research. Moreover, I was heartened that they had the agency to refuse and did not feel an obligation to participate.

Participants were aged from twenty-two to over seventy, some worked, one had had her own business and one was retired. Three participants were black and four were white. Participants were interviewed on a one to one basis either by telephone (due to location) or face to face in a comfortable setting allowing time for breaks determined at their request. In addition to one-to-one interviews, a group interview also took place at a local refuge where women wanted to be together for the interview.

One-to-one interviewees were given the choice of interview location so they felt most comfortable, i.e. a Gentoo local office which had full safety policies and practices in place, a local refuge which again had safety policies in place or their home (if they no longer lived with the perpetrator). Participants were given the opportunity to select their own pseudonyms where necessary and all participants were advised they could refuse permission for their information to be used. I ensured personal safety at all times by checking into my workplace before and after each interview. In the case of the London based participants telephone interviews were utilised given the location.

Whilst Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) assert that few qualitative studies employ telephone interviews, Carr and Worth (2001) note that telephone interviews can be a ‘versatile’ data collection tool and; according to McCoyd and Kerson (2006) allow participants to remain on ‘their own turf’ (McCoyd and Kerson, 2006 p.399) and permit more anonymity (Tausig and Freeman, 1998). As well as the obvious advantages in terms of travel costs and travel time to London there was also the benefit of anonymity

around sensitive topics (Chapple, 1999; Kavanaugh and Ayres, 1998). Telephone interviews were arranged via the housing provider's domestic abuse specialist who shared the participant information sheet with them and explained the purpose of the research. They agreed to take part in the process and chose a pseudonym meaning that I never knew their name or address. I found the 'gatekeeper' was useful in letting the women know the purpose of the research, meaning they were more able to decline taking part. This does raise the point that the women who did agree to take part were suggested by their support worker and were not selected independently.

The development of rapport is seen by many commentators as essential to the qualitative research interview processes (Fontana and Frey, 2005) and telephone interviews are frequently seen as difficult in establishing a rapport with participants. Opdenakker (2006) states rapport may be reduced if it difficult to create a good interview ambience. Compared to the face to face semi-structured interviews with housing professionals the telephone interviews did prove more difficult to establish a rapport. The interviews were arranged at the convenience of the participants to ensure it was the most convenient time for them. Prior to starting the interview I took time to talk informally with the victim, asking how their day was, before commencing an explanation of the research and that they could withdraw at any time. The process was useful to some extent in that a pseudonym was used and I didn't have their address so the women perhaps felt more assured in their anonymity in comparison to those participants I interviewed in their own home. With telephone interviews much of creating an ambience can be out of the researcher's control – for example, I was unaware if the women were speaking to me from a place they were comfortable in and

for some it was where abuse took place. It was essential that I was able to make them feel as comfortable as possible and establish a rapport.

Linked to this, another difficulty in undertaking telephone interviews was being unable to read non-verbal cues. Burnard (1994, p.69) argues that the lack of non-verbal cues means that 'the interviewer has to pay special attention to the phrasing and clarity of his or her questions'. Whilst active listening is crucial in all interviews (face to face and group) as a researcher it was important to assess the nuances in tone and delivery of speech of the participant. During one interview a participant became upset but said she did not want to stop saying that it felt good to talk about it. In a face to face interview it is much easier to make a judgement if the participant is able, in your opinion to continue without being harmed. It was difficult to listen to the woman crying and not being able to utilise the non-verbal methods of communication to illustrate that you understand and have empathy with their distress. Directly after the interview I had to attend a work meeting so did not have much time to gather myself together and I wondered throughout the meeting (and the rest of the day) how the woman was feeling after she out the phone down and how the rest of her day had been. Whilst I had not ended the interview leaving the woman in a distressed state I was aware she had been upset in the course of the interview. This also happened with face to face interviews but the drive from a woman's home back to the office gave me the opportunity to process the distressing situation.

In addition to one-to-one interviews I also conducted a group interview at a local refuge. There were fifteen women residing in the refuge at the time of the group interview and the Refuge Manager had previously discussed the opportunity to

participate in a group interview at a house meeting a few days earlier. Four women who were all White British from the North East of England aged between twenty-two and thirty eight years old agreed to take part. On arriving at the refuge I took time to outline the purpose of the research and how the interview would operate. Two of the women had small children with them so while they made drinks I played with the children. The session took place in the refuge lounge which was a comfortable environment with sofas and toys for the children. I showed the women how the Dictaphone worked and reassured them they could leave or cease taking part at any point.

One woman left the interview as her child was restless and would not settle. Another woman did not speak but nodded and gave me eye contact at some key points made by other women. She had said before the session started that she wouldn't know what to say 'that was any good' but was happy to take part with the other women. I felt it was important to engage with her throughout the session by addressing questions to the whole group and using non-verbal communication such as nodding back at her when she nodded in agreement with the comments. On reflection; in many ways it could have been more useful to have conducted the interview with a refuge worker in attendance given my brokering with support workers for interviews had resulted in participants feeling assured. However, after we had stopped recording and were chatting informally, the women telling me about feeling nervous when making a homeless application and that they often felt they didn't want to ask the refuge staff to help as they were so busy often dealing with urgent issues that they didn't want to keep bothering them. Whilst the women spoke very highly of refuge staff and the emotional support received I do not think they would have disclosed this information

in front of staff in case it was considered critical of staff in some way (which it was not). Letherby (2003) argues that when undertaking research we need to be sensitive to respondents and must have awareness of the relevance to our own presence in their lives and in the research process. She is critical of the cleaned up versions of research seeing that the complexity of the objectivity is crucial to any discussion of objectivity and subjectivity and that reflecting on bias can lead to useful data.

The group interview provided a useful layer of information, although they have sometimes been criticised for a weaker understanding of an issue than those obtained from individual interviews (Hopkins, 2007; Krueger and Case, 2009). While the group interviews were not specifically focus groups, the principle was the same. Kitzinger (2005) argues that focus groups permit researchers to enter the world of the participants which other research methods may not be able to do. I certainly felt the sense of the frustration the women were feeling in relation to waiting for an offer of property although this was not something that was an immediate theme in the interviews with victims. The sense that women could not move on with their lives whilst waiting for an offer was very immediate and palpable in the room. The location of the group interview with noises of people coming and going from communal areas and babies crying all added to the feelings the women described of not having their own space and the frustrations this can bring. This was in stark contrast to the individual semi-structured interviews undertaken which were one to one in a woman's home, in an quiet office or via telephone with no real background noise.

5.5.2 Victim Interviews: Analysis

As with interviews with housing professionals each interview was listened to a number of times and cross referenced with the transcription for accuracy. Coding was used to identify key themes or descriptors and then sub themes within that. One of the questions in the interview schedule for victims asked: ‘Can you tell me a little about your housing needs / housing situation when you were experiencing abuse?’ From that ‘decision to move home’ was one theme identified by women and ‘decision to stay put another. The issue of moving house versus not moving home was identified as a key difference between some women. Some women felt that a move was important to them in terms of their recovery but for others staying put was actually key to their recovery and the impact of moving or staying on their children was connected to this. This led to another theme identified within the decision to move house or stay put as a sub theme of the impact of moving or staying on recovery. See Table 2 below for an example of how coding was used.

Table 2: Coding Example:

'Can you tell me a little about your housing needs / housing situation when you were experiencing abuse?'

Theme 1 Moving house	**Theme 2** Decision to stay in current home
Yeah, my house like feels like, I know it sounds weird, but my house is not tarnished with any arguments, nothing bad has happened here, it just feels like it's new for me and my daughter.	I think I was more frightened of moving because, like I say, I'd been in a refuge, we'd moved to [names area], I didn't know anyone and I did feel isolated, do you know what I mean? And I struggled. I struggled to make friends 'cause I'm canny quiet do you know what you think I'm loud but [Laughter] for people I don't know, I'm no good. That wasn't another thing like why I wasn't moving, it was like everything he'd done it was to make me move and I thought no, you know, I'm not backing down.

5.5.3 Victim Interviews: Ethics

Those consenting to take part in the study received a written outline of research guidelines detailing their rights to withdraw at any time. The written outline explained how the information would be used and advised of any potential negative consequences of taking part in the research. As well as receiving this in writing; participants had this explained verbally when making contact to ask them to take part in the research. The process was explained on initial contact and then reiterated at the time of interview. In addition, on consenting to take part in the study were asked to sign to say they understood the nature of the research.

Participants were interviewed on a one to one basis either by telephone (due to location) or face to face in a comfortable setting allowing time for breaks determined at their request. Interviewees were given the choice of interview location so they felt most comfortable, i.e. a Gentoo local office which had full safety policies and practices in place, a local refuge which again had safety policies in place or their home (if they no longer lived with the perpetrator). I ensured personal safety at all times by checking into my workplace before and after each interview. Some participants were London based so telephone interviews were utilised. Participants were given the opportunity to select their own pseudonyms where necessary and all participants were advised they could refuse permission for their information to be used.

Westmarland and Downes (2013); Antle and Regehr (2003); Edwards (2010) outline the essential elements of informed consent should involve key factors such as an individual's capacity to give their consent; disclosure of adequate information about

the risks and benefits of participation so that an individual can make a meaningful decision and enough *time* and *space* for an individual to fully consider involvement.

Given the sensitive nature of the research it was essential that I was aware of any emerging ethical considerations that may have arisen during the research process. Downes, Kelly and Westmarland (2014) comment that scrutiny of violence and abuse as 'sensitive' topic that involves 'vulnerable' groups has made ethical clearance more challenging. They highlight the ethical dilemmas often faced by researchers in the subject area necessitates a balance between informing social science research on the issue *and* consideration of the impact on participants. There is a difficulty in framing all victims as vulnerable and as a homogenous group given they may be at very different stages in their journey and have other variables that may impact on whether they are deemed vulnerable. The women interviewed were certainly not a homogenous group and at differing stages in their recovery.

Fontes (2004) considers the effect of prior trauma on potential participants' ability to understand the risks and benefits of participating in research and asks if women experiencing or emerging from chronically abusive relationships can actually give informed consent, or is their judgement impaired? Alternatively, a generic approach to vulnerability and to avoid research for concern of impact on victims can according to Downes, Kelly and Westmarland (2014) strip potential participants of their agency to make an informed choice. They assert that refusal to participate is in fact a demonstration of that agency and argue that it's important to re-frame 'victims' as active stakeholders and agents in the research. This was apparent in some of the interviews where women did not see themselves as vulnerable and very much wanted

to tell their lived experience of domestic abuse. Some women felt that by sharing their experience they could help other women who may experience abuse acknowledging that whilst they might find it upsetting they felt it would be worth it. In addition to having altruistic reasons for wanting to participate in the research in that it could help other women, some felt it would be a cathartic experience and commented afterwards it had been a useful process for them. Although abuse is still considered by many to be a 'private' and 'sensitive' issue, Walker (1984) and McCosker (1995) highlight that many women interviewed feel a sense of relief to be able to talk about their experience 'Being interviewed by you was more useful than the counsellors at X'. (McCosker, 1995, p.4).

On this theme, Kelly et al. (1992) argue that talking about the effects of experiences of violence can be both cathartic and traumatic. To this end it was imperative to stress the voluntary nature of the participation throughout the interviews and women could withdraw at any time. Ford and Reutter (1990) assert this is more important than the informed consent forms provided at the beginning of the process. I made clear the interview would not continue with any participants who I felt may be damaged by participating.

At the beginning of each interview I explained that I worked at Gentoo and as some of the women interviewed were Gentoo tenants it was important to consider the impact this could have. In using interviews with victims it was necessary to be aware of the power imbalance in using the interview process is prone to a power imbalance in that the interviewer initiates the interview, determines what will be discussed, manages the interview guide, and ultimately decides when to terminate the conversation (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2005).

Women were asked to select the interview location and whilst most women selected to be interviewed at home one woman chose to be interviewed at the Gentoo office. Whilst I made it clear that although I was employed by Gentoo I was undertaking the interviews as a researcher, whether women were interviewed at home or the Gentoo office it is worth noting the power imbalance in the interviews as they were tenants of the organisation that manages their homes and who they pay rent to. For those women who were, or had been Gentoo tenants I was concerned that the women may have felt obliged to participate. In an attempt to mitigate this; I spoke with support workers on what the research was about and how the interviews would be conducted. The support workers had a relationship with the women based on trust and support, which was a useful conduit to the women considering participation, meaning they could ask questions and raise any concerns with someone they trusted that they may have had about taking part. Once women had agreed to speak to me to see if they would take part, I spoke to each woman by telephone and if they were happy to go ahead we arranged an appointment.

With respect to women interviewed in their home, the fact that the women had trusted me enough to invite me to their home went a little way in counteracting the power imbalance between researcher and participant. Morgan and Spanish (1984) assert that much guidance on interviewing participants does not consider the importance of the ‘spaces and places’ (Elwood and Martin, 2000), whilst Kreuger (1994) advises that researchers should use a neutral location to interview respondents. As the research was undertaken from a feminist perspective it was crucial to mitigate any power imbalance wherever possible but also be aware of it throughout the process. Whilst

the home would not be considered neutral it was imperative the women felt comfortable and in control as much as possible. Elwood and Martin (2000) suggest that by participants having a choice in where they are interviewed may feel more empowered. I reasoned that by that interviewing women in their own homes (their choice) represented to some extent a choice they had power over, whether to invite me in or not. I took the invitation very seriously and felt that being in their home it gave me greater insight into them and their experiences. One woman wanted to show me around her home and to illustrate how she had created it from nothing after leaving her husband and much loved home of over forty years. I sensed this was important to her and served as a pre-amble and statement as to where she was currently; a survivor, before discussing more painful things in her past. I sensed it gave me greater insight and understanding as to her sense of home and sense of pride in what she had created mirroring Elwood and Martin's point (2000) who state interview locations offer the researcher richer knowledge from the interview content alone. Ethically, I felt I had to return to her and check that I had her permission to write about these observations as she had consented to an interview and may not have been aware of my writing of reflections pre-interview. I felt I needed her express permission to write about these experiences as they felt very personal and something I have often reflected on since.

5.5.4 Victim Interviews: Reflexivity

Given my reason for first entering the domestic abuse realm over twenty-five years ago was as a result of someone close to me being murdered by her ex-husband; I was (and still am) heavily invested in the victim journey and this was very much the area of the research that I was most keen to give a voice to. I felt a strong connection with the voice of victims and what they had endured so was keen their words were heard given

that so many women's voices living with abuse could not be heard or had been permanently silenced by male violence.

I felt in an extremely privileged position to be invited into a woman's home, their personal place of safety and to hear about their experiences in some detail. I believe that it was very useful to interview a range of women in both the refuge and in their own homes. The one to one victim interview participants had not spent a lot of time in a refuge (one woman had in a previous abusive relationship and another was interviewed whilst living in a refuge) so the information obtained via the group interview added a multi-layered picture to the research overall and provided an insight to those women who had to leave their home to live in a refuge. The information gained from the group interview group offered much insight into waiting for a property and living in a refuge where women were essentially waiting for a home and thereby an opportunity to rebuild their lives. As a housing professional it was humbling to hear the importance of a good offer of property can make to a woman and what it represented in their recovery.

I felt that as the women knew that I worked in the housing sector was a useful factor in that they could easily explain processes and experiences they had encountered and knew I would understand what they were saying without having to ask for more detail. Whilst this was positive and served as a shorthand; my role as an employee at Gentoo was a potential barrier to be negotiated. One woman alluded to having a bad experience with a local housing provider and was not sure if she could tell me about it as I worked at Gentoo, stating: 'Well I'm frightened to talk to you because I don't go with Gentoo, I like - I'm from [mentions area].' She asked if I would tell the other

housing provider about her bad experience as she was worried they might make it difficult for her. I reassured her that what she told me would not be shared with other providers and that if I wrote about it, it would be anonymously to illustrate a point, she went on to tell me about the experience she had had in detail.

Once we had stopped recording and I was packing my things still chatting informally with the women, they said they thought it would be useful to know more about housing such as knowledge on getting on housing waiting lists and how a homeless application was processed as they felt they had no power in making a homeless application and a sense of being ‘done to’. I asked them if it would be useful if I asked someone from Gentoo to attend a house meeting to explain applying for a Gentoo property and someone from a local council to come and outline the homeless application process. After discussing this with the refuge manager, plans were established to attend a house meeting to outline Gentoo’s allocations process and I said that I would contact the Local Housing Authority to invite them to outline the homeless application process. As a researcher I felt it was morally right to action something I could do to attempt to ease the feelings of powerlessness the women had identified and resonated with my view research should seek to make a difference; not only on a systemic level but also to individuals. Additionally, the negative experiences of women in understanding their rights under homeless legislation making them powerless and the anxiety this created for them greatly frustrated me.

Following interviews with women I often reflected on what they had disclosed to me and wondered how they were progressing with their recovery. Whilst there was much emotional labour involved in the interviews with women which I had anticipated; I was

not prepared for when leaving the refuge after conducting a group interview I encountered a child on my way out. She wanted to tell me she was going to a new school in another part of the country and was having to move into a new house before the start of the new school term as they had had to move out of their home. I reflected on this on my journey home and have since reflected on it often and thought about how the child was progressing her new school, did she feel safe in her new home and had she made friends? I found the conversation upsetting in the way she spoke to me in a resigned manner about a situation that she had no control over. The child's mother had been in the focus group and felt she had no control over accessing social housing in an area she wanted to live, so felt she had no choice but to secure a private sector tenancy. Whilst it had been difficult to hear about the situation from the woman – hearing the child's resignation was even more depressing and made me feel extremely angry at the situation they were placed in – after leaving an abusive partner, yet still with no control over their lives. On this theme, a consortium of housing providers (including Gentoo) have commissioned a PhD around children's sense of home on domestic abuse whereby issues experienced by the child would be highlighted and had potential to influence the housing sector. Whilst this is positive it didn't address the practical issues facing the woman and child that day but reinforced to me the importance of the role of research that sought to make a difference to improve lives.

5.6 Interviews with Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

5.6.1 Research Design and Participants

Semi structured interviews were also used with perpetrators of domestic abuse. To recruit participants I discussed my research with the Programme Manager of the Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme, the Big Project that Gentoo are partners in and outlined what would be expected of participants. The programme manager discussed with men on the programme that the purpose of the interviews was to gain insight into their experiences of the perpetrator programme, the Big Project and to ascertain the impact of the housing provider's involvement in providing the wraparound support to men on the programme. The men were advised that I would be at the start of the programme the week after over coffee to meet with them if they had any questions or concerns in participating.

I attended the Programme and met with eight of the men, seven of whom were White British and one Asian. I outlined my research and advised that I was employed by Gentoo so the men were clear of my dual role from the outset. Four men agreed to discuss their situation with me in more detail to see if they wanted to participate. Following this discussion, three of the men said they would take part with one man saying he didn't feel confident to participate as he felt his English wouldn't allow him to fully explain himself and he would not want to do so with the support of an interpreter.

Of the three men who agreed to take part I gave them a Participant Information sheet and made arrangements to call them to arrange a suitable time and place to interview them at the office of the Big Project or a Gentoo office. Numerous plans were made to

conduct the interviews and were all cancelled by the men, often at the last minute, saying they had work commitments or other important appointments. Given the problems in establishing face to face interviews I contacted the men and suggested telephone interviews as an option. Following this suggestion, the interviews took place at the agreed date and time via telephone. I reminded the men at the beginning of the call that I would be recording the interview and would not use any personal details that might identify them such as real names of them, their (ex) partner or children. I felt the anonymity of a telephone interview helped the men in disclosing their experiences and what had led them to the programme.

Following the initial session with men at the programme, I contacted the programme Manager to see if any more of the men had any further thoughts on taking part in the research. She advised that some men had agreed they would take part and I made contact to arrange interviews, offering to carry them out in person or over the telephone. Again, the men cancelled the interviews at short notice advising they had had second thoughts or that they had time constraints. Following this, I asked (with the permission of the Programme Manager) the Positive Engagement Officer (PEO) who provided wraparound support to men if he could identify any men who might agree to take part. From this one man agreed to a telephone interview meaning five men in total. Recruiting men was much more difficult than I had originally envisaged which could be linked to two reasons. Firstly, the nature of the research was focussing on negative aspects of the participants' behaviour which made it more difficult to engage men. Linked to this, I made it clear that I was employed by Gentoo meaning that participants might have had concerns that the information they disclosed could impact on their housing either then or in the future. Secondly, I was interested in participants

who were Gentoo customers or living with a Gentoo customer. The programme was open to men from the Sunderland area, not only those connected to Gentoo. Men also had to be assessed as suitable to attend the programme meaning that there was already a small group of men who fit the research participant criteria.

5.6.2 Perpetrator Interviews: Analysis

The interviews with perpetrators were analysed using thematic coding as in the same way as the interviews with victims and housing professionals. I felt it was important to present the interviews as case studies so give a picture of how the men had accessed the programme and the background of each of them. Men interviewed were at different stages in the DVPP.

5.6.3 Perpetrator Interviews: Ethics

As well as considering the impact of me as a researcher on participants; it was important to recognise my potential bias as participants were taken from the programme that I had established with three other parties and secured funding for in the face of much adversity. Gentoo staff also support men on the programme with wraparound support. The purpose of the wraparound support is to support men to remain engaged on the programme so there was an investment from me personally and my employer for the programme to be viewed positively by the men using it. Gentoo are not funded externally to undertake this work, reflecting the social and organisational investment into the programme where Gentoo have an emotional vested interest in it being successful. Gondolf (2002) highlights this issue of subjectivity in his multi-site study of perpetrator programmes stating that when evaluations were conducted by programme staff who were naturally biased towards demonstrating

programme success. This was an issue to consider in the research given that the male participants have a tenancy or live(d) with the landlord the researcher is employed by. Subjectivity was also an issue highlighted by Palmer, Brown and Barrera (1992) in research that relied on self-reporting of change by men as outcome measures which may under-count re-offending.

Koocher and Keith-Spiegel (1998) highlight that a researcher's authority can make it difficult for participants to easily refuse consent arguing that as researchers usually study those who are poorer, less educated and more discriminated against, often less socially powerful than themselves. I have previously outlined the impact my employment at Gentoo could have had on the participants but consideration was also given as to the impact of myself in terms of factors such as gender and class. A point also picked up by Denscombe (2007) who noted people may respond differently depending on how they perceive the interviewer arguing that the age, gender and ethnic origin all have a bearing on what the interviewee will divulge and their honesty in what they reveal. I thought it was interesting to note that on meeting men at the Programme and them agreeing to be interviewed and their subsequent failure to attend face to face interviews but to agree to a telephone interview. On reflection the men may have found it easier to be more open via telephone than in a face to face interview where cues from me as a researcher may have had an impact. As well as consideration of the victim participants which I gave much thought to I also realised it was essential to also consider the wellbeing of the perpetrator participants. Consideration was given as to how the perpetrator may feel about disclosing the behaviour that led them to the programme. Wellings (2000) sees the concept of sensitive research as one where if it requires the disclosures of behaviours or attitudes which would normally be kept

private and on disclosure might result in disapproval or social censure. The impact of social desirability and asking perpetrators to disclose shameful behaviour can impact on participants argue Lee and Renzetti (1990, p.511), they describe the 'potential threat' as including 'psychic costs, such as guilt, shame, or embarrassment' as well as 'unwelcome consequences'. Gomm (2004) highlights that the interviewee's responses are influenced by what they think the situation requires arguing it is therefore essential to ensure what the purpose of the interview is to put the interviewee at ease.

Research on domestic violence and abuse raises a number of important ethical and methodological challenges in addition to those posed by any research. A clear issue for consideration will be those participants who are Gentoo customers (or applying to be) as they may have had concerns about making full disclosures for fear of it impacting on the security of their home, being allocated a home or being judged. Lee and Renzetti (1990) highlight this issue as a topic that may pose a substantial threat to those involved in the research and that therefore makes the collection, holding, and/or dissemination of research data problematic social consequences either directly for the participants or of the class of individuals.

5.6.4 Perpetrator Interviews: Reflexivity

This part of the research was the most difficult to contemplate given my position of the last 25 years following the domestic violence murder of someone close to me whilst an undergraduate student. My perspective perhaps unsurprisingly, has always been very victim focussed, spending my undergraduate placement at a women's refuge continuing as a volunteer post-graduation, my final year dissertation being on gender differences in charging and sentencing in domestic abuse homicides. My previous role

as a Domestic Violence Coordinator meant that my focus and emotional investment has always been around the victim particularly as there was no DVPP programme in the area I worked. Given this, I was extremely concerned that I would be unable to establish a rapport with a perpetrator of domestic abuse and that in turn this would mean I wouldn't elicit the most open responses from participants.

Hassan (2016) states that researching sensitive areas has the potential to expose the researcher to physical, mental, or emotional strain (Liebling, 1999; Jewkes, 2014). Reger observes that '[i]n learning to become a researcher, academics are taught to pursue objectivity while submerging their subjectivity' (2001, p.606). I mistakenly thought at the outset of the research that in order for the data to be useful I had to quell my 'subjectivity' and take an 'objective' stance.

Researchers using a reflexive approach frequently 'write (themselves) into the analysis' according to Gilgun and McLeod (1999, p.185) whilst (2011) highlights the issue of emotional labour in research. Citing Ellingson (2006, pp.299–300) Seear (2011) further argues that conventional accounts of research have had a tendency to remove the researcher from the research process which she concludes results in masculine 'modes of being' and resulting in 'tidy' research accounts. Reflecting on my initial visit to the Big Project (perpetrator programme) to explain my research to the men taking part on the programme was my first encounter with them. I met with them prior to the programme session, outlining what the research was about and the interview process. Interestingly, when talking about my research and on contacting the Big Project to seek participants I always used the term perpetrators, for example 'I am interviewing perpetrators of domestic abuse as part of my research' whereas staff

working on the programme always used the term ‘the men’. Ultimately at the start of the research I saw them as perpetrators of domestic abuse foremost before anything else.

Five men were interested in taking part and agreed to speak to me on a one to one basis to find out more about participating. The one-to-one initial interviews were useful pre-cursors to the actual interviews in practicing developing a rapport with men. Whilst I was initially nervous in speaking to the men, I was quickly able to establish a rapport. I felt that previous roles as a Housing officer where it is essential to establish a rapport with a wide range people and previously being a Probation Service volunteer where I attended prison visits with Probation Officers to assess men’s suitability for a compulsory day programme helped me with this process.

Whilst my previous experience was useful, undertaking the interviews was not without considerable emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983; Dickson-Swift et al., 2009). Having interviewed and spoken to many victims of domestic abuse I had some idea of what I might feel or how I might react but in relation to interviews with perpetrators I was apprehensive as to how the process might impact on me personally. Whilst I felt an affinity with victims of domestic abuse and the process of engaging them in the interview process felt natural; in the case of the perpetrators it was necessary to put them at ease in talking to me in a different way to that of the victims. Hochschild (1983) defines emotional labour as a situation where one is required ‘to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in other’ (2003, p.7). In interviewing perpetrators of domestic abuse I felt it was important to hear their experiences of a perpetrator programme where a housing

provider played an integral part and reflected on Hochschild's point in the need to strike a balance on the sensitivity of what was being studied and the benefit in developing a greater understanding of the topic.

