

Domestic Abuse

Support in
Supported
Accommodation
Strategy

Introduction

Supported Accommodation is an opportunity for victims of domestic abuse and their families to escape their abuser and have a chance to live a life without fear. 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will suffer domestic abuse at some time in their lives and it is vital that we support them.

Supported accommodation is one part of the range of help that we can provide to them to enable them to live safe and secure lives. Getting the right support, at the right time will help victims be safe and build back their lives. Access to specialist support services in supported accommodation is often key to ensuring victims can recover.

Domestic Abuse is often a hidden harm within our society and knows no boundary. By breaking the cycle and supporting those that are abused, we are showing survivors other options, and providing confidence to those who haven't left yet.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has been a long-needed piece of legislation for our country and our communities. The horrific cycle of abuse touches so many lives, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake, and I am proud to introduce a strategy that will support victims when their lives are upside down.



Deborah Earl

Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities
Cumbria County Council

Background

There are some 2.3 million victims of domestic abuse a year aged 16 to 74 (two-thirds of whom are women) with 20% of all children being exposed to domestic abuse. More than one in ten of all offences recorded by the police are domestic abuse related.

Building on previous government initiatives, including the violence against Women and Girls Strategy, in January 2019 the government introduced the Domestic Abuse Bill designed to promote awareness of domestic abuse; protect and support victims and their families; transform the justice process to prioritise victim safety and provide an effective response to perpetrators; and to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas, agencies and sectors.

On the 29th April, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was enacted and new duties on Cumbria County Council came into force, with the County Council required to:

- Assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for accommodation-based support in its area,
- Prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support in its area, and
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (England). Section 57

and to

“Appoint a domestic abuse local partnership board for the purposes of providing advice to the authority about—

- The exercise of the authority’s functions under section 57, and
- The provision of other local authority support in the authority’s area.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (England). Section 58”

As a result of this, a Local Partnership Board has been created around the existing Safer Cumbria – Domestic Abuse Group. This Partnership has worked to produce this strategy to inform the support elements linked to safe supported accommodation for victim/survivors of domestic abuse. This will ensure that the statutory duty is met and that services for victim/survivors of domestic abuse provide the support that they need and deserve.

This strategy only relates to the support element linked to safe accommodation linked to safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse.

The housing authorities retain the duty to ensure that there is appropriate types and levels of accommodation with access to support to meet the needs of this cohort in each district area, aligned to the relevant Housing and Homelessness Strategic plans.¹

The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have, in the Domestic Abuse Act and in the draft guidance, defined supported accommodation and support. (Appendix 1 and 2).

¹ <http://democracy.allerdale.gov.uk/documents/s114197/Final%20Draft%20Housing%20Strategy%202016-2021.doc.pdf>

https://www.barrowbc.gov.uk/_resources/assets/attachment/full/0/8503.pdf

<https://www.carlisle.gov.uk/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=8sxixY6pJOY%3d&tabid=1888&portalid=0&mid=10976>

https://www.copeland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/homelessness_strategy_v5.pdf

https://www.eden.gov.uk/media/5686/300719_final_final_eden_homelessness_strategy_2019-2024.pdf

<https://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/media/6988/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-strategy-20192024.pdf>

Principles

Underlying the work of partners in creating and delivering the strategy for support linked to supported accommodation, there are a number of principles that will inform the work that we do.

- The strategy and its delivery will be shaped by the lived experience of victims/survivors of domestic abuse – including children
- The work that we do will improve access to support services for victims/survivors by reducing barriers and developing clear, seamless pathways with reduced hand-off procedures
- The strategy recognises that supported accommodation is only a temporary solution and will promote successful move on to more permanent solutions at the right time, with the right support
- The Strategy recognises that supported accommodation should not only be accessed in crisis – but can form part of a proactive programme to support a victim/survivor and prevent crisis
- The strategy recognises that that victims/survivors have a right to equity of access to supported accommodation provision across the county including consistency of Quality Standards
- Recognising that individuals needs may vary ensure that they have access to the specialist services that they require
- Maintains an awareness of existing interdependencies
- Recognizes that support is a broader term than crisis support alone and endeavours to look at root causes.
- Recognise that, under the Domestic Abuse Act, children are victims in their own right and ensure that any children or young people's life cycle stage, needs and abilities are taken in to account

Cumbrian Characteristics

Geography

Cumbria is one of 33 counties in England and covers an area of 6,767 km sq; making it the second largest county by area in the country. Cumbria is divided into the following six local authority districts: Allerdale; Barrow-in-Furness; Carlisle; Copeland; Eden; and South Lakeland.

With a population of 498,900; Cumbria is the 6th least densely populated county in England. 16.5% of the population are aged 0-15 years (lower than the national average of 19.2%), while 24.1% of the population are aged over 65 years (higher than the national average of 18.2%).

Socio-economics

26 communities (LSOAs) in Cumbria fall within the 10% most deprived of areas in England; these communities are located within the districts of Barrow-in-Furness (12), Allerdale (7), Carlisle (4) and Copeland (3). It is generally in these deprived areas that unemployment and crime rates are higher, while household incomes and educational attainment are lower and health outcomes can be poor.

Inversely, Cumbria has 17 LSOAs that are classified as being in the 10% least deprived of LSOAs nationally; these LSOAs are located in South Lakeland (6 LSOAs), Carlisle (5 LSOAs), Allerdale (3 LSOAs), Copeland (2 LSOAs) and Barrow-in-Furness (1 LSOA).

Demography

Age

Over the next decade the population of Cumbria is projected to increase by +0.3% (England +5%), as the county's age profile is projected to become older; with numbers of 0-15 and 16- 64 year olds projected to decrease by 6.5% and 4.3% respectively (England -1.6% and +2.7%), while numbers of people aged 65+ are set to increase by 16.2% (England +19.6%).

Disability

According to 2011 Census data 20.4% of Cumbria's population has a long-term health issue or disability that affects their day-to-day activities. This is higher than the UK average of 17.2%.

Gender re-assignment

There is currently no reliable data regarding rates of gender re-assignment, either on a county-wide or nationwide level.

Marriage and civil partnership

35% of Cumbrian households are married or in a civil partnership. This is higher than the national average of 33.2%.

Pregnancy and maternity

39.2% of Cumbrian households have children. This higher than the national average of 38.6%

Race

Cumbria has a low proportion of BAME residents with just 3.5% of the population, well below the national average of 20.2%. Cumbria has a population of non-UK nationals at 3.1% (England 10%).

Religion or belief

The religious make-up of Cumbria is predominantly Christian 71.9% (England 59.4%) or non-religious 20.3% (England 24.7%). Other religions make up 7.8% of the Cumbrian population (England 15.9%)

Sex

Cumbria has a population that is 49.3% male and 50.7% female. This is consistent with the national figures of 49% and 51% respectively.

Sexual Orientation

There is currently no reliable Cumbria-wide information for sexual orientation of the population. The North West has a population in which 94.2% identify as heterosexual and 2.6% as LGBTQ+. Nationally, 93.7% identify as heterosexual with 3.4% identifying as LGBTQ+.

Needs Assessment

To inform this strategy an initial needs assessment has been undertaken with Supported Accommodation providers across Cumbria.

www.cumbriaobservatory.org.uk/crime-community-safety/crime-community-safety-further-information/

The needs assessment analysed data from across the county and considered 9 areas:

- Incidence of Domestic Abuse by Geography
- Out of County Referrals
- Demographics
- Socioeconomics
- Homelessness
- Pathway Mapping
- Service user experience
- Current services and assets
- Risk
- Level of need and gaps

Through consideration of these areas, the need's assessment was able to develop a picture of Domestic Abuse within Cumbria.

The needs assessment will be conducted on an ongoing basis with providers submitting returns at the end of each financial quarter. This continuous assessment of Cumbria's domestic abuse landscape will inform each stage of the process including commissioning.

