

Sustaining Tenancies Following Domestic Abuse

**A Report of Research
By**

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1 *Research Aims and Methodology*

1.1 Domestic abuse is a traumatic experience for women and their children, the ending of which normally results in women leaving their home. Thereafter, the process of re-housing which she experiences also places great stress on the woman and her children, will often involve a lengthy stay in refuge or temporary accommodation and usually leads to housing which is either not appropriate for the family's needs or is not sustainable. Living as an independent autonomous household requires a sustainable housing outcome, the achievement of which for women who have experienced domestic abuse will involve both housing factors and support factors. This research aims to investigate the duration of tenancies of women who have been re-housed because of domestic abuse and define the key factors which determine whether these tenancies are sustained.

1.2 The methodology was designed to examine the means by which women who have fled from domestic abuse obtain housing, the degree to which their housing needs are being met, the support received and the factors which contribute to the continuation or cessation of the tenancy. This involved interviews with women and with a range of agencies in three local authorities in Scotland reflecting the variability of city, urban and rural experience.

2 Domestic Abuse and Housing Need

2.1 Given the diversity of women in terms of age, social class, income and housing experience and whether the domestic abuse is perpetrated by a partner or other family members (more common among women from an ethnic minority background), different housing and support needs are evident. This diversity of need is evident at all stages – before leaving, during the re-housing process and following re-housing. Whatever their initial situation, most women in this situation experience a period in temporary or refuge

accommodation before finding alternative housing. In our sample only a tenth were able to remain in their own home either permanently or while they awaited re-housing and less than a tenth were able to move directly from a situation where they experienced domestic abuse directly to permanent alternative housing.

- 2.2 Statutory protection for women experiencing domestic abuse is relatively strong providing legal entitlement to housing. However, the scale of provision of housing and support does not match the scale of need which, on even the most conservative basis, suggests that a minimum of 13,500 women (and their children) are forced to leave their home each year in Scotland as a result of domestic abuse.

3 *The Housing Process*

- 3.1 The evidence presented in this report from the women interviewed indicates that most tenancies persist. The most important factor in the success of a tenancy is the quality of the dwelling and especially the characteristics of the neighbourhood. Almost all of the women who had been re-housed by the local authority had been offered flatted properties in difficult-to-let areas, sometimes near to their former home and accessible to their ex-partner. Those who had no choice but to accept these offers often demonstrated resilience and coping strategies and sustained these tenancies rather than return to an abusive partner. Some eventually managed to be re-housed in more acceptable areas. Most of the failed tenancies did so because of harassment by, or re-engagement with, the perpetrator of the abuse. This suggests that the re-housing process does not always take sufficient account of the woman's need for protection from the perpetrator.

4 *The Support Process*

- 4.1 In addition to information and advice, women require housing support, social support and personal support in order to leave a situation in which they

experience domestic abuse and achieve a sustainable housing outcome. In contrast to previous research, our findings suggest that the informal support of family and friends cannot be relied upon to support women in this process. The importance of Women's Aid as the main source of formal support throughout the process is significant. This finding points to the difficulty faced by women who do not access Women's Aid services or are unaware of the support they provide. It also points to the need for more co-ordinated support strategies for women leaving domestic abuse situations. Among statutory agencies, the joint social work / police domestic abuse unit in Fife is an example of good practice in relation to the co-ordination and delivery of support during and following the re-housing process. Despite improvements in practice and government guidance in recent years, women still report negative experiences in seeking advice, assistance or support from local authorities and benefit agencies. This suggests that the procedures and protocols, already in place in many authorities, need to be reinforced continually by adequate training and monitoring.

- 4.2 For support to be effective during the re-housing stage of the process several components of housing allocation and housing support need to be addressed. In particular, there is a need to clarify the double payment rules in housing benefit to ensure women have adequate time to move in and for re-settlement support to be effective. Housing allocation procedures need to understand the support process for women and allow appropriate time in refuge or transitional or short assured tenancies.
- 4.3 Support for women who have been re-housed is either almost entirely absent or, where it exists, is of short duration. Our findings also point to the lack of follow-on and longer-term support. The follow-on support which is currently provided (by Women's Aid mainly) is constrained by a lack of resources, is time-limited and is subject to uncertain and complex funding. Using the evidence available to us we have estimated a need for a minimum provision of 1 full-time equivalent follow-on support worker in each Women's Aid group. This estimate is distinct from the need for follow-on support for children and young people.

4.4 The longer-term support needs of women are hidden. For some women in our sample, their support needs only became evident some time after they had been re-housed. Furthermore, half our sample experienced continued harassment of a level and nature that jeopardised their tenancies. These needs are not presently addressed and there appears to be no clear focus of responsibility.

4.5 In view of the nature of their needs, the support provided for children and young people requires specialist staffing which should be distinct from the staff providing support to women. While our research cannot comment in detail on the support needs of children and young people nor on the suitability of the existing level of support, it is apparent that Women's Aid are again the predominant source of support both within the refuge accommodation and in relation to outreach and follow-on support. While it is our clear impression that the level of support available within refuge accommodation as well as outreach and follow-on support represents an under-provision in relation to need, more research would be needed to substantiate this view and to estimate the level of need.

5 *Organisational Procedures and Inter-agency working*

5.1 Although the details differ across the case study areas, a similar picture emerges with respect to the experiences of women fleeing domestic abuse and the provision of accommodation and support services for them. In none of the case study areas is there a fully developed strategy to deal with the housing, re-housing and support consequences of domestic abuse. As a result the provision of accommodation and support tends to be resource and opportunity driven. In none of the areas has an integrated assessment been made of the need for appropriate accommodation and support at the various stages of the process of leaving domestic abuse. Such an assessment would aim to ensure that, whatever pathway a woman took to independent living, there would be quality accommodation with appropriate support available to her.

6 *Recommendations*

- 6.1 The report makes a number of recommendations in relation to policy and provision of housing and support. These relate to the desire to enable women to stay put (if that is their wish), the provision of emergency and transitional accommodation, housing assessment and housing allocation, support assessment and support provision and collation of appropriate monitoring statistics.
- 6.2 The overall recommendation is that all local authorities should make an assessment of the need for accommodation and support services for women fleeing domestic abuse. There is a shortage of quality emergency accommodation for women fleeing domestic abuse, and also of transitional accommodation which offers a step towards independent living. Traditional communal and shared living arrangements in emergency accommodation (in Refuges and Homeless Persons' Units) can deter some women and should be replaced by self-contained accommodation (or self-contained rooms with shared communal facilities). However, there is a need for transitional accommodation with support as a transition to independent living in addition to emergency accommodation. Communal shared Refuges should be phased out and replaced by 'core and cluster' accommodation in which crisis, transitional and longer-term support can be accommodated. In addition, local authorities and housing associations should provide self-contained furnished accommodation (with floating support) as a transition to independent living.
- 6.3 Women fleeing abuse should not be allocated inappropriate dwellings in unpopular neighbourhoods. In particular, they should not be allocated a dwelling close to their former abuser unless this is a preferred option. Where the only vacancies available of dwellings of an appropriate size are in difficult-to-let areas, women should be allowed to refuse offers of these properties with no penalty. They should be allowed to stay in emergency, or preferably transitional, accommodation until such time as an acceptable offer of permanent accommodation has been made. Women should be allowed a

reasonable time to effect the move into a new dwelling following an offer of accommodation and receipt of the keys. A one month period seems reasonable.

- 6.4 To assist with the difficulties described here in relation to moving into new accommodation, the local authority Homelessness Strategy should include a strategy for re-settlement support for women fleeing domestic abuse which is relevant to local needs and resources. As a basic minimum every Women's Aid group should have resources to employ a full-time follow-on support worker funded on a permanent basis. More publicity should be given to the provision of the information and advice services and outreach support available to women who have not been through refuge accommodation.
- 6.5 In view of the high proportion of women who, following re-housing, continue to experience harassment and abuse and the potential importance of this in leading to failed tenancies, more consideration needs to be given to the support provided to women experiencing harassment. In particular, the negative experiences of women in relation to the judicial system and especially in the context of child contact arrangements needs to be addressed.
- 6.6 One of the main areas of gaps in provision and lack of co-ordination which recurred in our interviews with women and with agencies related to health services and to counselling support (particularly in relation to mental health). It has not been possible in this research to elaborate the specific issues involved, especially in relation to the longer-term support needs of women, children and young people and this would merit further research. Finally, existing statistics on homelessness, temporary accommodation and local authority housing allocations do not, at present, clearly distinguish the needs of women experiencing domestic abuse.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The research reported here was commissioned by Scottish Women's Aid with funding provided by the Scottish Executive Development Department. The primary aims of the research are to investigate the duration of tenancies of women who have been re-housed because of domestic abuse and determine the key factors which determine whether these tenancies are sustained.

Research into repeat homelessness commissioned as part of the Homelessness Task Force noted that 'domestic abuse is an especially traumatic experience which affects many homeless families, and appears to be particularly closely associated with repeat homelessness' (Pawson, Third and Tate, 2001). Qualitative research by Shelter Scotland found that the repeat homelessness of a small sample of women who had experienced domestic abuse was not the result of multiple returns to violent partners but rather to the inappropriate nature of the accommodation they obtained after leaving the perpetrator (Buck, 2002). This research is indicative rather than definitive and in the case of the Shelter report based on a very small sample. It does however suggest real difficulties facing women experiencing domestic abuse and provides pointers to the type of support that is required for women to survive domestic abuse and rebuild their lives. More structured and focused research is required in order to define the scale of the housing and support problems faced by women experiencing domestic abuse and the type of support services that are needed.

The Research Aims and Objectives

This research aims to provide the structured and focused approach referred to above. More specifically, the aims and objectives are:

- ◆ to establish the length of time women who have experienced domestic abuse sustain their tenancy
- ◆ to identify the factors which support or undermine the success of a tenancy and the relative weighting of each
- ◆ to identify the potential role of the various forms of support in sustaining the tenancy
- ◆ to develop recommendations for supporting the family.

Defining a Sustainable Tenancy

Within the overarching need for protection and security, a woman (and her children) fleeing domestic abuse will require the means to live independently (a dwelling, income, furniture etc) and the psychological and social support necessary to overcome the effects of the abuse which may have undermined her ability or skills to live as an autonomous household.

Living as an independent autonomous household requires a **sustainable housing outcome**. This may be conceived as a secure or successful tenancy, or it may be conceived as the ability to achieve her housing requirements and adjust her housing consumption to meet the family's changing needs. The notion of a 'sustainable tenancy' implies that a successful tenancy is one that endures. However, a particular tenancy may not be the most desirable or positive outcome for all women who experience domestic abuse but it may be one step in the process of achieving a desirable or sustainable housing outcome. It is arguable that an independent tenancy is the best solution in the short term as it enables women to regain control over their lives and provides security and stability for the children involved. Equally, however, a tenancy which lasts is not necessarily a sign of

success since a woman may be trapped, for a variety of reasons, in a neighbourhood or dwelling which she regards as unsatisfactory (or unaffordable).

It is possible to identify a range of factors that may lead to a tenancy breakdown. These will include institutional factors (including landlord action or breakdown of support), relationship factors (family, new relationship and previous relationship) and personal factors (the woman's situation, choices or abilities). Research therefore needs to articulate the interaction between housing and support and between housing outcomes and relationship outcomes. It is necessary to distinguish between a tenancy that breaks down and a tenancy that is ended by the woman in a controlled manner which leads to an improvement in her housing conditions. It is also necessary to consider whether a tenancy that ends when the woman returns to a partner is a 'failed' tenancy; if abuse continues, then the tenancy she has left can be considered to be a failure. Similarly, if a former or new partner moves in with a woman and continuing abuse causes that tenancy to end, it can also be considered to be a failed tenancy.

A key assumption of the research then is that, on leaving a relationship in which she has experienced abuse, the aim of the woman is to maintain an independent autonomous household free from abuse. The focus of the research therefore is to examine the **housing factors** and the **support factors** that prevent or assist in the achievement of this aim (either in the short term or in the long term).

The housing factors that are likely to be important include a dwelling that is:

- ◆ safe (whose location is not known by the partner or accessible to the partner)
- ◆ affordable
- ◆ suitable for the needs of the woman and her children
- ◆ of an adequate standard/quality including neighbourhood considerations
- ◆ accessible to shops/schools
- ◆ accessible to friends/family
- ◆ accessible to support services (including health services)
- ◆ offers security of tenure.

The support elements that are likely to be important include:

- ◆ information and advice
- ◆ financial and material support
- ◆ emotional support (including counselling where required)
- ◆ medical support (where required)
- ◆ support to develop skills (home-making, employment)
- ◆ support to cope with family relationships (children or immediate family)
- ◆ support for children and young people in their own right
- ◆ support to facilitate contact arrangements in safety.

A distinction needs to be made between short term and longer-term requirements. In the short term women may require considerable advice and support and somewhere to regain self confidence so that they can progress to independent living. In the longer term, they will require a “home” which implies psychological as well as practical dimensions. In the short term, safety will be the predominant requirement, especially perhaps for those who have not had a period in a refuge. In time, other considerations will begin to be important. For example, the literature suggests that the quality of the area and environment, including facilities for children, are important components of satisfaction with a dwelling and hence a tenancy (Malos and Hague, 1997). Our a priori assumption may anticipate that, over time, issues of security and the dwelling as a place of refuge will be replaced by issues of the dwelling as a home and with a neighbourhood as a place of self-expression and identity.

In the short term the woman’s own needs will tend to be predominant to enable her to regain control of her life. This is not to say that the children’s needs are not important at this stage. However, in the medium to longer term her relationship with her children and her ability to deal with, or access support to deal with, the children’s psychological and personal needs may become more apparent or prominent.

Women from diverse backgrounds will have very different preferences that will impact on what support they require and what is acceptable to them in relation to

achieving a sustainable housing outcome. Social class, educational attainment, ethnicity, age and family history may all be expected to play a part in shaping the woman's aspirations and decisions.

Defining Domestic Abuse

This section defines the nature of domestic abuse as it is experienced by women in Scotland today. It is drawn from the definition of domestic abuse adopted by the Scottish Executive's National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland¹.

Many women and children in Scotland live with the constant threat of domestic abuse, affecting their physical and emotional well-being and constraining their lives. At least a quarter to a third of all women in Scotland will experience domestic abuse at some point in their lives, and the level of "repeat victimisation" is high. There is evidence that violence escalates in frequency and intensity over time, and may increase at specific points in a woman's life (such as, for example, during pregnancy and following the birth of a child) or at particular times (such as separation or divorce).

The definition of domestic abuse adopted by the National Strategy is as follows:

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 or friends).

¹ Scottish Partnership on Domestic Abuse (2000) *National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland*, Edinburgh.
Also available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/law/stra-01.asp>

In accepting this definition, it must be recognised that children are witness to and subjected to much of this abuse (Mullender and Morley, 1994). Domestic abuse occurs in all social groups. There is no evidence that it is caused by stress, unemployment, poverty, alcohol or mental illness. It must also be recognised and taken into account that, particularly among black and minority ethnic communities, other family members connected to a woman through marriage may be involved in, or may participate in the abuse of the woman. In certain cases, abuse is perpetrated by other family members, even without the knowledge of the partner. In addition, there is abuse of women by members of their own families in the context of forced marriages or as a result of their failed marriages or divorce.

The range of common effects of domestic abuse includes physical injury, poor health and a range of psychological difficulties. The effects on children who may witness the abuse, or who may be used in the abuse, are also recognised as including a range of forms of stress or fear (Edleson, 1999).

The Scottish Domestic Abuse Strategy

In recognition of the seriousness and scale of domestic abuse in Scotland, the Scottish Executive established a Partnership on Domestic Abuse which was given the task of developing a National Domestic Abuse Strategy. The aims of the Strategy are:

- ◆ Prevention: active prevention of domestic abuse of both women and children
- ◆ Protection: appropriate legal protection for women or children who experience domestic abuse
- ◆ Provision: adequate provision of support services for women/children.

The research reported here is concerned with the third of these aims and specifically with the housing and support needs of women who have been re-housed as a consequence of domestic abuse.

The Scottish Partnership on Domestic Abuse's draft Action Plan 2000 - 2003 makes several references to housing, itemized below. All have been identified as priorities for immediate action:

- ◆ The development of transit accommodation for women and children who leave in an emergency and who require short term support
- ◆ The development of immediate and appropriate housing to people who are homeless because of domestic abuse or threat of violence
- ◆ Review of the CoSLA recommendations for refuge spaces, analysis and revision if required
- ◆ The provision of the required level of refuge spaces to meet the needs of the population, recognising the diversity of needs and meeting the needs of disabled women and women from black and minority ethnic groups
- ◆ The provision of refuge services to meet the needs of women who may not currently have access to provision, including women using drugs or alcohol, lesbian women, women from travelling communities, women with learning difficulties, older women, women working as prostitutes and women with mental health problems
- ◆ The provision of mainstream housing, as required, to meet the needs of women and children experiencing domestic abuse, and the provision of a range of housing to meet the needs of women at various stages
- ◆ The provision of support for the development of outreach and follow on work and specialist services to meet the needs of particular groups

The Action Plan also recommends the following to be of relevance to the housing and support needs of women surviving domestic abuse:

- ◆ The development of specific information to women/children experiencing domestic abuse in relation to the services which are available to them
- ◆ The provision of the information produced in a range of formats and languages, at a range of venues, and the availability of interpreters, as required
- ◆ The provision of support and advice to service providers (including the public, private and voluntary sectors and particularly those detailed in the strategy) to

develop training for staff at all levels, including frontline staff, in accordance with the good practice guidelines and including awareness of legislation, the needs of specific groups, support to women/children and the role of other agencies.