Clough and Nutbrown (2007) assert that the effectiveness of the interview heavily depends on the communication skills of the interviewer therefore it was imperative that I afforded the same level of care in ensuring the wellbeing of the participants. In successfully establishing a rapport it was important I was not influenced by their values. Turnbull (1973) highlighted his experience in feeling disgust in the people he was studying; whilst Burman (2001) noted issues around dilemmas for researchers when questions may invite the participant to disclose distressing revelations which are not easy to resolve. In one case, a participant contacted me to arrange the interview responding to a voicemail I had left. During the course of the conversation the participant disclosed distressing accusations made against him meaning that he feared for his safety. Following his disclosure of the concerns I had a duty of care, not only as researcher but also as a Gentoo employee and made arrangements for a worker to fully support him.

In establishing a rapport with the participants it was important to understand the impact of me as a researcher on them given my experience has been largely victim focused and I work for the housing provider they are tenants of. The participants therefore had to invest an amount of trust in me which I had to respect. Gentoo's tenancy agreement includes domestic abuse as a tenancy breach so it was therefore important that I made it explicit that information they disclosed was confidential and would be used to inform

my research but would not to inform Gentoo as to the detail of the information they chose to share (notwithstanding any safeguarding related disclosures).

As a researcher there was a delicate balance between engaging in a rapport with participants and not seeming to condone their abusive behaviour. A point made by Sculley (1990) who on interviewing men convicted of rape and discussed remaining neutral in her responses to gain information, highlighted concern that by interviewing men they might take her neutrality as a signal of approval or agreement. This was certainly a consideration for me in interviewing perpetrators of abuse and represented an important balance between ensuring the participant was comfortable enough to elicit information and that I was confident they understood the purpose of the research did not in any way condone abusive behaviour. One of my concerns was the possibility of men minimising their abusive behaviour and striking a delicate balance between letting them speak about their experiences whilst probing and challenging where necessary.

5.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has described the four sources of data (anonymous questionnaire and three sets of semi structured interviews) the ethics, analysis and reflexivity associated with each of them. The following four chapters describe the findings and analysis of this data. The following chapter discusses the findings of the anonymous questionnaire to housing professionals.

Chapter 6: Housing Professionals views on Domestic Abuse as a Housing Issue

6.0 Questionnaire, Results and Analysis

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings from the anonymous questionnaire which was completed by 233 housing professionals.

As discussed in the Chapter five (Research Methods), the questionnaire consisted of sixteen questions in SurveyMonkey format which was accessed via a link sent by email by the researcher and bodies such as the Northern Housing Consortium, the London Housing Operational Group and on twitter via key academics such as my PhD Supervisor and the Chartered Institute of Housing. In a bid to elicit more open and honest response it was anonymous; however, some respondents named the organisation they worked for. Respondents were advised questionnaire completion would take around 10-15 minutes.

6.2 Questionnaire Findings

This section presents the findings to each question.

1 Does your organisation provide support to tenants who have experienced anti-social behaviour? If yes, please describe.

Nearly all of the respondents (95.2%) answered yes to this and a text box allowed them to give examples of the type of support their organisations provided to tenants in relation to anti-social behaviour. Examples of support were wide ranging and included mediation, restorative justice, support to perpetrators of ASB, use of CCTV, pursued injunctions and other enforcement action leading to eviction of the perpetrator. Although 95.2% is a high figure it was surprising that this figure was not actually higher given that housing providers are regulated through the recently re-named Regulator For Social Housing (formerly the Homes and Communities Agency) on their response to anti-social behaviour with a requirement to produce an anti-social behaviour strategy.

2 Does your organisation provide support to tenants who have experienced domestic abuse? If yes, please describe.

I was keen to understand if there was a significant difference compared with support provided for victims of ASB. There was a slightly lower positive response to this question with 93.8% of participants answering yes. Organisations outlining that their organisations provided a range of support from simply signposting to specialist agencies, to offering target hardening, sanctuary rooms and some organisations

stating they employed Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) to offer specialist in-house support. Responses did not include highlight enforcement action as support for the victim in the same way they had for the previous question. Additionally, there was a slight variation to the previous question on providing support to tenants experiencing ASB where agencies were more likely to offer *direct* support to tenants experiencing ASB as opposed to signposting or referring to specialist domestic abuse support agencies. This might be because there was some knowledge of specialist agencies for domestic abuse whereas there are less obvious specialist agencies for ASB other than agencies such as Victim Support. Moreover, the regulatory requirements around ASB have seen providing an in house response to ASB as part of core business. Some responses indicated that domestic abuse was treated as an aspect of ASB due to the *neighbourhood impact* as opposed to the personal impact on the victim with referrals made to a generic tenancy support service.

> ‘We categorise DVA as ASB - due to the neighbourhood impact. We have a specialist tenancy support service who provide outreach to victims, but this is generic support and we would look to refer into specialist agencies for ongoing support’.

More positively, some providers where they didn’t offer specific support for domestic abuse made referrals to specialist domestic abuse support agencies.

> ‘We do not offer direct support, but as part of our process we make referrals to specialist agencies for support’.

‘By offering Sanctuary Scheme works, lock changes, linking clients with DV support services, management transfers to safe properties, applications to North London DV Reciprocal agreement, undertaking MARAC Risk assessments and onward referral to MARAC’.

3 Does domestic abuse sit within anti-social behaviour within your organisation?

Almost two thirds (64.9%) of respondents stated that their response to domestic abuse was situated within anti-social behaviour. Some indicated that there was not a separate policy for domestic abuse and as previously mentioned the responses to domestic abuse were framed in an ASB narrative.

‘We don't have a dedicated policy or procedure to deal with Domestic Abuse and currently view it as another element of anti-social behaviour’.

‘When an incident of domestic violence occurs one of the actions we take is to complete anti-social behaviour forms to monitor frequency and impact’.

However, whilst almost two thirds highlighted that it did sit within ASB, some respondents added more information to the free text box noting domestic abuse *was* seen as a *different entity* and that officers dealt with it differently, with specialist officers providing the response.

‘Yes although cases would also be referred to our Safeguarding Team’.

Responses indicated there was a growing awareness within some organisations that ASB and domestic abuse *were* distinctly different and as such the organisations were in the process of amending their current working practices to reflect this. One stated their organisation was introducing the role of Domestic Abuse Officers.

> 'It does sit within our ASB service currently. We are about to trial using Housing Officers in a new role referred to as Domestic Abuse Officers. The role will be to work with the local MARAC and citywide DV Tasking to ensure that a local response is being provided to safeguard victims of Domestic Abuse'.

4 Does your organisation provide support to tenants who have perpetrated domestic abuse? If yes, please explain to what extent.

Whilst there was evidence of some providers seeing domestic abuse as distinct from ASB and altering their practices and staffing in view of this, the overall response was almost certainly singularly victim focussed. Only 6.1% of respondents said their organisations provided support for perpetrators of domestic abuse to address their abusive behaviour. Whilst their organisations may not have directly provided that support, some responses indicated they had some knowledge of Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes (DVPP) in their area and did refer or signpost men into programmes or signpost to services including giving perpetrators the Respect helpline. In responding to perpetrators rehousing needs there was some recognition this would be beneficial in terms of the impact perpetrators may have on victims when they are not in accommodation. Findings suggested what whilst there may not have been a specific organisational approach or policy mandate to support perpetrators of domestic

abuse, the victim focused approach could often mean that it was necessary to offer perpetrators support.

> ‘Being a perpetrator did not exclude a person from [name of org]. We worked from the basis that moving perpetrators off the streets or into accommodation from prison was in the interests of survivors as we know that homeless perpetrators are more likely to harass survivors’.

5 Does your organisation have an agreed definition of domestic abuse?

Almost three quarters (68.7%) of respondents stated their organisation *did* have an agreed definition of domestic abuse whilst 14.3% said their organisation did *not* have a definition. The question also asked respondents to add the definition wording their organisation used. Whilst many quoted the Government definition as the one that their organisation used there were variations given suggesting that whilst stating their organisation used it, it was not always clear and indicated that perhaps only *some* elements of the definition were actually used. One respondent highlighted they used the Welsh Government definition which also places a duty on public authorities (including housing providers) to proactively respond to domestic abuse. Where the Government definition was not used the follow examples were given.

> ‘Any abuse whether physical or mental used against another person’

> ‘Same as the Welsh Assembly and defined within the new Act for Wales’

6 Have you ever received any training on responding to domestic abuse?

A high proportion of respondents (80%) indicated they had received *some* training on responding to domestic abuse. Respondents were also invited to outline the training received and responses reflected a wide range of training in terms of depth and length which ranged from in-house training to training delivered by specialist organisations including Women's Aid, SafeLives and local domestic abuse specialist agencies. Some respondents indicated they were qualified Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) or had IDVAs in the team. Some respondents felt that housing providers had a significant role to play in domestic abuse but that to do so effectively, staff needed to be adequately trained.

> 'I am a qualified an IDVA and obtained this qualification during my role as a Community Safety Officer'.

Almost a fifth (19.1%) of respondents stated they had *not* received *any* training in responding to domestic abuse. Interestingly, one had received training in recognising domestic abuse, but not in how to respond.

> 'I've been trained on recognising DV but not how to respond it'.

> 'Personally not recently but it is part of professional development'.

One view expressed was that housing was increasingly becoming called upon to fill in the gaps left by cuts to other services under the government's austerity agenda.

7 In your opinion, to what extent does domestic abuse affect your tenants?

A high number of respondents (82%) felt that domestic abuse would affect some of their tenants (see Table 3). It would have been interesting to note the difference by asking how many of their tenants would be affected by ASB in comparison. Less than 10% (7.7%) indicated that domestic abuse would in their opinion affect *very few* of their tenants and more surprisingly 2.1% felt that none of their tenants would be affected by it. Whilst 2.1% is not a statistically significant number it was nevertheless surprising that anyone in the housing sector would think that *none* of their tenants would be affected by domestic abuse.

Table 3: Domestic Abuse Extent

In your opinion, to what extent does domestic abuse affect your tenants?' (N=233)

Response	**Percentage**	**Number**
All of your tenants	0.87%	2
Most of your tenants	6.9%	6
Some of your tenants	82.2%	190
Very few of your tenants	7.7%	8
None of your tenants	2.1%	5

8 What multi-agency involvement does your organisation have in relation to domestic abuse?

Respondents were asked to indicate if their organisation was involved in any of the multi-agency arrangements highlighted in Table 4. Only around half of respondents' organisations were part of their area's Domestic Abuse Strategy (53.2%) or Operational Group (45.4%) meaning those who were not involved in any way would not have any input into the area's response to domestic abuse, highlighting absence of housing as an entity in a coordinated community response. To use Gentoo as an example with 29,000 homes in a city of 121,000 households (Tyne and Wear Research and Information: 2011) chairs the city's Domestic Violence Partnership; playing a leading role in the city's strategic response to domestic abuse, which in turn will benefit their existing and future tenants. Whilst housing organisations are not statutory agencies such as Police, they do have powers that can be used as part of a coordinated community response to domestic abuse.

Attendance at the Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) received the highest proportion of responses (81.3%). First established in Cardiff in 2003, MARAC is now firmly established across the UK as a multi-agency tool to support high risk victims of abuse. Whilst responses illustrated a high proportion of housing providers attended MARAC, there is an anomaly with the incredibly low number of MARAC referrals from housing providers which stands below 3% nationally (SafeLives, 2017/18). Whilst the low numbers of MARAC referrals may be part explained by housing providers' signposting to specialist domestic abuse agencies (as highlighted in responses to Question 3) who may *in turn* make a MARAC referral, it does not offer

a full explanation and raises questions about their role at MARAC. It rather begs the question: are housing providers an integral part of the MARAC process that can influence improvements to the MARAC process or are they there merely to offer information or useful at crisis point when someone needs to be re-housed? The responses to this question informed the interviews with housing professionals to probe this area in more depth.

The Multi–agency Task and Coordination (MATAC) process operates across Scotland and Northumbria Police areas and its aim is to provide a multi-agency response to those perpetrators of domestic abuse who cause the most harm. Just over a quarter of respondents (26.2%) came from the North East of England and Northumbria Police covers a large geographical area, meaning that almost a third (30.7%) of respondents had taken part in the MATAC process.

Interestingly, a quarter (25.5%) of respondents had taken part in a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) process. The DHR process is a rigorous, tightly controlled and confidential process where organisations are only included if they have any useful information which may be relevant to understand agencies involvement with victim and perpetrator and if any lessons can be learned.

Table 4: Multi-agency working

What multi-agency involvement does your organisation have in relation to domestic abuse?' (N=233)

Membership of Groups Response	**Percentage**	**Number**
Member of domestic abuse partnership / forum strategy group	53.2%	123
Member of domestic abuse partnership / forum operational group	45.4%	102
Attends Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)	81.3%	188
Has participated in Multi-Agency Task and Coordination Group (MATAC)	30.7%	71
Has participated in Domestic Homicide Reviews	25.5%	59
Other	16.2%	37
Don't Know	9.9%	23

As well as the list where respondents were asked to tick to indicate a positive response, they were also given the opportunity to add further information in a text box. The responses indicated a range of locality based positive multi-agency practice:

> ‘Legal Services within [redacted] City Council operate a DV Tasking process for all issues of Domestic Abuse experienced by our tenants’.

Another added information about working in partnership with Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to reduce repeat victims of abuse.

> ‘We are currently establishing operational links into STRIVE (GMP wide initiative to reduce repeat victims’.

As well as some examples of multi-agency working respondents added to the text box there was also an example of a secondment from a housing provider to a domestic abuse team. This was an interesting in that a housing response was considered integral to the team.

> ‘We have seconded a staff member for 5 months to the local authority in the JDATT (joint domestic abuse triage team) dealing with timely safeguarding of high level DV cases that have been reported to the police’.

9 How confident do you feel that your organisation is responding appropriately to domestic abuse?

Overall comments indicated confidence to deal with domestic abuse particularly round supporting victims and understanding referral pathways. The term ‘appropriately’ is a value judgement in itself and could be problematic in what the respondent deemed appropriate for a housing provider, given that some don’t necessarily see domestic abuse as specifically their remit.

Table 5: Confidence of Organisation

‘How confident do you feel that your organisation is responding appropriately to domestic abuse?’ (N=233)

Level of Confidence	**Percentage**	**Number**
Very Confident	37.5%	86
Fairly Confident	33.1%	76
Confident	20.0%	46
Not Very Confident	8.3%	19
Not Confident at All	0.8%	2

There was a slight increase in confidence levels in respondents’ organisations than the respondents’ confidence. This could reflect that a range of job roles completed the questionnaire so whilst they themselves may not work in a customer facing, housing management role they did have confidence in their organisation’s response. Comments also expressed concern about low levels of reporting of domestic abuse and some felt their organisations could do more for victims and perpetrators.

> ‘Personally I feel we have many victims of domestic abuse who are not aware of the support we can offer to them and domestic abuse is under reported to us.

> More often we initially become aware via a noise complaint or referral from an external agency. We could do more on raising awareness and prevention and we need to coordinate our service to ensure victims of domestic abuse receive the same level of support and provide a consistent service across of 13 local authority areas and all departments work collaboratively'.

> 'I think we can do more to support perpetrators and victims, we are currently reviewing our approach'.

> 'We don't have a dedicated policy or procedure to deal with Domestic Abuse and currently view it as another element of anti-social behaviour'.

The responses offered a wide range of practice highlighting there was not a standardised approach to recognising and responding to domestic abuse across the sector. Good examples of considering the organisational response to domestic abuse included:

> 'Each year a DV Mystery Shopping Exercise is conducted of the HOS call centre (by survivors) and findings used to improve service delivery'.

This approach was certainly not the norm with some responses highlighting the poor status domestic abuse received in their organisation.

> 'Training is poor, understanding is poor, reporting is poor. It is not given the status it should be as a risk to tenants.'

A lack of knowledge within organisations was also linked to limited resources which impacted on how organisations recognised and responded to domestic abuse. The lack of awareness and knowledge in staff was felt to impact on low reporting.

> ‘I feel that the levels of reporting are quite low compared to other places I have worked and do not feel comfortable that there is sufficient resources or knowledge in the organisation to effectively address issues of domestic abuse that affect our customers.’

The issue of resources twinned with the lack of status given to domestic abuse in organisational cultures left some respondents feeling that domestic abuse would be seen as less important given it was not part of their traditional remit. As previously discussed, the introduction of the Welfare Reform and Work Act (2016) resulted in social housing rents decreasing by 1% for four years; after originally being set for ten years allowing social housing providers to plan their business. This loss of income saw many housing providers adjusting their business plans to accommodate this loss in income. Adjustments included reducing their workforce and losing some of the services that were not seen as ‘core’ business. Savills (2018) highlighted that since the 1% reduction capacity in the sector has fallen by 9% as homes drop in value and providers cut back on maintenance (*Inside Housing* 09.03.18). The research findings did not however highlight the cut backs on roles that provided support to customers.

> ‘…also acknowledge the importance of responding to domestic abuse as major international and social issue is not embedded throughout all of the

> organisational culture, and in light of greater external and economic pressures, the importance of domestic [sic] to the organisation may become less.'

Alongside concerns around the impact of economic pressures on the organisation, attitudes to domestic abuse and ideas of how perpetrators present and what constitutes an 'ideal victim' still played a key role in an organisation's response to domestic abuse according to some respondents.

The historical misconception that domestic abuse was used as a tool by some women to obtain a house move was still seen by some respondents as still an assumption by some of their colleagues to this day and shaped the idea that a victim had to provide 'proof' of the abuse from a statutory agency by some providers to be considered for a house move.

> 'I have seen both very good responses and also some very poor responses. Those that were poor often involved staff members pre-conceived ideas on what a victim and perpetrator 'looks like' and beliefs that people 'make up' domestic abuse to get house moves. In one case a very high risk case was dismissed until social services became involved and provided evidence that a house move was required.'

10 If you deal directly with tenants, how confident do you feel personally?

There was a level of confidence in knowing where to refer to or ask for support from a specialist agency if they were unsure of how to respond.

> ‘My experience is limited but I would refer the tenant to local services providers’.

However, whilst there might be a level of confidence in knowing what to do once presented with domestic abuse, one respondent was not sure they would be able to actually recognise the signs.’

> ‘I am not sure I always recognise the signs.’

Some respondents disclosed they had personally experienced domestic abuse and felt this gave them empathy and understanding of what the victim was experiencing perhaps increasing their confidence when responding to tenants.

> ‘As a previous sufferer of domestic abuse, I have a strong understanding.’

One respondent who had also experienced domestic abuse had observed the prejudices of other colleagues who displayed a lack of understanding of domestic abuse but that it was not considered a training need by them.

> ‘I was once a victim of domestic abuse and have experience of working with women's organisations. I therefore have a tacit knowledge of the dynamics of

domestic abuse relationships and 'the system' - both good and bad. The only issue I had was the prejudices of other housing staff, who did not possess this knowledge and/or experience but refused to acknowledge that this may be an area for them to develop.'

11 Does your organisation treat perpetration of domestic abuse as a tenancy breach?

A small number (13.2%) of respondents stated their organisation did **not** treat domestic abuse as a tenancy breach. Whilst almost three quarters (72.6%) did, just over half (53.8%) of respondents' organisations had actually taken any action against perpetrators potentially highlighting a gap between policy and action. Comments also suggested some confusion as to *how* they could take enforcement action, some believed any enforcement action *had* to be related to anti-social behaviour, nuisance to neighbours or damage to property despite it being a clear tenancy breach.

'The [Arms-Length Management Company] ALMO tries to do this but I think in reality it does not happen very often and they find it difficult to action from a legal perspective.'

'I hope so! The Local authority has recently updated its tenancy agreement and I am not sure if this is treated as a breach; I would say not, unless this can come under ASB.'

A common thread throughout responses in the whole questionnaire reflected a view that responses to domestic abuse were largely framed in an ASB narrative and

confidence in taking enforcement action was centred round whether it could be categorised as impacting on the neighbourhood or be classified as ASB.

> ‘If it's causing a nuisance to neighbours noise wise or if property is sustaining damage.’

Other comments highlighted that whilst domestic abuse might be referenced as a tenancy breach it was often not *always* enforced and whilst there might be some awareness and understanding of domestic abuse there was a lack of consistency in an organisational approach to domestic abuse.

> ‘I have done work with my team around DVA but there is no consistent approach across our organisation.’

If there was an organisational approach to domestic abuse it was often solely victim focussed; this could offer *some* explanation to the lack of enforcement action against perpetrators if taking enforcement action would be detrimental to the victim.

> ‘Whilst there are other remedies, tenancy action is always considered, provided it does not put the victim at greater risk.’

However, the lack of knowledge or the assumption action had to be in connection with the community impact illustrated that although many organisations’ tenancy agreements might clearly *state* they view domestic abuse as a tenancy breach this

was not always pursued – respondents highlighted the difficulties in taking action to pursue a tenancy breach in relation to domestic abuse.

> ‘The ALMO tries to do this but I think in reality it does not happen very often and they find it difficult to action from a legal perspective.’

When action was pursued it was in respect to the community impact meaning action was often framed in an ASB response.

12 Have you or your organisation taken any action against perpetrators of domestic abuse?

Some respondents stated they had not personally taken action against a perpetrator and others highlighted they had no knowledge of their organisation *ever* taking action against a perpetrator, again demonstrating no standardised approach or response. As previously highlighted, findings suggested there was there was a much clearer focus on supporting the victim with some respondents suggesting limited understanding and experience and where using legislation had a typically ASB focus.

> ‘Perhaps not specifically as a perpetrator of DV, but in the sense of causing a noise nuisance or other nuisance, residing in a property where they have pushed the victim out and have no rights to the tenancy.’

Those who had stated their organisation had taken action against perpetrators and pointed to examples of injunctions or eviction as the main course of action.

> ‘Explicit in tenancy agreement. Have evicted.’

> ‘My organisation do take appropriate action against perpetrators.’

> ‘Injunctions - one perpetrator was imprisoned for 9 months following a breach of the injunction and therefore contempt of court Possession proceedings - suspended possession order obtained.’

However, one response gave the example of an injunction being used resulting in a Suspended Possession Order (SPO) to mandate the perpetrator to attend a Perpetrator Programme. Throughout this doctoral research I sought housing providers who had successfully used a Part One Injunction with Positive Requirements to attend a DVPP for assessment but did not find one provider doing so until reading responses the questionnaire.

> ‘We have taken action resulting in an SPO including sending perpetrator on DA perpetrators course, and will continue to do so where appropriate.’

While around four-fifths of respondents indicated they had *some* training on *responding* to domestic abuse, this largely centred on recognising and responding *purely* to victims. No participants detailed any specific training on working with, or responding to, perpetrators.

13 Is there anything else you would like to add about domestic abuse and social housing?

This question was included to capture any thoughts from respondents that did not fit the parameters of the previous questions. Comments included recognition from other agencies that housing providers could be instrumental in responding to domestic abuse and some felt that other organisations in many cases were gradually becoming aware of this.

> ‘Housing Providers can play a key role in supporting victims of domestic abuse; however, due to costs and reduction in services the focus is more on core housing management services. Housing organisations require funding to be able to deliver a robust service and fill the gaps of external support providers who are no longer operating and the reduced policing teams across our boroughs.’

Another view suggested that domestic abuse is under-reported and tenants are not always aware of the support that housing providers can offer and that there is an issue around consistency in approach to domestic abuse across the sector.

> ‘Personally I feel we have many victims of domestic abuse who are not aware of the support we can offer to them and domestic abuse is under reported to us. More often we initially become aware via a noise complaint or referral from an external agency. We could do more on raising awareness and prevention and we need to coordinate our service to ensure victims of domestic abuse receive

> the same level of support and provide a consistent service across of 13 local authority areas and all departments work collaboratively.'

Concern was raised about the potential for the organisation to cease to invest in responding to domestic abuse due to financial cut backs to the housing sector which in turn may push housing providers to focus more on core services only. The questionnaire was sent out against the backdrop of the Welfare Reform and Work Act (2016), with the 1% rent reduction for social housing rents coming into place which meant that many registered providers were re-assessing their remit given the immense savings that had to take place. For example, one provider had to make savings of £18 million per year for the next four years but this did not always mean that all providers immediately reverted to simply focussing on core business. Interestingly, although they had to make savings, this provider did not make any cuts to the team providing support for domestic abuse and actually increased the number of front line housing officers by giving them smaller patch sizes to ensure they had time to get to know and understand the support needs of its customers. The organisation's response was embedded throughout the organisation and it was very much seen as core business. It can be argued that it would be easier to make cuts to domestic abuse where the organisational approach was not fully embedded across the organisation and supported at the most senior level.

> 'Working within the support and housing management areas of the sector there is a great disparity over understanding and management from one area to another. With cutbacks to funding it is an area that is falling further from the

centre as associations focus more on delivery of core services only and not on a wider holistic management function.'

Whilst some mentioned they had seen poor responses and negative views about victims of abuse, one particular view showed a resentment in seeing domestic abuse as a gender based issue.

'Domestic abuse only seems steeped in the notion that woman are victims and men are always in the wrong. Very sexist. But then it seems OK to be sexist as long as it's against males.'

On a similar note, another comment pointed to a feeling of frustration that in their view the housing sector was impotent in their view to deal effectively with domestic abuse, and their problem with a victim centred approach.

'Support for Domestic Abuse victims only centres around [sic] the person being abused. Absolutely no consideration is given to neighbours who have to listen to it, or bring children up in neighbouring flats. If the victim does not want to/is unable to deal with the issues they have to continue to suffer the consequences. RSL's have to consider the implications to the wider community and the effects that this has on them. This means that we can sometimes be in the position where we HAVE – to take tenancy action against the victim, we are then treated like criminals by the support agencies. It could be that a neighbour has been a victim themselves and is acutely affected by someone else's situation but this is not considered. Courts also frown on RSL's taking out injunctions against

Perps of Domestic Abuse, stating that it should be taken by the victim - with support.'

This comment demonstrated that responses to domestic abuse are inherently famed in an ASB approach. Moreover, it is concerning that this frustration totally fails to understand the dynamics of domestic abuse and places responsibility for action on the victim. Such comments greatly concerned me as to the response a victim may receive but it also highlighted the view from the legal system that the action initiated by a housing provider to support a victim pursue an injunction was not always welcomed by the Court or seen as appropriate.

6.2 Discussion

One of the overriding themes identified in the questionnaire was that the response to domestic abuse was often framed in an ASB narrative. For example, one respondent stated they provided monitoring forms in the same way they do in cases of ASB. There seemed to be no awareness that this could put the victim in greater danger if the perpetrator was still residing with the victim illustrating a lack of understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse.

Whilst the anonymous questionnaire highlighted that housing providers did respond to domestic abuse it was often framed as part of ASB and not as a bespoke response to domestic abuse, with almost 65% of providers stating it sat within ASB in their organisation. Whilst it is promising that a response is provided to support tenants experiencing domestic abuse, where it sits within an organisation reflects the focus of

ASB as a social housing issue and that there was no standardised response to domestic abuse in the same way as ASB.

Although Davies and Biddle (2017) point out that since the late 1980s partnership approaches were identified as an appropriate way to tackle domestic violence (see also Barton and Valero-Silva, 2012; Whetstone, 2001) it can be suggested that housing providers have not always been part of this. Only around half of providers completing the questionnaire were part of the operational (45%) or strategic (53%) domestic abuse partnerships for their area highlighting that housing providers were not routinely part of multi-agency responses.