Incidence of Domestic Abuse by Geography

DV Crimes and Incidents	2019-20			
	Geography	DA safeguarding records with no crimes	DA incidents	TOTAL DA Safeguarding and Incidents 2019-20
Allerdale	539	1,251	1,790	18.3
Barrow	670	1,180	1,850	27.6
Carlisle	713	1,737	2,450	22.5
Copeland	389	898	1,287	18.9
Eden	190	456	646	12.1
South Lakeland	431	809	1,240	11.8
Cumbria	3,026	6,368	9,394	18.8
North West	23,478	70,766	94,244	20.9
England & Wales	529,077	758,941	1,288,018	22.8

Source: Cumbria data - Cumbria Constabulary 2021; regional & national data – ONS 2020b

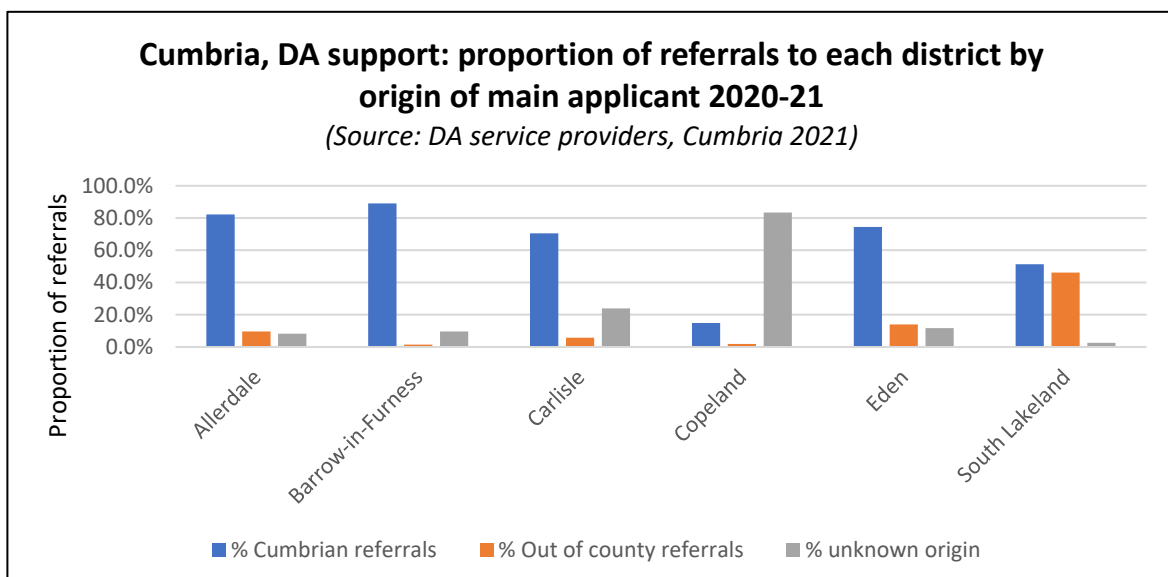
These figures show that although incidence of police reported domestic abuse in Cumbria is lower than the regional and national average there is considerable geographic variation. In particular, Barrow and Carlisle have rates at or above the national average.

The Rural Crime Network released a report in 2019 that stated “Rural victims are half as likely as urban victims to report their abuse. This under-reporting means much less is known about the needs of rural victims, of what good interventions are, or how to effectively prevent rural domestic abuse. It also means demand-led services, like policing and domestic abuse support, are gearing their service towards urban areas and urban victims. This in turn leads to fewer services in place to support rural victims and those victims less likely to report.”

As a predominantly rural county, the scale of Domestic Abuse may be under-represented within Cumbria.

Out of County Referrals

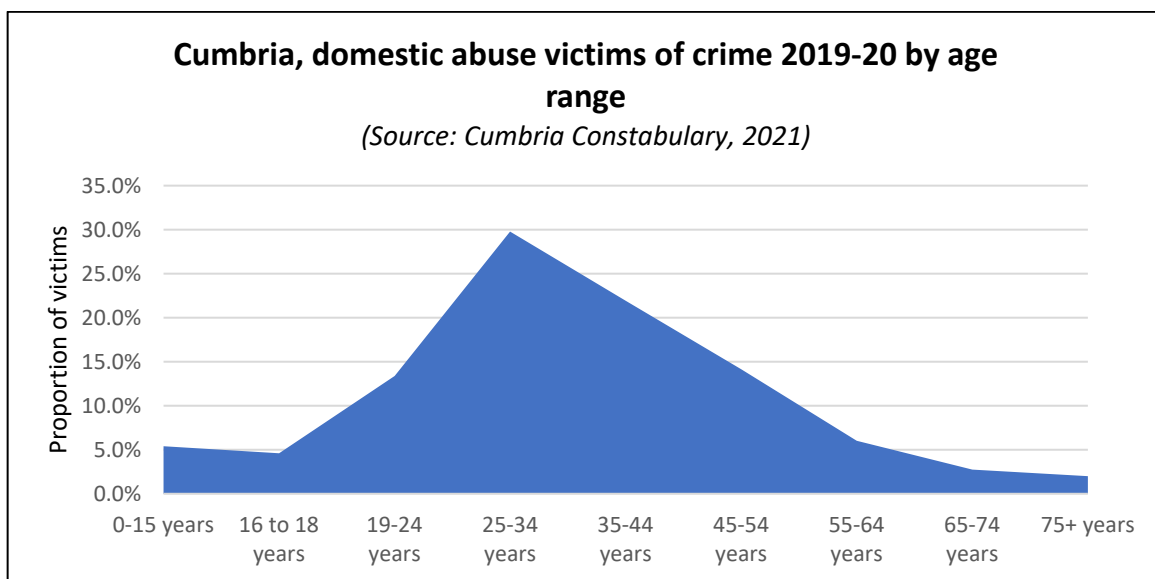
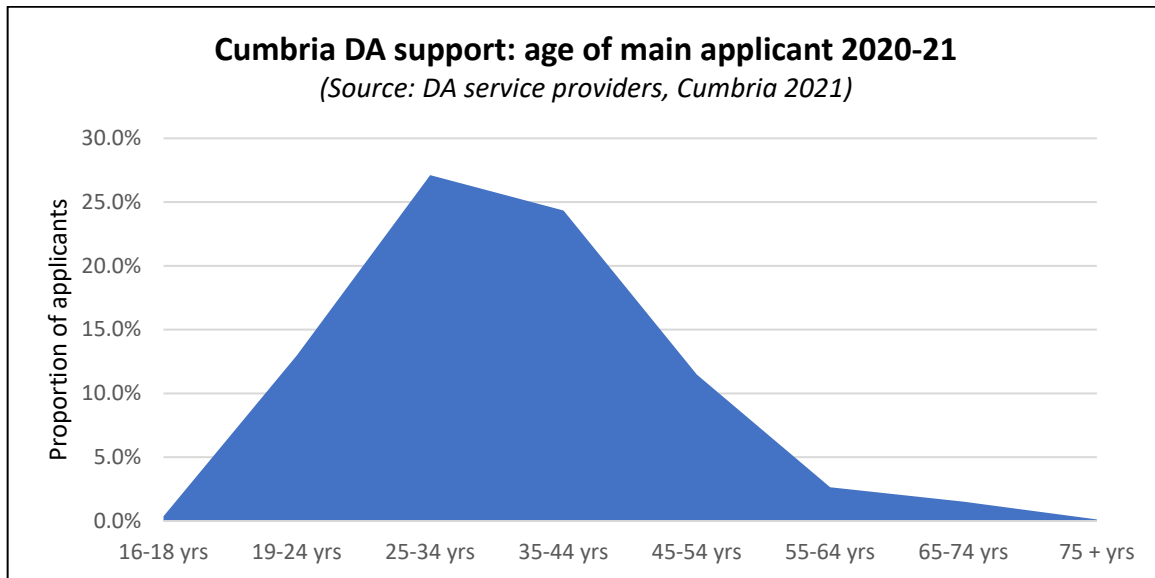
In most Districts out of county referrals make up a very small percentage of referral. However, in South Lakeland this increases considerably with out of county referrals making up about 50% of cases.



Demographics

Age

Almost one third of victims of domestic abuse related crimes in 2019-20 in Cumbria are aged 25-34 years (29.8%; 1,897); a further fifth (21.9%; 1,396) are aged 35-44 years while one in seven are aged 45-54 years (14.1%; 901). Together these age bands (25-54) make up two thirds of all victims of domestic abuse related crimes in 2019-20 in Cumbria (65.9%; 4,194). Those aged 24 and under make up 23.4% (1,489).