The Action Plan provides guidelines and service standards for service providers of relevance to the housing and support needs of women surviving abuse and these are taken into account in the recommendations of this Report (see Chapter 7).

Research Methodology

The methodology was designed to examine the means by which women who have fled from domestic abuse obtain housing, the degree to which their housing needs are being met, the support received and the factors which contribute to the continuation or cessation of the tenancy. The methodology was comprised of two elements:

- ◆ Semi-structured interviews with women who have had independent tenancies following experiences of domestic abuse
- ◆ Semi-structured interviews with a range of agencies concerned with the re-housing and provision of support for women experiencing abuse.

The population of interest to this research can be defined as all women who experience domestic abuse and who obtain independent tenancies. A number of agencies were used to contact potential participants. These agencies were: Women's Aid Groups, housing associations, local housing authorities, Social Work Services, and Police Domestic Abuse/Violence Units.

Ethnic minority women were included in the sample in order to explore the particular experiences and needs of minority groups. Also included in our sample were women with and without children.

Research evidence suggests that people living in cities have a different housing experience from those in rural areas, not just in Scotland but across Europe

(Shelter 2000; Novac, Brown and Bourbonnais 1996; Barlow 1998; Tulla 1998). This suggests the importance of sampling from a range of different types of local authority area and accordingly participants were sampled from one city authority (Glasgow), one urban authority (Fife) and one rural authority (Moray).

The primary data collection began with the women's semi-structured interviews. The approach to the sampling frame was to select three local authority areas as indicated above, one city, one rural and one town². Within each local authority, women were contacted through four Women's Aid Groups (one in each of the authorities and one of the ethnic minority Groups), the local authority Homeless Persons Units, the Police Domestic Abuse/Violence Units, Social Work and local housing associations.

A strict protocol was adopted to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the women contacted to participate in the research. This meant, however, that it was difficult to compensate for emerging biases in the (self-selected) sample as the research progressed.

Data from the women's interviews informed the interviews with staff from a range of agencies involved including Women's Aid, Social Work, Police, local authority and housing association housing managers, and agencies which may provide advice to women such as Victim Support. A full list of those interviewed is given in Appendix 1. These interviews were used to examine the factors which may contribute to tenancy breakdown, the scale of the problem, the nature of support available, the effectiveness of that support and any perceived gaps in provision.

² This was undertaken using the Randall definition of rurality, (local authority areas with a population density of less than one person per hectare).

Table 1.1: Sample of Women's Interviews

	Glasgow	Fife	Moray	Total
Women's Aid	10 (25.6%)	6 (15%)	3 (8%)	19 (49%)
Police	2 (5.1%)	5 (13%)	2 (5%)	9 (23%)
Housing Association	3 (7.7%)	5 (13%)	1 (2.5%)	9 (23%)
LHA	0	0	0	0
Social Work	0	0	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)
Other (snowball)	1 (2.5%)	0	0	1 (2.5%)
Total	16 (41%)	16 (41%)	7 (18%)	39 (100%)

Table 1.2: Age Structure of the Sample

	Location			
	Glasgow	Fife	Moray	Table Total
< 30	3 (8%)	1 (2.5%)	0	4 (10%)
30 - 34	7 (18%)	4 (10%)	0	11 (28%)
35 - 39	3 (8%)	5 (13%)	2 (5%)	10 (26%)
> 40	3 (8%)	6 (15%)	5 (13%)	14 (36%)
Table Total	16 (41%)	16 (41%)	7 (18%)	39 (100%)

Table 1.3: Employment Status prior to leaving the perpetrator

	Location			
	Glasgow	Fife	Moray	Table Total
Yes	4 (10%)	5 (13%)	5 (13%)	14 (36%)
No	12 (31%)	5 (13%)	2 (5%)	25 (64%)
Table Total	16 (41%)	16 (41%)	7 (18%)	39 (100%)

Table 1.4: Current Economic Status

	Location			
	Glasgow	Fife	Moray	Table Total
Works F/T	0	3 (8%)	2 (5%)	5 (13%)
Works P/T	4 (10.)	0	2 (5%)	6 (15%)
Student	0	1 (2.5%)	0	1 (2.5%)
Unemployed	10 (26%)	12 (31%)	2 (5%)	24 (62%)
Long-term sick	2 (5%)	0	1 (2.5%)	3 (8%)
Table Total	16 (41%)	16 (41%)	7 (18%)	39 (100%)

Table 1.5: Number of children in their care

	Location			Table Total
	Glasgow	Fife	Moray	
None	2 (5%)	2 (5%)	3 (7.7%)	7 (18%)
1 child	6 (15%)	5 (13%)	1 (2.5%)	12 (31%)
2 children	4 (10.2%)	6 (15%)	2 (5%)	12 (31%)
3 + children	4 (10.2%)	3 (7.7%)	1 (2.5%)	8 (20%)
Table Total	16 (41%)	16 (41%)	7 (18%)	39 (100%)

Table 1.6: From an ethnic minority background

	Location			Table Total
	Glasgow	Fife	Moray	
No	10 (26%)	15 (39%)	7 (18%)	32 (82%)
Yes	6 (15%)	1 (2.5%)	0	7 (18%)
Table Total	16 (41%)	16 (41%)	7 (18%)	39 (100%)

The methodology for conducting the women's interviews was carefully considered to ensure complete and accurate recording of information while taking account of the circumstances and needs of the women to be interviewed. Firstly, a decision was made that women should interview the female participants because of the sensitive nature of the subject. Secondly, the female researchers took a reflexive approach to conducting the interviews, acknowledging the personal and emotional factors that would be raised by the interview and hence the importance of establishing a rapport with the women. We did not see the women as simply a means of retrieving data and understood that, 'the personal involvement of the interviewer is an important element in establishing trust and thus obtaining good quality information' (Maynard & Purvis, 1995:16). As well as the philosophical basis to our approach, ethics also played an important part. Again, acknowledging the sensitive and potentially volatile nature of our subject matter, the safety and well-being of the women and children (and the female interviewers) participating in the research was deemed to be paramount. So, each step of our process was carefully monitored for potential difficulties and dangers.

The agencies were asked to identify and contact women who had experienced domestic abuse and had independent tenancies. Letters were sent via the agencies to the women. The letters were circumspect and no mention of domestic abuse was made. The women were invited to contact the female

researchers, thus effectively opting-in to the research. Women were only informed fully of the nature of the research when they spoke to a female researcher in person, who then made the appointment for the interview, if the woman was willing. Options regarding the venue of the interview were given. The woman's home or another safe venue could be chosen by the woman; however, the vast majority chose to be interviewed at home. Women were given reasonable expenses to cover their time, childcare and travelling expenses if needed.

The semi-structured interviews were preceded by an introduction which reassured participants of the confidentiality of their responses and gained permission for the interview to be taped. Also, women were reassured that at any time during the interview time to pause or even stop was acceptable. An awareness of the potential for negative as well as positive effects on participants was incorporated into our approach. The female researchers also revealed elements of their personal history, such as number of children, marital status and current job, in an attempt to 'equalise' the power relationship between interviewer and interviewee (Maynard & Purvis, 1995:15).

The interview schedule was divided into six sections (see Appendix 2):

1. Housing and Family
2. Leaving your ex-partner
3. Once you had left your ex-partner
4. Current accommodation
5. Support issues
6. Your experiences

The researchers were able to adapt the schedule in response to individual women and what they wanted to say. Also, again in response to individual women, in-depth responses were common. Women were asked at the end of the interview if there was anything else they wanted to add. As McGee (2000) has commented, this is important as it allows women some control over what they say in the interview.

The taped interviews were transcribed and thematic analysis was then undertaken. Transcripts were also coded and descriptive statistics were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

The Needs of Households Experiencing Domestic Abuse

This chapter presents a framework for understanding the process by which a woman, who is leaving a relationship in which she is experiencing domestic abuse, establishes and maintains an independent autonomous household. It is not our concern here to consider the experience of domestic abuse or the effects this may have on the woman's ability to cope. These issues are well documented in the literature (Mama, 1989, Dobash & Dobash, 1992, Hanmer & Itzen, 2000). However, "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). The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to consider the process by which a woman in this situation manages to access safe, affordable and independent accommodation. It also considers the support a woman may need to realise this objective and to sustain her independence. This analysis will provide a framework for the presentation of our empirical findings in the following chapters.

Maintaining an independent autonomous household

Access to affordable housing has become increasingly problematic for many female householders as a consequence of a social rented sector shrinking in size and falling in quality, escalating rents in a deregulated private rented sector and the overwhelming predominance of owner occupation as the tenure of choice. Despite recent improvements, the housing market in Britain still responds predominantly to stereotyped gender roles and relations and its operation remains geared to the presumed prevalence of the traditional nuclear family (Edgar et al, 2002). Low income, relatively poor women who are denied access to mortgage finance depend disproportionately on social rented housing for affordable accommodation. The treatment of women experiencing domestic abuse by housing agencies has often been less than sensitive. Many housing agencies require evidence of domestic abuse before granting a tenancy, making access to accommodation more difficult in a situation already causing distress and unhappiness. Women have also been re-

housed near to abusive partners although the literature appears to confirm that sensitivity in this respect has improved (Hague, Malos & Dear, 1996).

The literature suggests that women threatened with homelessness as a result of domestic abuse rely on supportive social networks, networks of 'kinship groups or simply of ... friends and neighbours within the community' which provide 'interdependency and reciprocity' between women members (Ackers, 1998, p38). However, the definition of domestic abuse described in Chapter 1 and the presentation of the four scenarios of domestic abuse described below suggests that this assumption is not universally true.

The gender revolution of the second half of the 20th century has been accompanied by a retreat from the nuclear family as the dominant household form. Women's access to housing now depends less on the 'protection' offered by a male breadwinner and more on their capacity to independently access resources to form and maintain independent households (Orloff, 1993). For those women who are unemployed, in poorly paid and insecure employment or are unpaid, and this includes many women fleeing domestic abuse, access to resources is problematic. In such circumstances, if women are to avoid the risk of homelessness, the capacity of the welfare state in providing social protection becomes critical.

Feminist critiques of welfare issues have shifted in recent years leading to a concomitant shift in the study of women's homelessness arising from domestic abuse. These arguments are concerned with opposing ideas of gender identity (Doherty, 2001). One perspective places women in a homogenous category and argues that the modern welfare state should meet the common needs and aspirations of women. In contrast other perspectives believe that such an approach is inappropriate and argue for a more sensitive understanding of women's individual situations. However, while it is important that we are sensitive to the context and recognise the heterogeneity among women, it is also important, as Neale (1997) reminds us, that we do not lose sight of women's "shared gender experiences". Nevertheless, effective social policies for preventing and resolving homelessness resulting from domestic abuse should recognise and address the heterogeneity of women's needs and experiences. This involves not only a recognition of difference

based on class, race, culture, generation, parental status, citizenship, disability and sexual orientation but also of the individual support needs of, for example, women caught up in the so-called ADM (alcohol, drugs and mental illness) syndrome (see Fisher and Breakey, 1991; Blasi, 1990).

Further, reflecting the complexity and multi-dimensionality of homelessness among women who have experienced domestic abuse, effective social policy requires sensitivity to the variety of women's individual life circumstances – young women deserting or being evicted from the familial home, older women leaving a partner who has abused her, women leaving an arranged marriage and extended family, older women and widows being abused by family members or children, lone parents being abused by teenage or adult children.

It is in this environment of the housing market and social policy that women who leave a situation of domestic abuse must navigate a course to achieve a successful housing outcome and maintain an independent autonomous household (if that is their desire). The next section considers the experience of leaving domestic abuse within this state and market environment.

The experience of leaving domestic abuse

The definition of domestic abuse against women presented in Chapter 1 emphasised the different forms and situations it may take. Most commonly in the public and professional imagination it is associated with abuse from a partner (most often, though not always, a male partner). However, among minority ethnic communities it is more commonly associated with familial abuse and may be experienced in relation to parents-in-law, brothers or other male (or female) family members as well as from a husband or partner. Finally, and less commonly reported in the literature, is abuse from a sibling or from a teenage or adult child. For example, there is at least one project in Scotland aimed at older (Asian and Chinese) women, some of whom have experienced domestic abuse from children as well as, the more frequently reported, abuse from a partner.

The prevention or ending of domestic abuse in a partner context should be achieved by the permanent exclusion of the perpetrator from the home rather than penalising the woman and her children. Indeed, Dutch authorities are currently considering the feasibility of permanent exclusion of the man, giving the woman the right to the home and its contents. It is difficult to gain accurate statistics on the extent to which women in Scotland are enabled to remain in the family home. Where police are involved in a domestic abuse incident this is perhaps more likely to be the outcome. In Fife, for example, the Domestic Abuse Unit states that a key objective is to enable “women and children to remain in their own homes and stay in their local communities where they and their children have access to a local support network”. It is not clear how many of the 2064 incidents of domestic abuse involving women in Fife in 2001/2002 resulted in the permanent exclusion of the man from the home (Fife DAU Report, 2002). However, a proportion of women will prefer to leave the home either because of their fear or lack of security, or of the associations the home has with the abuse they experienced or in order to take control of their lives again.

The prevention or ending of domestic abuse in a family context will almost always require the woman to leave that home (Mama, 1989). This will result not only in the ending of the relationship with the partner but may also result in severing ties with the family and thus isolation from family support.

Hence, for a significant number of women who experience domestic abuse the experience of ending that abuse results in the loss of their home (Mama, 1989, Hanmer & Itzen, 2000). The loss of the ‘home’, in most cases, involves leaving the dwelling, furniture and possessions. It may also involve a loss of autonomy as a result of losing employment either because of benefit regulations or if a geographical relocation is involved. However, it may not mean leaving behind all responsibility. Where there is a joint tenancy or mortgage the woman may leave the home but retain her legal obligation for any debt outstanding. Where this occurs, this situation will clearly constrain her choices and ability to attain an independent tenancy of her own.

Leaving domestic abuse in a partner context means ending a relationship with a person for whom the woman may still have feelings and who may be the father of

her children. The literature demonstrates clearly that, for this reason, many women will leave a relationship a number of times before a final break is effected (Galway Simon Community, 2000). Thus the process of leaving a relationship in which a woman experiences domestic abuse may often mean that the woman has experience of living with family or friends or in emergency or temporary accommodation on several occasions before she actually achieves a tenancy or permanent dwelling. Such experience, we may assume, will influence her knowledge about the options available to her and her strategy for obtaining a sustainable tenancy.

Leaving domestic abuse in a family context is less well documented in the literature. The family situations can be very different and thus the woman's situation and process of leaving the family home may also vary. The variety of situations may include women in an arranged marriage, women who are immigrants on a one-year marriage rule, older women who may have little knowledge of English, or young women who are fleeing from the tradition of an arranged marriage. Leaving the home in this context may require a considerable period of pre-planning and may involve the woman leaving behind some or all of her children. Her knowledge of agencies or options available to her or of her rights is also likely to be very limited. In some cultural traditions the fact that a woman leaves in this situation is perceived to bring dishonour on the family and hence the woman will often need to move a considerable distance to reduce the likelihood of discovery. Thus the isolation from family and support networks will be acute and probably permanent.

Leaving a relationship in which she is experiencing domestic abuse will not occur in the same way for all women (Gelles, 1997). Some women will plan their final departure. One strategy a woman may adopt is to apply for housing while living with the partner. Saving enough money for a deposit on a private rented flat may also be a strategy some women will adopt and will take time and planning to effect. For other women the point of leaving will be an unplanned reaction to a final episode of abuse that may or may not involve police, social work or other agencies. Whether the flight is planned or reactive, whether it occurs solo or with the aid of family or friends or with the involvement of statutory or voluntary agencies will all, we may

assume, have a bearing on the subsequent process of re-housing and the establishment of independence.

Whether the leaving situation is planned or reactive it is likely to be traumatic for the woman and her children. The leaving experience may occur in the context of crisis and presents the woman with a range of challenges she has to face. The need for accommodation and income is a necessary pre-requisite to achieve safety and stability for herself and to meet her children's needs. Such challenges are stressful in normal circumstances. They become even more difficult in this situation. Even though many women in this situation are not passive victims but have strong coping mechanisms and networks of support, the ability to face this range of challenges in a crisis normally requires some degree of support and advice.

The role of housing and support

Given this diversity, it is helpful to describe different scenarios of the experience of leaving domestic abuse. These represent an attempt to capture the main types of situation for women leaving domestic abuse. They do not attempt to capture the complexity of the situations of women from different backgrounds and circumstances. Nor do they capture the differences that arise from the heterogeneity of the women who find themselves in this situation. The purpose of these scenarios is to capture the housing and support issues involved in the circumstances in which women may present to housing, social services, police or Women's Aid. The four main scenarios described here are representative rather than inclusive.