Housing providers showed slightly more confidence in responding to ASB as opposed to domestic abuse and this again raises issues as framing domestic abuse as an element of ASB. Haworth and Manzi (1999) assert that housing management has always played a role in monitoring conduct of tenants. However, this monitored conduct has ultimately focused on the public realm and the impact that behaviour has on the *neighbourhood* in general as opposed to any impact on an individual behind closed doors. Interestingly, providers highlighted they used this approach when seeking to take court action in cases of domestic abuse where judges would be inclined to grant orders in terms of the impact on the *community* as opposed to the impact on an individual case of domestic abuse. Rather, the neighbourhood impact had more weight with judges than the impact on a victim of domestic abuse who did not see it as a housing management issue. This experience seemed to go some way to explain the ASB narrative in some responses and could be suggested that housing providers were taking an ASB stance to ensure a successful court outcome. This ASB

narrative used on occasion by providers and accepted by judges suggests the framing of ‘the social’ as impacting on the public only and needs to explicitly include the rights of women and children in households to encompass ‘the private’.

Some respondents displayed victim blaming attitudes with a focus on the impact of the abuse on the community i.e. other neighbours having to hear the abuse as opposed to having any empathy for the victim or any understanding of the barriers to leaving an abusive relationship. Such views reflect some of the attitudes found in the history in social housing in terms of undeserving and deserving recipients in the rationing of social housing and the concept of enforced civility as defined by Flint and Nixon (2006) very much focused on the impact of behaviour on the community, also documented in previous research (Hague and Malos, 2005).

The use of the questionnaire meant that it was easier for respondents to give more unpalatable answers compared to interviewees. Ofstehage et al. (2011) argue that although there has been an increase in support organisations and improved legislation to empower victims of domestic abuse, they can still face a range of victim-blaming attitudes when disclosing their experiences. Whilst Dunn (2010) and Kogut (2011) argue that public perceptions of innocence tend to vary greatly with different types of victims and victimisation, whilst Carpenter (2005) argues those whose behaviours are seen as morally questionable and consequently viewed as contributing to the victimisation they experienced. Loseke (2000) similarly argued this point stating that in order for victims to be perceived as victims they cannot be thought to have been complicit in that victimisation.

Within the victim blaming responses there were some misogynistic comments in the questionnaire responses whereby the gendered nature of domestic abuse was called into question. However, most responses reflected a desire to provide a victim-led service with over eighty per cent of questionnaire respondents indicating they had received some training on domestic abuse and that some organisations having qualified IDVAs in place. This proactive victim-focussed approach highlighted some innovative ways to identify victims such as through repairs or rent arrears.

6.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the key themes from the anonymous questionnaire to housing providers. It illustrated that housing providers often framed their response to domestic abuse in an ASB narrative, in some cases this was deliberate to point to judges the impact on their ability to undertake the housing function. Only half of respondents cited their organisation was involved either strategically or operationally in the domestic abuse partnership for their area meaning there was limited scope for a coordinated community response and in effect a post-code lottery. When housing providers were invited to be part of the response it was often at the point of crisis or as an afterthought and they were not always a part of the apparatus. In many cases respondents stated they had undergone domestic abuse training, those who done so suggested this had been victim-focussed with little no training on taking action against or in engaging with perpetrators to address abusive behaviour. This is turn meant that there was a gap between policy and action in responding to perpetrators. In conclusion, whilst individual responses illustrated examples of good practice from individual organisations, this was not inherent, neither was the response always bespoke to meet

individual needs meaning there was not a consistent sector wide approach to domestic abuse – rather individual organisational approaches.

Chapter 7: Housing Professionals Views on Housing and Domestic Abuse – Semi Structured Interviews Findings

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will report the findings from semi-structured interviews with housing professionals. The questions were informed by the responses to the questionnaire and gave the opportunity to probe points of interest in more detail. Participants were selected due to their work on domestic abuse within their organisation. Interviews were carried in person or in some cases over the telephone given the geographical spread of the participants. Participants comprised seven females and two males, aged between mid-thirties and mid-forties and worked in organisations based in the South East and London, North East and Wales. The key themes identified will be discussed before moving onto a discussion examining how the findings relate to existing research.

7.2 Considering the Role of Housing in a Coordinated Community Response

Respondents were asked to consider the role of housing providers in a coordinated community response to domestic abuse. Interviewees all firmly believed that housing had a key role in recognising and responding to domestic abuse. Given that I had selected participants often based on their commitment and good practice around domestic abuse this whilst unsurprising nonetheless did show a range of why they felt housing had a key role.

> ‘I think you know in terms of early intervention I don’t think there’s another agency that’s more, better placed than housing who identify you know the kind of early warning signs and also intervene you know.’

Participants expressed a view that housing had a unique role in a coordinated community response but that some agencies didn’t always realise that housing providers often had greater knowledge of their residents and much greater access to homes on a day to basis than some statutory agencies.

> ‘We are just *so* vital in a coordinated community response and the whole point of actually DAHA and the training is actually about trying to galvanise the rest of the housing sector to take it as seriously as organisations like Gentoo and Peabody erm because you know we’ve got so much information about our residents, we’re front line we’re easier to go to than the Police and Children’s Services.’

As well as the lack of awareness of the unique role, some participants felt that agencies weren’t always aware of the range of opportunities and powers available to housing providers and consequently housing providers were often overlooked in having a role to play.

> ‘Definitely you know I think we’re either housing generally the victim or perpetrators so housing plays a massive part erm and some partners really don’t realise the powers that we have available to us but I think that sometimes

housing gets overlooked to how people you feel you might be able to deal with it.'

There was some frustration that other agencies weren't always aware of the unique position of housing providers, there was a feeling of increasing awareness from other agencies regarding the role that housing providers could have and that it was slowly improving. Very often housing has greater access to a property and person than some statutory agencies, a view that was often seen at MARAC and MATAC.

'I think we are getting there, we are knocking on the doors, I don't think a lot of agencies realise how much information you store and in MARAC we are an essential partner, erm and MATAC and things like that. Children's Services are starting to recognise that actually we're a foot in the door we are the landlord we can get into people's properties where they can't. They may need a Police response to get into a property we can knock on the door and go we need to inspect your property can we come in, we can observe things that because say a Social Worker or a Police Officer or somebody from a statutory agency are even voluntary agencies you know, if they're going out and we're from Children's Services so you know if they're expecting somebody knocking on their door with that they're going to hide all signs of domestic abuse and child abuse.'

This 'foot in the door' approach and its usefulness to other agencies also was of benefit in terms of early intervention a unique position to recognise signs earlier before a resident might actually want or be in a position to seek help. This early intervention

approach was considered useful as it didn't rely on requiring all of the facts or information that statutory agencies often needed before being in a position to take action or offer support.

> 'Obviously the main advantage is that you can actually target and get to more people who are experiencing it because like I said before with housing providers going in and out of the properties they may be able to pick up on things a lot quicker they may have just from being there a sense that something might not be quite right and they can just get in there earlier.'

Whilst interviewees felt there was an increasing awareness albeit slowly from partners in the role housing providers could play, there was still a sense of frustration amongst some interviewees that they weren't *always* informed of cases of domestic abuse involving a resident until the *time of crisis;* such as when someone needed to move house. Yet housing providers were not consulted with or involved in the early stages when they could have been helpful then and it may have resulted in some cases in a victim not needing to move (when they didn't want to).

Whilst MARAC was perceived to be getting better at more proactively engaging housing providers around 'high' risk cases there was a sense that more could be done earlier in so called 'standard' and 'medium' risk cases where information was often not shared with housing providers. In effect, the apparatus of MARAC provided a useful multi-agency tool for high risk cases, whilst at the same time there was very often a gap in sharing information with housing providers in standard and medium risk cases with no formal national apparatus to do so. In comparison; many ASB cases at all

levels have a formal apparatus to be discussed in a formal way at multi-agency groups where housing providers attend; such as Local Multi Area Problem Solving (LMAPS) meetings or MAIS (Multi Area Information Sharing) meetings which are often established by police and local authorities under the remit of Section 17 (Crime and Disorder Act, 1998) requirements.

> ‘Absolutely, we have so much information that I just think needs to be tapped into I mean you know we go to the MARAC meetings but that’s obviously in [names City] that’s only the high level cases that get heard and I’m kind of conscious that there’s a lot of other cases that perhaps don’t need that threshold that are people in our properties that we never get to find out about’.

A recurring theme was housing providers only receiving information about a victim of perpetrator at crisis point or when a case was high risk with a noticeable gap around information sharing at the earliest stages.

> ‘Because you know something we only learn about it when something dreadful happens. You know there have already been thirty odd incidences that the Police haven’t told us about or they haven’t been taken forward as far as MARAC.’

Communication by agencies at the early identification stage was seen as essential and participants largely felt that a greater understanding was needed across agencies such as Police and specialist domestic abuse services as to what support housing providers could offer.

> ‘It’s something that we need to look at in terms of how do I get the lines of communication open a bit more because we do have so much information in housing because people don’t appreciate what we can do or the resources that we’ve got in terms of offering support and things like that they only tend to come to us if it gets to the point where somebody needs to move house and then they might ring up when they get put through the Lettings Team and then the Lettings Team will say well actually I’ll put you through to this person because they might be able to help you and the amount of times people have said I had no idea you had all this information or you could do as much as you can do to help.’

One interviewee stated that housing was crucial in terms of feelings of safety and a sense of home to give victims the confidence to build a life.

> ‘At the end of the day we’ve probably the most important thing that anyone will ever need in their life is a house a safe place to live and if they’re in a place which they can call home and feel safe then that will give them confidence and whatever else to then carry on and work with whoever they need to be working with to get themselves to…things aren’t solved overnight.’

7.3 The Role of Housing Providers in MARAC

Some interviewees discussed their role at MARAC, stating that they attended each MARAC meeting and played an integral part in the process with some also part of the MARAC Steering Groups designed to improve their local MARAC, thus playing a key role in the whole MARAC process.

> ‘Yeah, they do have a role to play in it, definitely. We cover seven different local authorities in our stock, people from my team will sit on every single MARAC meeting in those areas. We certainly see ourselves as a key player.’

This, however, was not the case for all interviewees, some expressed the view that whilst they were ideally placed to recognise and respond to domestic abuse, they felt they were often overlooked in the role they can play and often weren’t invited to the MARAC table to discuss cases which might often be their residents. So whilst they were part of strategic groups they were not actually involved in the MARAC operationally even where their residents were discussed.

> ‘For example I’m involved in the Domestic Abuse Forums and Steering Groups but the actual day to day MARACs we’ve not been involved with.’

SafeLives (2015) data shows that in identification of high risk victims and referrals to MARAC, 61% come from Police and 39% are referred from Health and Children’s Services, with only 3% referred from Housing Providers. Given there are 1,758 housing associations in England alone (Regulator for Social Housing, July 2018) this referral rate is extremely low. Whilst some providers may refer cases to an IDVA service who in turn may make the MARAC referral, it still raises the question of why so many housing providers are not referring directly into MARAC.

7.4 Training and Awareness Raising in Relation to Domestic Abuse

All participants highlighted the importance of training and the need to understand domestic abuse, including barriers to reporting and understanding the dynamics involved. Some providers used films such as ‘Murdered By my Boyfriend’ to inform staff about the dynamics of domestic abuse and interestingly, two interviewees had used specialist drama productions in staff training to demonstrate the dynamics of domestic abuse. One provider had made their own training film specifically with professional actors based on the existing drama production. All front line staff were trained using the film and they were planning to sell this tool as a training package to other interested housing providers.

> ‘What we’ve now done we’ve actually recorded that now...the training day will work in exactly the same way as it did if we were walking around the property and so the feedback we’ve got so far is actually forget you’re sat in a room watching it on a screen it does feel as though you are still in that property and you still lose yourself in that situation.’

As well as specific training for traditional front line housing officer roles, providers also highlighted that trades / repairs staff had bespoke training to spot the signs of domestic abuse.

> ‘We also do toolbox talks for our operative because we have our own DLO (Direct Labour Organisation) and obviously they go into accommodation and they’ll see all kinds of different things that we might not necessarily see, so

we've trained them in being aware of a situation and if they consider it to be they know who they can come back and speak to.'

'Yeah and then we'll go forward we've reassured everybody that if they identify something we wouldn't go up there and say Dave the plumber came today and said he saw bruises on you.'

The training and awareness raising for front line housing officer staff was seen as essential. Interviewees who mentioned this approach all highlighted that the reassurance for staff was key to its success. They pointed out that staff understood that they didn't have to be domestic abuse experts or make a judgment call and that their role was merely to report anything that didn't seem quite right to a specialist team who would investigate and determine what action, if any, should be instigated.

7.5 Semantics of Team Names and Job Titles and the Service Provided

Interestingly, the issue of team names and job titles was raised in the interviews. Some providers were moving away from a purely enforcement approach in job role and team titles. Some participants highlighted the change in team names and job titles to offer a wider perspective of the team remit.

'I manage the Neighbourhood Relations Team, a lot of authorities had a tight enforcement in their approach and I think a conscious decision was made here in about 2004/2005 to change to Neighbourhood Relations to more broadly

reflect the type of building relationships and engagement with both victims and perpetrators, so I have 10 officers.'

Whilst some teams had changed team names to reflect more accurately the support services provided, those who had not yet done so had a clear recognition that use of the term 'Tenancy Enforcement Team' could actively discourage victims seeking support from the Team if they believed their tenancy could be affected or enforcement action taken against them or the perpetrator. There was an understanding that a card left at a property or letter from the Tenancy Enforcement Team could actually cause concern for a victim of domestic abuse who might feel enforcement action was going to be taken against them and therefore would be far less likely to disclose domestic abuse. As a victim of domestic abuse, losing your home would be a huge concern meaning a victim would be less likely to come forward to ask for support if they thought there as a chance it could negatively impact on their tenancy and risk losing their home. One provider said despite their social media and website material clearly offering support to victims, the team name was an issue and needed to be addressed.

'..if you're suffering please contact us but again it's difficult at the minute because some of the bits and pieces that go out say if you're a victim please contact the Tenancy Enforcement Team and I just think that's going to put somebody off but that's all in the process of changing so that'll hopefully have a positive impact.'

Interviewees spoke about tenants not being aware or understanding their housing provider could provide support in relation to domestic abuse and that they might find out about the abuse from the MARAC process.

> ‘Generally speaking when we’ve gone to tenants who come to us via MARAC you know we’ve said to them why didn’t you come us to first they’re like ‘well I didn’t think you could do anything I didn’t think there was any point coming to you because I didn’t know’ so we know we’ve got to do something about that.’

In some cases, interviewees stated for their organisation it was early days in their response to domestic abuse and they were moving from a typically ASB focused response to the issue of domestic abuse. One interviewee highlighted they had, until recently been using the Risk Indicator Matrix (RAM) which is a tool to measure vulnerability in victims of ASB. Developed in 2010, the RAM is focused on ASB and in is not designed to measure risk in relation to domestic abuse. One of the questions asks if the person causing the ASB is known to the victim, so clearly it is an inadequate tool in relation to domestic abuse.

> ‘At the moment we’ve just brought in the use of the CAADA-DASH [meaning SafeLives RIC] form but before that we were doing a risk matrix about anti-social behaviour and basically what we do is obviously find out whether or not the person wants to remain in their property and if they did whether or not they needed extra security works, if they didn’t then we would give the advice to obviously go to the local Borough Council and explain their situation.’

7.6 Requesting Proof of Domestic Abuse

Providers were seeing incremental changes to existing procedures which still very much in the main reflected an ASB related approach to domestic abuse. Some providers stated they had been, until quite recently asking for 'proof' of domestic abuse in cases of lock changes whereby a tenant would be re-charged for a lock change if they couldn't give a 'legitimate' reason for requiring it. If they had reported domestic abuse to the police and could quote a crime number then they would not be re-charged for the lock change, whereas if they could not give a crime number they would often be re-charged for the repair.

> 'We're in the process of changing that. Yes…up until recently we were asking for evidence of that but I've managed to agree with the Repairs Team that basically for a lock change the money will be used out of our security budget within the ASB Teams.'

Whilst there was much consensus in not asking for proof in lock changes there was not always the same approach in relation to management moves where to varying degrees some providers needed an element of proof from MARAC, an IDVA or the police, representing a failure to fully understand the nature and dynamics of domestic abuse that not all victims report to the police or a specialist service and fails to recognise the unique role housing can have in receiving disclosures. Some providers stated that management moves *could be* arranged in cases of ASB *without* police evidence where the provider itself had been involved in responding to the ASB. In contrast; some interviewees highlighted that in domestic abuse cases the victim often needed validation or proof of the abuse from another agency, such as the Police for a

move to be instigated. This was seen as a difficult policy for staff to implement by asking for and finding 'supporting evidence.'

> 'If somebody wants to move we do ask for some supporting evidence, now that's obviously not always available. We're finding that difficult because if somebody's got the courage to come to us and tell us, we don't want to say right you've got to go and get the police to support this now, but what we are finding is that by the time a person had plucked up the courage to ask us we already know about it because of something else.'

The request for supporting 'evidence', particularly with one provider, was connected to victim safety and whether the police deemed the victim would actually be as safe as they could be in the proposed property move. The onus on victim safety being validated by the police as opposed to the victim themselves having the ultimate control of what they felt was right for them. Indeed, in many cases a move could only happen with police involvement not taking into account that some victims would not report abuse to the police.

> 'In terms of a management move we do ask for a supporting letter or some kind of reference from either the police or their IDVA to support a move and that's not just to support in terms of believing that victim's experiencing it but it may well be that a victim wishes to move but they're insisting they only want to move around the corner and actually when you speak to the police or the IDVA they say well no actually they do need to move but they need to be completely out of the area so that's why we feel it's important that we need that.'

In this case this advice from police would be considered paramount as opposed to the victim's feelings of their own safety and where they felt they needed to be in terms of their support network, children's school and work for example.

7.7 Understanding and Attitudes to Domestic Abuse

Some providers were much further into their journey in understanding domestic abuse than others and did *not* request proof for a lock change or management move. One interviewee remembered this as not always being the case earlier in their career but felt there was greater awareness and a shift in attitudes to a greater understanding as to the dynamics of domestic abuse.

> 'When I worked for a different authority and I remember vividly sitting in a room and we shared a room with the Housing Options Team and I can remember a female tenant rang up and she was obviously known in the office and the Homelessness Officer said 'well what have you done now' and this was only 10 or 12 years ago, fairly recently, 'what have you done this time' followed by 'surely you must have done something to provoke him'. And at that time I just remember thinking 'no this just isn't right this just isn't appropriate' so I think training is always about the acceptance remembering how much effort and resilience it must have taken to make the phone call.'

As well as this shift in attitude there was recognition that not everyone presented as an 'ideal victim', meaning there was a sliding range from organisations requiring proof of domestic violence to those who didn't request any proof and had an understanding

that there was not an ‘ideal victim’ of domestic abuse and actively challenged this view representing a more nuanced and deeper understanding.

> ‘At the moment I won’t lie, that was very much about a shift in attitude you know that’s why it’s important to run campaigns because if there are so many myths out there about obviously what people think of like typical victims if you have someone who has got a conviction or whatever they might not be a cowering wallflower people are like oh well she’s aggressive blah blah blah so and I think at the moment we’ve got a really good process in place and the managers you know are taking that responsibility of saying to their teams you know don’t ask for this stuff.’

7.8 Routes to Identifying Domestic Abuse

There were four main routes in housing providers identifying domestic abuse such as routine and emergency repairs, rent arrears, complaints that initiated as anti-social behaviour and routine enquiry questions on every customer contact.

7.8.1 Repairs

Repairs represented a common route to identifying domestic abuse with many interviewees highlighting this. Whilst a common theme was the type of repair that was used to identify domestic abuse, in some cases it was when a customer called to report a repair and the staff member taking the repair request felt there was more to it than a simple repair and didn’t want to recharge the customer there was something they weren’t disclosing.

> ‘The Contact Centre can identify if there’s any suspicious repairs, so kind of this lady has had three lock changes in the last three months there’s something not quite right because she’s saying she’s lost her keys but we’re not sure kind of thing so we can do that.’

> ‘Most social landlords have a variety of different ways through repair contacts that can be quite a key one somebody’s asking for a lock change or damage it can open it to a multitude.’

In addition to identifying domestic abuse through repairs requested by a customer, interviewees detailed the important role that trades staff played in identifying what could potentially be domestic abuse. As well as being in a position to identify potential domestic abuse though damage to property and the nature of the repairs such as damaged door locks, plastering needed to cover damage to a wall for example, interviewees commented that trades staff were trained to recognise when something was not quite right and warranted investigation by a specialist team. This included interaction between household members who may not moderate potentially abusive behaviour in front of trades’ staff in the way they would be likely to in front of a Housing Officer.

> ‘So we have various different things we have our repairs staff who will go out and all of our staff are trained to kind of look at the bigger picture so our repairs staff, say our Gas Service staff aren’t just going out to do a gas service they’re looking around if there’s things like punch holes in doors and little bits and pieces so it’s not just for domestic abuse. We have a load of training in with the

repairs staff whereby they are going out and looking at the bigger picture which all our front line staff have been trained on, erm… but we do get a lot back from the repairs and this approach was covered on the North East News as well a while back which showed a small clip of one of our repairs guys going out and doing a bit of a repair and identifying some domestic abuse.'

Interviewees felt that schemes such as this often termed 'Cause for Concern', worked as they did not rely on the trades person being an expert in recognising and understanding domestic abuse and making an actual referral to police or social services to report potential abuse. Such schemes allowed trades staff to raise their concerns to specialist, trained staff who would then investigate. Some providers used a hand held device which detailed the repairs jobs for that day that staff updated on completion of a job, there was also the opportunity to press a button signifying 'something was not quite right' whereby staff could simply type their concerns or what they had seen which was then sent to a specialist team. Other providers had a 'something not quite right' box at the depot where staff could post an anonymous card detailing concerns and the box was emptied daily by the depot manager with concerns fed into the Neighbourhood Safety Team who would investigate. Interviewees felt the trades staff had confidence in reporting concerns to specialist teams who investigated in a non-obvious way so trades staff could be confident that the link between them could not be made. Specialist teams often visited stating they were undertaking a satisfaction survey on the repair for example, or an annual customer visit to get access to the property where they would assess the situation and where safe to do so outline all the services available to customers, including support around domestic abuse.

7.8.2 Out of Hours Emergency Repairs

Whilst routine repairs played an integral role in highlighting potential domestic abuse, one interviewee spoke about cases being identified via emergency and 'out of hours' repairs. Out of hours repairs often included jobs such as boarding of windows and lock changes.

> 'Every week I get a copy of all the joinery repairs and all the glass breakages so any jobs that have been raised and it's a bit unwieldy at the minute but once we get the new housing management system in we'll be able to narrow down the parameters a little bit so I'll be able to focus more on what we need to look for but that covers obviously any unexplained damage any glass breakages any lock changes things like that and we've picked up allsorts from that and of course we've got the something's not right tabs that we're using now and we've found we've had a couple of domestic abuse cases flagged.'

7.8.3 Identifying Domestic Abuse via Rent Arrears and Financial Issues

As well as the usual routes of self-disclosure, noise nuisance and identifying domestic abuse through repairs, one provider mentioned rent arrears as an important route in identifying domestic abuse and this was embedded in their approach.

> 'So everyone gets training now on how to identify domestic abuse and what we've tried to do is make it relevant to everyone to each direct role like for example the Financial Inclusion Team it might be through rent arrears or financial advice so each directorate have a good idea on how to identify

domestic abuse and then there's a referral process and we will investigate and pick up the case as and when necessary.'

'We've had training and everybody understands that they have to ask questions and in fact strangely enough we had one of our income team identify very recently that there was an issue of domestic abuse because of rent arrears and it was really good to see that everybody was taking it on board, it was not just housing officers it was our income team who were identifying that the tenant was very reluctant to talk about why they were in rent arrears so they started asking some difficult questions.'

Providers highlighted an increasing awareness of financial abuse as domestic abuse and were becoming much more proactive about identifying domestic abuse via rent arrears and the level of support they could offer a victim who might not have had any control over finances previously. Many organisations had established Money Matters/ Financial Inclusion Teams as a result of the impact of welfare reform and support tenants with debts and financial difficulties. The teams represented good value for money in terms of income management (collecting rent) and were increasingly being accessed by support customers who were experiencing or had experienced domestic abuse.

'We can do a lot around finances as well helping people getting their finances sorted and if they can leave the perpetrator making sure that particularly if they've been kept in the dark financially by their partner that we can help them access other accommodation not just ours but other accommodation and help

ensure that they've got finances in place they've got their benefit sorted and we've got a hardship fund so accessing emergency, you know if they've got to leave a property and leave all their belongings there we can help them access furniture packs we work closely with a local charity called [redacted] they do recycling of furniture and it's always really good stuff so we can help people access that at a really low cost and good quality safe stuff.'

7.8.4 Routine Questions as Part of Every Contact

Two providers took a more proactive approach as well as identifying possible domestic abuse through the routes identified above. One routinely asked customers on *all* contacts if they felt safe in their home. Given the number of contacts with a customer a housing provider could have, this represents a considerable opportunity for customers to access support.

'Absolutely...my team and also the sustainment and the housing officers now ask when they are going out and doing routine visits and the occupational therapy team they ask people if they feel safe at home just as part of the routine dialogue with people and if people say no they ask them why and sometimes it is just it's a bit dark and I could do with a light or sometimes it's more serious.'

There was recognition of the importance in how the question is asked and the awareness if someone is asking for a light, for example, was it about understanding the underlying reasons why they might need a light and being skilled in probing further as to possible reasons behind the request.

‘Mostly it’s been lights and things that have been coming through but again that one was a prime example where she’d asked for a light but actually there was allsorts going on and it just needed somebody with a bit of knowledge to go in there and make that face to face contact and all the domestic abuse side of it came out and it resulted in a referral to MARAC and everything.’

7.9 Identifying Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

Interviewees identified perpetrators of domestic abuse in three main ways, including victim disclosure, MARAC and via repairs. The two organisations who operated in the MATAC area also identified perpetrators as part of the MATAC process who scored as high on the Recency, Frequency and Gravity (RFG) framework. Chapter Four has a full definition of and the remit of MATAC.

7.9.1 Taking Action against Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

Whist participants highlighted a fairly high level of confidence in responding to victims of domestic abuse, in particular at the point of crisis, there was not the same level of confidence in responding to perpetrators of domestic abuse. Although interviewees pointed to their organisations having policies and procedures in place with their tenancy agreements largely identifying domestic abuse as a tenancy breach there was often a gap between policy and practice in taking action against a perpetrator. Housing providers were more confident in taking action against a perpetrator where the perpetrator’s actions were impacting on others in the neighbourhood which could be deemed as ASB such as noise nuisance as it was disturbing other tenants or impacting

on the community bas a whole. There was acknowledgment that this was an area for improvement.

> ‘And then again obviously from neighbours as well if they’re ringing up and saying this person is coming round and causing problems erm we have taken action previously in regards to removing people from areas but rather than do it under the guise of domestic abuse we’ve had to do it under noise nuisance, harassment, alarm and distress to others in the area erm so that is something we are looking at, at the moment. We do have written in our policies and procedures that we would take action against perpetrators tenancies. To my knowledge we haven’t done that on a strict basis erm but it has been done but just not on every case.’