Nationally, the Crown Prosecution Service Violence Against Women and Girls Report 2018- 2019 showed that from those domestic abuse complainants where age was recorded, the majority were aged 25–59 (78.8%). 19.0% of complainants (14,897) were 24 years old and under, with 1,533 (2.0%) of complainants being 14–17 years old and 72 (0.1%) aged 10–13.

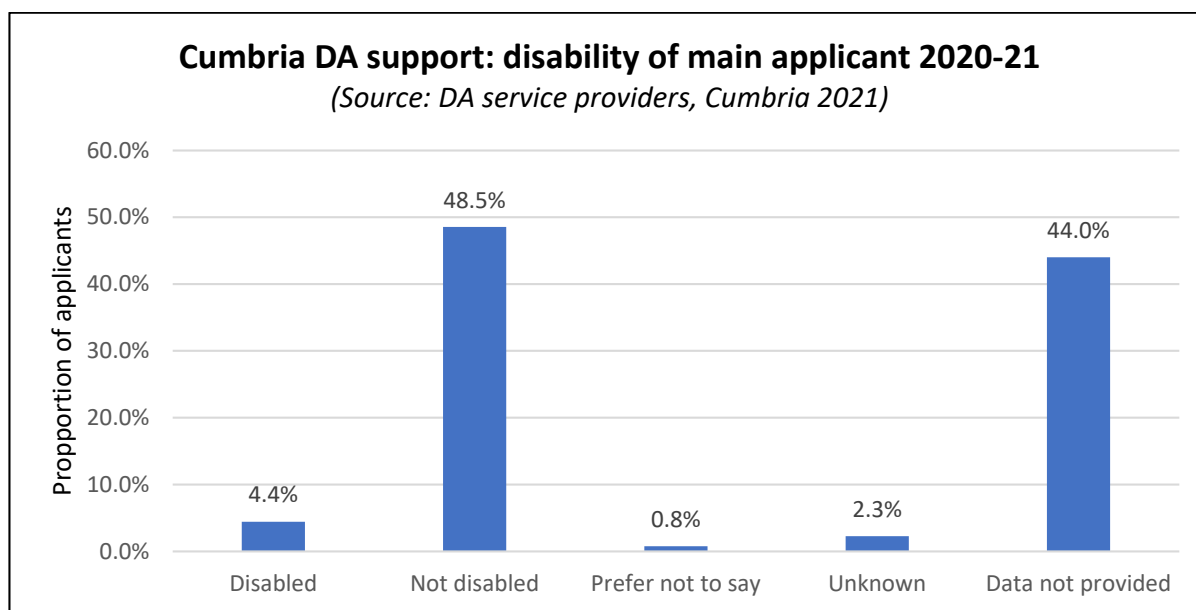
Extrapolating national statistics to the Cumbrian population allows for a comparison of proportions of domestic abuse survivors. Within Cumbria there is a larger proportion of younger victims (under 24 years) accessing services than expected and an under-representation amongst older adults (55+).

		Expected Cumbrian %	Accessing Services Cumbrian %	% Gap
Age	Under 24	19.32	23.40	4.08
	25-34	15.444	29.80	14.36
	35-44	14.442	21.90	7.46
	45-54	20.33	14.10	-6.23
	55+	25.671	10.80	-14.87

This aligns with Age UK’s “No Age Limit” (2020) report that suggests that incidents of Domestic Abuse amongst older adults is currently under-reported, whilst experiencing a higher proportion of Domestic Homicides (22%).

Disability

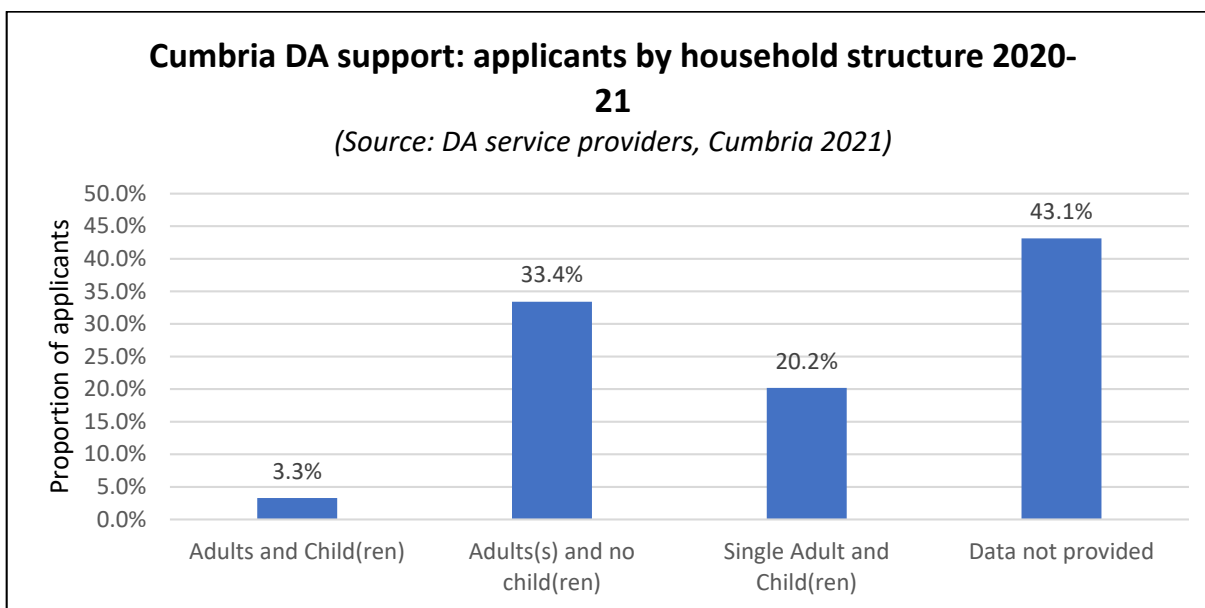
For the year ending March 2019, the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) showed that adults aged 16-74 years with a disability were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse in the last year than those without. This was true for both men (7.1% compared with 3.3%, respectively) and women (13.8% compared with 6.4%, respectively).



Marriage and civil partnership

For the year ending March 2019, CSEW showed that adults aged 16 to 74 years who were separated or divorced were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse than those who were married or civil partnered, cohabiting, single or widowed. Both men and women who were married or civil partnered were less likely to be victims of domestic abuse in the last year than those who were single, cohabiting, separated or divorced.

Pregnancy and maternity



Research from Angela Taft (2002) estimated that between 4 and 9 in every 100 pregnant women are abused during their pregnancy or soon after the birth. Furthermore, J. McFarlane et al. (2002) identified a link between abuse during pregnancy and a woman’s chance of being killed by her perpetrator,

Race

	Allerdale	Barrow-in-Furness	Carlisle	Copeland	Eden	South Lakeland	Total
Asian	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	1.3%	0.6%	0.3%
Black	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
Mixed	0.5%	0.2%	0.4%	0.7%	0.2%	0.4%	0.4%
Not stated	9.1%	13.3%	15.9%	11.5%	14.0%	15.0%	13.3%
Other	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.6%	0.2%
White	90.2%	86.4%	83.0%	87.2%	84.4%	83.2%	85.6%

According to Walby and Allen 2004, there is little variation in the prevalence of domestic violence by ethnicity. However, Batsleer, et al 2002; and Rai and Thiara, 1997 found that Black and other minority ethnic communities are less likely to access statutory services. Similarly, a report from the British Medical Association 2014 into domestic abuse found evidence to suggest that black and minority ethnic (BME) women put up with abuse for a longer period and are more reluctant to access services.

There was a larger proportion of non-White British applicants referred to Cumbria’s domestic abuse safe accommodation service providers in 2020-21 than the county average (5.7%; 45 applicants). This could reflect applicants referred from out of county areas with larger ethnic minority populations.

Religion or belief

Providers do not currently collect information on religion or belief of survivors. This has been included as a grant condition to ensure data will be collected in the future and services reflect the religious diversity of survivors.

