

# Housing Providers & Refuges: Tackling move-on together during COVID 19

This is an initiative led by The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA), Women's Aid Federation of England, National Housing Federation and the Chartered Institute of Housing to bring the housing sector and refuges together to get survivors who are ready for move on right now into a safe home. Some housing providers are advising that they have a number of homes that are currently empty as the usual nominations and lettings procedures were paused during the early part of the coronavirus pandemic. They want to ensure they are playing their part in providing homes for people who are particularly vulnerable, including survivors of domestic abuse.

This group will also be working together to ensure we can provide sustainable move on from refuges over the long-term. In the short-term, we are asking housing providers, local authorities and refuges to work together, to coordinate need for move on accommodation with the availability of suitable homes.

For data purposes and promotion of this best practice, please can you let [DAHA](#) know once you have offered a property and a move has taken place.

## Why should housing providers prioritise survivors' safety?

- For people experiencing domestic abuse, home is often **the most dangerous place**.
- The lockdown is increasing physical and emotional harm to women and children experiencing domestic abuse, and early reports found that the number of domestic abuse homicides over the first three weeks of lockdown was [three times higher than last year](#).
- Safe and stable housing is a core need for families and yet it can be the most difficult need to meet. Women and children often face years of housing insecurity after leaving refuge.

- **The pandemic is making resettlement even harder;** many refuge services are full but unable to move women on, blocking spaces for survivors who need to escape. The average number of refuge vacancies in England during the first 7 weeks of lockdown was 97, compared with an average of 183 for the same period in 2019.

## How can housing providers help?

- **Identify safe and suitable properties to let directly to survivors ready to leave refuge.** Even one property can change a family's life forever. Ideally the property would be furnished, as families will be coming out of refuge with very little. If this is not possible, please supply white goods and other basic items as a bare minimum.
- **If you are a housing association, talk to your local authority about any homes that may be suitable for survivors ready to leave refuge.** We know housing providers will also be working with local authorities to provide accommodation for other priority groups, including rough sleepers currently housed in hotels.
- We are working on how best to coordinate a list of move-on accommodation needed so providers can match up their homes and get in touch with the appropriate refuge. In the meantime, please **contact your local refuges** by searching online. Use the [Domestic Abuse Directory](#) and search by local authority area for your local services – they may be more than one provider, including specialist services led 'by and for' BME women.
- Make contact and say you have properties to let immediately. If you are struggling to get in touch, email [membership@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:membership@womensaid.org.uk)
- Work with the refuge service to assess the survivors' needs as you would any new resident/tenant, and to see if they require additional support. Ensure that survivors have support to travel and support with financial inclusion on resettlement.
- If you would like advice, contact the [Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance \(DAHA\)](#)

## What do refuge services need to do?

- **Identify families that are suitable for move-on.** Work closely with housing providers who offer properties, including to manage expectations of the family in terms of what is seen as a 'standard re-let'.
- **Proactively contact your local housing provider to see if they are prioritising domestic abuse at this time - they may also be signed up to [Make A Stand](#) pledge which will give you an indication of their commitment.** Try and contact someone senior in the Lettings department, but if this is not possible send an email to their general email attaching this document and asking for your request to be directed to the appropriate person.
- If the survivor needs support with financial inclusion, talk to the housing provider about this as most can provide support. There may also be flexible funding or hardships funds to access in your area, which might support the family at this time to purchase essential items. Previous government guidance listed move-on from refuges as essential, so local authorities may be able to help.
- Continuing providing resettlement support and establish additional ongoing support as appropriate.
- If a housing provider contacts you and you do not have a family that is suitable for move on, make sure to let them know of other refuges in your area who they can contact.