One provider spoke specifically about facing problems in taking court action against a perpetrator of domestic abuse and recalled receiving criticism from the Judge who felt it was not the role of the housing provider to take this action. This led them to consider taking future action along the grounds of impact on the community to mitigate such criticism and to expedite a more favourable court outcome. It would be disingenuous to suggest that providers only considered the impact on the community in taking action. Rather, in some cases it was done so in response to previous negative experiences with the court process and framing their action as impact on the community increased the likelihood of a positive court outcome. Providers also highlighted there could be difficulties in pursuing court action when the perpetrator was not the tenant (and the victim was).

> ‘I took an injunction out for a woman who was a victim of domestic abuse. Her ex-partner, he was not a tenant of ours and he was coming round to the property, he was damaging the property, he was physically abusive towards her but he was also putting things, photos online and things like that so from my point of view I obviously wanted to protect her and I went down the route of a without notice injunction and when we went back to Court the Judge said it was not my remit to do that it wasn’t a housing related remit which I disagreed with but since then we’ve kind of had our fingers burnt with it erm so we’ve had to look at more creative ways around it, so if it has started to affect neighbours then we will do it under the guise of an ASB of noise nuisance rather than domestic abuse.’

Participants in many cases stipulated they took a victim-led approach and in some cases this came across that it was an either/or situation in that they focused on providing a victim response and therefore would not focus on taking any action against the perpetrator, often as this was felt it may be detrimental to the victim.

> ‘But because we set ourselves up as obviously a victim approach we are very aware that perpetrators will try to use different techniques to get in and try and perhaps control that relationship with us as well so that’s not what we see our role as doing.’

One provider stated that whilst it could be frustrating not taking action against a perpetrator, they needed to have insight into the bigger picture and wishes and needs of the victim.

> ‘Because any involvement that we do have at the minute tends to be well actually the victims that come forward tend not to want us to do anything in terms of taking action against the perpetrator even if they are in one of our properties and obviously you don’t want to do something you need to make sure that victim is safe first before we then look at what do we do with this person.’

Some providers felt that whilst it was frustrating not to take action against a perpetrator it would actually be counter-productive to do in terms of the victim’s trust. In gaining trust, some providers did not pursue re-chargeable repairs and picked up the cost of the damage themselves to best support the victim.

> ‘Not just go down an enforcement route if that’s actually going to put the victim in more danger because it’s just totally counter-productive isn’t it whereas you think yeah it’s a clear tenancy breach but if I do something so it’s kind of using your insight isn’t it really and not just going they’ve damaged our property we’re going to do something…and it can be really frustrating especially if you’re desperate to do something because you think they shouldn’t be allowed to get away with that but you’ve got a victim in front of you that’s saying no I don’t want you to do anything.’

Whilst some providers argued they didn’t take action against a perpetrator due to their victim-led approach, some providers were further forward in their approach in taking action against perpetrators in what they deemed ‘more serious’ cases of domestic abuse. Providers highlighted they were more likely to take action on what they deemed ‘really serious cases’ where they had what they termed firm evidence.

> ‘Well we’ve taken quite a firm line on some of the really serious cases of domestic abuse that we’ve had and we have gone through and sought the civil injunctions against them. Erm we have got a case coming up where potentially we would be issuing possession against a perpetrator of domestic abuse so we do take quite a firm line if there is evidence there that does warrant legal action then we will use what powers are available to us to deal with it.’

One provider highlighted that very it was difficult to take action without involving the victim in any legal action and thereby increasing their risk whilst another had initiated eviction action against the perpetrator on the grounds that the behaviour had made the victim leave her home. In this particular case, the perpetrator handed in his notice before the case proceeded to court.

> ‘…the majority of cases we always report and it’s resolved without the need for legal action but sometimes you feel you haven’t actually addressed the offenders behaviour because a lot of time it’s victim centric as well because the victim may not want to give statements or you could be increasing the risk of harm because the behaviour is so abhorrent you’d feel it’s right to take action it ticks every box.’

Whilst the case didn’t result in eviction as the perpetrator gave notice it would impact on him making an application again to the same provider as they would have a record of planning eviction action.

> ‘Yeah, based on the behaviour that we’ve served the Notice so that would prevent that person’s re-housing it is frustrating not that you want to go after these persons but you know you feel well a process should be followed and concluded.’

Another provider stated they took a strong stance on perpetrators as part of a whole system approach but again mentioned the difficulty in pursuing court action.

> ‘We’ll go to Court if we can to get injunctions against perpetrators particularly where they’re joint tenants. Just to allow the victim some kind of safety net to stay at home so we’ll definitely go for an injunction where we can.’

The same provider had a campaign aimed at the whole community and action against perpetrators was in line with their overall approach highlighting a clear link between policy and action.

> ‘At the moment we have quite a strong stance as part of the No Home campaign so we do take a strong enforcement stance against perpetrators even when they’re not our residents actually erm. Where they are residents we secured a Suspended Possession Order against one where the victim wasn’t our resident but you know the perpetrator, it was very difficult.’

This illustrated even when there was a desire to take action the problem was the difficulty in pursuing Court action.

7.9.2 Positive Engagement to Assist Perpetrators to Address their Abusive Behaviour

As well as a lack of confidence in taking enforcement action against perpetrators, knowledge about where to access help for perpetrators who wanted to address their abusive behaviour was also an issue in terms of lack of awareness of support for perpetrators in the area.

> '…suppose we haven't done anything as yet that specifically targeted towards perpetrators in terms of campaigns or anything like that because I'm kind of conscious there's not a huge provision really for perpetrator support and things like that at the minute so it's probably something we need to look at more.'

As highlighted, providers tended to have singular approach that is very victim focused and see this as their starting point in responding to domestic abuse. However, there was an awareness that whilst they did not actively support perpetrators to address their abusive behaviour it was something they felt would be useful and could see merit in such an approach in terms of impacting on future victims.

> 'We don't currently offer them any support to change their behaviour although again it's something we're looking at because what we are seeing is three or four different victims and the same perpetrator going from victim to victim to victim so we recognise that if we're dealing with four victims then why not just change the behaviour of one perpetrator.'

Whilst there was a desire to respond to this there was some reticence in supporting perpetrators to change their behaviour and there was still some way to go with many providers to see this as part of their response to domestic abuse.

> 'We are looking at that although we've not got anywhere with that because I think it's slightly unpopular. We haven't to date. At the moment in Wales apart from one new project, Drive, but there's never really been anything available to perpetrators. To be honest with you, I don't think as an organisation and not just us now but generally in this sector we've not really looked at perpetrators very sympathetically, it's always been you know you naughty person and we've just gone down the enforcement and removed them from the property.'

Two of the participants operated in an area that had Multi-Agency Task and Coordination (MATAC) in operation). The organisations had different approaches to it in terms of staff resources.

> 'MATAC certainly is now coming very much at the forefront, again it's something resource wise we haven't been able to attend with the meetings [the organisation attends MARAC]. We carry out the research and we're very keen so we are looking at that with the changes in the company to make sure that we can get a representative at those meetings.'

The other provider played an integral role on MATAC, with the meetings being hosted by their organisation and they attended every meeting. They felt they had an integral

role to play in the process as very often they would hold some information on an identified perpetrator that other agencies may not have.

> ‘We are currently involved with the new MATAC process as well as MARAC so that is identifying a lot of perpetrators. On average we have between fifty and sixty cases heard in our MARACs in [names area] every month so that identifies for us, you know, potential perpetrators there so we were never a co-part of MARAC for a long time…until they realised actually the amount of information we hold and usually it’s very rare actually where we’re doing the MARAC research that we say not known to [names organisation] because in some way shape or form…regardless of whether they’re in our tenancies have either been in our tenancy or have registered to be with us or have family members so we know of them.’

The MATAC approach as well as looking at what enforcement action the group can take against a perpetrator can also make a referral to a local perpetrator programme. In one of the areas the housing provider is part of the Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme and actively makes referrals.

> ‘We are currently obviously working in partnership with IMPACT and Barnardo’s who are the Big programme so we’re looking at kind of sitting down and talking to perpetrators that have been identified and saying do you know what you have been identified there is a programme, if you’re ready to change your behaviour.’

Interviewees referred to the lack of services in the areas as hampering their ability to provide support to perpetrators to address their behaviour. Only one provider directly provided support for perpetrators whilst of those who did not directly provide support some were aware of the Respect helpline and of limited support on the area.

> ‘At the moment we don’t have any support option…I mean what we do erm…is in certain cases where we kind of feel it is safe we will refer perpetrators to organisation such as Respect or if they’re kind of engaged with Probation.’

7.9.3 Training on Responding to Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

Whilst all interviewees spoke about training they had in relation to recognising and supporting victims of domestic abuse, only one provider had undergone any training on working with perpetrators.

> ‘I can’t think of anything actually every bit of training that we’ve had seems to have come from a more victim side which obviously everything is going to be weighted in that direction. There might have been bits and pieces in e-learning and things like that but nothing that’s specifically that if you get a perpetrator coming forward this is what you need to do.’

Only one provider mentioned they had undertaken training in relation to perpetrators of domestic abuse. They highlighted the whole of the Neighbourhood Safety Team took part in the training around engaging perpetrators in DVPP and the content covered by men on the programme so that staff could get an understanding of the programme and the ask of men.

7.9.4 Taking Enforcing Action against Perpetrators

Taking action against a perpetrator of domestic abuse seemed to be framed in an anti-social behaviour narrative with a focus on harm or impact to the community.

> ‘Only from an anti-social behaviour point of view we’ve obviously got a remit that we have to go through to try and offer tenancy support also Acceptable Behaviour Agreements and things like erm…that so it would be going under ASB rather than specifically domestic abuse.’

As previously set out, interviewees suggested their organisation were more confident in taking action when treating domestic abuse as anti-social behaviour (ASB) and using tools and powers applicable to ASB which considered the neighbourhood impact as opposed to the individual experiencing domestic abuse.

> ‘As far as I am aware I know that [names area] has had one eviction with regards to a domestic abuse case and erm like I say we’ve had a couple of injunctions which have gone through but it’s been on noise nuisance really more than anything else so it’d be difficult to be able to give you exact numbers of what we’ve had because it would be classed as something else.’

Whilst all interviewees confirmed there was some level of domestic abuse training in their organisation, it was very clear that the focus of such training in most cases was around understanding domestic abuse and responding to victims. Responses highlighted a lack of training in responding to perpetrators of domestic abuse; and in particular, guidance on existing legal and civil measures that housing providers could

utilise. Moreover, there was a lack of awareness raising training on options for those perpetrators who could be referred for assessment of suitability at a Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme and how such programmes could be utilised to address abusive behaviour.

> ‘I think it would be really good if we could have some sort of training or involvement in some of the perpetrator programmes because I think that’s part of the bigger problem moving somebody, injuncting somebody or shifting them elsewhere is never going to change their attitude or behaviour so if you know there was no time or money limits I think it would be good to really put something in place for them as much as for victims to try and actually challenge the underlying cause and actually prevent it from happening somewhere else.’

The interviews with housing providers illustrated there was not a standard or typical response to domestic abuse and that organisations were at varying stages in their journey in recognising and responding to domestic abuse. Whilst there was a common theme in being victim-led, their differences were more marked in their responses to perpetrators. In essence, there was no standardised approach. Victim-led was often mentioned to define an approach, but often this meant not taking action against the perpetrator as they cited the victim did not want them to take action. In effect, a so called victim-led approach often meant that the perpetrator could go unchallenged, free to move on to their next victim. This raises a serious question of housing providers avoiding taking action against perpetrators citing they are respecting the decision of the victim.

> ‘I think there are pockets of good practice all over the country but you know it is about having that standardised response isn’t it so that people then have like a postcode lottery almost on where they live.’

7.9.5 Housing Provider Campaigns Aimed at Perpetrators

Whilst some providers had campaigns aimed at residents, highlighting how to access support as a victim, only one provider had a campaign that could be construed as taking a wider approach to domestic abuse, in that it set out the organisation’s approach and highlighted that *all* residents had a role to play in recognising and reporting domestic abuse. The same organisation had undertaken work with young people on healthy relationships.

> ‘One of the things we did last year was we ran healthy relationship workshops for young people…we have 850 young people in one of the London boroughs so that was kind of looking at you know maybe one step before you know.’

Their approach to domestic abuse was not purely focused on victims but was all-encompassing in sending out a message to the community that domestic abuse would not be tolerated in their properties, thereby letting victims know they could be supported and perpetrators that their behaviour would not be accepted. It was the only campaign that incorporated an approach that also spoke to the community and highlighted that they had a role in reporting domestic abuse. This chimed with the Duluth model of a coordinated community response which sees that community organisations have a key role in responding to domestic abuse perpetration.

‘The No Home for Domestic Abuse was kind of encapsulated in that sense because that was sending a strong message to perpetrators that the behaviour is not tolerated it also highlights that we actually have a clause in the Tenancy Agreement, a domestic abuse clause so highlighting that and just letting people know it’s not on you know we’ve engaged with neighbours, we’ve engaged with the police and you know we will take strong action against you.’

7.10 What Would Housing Providers Like to See?

The final interview question asked providers what they would like to see in relation to domestic abuse and produced some common themes and a range of responses.

7.10.1 A Real Coordinated Community Response

A key theme emerging from interviewees was the need for a *real* coordinated community response where housing had a key role and that co-location with other agencies would be useful to engender this approach.

‘I think I’d like the IDVAs in house to be honest I’d like the Independent Domestic Violence Advisors as part of the team to you know get that contact to make more directly alongside and knowing the nature of the work they do I’d like that to take place I’d like to have the resource I think to be honest it would be having that team of multi-agency professionals who could sit down on a daily basis and discuss you know you’d have a representative from Mental Health Team, Social Services, the Children and Families having that multi-disciplinary team

composed of different agencies altogether and to assess on a daily basis of responses.'

As well as a desire for a coordinated community response there was also a feeling this needed to be more than just a case of co-location and that there was a need to work with young people to pre-empt violence and abuse.

7.10.2 A Wider Range of Housing and Emergency Accommodation Options

Interviewees expressed a need for a range of accommodation options and the frustrations they felt when they couldn't move someone immediately or find suitable refuge accommodation. Interviewees highlighted there was a need for a wider range of safe, emergency accommodation, i.e. a safe house as not everyone wants to spend time in a refuge and often stayed in the abusive home as no other options were available. Interviewees felt frustrated by this and this was a view also highlighted by some victims – one who felt she could not go into a refuge so waited until a property became available.

'I think for us it would be good to be able to, if somebody phoned us or turned up on the day just to make sure that there are no issues with going 'right okay we'll secure your property or yes we'll put you up in temporary accommodation.'

As well as the need for good quality temporary accommodation, there was also recognition by some that this should also come with support to enable the person to sustain a tenancy, particularly with reference to young people.

> ‘I think in terms of refuges there’s a refuge in [names areas] we don’t have Council refuges perhaps I’m the wrong practitioner to say what the merits of refuges are but in terms of providing some temporary accommodation with ongoing support which could act as a transitional period to make sure their life skills and that person is ready to move on particularly with young person’s so I would say for me it’s maybe the need for good quality *secure temporary* accommodation as a move on.’

This lack of single family accommodation was highlighted in relation to problems in finding refuge places for families with older sons and the impact this had on women feeling they had no choice but to stay with the perpetrator as it would mean leaving their child with the perpetrator. One interviewee discussed this on two levels, the lack of choice for women with older sons, but also on the message it gave to older sons in relation to domestic abuse.

> ‘They need refuges that are nice and up-to-date because that is kind of a big thing and refuges that’ll accommodate families with older children because so far it just kind of once you get a male over a certain age it’s a case of we can’t accommodate you, but is that not then it’s shaping that boy’s behaviour it’s not helping so they can go one way or another couldn’t they and kind of do the whole protective route but then they could think well actually my mum is staying here so my dad’s behaviour can’t be that bad.’

Interviewees spoke about the *right* accommodation being available and the impact of abuse on young people; in that young people were living with abuse or in one case perpetrating abuse against the mother. With reference to this, there was a comment that there was a gap in working with children in terms of early intervention and children witnessing domestic abuse.

> 'We've got one case at the minute where there's a 16 year old boy has beat his mother up so severely because that's what he saw his dad do so you know we would like to get in there and work with young people in schools and stuff with young people to talk about why abuse against anybody against anybody not just women obviously we've seen an increase in abuse in same sex relationships as well so helping support and seeing that it's wrong.'

> 'Providing more secure accommodation, helping people get out of refuges and into long term safe and secure accommodation.'

Whilst *all* interviewees felt the housing sector had a role in addressing domestic abuse; one felt they had an integral role in not merely responding to a victim but proactively tackling the issue within communities and being part of communities providing solutions to their own problems.

> 'I think particularly under the austerity and things like that I think housing providers should be a partner in terms of bridging the gap between the voluntary sector and the private sector and providing innovative ideas for communities to almost solve their own problems like one of the things I would love to do is to

do a kind of a project on the bystander approach which is an American idea which looks at as a community you know what is our role in relation to our neighbours in relation to strangers in tackling violent and abuse against anyone I think all housing providers should sign up for something like that because at the end of the day because we provide housing, we provide communities.'

7.11 Discussion

All interviewees were empathic in relation to domestic abuse and illustrated a high level of personal commitment to providing support for victims of domestic abuse and a desire to provide a good service. Whilst it was important to be cognisant of the impact of the interviewer on participants the interviewees were all approached to participate on the research given their commitment to providing a good service around domestic abuse. Gomm (2004) highlights that the interviewee's responses are influenced by what they think the situation requires. Whilst I made time to put the interviewer at ease and made clear their responses would form part of the research and that they would be anonymised, there was still an element of interviewer effect to be considered. For example, interviews did show more empathy compared with some responses in the questionnaire which in some cases were victim blaming.

There was a strong sense from interviewees that their organisation's approach was victim focused and was reflected in their training and any campaigns the organisation had taken part in. Domestic abuse perpetration not being framed as a typical housing issue was referenced on many levels throughout the interviews. Wydall and Clarke (2015) demonstrate the impact on families and the overall cost to society make clear the importance of reducing domestic abuse reoffending (See also Walby and Allen,

2004). However, findings point to this not being the priority for housing providers in their approach to domestic abuse.

Only one provider interviewed had undergone any specific training in relation to responding to perpetrators. This lack of confidence in dealing with perpetrators reflected the findings from ‘Change, Justice, Fairness’ (Scottish Women’s Aid, 2016) who in their research into Fife Housing Partnership found that two thirds of service providers did not know if housing services could take action against a perpetrator of domestic abuse and 28 out of the 80 staff stated that they did not consider it part of their job role to take action against a perpetrator of domestic abuse. Perhaps unsurprisingly, interviewees stated they focused their campaigns on victims of domestic abuse and did not target any campaigns solely on perpetrators.

The issue of domestic abuse perpetrators was overlooked or missing in practice with many providers whether that be in training, actions pertaining to tenancy breaches or providing support for perpetrators to address their abusive behaviour. There was a gap between policy and action in that domestic abuse was largely defined as a tenancy breach but action was not always taken and when it was (as previously highlighted) it was often in relation to the impact in the community which was also reflected in the questionnaire findings. Interviewees often termed their approach as ‘victim led’ or ‘victim centred’ with the idea that their actions were ultimately directed by the wishes of the victim. This reflected Wydall and Clarke’s (2015) findings who argued that that perpetrator and victim interventions to have a tendency to operate separately which they argue fails to acknowledge the interconnectedness between victims, perpetrators and their families. This ‘either or’ approach was demonstrated by one provider in the

MATAC area who attended MARAC but felt they had not been able to resource attendance at MATAC, in effect making a choice that they could resource MARAC but not MATAC. This reflects the point made by Hester and Westmarland (2006) who acknowledged that investing in providing services for male perpetrators was controversial, particularly when women's services face cuts.

Whilst approaches were specified as victim led, there was a growing awareness amongst interviewees in recognising that housing providers could have a positive impact by responding effectively to perpetrators. For example, one provider mentioned they had noticed the same perpetrator names were discussed in MARAC and that one perpetrator could impact on a number of residents. They realised they could have a positive impact by responding and taking action against his behaviour rather than solely supporting victims. As outlined in chapter four, Westmarland and Kelly (2006) argued for the need for agencies from criminal justice, health and social care to work together to develop coherent and coordinated approaches to perpetrators that focus on tackling men's violent behaviour.

Interviewees highlighted a growing, albeit slow, awareness from other agencies as to the positive role housing providers could play in a coordinated community response to domestic abuse, a point also evident in the questionnaire responses. Whilst this awareness was welcomed there were still some frustrations of only being called upon at a time of crisis such as when a woman needed to move home and that housing providers needed to be part of the discussion earlier on. The important role that housing can play in terms of early intervention or what one interviewee described as a unique 'foot in the door' that wasn't at the disposal of other agencies was slowly

becoming more recognised by other agencies. The often less formal role that housing providers could take compared with some statutory agencies meant that they were well placed to be a conduit for other services. This point was borne out by SafeLives Insights data (2015) which illustrated that Gentoo tenants experienced domestic abuse for on average three years compared with the national figure of four years of those who accessed support from a specialist domestic abuse service.

There was strong consensus amongst interviewees that there was a need for a coordinated community response where mental health, housing and criminal justice agencies worked together more effectively. This resonated with Pence and Paymar's (1993) point when they stipulated that for a coordinated community response, agencies had to not only think differently but act differently.

Interviewees highlighted the frustrations in the lack of housing options available to victims of domestic abuse which impacted on options at their disposal. Such points were made over thirty years ago (Morley, 2000; Aguirre, 1985; Horn, 1992; Shepard and Pence, 1988) and depressingly are still a major issue today. This makes the case to for housing providers to proactively recognise domestic abuse and seek or provide early support meaning that in some cases women, where it is safe to do so may not need to move home, again reflecting other comments from housing professional interviewees about housing providers needing to be included at the beginning of a case of domestic abuse in their property as opposed to the point of crisis.

Whilst Fitzpatrick et al. (2003) highlighted the value of specialist refuge provision in meeting the needs of households escaping domestic violence; interviewees pointed

out that refuge space to meet family needs; including older sons and pets were not always available. Hague and Malos (1996) note the stigma and uncertainty that can be attached to living in refuge especially when there is no real access to settled housing post refuge. One interviewee felt that there was an important task to be undertaken in promoting the reality of a refuge, that the quality of purpose built self-contained flats within the refuge in her area would surprise people. There was growing recognition of the importance of semantics around team names and this reflected the growing awareness of the wider role of housing moving away from traditional job titles and team names involving tenancy enforcement or ASB. Changing language was a recognition of the message this could send out to victims who may feel that by disclosing domestic abuse it might be viewed as a tenancy enforcement matter so there was a need to think and act differently in terms of language used. Some interviewees (and questionnaire respondents) gave examples of cases of domestic abuse whereby victims still needed to provide proof of the abuse for management moves and lock changes. This proof could be crime reference number, a letter from an IDVA or social services involvement illustrating that many providers still had a long way to go in their response to domestic abuse and represents a failure in understanding that not everyone will report the abuse to the police or indeed specialist services and that disclosure of domestic abuse was entirely different to disclosing anti-social behaviour, for example. Research suggests that a high proportion of domestic abuse is not reported to the police (Catalano, 2007; Lichtenstein and Johnson, 2009). Gover, Welton-Mitchell et al. (2013) assert that reporting victimisation experiences to law enforcement agencies is a difficult process for survivors, even when that response is helpful and supportive (Thompson et al., 2007).

7.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the findings from the semi-structured interviews with housing professionals. The questionnaire findings provided rich data and served to influence the questions for interviews with housing professionals allowing me to probe in more detail. This chapter has highlighted that in the main, housing providers where they provide support around domestic abuse very much take a victim-led approach often means that perpetrator action and support to address the abusive behaviour of perpetrators is not taken. Encouragingly, there was a growing awareness of the impact of perpetrators and recognition that more could be done by organisations.

Chapter 8: Women's Experiences of Support from Their Housing Provider and Experiences in Accessing Housing

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the semi-structured interviews undertaken with victims of domestic abuse in Sunderland and London. The women were at varying stages in their recovery and their ages ranged from early twenties to mid-seventies. Interviews were carried out at the victim's home, over the telephone and in a local refuge. Interviews were carried out on a one to one basis with individual women and a group interview with women in a local refuge also took place. The group interview with women in the refuge added an extra layer of information and highlighted important, different experiences and insight compared to women who had not spent time in a refuge. The analysis starts by looking at routes to support, women's experiences of support and practical and emotional factors in moving or staying put and their perception of the impact on children. It will then highlight differences between generic and specialist support and will conclude by exploring the women's hopes for the future.

8.2 Routes into Support from the Housing Provider

Despite the housing providers of women interviewed promoting the support they could offer customers experiencing domestic abuse, interviews highlighted that women often accessed that support via non-support related routes. This could be via repairs when requesting a lock change or in other ways, for example making a noise complaint meaning they had not always specifically approached the provider for support around domestic abuse. Some of the women interviewed said they had not previously considered disclosing to the housing provider. In some cases contact was made when

the housing provider was notified by the police about abuse or came to light following a complaint. Sally explained that her housing provider became involved after the police notified her housing provider. She had simultaneously reported repairs that had alerted the housing provider to consider that domestic abuse could be an issue. Sally had a good relationship with her housing officer, as she had been able to talk to her when she had left a previous abusive relationship and was re-housed from a refuge in the area. Although Sally had a good relationship with the housing officer, in this case, she had not wanted to talk to anyone at all about the abuse, let alone a housing support worker that she had not previously met.

> '…well, me housing manager came out because the police had informed them and they got us in touch with a support worker [names support worker].' (Sally)

The housing officer was the first point of contact with Sally who subsequently made a referral to the support worker. Sally remembered feeling uncomfortable at their initial meeting because she did not have an existing relationship with the support worker.

> 'I didn't want…I was all right talking to [housing officer] but because I didn't know [support worker] and I didn't feel very comfortable talking to [support worker name].' (Sally)

Mary sought help from her housing provider after a visit from the housing officer to carry out an annual customer survey. Mary and her husband had always paid their rent on time, kept their property and garden in excellent condition; they were exemplar tenants so would not have necessarily come to the attention of their housing officer

otherwise. The housing officer left a Tenants' Handbook which included a wide range of information on services and support that the organisation could provide to customers from be-friending, support with money advice to support for anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse. Mary had experienced domestic abuse much of her married life (over forty years) and had not been aware that she could seek support from her housing provider, however, a chance conversation with someone in the organisation and then on reading this in the Handbook was a catalyst for her to seek help.

> 'I phoned up and asked for an appointment and…I don't know if I phoned up or if I actually went down…and they let me see somebody straight away. I think they must have been in a bit of a…I must have been wandering the roads.' (Mary)

Emily made a complaint about noise from an upstairs neighbour and received a visit from the housing provider to discuss her complaint in more detail. She had not previously informed them she was experiencing domestic abuse.

> 'Well, it's really random actually, I had a new Estate Manager knock on the door just to introduce herself. The week prior I put in a complaint about a neighbour upstairs that was banging constantly on the walls.' (Emily)

The Estate Manager's warm approach in asking how she was made Emily feel she could disclose to her and soundly illustrates the importance of the manner of initial contact and its effect to elicit the confidence of a victim to disclose domestic abuse.

> ‘So when the lady knocked on the door I thought it was that she just said ‘Hi, I’m such and such, how are you today...and I burst into tears and she was like ‘Do you mind if I come in?’ (Emily)

In this case, the Estate Manager listened and advised that although she didn’t have the necessary skills to best help her, she would ensure she got the right person to support her. Whilst the Estate Manager was not an expert, her supportive approach demonstrated she had enough knowledge to provide immediate support and provide Emily with access to more appropriate support.