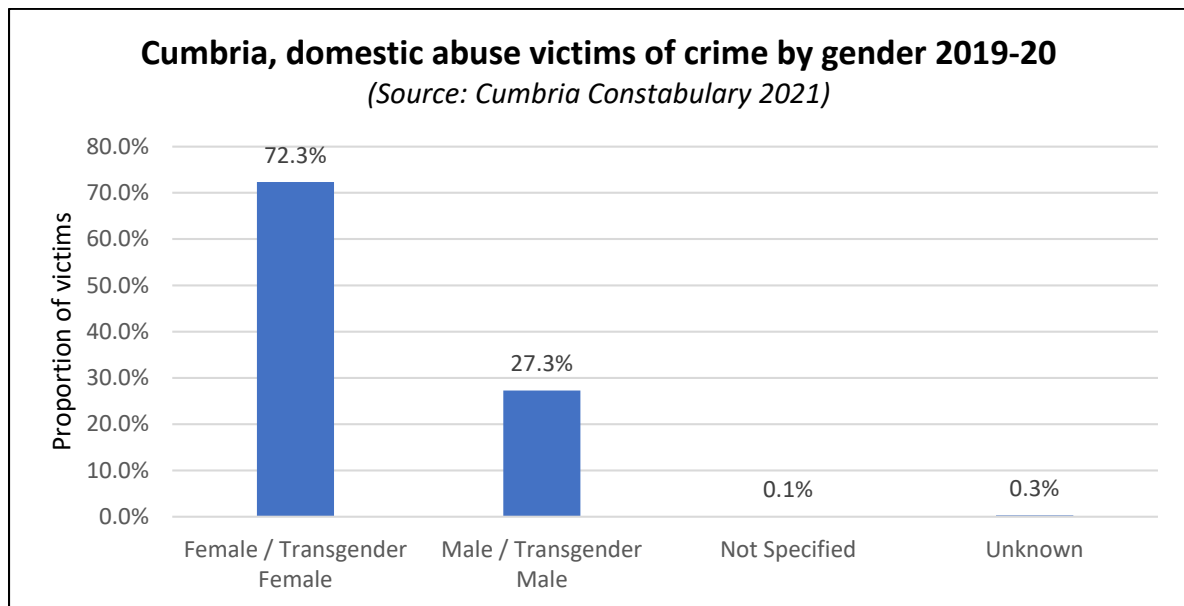
There is limited research on the relationship between religious beliefs and domestic abuse victimisation in the UK. For example, a 2011 report on forced marriage in Luton observed that forced marriage has historically been practised in many different communities. However, it concluded that, due to their relative size within the UK population, forced marriage was now most common in the UK amongst South Asian communities. Forced marriage is a violation of human rights and is seen in the UK as a form of domestic violence.

Gender re-assignment

There is limited research on how many transgender people experience domestic abuse in the UK. However, data suggests it is a significant issue. A report commissioned by the Scottish Trans Alliance and published in 2010 indicates that 80% of trans people had experienced emotional, sexual, or physical abuse from a partner or ex-partner, although only 60% of them recognised the behaviour as domestic abuse.

The National LGBT survey, conducted in July 2017, found that trans respondents had much higher declared rates of most incident types involving people they lived with (48%) than cisgender respondents (26%).

Sex



The data shows that, in Cumbria, Domestic Abuse is a gender biased crime. 72.3% of domestic abuse related crimes in Cumbria in 2019-20 have female / transgender female victims (4,607 crimes).

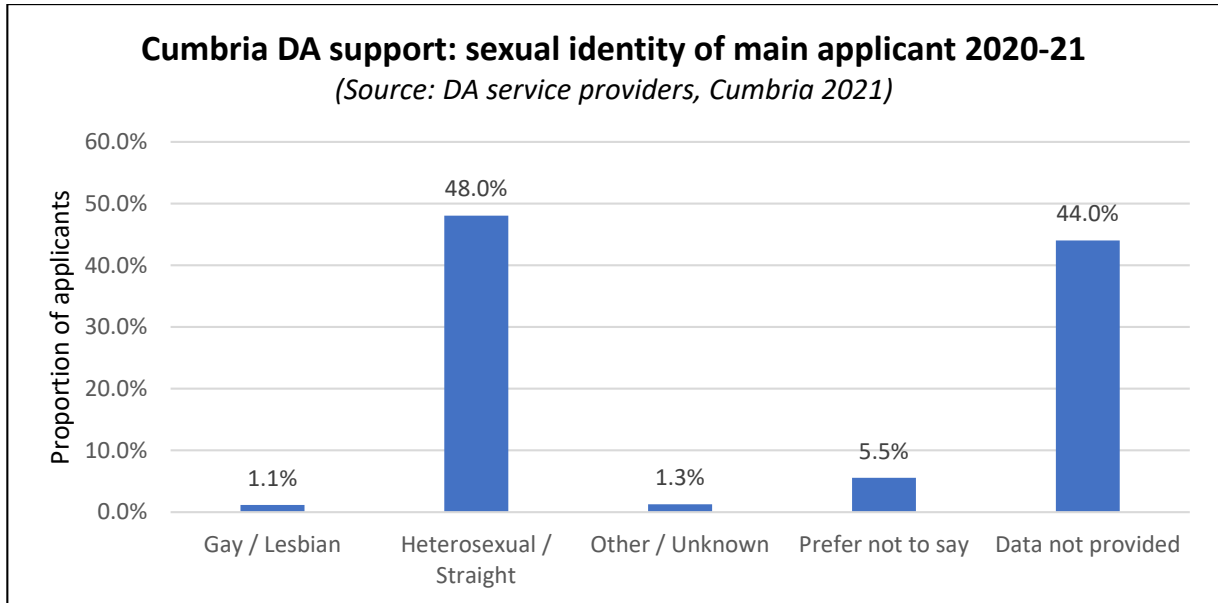
In year ending March 2019, the CSEW estimated that 1.6 million women and 786,000 men aged 16-74 years experienced domestic abuse. Women were more likely to be victims of each type of abuse (except sexual assault by a family member) than men. For example, 6.8% of females aged 16-74 years were victims of non-sexual domestic abuse in the last year, compared with 3.5% of males. Similarly, 1.7% of females aged 16-74 years were victims of domestic stalking in the last year, compared with 0.6% of males.

It should not be forgotten that men are also victims of domestic abuse. Stigma and fear of feeling emasculated can make men less likely to report domestic abuse than women.

		Expected Cumbrian %	Accessing Services Cumbrian %	% Gap
Sex	Male (M identify)	33.229	27.3	-5.93
	Female (F Identify)	66.3795	72.3	5.92

Comparisons with national crime survey data (CSEW) suggest that male domestic abuse is currently under-reported within Cumbria.

Sexual Orientation

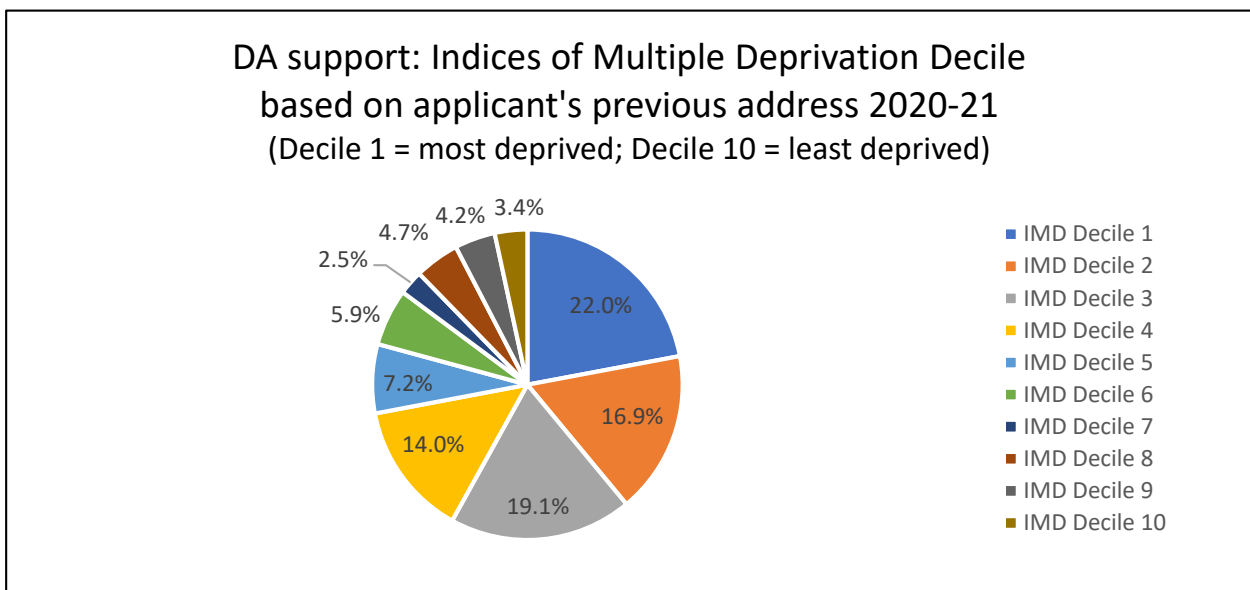


There are large data gaps in 2020-21 around sexual identity, which is not recorded for 44.0% of Cumbria’s applicants (349). Almost half 48.0% (381) are shown as heterosexual; 1.1% (9) gay / lesbian.