1. Relationship breakdown scenario:

This captures the situation of a relationship breakdown which is accompanied by domestic abuse. In this situation the period of domestic abuse which the woman has experienced is not long-term. The woman is able to leave the relationship with resources, is self-reliant and has supportive networks with family and friends. In this scenario it is to be expected that the woman is able to negotiate re-housing and requires only limited support or advice regarding her legal, financial, housing or support needs.

2. Family breakdown scenario:

In this scenario the woman is fleeing abuse in a familial context where the perpetrator(s) of the abuse include other family members as well as the partner/husband. In this scenario women may need support, advice and resources to access appropriate housing. They will also have support needs which will vary depending upon the circumstances of the contextual situation. Women may not always articulate these support needs. In this scenario the woman will require housing advice and will normally require personal support

3. Long-term, endemic, domestic abuse scenario:

In this scenario the woman has survived long term (mental and/or physical) abuse which has undermined her capacities, affected her confidence, skills and ability to cope and will probably have deprived her of financial resources (or employment skills). It is likely that the woman will have made several attempts to leave her partner. In this scenario the woman is likely to require intensive support during the re-housing process and, particularly also, continuing support once she has been re-housed

4. Domestic Abuse and ADM scenario:

(ADM: alcohol, drugs, mental illness). In this scenario the woman leaves a relationship where she experienced domestic abuse but also has other support needs as a result of her dependence on alcohol or drugs or as a result of her mental illness. Again it is likely that the woman will have made several attempts to leave her partner. In this scenario the woman is likely to require intensive support as a result of the domestic abuse she has experienced and will probably also require support and/or supported accommodation to cope with her dependency or mental health problems.

Using these scenarios in order to examine the need for assistance or advice to access housing and for personal support, it is possible to identify four situations of housing and personal support (summarised in Figure 2.1). The purpose of this model is to clarify the situations where housing support and/or personal support may be required. The model is too crude, in this form, to distinguish between long-term and short-term support or between support required by the woman herself and

support for the children. However, it provides a basic starting point to clarify the complexity of the situations identified by the empirical evidence in the following chapters.

The model also does not distinguish between the heterogeneous situations of women who experience domestic abuse in which life-course stage, parental status, ethnicity and sexual orientation can all play a part in determining the extent and nature of the housing or personal support a woman may require.

Figure 2.1 Scenarios of Housing and Personal Support for Women Fleeing Domestic Abuse.

		PERSONAL SUPPORT	
		YES	NO
HOUSING SUPPORT	YES	Needs advice and / or support to get housing	Needs advice and / or support to get housing
		Needs support for herself and/or her children	No major support needs for herself and/or her children
		<i>Scenarios</i> (4) (3) (2)	<i>Scenarios</i> (2) (1)
	NO	Can access housing without support or with limited advice	Can access housing without support or with limited advice
		Needs support for herself and/or her children	No major support needs for herself and/or her children
		<i>Scenarios</i> (2) (1)	<i>Scenarios</i> (1)

The model presented so far provides a framework for the role of housing and support in enabling a woman to leave a situation of domestic abuse and to sustain an independent autonomous household. However, the experience of domestic abuse also has important effects upon the children in the family (Mullender & Morley, 1994; McGee, 2000). This needs to be considered in the context of this research from two perspectives - the children's need for support and the effect that a lack of support for the children may have on the woman's decision or ability to sustain a tenancy. These issues will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

Conceptualising the Process

Our discussion so far has determined that there are a variety of situations of domestic abuse and that women leaving these situations have a variety of housing and support needs. In order to understand this variety it is helpful to distinguish the routes or pathways a woman may take to achieve a sustainable housing outcome.

The process of leaving a situation of domestic abuse can be conceived in relation to four distinct stages involving the stage prior to leaving the perpetrator, the process of leaving, re-housing and the establishment of independence on gaining permanent housing. Different routes may be distinguished at each stage in the process. These are summarised here.

Prior to Leaving Stage

For many women, the thought of leaving their home is a frightening one because they do not know what to expect and what agencies and organisations can offer support to them. To reduce this uncertainty and fear of the unknown, women may seek out information and advice to aid their decision-making.

The Leaving Stage

Where a woman has to leave her home to end domestic abuse several housing routes are possible. These often involve a move to emergency accommodation – this may be to family or friends, to bed and breakfast or other homeless accommodation or to a refuge. It is probably unusual for a woman to move directly to permanent accommodation though some women achieve this by careful planning. It may however be possible in areas where there is available (difficult to let) accommodation for a woman to be re-housed without presenting at the homeless persons unit.

Where the initial move is to emergency accommodation, this will normally be followed by a period in temporary accommodation prior to re-housing. This temporary accommodation may be in the same place (e.g. a Women's Aid refuge) or, more likely, it will involve a move to specific (furnished) temporary

accommodation. The length of time this stage lasts may depend upon the availability of social (or private) housing in the area, the allocation procedures adopted by landlords (i.e. her priority in the queue) and the family's housing requirements (e.g. larger houses are in shorter supply).

With regard solely to her housing situation, the support that is required at this stage is mainly information and advice in relation to her housing options and benefit entitlement (including 2-homes payments if she intends to return to the home when the partner has been excluded).

Re-housing Stage

When an offer of a house has been accepted the woman faces a number of challenges. These include obtaining housing benefit, arranging for the utilities to be connected, arranging the move-in process, including furnishing and decorating the dwelling, and obtaining grants or assistance to facilitate this. In addition, where children are involved, education or child care arrangements may be required.

Support at this stage will involve a range of advice, and practical and financial support. Different pathways may be distinguished at this stage, influenced by the previous tenure of the woman and whether the tenancy was with the same landlord.

Post housing stage

These support needs will occur prior to and for some time (at least the first 3 months) after moving in to the new house. Once the move to the new dwelling has been effected, other support needs will continue to be required. These may include personal support (psychological, emotional), support with the children (access contact, counselling etc) as well as assistance with training and employment. Some of these support needs may not be apparent until some time after re-settlement (perhaps a year or more).

The description of these stages is intended to clarify the nature of the housing needs, housing support and personal support that may be involved during the process of leaving domestic abuse and establishing an independent autonomous household. The routes through this process and the actual nature and type of

support requirements will, of course, also vary for women at different stages in the life-course as well as for women from different cultural backgrounds. For example, a young woman (aged 16 or over) leaving a parental (or step-parental) home as a result of physical abuse may need more access to social services who may use child protection legislation to provide access to supported accommodation. On the other hand, older women or women from an ethnic minority group may not be able to rely on family and friends for emergency or short-term accommodation and will be more reliant on voluntary or statutory homeless emergency accommodation. Equally a woman with a drug or alcohol dependency will often be unable to access temporary accommodation (which is predominantly shared accommodation) as a result of the duty of care and risk management which housing providers are required to exercise to other tenants.

The steps in the process are summarised diagrammatically in Figure 2.2. This figure demonstrates that the woman may return to the former home at different stages in the process. In particular we may surmise that the re-housing stage will be particularly critical. A failure to identify suitable options at this stage may leave the woman with little choice but to return. Equally, if the time taken at this stage is lengthy then the pressure to return to the former home will be greater. Hence, the level of 'tenancy failure' may not be as high as we may intuitively expect since many women will return to a partner, as a result of a protracted or unsatisfactory re-housing experience, before they have achieved a suitable tenancy. On the other hand, re-housing a woman before she is ready to take on the responsibility of a tenancy (and her children) on her own is more likely to result in the failure of that tenancy. Although our sample is not intended to be representative we can identify, from the experiences of our participants, five main pathways for women who leave a situation of domestic abuse:

Pathway 1: Family and Friends (29%)

Of the 29% of the sample who left the abuse situation to live with family and friends, 64% moved on to a permanent tenancy (64%). The remainder (36%) moved from family/friends to Women's Aid refuge and thence to a permanent tenancy.

Pathway 2: Women's Aid (45%)

This pathway involves moving directly from the abuse situation to Women's Aid and thence to permanent housing (82%). The remainder were still in a refuge (other area) or other outcome.

Pathway 3: Permanent Tenancy (8%)

This pathway involves a move from the abuse situation to a permanent tenancy.

Pathway 4: Temporary / Homeless Accommodation (5%)

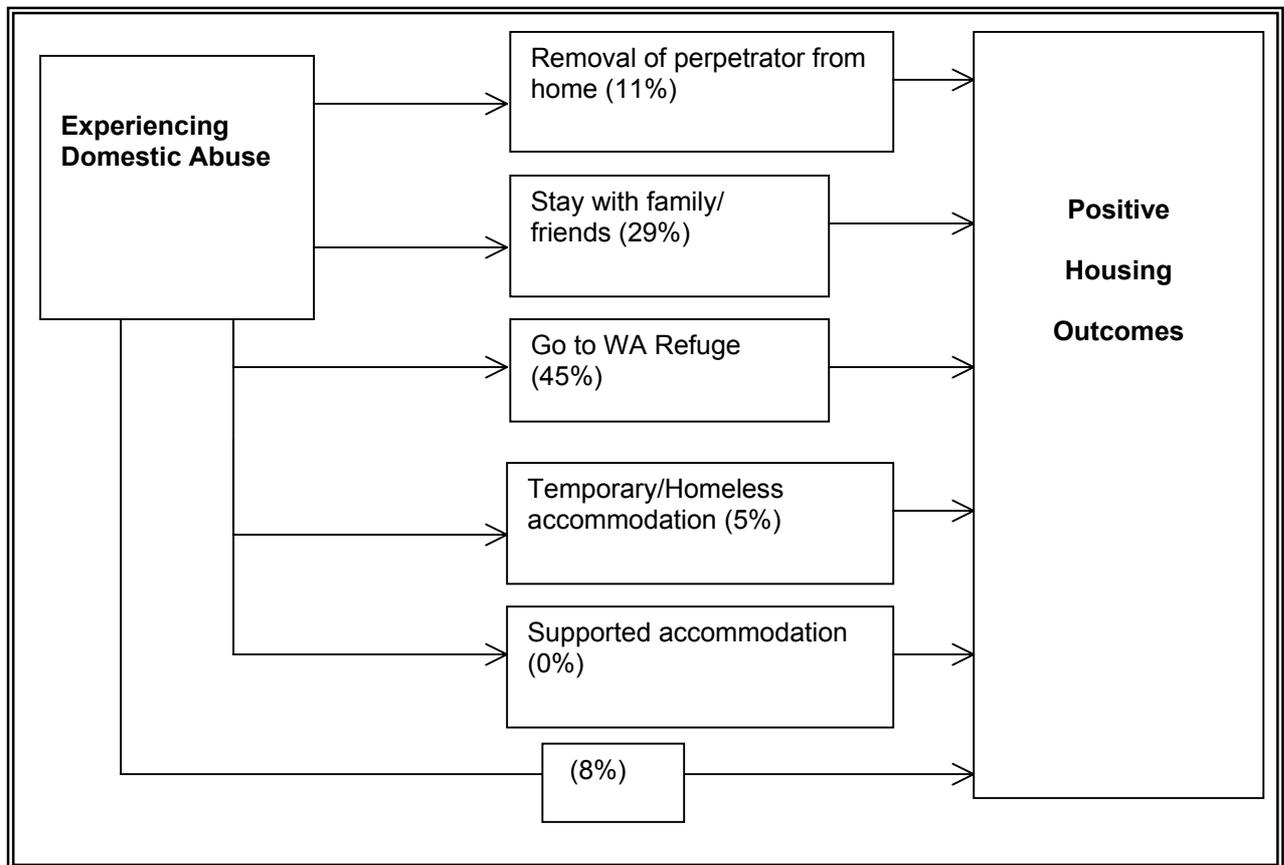
This pathway involves a move from the abuse situation to temporary accommodation (the homeless persons unit).

Pathway 5: Stayed in own home (11%)

This pathway allows the woman to remain in her own home with exclusion of the man.

A further pathway may be conceived where transitional supported accommodation is available as an option to women. No women in our sample were found to have taken this route. It is included in Figure 2.2 to suggest the range of possible pathways available to women.

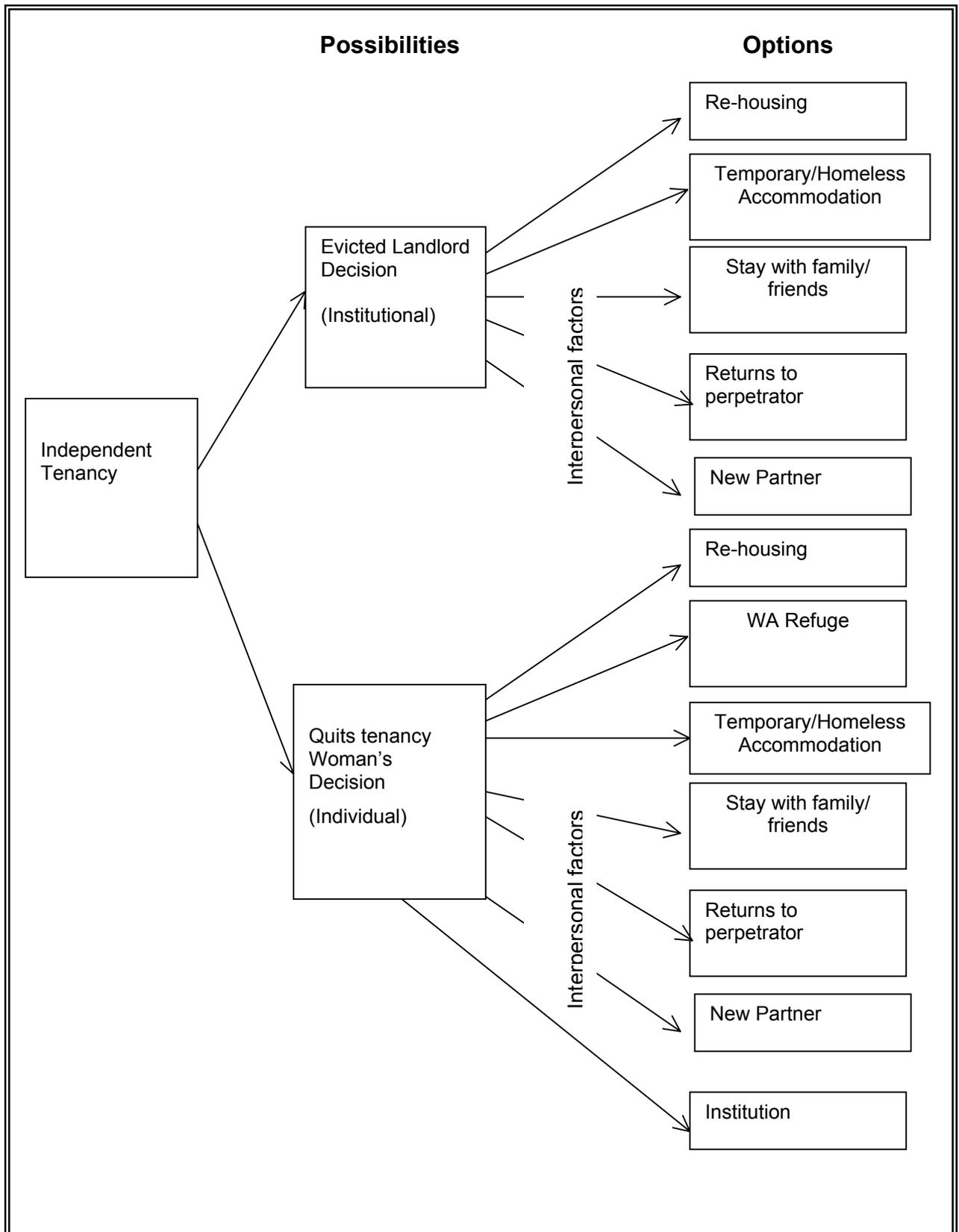
Figure 2.2 Pathways to achieve a life with no domestic abuse and an overview of our findings (with respect to the first step)



Once re-housed a tenancy may end or fail as a result of a range of different factors. Figure 2.3 is used to provide an insight into the potential pathways for women whose tenancy has terminated. Whether this tenancy is an ended tenancy or a failed one, depends on the variables discussed in Chapter 1. The two decision-makers, who may cause a woman to move are the woman herself – *individual choices* (e.g. move to a better property) or the landlord – *institutional choices*, (e.g. rent arrears, eviction notice is served). Within the sample, several women had quit a previous tenancy either due to buying a house, moving to a better area, returning to the perpetrator, or fleeing the perpetrator where the abuse continued post separation. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Once the move to independent housing has been achieved, a range of structural, institutional, inter-personal and personal factors can come into play to support or undermine that tenancy. Institutional factors that may undermine a tenancy may

Figure 2.3 Pathways if an independent tenancy is terminated



include factors which affect the woman's resources – loss of social protection, loss of adequate child care, loss of employment or failure to obtain employment. These factors may include landlord action (e.g. eviction for rent arrears or anti-social behaviour) or the failure of support arrangements. The inter-personal factors may include pressure from family or children. The personal factors may include both personal constraints (inability to cope) and personal choice (decision to move on). These are summarised in figure 2.4.