> ‘and bless her she was like ‘I’ve not got the skills or the experience to help you but I do know somebody that is, can you give me the rest of the day and I promise you I’ll get somebody to give you a call back.’ (Emily)

The role of housing providers having an impact on peoples’ lives in non-housing related situations was further demonstrated by Carrie who sought help on a non-housing related matter when her abusive ex-partner picked up her child from school without her knowledge. She didn’t know where else to turn and contacted her housing provider for advice and help. She had left her abusive partner without the input from the housing provider but was still feeling she was being abused via ongoing child contact.

> ‘Something…basically…when I did leave the situation, I left the situation on my own but I was still going through it because I had a child, so due to the child contact it felt like I still was experiencing even though I wasn’t in the actual

situation anymore. So basically one day he just…he went to pick up my daughter from school without me knowing.' (Carrie)

8.3 Repairs as a Route to Support

The important role that housing providers can play in recognising domestic abuse via repairs was highlighted by Sally. Her property had been attacked by her ex-partner meaning she felt she had to report the damage to the housing provider.

'But like I say, if it wasn't for him causing the damage to the house like that they'd probably would never have been involved 'cause I wouldn't have phoned them and said, do you know what I mean?' (Sally)

Trudy came to access support via reporting repairs when she was unable to get into her house after the locks on her doors had been changed by her husband without her knowledge. The repairs call handler reported the request for a lock change to the Support Team in line with the organisations policy. Consequently, Trudy was referred to a support worker which led her to disclose the abuse she was experiencing.

'Yeah, I was a joint tenant, yeah, and obviously they put me in touch with [named support worker] because that had came up on the system that it was some kind of alert or 'cause for concern' and obviously within the same day the police were alerted and then obviously on [date] I then went and saw [support worker] and they kind of knew the whole situation at that point.' (Trudy)

Victims, in some cases, said they found it easier to disclose to a housing professional, it was sometimes a case of them being in the right place at the right time (Emily and the Estate Manager as an example of this). A key factor in disclosure was the relationship and *attitude* of the Housing officer and the opportunity of being able to talk to someone who was not a family member.

> 'And so we was talking I just told her, basically it had to come out and she just happened to be somebody…and I think because I had…I didn't know her, in a way it meant that I didn't have that fear of sometimes when people are close to you sometimes they're more honest and it can be more hurtful and it all just spilt out.' (Emma)

8.4 Victims Expectations of the Support from their Housing Provider

A recurring theme was a lack of awareness of the support they could access and expect from their housing provider. Sally said she had not considered a housing provider would offer support around domestic abuse.

> 'Not at all, not at all, like I knew…as far as I was concerned it was just a landlord and you paid your rent and that was it, I didn't know nowt about what they done till I actually got involved with them, do you know what I mean.' (Sally)

Women also expressed a level of surprise at the extent and level of support given and that it had exceeded their expectations.

> ‘Yeah, well she helped me like quite a bit and then like I wasn’t going to have much…like obviously when I went to go and see her on the [date] I didn’t have much faith, I just thought ‘Okay, you know, just go to somebody to talk to.’ (Trudy)

Emma, who initially disclosed to her Estate Manager, was referred to a support worker who called her on the same day and arranged to see her. Emma felt that she was understood by the support worker and that she provided everything she needed.

> ‘I always say [support worker name] was like an earth angel, she was a lovely woman, she was so understanding, caring, she was…just her nature, just her way, she’s got a softly spoken, she’s really understanding, she gave me cuddles the first time she met me. I was upset, I was crying, she was just really friendly, she told me all the other people I could go to like National Domestic Violence, the domestic violence team in [area she lived], contacting like a solicitor, police.’ (Emma)

Trudy spoke to her support worker and initially thought it was someone to talk to, not expecting much. However, on accessing the supports she felt her support worker provided a huge level of support and the worker really invested herself into the process. Trudy talked about how invaluable that support was when she was giving evidence at court against her husband on an attempted murder charge (of her). She highlighted the support was also provided to members of her family which she felt ultimately benefitted her.

> Because obviously I had my mam and dad there and I wanted someone that was…obviously she'd been there the whole time, so in a way like she's kind of invested her time as well. I know it's her work and obviously she's got to like… to a degree, that's what she's got to do but I did really appreciate the fact that she came, she put herself out but also it meant that because she was there it calmed my mam and dad, it calmed like…like she was on my side but it was a professional, so it still kept everything to…'cause obviously my mam and dad, you know, they mean well but my mam and dad.' (Trudy)

A recurring theme throughout interviews was the low expectation of the level of support that would be provided from the housing provider. Women in some cases had not considered seeking support from their housing provider because they didn't think they could which led to low expectations of the quality and type of support they would be provided with when they did access it.

In some cases women had not sought housing provider support themselves but were referred from other agencies; such as police thereby demonstrating some knowledge from other agencies as to the support housing providers can offer. Women expressed that the support they received was like having 'someone backing you up' and having 'someone in your corner.' This feeling gave women the confidence, to leave in one case, and in another the confidence to pursue a criminal justice outcome that they would not have necessarily considered otherwise.

> 'Well that's it, you are and you're blaming yourself, do you know what I mean? You're thinking…and I think if I never had that support at the time I probably

> wouldn't have took him to court, I wouldn't have said I was going to press charges but because I had plenty of people around me saying I was saying the right thing, backing me up, you know what I mean, that was a massive thing, like I say.' (Sally)

Mary said the most important thing about the support provided was having somebody she could go to and know they would back her up.

> 'So I was having to…I couldn't be in my own home because of…so if [names housing provider] hadn't been there…' (Mary)

8.5 The Practical Implications of Moving

Women spoke about moving after experiencing domestic abuse and the practicalities and difficulties this entailed. For some, their housing provider supported them with very practical help in moving.

> But when I moved [names housing provider] got me a cooker 'cause I never…my cooker was fitted in me previous property, so I couldn't have took that with me. And they got it from the [mentions housing provider] fund or something like that they got me a cooker out of the [housing provider funded] Fund.' (Sally)

Mary talked of not being able to take any of the possessions she had bought with her husband from the joint tenancy they had shared for over forty years. She remembered the difficulty she faced in trying to move the possessions she was permitted to take

and how her support worker had been on hand to help her with this very practical task on the day of her moving to her new property. Mary had declined a refuge space arranged by her support worker and was living in the property she shared with her husband until her new property became available.

> ‘On the morning that he heard I got the keys and everything and I was getting the electric on, he said to me ‘I want you out of this house now.’ I said ‘I haven’t got a bed to sleep in though’, couldn’t care about that, you know. So [support worker] and one of her colleagues came with a car and got my boxes and one thing and another and brought them down here for me. So I do not know where I would have been, I really wouldn’t.’ (Mary)

8.6 Moving or Staying in the Home

Whilst women highlighted the practical implications and concerns about moving; such as the financial costs associated with moving and re-building a home, some women discussed the impact that moving had on their recovery. For some, it was positive step and they felt the move represented a new start for them (and their children).

> ‘Oh I…I mean, you know, like coming into a strange, a new area, a new house, I’ve been able to go to bed and know that I’m…I feel really protected in this house.’ (Emily)

> ‘Well I knew when I walked in that the house just felt...the first night my daughter came up from [names area daughter lives], the first night we slept here, this house wraps itself round you, it really does.’ (Mary)

One woman spoke about the frustration at having to move and how she was seeking a new home from the refuge when she felt more could have been done to keep her home.

> ‘He doesn’t live with me so it’s like I wish I could have just gone back to it and just put an injunction and then it’s not it’s like I’m picking areas I don’t even want for the sake of just getting out.’

Some women reflected on the positive and therapeutic effects in moving. Carrie spoke of moving as a cathartic experience in that *she* was for the first time able to make choices for herself.

> ‘…and I was in a very controlling environment where I had no choice in a lot of things, so having the choice of actually just moving and doing something for myself was beneficial for me, yeah.’ (Carrie)

Emma discussed how she felt safer in her property after moving to a new area, had started to re-build her life including starting to make friends and that people would be aware of someone new in the area (i.e. her ex-partner) which gave her confidence.

> ‘I’ve made friends with a couple of the mums and I feel safer in that environment that the fact that these people recognise who I am, my friends and family and they would notice if somebody shouldn’t be here.’ (Emma)

In moving to new locations; having a support network was of key importance to many women in terms of their hopes and plans for recovery. Nicky said she couldn't live near her mother (who was an important source of support for her and her child) as the perpetrator knew where her mother lived so she feared that if she were to move close to her mother this would result in him finding her. In deciding where to apply for housing, her Support Worker discussed options on areas where she had some existing support so would not feel so isolated.

> 'In an ideal world it would be next to my mam in [names area] but it's probably not the safest place for me to be as he knows...I know that with chats with [support worker] we've discussed that the best place is probably with other support network which would be on the other side of the water so like [names area].' (Nicky)

Deciding to move often away from support networks or areas the women originated from or knew well was an understandably a difficult decision to make. Sally spoke about how she resisted this for some time as she had previously moved (with her children) following a previous abusive relationship and didn't want to go through the upheaval of starting over again. She spoke about her resistance as a kind of defiance at first: that the perpetrator wouldn't push her out of the area where she had a strong support network and her children went to the local school.

> 'Aye, it's like at the time it was like…that wasn't another thing like why I wasn't moving, it was like everything he'd done it was to make me move and I thought no, you know, I'm not backing down and things just got worse and worse and I

> thought ‘no chance’ and then in the end I realised I’m the only person who I’m spiting is myself, it’s me who I’m causing more damage to by stopping.’ (Sally)

Sally’s experience of the desire to stay in her home at first demonstrates the difficult weighing up of factors ranging from the practical to the support and ultimately their safety.

8.7 The Impact of Moving or Staying on Children

Deciding whether to move or to stay in their current home following domestic abuse was a decision that also focused on practical concerns such as financial costs of moving home and the impact on children.

Sally who had originally resisted moving was worried about the long term impact on her children of yet another disruption.

> ‘The kids struggled, do you know what I mean, when we first moved to [names area] those kids on the estate just picked on them and things like that and they didn’t make friends at school and things like that and I think it was past experiences that put us off doing it again.’ (Sally)

Because of her previous experiences Sally decided against moving in the first instance, her housing provider fitted a safe room and other target hardening equipment such as CCTV cameras fitted in the property prior to the perpetrator being released from prison. She was keen to keep some normality for the children and did not want to feel she had to move again. Sally spoke about the impact on *her* wellbeing and her

ability to parent on the release of the perpetrator and the proximity of his family close by. In retrospect, she felt her original decision *not* to move at the time of the perpetrator's release from prison had perhaps impacted negatively on the children's, with them worrying about her when they were at school which manifested in their behaviour at school.

Feeling responsible for the welfare of her children in moving previously and then deciding to stay at her current home more recently was palpable: the level of responsibility she felt for either decision demonstrated the difficulties faced by women.

> 'I'm not sure whether it was just me and the way I was going on. Like I say when I was at home I was a mess and then she was going to school, and say if the teacher would nag her for being late or not having her tie on or something like that, she'd break down and cry and swear and just walk out. Or she'd text me in her lessons, she'd just text me anything ridiculous, I think she was just texting me to see if I was alright.' (Sally)

Whilst moving for some women represented a fresh start and improved their sense of safety, this did not always come without some emotional cost. Emily spoke about the feelings of blame she experienced from her child for leaving her partner.

> 'cause she sort of…I felt that she blamed me, I don't know if she did, she was still young at the time but I just thought that she sort of blamed me for us not being together no more.' (Emily)

This was reiterated by Sally who also felt blame and guilt for uprooting her children.

> ‘Do you know what I mean, so I think they…at the time when I said ‘We’ll move’ and they said ‘Oh no Ma’ it’s like my kids they knew we’d have to move one day, it’s just up the road, blah de blah de blah, and they’re like ‘No, no I don’t want to move’, ‘We’ve got to’, you know what I mean?’ (Sally).

Sally’s decision to move after her initial reticence she felt, had positively impacted on the wellbeing of her children in that her stress notably decreased as a result of the move.

> ‘Life’s changed for them, really, do you know what I mean, apart from…well they’ve got their own bedrooms now so that’s a plus, which, you know, but they are settled and are…home’s happier because I’m not stressing them out, you know, they’re not seeing me upset all the time, which is…before it was a massive thing, it was like every day, do you know what I mean?’ (Sally)

Sally explained that she was now able to reflect and realise she was in shock following the abuse and this in turn impacted on her home life with her children.

> ‘They’d speak to us [me] and I just wouldn’t hear, do you know what I mean, it would just echo through us, I was that…shocked, do you know what I mean, and they’d just, walk away and not even say it again because they must have just thought ‘What’s the point? And it’s like now, do you know what I mean, it’s

like mad. I go in their rooms and I dance and that and they're like 'Mam get out' but like before it's…you know? It's totally changed.' (Sally)

Whilst Sally agonised over the impact of a move on her children, the decision to move was for others to have had a positive effect on their children, in that it was symbolic of a fresh start.

'Yeah, my house like feels like, I know it sounds weird, but my house is not tarnished with any arguments, nothing bad has happened here, it just feels like it's new for me and my daughter.' (Emma)

8.8 Re-building a Home after Abuse

The cost of moving and other practicalities impacted on rebuilding a home. Mary spoke about this process, the time involved and the costs after leaving with just a handful of things from the home she had shared with her husband for over forty years.

'And I asked for my bedroom furniture, I wanted by BBQ, my gas bottle and my nice sun lounger, so he's come back and said…oh and I've got some designer handbags that I'd never got picked up. So he's decided that I can have my personal things, I can have the BBQ and the sun lounger but that's it! So I had to obviously buy a new bed, but I just wanted my bedroom furniture to finish the house off but he said 'You can't have the bedroom furniture because I need it for when my brother stays.' So he needs a dressing table and mirror, you know.' (Mary)

Mary talked in detail about the long process in building her new home to the level she wanted it to be. During the interview she was keen for me to see what she had done in the property and discussed how she had bought her furniture, the experience of seeing it in a shop window and then going into the shop and buying it, painting her own pictures and she had undertaken much planting in the garden. The making of a beautiful and comfortable home appeared to be a very therapeutic process for her and she had very obvious pride in the hard work she had undertaken. Mary had also talked frequently about having been a 'good wife' and had taken pride in being an excellent home maker.

> 'Well I've been in here ten month now and I have one more job to do…and then I'm all done. And it's a job I can't do on my own, which I find so frustrating, but I'll have to get somebody in, a joiner, to do it. I can't get my heavy winter curtains up because they're catching the blind, so I need some wood across and an extending bracket, but I just need to get that sorted before…I think I'm very lucky that I can do lots of things myself but you do struggle for a handyman and you don't like always asking your friends or neighbours to…you know what I mean?' (Mary).

8.9 The Housing Situation of the Perpetrator

The housing situation of the perpetrator for one woman was key to her ongoing contact with him. Nicky said she had a sole tenancy with her housing provider, but when she attempted to end the relationship with the perpetrator who had lived at the property with her she felt pressurised to let him stay over as he told her he had nowhere to go.

Nicky: ‘No he was stopping from place to place when I got the property that’s when it sorted of ended anyway but he just wouldn’t leave me alone so he’d keep coming back because he was stopping from place to place’

Interviewer: ‘So he didn’t have a property?’

Nicky: ‘No and that’s why he would sort of make me feel sorry for him and let him stop a couple of nights.’

8.10 Waiting for an Offer of Property

Nicky had moved into a refuge arranged by her housing provider and whilst she felt she needed a place in the refuge at the time waiting for another property to be offered, she didn’t understand why the support worker had advised her she needed to keep on her old tenancy given that she could not go back to it for fears for her safety. This was a case of the support worker using this as way around the system so as to allow her to be offered a property as a Direct Allocation (also known as a Management Transfer) and would not result in losing her tenancy status: if Nicky had ended her secure tenancy and then some months later accessed a new tenancy it is likely it would have been a starter or introductory tenancy. The loss of tenancy security was highlighted by Kelly, Sharp and Klein (2015) who found that of the 121 women who came into and exited Solace refuges in 2015 22% had a secure tenancy on arrival whilst only 13% did on departure and 87% of those women left the refuge for *continued* temporary accommodation.

When a property becomes available to rent, the housing provider decides how it is to be allocated:

- advertised via choice based lettings (where applicants registered actively bid for a property) or allocated from the Housing List for those providers who don't operate Choice Based Lettings systems; or

- Direct Allocation or Management Transfer (Where the provider allocates the property directly to someone for a reason outlined in the Allocations Policy, for example, domestic abuse).

By ensuring Nicky was suitable for a direct Allocation this would mean the housing provider could try and find a property suitable for her and her child near to existing support networks. If Nicky had given up her tenancy and presented to the Local Housing Authority as homeless then she would have been made one reasonable offer of property whereby the Local Housing Authority would have dispensed its duty.

Nicky was waiting for a suitable property in an area she wanted to be in but didn't feel she needed to be in the refuge any longer.

> 'I don't know because I don't know if it's realistic. What I was saying I probably needed the support from here [the refuge] but if they found a house quicker I did come in here for a short period of time so maybe paying dual housing benefit for this new property instead of my old one.' (Nicky)

The Secure Tenancies Bill (2017), discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, currently going through Parliament means that in the case of local authority tenants fleeing domestic abuse having to give up their social housing tenancy would be offered tenure security.

8.11 The Value of Practical Support / Feelings of Safety

Interviewees spoke about the care and support they received from specialist staff and in many cases this had exceeded their expectations. This care had made them feel valued and cared for and women also spoke about the difference that practical support had meant to them: whether it was helping them with food parcels or explaining the court process in easier terms than that of the solicitor.

> '[Support worker] took us for a…what do you call it? A food parcel, just got like, it was a week after Christmas and I was skint, do you know what I mean?' (Sally)

For some women having support to understand the complexities of Criminal Justice System was invaluable.

> 'But she was just so helpful when like, even when I had papers from court and sometimes I didn't understand them and she was like reading through everything, 'cause she'd been there, done it, she'd explain it like 'Well this is this' but it's not, it's this.' (Carrie)

A common theme highlighted by victims was the practical security and safety measures that housing providers were able to assist with which added to a victim's

feeling of safety. For Sally, the safe room was the most useful thing that her housing provider did in the support given:

> ‘Aye, beforehand I knew he’d kick me door in. It would take seconds, do you know what I mean and there’s no way the police would get there or…like, do you know what I mean...I got a lot of support from [names provider] when he was due out from jail. I got the safe room put in, I got a lot of security measures in place. [Names provider] got us [me] a two year exclusion order, which the courts wouldn’t give me…Something to do with his human rights, [housing provider] got us [me] the two year exclusion order.’ (Sally)

Emily highlighted the rapid response of her support worker in target hardening the property when she disclosed domestic abuse. Emma’s ex-partner had attempted to set her property on fire so the support worker also arranged for fire brigade to visit to check her safety.

> ‘The minute I spoke to [support worker] she was like ‘There are things that we can do to help straight away.’ The fire brigade came round, they checked my fire alarm, they put on a special post-box so that if anything fire was put through to get out before that and they checked it and made sure that my windows and doors shut properly and that the fire door was okay.’ (Emily)

For Trudy, the support worker arranging to have the locks changed and extra locks added including to her garden gate meant she felt safe to leave her back door open when her dog was in the garden.

Trudy: ‘Yeah, [names neighbour] has her door open I’m totally fine with it is because I know no one can get in because there’s all the locks’

Interviewer: **‘**Everything’s locked?’

Trudy: ‘Like yeah’

Trudy had not wanted to move, although the opportunity had been offered to her. She pointed out she was keen to stay in her home with safety measures in place.

> ‘So obviously I feel more secure in here and I don’t really want to move. I would only want to move for something better, obviously at the moment I can’t see getting any better.’ (Trudy)

Those who had moved talked about the importance of the move in relation to their feelings of safety and associated recovery. Emma spoke about her previous flat and how the lack of security in the block impacted on her feelings of safety.

> ‘I did have security to a point but you just had to ring buzzers and eventually somebody would just let you in willy-nilly. Like where I am now everybody sort of knows everybody and they’re very cautious as to who they are letting in, like who they let in and if they’re not sure they won’t let you in, which…I’d much rather miss a parcel than have…than knowing he could get into the property again.’ (Emma)

8.12 Fragmentation between Specialist Support Roles and Generic Roles

Whilst victims often stated the support they received from their housing provider was positive and often exceeded their expectations; this was not always reflected in the organisation as a whole. Women gave examples of their negative experiences with non-specialist housing staff.

Trudy stated letters she received about a garden tenancy breach on the grounds of having overgrown grass (the tenancy agreement included that tenants must maintain the garden). Whilst she spoke about the fantastic support from the specialist support worker; she felt that there was a lack of a joined up approach across the organisation which led to a lack of understanding of her circumstances. She pointed out that she was undergoing the trauma of going to court (accompanied by the housing provider support worker) to give evidence against her ex-partner who was on trial for attempted murder whilst simultaneously receiving letters about a tenancy breach about her grass being uncut which caused her much concern in that she may lose her property.

> ‘And obviously I was explaining to them that I’d been part of the like domestic support and obviously I’d lost my means of doing it, I’d lost my in-law, I’d rather it been like that, I’d rather have long grass than be in the current situation I was in but it was still quite…well you were stuck between a hard place and a rock leave it or not.’ (Trudy)

Following the arrest of her husband, Trudy was the only person living at the property resulting in only one wage and had at the same time had her hours at work cut meaning

she was in a difficult financial situation with no disposable income to pay someone to undertake the work or buy garden equipment like a lawnmower to do it herself.

> ‘Yeah, even though like I put…there was a note on the system to say that my husband had left and there was like…like a dramatic change in money as well and obviously there was the whole domestic thing around that, so it was kind of like…in that way I couldn’t…but it was only…I said to them I’d just appreciate a one-off cut and I can try and maintain it myself or go round with the shears because I mean it was really long.’ (Trudy)

This fragmented approach was also emphasised by Emma who was liaising with the Lettings Team and viewing a property after being offered a Direct Allocation on the grounds of the domestic abuse she experienced. The perpetrator had previously set fires outside of her flat and though her letterbox. In viewing another property she naturally wanted to consider the safety of her and her children as she had concerns the perpetrator would find her again. She was shown a flat in a block and wanted to feel assured that the block was secure in case her partner was able to gain access to the block via the communal door being left open, the perpetrator following a tenant into the block before the door closed, or tenants releasing the door if someone was pressing the intercom saying they had mistakenly pressed the wring buzzer. The Lettings Team were aware of the reason for her move but she felt they did not understand how she might be feeling and the reality of her worries. In essence, if the perpetrator found her new address and could gain access to the block, then Emma’s life could be at risk and consequently she was likely to need re-housing again. There

seemed to be no acknowledgement of the need to understand if she would feel safe in accepting the property.

> 'Is there not any other property that I could look at because…just to compare' and he was just basically like 'You either take this' and that and it's just…I think when the handover was given to the housing team that they need to be sympathetic to the fact that I'm not just being difficult that. Yeah, I just think they need to know and just be a bit sympathetic to what your needs are and that we might seem a bit more difficult but it's just because we're coming out of a situation that we certainly don't want to get ourselves back into.' (Emma)

8.13 The Role of the Housing Support Worker in Victims' Rebuilding Lives

Victims in some cases highlighted the positive experience they had in relation to their support workers and other housing staff in their overall rebuilding of their lives as well as the support given at crisis point. Some women talked about referrals to other helpful agencies that they would not have accessed independently. This reflected the wider range of services available to customers; for example, volunteering and work and learning programmes which some customers felt had greatly added value to them rebuilding their lives.

> 'And then they got us volunteering, which was a big thing for me. I started volunteering for [names provider] and that built my confidence, me self-esteem and things like that and it give me routine. So I was keeping myself busy, so

> while I was keeping myself busy my mind wasn't [noise to imply racing], do you know what I mean?' (Sally)

Whilst Sally may have sought other volunteering opportunities of her own volition, the opportunity to take part in a programme run by the housing provider to consider her aspirations gave her confidence to volunteer as a befriender with the housing organisation and a work placement to gain experience for her CV. Sally felt this support was crucial in moving forward.

> 'Life's just totally changed round, which a few year back I wouldn't…if you'd have said it a couple of year back what I'd be doing now I would have laughed at you, do you know what I mean? [Laughter] I'd probably tell you where to go. But it's like…I don't know, it's mad how things have changed. If I hadn't had the support that I did have it wouldn't have happened, do you know what I mean?' (Sally)

Whilst victims talked positively about the specialist support received when experiencing abuse or in the immediate aftermath, not all victims experienced follow up care to the level they would have liked. Emily spoke of the outstanding care she had received whilst disclosing domestic abuse but felt once she moved to another property (with the same housing provider) she would have liked someone to check in with her to see how she was doing rather than the support just ending once she had moved. This raises an important point in recognising rebuilding of lives as not merely a one dimensional process involving practical solutions and re-building selves and

living. The point raised illustrates the importance of the victim having input in when *they* feel their case is ready to be closed.

> ‘Maybe just the fact that just someone just seeing if you’re okay, if everything is fine or maybe an actual…the fact that at the beginning you get to see somebody and at the end you just get like a random phone call to see if they did okay. So maybe actually seeing somebody.’ (Emily)

8.14 The Housing Provider as a Conduit to Specialist Services

Whilst support workers had provided much practical and emotional support, an important element of that support was according to some women had been in signposting and actively referring them and their children to specialist services. This highlights the importance of housing providers being engaged with Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) specialist services and VAWG partnerships to ensure they have knowledge of such specialist services and can refer confidently.

> ‘Yeah, they put you through to different trusts and stuff like that. I mean I got help from Hestia, is I think the women’s group. Yeah, Hestia, at the same group, they did a thing for children where they actually it’s like a ten week course. So once a week they’ll go to a programme and it will just for them to sort of understand because a lot of children in domestic violence actually blame the mothers and they think they’re wrong, so it’s just for them to understand what wrong is and what right is.’

Mary had problems with her original solicitor and discussed her frustrations with her support worker who was able to recommend a firm they had a good relationship with on domestic abuse cases. For many women dealing with solicitors was a new experience full of uncertainty.

> ‘So then I was dealing with solicitors…and this is what point I want to make with solicitors really, it was a recommendation of solicitors from [names housing provider.’ (Mary)

8.15 Would Victims Recommend Seeking Housing Provider Support?

Interviewees were asked if they would recommend accessing support from a housing provider to other women. The women overwhelmingly said they would recommend this. Given that I am employed by a housing provider it is possible that the interviewees were more likely to give a positive response. In responding, many women highlighted that support was available was largely unknown to tenants and more needed to be done to highlight this.

> ‘Definitely, because I didn’t know that was an option in life, it’s not known.’ (Trudy)

> ‘Oh good grief, I think more people need to [Laugh] I mean it’s not something you expect after forty-five year, it’s not a situation you. But by God if I hadn’t known that you were there.’ (Mary)

> ‘I think their team is fantastic and they’re very compassionate and I think if all housing providers could be like that I think lots will benefit from that from them, yeah. I haven’t got no major criticisms to say about the experience that I’ve had.’ (Carrie)

8.16 Thoughts on How Housing Providers Improve their Support

Interviewees were asked what would have improved their experience with housing providers. Those who responded with ideas about improvements largely focused on practical measures that housing providers could offer rather than the quality of the support. As mentioned previously, Trudy had received letters about a tenancy breach regarding the condition of her garden and this was something that had greatly worried her. For her, hiring equipment such as lawn mowers or offering cost effective practical services such as gardening or simply grass cutting would have eased the tension around receiving letters about a tenancy breach.