National evidence suggests that LGBTQ+ communities face complex barriers to seeking support for domestic abuse, with a reported 60-80% of LGBTQ+ victims have never reported incidents to the police or attempted to find protection from services.

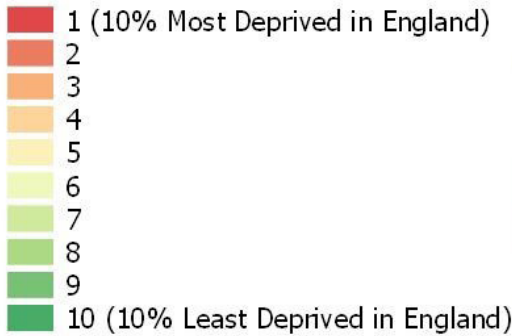
Socioeconomics

There are links between poverty, deprivation, and domestic abuse. Data show that a substantial proportion of applicants referred to Cumbria’s domestic abuse safe accommodation providers originate from communities considered to be more deprived. Data also show significant proportions of domestic abuse victims are on a low household income, claiming benefits or unemployed. Homelessness affects a considerable proportion of people requiring support.

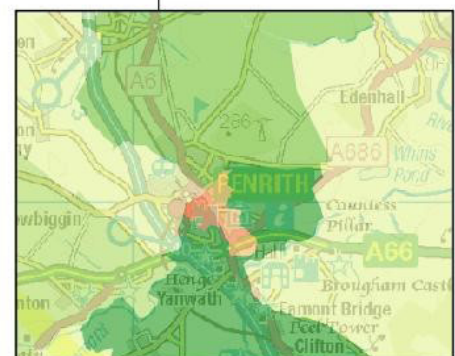
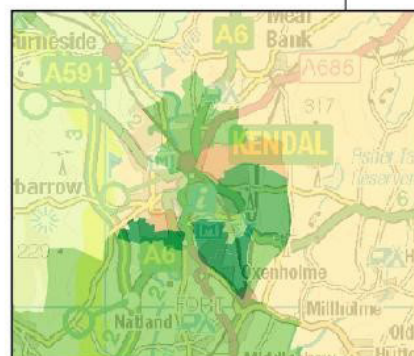
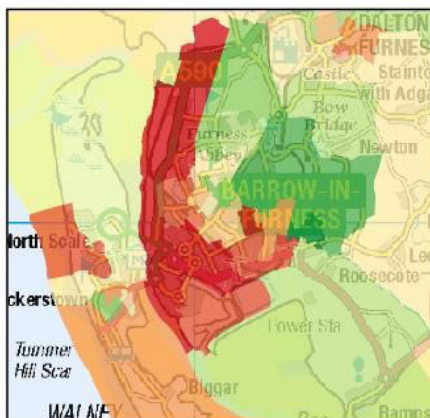
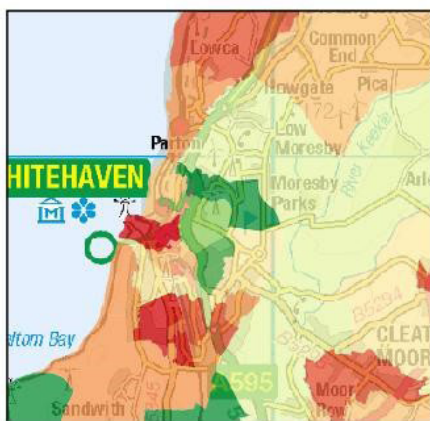
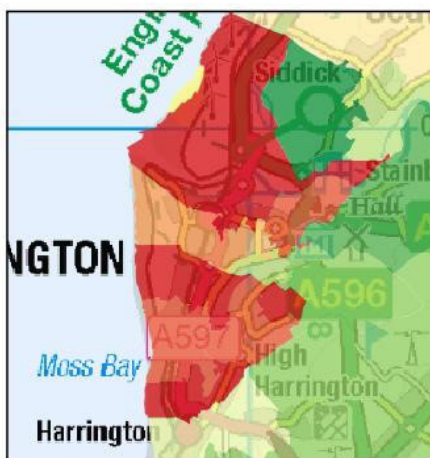
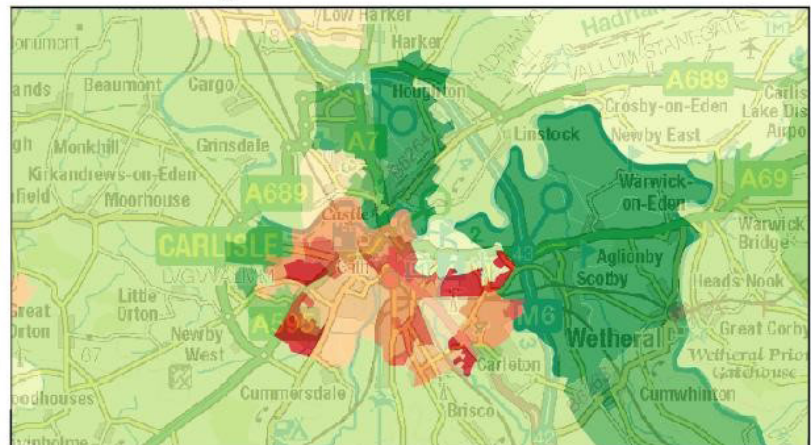


LSOAs by Overall Deprivation Decile

Deprivation Decile



Source: DCLG 2019



Cumbria Intelligence Observatory

Homelessness

A person who is homeless or at risk of homelessness as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse has a priority need (as set out in S189 of the 1996 Housing Act). Section 193 of the 1996 Act requires housing authorities to secure suitable accommodation for occupation for the applicant together with any other person who may be reasonably expected to reside with them as a member of the family.

Households at risk of domestic abuse often have to leave their homes and the area where they have lived. There is a clear need for victims of abuse and their children to be able to travel to different areas in order for them to be safe from the perpetrator. Within Cumbria, Housing Authorities work in partnership to facilitate this cross-boundary response in emergency high risk cases and extend the same level of support to safeguard those from other areas; where the household may need to leave Cumbria the housing authorities can make a statutory referral to another local authority area in England.

In addition, section 177 of the 1996 Act provides that it is not reasonable for a person to continue to occupy accommodation if it is probable that this will lead to violence or domestic abuse, regardless of their housing security.

Section 188 of the 1996 Act, requires housing authorities to secure appropriate safe accommodation if they have reason to believe that the applicant may be homeless, eligible and have a priority need. If there is evidence that would give the authority reason to believe the applicant may be homeless as a result of domestic abuse, the authority should make interim accommodation available to the applicant immediately whilst they undertake their investigations.