The institutional variables which may strengthen a tenancy are policies that enable women with children to enter the labour market (e.g. Child Tax Credits). This means-tested benefit will pay up to seventy percent of the childcare cost as well as ensuring a minimum income (dependent on income). Women who have no children, or no school- aged children and who work more than thirty hours per week in low-paid employment can apply for Working Tax Credit. These benefits reduce the poverty trap and thus increase incentives for women to take low-paid jobs.

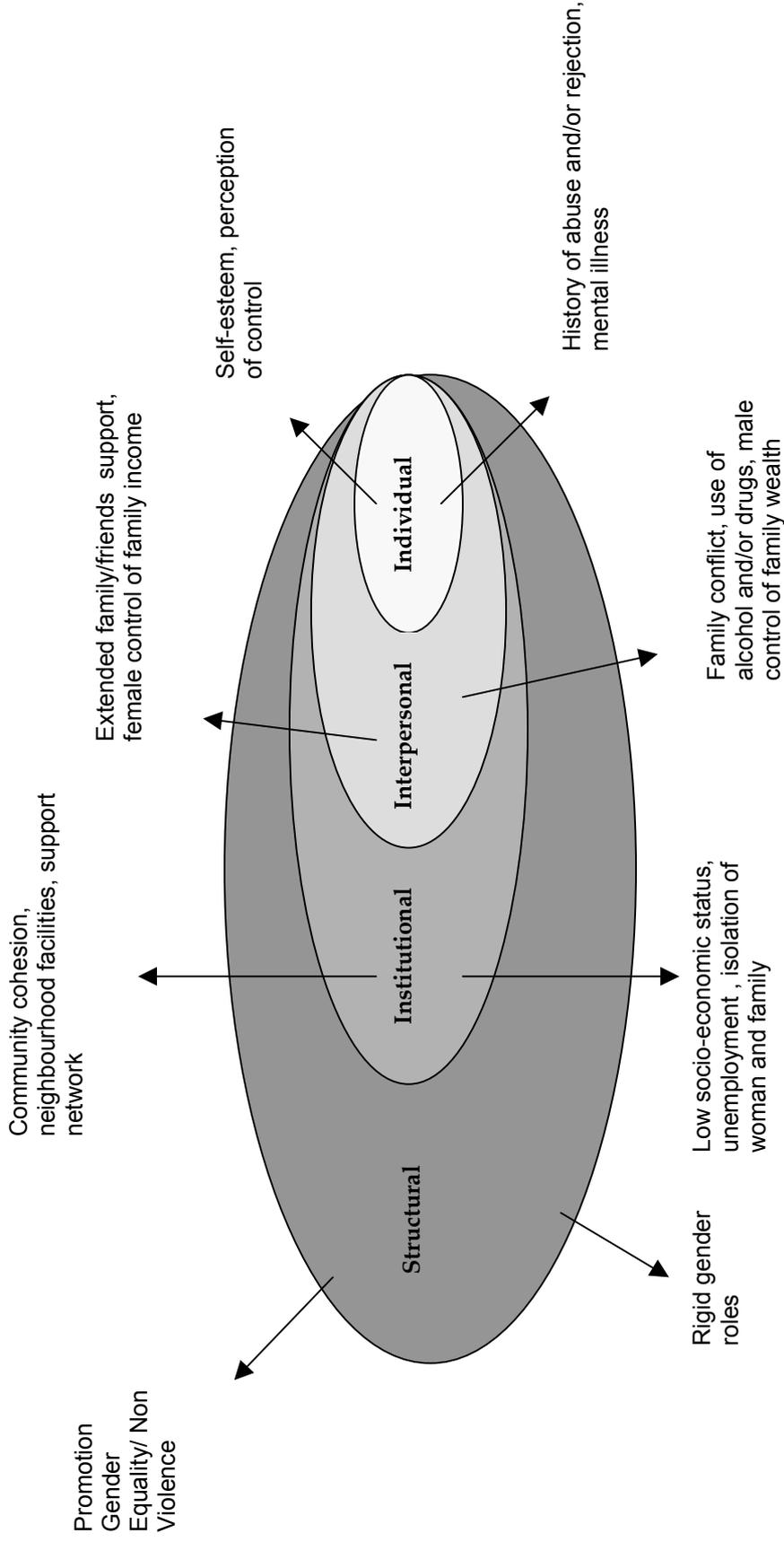
Furthermore, with respect to employment, financial reward is not the only benefit to working. Inter-personal and individual factors can be strengthened, such as women may build friendships with work colleagues and this social interaction can build self-esteem, while learning new skills can boost self-confidence.

Conclusion

When women decide that they and their children want a life free from domestic abuse, the optimal outcome is to maintain an independent autonomous household and the new property would ideally be of an “appropriate standard”. In Chapter 4, the primary data findings with respect to housing are discussed. Furthermore, if women demand support for themselves and/or their children, irrespective of which stage of the process they are at, the first best solution is that these needs should be met. This is especially important since a tenancy may fail if their needs are ignored, resulting in women and their children becoming homeless again. Service provision and the relating constraints and gaps are discussed in Chapter

Figure 2.4

**Supports
Tenancies**



**Undermines
Tenancies**

Adapted from: Violence Against Women
(WHO Fact Sheet No 239, June 2001).

All people should have a right to housing. However, few countries in Europe enshrine this right in their constitution or in legislation and none implement it effectively in practice (Edgar et al, 2002). In Britain housing and homelessness legislation provides protection for some groups and gives them priority access to social housing. This includes women fleeing domestic abuse who are defined as unintentionally homeless and are given priority in social housing allocation. This section summarises the legal rights of women in this situation. It also identifies the entitlement to housing and related benefits. The local policy context and guidance employed by local housing and social service authorities are discussed by reference to the three case study authorities. The chapter then proceeds to consider the available evidence to make an assessment of housing need arising from domestic abuse.

The right to housing

The right to housing or of access to housing for particular groups, such as women fleeing domestic abuse, may be protected by law. Local authority policies and procedures may also guarantee priority action in relation to access to temporary or permanent housing allocation. The ability to afford adequate and secure housing may still be a problem for some women if they do not have access to financial support (income support or housing benefit). This section discusses this context for women leaving a situation in which they experience domestic abuse.

In Scotland, legislative protection for people who experience domestic abuse is found in the *Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981*. This Act confers equal rights to the family home on spouses and entitled co-habitees and makes provision for non-entitled co-habitees to pursue their occupancy rights in the courts (Scottish Parliament, Research Note RN00/101). The Act provides two remedies against domestic abuse – an exclusion order and a matrimonial interdict. An exclusion order is intended to provide protection for the non-abusive partner

(normally the woman) and allow her to continue her occupancy of the home. The matrimonial interdict is intended to restrict the abuser's access to the family home and surrounding area.

Women experiencing domestic *violence* have in practice been given priority in terms of local authorities' responsibilities for homelessness since the 1987 Housing (Scotland) Act. The Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003 makes this priority explicit rather than a consequence of guidance and broadens the priority category by substituting domestic *abuse* for domestic violence to include persons experiencing non-violent domestic abuse.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 Part II

The 1987 Act establishes the duty of a local authority towards people experiencing domestic violence in Part II Section 24 (subs (3) (b)) :

- ◆ 'A person is homeless if he (sic) has accommodation but...it is probable that continuing occupation will lead to violence from some other person residing in it and likely to carry out the threats'.

The Act created a hierarchy of duties placed on local authorities in respect of persons assessed as homeless. At the top of the hierarchy is a duty to provide accommodation for persons who are assessed as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Persons experiencing domestic abuse are not explicitly mentioned in the Act as a priority category, but among those defined as priority are:

- ◆ any pregnant woman, regardless of the stage of her pregnancy or her age, together with anyone who normally resides with her or might reasonably be expected to reside with her
- ◆ a person with whom dependent children are living or might reasonably be expected to live.

Many women experiencing domestic abuse would fall into one or both of these categories. Furthermore, an additional priority category was defined as:

- ◆ a person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or mental handicap or physical disability, or *other special reason*.

The Code of Guidance on Homelessness issued in December 1998 offered advice on what circumstances may bring a person within the 'other special reason' element of this definition and this included 'women suffering, or in fear of, violence may be vulnerable even if they have no children'.

In practice most local authorities have interpreted the legislation liberally with respect to women at risk from domestic abuse and have accepted presenting applicants as in priority need and unintentionally homeless.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

This requires local authorities to provide *permanent* accommodation for those persons assessed as unintentionally homeless. Again in practice with respect to women at risk from domestic abuse, local authorities have, where possible, provided permanent accommodation. Housing Support Services are now prescribed by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (Housing Support Services) Regulation 2002 and accompanying statutory guidance. This aims to support vulnerable people, including women experiencing domestic abuse, in different types of accommodation and tenure. Local authorities have a duty to develop a Supporting People Strategic Plan which will form Part 2 of the Local Housing Strategy.

The Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003

This recent legislation has followed the Homelessness Task Force's recommendation that all homeless persons should be treated as priority, but that this should be staged over a ten-year period. The Act has the effect of initially widening the categories of persons to be assessed as being in priority need to include all those set out in section 1(2). Subsection (2)(b) includes within the definition a person who runs the risk of domestic abuse. Local authorities are already encouraged in the Code of Guidance on Homelessness, to which authorities must

'have regard', to assess people falling into these categories, and others, as being in priority need as a result of their vulnerability. The objective of including these groups in the Act is to codify existing good practice, and to ensure that those most in need of assistance are given legislative protection. A steering group has been established to review the Code of Guidance and revised Guidance should be available early in 2004. Section 9 makes amendments to sections 20 and 33 of the 1987 Act to replace references to domestic violence with references to domestic abuse. This enables consistency with the wording in section 25 and extends the references to include behaviour other than physical violence. The Act also suspends a local authority's ability to refer an applicant to another authority on the grounds of local connection. This is of particular relevance to women fleeing domestic abuse since they may wish to be re-housed at some distance from the perpetrator of the abuse and this may be outwith the local authority where they currently live.

As with the earlier legislation, these changes will make little difference to those at risk of domestic abuse since local authorities already give them priority in practice.

The Homelessness Task Force

Although not included in the Homelessness Act, the Homelessness Task Force made specific recommendations with respect to persons at risk of domestic abuse. These are worth quoting in full:

91. Local authorities' homelessness strategies should make specific provision for the accommodation and support of people with disabilities, and for people whose homelessness is a result of domestic abuse.

93. Domestic abuse often leads to homelessness and is a key cause of repeat homelessness in Scotland. We also recognise that the threat of homelessness may compel those experiencing abuse to remain in a situation where they may be subject to further abuse. It is essential that local authorities' homelessness strategies should be dovetailed with domestic abuse strategies. We recommend that, in drawing up their homelessness strategies, local authorities should review:-

- ◆ *the information and advice available to those who are, or may become, homeless as a result of domestic abuse;*
- ◆ *the availability of safe, emergency, supported accommodation for those who have experienced domestic abuse, taking into account the diverse needs of disabled women/children, women/children from black and minority ethnic groups and those with addiction problems;*
- ◆ *the availability of suitable long-term accommodation and support packages within a framework which offers options and choice and minimises the risk of further incidents of abuse and/or homelessness; and*
- ◆ *the extent to which local arrangements recognise the needs of children involved in domestic abuse situations, given that the trauma and distress of being so involved is compounded and deepened by leaving the family home.*

In undertaking this review, local authorities should take account of the work of the National Group to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland which has established a working group to undertake a review of current recommendations on refuge provision.

Housing Benefit Regulations 1987

Housing benefit regulations can be used to support women who experience domestic violence. These include:

- ◆ Regulation 5(5)a: housing benefit may be paid on both the person's previous address and their new address (eg refuge, temporary homeless accommodation). Payment in respect of the former home in these circumstances can only be made where the victim intends to return to that address. An example would be where an interdict has been granted against the partner and the victim is afraid to return to the home because of threats of violence. Benefit will be paid up to a maximum of 52 weeks, with the authority making regular checks.

- ◆ Regulation 5 (7a) 'Victims of Domestic Violence': states that if the complainant is the sole tenant of the property, housing benefit can be paid on that property for a maximum of 4 weeks irrespective of whether or not they are staying there. This applies irrespective of whether the person intends to return to the former home or has a rent liability at the new address.

Local authority policies and procedures

It has not been possible within the constraints of this research to evaluate the policies of all local authorities in Scotland. However, it is clear that there is considerable discretion provided for in the legislation that is exercised in practice. It is therefore important to consider as part of this research the issues that contribute to good practice in policy and procedures in the re-housing and support of women who leave a situation where they have experienced domestic abuse.

The following discussion provides examples of policies and procedures in city, urban and rural authorities using the case study authorities as examples. The COSLA Guidance on Preparing and Implementing a Multi Agency Strategy to Tackle Violence Against Women (1998) has been used by a number of authorities to develop corporate strategies and to guide procedures within service departments.

Fife Council

The Fife Council's Policy Statement provides the framework for the development of departmental procedures and good practice. The Policy states that the Council will *'take every possible step, using all available resources, to provide whatever support is required by those who have experienced [domestic] abuse, including young people who have experienced the abuse of their mothers'*. To this end the Council employs a domestic abuse strategy co-ordinator (in a multi-agency post) to facilitate the development of the Council's corporate response to the needs of women and children affected by domestic abuse.

Within this framework the Social Work Services Department have developed 'Good Practice Guidelines' and the Housing Services Department prepared a 'Policy and Procedures' guideline for their respective staff.

An example of specific housing policies includes, for example, conditions in the tenancy agreement. The tenancy agreement issued by Fife Council states quite clearly that tenants must not behave in such a way that:

- ◆ *'amounts to violence or threats of violence against a tenant or any members of your family (including violence against the tenant's or occupier's partner) so that they are forced to leave. Domestic violence includes physical, emotional or sexual assault'.*
- ◆ *'If you or a member of your family is found guilty of breaching this section of the tenancy agreement ... you may be evicted and treated by the Council as intentionally homeless'.*

The procedural guidelines aim to ensure that Homeless Officers and Area Officers respond sensitively and appropriately to the housing needs of women experiencing 'violence from known men' (p6). These procedural guidelines include – confidentiality, interviewing (including the choice of a female officer), interpreting and child protection. The guidance note requires the officer 'dealing with the case (to) collect supporting statements from those individuals and agencies with whom the woman has had contact' but are, at the same time, required to 'believe the victim', 'accept the woman's perception of danger' and in no circumstances 'ask for proof of violence' (p11). The Area Officer is required to complete the Domestic Violence Initial Referral Form to pass to the Homeless Officer. The guidance suggests that the provision of temporary accommodation should meet the woman's needs (her area of preference, children's school, and family connections).

Glasgow City Council

Glasgow City Council's 'Joint Housing and Social Work Protocol on Domestic Violence' provides a guide for staff in housing and social work services in dealing with domestic violence. This protocol is being reviewed in the context of the transfer of housing to Glasgow Housing Association.

The Joint Protocol states that for a woman 'leaving an abusive partner' where she is in a Council tenancy she will 'be permanently accommodated in broadly equivalent accommodation' and where she is leaving private sector accommodation she will be 'offered medium demand property' – dependent upon turnover and areas requested. Having left an 'abusive partner' the protocol indicates that, in cases where there may have been frequent moves because of domestic violence, 'housing and social work should jointly examine, along with the women (sic), the circumstances to reach a decision on the best solution in these situations' (p6).

The Social Work Services Department also provides a Policy and Code of Practice guidance to staff. This confirms that, in addition to general support by funding relevant organisations and services, Social Work support is directed towards both the women and children involved and provides information and advice on:

- ◆ finance and welfare benefits
- ◆ support services for children and young people
- ◆ local counselling services and projects
- ◆ housing
- ◆ community support services.

The principle that 'the best form of child protection is supporting the mother and non-abusing adult' will, it is suggested, be developed in more detail. Furthermore, the lack of a domestic abuse category in the computerised Social Work Information System will be addressed through the IT strategy.

Moray Council

Women fleeing domestic abuse present to both the Council's Homeless Persons' Unit and Women's Aid. The Homeless Persons' Unit try to put women in the Refuge and if spaces are not available place them in the Council's temporary accommodation. While there, their needs will be assessed and appropriate support arranged if necessary from Social Work Services, or by on-site support workers in the hostels. Social Work Services are not proactive with respect to domestic abuse. They respond to requests for assistance within their own statutory duties which

means that their involvement is largely limited to those cases where there are Child Care or mental health issues. No woman would be placed immediately in permanent accommodation.

Women fleeing abuse are treated sympathetically by the Homeless Persons' Unit. The local connection qualification for homelessness status is ignored in 90% of domestic abuse cases. In addition the Council does not ask for evidence of abuse as per guidance, but will carry out inquiries when reasonable. This is usually not necessary.

Moray Women's Aid helps women to obtain permanent accommodation from the Council or local housing associations, but mostly from the Council who have most vacancies. Re-housing is discussed with the women and the Council, and advice given to the women as to when they are ready for independent living. The Council is willing to defer re-housing if necessary without loss of priority status. However, the Council offer women fleeing domestic abuse the same choice as all applicants for permanent housing; one offer which can be reasonably refused.