> ‘I said to them well even if you were to bring somebody out and like hire them or whether it was part of my housing agreement or ’cause obviously you have like to a degree where repair men come out and they say it’s like I don’t know is the garden kind of classed as that or in like under exceptional circumstances. But because they said the only exceptional circumstances they’ve got is the elderly and disabled and they thought that maybe they should maybe expand it a bit.’ (Trudy)

Mary who was in her mid-seventies and felt she could not have moved into a refuge when she was offered the option. She had opted to stay in the home she lived in with

the perpetrator whilst awaiting an offer of a property. Mary felt there was a gap in suitable temporary accommodation for those leaving an abusive partner and spoke about the impact of waiting for a property to become available. The issue of good quality, safe, temporary accommodation for those who didn't want a refuge place was also highlighted in the interviews with housing professionals who felt frustrated about this.

> 'You know, like…[support worker] said I could have gone into a refuge. Now that for me…[shakes head and indicates it was not for her] I mean, there obviously had to be a time factor in getting a home. But maybe if there was a temporary- well I think, you know, like in the darkest days you're thinking 'Ee my God where am I going to end up?' I think it's the wait. But I know you can't do anything about that, that's quite…that's very understandable.' (Mary)

Nicky made a similar point, she accessed refuge accommodation via her housing provider and still had her tenancy. Nicky was waiting for another property to become available as she could not return to her existing tenancy as the perpetrator had since been released from prison. Nicky advised she had needed support when she first came to the refuge and it had been useful but now she was waiting for a property whilst residing in the refuge purely as she had nowhere else to go which she felt was holding her back from getting on with her life.

Whilst many comments focused on the lack of housing options available other than refuge, Sally highlighted the lack of a joined up approach when many agencies are involved. Sally described one of the frustrations she had felt were about the numbers

of support agencies involved and how this could sometimes be rather overwhelming and illustrated a lack of coordination between agencies.

> ‘I think like I said earlier just trying not to…Well it’s not so much pestering me but the level of contact, do you know what I mean? When they keep phoning you, maybes they could go through like [domestic abuse charity] or the police, do you know, rather than. Like I say, rather than everyone phoning you, keep repeating yourself.’ (Sally)

8.17 Lack of Control in Housing Choice

Women spoke about the pressure of waiting to be offered a property, there was a difference in this impact between women in a property and those in a refuge. The women who took part in the group interview in the refuge and Nicky (who was living in a refuge) expressed a greater lack of control in their housing situation. A key point emphasised by the women in a refuge was a feeling of being ignored and a sense of being ‘done to.’ Women expressed frustration at not having any real control, knowledge or choice over pursuing their housing options. The point was made that women felt they had to take the first property offered as they were afraid of the repercussions if they didn’t accept that property – making them wonder if there would be another offer, would it be better or worse? There was a feeling of having to accept a property, even if they felt it was unsuitable and being powerless in some cases to refuse a property. In effect, by having some feeling of choice in choosing a home would in effect mean that the tenancy would be more likely to be sustained and had a major part in rebuilding lives.

‘And like you’re in fear of well if you refuse it then that’s it, they’re not going to come back to you.’ (Val)

‘Aye, you’ll go to the bottom of the list, won’t you?’ (Jenny)

In addition to this worry, accepting an offer of property had other impacts, including financial concerns.

‘Well I did in the past and I accepted one that was in the middle of nowhere and I struggled, was stranded and like food was expensive ’cause there was only one local shop but it was the thought that ‘Ee God, how long am I going to wait for the next one?’ (Val)

This uncertainty had a negative impact in that women were unsure of their rights in refusing a property and what they could expect throughout the process. The uncertainty of waiting for an offer of property also meant that women felt they were often unable to begin to move on in life and make plans.

‘Just been stuck on the waiting list for a while and it’s just waiting. What’s more frustrating is waiting for people to get back to you for information to see where you’d more or less stand.’ (Jenny)

‘Yeah, it really is stressful, the length of time you have to wait and you are more or less stuck in limbo, it’s like. You can’t exactly plan anything.’ (Val)

8.18 Rent Arrears as a Barrier to Accessing Housing

In the refuge interview there was a view that barriers such as rent arrears prevented re-housing in many cases. This was despite the fact that many housing providers state they accepted women with rent arrears in domestic abuse cases where there is an agreement to pay arrears at an affordable rate (despite the arrears could often be caused by the perpetrator).

> ‘I’ve seen women in here and they’ve like had rent arrears, sometimes they’re more interested in that than the stress that the women are under and then sometimes they don’t realise maybe these arears were caused by these partners, you know what I mean?’ (Jenny)

Moreover, women had been told they couldn’t access a property because of the arrears and the problem in paying back arrears they could not afford.

> ‘…they can’t really afford to be paying these arrears back and then on top of being told you can’t get a house because you’ve got these arrears.’ (Sue)

8.19 Hopes for the Future

Interviewees were asked about their hopes for the future and where they expected to be in a year’s time. They spoke about recovery in terms of building confidence and being able to pursue education and employment goals.

> ‘In a year’s time I think it’s just for me to be…have the confidence to be in full time employment. I’m very lucky to be in a good area so I’m very happy where I am living and it’s just to stop blaming myself and…yeah, just stop blaming myself and actually have the confidence to actually move forward.’ (Carrie)

Trudy was planning to go to university to pursue her dream of becoming a teacher and continue living in her property.

> ‘Probably, probably still be living here, I know it sounds really strange but what is it, like July next year well, since I’ve arranged to go back to university. A PGC with a PCET [teaching qualifications] in September and obviously it’s always something that I wanted to do but…but for some reason I just kept that put on hold, like it wasn’t. There was always an excuse not to do it or, you know, we can’t afford to do it, you need to work, you can’t suddenly like…so obviously now.’ (Trudy)

Nicky spoke of pursuing her dreams of child nursing and her main aim was to have a home and pursue qualifications to obtain a place on a Nursing degree at university. Sally stated she was happy to take each year as it came, she now felt settled in her home and had dreams for her future. One of her dreams was to pursue driving lessons:

> ‘I’ve been saying I’ll do for about ten year like, I will do it eventually, I know I will. But like I say I’m just happy to have each year as it comes.’ (Sally)

Sally also took time to reflect how far she had come and the positive changes in her life. She now worked for the housing provider who had supported her, loved her job and was getting some support worker experience by shadowing support related roles with a view to eventually pursuing this role:

> ‘Life’s just totally changed round, which a few year back I wouldn’t. If you’d have said it a couple of year back what I’d be doing now I would have laughed at you, do you know what I mean? [Laughter] I’d probably tell you where to go.’ (Sally)

8.20 Discussion

Women interviewed all highlighted they had an overall positive experience of support from their housing provider in terms of specialist workers highlighting the importance of staff understanding domestic abuse and providing advocacy. In essence, housing providers are ideally placed to recognise and respond to victims of domestic abuse.

It is interesting to note that in some cases women accessed support from their housing provider by chance and chose to disclose the abuse when the opportunity presented where they felt the person would be receptive. Websdale and Johnson (1997) highlight the effects that appropriate services and support can have a positive impact on women’s abilities to end abusive relationships, whilst Kernic and Holt (2005) assert that women often seek help from many informal and formal networks without necessarily disclosing their victimisation. This was a theme identified by some women who disclosed their abuse when the housing provider was visiting for unrelated issues. Krause, Kaltman, et al. (2007) point out that that survivors experience abuse differently with seeking help as a process which evolves over time. As well as help seeking

changing over time, Kaukinen (2004) argues that women employ multiple help-seeking strategies, involving friends and family, as well as help from police and social services. The less formal (i.e. non statutory) relationship with individual housing staff seemed to be an important factor in women disclosing their experience of abuse to staff. Some women actively sought help for related issues such as being locked out of the property when the perpetrator changed the locks or to directly request help to escape the abuse. Zweig and Burt (2007) found in their research that women felt services were more helpful when they experienced positive staff behaviour meaning that women felt in control in their interactions with staff. This was a point reflected by women in this research who had positive experience of support staff. Two women detailed experiences where non-support staff or approaches were not helpful and did not reflect an understanding of their situation, for example Emily highlighted her experience with a Lettings Officer and Trudy spoke of receiving tenancy breach letters in relation to her garden. Both women highlighted they had received excellent support from their support worker where they felt understood and supported; this negative experience was disappointing to them.

Moe (2007) suggested women were very active help seekers and that the failures of agencies to adequately assist them meant that women were entrapped in abusive relationships; echoing a point made previously by Gondolf and Fisher (1988). This was evident in the case of those women who actively sought help such as one woman contacting her housing provider when an ex-partner had picked up her daughter from school and Mary who the day after she learned her housing provider could provide support for those experiencing domestic abuse sought help the next morning. The unique relationship that housing providers can have with tenants where they are not a

statutory agency and perhaps more informal nature of support was seen as key in them seeking help.

The importance of well trained staff to facilitate any disclosure is crucial, according to Waldrop and Resick (2004) who argue that women who receive supportive responses from those they first tell about the violence are likely to have increased confidence and be more likely to seek support and help in future. In addition to the initial disclosure, the ongoing trusting relationship with support workers played an important role in women's experiences. The IDVA role in the UK was established in Britain in 2005 to provide advice and support to women who were considered at risk of further abuse. The role of IDVA is aimed at providing support at crisis point, typically for fairly short time-frames and is principally focused on reducing risk. The role is an advocate on behalf of victims to access relevant services (Howarth, Stimpson, Barran, and Robinson, 2009; Robinson, 2009). A key foundation in the development of advocacy was that women were frequently presented with very limited options to address the multiple complexities facing them and that in seeking formal assistance they encountered a myriad of procedures and barriers in accessing what they needed from organisations that did not understand domestic abuse. Consequently, in the face of such barriers many women abandoned their help-seeking efforts (Barran, Botham and Brookes, 2003; Dobash, Dobash and Cavanagh, 1985; Stark and Flitcraft, 1996).

Women interviewed in their home highlighted typical examples of advocacy, such as referrals to specialist support services, and helping one woman moving her belongings from the home she had shared with the perpetrator and taking another woman for food parcels as opposed to simply making a referral to a food bank.

Research findings highlighted some differences in moving or staying put in terms of rebuilding their lives. Women had very individual reasons for staying put or moving home, meaning that it would be hard to draw any meaningful conclusions other than a woman's determinant as to having some agency in deciding to move or to stay as important to reclaiming self. Flasche (2015) states that recovery is very individual given that experiences of domestic abuse are diverse meaning that it is crucial research and practice to avoid overly prescriptive approaches (Alexander, Tracy, Radek and Koverola, 2009).

Women who were living in the refuge had concerns about how the homeless system worked, what to expect and how much of 'their story' they should disclose when presenting as homeless. The impact of austerity, resulting in staffing cuts to refuges meant that women often had to present as homeless alone heightening those fears.

It is well documented that a lack of alternative housing and income are a major reason why women leave refuges and return to an abusive partner (Johnson, 1992; Menard, 2001; Schechter, 1982). Champion et al. (2009, p.3) argue:

> 'Moving between various types of accommodation that lacked security of tenure and/or failed to provide a sense of safety directly impacted on the women's ability to obtain a life free from violence.'

Whilst none of the women spoke about returning to their ex-partner in this research the lack of certainty in their housing situation made it easy to understand why this is a possibility. Another layer to this was in terms of intersectionality, the three Black women interviewed all lived in London where social housing is limited and illustrated an axis for difference, adding another barrier for them.

As well as being uncertain as to how the homeless system worked some women in the refuge perceived barriers to accessing housing that they wanted to live in, for example having existing rent arrears. Although this should not prevent them being offered a property under homeless legislation, they felt it would hinder their chances of being offered a property as they believed some housing providers would not accept them.

Women often continue to face barriers after leaving abusive relationships in terms of finances, housing, recovering from the abuse and re-building self-confidence (Belknap, 2007). Women highlighted the practical support the housing provider had offered such as food parcels, accessing a solicitor to pursue a divorce, moving belongings to a new home and it was felt that these individual acts were very meaningful to the women and made them feel they had someone in their corner or somewhere to turn for practical help.

In terms of women rebuilding lives there was a noticeable difference between women in the refuge and those interviewed in their home. There are various theories relating to rebuilding self, post domestic abuse most of which highlight levels or stages (Farrell, 1996; Merritt-Gray and Wuest 1995; Ai and Park; 2005). Interviews highlighted the

differing stages women were at in their rebuilding their lives and regaining their identity in some cases. For some women moving from the home they had shared with the perpetrator was key to that rebuilding and a new home for others was the catalyst to begin their recovery. Mary spoke about the house wrapping itself around her on the first night in her new home and Emily felt her new house was not tarnished by the violence that had occurred in her previous home.

For some women staying in their home was an important part of rebuilding their lives as it provided important support networks for them and where the perpetrator was recognised, meaning that neighbours could sound the alert if the perpetrator was seen in the area. For these women target hardening represented an important element in their feelings of safety.

As well as the emotional cost in deciding to move home, women highlighted the financial cost this presented. Although rebuilding a home for Mary was an important part of rebuilding her life and something she could take pride in, the financial element was of concern to women. Mary spoke of the loss of much loved possessions and leaving a beautiful home; but was proudly rebuilding another beautiful home in her mid-seventies. She spoke of buying new furniture from a local charity shop and how she was adept at seeking out good quality items at a reasonable cost.

Women spoke about their plans for the future including going back to college or university, volunteering or learning to drive after feeling their life had perhaps been on hold whilst in the abusive relationship, Merritt-Gray and Wuest (1995) term such actions as ‘reclaiming self’ by creating a physical distance from their past, in this case

via new housing, education or learning to drive. One woman felt a strong desire to use her experience to help others experiencing abuse, a concept that Al and Park (2006) term post-traumatic growth and all women's reasons for taking part in the research were framed to various degrees in a desire to help others who may be in their situation.

8.21 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the findings and main themes from the in depth semi-structured interviews with women in their homes and a group interview in a refuge. As highlighted in the introduction to this thesis, this action research is committed to giving women who have experienced domestic abuse a voice with regard to their experiences of social housing in a bid to inform housing providers to improve their practice.

The interview with women in their homes highlighted some excellent experiences from specialist support staff from their housing providers. Despite this, the understanding of domestic abuse and its dynamics was not always recognised by staff in a non-specific support role such as Lettings/Allocations or housing management. The lack of support was at odds from the specialist support women had received. For example in the case of the housing officer sending letters about a tenancy breach relating to grass cutting where in this case, only specialist support staff had access to information pertaining to domestic abuse. This could have been counteracted by adding a note to the housing management system to speak to the support officer before pursuing any tenancy breach action.

The women in the refuge had, in many cases left their social housing and were waiting for an offer of property after presenting as homeless due to domestic abuse. Obviously,

in some cases women do need to move for safety, but for some it would have been more effective to provide early support and seek to offer a management transfer to a new home with the same provider.

Chapter 9: The Big Project – Views from the Men

9.1 Introduction

The Big Project consists of three elements - a Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme (DVPP) for men, support for women partners and ex-partners and positive engagement for men on the programme from housing provider, Gentoo. The Big Project is unique in having wraparound support from a housing provider. This chapter describes how this model operates and how the positive engagement offer is viewed by the men on the programme which relates to Research Question 3.

After a description of the three elements of the Big Project, key themes identified in the interviews with men are described. The different contexts of the men accessing the project are described in turn, and then how these fit with existing literature on domestic violence perpetrator programmes is considered. Although the sample size is small this study starts to fill a gap in knowledge in research on perpetrator programmes in terms of positive engagement from a housing provider to men on the programme. Men who participated in the research were at different stages of the programme but some common themes were identified.

Since the Big Project began 36 men have successfully completed the programme (August 2018). Not all men on it are Gentoo tenants which presented a small sample size to select men from. Added to this was the take up of those men who were Gentoo tenants or their (ex) partner was a tenant / applying to Gentoo for housing meant that the sample frame was fairly limited. Although this is covered in more detail in the Research Methods chapter, it is worth highlighting here the possibility of men's

concerns about disclosing their abusive behaviour to me where I am employed by their landlord where domestic abuse is a tenancy breach which can lead to possession of the property. Connected to this, I work outside the field of engaging with perpetrators and am known as a victims' advocate meaning the men may have had concerns in relation to this.

The research has limitations in that it interviewed males in one part of the country who had access to positive engagement from housing provider, Gentoo. However, a comparative study could not be made as at the time of undertaking this research as no other housing providers were engaging with a perpetrator programme in this way and this is still understood to be the case.

Nevertheless, despite the methodological challenges and limited research on the role of housing providers in offering support to men to address their abusive behaviour I was keen to address this gap in knowledge and provide a basis for further research and to consider if there was value in positive engagement offered by a housing provider.

9.2 How the Big Project Model Operates

9.2.1 The Big Project – Perpetrator Programme

The weekly DVPP sessions are operated jointly by Barnardo's and Impact Family Services who also work in partnership across the Tyne and Wear area delivering Respect accredited DVPPs. The Respect accreditation standard was launched in 2008 and is a quality standard for programmes which is designed to give confidence to the

public and those who commission services. The accreditation was originally aimed at programmes and has now been developed to reflect an organisation's approach. The Big Project Programme is a 26 week group work rolling programme whereby men can enter at the beginning of any module. The programme is a comprehensive prevention model and based around a motivational, experiential approach. The course also uses cognitive, behavioural and pre-social concepts. The primary aim in working with perpetrators of domestic abuse is to increase the safety of women and children. Before entering the programme men are assessed on a one to one basis as to their suitability to participate and that they are accepting that their behaviour is abusive. The programme includes a four-session assessment which assesses men's motivation and suitability for the programme which begins the process of engaging the men so that trust, disclosure and examination of abusive behaviours necessary for effective work can start. The programme sessions are two hours long and cover the following modules:

- Module 1 - Defining, Analysing and Ending Abusive Behaviours
- Module 2 - Defining, Analysing and Ending Abusive Behaviours
- Module 3 - Effects on Children
- Module 4 - Respect, Trust and Support
- Module 5 - Sexual Respect
- Module 6 - Honesty, Accountability and Partnership
- Module 7 - Future Conduct

9.2.2 The Big Project – Women's Support

Support for partners and ex-partners of men on the Programme is provided by Impact Family Services specialist domestic abuse service as of 2018 and was originally delivered by local domestic abuse charity, Wearside Women in Need (WWIN) when the project was established. This support to women is vital so that women's workers can cross reference with the Big Project manager. An important element of the women's support work is that it is distinct from the work with men. The women's support worker, in addition to supporting women whose partners or ex-partners are on the programme liaises with the programme manager to ensure the woman's (ex) partner man is engaging with the programme and to ensure the woman's experience matches with the man's account of how he has been in the past week.

9.2.3 The Big Project – Positive Engagement Work

Whilst the Big Project sessions are two hours long, men can engage with Gentoo's Positive Engagement Officers (PEOs) throughout the week. Gentoo's role in the programme is to provide positive engagement with men on the programme to remain engaged with the programme to completion. Based on Gentoo's model of providing positive engagement with perpetrators of anti-social behaviour linked to mental health or substance misuse, the workers provide the positive engagement with men whilst the specialists (Impact Family Services and Barnardo's) deliver the weekly programme.

Other DVPPs in the Northumbria Police areas were funded after the commencement of this research and whilst running the same programme content do not have housing

provider involvement and do not offer positive engagement with men on the programme.

9.3 Interviews with Men on the Big Project – Key Themes

9.3.1 Men's Attempts to Access Support to Address Their Abusive Behaviour

Men highlighted the ways in which they had previously sought support to address their behaviour, some men stating they had not always realised their behaviour was abusive when asking for help, in some cases framing it as a mental health or anger management issue.

Rob had almost completed most of the programme in the last city he lived in but was re-starting it again in Sunderland. He realised he needed to do it and had originally sought help from his GP for mental health related issues, the catalyst being the death of a close family member. He had tried some medication from his GP for what he described as 'his moods' before being referred to a DVPP by Children's Services.

In Jake's case the recommendation to attend the programme also came from Children's Services, the impetus to attend was working towards obtaining access to his children and this was part of his agreement with Children's Services.

> 'What I done is I started an argument over the washing and when I came back it still wasn't done so I started another argument about it and I went to kick the washer door shut and it opened and then I kicked it again and I put my foot through the door and as I pulled my leg out the glass come out and cut my

> partner's foot her right foot and she had to get four stitches and when she went to the walk in centre they asked her how it was done and obviously I told her to tell them it was my fault and obviously they reported it to Social Services because they were already involved anyway because of the children.' (Jake)

Paul was known to the police as he had been arrested in relation to domestic abuse against his previous partner. He and his new partner had a baby in the week prior to the interview. Paul said things had escalated in an argument with his partner when he used force against her which resulted in the police being called. The police had suggested the Big Project to him and he decided to try it to see if it could help him.

John also accessed the programme after being told about it by Social Services. He self-referred after being removed from the Gentoo home he shared with his partner by the Police and spending the night in a police cell. John had contact arrangements in place to see his children weekly and when Social Services recommended the programme to him and he thought he would try it. He had previously tried to access support to address his behaviour from the charity Mind and had tried anger management, which he felt had not been useful to him.

Cal was referred to the Big Project by Gentoo after being arrested and charged in relation to domestic abuse. His Housing officer visited him with a PEO following the arrest and discussed the Big Project. He was originally ordered by the court to attend Probation's Building Better Relationships programme but the timing of the sessions conflicted with his work pattern. The order was changed so he could attend the Big Project and whilst there was a waiting time for Cal to access the programme time he

had regular contact with the PEO who provided a range of positive engagement with him.

9.3.2 Men's Motivations to Engage with the Programme

The most common motivation to attend the programme was two-fold; a desire for men to address their abusive behaviour *because* of their children and them considering this impact; or that it was a condition for them actually obtaining or maintaining contact with their children.

Jake's motivation to attend the programme was centred around the impact of his behaviour on the children. He reflected that growing up 'in care' (as he termed it) was a constant reminder that he wanted a better life for his children. He had encountered four children's homes from the age of eleven and had hated this, recalling one of the worst things about it was having no personal possessions as they would be stolen if they weren't kept on you at all times and how difficult the whole experience was. Jake was adamant that he did not want this life for his children who were involved with Children's Services.

Cal had two children to two different women. Although he has contact with his older child he was unable to have contact with his younger child where there is was a restraining order against him making any contact with his ex-partner or seeing the child. He hoped that by addressing his abusive behaviour he could have access to both children in future.

John's motivation to attend the programme each week was also his wife and children which he described as the most important things in the world. He outlined his wishes for the next year as:

> 'Obviously to have the kids back and just living in a happy family just a normal peaceful happy family.' (John).

9.3.3 Experiences of the Big Project and Positive Engagement Role

Men were asked if they would recommend the programme to others who might benefit from it, all participants said they felt it was a positive thing and they would recommend it to other men who needed to address their abusive behaviour.

> 'Definitely I would offer anyone that that's done anything similar to me about domestic abuse to go onto the BIG project because if someone is wanting a wake-up call what they need like I needed this course is 100%.' (Rob)

> 'I think its mint, I do. I think it's really helpful.' (John)

> 'I think it's having a really good effect, it's only early days at the minute but definitely. There's a couple of situations with my new partner and the programme has come into it where I've been thinking about stuff and reacted differently to the way I would have reacted before.' (Paul)

Men highlighted how useful access to the Positive Engagement Officer (PEO) was in keeping them engaged in the programme and commented positively on the

relationship they had developed with the PEO. When men attended the Big Project for the first pre-group session the PEO assigned to them was in attendance to meet the men at the very beginning to outline what the offer was in the wraparound support so that the relationship was in place at the start of the programme.

Paul had met his PEO on starting the group but felt he did not need their support at this stage although felt able to seek it if needed as he progressed through the programme. Paul didn't make any differentiation between the Gentoo PEO and the staff running the weekly sessions. He had met the PEO at the first session. He recalled she had introduced herself and explained that she was there to offer any support whilst he was undertaking the programme. Paul had not had any need for support at the time of the interview from the PEO but was clear that he could make contact if he did.

> 'They're there if you need to ring them or anything like that I've never had any issues.' (Paul)

Men found the positive engagement to be wide ranging and that they could contact the PEO for help and advice on matters that were not related to the DVPP. The accessibility of the worker outside of programme time was seen as useful to the men. Whilst the PEO was able to provide positive engagement they were also able to signpost and advocate on behalf of the men. In addition to the men being able to contact the worker easily, arrangements were also in place whereby each week the worker would call at a set time to see how they were and if they needed any help with anything. These calls were designed to keep the men engaged with the programme.

Although Cal was only at the beginning stages of the programme he had the support of the PEO for some time before beginning the programme and found this engagement crucial on a number of levels:

> ‘His support has been unquestionable, I would be knackered without him! He has helped me on so many levels, not just practical things like supplying food and helping to contact companies about my debt…that has been a really big help. He has supported me with mental health, I have had suicidal tendencies and have anxiety and depression due to previous substance misuse - if it wasn’t for [names PEO] I would probably be homeless or dead.’ (Cal).

Cal was able to discuss the weekly sessions with his PEO and found it helpful. He mentioned discussing how the role play on the impact on children had made him feel and he found being able to reflect on the sessions with the PEO was very useful. He felt there needed to be more information accessible in the community to offer support for men to seek to change their behaviour and to understand emotional abuse with more organisations knowing about programmes like Big. He added that housing providers should be able to mandate perpetrators to get support to change behaviour if they live in their properties.

The positive engagement had been crucial in supporting Jake with potential homelessness which may have had a detrimental effect to him remaining engaged and committed to the programme. My findings reflect points made by Wydall and Clarke (2015) who observed that stand-alone perpetrator programmes are not always responsive to individual needs or the wider social needs of some perpetrators (see

also, Eadie and Knight, 2002; Rees and Rivet, 2005). Meeting individual needs was further evidenced in interviews with men who found the support wide ranging including supporting a man to move home to non-housing related matters including accessing support for debt and the idea they could make contact easily to access that support which reflected Wydall and Clarke's (2015) findings in that the role of the key worker for men in their study was multi-faceted and supported the perpetrator in developing basic skills. They also found that the non-enforcement element to the key worker role useful in developing that relationship and in keeping men engaged in the programme. The men found value in the input from the Gentoo which was instrumental in some cases in keeping them engaged in the programme. The early introduction to the PEO at the start of the programme was useful and made it clear to the men that they were there to help.

The social housing sector has an established history in terms of addressing behaviour in relation to ASB and is often at the forefront of adopting new methods with the aim of ensuring tenants enjoy peaceful enjoyment of their home, however, the same cannot be said in relation to domestic abuse. Interestingly, men highlighted the positive aspect of the programme and their desire to ultimately get back to the family home, so it is disappointing that I was unable to find another housing provider who was actively engaged in a DVPP in the same way as Gentoo. Although DVPPs are now funded across the Northumbria Force area none (other than the Big Project) provide positive engagement. It would be beneficial to undertake a comparative study analysing any findings arising from such a comparison.