The table below profiles comparative Homeless data (H-Clic) for 2019/20, highlighting the number of households owed a statutory duty as a result of being at risk of / or experiencing Domestic Abuse:

	No of households with duty as a result of domestic abuse	% of households with duty where duty results from domestic abuse
England	26,790	20
North West	4,050	20
Cumbria	309	22
Allerdale	44	19
Barrow	53	18
Carlisle	70	20
Copeland	52	17
Eden	52	41
South Lakes	38	16

Of those owed a statutory duty, the following data profiles the number of households owed a Relief Duty in 2019/20 – which gives the details of those where a duty to provide interim accommodation would have been triggered:

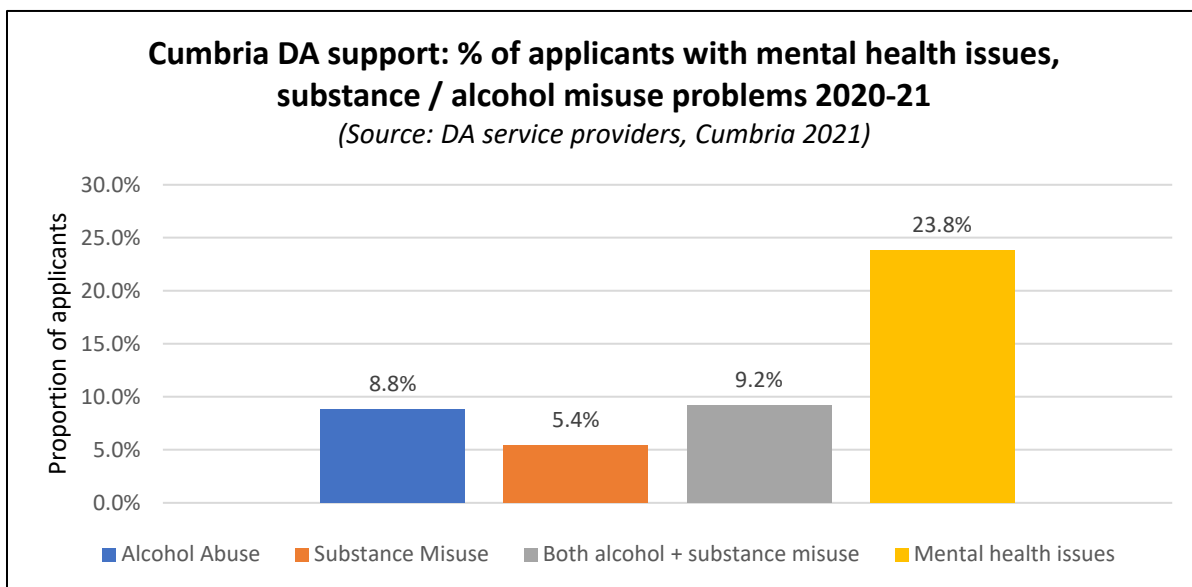
	No of households	%
England	17,550	12.6
North West	2,360	11.7
Cumbria	123	12.6
Allerdale	23	11.7
Barrow	11	5.1
Carlisle	36	12.9
Copeland	21	11.4
Eden	12	26.1
South Lakes	20	8.4

This data gives an indication of the usage and need for emergency safe accommodation; future data will enable further analysis to be made as comparative data for 2018/19 is challenging due to the legislative and recording changes to Government due to the Homeless Reduction Act 2018, and fully understanding the impact on Covid-19 on the data available.

This information only relates to where a statutory duty is exercised. It does not capture the use of temporary accommodation to support victims of domestic abuse who are not statutorily homeless.

Pathway Mapping

Drug and alcohol misuse combined with domestic abuse and mental ill health are recognised nationally as factors that increase the risk of harm to adults and children in families. Significant proportions of domestic abuse victims accessing support services in Cumbria require support services in relation to these health issues; almost one quarter of applicants (23.5%; 186) have issues relating to alcohol and substance misuse whilst 23.8% (189) have mental health issues as a primary need. The key issue, in terms of support, is around consistent and timely access to specialist services, such as, substance misuse and mental health provision.



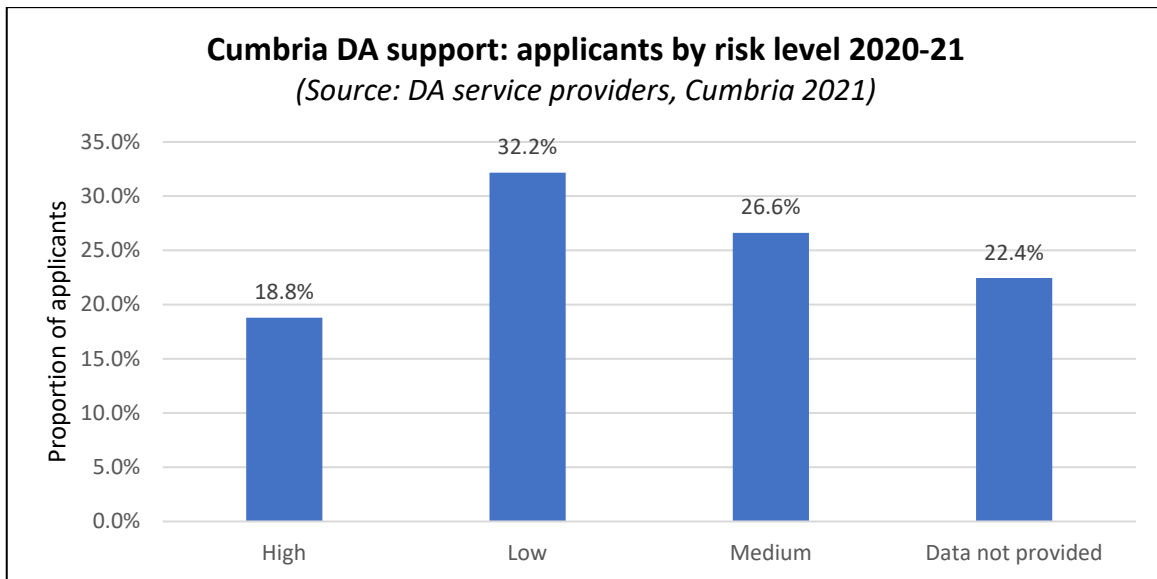
Service User Experience

Case studies paint a positive picture overall, however there are some issues in relation to:

- Scaled back provision and changes in contact and support as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Delays in survivors accessing services
- Accommodation not being suitable / not feeling safe / difficult living in shared accommodation.
- Communication difficulties due to lack of trust, disability, or language barriers)

Risk

The rate of domestic abuse related safeguarding incidents and crimes is similar to, or lower than, that of similar police force areas, regional, and national rates.



A large proportion of domestic abuse victims in Cumbria are classified as at a High or Medium risk level (45.4% of applicants; 360). A sizeable proportion of victims have dependent children (23.5% of applicants; 186).

The most common types of domestic abuse in Cumbria are physical abuse, emotional abuse and controlling and coercive behaviour.

Level of need and gaps

It is clear that there is a range of supported accommodation options and services that differs across Cumbria's districts, in particular access to immediate support out of hours; and limited accommodation for males victims and their children.

Cumbria currently has access to 63 units of supported accommodation specifically for use for victims of domestic abuse, in addition to the wider temporary accommodation provision for homelessness; with 11 FTE specialist support officers supporting these units. This includes supporting transitional moves and tenancy sustainment support to ensure that this is successful and continues to reduce the risks of harm and repeat abuse patterns.

The supported accommodation provision across the county ranges from dispersed independent provision (with tailored in reach support during office hours); use of B&B out of hours / weekends (with no access to face to face support); bespoke independent safe house provision with additional security features (with tailored in reach support including evenings); to immediate access to safe provision with enhanced security features and 24 hour staffing on site.

The Council of Europe minimum recommendation for domestic abuse refuge accommodation is one unit for every 10,000 population. For Cumbria, this would equate to a minimum requirement of 50 units of refuge accommodation.

It is recognised that many of the providers did not routinely collect some of the data requested and as such, they have agreed to collect this on an ongoing quarterly basis in the future. Over time this will improve the data set and will further inform the commissioning strategy.

Priorities for Future Provision

Based on the strategic principles, evidence in the needs assessment and feedback from stakeholder engagement, there are a number of strengths that have been identified that can be built on, as well as a number of issues that the intended commissioning strategy will need to address.

From this work a number of priority areas for development have been identified:

Consistent collection of information to provide a robust evidence base

Information about victim/survivors, their needs, and outcomes is not consistently collected at this point in time. This is currently being improved but, as part of any new arrangements, information collection and data quality requirements will be built into the service requirements that emerge from the production of the commissioning strategy.

Development of shared outcome measures

To support service delivery in the two years before implementation of this strategy metrics have been developed that relate to the objectives. However, these are largely process or output related and there is a need to ensure that the outcomes – including victim/survivor experience – are more consistently captured and used to drive service improvement.

“Lived experience” research will be undertaken by the University of Cumbria to assist in informing the commissioning strategy. Furthermore, provider forums and victim/survivor forums will be established to ensure the voice of victim/survivors is heard on an ongoing basis at a strategic level.

These shared outcomes will be further developed in the commissioning strategy which will be produced by the end of 2021.