The focus of Social Work Services is very much on the children of women who experience domestic abuse rather than the women themselves. Senior social work staff at Moray raised the issue of whether help is offered in a way that is acceptable to women experiencing abuse. Are they forced to take help, or feel that they are forced to take help? It was felt to be important that women fleeing abuse need to have a boost to their self esteem, not feel they are being policed. The statutory requirement to concentrate on the needs of children carries with it the danger that this may occur.

Housing need arising from domestic abuse

It has been argued (Malos and Hague, 1997) that some women are remaining in a relationship or return to a relationship in which they experience domestic abuse because there is a lack of suitable alternative accommodation. This section examines what is currently known about the scale of the need for housing for women who are experiencing domestic abuse or who are leaving a relationship in which they are experiencing domestic abuse.

Scale of domestic abuse

Since domestic abuse is often hidden and unreported, there is no complete record of the numbers of people involved. Statistics are available nationally from the police forces who recorded 36,000 incidents of domestic abuse in 2000 (the last year for which published data are available), more than two-fifths of which were 'repeat' incidents. There is a significant variation geographically in recorded incidents ranging from Grampian with the highest rate (882 per 100,000 population) to Dumfries and Galloway (457 incidents) around a Scottish average of 712 incidents per 100,000 of the population.

The Police statistics of recorded domestic abuse incidents can be used to gain an initial estimate of the number of women who may be made homeless in a year due to domestic abuse. This estimate is summarised in Figure 3.1 and suggests a figure of 13,750 women (plus their children) in need of re-housing as a result of domestic abuse. Two-fifths of reported incidents are repeat incidents and hence the total number of domestic abuse incidents reported to the police is approximately 22,000. A fifth of reported police incidents were recorded between people in an ongoing relationship who did not co-habit. Thus nearly 17,500 incidents recorded by the police involved a situation where one of the partners was at risk of being excluded from their home as a result of domestic abuse. In 41% of these situations the home belonged to the woman and in 45% of cases it was a joint home. The estimate assumes, initially, that the woman should be able to remain in her home where she has the sole tenancy but that in all cases where there is a joint tenancy she will need to leave the home. On this basis approximately 10,200 women will be homeless. However, it is known from Women's Aid statistics and our

research that a proportion of women who have their own tenancy will also flee their accommodation. It is not possible to estimate this level accurately. For the purposes of deriving this estimate we may suggest that half of women who have a sole tenancy will leave that home as a result of domestic abuse, hence as many as 3,545 women who have a tenancy in their own name, who report domestic abuse to the police, may also flee their home as a result.

Figure 3.1: Estimate of number of women made homeless due to domestic abuse in a year

Reported domestic abuse incidents	(a)	(a)	36,000
Less repeat incidents	$(a) \times (.6) = (b)$	(b)	21,600
Less 20% not co-habiting	$(b) \times (.8) = (c)$	(c)	17,280
41% of women have sole tenancy	$(c) \times (.41) = (d)$	(d)	7,085
Number at acute risk of homelessness due to domestic abuse	$(c) - (d) = (e)$	(e)	10,195
Assume 50% of sole tenants flee the home	$(d) \times (.5) = (f)$	(f)	3,545
Total Estimate of women leaving home	$(e) + (f) = (g)$	(g)	13,740

Nb. Based on Police Reported Incidents in 2000

This estimate is based upon the reported Police statistics which will, of course, under-record the actual level of domestic abuse. The Scottish Crime Survey, which overcomes some of the problems associated with police statistics, shows that 16% of violent crimes were classified as domestic abuse and that three-

quarters of respondents had not reported the incident to the police. Hence we may regard the recorded figures as a significant under-estimate of the extent to which women are at risk of losing their home as a result of domestic abuse. Furthermore, the Scottish Needs Assessment Programme (1997) suggests that between one-tenth and a quarter of women currently experience domestic abuse. It is best therefore to consider the estimate in Figure 3.1 as the lower boundary of a range. If the Scottish Crime Survey figures are correct the upper boundary of that range could be as much as four times our estimated figure.

Scale of homelessness presentations

Domestic abuse is an enduring feature of homelessness among women. It is also emerging as a major factor for people who experience repeat homelessness (Pawson, 2001). Approximately 46,000 applications per year are made to local authorities under Homelessness legislation in Scotland (6% of which are repeat applications during that period). In the six months from April to September 2002 23,150 applications were recorded. More than 15% of this number (3609) were women citing domestic dispute (violent or non-violent) as a reason for their homelessness. However, it is not possible to estimate how many of the (approximately) 1,100 women, in this figure, citing non-violent dispute could be classed as domestic abuse. Taking these figures as a guide then between 5,000 and 7,000 women a year may present as homeless as a result of domestic abuse in Scotland. The homelessness returns suggest that two-thirds of these women who present as homeless, citing domestic dispute, have children.

The number of women who present as homeless citing dispute with partner will be an under-estimate of the total number of women who leave their home following domestic abuse. This is because a proportion of women will find accommodation by other means and a proportion will not mention this as a reason for their homelessness (especially where other factors may be involved). Furthermore, many women live with family or friends as an immediate response to their situation and when they then make application for housing the recorded reason may be 'no longer able to live with family and friends' rather than domestic abuse.

Scale of Presentations to Women's Aid Refuges

A total of 5,783 requests for refuge were made in the year 2001/2002 to Groups affiliated to Scottish Women's Aid (Women's Aid Annual Report, 2002). Some of these requests were repeat presentations. However, these figures are also an underestimate of need since they will to some extent be a reflection of the level of provision (357 refuge spaces available), and a lack of knowledge about Women's Aid among women who experience domestic abuse. Furthermore, it is unclear how many of the women who were provided with refuge space had also presented to the homeless persons unit of the local authority and thus appear also in the homelessness statistics.

Housing Provision

Homelessness Outcomes

Three-fifths of women applying to Scottish local authorities under Homeless Persons Legislation, citing domestic dispute, during the first nine months of 2002 were offered permanent accommodation (see table 3.2). However, more than a fifth of women did not accept this offer of accommodation. Presumably women who refused this offer either would have returned to the perpetrator, remained living with family or friends, moved elsewhere in the UK or were housed by a housing association or the private sector. The same caveat remains that not all women citing (non-violent) domestic dispute will have experienced domestic abuse.

Temporary Accommodation

At the end of September 2002 local authorities reported 4704 households in temporary accommodation. More than half of these households (2472, 53%) were in local authority owned dwellings, 28% (1324) in hostels and 15% (706) in bed and breakfast. One-third of these households were families with children. In addition, one-third of this temporary accommodation is in Glasgow and 42% is in the three case study areas. It is not possible, at this time, to identify the causes of

homelessness which lead to allocation to temporary accommodation and hence to estimate what proportion of these households are women who have fled domestic abuse.

Women housed by Local authorities

It is not possible, on the basis of current local authority statistics, to identify the proportion of lettings (either mainstream or lettings under homeless legislation) that were made to women fleeing domestic abuse. However, a total of 53,187 dwellings were allocated by Scottish local authorities in 2001/2002 (HSG/2003/1), of which 17% were lets under the homelessness legislation. Assuming 15% of homeless applications are from women citing domestic dispute (see above) then an estimated 1,350 of these local authority allocations may have been to women leaving domestic abuse who had presented as homeless. This estimate broadly accords with the figure for housing outcomes presented in table 3.2.

Women housed by housing associations

Housing associations are involved in re-housing women leaving domestic abuse using a number of distinct approaches. Some associations have been involved in providing refuge accommodation in partnership with Women's Aid (6 provided and 12 had plans to provide in 1996 according to Goldsack, 1997). Many associations have nominations arrangements with Women's Aid to provide a specified number of housing allocations a year for women coming through the Women's Aid refuge route. A number of associations lease property to Women's Aid or have a management agreement with them. In addition, associations use a points system which gives priority to women fleeing domestic abuse and who are re-housed through their allocations system (and who may therefore not appear in the Women's Aid or Homeless Person's Unit statistics). At least one association keeps a separate housing list for violence/harassment. It has been estimated that 15% of the 357 Women's Aid refuge spaces are provided by housing associations (Goldsack, 1997). Goldsack (op. cit.) identified only one association which specifically identified provision for women who have experienced domestic abuse in their constitution and

strategic planning and committed to ensure at least 5% of all permanent housing allocations are made to women and children escaping domestic abuse.

It is estimated (from SCORE data) that at least 286 women in Scotland were allocated housing in 2001/2002 where domestic abuse was the main reason for re-housing (Table 3.1). This does not include women housed from the general allocations list or nominated by local authorities or women housed as a result of being statutorily homeless who may also have experienced domestic abuse. Almost a quarter of the women re-housed came from either temporary accommodation or had been living with family and friends, and a further quarter had been a tenant of the same housing association and more than one-third had been local authority tenants.

Table 3.1 Previous living circumstances of women re-housed by housing associations as a result of domestic abuse

	City	Urban	Rural	Table Total
Council	32 (11.2%)	46 (16.2%)	24 (8.5%)	102 (36%)
Tenant of this HA	38 (13.4%)	26(9.2%)	8 (2.8%)	72 (25%)
Tenant of other HA	6 (2.1%)	5 (1.7%)	2 (0.7%)	13 (5%)
Renting privately	4 (1.4%)	4 (1.4%)	4 (1.4%)	12 (4%)
Owning/ buying	0	3 (1%)	2 (0.7%)	5 (1.7%)
Immediate family	5 (1.7%)	6 (2.1%)	1 (0.4%)	12 (4%)
Friends/ Relatives	8 (2.8%)	12 (4.2%)	3 (1%)	23 (8%)
Partner	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.4%)	3 (1%)
Bed & Breakfast	8 (2.8%)	10 (3.5%)	2 (0.7%)	20 (7%)
Hostel/ Supported Accommodation	6 (2.1%)	4 (1.4%)	0	10 (4%)
Roofless/NFA	1 (0.4%)	0	1 (0.4%)	2 (1%)
Other	3 (1%)	5 (1.7%)	1 (0.4%)	9 (3%)
Table Total	115 (40%)	122 (43%)	49 (17%)	286 (100%)

Count (Percentage of Total Sample)

The profile of the women indicates that two-thirds had one or more children in their care and that over two-fifths were under 30 years of age (Tables 3.2 and 3.3). A quarter of the women worked either full-time or part-time (Table 3.4).

Table 3.2 Number of Children in the care of women re-housed by housing associations as a result of domestic abuse

	City	Urban	Rural	Table Total
None	43 (15%)	35 (12.2%)	17 (5.9%)	95 (33%)
1 child	35 (12.2%)	44 (15.4%)	16 (5.6%)	95 (33%)
2 children	32 (11.2%)	30 (10.5%)	13 (4.5%)	75 (26%)
3 + children	5 (1.7%)	13 (4.5%)	3 (1%)	21 (7%)
Table Total	115 (40%)	122 (43%)	49 (17%)	286 (100%)

Count (Percentage of Total Sample)

Table 3.3 Age Group of women re-housed by housing associations as a result of domestic abuse

	City	Urban	Rural	Table Total
<30	54 (18.9%)	50 (17.5%)	22 (7.7%)	126 (44.1%)
30-34	18 (6.3%)	22 (7.7%)	9 (3.1%)	49 (17.1%)
35-39	18 (6.3%)	27 (9.4%)	7 (2.4%)	52 (18.2%)
40+	25 (8.7%)	23 (8.0%)	11 (3.8%)	59 (20.6%)
Table Total	115 (40.2%)	122 (42.7%)	49 (17.1%)	286 (100%)

Count (Percentage of Total Sample)

Table 3.4 Economic Status of women re-housed by housing associations as a result of domestic abuse

	City	Urban	Rural	Table Total
Work full-time	21 (7.4%)	23 (8.1%)	8 (2.8%)	52 (18.2%)
Work part-time	6 (2.1%)	7 (2.5%)	8 (2.8%)	21 (7.4%)
Unemployed	60 (21.1%)	53 (18.6%)	20 (7.0%)	133 (46.7%)
At home	12 (4.2%)	22 (7.7%)	9 (3.2%)	43 (15.1%)
Student	3 (1.1%)	2 (0.7%)	0	5 (1.8%)
Disabled/L-T sick	12 (4.2%)	14 (4.9%)	4 (1.4%)	30 (10.5%)
Table Total	115 (40.2%)	122 (42.7%)	49 (17.1%)	286 (100%)

Count (Percentage of Total Sample)

Refuge Accommodation for Women in Scotland

There are currently 357 spaces available in the 40 Groups affiliated to Scottish Women's Aid. In 2001/2002 this space was used to accommodate 1551 women and 2014 children.

The Domestic Abuse Service Development Fund (DASDF), which started on 1 April 2000 (initially for 2 years), made £3 million available in each of the years 2000/1 and 2001/2 (£1.5 million from the Scottish Executive and £1.5 million matched funding). A further £2million was allocated from Scottish Homes to provide refuge places and more permanent 'move on' accommodation. The Fund was extended for a further 2 years to 2004. The second round of the Fund was heavily oversubscribed but the Executive is supporting 57 local projects which include outreach work, multi-agency development, work with children, training, work in rural areas, preventive work through schools, support work in refuges and partner support. All but one of the projects was for refuge accommodation and hence approximately £12million of capital expenditure has been available over the period to increase provision. However, since some of this has been directed to re-provisioning rather than additional accommodation it is difficult to estimate the extent of the increase in available accommodation. However, even with this additional expenditure, reference to existing CoSLA standards suggests that there is an under-provision of refuge accommodation and, by inference, of move-on accommodation.

Support Provision

Supporting People Mapping Supply Database and information on local authority pipeline projects 2003-2006 are not available at the time of writing to make an estimate of the provision of support services to households not living in refuge accommodation in Scotland.

Conclusions

Statutory protection for women experiencing domestic abuse is relatively strong. Women experiencing domestic abuse have robust legal entitlement to housing, strengthened by recent legislation. Guidance under the legislation aims to ensure that local authorities' Homelessness Strategies make specific provision for the accommodation and support of women (and children) whose homelessness is the result of domestic abuse. The recommendations of the Homelessness Task Force go further and recommend that local authority strategies review the availability of suitable long-term support packages within a framework which minimises the risk of further incidents of abuse and/or homelessness. The evidence from the study areas

suggests that, in both urban and rural areas, authorities have developed procedures and protocols to address legislative requirements and guidance. However, the practice on the ground needs to be examined and this is done in later chapters.

It is difficult using available statistics to estimate either the true scale of domestic abuse in Scotland or to determine the number of women (and children) who are forced to leave their homes as a result. Our review of the evidence suggests that the lower boundary figure may be 13,500 per annum in a wide range. This is in a context where almost 6,000 requests for refuge are made to Women's Aid each year; many women will not seek refuge either due to lack of knowledge, perception of the lack of space available or negative perception of the nature of that accommodation. The actual provision of refuge space and other accommodation is small compared with even this (conservative) estimate of need. It is not possible from existing local authority statistics to make an accurate assessment of the number of women fleeing domestic abuse who are in temporary accommodation nor how long they remain there before being housed permanently. Half of the women who applied to Scottish local authorities under Homeless Persons legislation during the first nine months of 2002 were offered and accepted permanent accommodation. It is not possible, at the time of writing, to estimate the provision of support services to households not living in refuge accommodation in Scotland.

Figure 3.2 Women applying to Scottish local authorities under Homeless Persons Legislation

(10 December 2001 with case concluded by September 2002)

REASON	Last action taken by local authority									Total
	Offered permanent accommodation		Private tenancy secured		Offered temporary accommodation		Referred to other LA	Offered advice and assistance only	Other	
	Accepted	Not accepted	Accepted	Not accepted	Accepted	Not accepted				
violent dispute with partner	919	289	37	2	157	57	46	175	234	1916
non-violent dispute with partner	424	112	21	3	56	42	11	348	100	1117
Total	1343	401	58	5	213	99	57	523	334	3033
%	44	13	2	0	7	3	2	17	11	100

Source: Special tabulation Scottish Executive

This chapter describes and analyses the housing experiences of the interviewed women after they left the situation in which they experienced abuse, and in particular how they fared with independent tenancies. Although housing and support cannot be separated, especially in the context of failed tenancies, support is dealt with more fully in Chapter 5.

The evidence presented here is both quantitative and qualitative, based on the semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data presented are indicative of the experiences of women fleeing domestic abuse, but not necessarily representative of all women fleeing abuse since the sample was not drawn to achieve this. They provide the context within which the qualitative data can be assessed. The latter provide a rich source of information on the housing and other problems facing women wishing to escape from situations of domestic abuse.

The Housing Options for Women Experiencing Domestic Abuse

Chapter 2 discussed the disadvantaged position of women generally in the housing system, derived largely from their position in the labour market; women are less likely to be employed than men because of child rearing responsibilities, and when they do work tend to earn less. This disadvantaged position applies particularly to women from the ethnic minorities. (Mama, 1989: 88).

Women experiencing domestic abuse and wishing to escape from that abuse are even more disadvantaged; their already weak position in the housing system is further weakened by the need to sometimes move quickly. Moves are often unplanned and usually accompanied by a loss of income, at least temporarily. Women with dependent children face particular difficulties connected with schooling and children's need for stability and security.