9.3.4 Men Considering the Impact of their Abusive Behaviour on Children

One of the key motivations of men attending the Big Project was child contact. Some men were referred to the programme by Children's Services where attendance was required to allow contact with their children. There was some realisation of the impact of abusive behaviour on children which echoed existing research findings from Project Mirabal which measured 'Safer, Healthier Childhoods' and 'Safety and Freedom from Violence and Abuse for Women and Children' as well as an improvement in men's 'Awareness of Self and Others' within the six measures of success in relation to DVPPs (Westmarland and Kelly, 2015). It is worth, however, pointing out that the data from Project Mirabal in respect to this measure also included views from partners/ex partners and my findings are based in men's perceptions. Although men had been referred by Children's Services their desire to complete the programme was rooted in an increased awareness of the impact of their abusive behaviour on their children.

Regardless of the way men entered the programme they all had some motivation to lessen the impact of their abusive behaviour on their children. Rob had left the family home as he felt his abusive behaviour was impacting in his daughters who were scared of him and the realisation of this impacted on him heavily both in the session and afterwards. As highlighted previously, Jake was concerned that if he didn't address his abusive behaviour his children could end up in care system as he had which was an extremely negative experience for him that he did not want for his children.

As well as motivation to enter the programme, continuing to attend the programme was also connected to the impact on children. Paul continued to attend in a bid to provide a calm environment for his baby.

> ‘Nice and calm and peaceful and I’ve got to just for the baby as well shouting is no good where the baby is.’ (Paul).

Rob felt strongly that attendance should be mandatory if children were involved and that attendance should be a condition in seeing them.

> ‘Me personally I think if you’re in a relationship and you’ve got children and Social Services are involved I think it should be mandatory. If you’re wanting to see your children and prove that you’re not going to do what you’ve just done yeah I think it should be mandatory to all men that’s done any sort of domestic abuse around their children or women.’ (Rob).

9.3.5 The Housing Situation of the Men

While some men’s motivations for attending the programme were centred around returning to the family home, conversely, Jake highlighted the programme had led him and his partner to fully understand that he couldn’t live in the family home for the considerable future and the relationship with his partner was much better if they lived apart. He recognised that he had to change his abusive behaviour and that the change needed to be embedded before he and his partner could think about having a home together again which was a goal for them for the future.

Jake recalled their housing officer had been really supportive and they had appreciated her support.

> ‘No, it’s having a positive impact because I’ve realised now that because me and my partner are speaking and now I’ve moved out of the home and I’ve got my own property now and we don’t live together and we find it easier if we live separate.’ (Jake)

This highlighted the importance of a settled home in Jake attempting to make positive changes in his life. His housing officer was instrumental in finding him accommodation so he could move out of the home he shared with his partner. The couple wanted to live close enough to each other to maintain a relationship whilst not living together.

> ‘Yeah because me and my partner were renting a house from Gentoo in [area] and [names Housing Officer] from the [names local office] got me a flat in the next street from [names partner] so we lived close together.’ (Jake)

Rob did not live in a Gentoo property although his partner was applying to be a Gentoo customer at the time of the interview. He and his partner moved to Sunderland a few months prior to the interview after downsizing from a three bedroom house and were currently living separately, but feeling the financial strain of running two homes.

Rob’s hopes for the future included living back in the family home with his partner and children and getting married. He said he wanted to be doing the things that normal families do. He felt that if there was a possibility of a future back in the family home then he had to change, he highlighted these changes included looking after the children so his partner could be herself and not always just be a mother and that he realised it was important that she had a break. Rob felt his dreams were within his

grasp if he could change his abusive behaviour and that if he did not achieve them it would be down to him alone. He was eager to complete the programme and said he felt doing two sessions a week would be an option he would consider as once a week sometimes felt like too little.

Rob felt the engagement with Gentoo was helpful and that Gentoo should rehouse those men who genuinely wanted to change their abusive behaviour. He felt help from Gentoo should be withdrawn if any men were 'milking it' [the support] just to get a property. His aim was to live in the family home in the future.

Jake had recently moved from his flat into a new area of the city following serious allegations being made against him which resulted in threats to him by others in the neighbourhood. He maintained the allegations were false and spoke about his fear in that he couldn't live in the flat he was paying for due to threats on his safety.

> 'If I wasn't on this BIG project I think I personally would have been homeless the way I thought I was going to be because in October time I decided to sign myself on Sunderland City Council as homeless because my property in [location] I didn't want to pay for to Gentoo because I couldn't live in it because it was unsafe to live there so I declared myself as homeless.' (Jake)

The accommodation was very depressing and he felt it was detrimental to him moving forward.

> ‘City Council put me into the Salvation Army. I was back where I was when I was 14 or 15 year old living in a children’s home I was back to square one in a little room thinking look at my life.’ (Jake)

While he was in the emergency accommodation, the PEO found him another Gentoo property meaning he did not have to return to the house he had shared with his partner.

> ‘[names PEO] actually spoke to the Co-ordinator in [names area] and they allocated me my flat what I’ve got.’ (Jake)

This risk of a perpetrator returning to the victim’s home when they are unable to access housing was a point highlighted in an interview with a victim who said she felt sorry for her ex-partner when he had nowhere to stay. She felt pressured and reluctantly agreed to him staying at her home despite the relationship ending as she didn’t want to see him become homeless. The importance of the perpetrator having a home supports Wydall and Clarke’s (2015) findings of the multi-agency ‘Making Safe’ programme that provided perpetrators with a two year tenancy to prevent them returning to the home of the victim had beneficial outcomes for victims in that it gave them space and time for recovery work, ‘expanded space for action’ as defined by Westmarland and Kelly (2012). As to the impact on perpetrators, the findings also reflected those of Wydall and Clarke (2015) whereby perpetrators saw the offer of accommodation as a lifeline.

9.3.6 Men’s Understanding of Domestic Abuse

In the course of the interviews it was interesting to note men’s understanding of what constituted domestic abuse. Men highlighted an increased awareness of domestic

abuse as a result of the programme. This included the realisation that domestic abuse was not purely physical and included emotional abuse.

John had completed twenty weeks at the time of the interview and felt it was helping him to see things differently even down to the language he used to his partner. He said he had the realisation that emotional abuse was actually domestic abuse and was hurtful to his partner, something he had not considered prior to the programme.

John: It's helping me look at things completely differently and things I didn't know what were abuse actually is.'

Interviewer: 'So what is an example of that then, what did you think wasn't abuse but now you think it is?'

John: '…certain things I didn't find as domestic abuse like just having a daft laugh with my lass calling her fat for example you don't realise that she's not laughing and you don't realise that it's hurting her, you know what I mean?' Like calling her 'baby' and things like that I didn't realise that was abuse and saying 'my lass' and things like that.'

Rob talked about it as a wake-up call that made him realise how aggressively he came across to others, including his children, something he had not always considered previously. He had originally thought his behaviour had not been as bad as other men on the programme who had used physical violence, but the sessions helped him

realise the name calling and aggressive behaviour were indeed abuse. This realisation in recognising abusive behaviour also gave the men tools to benefit their relationships.

> ‘you obviously learn and pick things up and bring the good habits out of there and bring them back into the house and everything else like arguments when to walk away and have time out and stuff like that and looking at your partner’s point of view when she’s got points of view to say and stuff like that and instead of thinking about yourself all the time and your needs and stuff like that…I understand my faults and I’m trying to learn from them.’ (Rob)

Cal was finding the programme useful in *understanding* how his behaviour was abusive. Prior to this he had not considered that his emotionally abusive behaviour as abuse. He discussed the feeling of shame of being defined as a ‘perpetrator of domestic abuse’, the difficulty in digesting this and feeling remorse when he was presented in court with the abusive texts he had sent his ex-partner.

Rob felt that although the weekly sessions were sometimes difficult to fit in around work (his employer did not know he was on the programme) the programme was beneficial to him in addressing his behaviour.

> ‘That’s why I thought obviously I’m [mentions age] now and with arguments and stuff and this that and the other that obviously some help would probably help me along the way…going on the programme I know I’ll come out beneficial after the six months, it’s a 26 week course.’ (Rob).

9.3.7 A Desire to be back in the Family Home

The desire for men interviewed to maintain the relationship and get back to the family home was a long term goal with some realisation that work was needed by them for this to happen. Three men highlighted their original impetus to take part in the programme was rooted in a desire to be back in the family home or to see children or in the case of Jake to work towards that. In terms of motivations in continuing with the programme most men had the same focus.

> ‘The bairns and my wife.’ (Rob)

The desire to get back to the family home or to develop a settled home featured strongly in men’s hopes for the future.

> ‘I’d like to get a bigger house. Obviously to have the kids back and just living in a happy family just a normal, peaceful happy family...and a decent garden for the bairns and things like that.’ (John)

9.4 Discussion

Despite the narratives being small in number, they do identify tentative themes and importantly support some of the findings from Kelly and Westmarland’s Project Mirabal research (2015). They also reflect Wydall and Clarke’s (2015) research into the ‘Making Safe’ multi-agency programme.

One of the themes identified was awareness of, and making referrals to, DVPPs by agencies. For example, Rob had sought support from his GP but was referred to an Anger Management programme highlighting a need for training for GPs and other agencies to recognise domestic abuse perpetration. A point found by Davies and Biddle (2017) in their research of the MATAC process. Interviewees (comprising the MATAC Police Team and other partner agencies) shared concerns about the lack of engagement from some healthcare providers in particular along with the National Probation Service and some of the local authority children's services across the region.

Connected to this point Pence and Paymar (1993) argue that DVPPs were not designed to be used in isolation but part of the systems approach, a coordinated community response to domestic abuse. They assert a CCR requires participants to not just think differently but to *act* differently. This makes the case for a clear coordinated community response where a range of partners have a multi-faceted understanding of domestic abuse in terms of perpetration and needs of victims and supports the view of Shepherd (2005) who argued that coordinated community responses where agencies act together to protect victims and hold offenders accountable can make a difference. Cal highlighted the need for other agencies to have awareness of projects such as the Big Project as he was introduced via his housing officer and previously had not heard that such support was available.

The positive engagement provided by the PEO was an important extra layer in keeping men engaged on the programme. These findings mirrored those of Wydall and Clarke (2015) who in their study of the Making Safe Programme found that in allocating a key worker was useful in terms of an important source of monitoring of the perpetrator's

activities. They reference the work of Fleury et al (2000) who stated a victim is often in greatest danger at the point of separation, when the perpetrator senses a loss of control. In this sense, the PEO role was an important extra layer in monitoring men's behaviour outside of the programme. As well as engaging with the men, the PEO can advise Big Project Manager if the man has any concerns or issues about attending or any relevant issues. Although this research did not interview the Positive Engagement Officers (PEO) or Big Project staff there is future scope to undertake further research into the impact of this role.

In addition to the positive engagement being a general point of contact there was, in some cases, a high degree of advocacy for the men. The positive engagement encouraged engagement in the programme, which again reflected findings from Wydall and Clarke (2015) who found the intensive support provided to men and addressing lifestyle choices had a positive impact. Jake was supported to present as homeless to access emergency accommodation and then supported to find a new Gentoo property meaning he was less likely to ask his partner to stay at her home. The Royal Australian Commission into Family Violence highlighted the homelessness of perpetrators as an issue in being able to successfully monitor them.

Three of the men's goals were to return to the family home with a fourth man seeing this as a long term goal which kept them motivated to continue engaging in the programme. This was also a key finding in the Making Safe study (2015) in that men's hopes for the future strongly featured moving back to the family home and an awareness that if this was to happen they had to make those changes in themselves.

Men in my study showed a developing understanding of emotionally abusive behaviour. Paul said the programme was helping him to listen to his partner's view and not to only consider his own needs, whilst Cal had a growing awareness that emotional abuse was domestic abuse and Jake reflected on previous conversations with his partner that were not respectful. These findings correlate with the measures of success findings from Project Mirabal (2015). They also resonated with the findings from Wydall and Clarke (2015) who on interviewing partners of men in the programme, identified an improvement in the communication skills of the men engaging with the Making Safe programme.

9.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the component parts of the Big Project. It has examined cross cutting issues emerging from the interviews with men on the perpetrator programme: the Big Project operating in Sunderland. It provided insight into men's motivations for attending the programme, their experiences of it and their views and experiences of the positive engagement by the housing provider, Gentoo.

The findings from interviews with men point optimistically to the role housing can play as part of a coordinated community response in relation to perpetrators of domestic abuse who seek to address their abusive behaviour. Kelly and Westmarland (2015) argue there is no miracle cure in relation to domestic abuse perpetration, rather steps towards change. Whilst this sample size is limited and based on one programme, it points to the benefit of housing providers offering support to men to address abusive behaviour which can ultimately reduce the victimisation of other women and children.

Chapter 10: Summary of Findings and Conclusions

10.1 Introduction

This research set out to consider the role of housing in a coordinated community response to domestic abuse. Research methods included semi-structured interviews and an anonymous questionnaire to housing professionals, semi-structured interviews with victims of domestic abuse and lastly perpetrators engaged in the Big Project. This research is action research and intended to make a difference to the housing sector I work in and contributes to knowledge in the fields of housing and domestic abuse.

This chapter will explain the overall findings and then answer the research questions in turn in relation to key findings before discussing the contribution to knowledge this research makes. It will conclude by discussing the limitations of the research, opportunities for future research, the impact of the action research and importantly from an action research perspective the implications for policy and practice.

In considering the role of housing in a coordinated community response, the research asked the following questions:

1 How do Registered Housing Providers identify and respond to victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse?

2 What good practice exists with regards to housing providers' response to domestic abuse currently and what potential is there for development?

3 The Big Project is unique in having wraparound support from a housing provider. How is this support viewed by the men on the programme?

10.2 Research Question 1

10.2.1 Research Question 1 Findings

Findings for this question were informed by semi structured interviews with victims of domestic abuse in their own home and in a refuge, an anonymous questionnaire to housing professionals and semi-structured interviews with housing professionals.

Housing providers offered a number of routes to identify victims of domestic abuse through 'core' business activities such as repairs, rent arears, considering the possibility of domestic abuse when responding to anti-social behaviour and in one case, asking the customer if they felt safe in their home on every customer contact. Housing providers have a unique relationship with their tenants in that it is built around a specific issue as with specialist domestic abuse services. This relationship is built up over time and exists prior to a particular time of crisis. This was a useful factor in women's help seeking and in experiencing a positive response when disclosing domestic abuse.

Housing providers where they did respond to domestic abuse largely took a victim-led approach. This meant that whilst their actions were victim centred, they did not always demonstrate a strong focus on responding to perpetrators of domestic abuse.

The questionnaire found almost two thirds (65.3%) of respondents stated that their organisation's response to domestic abuse was situated within an anti-social behaviour remit, and in many cases there was *not* a separate policy for domestic abuse. Whilst almost three quarters (72.6%) of providers stated domestic abuse was a tenancy breach, just over half (53.8%) of respondents' organisations had taken any action against perpetrators of domestic abuse, highlighting a clear gap between policy and action. When action was taken against perpetrators of domestic abuse it was often done so through an anti-social behaviour (ASB) lens based on the impact to the community as opposed to the individual. It is worth pointing out this was sometimes used to ensure success, as courts in some cases did not see housing providers taking out injunctions in relation to domestic abuse as a core housing function. This ASB framed approach originates from regulatory requirements for housing providers in relation to ASB.

There is cause for some optimism that recognition and response to domestic abuse is, albeit slowly, increasingly becoming part of the culture of the sector and the approach maturing. More promisingly, there was an awareness amongst providers of the need for a wider approach to domestic abuse, some highlighted seeing the same perpetrator names at MARAC leading them to consider they might have a greater impact if they took a wider approach and dealt with the cause of the problem – men's violence.

10.2.2 Research Question 1 Contribution to Knowledge

This research contributes to knowledge on how social housing providers recognise and respond to domestic abuse in relation to female victims and male perpetrators of domestic abuse. Whilst there is a body of research on housing and domestic abuse much of it is focused on homelessness and women's experiences of accessing housing, there is limited data on the role of housing providers recognising and responding to domestic abuse. This study has illustrated that housing providers have a key role in recognising and responding to domestic abuse particularly in terms of women's help seeking.

At the time of writing, the questionnaire to housing professionals is understood to be the largest, national questionnaire to date on housing and domestic abuse. A European housing research body, Kadera have replicated some of the questions used for their questionnaire to housing professionals across Europe which will allow for an international comparison.

10.3 Research Question 2

10.3.1 Research Question 2 Findings

The research findings highlighted a range of good practice and areas for development from individual housing providers. There was a high level of both emotional and practical support and advocacy provided to victims which also acted as a conduit to specialist services. Whilst victims overall indicated a positive response both in disclosing abuse to housing professionals and in the support they received post

disclosure from specialist staff, this was not always the case with non-specialist staff who victims felt did not understand the dynamics of domestic abuse. Connected to this some providers asked victims to supply 'proof' of domestic abuse in cases where a lock change or a house move was required, illustrating they still had some way to go in their understanding of help seeking.

Responses to the questionnaire and interviews revealed that some organisations had qualified Independent Domestic Violence Advisors in post and some providers discussed plans to introduce new roles into their organisation specifically to support victims of domestic abuse. There was also some re-shaping of job roles and team titles to reflect the changing response. Traditionally, job and team titles were often framed around a language of enforcement such as 'Anti-social Behaviour Team' and 'Enforcement Officer' reflecting the long standing focus on anti-social behaviour. Chapter Two discusses the successive government policies that led to this focus on anti-social behaviour that has become an integral part of housing culture. Although in some cases such titles were still used, there was an increasing recognition that these could be detrimental to tenants seeking help in relation to domestic abuse if they thought it could be seen as an enforcement issue which would impact on their tenancy.

This study shows there is *no* standardised response to domestic abuse across the housing sector. There is potential for a standardised response in recognising and responding to domestic abuse via DAHA which offers housing providers a free toolkit covering eight areas of practice (see Chapter One).

10.3.2 Research Question 2 Contribution to Knowledge

This research has highlighted examples of good practice in relation to housing providers' role in a coordinated community response to domestic abuse and in terms of women's help seeking. The findings did suggest some fragmentation between specialist and non-specialist roles in understanding the dynamics of domestic abuse.

Findings point to a gap in housing providers having an established role in a coordinated community response, often overlooked until a time of crisis.

10.4 Research Question 3

10.4.1 Research Question 3 Findings

The research findings suggested the role of the wraparound support to be useful in maintaining men's engagement in a perpetrator programme. Men had positive experiences with the DVPP and with regard to the relationship they had developed with the Positive Engagement Officer. The accessibility of the PEO outside of programme time was seen as useful by the men which chimed with observations of Wydall and Clarke (2015) who argue that stand-alone perpetrator programmes are not always responsive to individual needs or the wider social needs of some perpetrators (Eadie and Knight, 2002; Rees and Rivet, 2005). My findings supported those of Wydall and Clarke (2015) whereby men were given a key worker and housed away from the victim which saw beneficial outcomes for the perpetrator (and in their study, victims too). Although the findings are limited, they provide a foundation on which to build further research to consider the impact of positive engagement by housing providers to men on a DVPP.

10.4.2 Research Question 3 Contribution to Knowledge

The research findings point to only one housing provider at the time of this research being actively involved in a domestic violence perpetrator programme. This illustrates the infancy of the response especially with regard to perpetrators of domestic abuse. Whilst there is a body of research into the impact of perpetrator programmes this research highlights some optimism in relation to the impact of positive engagement work delivered by a housing provider working alongside a DVPP.

10.5 Limitations of the Research

The research used a mixed methods approach using semi structured interviews and an anonymous questionnaire. Interviews included seven victims of domestic abuse in two areas of the country, Sunderland and London and four women as part of a group interview in Sunderland. This is a fairly small sample size and although I had some difficulties in recruiting women I was able to achieve the original number I intended to interview. The women who agreed to participate were approached by their support worker to ascertain if they would be interested in taking part or in finding out more about the research to help them make a decision. The women who did participate in the one-to-one interviews had a trusting relationship with their support worker meaning I may have had different results if I had recruited women in a way that did not involve accessing women via a support worker.

Whilst the anonymous questionnaire to housing providers had 233 respondents, elicited a number of views, the interviews with housing professionals totalled nine. This is a fairly small sample size and further research could build on this.

It would have been useful to make a comparison between the men interviewed as part of the Big Project and men who received wrap-around support from another housing provider. Whilst planning this research a comparison could not have taken place as no other housing provider was offering this support which highlights the point that housing providers do not offer any tangible support to men seeking to address their abusive behaviour. I was unable to undertake a comparative study between the Big Project and those DVPPs who did not offer wraparound support as at the time of the research there was some uncertainty as to their funding and continuation.

10.6 Potential for Future Research

There are areas for future research stemming from this thesis. With reference to the Big Project, it would be extremely useful to undertake a longitudinal study of the men interviewed to track their journey and consider the impact of the positive engagement on any future behaviour. Moreover, the findings were limited but provide an opportunity to interview more men to further develop themes. There is scope to undertake a comparative study between a DVPP that does not offer positive engagement and the Big Project.

In respect of interviews with victims, there is scope to use the same interview schedule to interview greater numbers of women across different areas of the country to seek a greater depth of knowledge and to identify any further themes. The group interview at

the refuge, albeit small, yielded some interesting points which could be explored on a larger scale by a series of focus groups and interviews in refuges nationally to gain more information and insight into how long women are waiting to be re-housed, the offer of property, how that offer is explained and the response when presenting as homeless.

It is worth noting that the respondents who chose to complete the questionnaire perhaps had some interest in domestic abuse. It would be useful to undertake focus groups with housing provider staff nationally using the questionnaire as a basis to identity any further themes or to note any key differences.

As some of the questions in the questionnaire have been replicated by European research body Kadera which will allow an international comparison. The findings of this European study could highlight further opportunities for research.

10.7 Implications for Policy and Practice

This action research seeks to influence housing policy to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse and as such this research has several implications for policy and practice locally and nationally. As discussed in Chapter One, the purpose of action research is research that leads to action. My desire is to use this research as part of my work with DAHA and Gentoo to influence the housing sector and its response to domestic abuse.

Whilst the focus on the criminal justice system as the main response to domestic abuse has potential to shift via the Government's upcoming Domestic Violence and Abuse

Bill in that it advocates that domestic abuse is everyone's business. However, without regulation of housing providers to effectively recognise and respond to domestic abuse, it can be suggested that it will not be everybody's business at all. The Government's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and Action Plan (2016) states that housing providers are ideally placed to recognise domestic abuse. However, this is merely rhetoric as it places no duty on providers to recognise and respond to abuse. In contrast, the Welsh Assembly's Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act (2015) places an organisational duty to encourage relevant professionals to *ask* potential victims and to *act* so that harm as a result of the violence and abuse is reduced.

The recently published Housing Green Paper (2018) despite containing some rhetoric around housing and domestic abuse fails to recommend or even infer that housing providers have a key role in recognising and responding to domestic abuse. It discusses the possibility of introducing a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) around ASB. The Green Paper seeks views on the idea, meaning it will be essential to feed into this consultation with the suggestion that there is a need for a KPI in relation to domestic abuse.

This action research seeks to ensure housing is not overlooked in relation to cross-cutting Government strategies on domestic abuse and that there is greater synergy between domestic abuse, housing and welfare policies based on knowledge of the barriers and failures currently experienced by women experiencing domestic abuse. DAHA has established a national policy and practice group bringing the housing, domestic abuse and homeless sectors together to develop joined up approaches by

the domestic abuse and housing sectors. Some of the findings of my research have been used as part of feedback by the group to the Government's Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill as part of an overall response from a national policy and practice group established by DAHA.

Whilst the national policy and practice group main focus is on victim / survivors, the findings of this research also point to a lack of confidence or experience in housing providers taking enforcement action or offering positive engagement in responding to perpetrators. Since this action research seeks to influence the housing sector response to domestic abuse, including perpetrators, it was necessary to take practical steps to address this gap. In my role within DAHA I have established a sub-group to focus on perpetrators with the aim of seeking and developing good practice in terms of positive engagement and enforcement action and to developing a practical toolkit for housing providers in relation to perpetrators in a bid to instil confidence in their approach. The group comprises DAHA, Respect, Northumbria Police, academics, a housing barrister and the Drive Project. The free toolkit will be launched at an event for housing providers in 2019.

On a regional level, I have established and chair the North East Domestic Abuse and Housing (NEDAH) Meeting which meets up to five times per year. The meeting acts as a resource for housing providers to share good practice, support each other in the response to domestic abuse, highlight barriers to good practice and acts as a conduit to the national policy and practice group and perpetrator sub-group. The meeting is attended by housing providers across the North East of England and beyond. The meeting is also attended by the three Police and Crime Commissioners Offices for the

North East region (Durham, Northumbria and Cleveland) to enhance partnership working between the housing and criminal justice sectors.

At the first NEDAH meeting to set the scene from a customer's perspective, one of the women who I interviewed as part of this research, 'Mary' told her story and why it was important for providers to recognise and respond to domestic abuse. 'Sally' has agreed to speak at a future meeting to highlight the impact of a sanctuary scheme, why staying in her home was important to her initially and when she felt ready to move home.

On a local level the tangible outcomes of this action research have also resulted in changes in policy at Gentoo, based on the experiences of some of the participants and a practical solution to the issues suggested by one of the women interviewed. I met 'Mary' who was visiting Gentoo for an event, she mentioned that she had heard of Gentoo's sheltered housing schemes for older residents and the fact they had family rooms. Gentoo's sheltered housing schemes contain family rooms so that visiting family members can visit relatives living in the scheme and have a room with a bathroom they can stay in. The schemes all have an on-site warden and monitored CCTV and all visitors to the schemes are vetted on entry.

Mary recalled that in her interview she had commented it would have been ideal if Gentoo had some temporary accommodation that she could have accessed for a couple of weeks until her new home was found. Based on Mary's experience and her suggestion of how to help other women, the sheltered scheme family rooms at Gentoo are now available as a stop-gap for victims to use where there is a gap between leaving and a new home can be found. Women can access full support from on-site sheltered

scheme staff, Gentoo's Victim Support Team and that of specialist provider Wearside Women In Need Outreach Team.

Throughout the research journey I have fed back experiences and research to continuously improve Gentoo's recognition and response to domestic abuse. The emotional and economic cost of moving home was a theme identified in interviews with women in the refuge who highlighted the worry of having outstanding rent arrears in some cases prevented them from accessing social housing. In a bid to develop greater recognition of economic abuse across the housing sector I have developed a partnership with Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA) to develop training for housing providers (and other agencies). Housing providers increasingly have Money Matters or Financial Advice teams. The training aims to ensure that economic abuse is recognised and that any safety implications for financial advice given to potential victims of domestic abuse are fully understood by staff whose main role is not directly related to domestic abuse. Missing important signs of abuse and subsequently giving advice that could put a victim in danger, for example declaring themselves bankrupt where their details including home address would be in the public domain could have harmful effects for victims of domestic abuse seeking financial advice. The training has been funded by the Home Office and is being disseminated nationally by SEA.

Some of the women interviewed expressed surprise at the support their housing provider had given and said they had not realised that their provider could offer this. The men also indicated they had not realised that they could access the positive engagement support from Gentoo. Whilst the questionnaire found a large number of responses said their organisation *did* include domestic abuse as a tenancy breach

there was a gap in taking action on tenancy breaches relating to domestic abuse. On signing up tenants to a property, housing providers should more clearly spell out that domestic abuse is a tenancy breach and advise that support is available for anyone experiencing it. Tenancy agreements usually state that information can be shared and that signing indicates consent to information being shared when necessary. In the case of domestic abuse, tenancy agreements could clearly state that information *will* be shared with other agencies in cases of domestic abuse so that it is clear and consented to by potential victims and perpetrators.