Provision of accommodation

As highlighted above, the funding from MHCLG relating to the new duty is not permitted to be spent on the provision of accommodation either through revenue or capital funding. However, the findings from the needs assessment show that there is a wide geographic variation in the type of supported accommodation available in different parts of the county. There is a need to ensure that there is equitable access to refuge services and specialised safe accommodation across the county, including out of hours and emergency provision for higher risk cases.

To address these issues work will take place with partners to identify opportunities to improve the provision of specialised domestic abuse supported accommodation in parallel with the development of the commissioning strategy for the support element. This will require that any commissioning of domestic abuse support will also need to be linked with existing and emerging Homelessness and Housing Strategies.

Given the relatively dispersed population of Cumbria, consideration needs to be given about what accommodation can be provided at a locality level and what will need to be provided on a countywide basis.

Access to specialised support

MHCLG guidance clearly states that commissioned support services must ensure the appropriate and adequate support within safe accommodation that meet the needs of all victims including those with relevant protected characteristics and / or multiple complex needs and who's support needs may not be able to be met within generic domestic abuse safe accommodation (examples of this groups are included at appendix 3)

As evidenced in the needs assessment there is inconsistent collection of information about individuals' characteristics and needs. This means that assessing whether their needs are being met is difficult. However, there is also evidence that specialised support is not uniformly available – either for different cohorts of victim/survivors or for those with multiple complex needs.

Initial work has been undertaken to address this using the MHCLG grant through commissioning of additional services for those with multiple complex needs. However, more robust arrangements will need to be built into other commissioning strategy as either stand-alone services or as an improvement or expansion of the support offer provided through the current generic domestic abuse support.

In addition, further work is required to understand the level of specialised support required. Given the relatively dispersed population of Cumbria, consideration needs to be given about what support can be provide at a locality level and what will need to be commissioned on a countywide basis.

Support for Children

The 2021 Domestic Abuse Act recognises that children are victims in their own right. There is geographical variation in the access to accommodation that supports children. There is also variability on the specialised support that is available for children.

Initial work has been undertaken to address this using the MHCLG grant by the provision of inreach support from community groups and through Children's IDVAs. However more robust arrangements will need to be built into other commissioning strategy as either stand-alone services or as an improvement or expansion of the support offer provided through the current generic domestic abuse support.

In addition, work is required to be undertaken about how the support in supported accommodation can transition into other support services available for children, such as early help, especially when moving to permanency.

Relationships with Community Support

As noted above the MHCLG grant can only be used to provide support within supported accommodation. This could lead to a funding a support cliff-edge when a victim/survivor successfully moves on to permanent arrangements.

Initial work has been undertaken to address this using the MHCLG grant by the provision of inreach support from community groups to ensure that there is a relationship built with the support available in the community which they will move into.

However, the commissioning strategy will further explore and put forward further options for developing transitional arrangements as a victim/survivor moves to permanency. This will need to be done in conjunction with accommodation providers and will form part of the parallel process outlined above.

Support in own home

Nationally, there is a shift to enable victim/survivors to stay in their own home – with perpetrators moving into alternative provision. Work will take place with partners to understand how this can be further developed including use of target hardening measures with the commissioning strategy looking at ways in which support can be provided.

Housing duties are placed on District Councils to assist to ensure that households at risk of domestic abuse can remain in their own accommodation if they choose to do so. However, use of sanctuary is not appropriate if the perpetrator lives at, or retains a legal right to enter the home, or if the victim continues to be at risk in the vicinity around the home.

Quality of provision

Work has previously been undertaken to ensure that there were shared competencies and job roles between the different domestic abuse generic support providers. Further work is required to be undertaken to maintain this including the development of consistent service quality standards to be included in the reprovisioning of commissioned services. This will be aligned with MHCLG Quality Standards outlined in the draft guidance. (Appendix 4)

To ensure equity of access to services these quality standards would ensure consistent skills/expertise/ training of staff in place who are responsible for providing appropriate support to victims/survivors. As part of the commissioning strategy workforce development will be built into any future specification. In addition, the provision of cross-organisational learning and development opportunities will be commissioned.

Prevention. The partner organisations involved in the development of this strategy recognise the need to work “up-stream” in order to tackle the root causes of Domestic Abuse. On-going prevention work is currently underway under the purview of the Local Partnership Board and includes activities such as awareness raising and healthy relationships training.

What Difference Will It Make?

More detailed outcome measures, including baselines, will be developed as part of the production of the commissioning strategy.

This strategy will have the following impacts:

Increase

- Immediate Access to support to meet needs and reduce risks
- Availability of support for children as DA victims
- Consistency of quality standards
- Access to specialised support

Decrease

- Number of handoffs for Waiting times for specialist services
- Numbers of repeat survivors receiving crisis support

Implementation of Strategy

To enable the principles of the Strategy and the findings of the needs assessment to be implemented the Strategy will be translated into a fully formed commissioning strategy which will form the basis of the new service delivery model.

In order to ensure alignment of contracts it has been agreed that the new commissioned model will commence on 1 April 2023.

In order to inform the development of the commissioning strategy, which will set out what services will be commissioned and in what manner, engagement will take place with partners, stakeholders, victims/survivors and members more fully to develop a commissioning strategy.

From 2021 to 2023 the principles and priorities of the strategy will be used to inform service development and use of the MHCLG grant. The MHCLG funding allocation is being used to bridge from the existing provision to the new model with a number areas of service improvement put in place.

Appendix 1

Definitions of Supported Accommodation

In its draft guidance MHCLG provided the following definition:

“While we acknowledge the critical role of refuge in providing safety and support, particularly to those victims at high risk of serious harm, government recognises that victims and their children may need to live in a variety of different forms of safe accommodation.

Accommodation such as Bed and Breakfast accommodation are not considered relevant safe accommodation, and are specifically excluded in the Regulations, so local authorities should not commission support within these types under this duty.

Commissioning authorities will need to ensure that duties covered under other Acts, such as temporary accommodation provided under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, continue to be met alongside this duty. It is possible for support under this (Part 4) duty to be provided in accommodation associated with another duty such as a Housing Act 1996 Part 7 duty, provided, such accommodation adheres to the description of relevant accommodation. Description of ‘relevant accommodation’ [also referred to as ‘safe accommodation’ throughout this guidance] is specified by the Secretary of State in regulations as:

- **Refuge accommodation** – a refuge offers accommodation and intensive support which is tied to that accommodation. Victims, including their children, have to be refuge residents to access expert emotional and practical support.
- **Specialist safe accommodation** – safe accommodation specialist refuges for BAME, LGBTQ+, and disabled victims and their children [not limited to – see appendix 3] which may provide single gender accommodation with dedicated specialist support to victims who share a protected characteristic(s) – including services that are led by those that also share the protected characteristic (also known as ‘by and for’) - and/or have complex needs.
- **Dispersed accommodation:**
 1. Safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse), self-contained accommodation with the same level of specialist domestic abuse support as provided within a refuge but which may be more suitable for victims who are unable to stay in a refuge with communal spaces due to complex support needs or for families with teenage sons for example.
 2. Safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse), self-contained ‘semi-independent’ accommodation which is not within a refuge but with support for victims who may not require the intensive support offered through refuge, but are still at risk of abuse from their perpetrator/s.
- **Sanctuary Schemes** – properties with local authority installed Sanctuary Schemes or other similar schemes which provide enhanced physical security measures within a home. A Sanctuary Scheme is a survivor centred initiative which aims to make it possible for victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes, where it is safe for them to do so, where it is their choice, and where the perpetrator does not live in the accommodation. This is done by providing additional security – ‘installing a sanctuary’ – to the victims’ property or perimeter.

A number of local authorities run Sanctuary Schemes, working in partnership with the police to implement the scheme and any organisation working with an individual they deem suitable for sanctuary measures can make a referral to the scheme.

- **Move-on and / or second stage accommodation** – interchangeable terms for projects temporarily accommodating victims, including families who no longer need the intensive level of support provided in a refuge, but would still benefit from a lower level of domestic abuse specific support for a period before they move to fully independent and permanent accommodation. There is no expectation that every victim will require this. Many victims are ready to move straight to a permanent new home from refuge. However, move-on and / or second stage accommodation may be helpful in some cases.