Given these difficulties, the option of the woman remaining in the home and the abuser being permanently excluded is attractive. Although there are legal mechanisms for doing this and local authorities can use the perpetration of domestic abuse as grounds for eviction, these measures take time and can leave the woman in an insecure position and vulnerable to further abuse. She may also wish to leave to make a new start and re-assert her independence. For many reasons, women may choose to leave despite the difficulties involved in doing so.

The major tenure for Scottish households is owner-occupation; this is also the most reliable source of a quality dwelling in a desirable neighbourhood. Access to the owner-occupied sector depends on either an income to support mortgage repayments or capital assets. In the private rented sector, rents are unsubsidized and often higher than will be covered by Housing Benefit. In the social rented sector, the supply of quality dwellings in popular neighbourhoods has shrunk significantly over the last twenty years and vacancies occur most frequently in the unpopular, difficult-to-let schemes. This provides the context within which women fleeing domestic abuse have to find housing solutions.

Domestic abuse is not restricted to one part of society; it occurs in low and high income households and women can be tenants or owner occupiers. The decision to leave a situation in which domestic abuse is experienced can be planned or it can occur as an emergency related to a particular incident of abuse. Figure 4.1 shows these circumstances and the housing options available to women fleeing domestic abuse. Although theoretically all the options are available to women in all circumstances, these circumstances will constrain their choices and some women may find their routes out of abuse limited by the housing options open to them. They may find that the price of leaving their abuser is a significant reduction in the quality of their housing conditions with a consequent reduction in quality of life for themselves and their children.

Figure 4.1 Housing options for women fleeing domestic abuse

	<i>Unplanned</i>	<i>Planned</i>
<i>Owner occupier</i>	Refuge, family/friends, HPU Temporary/supported accommodation Independent tenancy Owner occupier	Refuge, family/friends, HPU Temporary/supported accommodation Independent tenancy Owner occupier
<i>Tenant</i>	Refuge, family/friends, HPU Temporary/supported accommodation Independent tenancy Owner occupier	Refuge, family/friends, HPU Temporary/supported accommodation Independent tenancy Owner occupier

Women who plan their move are at an advantage and may be less likely to need emergency accommodation such as a Refuge, the local authority Homeless Persons Unit, or staying with family or friends. They will have had time to explore their options and make suitable preparations. Their choices however may still be severely constrained. Women who are owner occupiers will find it difficult to move directly to their own property if they have no income to support a mortgage; they may also need to extract equity from the marital home, which takes time. Women who do not work will depend upon this equity if they are to remain as owner occupiers, and access to it requires the co-operation of the abusive partner or recourse to legal action. The initial move therefore is likely to be to emergency or temporary accommodation of some sort, or an independent tenancy. Those women who work and/or can extract equity from the marital home may eventually become owner-occupiers in their own right, but many may have to become tenants in the medium to long term because of income or capital deficit. Women with dependent children may be reluctant to move because of their desire to protect the housing and schooling circumstances of the children. Middle class women and owner-occupiers in particular may be reluctant to move to a council estate and may prefer to move to private rented property despite the higher rents.

Women who are tenants will very rarely have the option of owner occupation and their long-term option will be an independent tenancy. The routes to that tenancy will vary dependent on their particular circumstances and needs, but the quality of the dwelling and neighbourhood they obtain will depend on the degree of control they can exercise over their re-housing experience and in particular the extent to which they can wait for an offer they find attractive. This in turn will be determined by the allocation policies of the housing agencies with which they are involved. The fact that there is a shortage of quality accommodation in popular neighbourhoods means that the ability of the housing agencies to meet women's preferences is often constrained. Only those women with access to funds will be able to use the option of the private rented sector given the levels of private sector rents and the usual requirement for at least one month's rent as a deposit.

Women whose moves are unplanned and occur as a response to a crisis are at a further disadvantage, whether owner occupiers or tenants. They are far more likely to need emergency accommodation, whether that be a Refuge, the Homeless Persons Unit or with family or friends. In the longer term, women who are owner-occupiers may be able to become home owners in their own right after a period in temporary accommodation or as a tenant. Women who were tenants face the same constraints as those former tenants whose move was planned in terms of accessing quality rented accommodation, but may find the process of obtaining this accommodation more problematic because of the uncontrolled manner of their leaving the perpetrator.

Whatever the circumstances, women fleeing domestic abuse face severe housing constraints. Their options are limited and in most cases their most realistic route to independent living is a tenancy. Because of income constraints, these tenancies are most likely to be in the social rented sector where there are already shortages of quality dwellings in popular neighbourhoods and competing demands from other households. Once having obtained a tenancy, they must then be able to sustain it if they are to maintain their independence and reduce their vulnerability to further abuse.

Women's Knowledge of their Housing Options

No matter how many housing options are open to women fleeing abuse, they remain theoretical unless women are aware of them and how to access them. An already

constrained set of choices becomes even more constrained when information concerning them is incomplete. The agency interviews demonstrated that in recent years an increasing level of publicity had raised awareness about domestic abuse and associated with this there had been more information and advice leaflets informing women of their rights and options. However, the effectiveness of this information is difficult to assess and it appeared not to be sufficiently focused on housing options. From what the participants were telling us it remains the case that many women lack a clear understanding of their options. Furthermore, their perception of these options is not positive; for example, there is often a negative perception of refuge accommodation and an expectation that the response from the local authority will be poor housing in low demand estates.

The participants' knowledge of the possible routes out of abuse was indeed incomplete, making escape from that abuse more difficult. Furthermore, the trauma and chronic stress which women experience as a consequence of abuse can mean that their ability to access and process information that is available is limited. The quotes below from the interviews illustrate this:

I went to the housing, I had a letter from a family friend, and that was the only person I knew could get me away from this situation that I could go and live with and she gave me letters saying that if I could get a house she would help to look after me. There was no possible way so I could have had more information from the council. I was really worried about going out as well. I didn't have any fight left in myself to ask the right questions and everything, so I got very limited information. (White woman, one child, private tenant)

I was dealing with the council they were about as much use as a hole in the head to be honest. I got no information from them. Every time I was supposed to see a certain person I didn't even know what the person's name was, they were either never there or – you got no help whatsoever. (White woman, one child, H.A. tenant)

Looking back I didn't know where to go for help, it sounds silly at my age [43], but I didn't really know where to go for help. (White woman, one child, L.A. tenant)

These quotes indicate not only a lack of information but, for some women, a degree of distress that hampered their ability to find information. In other, less stressful circumstances they would almost certainly cope with their problems more successfully.

Many women have effective coping strategies and participants exhibited determination and self reliance in removing themselves from abusive situations:

[planning to leave for]... about a year, I used to do overtime and banked all of that, so I knew when I left I would be OK financially. (White woman, two children, H.A. tenant)

I never had much information. Housing no, because I had a private landlord. After that I got some information and I went to the housing associations in the areas and filled in the forms and had meetings with the advisors and then they offered me membership and I go into monthly meetings. (Asian woman, three children, H.A. tenant)

It remains the case however that for many women their information is incomplete concerning their rights and options. This is most acute prior to leaving and can be a severe obstacle to escape from the abusive situation. Police Domestic Abuse Units in the study areas are becoming more effective in contacting women as a result of domestic abuse incidents and offering information prior to leaving (see Chapter 6). Access to information can increase significantly on leaving, dependent on the route they take. Evidence is presented later that those women who contact Women's Aid receive more information than others, and that this information is offered in a more sympathetic and effective way than by official agencies such as local authority Homeless Persons' Units.

The Re-housing Process

Leaving a perpetrator of domestic abuse is not a single act but a process. It involves emotional and practical difficulties which interact and compound each other, and where children are involved becomes more complex and problematic. Many women leave and return to their partner several times before they make a final break; these returns usually taking place very soon after leaving. This section examines the role of housing in this process and the difficulties that this posed for the women in our sample.

Table 4.2 shows the length of time that had elapsed between the interview and the woman leaving the perpetrator. About half had left the perpetrator over two years ago and have almost certainly left for good; about a fifth left between one and two years ago and have probably made a final break. The remainder (28%) had left less than a year ago and may not have completed the process.

Table 4.1 Time since leaving partner

< 1 year	11 (28%)
1 - 2 years	9 (23%)
> 2 years	19 (49%)
Total	39 (100%)

Count (Percentage of Sample)

It has been indicated above that the most likely final housing destination of women fleeing domestic abuse was a tenancy. Table 4.3 shows the current accommodation of the women and confirms this, with three quarters of the women living in rented accommodation. Only five of the women had been owner-occupiers and three remained so after leaving.

Table 4.2 Previous and current accommodation

	Previous Tenure	Current Accommodation
Women's Aid Refuge	0	2 (5%)
Tenancy	32 (82%)	33 (85%)
Owner-occupier	5 (13%)	3 (7%)
Other	2 (5%)	1 (3%)
Total	39 (100%)	39 (100%)

Count (Percentage of Sample)

Escaping domestic abuse is a process, as indicated above, and it is rare for this process to take only one move or step. Table 4.4 shows the number of steps or moves the women took to reach their current stage and accommodation since the last time they left their partners. Most took only two steps, but eleven took three or more steps. Most had attempted to leave at least once before, and some had left and returned several times. The data and experiences reported in this section relate only to the last separation from the perpetrator.

Table 4.3 Number of steps to current accommodation

1 step	5 (13%)
2 steps	22 (56%)
3 steps	10 (26%)
4 steps	1 (3%)
5 steps	1 (3%)
Total	39 (100%)

Count (Percentage of Sample)

Table 4.5 shows what those steps were at each stage. The first step was most commonly to some sort of emergency accommodation, accounting for 28 women³. Thereafter, most women proceeded to tenancies either at Stage 2 or Stage 3. A minority

³ The distribution between Refuges and Homeless Person's Units should not be taken as an indication of the experience of women more generally since the sampling method was not designed to achieve this. More women were obtained for the sample from the Women's Aid groups than from the local authorities.

of women had more complex experiences involving moves back to a Refuge or sequential tenancies. Eleven women had had more than one tenancy, and these are examined in more detail in Section 4.4.

Table 4.4 Steps in leaving abuse

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Stayed in home	4 (10%)	0	0	0	0
Family/friends	11 (28%)	1 (3%)	0	0	0
Homeless Persons Unit	3 (8%)	0	1 (8%)	0	0
Women's Aid Refuge	17 (43%)	7 (21%)	0	2 (67%)	0
Tenancy	3 (8%)	23 (70%)	10 (84%)	1 (33%)	1 (100%)
Owner-occupier	0	1 (3%)	1 (8%)	0	0
Other	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0	0	0
Total	39 (100%)	33 (100%)	12 (100%)	3 (100%)	1 (100%)

Count (Percentage of Sample)

The routes through the various housing options taken by the women are shown in Tables 4.6 and 4.7, which show the moves between Stages 1 and 2, and Stages 2 and 3. For example, of the eleven women whose first move was to family or friends, four then moved to a refuge, six obtained an independent tenancy and one became an owner occupier; of the 16 women whose first move was to a Refuge, one moved to another Refuge at Stage 2 and 13 moved to independent tenancies (Table 4.6). Of the six women whose second move was to a Refuge, one then moved to local authority Homeless Persons' accommodation and five obtained independent tenancies; of the four whose second move was to a tenancy, three moved to other tenancies and one became an owner occupier (Table 4.7).

Table 4.5 Moves from Step 1 to Step 2

Step 2 ↓	Step 1 → Stayed in home	Family /friends	WA Refuge	HPU	Tenancy	Other	Table Total
Not applicable	2 (5%)	0	1 (3%)	0	2 (5%)	1 (3%)	6 (14%)
Family/friends	1 (3%)	0	0	0	0	0	1 (3%)
Women's Aid Refuge	0	4 (10%)	1 (3%)	2 (5%)	0	0	7 (18%)
Tenancy	1 (3%)	6 (15%)	14	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0	23 (59%)
Owner-occupier		1 (3%)	0	0	0	0	1 (3%)
Other		0	1 (3%)	0	0	0	1 (3%)
Table Total	4 (10%)	11 (28%)	17 (44%)	3 (8%)	3 (8%)	1 (3%)	39 (100%)

Count (Percentage of Sample)

Table 4.6 Moves from Step 2 to Step 3

Step 3 ↓	Step 2 →			
	Family /friends	WA Refuge	Tenancy	Table Total
HPU	0	1 (8%)	0	1 (8%)
Tenancy	1 (8%)	6 (50%)	3 (25%)	10 (84%)
Owner-occupier	0	0	1 (8%)	1 (8%)
Table Total	1 (8%)	7 (58%)	4 (33%)	12 (100%)

Count (Percentage of Sample)

Despite the complexities of the various routes and the differing housing options that women in the sample took, most ended up in independent tenancies. These offer the best chance for the women to re-establish their independence and to rebuild some sort of home for themselves and their children, for those who have them. Their experience of these tenancies is examined in the next Section.

Independent Tenancies

A tenancy is the most realistic housing option for women fleeing abuse. This is largely due to financial constraints rather than a matter of choice. This section examines the women's experiences of obtaining rented accommodation, and their satisfaction levels with it. The experiences of women who have had more than one tenancy will be examined in detail.

Table 4.8 shows the current and previous accommodation of the women. For current accommodation, most are in the social rented sector rather than in private rented accommodation, mainly because of the higher barriers to entry for the latter. Access to the different sectors is examined below, as well as levels of satisfaction with different landlords.

Table 4.7 Previous by Current Tenure

Previous Tenure ↓	Current Accommodation →				Table Total
	Women's Aid Refuge	Tenancy	Owner-occupier	Other	
Local Authority	1 (2.56%)	16 (41%)	0.00	1 (2.56%)	18 (46%)
Housing Association	0.00	4 (10.3%)	0.00	0.00	4 (10%)
Private Let	1 (2.56%)	7 (18%)	2 (5.1%)	0.00	10 (26%)
Owner-occupier	0.00	4 (10.3%)	1 (2.56%)	0.00	5 (13%)
Other	0.00	2 (5.1%)	0.00	0.00	2 (5%)
Table Total	2 (5%)	33 (85%)	3 (8%)	1 (3%)	39 (100%)

Count (Percentage of Sample)

The distribution of the sample for current landlord shows a majority in housing association property; this reflects, to some extent, the sampling methodology. Most women re-housed as a result of domestic abuse are actually re-housed by local authorities. The previous tenure reveals that most of the sample came from local authority housing, but no conclusions can be drawn from this with respect to all women experiencing abuse.

A key objective of the research is to establish whether post-abuse independent tenancies can be sustained. Table 4.9 shows how long the current tenancies have lasted. Eleven have lasted more than a year and five more than two years. The other tenancies may endure. The tenancies that ended will be examined in more detail in the next Section.

Table 4.8 Length of current tenancies

Length of time since you/partner left ↓	1 – 3 months	3 - 6 months	6 - 12 months	12 - 24 months	> 24 months	Table Total
< 1 year	2 (5.7%)	3 (8.3%)	3 (8.3%)	1 (2.9%)	0	9 (25.7%)
1 – 2 years	1 (2.9%)	2 (5.7%)	3 (8.3%)	3 (8.3%)	0	9 (25.7%)
> 2 years	1 (2.9%)	0	5 (14.3%)	4 (11.4%)	8 (22%)	18 (51%)
Table Total	4 (11%)	5 (14%)	11 (31%)	8 (22%)	8 (22%)	36 (100%)

Count (Percentage of Sample)

Access to rented accommodation needs to be set within the context of a shortage of quality affordable accommodation in popular areas, and of market rents in the private sector. Women seeking rented accommodation thus face competing demands from other households in need and households with greater market power.

Access to the private rented sector depends on being able to meet a market rent and also having a deposit (usually a month's rent) plus a month's rent in advance. Housing benefit rarely covers all of the rent. A private sector tenancy has the advantages of usually being furnished (important when a woman has had to abandon her belongings, including furniture, cooker etc) and often being in acceptable neighbourhoods. Only three women in the sample are currently living in private rented property and few have had access to sufficient funds to access the private rented sector. Those that did had struggled over a period of time to get the money. The quotes below illustrate these points:

...this is a private let. I did it through a letting agency so I had to pay all that myself which just about crippled me for quite a while.....it was £800 to pay up-front. It took me quite a long time to

get it organized, but I got it in the end and I'm quite happy now. (White woman, four children, private tenant).

I get housing benefit but I also pay some rent myself as the housing benefit doesn't cover it. Because basically the housing benefit people don't like you renting from private landlords as they charge too much for flats. The rent on my flat is over £420 per month, so out of that I have to pay £95 per month as well. (White woman, one child, private tenant)

.....I cashed in the policy, I felt guilty owing everybody money. It just went on the deposit and I never got my deposit back because they were looking for the first month's rent plus a deposit. The social didn't give me it. It was £900. (White woman, four children, private tenant)

for a week I wandered the streets with the children during the day looking for private lets. I sold jewelry, everything to try and get enough money for a deposit for a house and I couldn't. It was about £850 I needed and I couldn't get that. (White woman, four children, H.A. tenant)

A move to the private rented sector is almost always a planned move and, unless the woman is earning a decent income, will impose a financial burden upon her. A modest income may bar access because of non-eligibility for Housing Benefit. A private let may offer a short-term housing option, but will not be accessible or sustainable for most women fleeing domestic abuse. Assured tenancies also do not offer the security of tenure offered by a Scottish Secure Tenancy in the social rented sector.

