

Domestic Abuse and Prevention of Homelessness

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Definition

Domestic abuse (as gender-based abuse) can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their will, including rape) and mental and emotional abuse (such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family and friends).

Scottish Executive 2000

Some Facts and Figures...

- 1 in 5 women will experience domestic abuse at some stage in their lives (*Scottish Executive*)
- 2 women a week in GB are killed by a partner or ex-partner (*Flood-Page*)
- A women will be assaulted 35 times before seeking help (*Dobash & Dobash*)

Some Facts and Figures...

- Only 8% of women rehoused from refuge are rehoused by a housing association (*Scottish Women's Aid Annual Statistics*)
- 30-60% of men who physically abuse their partner will do so to the children (*Various, quoted Humphreys & Thiara*)
- For Women risks were particularly high for those who were separated (1996 British Crime Survey)

Domestic Abuse and Homelessness

- 79,851 contacts to Women Aid for Support *(Scottish Women's Aid Annual Statistics)*
- Domestic Abuse is second highest category
(Scottish Executive Homelessness Bulletin September 2008)
- 'at a conservative estimate 13,500 a year' *(Edgar Et al 2003)*

Sustaining Tenancies

- “but the treatment the women received from local authorities was on the whole unsympathetic and in some cases callous. This was compounded by the quality of the accommodation offers the women received, which was usually in the most unpopular and difficult-to-let neighbourhoods.”
- “It is almost as if the women were being further punished for being abused by having to experience a significant deterioration in their residential quality of life” (Sustaining Tenancies Edgar et al 2003)

Staying Put

“Although the focus of this research is re-housing women away from the perpetrator, more attention should be given to the option of the exclusion of the abuser. The disruption caused by re-housing to the lives of the women and their children could be minimised if they could stay in their home and their security could be guaranteed.”

(Sustaining Tenancies Edgar et al 2003)

Integrated Policy Response

- Co-ordinated community response in policy and service delivery
- Appropriate criminal justice measures
- Multi-agency partnership working and risk assessments
- Provision of appropriate services for women and children
- Additional home security

Good Practice

- Ensure that the appropriate staff receives domestic abuse awareness training to begin to address some of the myths and attitudinal issues that exist. Training will increase the confidence of front line housing staff to work with women who have experienced domestic abuse more sensitively

Good Practice

- Support women and children to remain in their homes, if they choose to do so, by re-housing the perpetrators and reducing the level of disruption to the family
- Revise allocation and transfer policies to ensure that they meet good practice in relation to domestic abuse

Good Practice

- Make sure arrears and rechargeable repairs policies are not penalising women inappropriately, either by preventing them from being housed or charging them for repairs for which they are not responsible
- Ensure confidentiality policies are implemented at all times, by all staff and that service users know what the policy is
- Provide relevant up-to-date information about domestic abuse services or other sources of help