Other forms of domestic abuse emergency accommodation – i.e. a safe place with support. To give victims an opportunity to spend a temporary period of time to [consider and] make decisions in an environment which is self-contained and safe. This would include access to wrap around support and specialist support for victims with complex needs (including mental health needs and substance misuse). An example of 'other' forms of safe accommodation would be the 'Whole Housing Approach'.

Local Authorities must adhere to the Regulations and the above description of accommodation when fulfilling their duty. All support provided under their duty must be provided to victims of domestic abuse, or their children, who reside in relevant accommodation as set out above and should meet the MHCLG Quality Standards (See Annex B), Women's Aid National Quality Standards and / or Imkaan Accredited Quality Standards." (Appendix 4)

Appendix 2

Definitions of Support

In its draft guidance MHCLG provided the following definition:

Domestic abuse support includes the expert help provided to victims and their children by the specialist staff in domestic abuse support services. We recognise that some support is directly provided within safe accommodation services such as refuges, and that outreach support will be provided to victims in other types of relevant accommodation, including their homes in the case of a sanctuary scheme.

The support should be delivered by knowledgeable and/or experienced specialist providers, charities, and other voluntary organisations whose purpose is to provide support to victims of domestic abuse.

This guidance describes domestic abuse support within relevant accommodation as:

- **Overall management of services within relevant accommodation** – including, the management of staff, payroll, financial and day to day management of services and maintaining relationships with the local authority (such functions will often be undertaken by a service manager)
- **Support with the day-to-day running of the service**, for example scheduling times for counselling sessions, group activities (such functions may often be undertaken by administrative or office staff)
- **Advocacy support** – development of personal safety plans, liaison with other services (for example, GPs and social workers, welfare benefit providers);
- **Domestic abuse prevention advice** – support to assist victims to recognise the signs of abusive relationships, to help them remain safe (including online), and to prevent re-victimisation.
- **Specialist support for victims**
 - Designed specifically for victims with relevant protected characteristics (also known as by and for), such as faith services, translators and interpreters within BAME-led refuges, immigration advice, interpreters for victims identifying as deaf and / or hard of hearing, and dedicated support for LGBTQ+ victims [not limited to].
 - Designed specifically for victims with unique and / or complex needs such as, mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support, including sign posting accordingly. ;
- **Children’s support** – including play therapy and child advocacy;
- **Housing-related support** – providing housing-related advice and support, for example, securing a permanent home, rights to existing accommodation and advice on how to live safely and independently;
- **Advice service** – including financial and legal support, including accessing benefits, support into work and establishing independent financial arrangements; and,
- **Counselling and therapy** (including group support) for both adults and children, including emotional support.

Authorities must ensure that support commissioned under this duty is provided to victims of domestic abuse, including their children, who reside in relevant accommodation as described in section (section A3.1) of this guidance.

Appendix 3

Protected Characteristics

In its draft guidance MHCLG provided the following definition:

Victims and their children with relevant protected characteristics as per the Equalities Act 2010 must be able to access the support that they need. Under this duty, we expect authorities to ensure the appropriate and adequate support within safe accommodation that meet the needs of all victims including those with relevant protected characteristics and / or multiple complex needs and who's support needs may not be able to be met within generic domestic abuse safe accommodation, such as victims who identify as:

- Black Asian and Minority Ethnic [Including Gypsy Roma and Traveller, with consideration to the Women and Equalities Committee report]
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and / or Transgender
- Disabled – including but not limited to, deaf or hard of hearing, visually impaired, Autistic, wheelchair users and those with learning difficulties
- Male
- Young (aged 16-18 – including care leavers) and older victims (over 65)
- People with an offending history
- Those presenting with complex needs (including those with mental health and/or substance misuse needs)
- Those facing multiple forms of abuse within the family such as honour based violence and forced marriage
- Religious and/or spiritual, particularly if facing barriers as a result
- Having insecure immigration status
- From isolated and/or marginalised communities, including where there is limited English proficiency.
- Victims who have no choice but to move away from their local areas, communities and friends to escape their perpetrator to stay safe and receive the support they need.
- Children of victims (including adolescent male children) within safe accommodation.
- Victims with children, including large families and those with older adolescence boys (12+)
- Pregnant victims

Commissioning authorities should consider the needs and specific barriers of victims that may fall into more than one protected characteristic and / or unique and complex needs.

Appendix 4

MHCLG Quality Standards

1. Safety, Security and Dignity

- Victims can access crisis support at any time and receive a timely response.
- Victims are assessed and offered trauma informed services on the basis of their individual need for safety and support.
- Measures in place to ensure service users are safe from being found by their perpetrator.
- Physical buildings to be well maintained and meet the relevant building standards.
- Victims should not be forced to stay in danger but assisted to move geographical location if necessary, for their safety including supporting them through referral processes to do so.
- Consideration should be given to single gendered and LGBTQ+ provision.
- Victims' duration of support to be based on needs and not pre-set timescales.

2. Rights and Access

- Service users are believed and listened to and service interventions are respectful of their rights to self-determination.
- Service users with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 can access dedicated specialist services addressing their needs.
- Resources are allocated to addressing barriers to access, including supporting service users with limited English proficiency, and having insecure immigration status.

3. Health and Wellbeing – trauma informed

- Service users are supported to access services that meet their physical, mental, and sexual health needs.
- Service users can access individual counselling or group work to build their confidence and resources.
- The organisation should work in partnership with and have appropriate referral pathways to a range of other services including the sexual violence sector, drugs, alcohol/mental health services.
- The safety and wellbeing of staff teams is attended to ensuring safe working practices that protect the physical safety and mental wellbeing of staff.

4. Stability, resilience, and autonomy

- Service users are supported to take charge of decision-making processes in their lives.
- Service users are encouraged to identify goals and access education, training, and employment to maximise their stability and independence.
- Service users have access to resettlement and follow-up services with exit strategies tailored to individual need. This should include access to ongoing specialist support in the community as part of resettlement, including through partnerships and appropriate referral pathways.

5. Children and young people

- The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is addressed in risk assessment and support planning.
- Children are able to access support to understand their experiences and build their resilience and confidence.
- Support is provided to parents to develop their parenting resources and maintain their relationships with their children.
- Services are responsive to the needs and views of children and young people.

6. Prevention

- Children and young people are better informed and educated around consent, healthy relationships, gender inequality and violence against women and girls.
- The organisation contributes to training and awareness-raising activities with other professionals and within local communities, tailoring training and awareness raising activities to different and diverse communities.
- The organisation contributes to local strategies for ending violence against women and girls.

Appendix 5

Partner Organisations

Statutory Partner Organisations

Allerdale District Council (ADC)
Barrow Borough Council (BBC)
Carlisle City Council (CC)
Copeland Borough Council (CBC)
Cumbria Constabulary
Cumbria County Council (CCC)
Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW)
Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
Eden District Council (EDC)
Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust (LSCFT)
Morecambe Bay Clinical Commissioning Group (MBCCG)
Morecambe Bay Health Trust (MBHT)
National Probation Service (NPS)
NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I)
North Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group (NCCCG)
North Cumbria Integrated Care (NCIC)
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
South Lakeland District Council (SLDC)
University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay: Integrated Care Communities (UHMBT ICC)

Non-Statutory Partners

Birchall Trust
Cumbria Council for Voluntary Service (CVS)
Gateway4Women
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)
Safety Net
Springfield
The Freedom Project
The Well
Unity
Victim Support (VS)
Women Community Matters (WCM)
Women Out West (WOW)

Appendix 6

Interdependencies

It is recognised that there are an array of legislative and regulatory interdependencies that this strategy needs to take account of. In the formulation of this strategy and the further commissioning strategy Cumbria County Council and the Local Partnership Board will give regard to:

- Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG) 2016-2020
- The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime 2021
- Housing Act 1985
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Care Act 2014
- Children's Act 2004
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Policing and Crime Act 2017
- Local Government Act 2000
- Cumbria Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Cumbria Joint Public Health Strategy
- Cumbria Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement
- Safer Cumbria Community Safety Group Plan
- Cumbria Safeguarding Adults Policy
- Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership Guidance
- Cumbria Children Looked After Strategy 2019-2023

Appendix 7

Needs Assessment

www.cumbriaobservatory.org.uk/crime-community-safety/crime-community-safety-further-information/