Most women fleeing domestic abuse have to rely on the social rented sector for long-term accommodation, and 30 of the 33 women in our sample who were renting property were tenants of the council or housing associations. Rents in social rented housing are affordable and not an issue in terms of access as long as Housing Benefit is arranged; this issue is covered in Chapter 5. More significant for the sustainability of the tenancy are the quality of the accommodation and neighbourhood, and whether she is safe from her former partner.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003 gives women fleeing domestic abuse priority status as of right rather than the hierarchy of priority defined in the 1987 Act. This means that local authorities must provide them with permanent accommodation when they present as homeless and housing associations now have a legal obligation to assist local authorities to do this as a consequence of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. Furthermore, women with dependent children have an additional qualification for priority status. Theoretically, women fleeing domestic abuse should be in a good position to obtain affordable accommodation suitable for their needs. There are issues connected with getting financial assistance and practical support to

furnish such accommodation, and these are also dealt with in Chapter 5. The issues discussed here are access to and availability of accommodation that meets women's needs and preferences.

The experiences of the women in terms of accessing local authority accommodation and the quality of the accommodation offered have not been happy. All three authorities normally make only one or two offers of permanent accommodation (discussed more fully in Chapter 6) and if these are refused the woman loses her priority status. This will mean a longer period in temporary accommodation or a Refuge. The quality of the offer thus becomes crucial. Additionally, some women felt that their difficulties had not been understood by the council officers and that they had been treated unsympathetically. In addition to the trauma of experiencing and surviving domestic abuse, almost all had suffered difficulties in establishing their independence and some had endured unsympathetic and at times judgmental treatment from the agencies with a duty to assist them.

They were terrible, absolutely awful. They were treating me like a second class citizen because of my predicament, because of my mental health....I didn't have any fight left in myself to ask the right questions and everything, so I got very limited information. (White woman, one child, private tenant)

They just give you one offer. They say you are homeless and no matter what we give you, you have to take it. It's like that and that's not nice, just because we are homeless you can't just give us anything" (Asian woman, one child, temporary accommodation)

The housing association were good about it, but the council weren't...they allocated me a house 100 yards from where my husband was staying and I did tell them this but they didn't seem to care. (White woman, one child, H.A. tenant)

The council they pushed me into signing the missive. She didn't actually say my wee one would be taken from me but she knew that the fear was there. It was sheer fear because I didn't have a house and I did my best to see she was alright. (White woman, one child, H.A. tenant)

I couldn't believe the state of it, it was one of the worst flats they must have had. It looked like a place where junkies came into and do whatever they had to do. The veranda outside was full to the brim with rubbish and pigeons. They said they would get all that done. The sewage was coming up the toilet pans. The floor was crawling with beetles. It was disgusting. Along the walls there were lots of wires exposed. I just couldn't believe at the time what was happening, when is this going to end, it has got to stop somewhere. I went into the living room and it was just a mess. I had no choice, I had to take it. I left with one of the support workers and there was another person there with us and we went for a coffee. I said to them what position am I in if I don't take this house? (White woman, one child, H.A. tenant)

The conclusions that can be drawn from these powerful testimonies are as follows. First, the interviewed women were often subjected to, at best, unsympathetic treatment by local authority housing departments, and at worst were treated in a bureaucratic manner

which appeared callous to the women at a time when they were vulnerable and in need of considerable support. Some were made to feel as if they were to blame for their abuse and were being further punished for this. Second, the quality of the offers they received was poor and they felt that they were not being treated as fairly as other applicants. The properties themselves were often in disrepair (sometimes severely so) and the neighbourhoods unpopular and subject to social disorder, crime and drug abuse. Some women were offered properties close to where their former partner was living. Only two women stated that they had been satisfied with the treatment they had had from the local authority and the offer they had been made.

Not surprisingly, some of the women refused the offer they had been made and sought other solutions to their housing problems. Three women had obtained private rented accommodation; however, there appeared to be more risk for these women to sustain these tenancies especially if they are dependent on low incomes. The three women in private rented property had all had to creatively find ways, with considerable tenacity, of saving over a lengthy period to get the deposit. They were generally pleased with their property, but were worried about their security of tenure. More commonly, women had recourse to housing associations and 20 of the women obtained tenancies through this route. Their experiences were generally positive, with satisfaction with both the manner in which they were interviewed and also the quality of the accommodation they were offered. The reasons for these disparities will be examined in more detail in Chapter 6. Whatever the reasons, the disparities are likely to be of significance with respect to the sustainability of the tenancies and the ability of the women to survive the abuse they experienced and rebuild their lives. The next section examines the tenancies that the interviewed women obtained with particular reference to how long they have lasted and, for those that ended, the reasons for the cessation of the tenancy.

The Sustainability of the Tenancies

An independent tenancy is the most effective route for the majority of women experiencing domestic abuse to regain control over their lives and re-establish a stable home for their children. The degree to which the tenancies they obtain provide them with security and meet their expectations and preferences is thus crucial. Key variables here

include safety from ex-partners, the quality of the dwelling, the nature of the neighbourhood and the extent to which supportive social networks are available.

It is tempting to conclude that short tenancies are failed tenancies. Some short tenancies may be classed as failures, especially if they were abandoned rather than terminated in a controlled way. Some short tenancies however can be a necessary step to something better. This section examines the duration of tenancies and also the reasons why those that ended did so. The data are indicative rather than representative of the experiences of all women re-housed because of domestic abuse.

A tenancy was considered to have failed if any of the following applied:

- ◆ it was abandoned
- ◆ the woman returned to a Refuge
- ◆ the woman returned to her partner and subsequently left him again
- ◆ the partner moved in with the woman and she subsequently left
- ◆ the woman ended the tenancy due to harassment, whether by a partner or neighbours.

A tenancy which was ended in a controlled way and did not involve the perpetrator was not considered to be a failed tenancy, but it could have been a tenancy which did not meet the woman's requirements or preferences. It may have been terminated by means of a transfer request to another area or more suitable property using the landlord's normal procedures; in this case, the woman has retained an independent tenancy but transferred it to another property in a legitimate way.

This section discusses the number and length of tenancies women held after fleeing from domestic abuse. Some women in our sample experienced only a single situation of domestic abuse in which they left the perpetrator and we examine the nature and duration of their tenancies since leaving that perpetrator. However, some women left the same perpetrator on more than one occasion or had experienced domestic abuse with different partners whom they had. For these women we examine their tenancy history in so far as it relates to these different leaving situations.

Table 4.10 shows the duration of the tenancies that ended divided into failed and non-failed.

Table 4.9 Duration of ended tenancies

	Ended	Failed
≤ 6 months	1	5
6 – 12 months	5	3
12 – 24 months	6	1
> 24 months	2	4
Total Tenancies	14	13

Although some failed tenancies lasted only a short time, others lasted more than a year and some more than two years. The non-failed tenancies tended to last longer. These data can be misleading however in that some of the failed tenancies had been in the woman's name before she became involved with the abusive partner. Some of the tenancies which did not fail were also short in duration. This re-emphasises the point that the duration of a tenancy is not the only variable in judging its success.

Table 4.11 shows how many of the interviewed women have had more than one tenancy, and the number of tenancies. Current tenancies are excluded. The number of tenancies that could be considered as failed tenancies is also shown. These data indicate that some of the women have had periods of considerable residential instability involving frequent moves, sometimes over long periods and sometimes over short periods.

Table 4.10 Number of ended and failed tenancies

Number of tenancies	Number of Women	
	Ended	Failed
1	9	9
2	1	3
3	1	1
Total No. of Women	11	13
Total No. of tenancies	14	13

The women were asked for the reasons why their tenancies were ended and the reasons given are shown in Table 4.12. There could be more than one reason given for each tenancy.

Table 4.11 Reasons for failed and ended tenancies

	Ended
Bad neighbourhood	8
Personal/social support	2
Notice to quit	2
Purchase new property	1
Moved in with new partner	1
Total Tenancies	14

	Failed
Harassment by partner/family or neighbours	6
Return to partner	5
Perpetrator moved in	2
Total Tenancies	13

Most of the failed tenancies did so because of the behaviour of, or re-engagement with, the perpetrator. This suggests that the re-housing process does not always take sufficient account of the woman's need for protection from the perpetrator. The ability to sustain a tenancy may be further exacerbated by having to live in a difficult neighbourhood. Some women (albeit a small proportion) find it so difficult that they return to almost certain further abuse. The interviewed women who had had failed tenancies eventually did make a final break with their partners and some are now in new independent tenancies which they may sustain. Their chances of doing so will be greater if they have been re-housed in a quality dwelling and a popular neighbourhood. It may also be that their determination to quit the relationship is now such that they will endure temporary discomfort and move on to a more acceptable tenancy in a controlled way which preserves their independence.

Evidence to support this is given by those tenancies that had been ended but had not necessarily failed. The reason given for ending the tenancies was the same in all cases: having to live in a bad neighbourhood. The women responded to this by applying for a transfer or finding accommodation in the private rented sector. As they did not return to an abusive situation, left in a controlled manner, and retained their independence, it is difficult to say that these were failed tenancies. The tenancies may have been uncomfortable and not what the women wanted, but they may well have been steps towards what they wanted and in those terms could be considered a success. Whether they should be expected to go through an intermediate stage before getting what they wanted is a question which will be addressed in Chapter 6.

These conclusions are indicative rather than definitive because the sample of women is small. In terms of the number of tenancies of re-housed women that are of short duration, some evidence is provided from local authority data. Table 4.13 shows the number of women who were re-housed by Moray Council as a result of domestic abuse between 1999 and 2002 and the number whose tenancies ended. Also shown is the average duration of the terminated tenancies. No information is available concerning the reasons why the tenancies ended. About 20% of the tenancies lasted less than a year. This is a smaller proportion than for the interviewed women but the figures are not directly comparable.

**Table 4.12 Women Experiencing Domestic Abuse 1999-2002
The Moray Council**

	April 1999 – March 2000	April 2000 – March 2001	April 2001 – March 2002
Number of women presenting as homeless as a result of domestic violence	45	44	34
Number of women re-housed due to domestic violence	Figures unavailable	30	21
Number of women still in allocated property	Figures unavailable	24	17
Number of women terminating tenancy	Figures unavailable	6	4
Length of time tenancy lasted	Figures unavailable	219 days	149 days

Source: HL1 data

Women's Perspectives of the Housing Process

'The house is my stability and my security, it is my domain.' (White woman, one child, L.A. tenant)

From a woman's perspective, housing 'ranks as one of the crucial factors affecting women's ability to find viable alternatives to a violent relationship' (Dobash and Dobash, 1992:93). The ability to find safe, affordable housing is pivotal in allowing women the freedom of choice to live without threats of violence to themselves and their children. Women participating in the research had varied, passionate and insightful perspectives on

the housing process from which they had emerged. The remainder of this section will describe the experiences and views of the women through the housing process.

The housing process

Many of the women found the period prior to leaving the perpetrator a difficult and isolating time and found information regarding their housing options difficult to access. The majority of women expressed negative experiences in relation to local authority housing staff, of which the following quote is typical:

'The council were really reluctant to refer me, the woman there didn't seem to connect with what I was going through...I knew she was going to give me places I couldn't go and she didn't seem to understand.' (White woman, five children, H.A. tenant)

However, some women did report positive experiences with a number of agencies:

Brilliant [Women's Aid], best people ever..' (White woman, two children, H.A. tenant)

The Domestic Violence Unit was the best help....they were the main help I got (White woman, no children, H.A. tenant)

Housing - no, because I had a private landlord. After that I got some information and went to the housing associations in the area...they offered me membership ... they [H.A.] were really helpful ... (Asian woman, three children (custody with father), H.A. tenant)

Overall, in our sample women accessed advice on housing and related issues from a number of sources (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.13 Sources of Housing Information and Advice

Not applicable	3 (7.7%)
Police	9 (23%)
Social Work	3 (7.7%)
Women's Aid	21 (53.9%)
Family / friends	1 (2.6%)
Other	2 (5.1%)
Total	39 (100%)

Count (Percentage of Sample)

Many participants had no idea where to go for information or advice. When asked how this could be improved, many women wanted information about Women's Aid and related organisations to be more widely available. This is also a recommendation within the National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse (Scottish Partnership on Domestic

Abuse, 2000) for raising public awareness by using posters in public places, media coverage and leafleting merchandise.

I think it [Women's Aid] should be published in a magazine. I think it should be more published in libraries and public place. (Asian woman, one child, temporary accommodation)

More information and wider access to the information. The information is out there but it's not much good if you're going from one place to another and not getting it. (White woman, no children, H.A. tenant)

If I had known there was a Women's Aid I would have contacted them, I was paying so much for private accommodation. (Asian woman, one child, temporary accommodation)

There also appeared to be differences in the information ethnic minority women were accessing. Unfortunately exact statistics regarding levels of domestic abuse among minority ethnic women are unavailable (Baroness Uddin, 1999). Thus, while women who present to the two specialist Women's Aid Groups in Edinburgh and Glasgow may receive appropriate information and support, it is apparent that many women from ethnic minority groups are unaware of available support. There are a number of factors which may impact on access to information and advice among Asian women. These can include women being misinformed, having little knowledge about their housing or welfare rights, and language barriers. Also, the cultural pressures to stay within the family to avoid shaming family and community are high (Hemat Gryffe's Women's Aid, 2002).

...because Asians don't know about these kind of things.... I wish I know about this four or five years ago...I have just wasted my life there. (Asian woman, three children, L.A. tenant)

I didn't know there was such a thing or somewhere like the refuge, I didn't know anything whatsoever... (Asian woman, one child, temporary accommodation)

I knew nothing about Women's Aid, even though I am 26 I never knew about things like this. (Asian woman, one child, temporary accommodation)

Leaving the Perpetrator

When it came to leaving the family home, the participants fell into two categories: those who had been able to plan ahead and those who had had to leave suddenly. Reasons for a sudden move appeared to be either fear or sometimes a reaction to particularly violent attack:

Oh aye, it had to be quick...two or three times I thought about getting away, but I was scared, you're trapped, you want to go, but you're frightened to go...but then I was expecting [my

baby]...it was her safety as well as mine, that's what made me go. (White woman, one child, H.A. tenant)

On this incident he had been particularly violent, wrecked the house, had smashed the windows and had threatened to slit my throat...the social worker and the probation officer actually came to the house to collect him...I was bedraggled, confused, hysterical and vomiting as my nerves were shot to hell...they said "you are coming out of here as he will come back". We were taken to a Women's Aid centre. (White woman, two children, L.A. tenant)

He came in drunk on the Thursday and battered me, so when I woke up the next morning I told him I was leaving. (White woman, two children, H.A. tenant)

It was three o'clock in the morning. The police dropped me on my mum's doorstep. I had to try and make arrangements to get my belongings the following day, well some of them anyway. (White woman, one child, H.A. tenant)

Women who were able to think and plan ahead appeared to be at an advantage; for example, legal advice could be sought, furniture and personal belongings could be taken, accommodation, although often temporary, could be organised and consideration could be given to the impact on the children.

I left when he was at work, so it was planned in my own mind but I had to get the right time to get out because I wanted to take my furniture with me. So I planned for the furniture van to come at a certain time...I took myself and my youngest daughter [on holiday] for the weekend just to get away. I thought it would be not so much of a wrench for her if I took her away for a couple of days first. (White woman, two children, L.A. tenant)

Well, something clicked in my head [one day] and "I said I don't want to put up with this". From then on until the [date] I just thought and I knew what I was going to do, I didn't know when I was going to do it. I had seen a solicitor...I have a really good friend who runs a bed and breakfast and I asked her if she would take me in....then I went to see a police officer and she put me in touch with the housing...I went to the council and had a house in a fortnight. (*White woman, no children, L.A. tenant*)

The process of being re-housed

Two main issues emerged from the interviews regarding the re-housing process. First, some of the women found that they were only entitled to one offer of housing from their local authority. If this offer was refused the women were regarded as being voluntarily homeless.

They just interviewed you and said "we will give you one offer if you like it or not", there was a really big waiting list...You had to take the first offer you got. If you don't take the first offer you are on a massive waiting list, you could be eighty ninth on it or something like that and be waiting for ages' (Asian woman, one child, L.A. tenant)

I went to [the] Council and they were no help. They said "you'll just have to take the first thing we offer you and if you refuse that's it". I wasn't going to take that, I'd had a man telling me for

the last twenty years what I can and cannae dae and I lost the rag with them. (White woman, two children, H.A. tenant)

Second, many participants discussed with us the role the housing staff played in their re-housing process. While some found the staff at housing agencies helpful, most felt their treatment could have been better.