This research will feed into national workshops and speaking engagements that DAHA delivers to disseminate good practice and research. The examples of good practice of housing providers, gaps and areas in improvement identified in my research have been included in this process meaning that the information reaches a wide range of housing providers in a bid to inform and improve the housing sector.

10.8 Conclusions

Much has changed since beginning this research, the journey has been an interesting one on many levels. From a personal perspective the dual role of researcher and housing professional has had its challenges, not least undertaking this research whilst working full time. However, it has been an enormous privilege to take this journey which began in the same year as launching DAHA whose mission is to improve the housing sector response to domestic abuse.

I have been honoured to hear women's experiences of domestic abuse and the response they received from their housing provider. Throughout the research journey I have frequently recalled the focus group I conducted for the Home Office visit where women's experiences of their housing provider ranged from appalling to life saving – in many ways a postcode lottery.

Since beginning this research, DAHA has made inroads into the sector response to domestic abuse and has literally travelled to almost every part of the UK (and the Netherlands and USA) promoting that housing providers have an important role in recognising and responding to domestic abuse. The Chartered Institute of Housing's President for 2017/2018, chose domestic abuse as the theme of her presidency which has firmly put the issue on the housing agenda. In an unprecedented move the incoming President (2018/19) has continued the theme into his presidency. As part of this year's presidential theme DAHA, Women's Aid and CIH launched the 'Make a Stand' pledge for housing providers which asks them to make four focused commitments to provide support for those experiencing domestic abuse. At the time of writing over 40% of housing providers have signed up to the pledge representing a momentum in the sector. As an action researcher, my findings seek to add to this groundswell from the sector and influence its response to domestic abuse. I feel positive and excited that there are steps towards change in the housing sector moving to seeing domestic abuse as part of core business. Whilst the focus (where indeed there is one) is still very much on the response to victims often in isolation I am hopeful that the research can provide a foundation for the discussion on the role the housing sector can play in responding to perpetrators of domestic abuse.

These promising, sector led movements, to categorise domestic abuse as a core housing issue are still very much 'bottom up' and reliant on individual housing providers', often down to the drive of individuals within organisations. Whilst it is positive to see housing (and DAHA) referenced in the Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill and the Violence against Women and Girls Strategy (2016) meaning that there is recognition of the role housing can have, it still does not go far enough in reflecting Walby's (2018) argument that minimum standards of access to housing as more important that increasing criminalisation of domestic abuse. This research has examined the role of housing in a coordinated community response and has established there is a clear role but disappointingly however it does not have the legislative framework reflective of ASB. To see the necessary improvement to the housing sector, the Regulator for Social Housing must introduce mandatory measures in relation to housing providers approach to recognising and responding to domestic abuse.

In concluding this thesis I would like to give the last word to Mary, one of the research participants, recalling her comments as to the important role housing providers can (and should) play as part of a coordinated community response and why they should be regulated in recognising and responding to domestic abuse.

> 'I think the most important thing was that you had somebody in your corner. You know, that somebody that…if [names housing provider] wasn't there where would I be today? Doesn't - doesn't bear thinking about, 'cause I don't think I would have made it, I think he would have destroyed me completely [Crying].'

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Durham University
School of Applied Social Sciences

APPENDIX 1 Revised Research Ethics and Risk Assessment Form, May 2015

Section A: Introductory Information

A.1. Name of researcher(s):	Kelda (Kelly) Henderson
A.2. Email Address(es) of researcher(s):	Kelly.henderson@gentooliving.com
A.3. Project Title:	The role of housing in responding to domestic abuse as part of a coordinated community response.
A.4. When do you intend to start data collection?	1 December 2015/asap
A.5. When will the project finish?	July 2017

A.6. For students only:

Student ID:	000577697
Degree, year and module:	PhD, Year 2
Supervisor:	Professor Nicole Westmarland

A.7. Brief summary of the research questions:

1 How do Registered Housing Providers identify and respond to victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse?

2 What good practice exists currently and what potential is there for development?

3 How do Registered Housing Provider interventions support the work of a Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme and what are the experiences of those that use it?

A.8. What data collection method/s are you intending you use, and why?

The research is based on a feminist methodological framework and in order to address the research questions a mixed method approach will be undertaken. Qualitative and Quantitative research methods will be utilised.

1 Ten Semi structured interviews with victims of domestic abuse. Commentators on research design highlight that qualitative research lends itself to theory making and development. Barnes (2008) argues that qualitative methods are often favourable to form an in depth understanding of participants and the experiences of women experiencing abuse. Although abuse is still considered by many to be a 'private' and 'sensitive' issue, Walker (1984) and McCosker (1995) highlight that many women interviewed felt a sense of relief to be able to talk about their experience.

2 Ten Semi structured interviews with perpetrators of domestic abuse who are participating in a perpetrator programme. Again, this method was chosen to gain a deeper insight into men's experiences on the programme. It is anticipated that this approach will provide a more nuanced understanding which could not be achieved by quantitative research methods.

3 One hundred Electronic Questionnaires to housing professionals and key stakeholders. This method will allow a cross section of views nationally to be measured to identify themes which can form the basis for semi structured interviews with housing professionals.

4 Ten Semi structured interviews with housing professionals and key stakeholders following questionnaires. This method was chosen The participants for semi structured interviews (10 interviews) with housing related professionals will be gained from feedback from questionnaire ascertain views. The questions posed will be informed by themes emerging from questionnaire findings. There will also the opportunity to use a snowballing sampling technique to gain participants as it may prove difficult to obtain suitable participants from the questionnaire alone. Professional networks will also be used where the researcher has a good rapport with as a practitioner to secure participants.

As part of the research seeks to understand the perceptions of housing professionals in responding to perpetrators of domestic violence it will be essential to have an effective national sample. To ensure a representative national sample the bodies who will assist in the questionnaire dissemination will be utilised to ensure that interviews are not all from the same region.

5 Two Focus Groups with women in refuges – the Focus Groups will explore women's experiences of housing to gain deeper insight to their experiences.

Section B: Ethics Checklist

While all subsequent sections of this form should be completed for all studies, this checklist is designed to identify those areas where more detailed information should be given. Please note: It is better to identify an area where ethical or safety issues may arise and then explain how these will be dealt with, than to ignore potential risks to participants and/or the researchers.

	Yes	No
a). Does the study involve participants who are *potentially vulnerable*[i]? ×	☒	☐
b). Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)?	☐	☒
c). Could the study cause harm, discomfort, stress, anxiety or any other negative consequence beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	☒	☐
d) Does the research address a *potentially sensitive topic*[ii]?	☒	☐
e). Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	☐	☒
f). Are steps being taken to protect anonymity and confidentiality?	☒	☐
g). Are there potential risks to the researchers' health, safety and wellbeing in conducting this research beyond those experienced in the researchers' everyday life?	☒	☐

Section C: Methods and data collection

C.1. Who will be your research participants?

Victims of domestic abuse accessing support from a housing provider.

Perpetrators of domestic abuse on a Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme.

Housing professionals and key stakeholders.

C.2. How will you recruit your participants and how will they be selected or sampled?

Participants will be selected from the Big Project (victims and perpetrators).

Male perpetrators will be selected via the Big Project which is a male perpetrator Domestic Abuse Programme. Men participating in the group will have the research explained to them by the Programme facilitators. All men participating in the group who are Gentoo housing provider clients will be given the opportunity to put themselves forward to participate in the research.

Female victims will be advised of the research when accessing support from the Gentoo housing provider. All female victims whose partners are attending or have attended the Big project will be given the opportunity to put themselves forward to participate in the research.

Housing professionals will be asked to compete a questionnaire and from there a selection will be interviewed. Questionnaires will be circulated via regional and national professional Housing bodies (i.e. Chartered Institute of Housing, Resolve, Northern Housing Consortium) to increase participation.

C.3. How will you explain the research to the participants and gain their consent? (If consent will not be obtained, please explain why.)

Information leaflets will be given out by Gentoo/Big Project practitioners to all eligible participants. Those who respond to the researcher that they are interested will then have a meeting set up. At this meeting the researcher will explain again the nature of the research and check that the participant has no questions about the information given on the information sheet. Should they then still choose to participate they will be asked to sign the informed consent form to illustrate they understand. The researcher will explain (also in written information sheet) that they can withdraw at any point during the research or until the point of data analysis.

Participants will be interviewed on a one to one basis in a comfortable setting allowing time for breaks determined at their request. Interviews will take place at the office of the Programme or the Gentoo housing provider's office which have full safety policies and practices in place.

For housing professionals completing the questionnaire the completion of it will be their consent (the electronic questionnaire will include a statement to select that they understand). Full information about the study, about confidentiality and anonymity, and about what the data will be used for will be given prior to asking for consent to take part in the questionnaire.

An information and consent sheet will be used for the interviews with housing professionals.

Interviews with housing professionals will take place at their place of work or on the telephone.

C.4. What procedures are in place to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of your participants and their responses?

Participants will select their own pseudonyms if they want to and all participants will be advised (and outlined in written guidance) that they can refuse permission for their information to be used.

Interviews with housing professionals will allow them to select a pseudonym for their organisation if they wish. They will not be named individually though may choose to keep their organisation name.

C.5. Are there any circumstances in which there would be a limit or exclusion to the anonymity/confidentiality offered to participants? If so, please explain further.

If an interviewee disclosed anything that would put another person or themselves at risk of harm. This will be outlined in the information sheet and reiterated verbally before the interview.

C.6. You must attach a **participant information sheet or summary explanation** that will be given to potential participants in your research.

Within this, have you explained (in a way that is accessible to the participants):	Yes	No
a). What the research is about?	☒	☐
b). Why the participants have been chosen to take part and what they will be asked to do?	☒	☐
c). Any potential benefits and/or risks involved in their participation?	☒	☐
d) What levels of anonymity and confidentiality will apply to the information that they share, and if there are any exceptions to these?	☒	☐
e). What the data will be used for?	☒	☐
f). How the data will be stored securely?	☒	☐
g). How they can withdraw from the project?	☒	☐
h). Who the researchers are, and how they can be contacted?	☒	☐

Section D: Potential risks to participants

You should think carefully about the risks that participating in your research poses to participants. Be aware that some subjects can be sensitive for participants even if they are not dealing explicitly with a 'sensitive' topic. Please complete this section as fully as possible and continue on additional pages if necessary.

What risks to participants may arise from participating in your research?	How likely is it that these risks will actually happen?	How much harm would be caused if this risk did occur?	What measures are you putting in place to ensure this does not happen (or that if it does, the impact on participants is reduced)?
Emotional distress	Medium	Medium	Access to counselling for the victims and perpetrators taking part. The housing provider has a contract for fast track counselling for its customers to Mind. Further support from the Support workers

Section E: Potential risks to researchers

You should think carefully about any hazards or risks to you as a researcher that will be present because of you conducting this research. Please complete this section as fully as possible and continue on additional pages if necessary. Please include an assessment of any health conditions, injuries, allergies or intolerances that may present a risk to you taking part in the proposed research activities (including any related medication used to control these), or any reasonable adjustments that may be required where a disability might otherwise prevent you from participating fully within the research.

1. Where will the research be conducted/what will be the research site?

What hazards or risks to you as a researcher may arise from conducting this research?	How likely is it that these risks will actually happen?	How much harm would be caused if this risk did happen?	What measures are being put in place to ensure this does not happen (or that if it does, the impact on researchers is reduced)?
1. Physical harm to the researcher	Very low	High depending on severity	The researcher will conduct research in a safe place at the office of the Programme or the housing provider's office which have full safety policies and practices in place
2. Emotional harm to the researcher	Medium	Medium depending on severity	The researcher has access to counselling via the workplace and will undertake a full debrief with her supervisor.
3.			

SECTION F: Other Approvals

	Yes, document attached	Yes, documents to follow	No
a). Does the research require ethical approval from the NHS or a Social Services Authority? If so, please attach a copy of the draft form that you intend to submit, together with any accompanying documentation.	☐		☒
b). Might the proposed research meet the definition of a *clinical trial*[iii]? (If yes, a copy of this form must be sent to the University's Insurance Officer, Tel. 0191 334 9266, for approval, and evidence of approval must be attached before the project can start).	☐		☒
c). Does the research involve working data, staff or offenders connected with the National Offender Management Service? If so, please see the guidance at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service/about/research and submit a copy of your proposed application to the NOMS Integrated Application System with your form .	☐		☒
d). Does the project involve activities that may take place within Colleges of Durham University, including recruitment of participants via associated networks (e.g. social media)? (If so, approval from the Head of the College/s concerned will be required after SASS approval has been granted – see guidance notes for further details)		☐	☒
e). Will you be required to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (criminal records) check to undertake the research?	☐	☐	☒
f) I confirm that travel approval has or will be sought via the online approval system at http://apps.dur.ac.uk/travel.forms for all trips during this research which meet the following criteria: For Students travelling away from the University, this applies where travel is not to their home and involves an overnight stay.	Yes ☒		No ☐

For Staff travelling away from the University, this applies only when travelling to an overseas destination.			

SECTION G: Submission Checklist and Signatures

Supporting Documents	Included (tick)
Fully Completed Research Ethics and Risk Assessment Form	✓
Interview Guide (if using interviews)	✓
Focus Group Topic Guide (if using focus groups)	N/A
Questionnaire (if using questionnaires)	✓
Participant Information Sheet or Equivalent	✓
Consent Form (if appropriate)	✓
For students only: Written/email confirmation from all agencies involved that they agree to participate, also stating whether they require a DBS check. If confirmation is not yet available, please attach a copy of the letter that you propose to send to request this; proof of organisational consent must be forwarded to your Programme Secretary before any data is collected.	✓

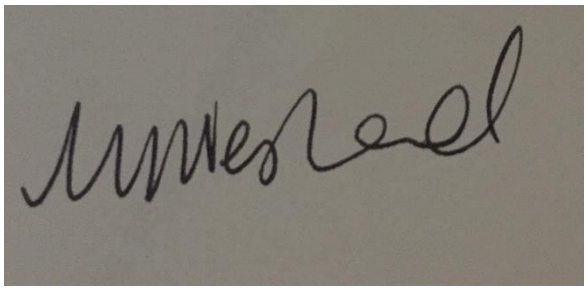
Please indicate the reason if any documents cannot be included at this stage:
(Please note that any ethics applications submitted without sufficient supporting documentation will not be able to be assessed.)

Signatures

Researcher's Signature:

Date:

Supervisor's Signature (PGR students only):



Date: 27 November 2015

Please keep a copy of your approved ethics application for your records.

If you decide to change your research significantly after receiving ethics approval, you must submit a revised ethics form along with updated supporting documentation before you can implement these changes.

PART F: OUTCOME OF THE APPLICATION

Appendices

Participant Information Sheet – Women In-depth Interviews

You may have been asked or have already agreed to participate in in-depth interviews as part of research into the role of housing providers in responding to domestic abuse.

What is Involved?

If you decide to take part in the in depth interviews you will be asked to sign a consent form and you will be interviewed at a time at your convenience. It is anticipated the interview will last for up to 90 minutes. The interview will be face to face, audio recorded in a private room either at a Gentoo Office or at the offices of Wearside Women In Need.

The interview will start by asking you a little about yourself and then will ask you about your involvement with Gentoo and how they came to be involved. The researcher will ask you about how you found the support from Gentoo and if there was anything that could be improved.

The researcher will ask about your housing situation whilst experiencing abuse and support from other agencies.

What Happens after the Interview?

After the interview the audio recordings will be written up into a transcript which only the researcher and her Supervisor Team (2 people). All information will be kept locked in a secure cabinet and you may have a copy of the transcript. All information will be kept on secure, password protected computer.

Potential Benefits in Taking Part in the Research

The research seeks to ascertain if housing providers can have an impact on responding to domestic abuse and understanding what works. In participating in this research you could help improve services to women experiencing domestic abuse.
You can withdraw your consent for the information to be used up until June 2016.
If you require further information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below.

Kelly Henderson – kelda.henderson@durham.ac.uk or 07442 505719

Participant Information Sheet – Men In-depth Interviews

You may have been asked or have already agreed to participate in in-depth interviews as part of research into the role of housing providers in responding to domestic abuse.

What is Involved?

If you decide to take part in the in depth interviews you will be asked to sign a consent form and you will be interviewed at a time at your convenience. It is anticipated the interview will last for up to 90 minutes. The interview will be face to face, audio recorded in a private room either at a Gentoo Office or at the offices of Impact Family Services.

The interview will start by asking you a little about yourself and then will ask you about your involvement with Gentoo and how they came to be involved. The researcher will ask you about how you are finding the Programme you are attending. The researcher will ask about your experiences of personal relationships and family life, the support from Gentoo and if there was anything that could be improved.

The researcher will also ask about your housing situation whilst taking part on the Programme.

What Happens after the Interview?

After the interview the audio recordings will be written up into a transcript which only the researcher and her Supervisor Team (2 people). All information will be kept locked in a secure cabinet and you may have a copy of the transcript. All information will be kept on secure, password protected computer.

Potential Benefits in Taking Part in the Research

The research seeks to ascertain if housing providers can have an impact on responding to domestic abuse and understanding what works for men. In participating in this research you could help improve services to men seeking help.

You do not need to take part in the research and this will not impact on the support you receive on the Programme.

Potential Risks in Taking Part

The interview will be confidential and you can refuse to answer questions. The researcher has a duty to act if the researcher you or someone else is in immediate danger or harm. If this happens the researcher will raise it with you in the interview.

You can withdraw your consent for the information to be used up until June 2016.

If you require further information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below.

Kelly Henderson – kelda.henderson@durham.ac.uk or 07442 505719

Participants Consent Form Researcher – Kelda (Kelly) Henderson

The Role of Housing in a Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Abuse

Email: kelda.henderson@durham.ac.uk

I am willing to participate in an interview for the above mentioned research and confirm that I have had the scope and purposes of the study explained to me and understand how the information I disclose in the interview will be used.

Yes /No

I consent to the interview being tape recorded.

Yes/No

I understand that in the event of any disclosures on my part that highlight risk of serious harm to myself, a third party or a child this information will need to be shared with other agencies to ensure the safety of myself or others.

Yes/No

I understand that my contributions will be anonymised, I can choose a pseudonym and personal names will not be used.

Yes/No

I understand that my contributions are confidential.

Yes/No

I understand that I have the right to request copies of the transcript and/or final research report.

Yes/No

I understand that I can withdraw for the study at any time, including during the interview or at any point after the interview up to the date of 30 July 2016.

Yes/No

I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question or discuss any topic that I do not want to talk about.

Yes/No

I understand that if I am unhappy with the way I am treated in this study or if I have any concerns about the conduct of the researcher then I can address these complaints

or concerns to Professor Nicole Westmarland (my supervisor). Her contact email is: Nicole.Westmarland@durham.ac.uk.

Yes/No

I agree to participate in this research project:

_____

*Participant's Signature Date

Participant requires a copy of consent form? YES/NO

Participants Consent Form Researcher – Kelda (Kelly) Henderson

The Role of Housing in a Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Abuse

Email: kelda.henderson@durham.ac.uk

I am willing to participate in a Focus Group for the above mentioned research and confirm that I have had the scope and purposes of the study explained to me and understand how the information I disclose in the interview will be used.

Yes /No

I consent to the Focus Groups being tape recorded.

Yes/No

I understand that in the event of any disclosures on my part that highlight risk of serious harm to myself, a third party or a child this information will need to be shared with other agencies to ensure the safety of myself or others.

Yes/No

I understand that my contributions will be anonymised, I can choose a pseudonym and personal names will not be used.

Yes/No

I understand that my contributions are confidential.

Yes/No

I understand that I have the right to request copies of the transcript and/or final research report.

Yes/No

I understand that I can withdraw for the study at any time, including during the Focus Group or at any point after the Focus Group up to the date of 30 September 2016.

Yes/No

I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question or discuss any topic that I do not want to talk about.

Yes/No

I understand that if I am unhappy with the way I am treated in this study or if I have any concerns about the conduct of the researcher then I can address these complaints or concerns to Professor Nicole Westmarland (my supervisor). Her contact email is: Nicole.Westmarland@durham.ac.uk.

Yes/No

I agree to participate in this research project:

_____

*Participant's Signature Date

Participant requires a copy of consent form? YES/NO

APPENDIX 2 Interview Schedule for Professional Participants

Interview Questions for Professionals Working in the Housing Sector

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. Your time and insight are really valued. As outlined in the Participant Information Sheet the interview will be recorded and the information stored securely with only myself and my PhD Supervisor having access to it. Can I check you are still happy with that?

The interview will take approximately 1 hour and is split into 5 parts. I would like to remind you that you are free to stop the interview or withdraw at any time.

Part One - About You and Your Organisation

1 Can you tell me a little bit about your organisation, its values and what you consider its priorities to be?

2 Can you tell me about your role within your organisation?

Part Two – Victims

3 How does your organisation identify victims of domestic abuse?

4 How does your organisation respond to victims of domestic abuse?

Prompt – for example special services, workers or interventions

5 Have you ran any campaigns aimed at domestic abuse victims?

6 Do you offer staff any training in relation to working with victims?

Prompt - who, what, how many, what methods etc?

7 Does your organisation require proof of domestic abuse to support things such as:

a) Management Move
b) Lock Change
c) Anything else?

Please explain to what level, i.e. crime number? Self-disclosure?

Part 3 – Perpetrators

9 How does your organisation identify perpetrators of domestic abuse?

10 How does your organisation respond to perpetrators of domestic abuse?

Prompt – for example special services, workers or interventions

11 Have you ran any campaigns aimed at perpetrators of domestic abuse?

12 Do you offer staff any training in relation to working with perpetrators of domestic abuse?

Prompt - who, what, how many, what methods etc?

13 Does your organisation offer any support to perpetrators to change their abusive behaviour or take enforcement action against them. If so - what outcomes has your organisation had?

Prompt: Can you outline?

Part 4 – Multi Agency Approach

14 There's a view that a coordinated community response (i.e. where partners pull together strategically and practically to respond to domestic abuse) is a positive way to deal with domestic abuse. In your opinion does the housing sector have a role to play in this; and if so to what extent?

Prompt - Are you included in multi-agency meetings and approaches?

15 Do you think your organisation could do more or improve on anything in relation to a coordinated community response?

Part 5 – Best Practice and Barriers

16 What do you think are the main barriers for housing providers in responding to domestic abuse?

17 What do you think you think are the main advantages of housing providers playing a larger role in responding to domestic abuse?

18 Do you know of any examples of best practice of domestic abuse work in housing?

19 If money and time were not limited, what role would you like to see housing providers taking in relation to domestic abuse?

APPENDIX 3 Interview Schedule for Perpetrators

Introduction

Firstly, can I start by thanking you for considering taking part in this research and talking to me today?

I hope you have already seen the information sheet which gives information about the research which is looking at the role that housing providers can play in responding to domestic abuse. I am very keen to hear the views of men on the Big Programme.

Before we start the interview I have a consent form that I would ask you to sign if you are happy to do so. We can go through it together if you like or you might prefer to read it yourself.

Your Support Officer /Service (include name) are available if you feel you would like some extra support in the interview or afterwards.

So, before we start is there anything you would like to ask?

Some background on you

1 Can you start by telling me a little bit about yourself?

[Prompt: Have you always lived in this area?

[Prompt: Have you lived in a Gentoo property for long? Any children? Work?]

Your experience

2 Can you tell me a little about how you came to access the Big Project?

[Prompt: was it a self-referral? If so how?]

[Prompt: was it via an agency, if so how?]

3 Had you previously tried to access any support to address / help you change your behaviour? If so; can you tell me a little bit about it?

4 Have you had any support or intervention from another organisation?

5 Can you tell me a little bit about the programme and how you are finding it?

[Prompt: best bits? Worst bits? What do you find most difficult?]

6 What are your motivations to attend each week?

(i.e., does the Wraparound support help? Is your tenancy at risk)

7 Do you feel the Programme is having any impact? If so in what way? If not; why not?

8 Can you tell me a little about the involvement from Gentoo? How did they become involved?

9 Has domestic abuse caused any issues with your tenancy? For example; has action been taken against you or have you had to leave the home?

[Prompt: If so, what happened and where did you go?]

10 What specific support do you feel you are receiving from Gentoo?

11 How are you finding their support? Would you recommend it to anyone else?

[Prompt most helpful, least helpful?]

12 Is there anything missing from the support you are receiving that you feel would be helpful?

13 What do you think housing could do to help men change their behaviour?

14 Do you think housing providers should make it mandatory or optional for men to take part in Programmes like Big?

15 Imagining your life one year from now how do you see it, what would your ideal housing situation be?

APPENDIX 4 Interview Schedule for Victims / Survivors

Introduction

Firstly, can I start by thanking you for considering taking part in this research and talking to me today?

I hope you have already seen the information sheet which gives information about the research which is looking at the role that housing providers can play in responding to domestic abuse. I am very keen to hear the views and thoughts of women who have experienced domestic abuse. Would you like me to talk you through the information sheet to remind you what the research is about?

Before we start the interview I have a consent form that I would ask you to sign if you are happy to do so. We can go through it together if you like or you might prefer to read it yourself.

Your Support Officer / Service (include name) are available if you feel you would like some extra support in the interview or afterwards.

So, before we start is there anything you would like to ask?

Some background on you

1 Can you start by telling me a little bit about yourself, for example whether you've always lived in this area, whether you have a large or small family?

[**Prompt**: Have you lived in a Gentoo property for long? Any children? Do you work?]

Your experience

2 Can you tell me a little about the involvement from Gentoo? How did they become involved when you were experiencing abuse?

[**Prompt**: For example was it via repairs / did you contact them to ask for support? Or was via the Police or other agencies?]

3 What was the support from Gentoo like, can you describe it?

3a) what was the most useful thing Gentoo did for you?

3b) what was the least useful thing Gentoo did for you/was there anything that made your situation worse?

4 Did it differ from any other support you had / were receiving and if so in what way?

5 Can you tell me a little about your housing needs / housing situation when you were experiencing abuse?

[**Prompt** – for example did you move home? If you didn't move home were any safety measures put in place to make you feel safer, such as window locks, lock changes, safe room?]

[**Prompt** – if you did move home can you tell me what that process was like?]

6 What happened regarding housing for your partner, were any other organisations involved?

[Prompt – who from? the BIG project, have they heard of it, do they think something like that would have been useful in their circumstances]

7 Did your children receive any support from any organisations?

[Prompt who, what would have been useful]

8 Would you advise or recommend other people access support from a housing provider?

8a What do you think housing providers should be considering when trying to support people who are experiencing abuse?

9 As well as the support from Gentoo, did you get any support from any other services i.e. Police, specialist domestic abuse / women's service?

10 What are your hopes and dreams for the future? Imagining your life in 1 year from now what would it look like? Where would you be living?

(This is the 1st interview – were any questions hard to understand?)

[i] ***Potentially vulnerable groups*** can include, for example: children and young people; those with a learning disability or cognitive impairment; those unable to give informed consent or individuals in a dependent or unequal relationship.

[ii][ii] ***Sensitive topics*** can include participants' sexual behaviour, their illegal or political behaviour, their experience of violence, their abuse or exploitation, their mental

health, or their gender or ethnic status. Elite Interviews may also fall into this category.

[iii] ***Clinical Trials:*** Research may meet the definition of a clinical trial if it involves studying the effects on participants of drugs, devices, diets, behavioural strategies such as exercise or counselling, or other ‘clinical’ procedures.