They were terrible, absolutely awful. They were treating me like a second class citizen because of my predicament, because of my mental health....I didn't have any fight left in myself to ask the right questions and everything, so I got very limited information. (White woman, one child, private tenant)

No, no advice [from the council], I just felt like a piece of dirt really. At the start I was put in this category, well you just have to get on with it.' (White woman, two children, H.A. tenant)

This finding confirms existing research which found that in the year 1996 –1997 only 11% of housing staff had received training on domestic abuse (Tagg M.,1997, p33). Tagg (op cit) reports that housing staff identified a need for training in relation to counseling skills (70%), knowledge of non-statutory agency provision (89%) and legal issues (52%). This acknowledged need for training was a factor expressed by many of the women interviewed:

I had to explain this and that, I felt like saying forget it and walking out. They asked you when did he hit you and how often did he hit you, some intimidating questions.....Woman to woman I think maybe, because a woman can understand, not every woman but a lot more than a young boy. (White woman, one child, L.A. tenant)

I ended up losing my rag with her, I said, "would you stay in a house like this", she said "we're not talking about me", I said but "I'm just like you, would you stay in this house", and she said "no". (White woman, one child, H.A. tenant).

I think they should have some kind of training just to give them an idea of what some women have to go through, I'm not looking for sympathy, just a bit of understanding. The last thing you need is somebody telling you what to do, you've had enough of that. (White woman, two children, H.A. tenant)

This need for training has been acknowledged by the National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse. It has been argued elsewhere that, already, 'training by Women's Aid has undoubtedly raised the consciousness of many housing officers concerning the realities and needs of women of women escaping violence' (Morley, 2000).

After re-housing: perceptions of tenancies and future plans

A number of participants, especially women in private accommodation, expressed their dissatisfaction with their tenancies.

I am happy about the house, but I'm not happy with the situation I'm in about my landlord I would rather have a council tenancy than that or a housing association. (White woman, one child, private tenant)

It was either go private or go back home...the rent is £82 a week for me, the rent is £935 a month...it's a short assured tenancy, but it's indefinite. (White woman, four children, private tenant)

It's not feasible to work at the moment because it's a private let and it's £400 a month... but I would have preferred to be in a housing association again and then maybe I could start to think about doing something instead of sitting in the house all day...this is just a six month let at a time and if you're doing things like decorating you think "well I've just spent all this money doing it and it's not going to be mine" (White woman, four children, private tenant)

These and other difficulties, such as finding large deposits and the delay of housing benefit for private accommodation, have been reported elsewhere in the literature (Malos, 1997, Buck, 2002). However, even when participants were able to access social housing, it was often felt that the accommodation was unsuitable. Some women would have liked a better area or flat location; one woman who had health problems was allocated a top floor flat:

Because of my spine I only go out once to bring the children in...I am thinking of applying again...they said you will apply after one year or whatever. (Asian woman, three children, L.A. tenant)

I am happy with the house....give me the same house over the other side [of town]. (White woman, one child, H.A. tenant)

I have a wee bit of garden at the back which is mine so I can get my washing out, I would have preferred a house but beggars can't be choosers. (White woman, two children, L.A. Tenant)

However, some women were completely happy with their new homes:

Yes, I love my house and I've got good neighbours. (White woman, two children, H.A. tenant)

Absolutely delighted, I love the area and my house it is great! (White woman, no children, H.A. tenancy)

The women who were happy in their tenancies had no intentions of moving, felt secure, happy and settled and were more able to think ahead to re-training, going back to work and to the future with their children.

The area's brilliant, I landed on my feet here...I don't want to move again, I'm sick of moving, this is the first time in years I haven't been living out of bags...I want to get some training so I can get a decent job' (White woman, two children, H.A. tenant)

It is brilliant...it's nice and cosy and I like having the security door it gives you peace of mind...I'm settled here for good I wouldn't move from here now. (White woman, no children, H.A. tenant)

Whether or not they were happy in their present accommodation, many participants had plans for the future, to find work, buy their own home or move on to another house:

Now I would really like a mortgage ...I would like a house with a front and back door and a garage for my car. It would have to be in a good neighbourhood where people would look out for you. This house is great I love it, but you can only see the fence in front of you' (White woman, two children, H.A. tenant)

I'll stay here as long as I can. I don't think I would move unless I could afford to buy somewhere nice then I would. (White woman, one child, H.A. tenant)

Long term plans...to get back over to the West End again, start driving lessons and get back into work or education. (White woman, one child, H.A. tenant)

Conclusions

Although obtaining an independent tenancy is the most realistic housing route for women who experience domestic abuse, the experiences of the interviewed women along this route were mixed at best, and in some cases harrowing. 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.

Local authorities are the main suppliers of affordable rented housing, 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 were usually in the most unpopular and difficult-to-let neighbourhoods. Refusal of these offers could mean a longer stay in temporary accommodation and, importantly, a loss of priority status. Some women in this situation resorted to the private rented sector, with subsequent strain on their finances.

The women who fared best were those who managed to be re-housed by housing associations. They were treated more sympathetically and were allocated better quality housing in more popular neighbourhoods. Their chances of sustaining their tenancies and independence were significantly increased. Most women fleeing domestic abuse will have

to rely on the public sector for re-housing. Unfortunately the supply of housing association accommodation is small compared to local authority housing.

Women who were re-housed by the local authority reacted in different ways. Women who had made a final decision to leave their partners and who had a degree of self-reliance or support often managed to sustain a tenancy in a difficult neighbourhood until such time as they could obtain a transfer to better accommodation or find accommodation with a housing association. Some were prepared to shoulder the financial burden of the private rented sector. Others who had not made the final decision to leave their partners for good, or who were not able to sustain independent living on their own, found it difficult to maintain their tenancy and either re-established a relationship with their partner or returned to a Refuge. However, the majority of the participants at the time of interview indicated a strong desire to remain independent and to sustain their tenancy.

Chapter 5

The Support Process

Access to safe and affordable housing is a necessary requirement to enable women to leave a relationship in which they experience domestic abuse. The provision of refuge spaces and temporary accommodation is a necessary part of the re-housing process. However, as our framework in chapter 2 describes, women also require support during some or all of the stages during which they leave their situation, get alternative housing and maintain their independent housing status. This chapter draws upon the interviews with women and the agency interviews to examine the nature of the support needs of different women and the variation in support needs and provision at different stages in the process. It considers the provision of support (the nature, availability and provider of support) and whether this is effective and sustainable. It considers the gaps in provision and discusses some of the reasons for these gaps. Finally, it considers the women's own experiences and their perception of the availability and suitability of support. Throughout the discussion the support needs of the children in the family will be considered in so far as these affect the woman's ability to sustain her tenancy.

Support Needs of Women

This section considers the nature of support that women may need. It considers the need for support at each of the four stages of the process (of leaving). It examines the access to support that women may experience following different re-housing pathways.

Types of Support

Women need different types of support when leaving a situation where they experience domestic abuse. Existing research and literature suggests four main types of support requirement – information, advice, advocacy and emotional support (ODPM, 2002 p13; Malos and Hague 1997; Goldsack, 1997). On the other hand, eligibility criteria for funding (from Housing Benefit or Supporting People) suggest a distinction between housing support, counselling support and personal support. This distinction is adapted here, based upon our conceptual framework outlined in chapter 2 and our empirical findings from the interviews, to classify the types of support women leaving a situation in

which they experience domestic abuse may require (figure 5.1). The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (Housing Support Services) Regulation 2002 defines twenty-one prescribed housing support services and this has also informed our typology. Recent legislation requires local authorities to provide information and advice services for homeless people (Housing (Scotland) Act, 2001). Hence, it is helpful to separately distinguish information and advice as a form of support. We do not include advocacy in this typology since this is more correctly defined as an approach to support provision which arises because of a lack of awareness or poor cultural / institutional attitudes rather than a specific form of support arising from the woman's own needs. We would thus suggest a useful organising typology of support to be the four main categories – information and advice, housing support, social support and personal support.

It has not been possible within the remit of this research to consider in depth the support provision for women leaving a domestic abuse situation who may have complex needs. However, there appears to be a lack of specialist provision and a lack of understanding of the issues involved. It is probable that repeat homelessness, among women who have experienced domestic abuse, is more prevalent among women who have other support needs (e.g. drug or alcohol dependency, learning disability, mental illness). This was reported to us in the agency interviews and is recognised, in part, in the national action plan. An understanding of the requirement for specialist support for women with complex needs would require further, more detailed, research to establish.

Figure 5.1 Typology of support for women experiencing domestic abuse

Housing Support	Social Support	Personal Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of temporary accommodation • Assistance with housing application • Assistance with housing benefit application • Assistance with community care grant and furniture grant applications • Assistance arranging moving in to accommodation • Assistance in arranging for repairs (landlord or plumbers, builders etc.). • Assistance with minor repairs (e.g. changing light bulbs, unblocking sinks). • Assistance in ensuring security of dwelling (e.g. locks, adaptations, cctv) • Arranging adaptations to cope with disability • Controlling access • Advice on tenancy rights • Advice on rent (or rent arrears) management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with budgeting/debt counselling • Assistance in claiming benefits • Resettlement activities • Organising access to professional help (mental health, Social Services etc) • Legal support (e.g. advice regarding child contact or custody, interdict hearings, accompanying to court) • Help with immigration process • Child care • Arranging children's support, schooling and related needs • Liaison with relatives • 'Good neighbour' tasks (e.g. welfare checks) • Arranging social events / social support • Dealing with disputes with neighbours • Interpreting (interviews, leaflets) • Advice on diet or food preparation • Material help (shopping, clothes) • Support for children and young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional support, personal therapy – including self-help groups • Counselling to cope with mental health problems – including group sessions • Counselling to deal with alcohol/drug addiction - including group therapy sessions • Support with life skills • Skills, training, employment • Personal safety training and aids • Medical support, health needs • Health visitor, community nurse, community psychiatric nurse sessions

Support during the process

In chapter 2 we described four main stages in the process of a woman leaving a situation of domestic abuse and establishing a sustainable housing outcome. Support needs may be different at each stage both for the woman herself and for her children.

This model is used in the remainder of this chapter to consider the nature of support she may require, what support is available and what women have said about their needs. Our a priori assumption about the need for support (for the woman and her children) at each stage is summarised in figure 5.2. The extent to which these needs are met appropriately, we assume, influences her decisions (e.g. to return to the partner, to seek re-housing) and affects her ability to maintain an independent autonomous household.

The types of support required and the level of support needed are different for different women. However, as a broad generalisation, it is apparent that the nature of support required does vary between the main stages of the process and there is a distinction to be made between short-term support needs and long-term support needs. This latter distinction is important since our empirical findings suggest that short-term needs are more visible and attract some (though inadequate) funding, while long-term needs are more hidden (and are therefore generally not funded). Because long-term support needs are less visible they tend to be either not recognised at all, not provided for sufficiently (i.e. for a sufficient time period) or not co-ordinated (e.g. support needs are not associated with the original domestic abuse situation).

Figure 5.2 The Support Process for Women

	<i>Information and advice</i>	<i>Housing Support</i>	<i>Social Support</i>	<i>Personal Support</i>
Prior to Leaving stage	X			X
Leaving stage	X	X	X	X
Re-housing stage		X	X	X
Post housing stage				X

While our sample of women interviewed is not representative, the evidence is suggestive of the way in which the availability of support or knowledge about support varies depending upon the pathway the woman adopts when leaving the situation of abuse. Table 5.1 shows the path women took on first leaving their situation and, in each of the five pathways, from where they received support. A substantial proportion of women reported receiving no support at the point at which they left the perpetrator. Women who turned to their family relied in equal measure on their family and on Women's Aid for support. Women whose first step was to a Women's Aid refuge had also received support from another voluntary organisation (e.g. Wise Women) and were much less likely to report receiving significant support from family. Those who had managed to move

directly to a tenancy had received support from the police and from family. Those who managed to remain in their own home also indicated receiving support from the police and from family. Only a small number of our sample went first to a homeless persons unit and these women appeared to receive little support.

Table 5.1 Support Received by Pathway (1st Step)

	Support Provider (Main)							Table Total
	Not applicable	Women's Aid	Social Work	Other Vol. Org.	Family, friends	Other	Police	
Stayed in home	1 (2.6%)	0	0	0	1 (2.6%)	0	2 (5.1%)	4 (10%)
Family/friends	2 (5.1%)	4 (10.3%)	0	1 (2.6%)	4 (10.3%)	0	0	11 (28%)
Women's Aid	0	11 (28.2%)	1 (2.6%)	3 (7.7%)	1 (2.6%)	0	1 (2.6%)	17 (44%)
Homeless person unit	0	1 (2.6%)	0	1 (2.6%)	0	1 (2.6%)	0	3 (8%)
Tenancy	0	0	0	1 (2.6%)	1 (2.6%)	0	1 (2.6%)	3 (8%)
Other	0	0	1 (2.6%)	0	0	0	0	1 (3%)
Table Total	3 (8%)	16 (41%)	2 (5%)	6 (15%)	7 (18%)	1 (3%)	4 (10%)	39 (100%)

As well as considering the support women received, depending upon the pathway women chose on leaving their situation of domestic abuse, it is also important to consider the support they sought at each stage of the process since this gives an indication of their support needs. However, this analysis does not give us any indication of the quality of the support they received or whether that support met their needs. The next section, which considers the women's perspectives on their experiences, gives some insight into this aspect.

Prior to leaving the situation in which they experienced domestic abuse, women needed information and advice and personal (i.e. emotional) support. Table 5.2 reflects this overall need and demonstrates that almost half of the women (45%, 17 in number) did not receive any information or advice and hence their leaving was unplanned and precipitate. For those who did seek advice Women's Aid was the most important source of information (one-third) followed by the Police (one-quarter). Almost 60% of women, at this stage, also required personal support in terms of emotional (or practical) support and fourth-fifths of these women sought this from family and friends.

Table 5.2 Support sought prior to leaving the perpetrator*Multiple responses are possible.*

	Advice & Info	Housing Support	Social Support	Personal Support
Women's Aid	13	3	1	
Social Work	5			1
Housing Agency	2			
Other Vol. Org.				
Family / friends	6	2	2	18
Other	1		1	1
Police	9	2	1	2
Health	4			1
Legal	5			

17 of the participants did not seek any advice/ information or support at this stage.

Once they had left the perpetrator, women had need of housing support and social support in equal measure. Table 5.3 demonstrates that, in our sample, women received this support predominantly from Women's Aid. The relative insignificance of other sources of housing and social support indicated in this evidence demonstrates the paucity of support women who do not manage to access a Women's Aid refuge may experience. This evidence also suggests that personal support was also important for most (85%) women but that at this stage they sought this support from family (34%) or from Women's Aid (25%).

Table 5.3 Support sought after leaving the perpetrator*Multiple responses are possible.*

	Advice & Info	Housing Support	Social Support	Personal Support
Women's Aid	5	23	23	10
Social Work	2	2	1	1
Housing Agency	1	1	0	0
Other Vol. Org.	0	0	0	0
Family / friends	4	9	5	15
Other	1	2	3	3
Police	1	1	2	1
Health	1	2	2	2
Legal	2	0	0	0
HPU	0	3	2	1

All of the participants did seek advice/ information or support at this stage.

During the re-housing stage women were living in very different situations – with family and friends, in Women's Aid refuges or in temporary accommodation – and hence the

support they sought reflects their situation to some degree as well as reflecting their support needs. As may be expected, housing support was the most sought after at this stage. However, at this stage in the process, women clearly had social and personal support needs in addition to their requirement for support to gain access to housing. Table 5.4 illustrates the importance of Women’s Aid in providing support of all types at this stage in the process. Women’s Aid was the most important source of housing support, followed by housing agencies. It was also the most important source of social support, followed by family and friends. Finally, Women’s Aid was almost as important as family and friends in relation to personal support at this stage in the process for the women interviewed in this research.

Table 5.4 Support Sought at the Re-housing Stage

Multiple responses are possible.

	Advice & Info	Housing Support	Social Support	Personal Support
Women's Aid	0	19	19	18
Social Work	2	0	1	1
Housing Agency	5	10	2	0
Other Vol. Org.	0	3	0	0
Family / friends	3	7	10	20
Other	0	1	1	2
Police	1	4	4	3
Health	2	0	3	0
Legal	0	0	0	0
HPU	0	3	2	1

All of the participants did seek advice/ information or support at this stage.

Once women have been re-housed, the level of support overall that they seek or receive reduces. On-going support after re-housing is less evident and may only persist for the first few months of a tenancy. However, during this stage personal support becomes more important and women sought personal support from more than one source (see Table 5.5). At this stage in the process, family and friends and Women’s Aid are the most important sources of personal support. However, for many women in the sample the support received from friends was from women they had met in the Women’s Aid refuge. Social support is predominantly received from Women’s Aid. Once again we assume that this reflects the nature of our sample and is indicative of the paucity of support that may be available for women who do not manage to access this pathway.

Table 5.5 Support Sought at the Post Housing Stage

Multiple responses are possible.

	Advice & Info	Housing Support	Social Support	Personal Support
Women's Aid	0	0	14	16
Social Work	2	0	2	1
Housing Agency	0	1	2	0
Other Vol. Org.	0	0	6	6
Family / friends	4	0	5	22
Other	0	0	2	3
Police	2	3	4	4
Health	2	0	3	4
Legal	0	0	3	0

2 of the 39 participants did not seek advice/ information or support at this stage.

It should be emphasised that this evidence reflects the support that women sought at each stage in the process. It does not indicate that the support they received met their needs nor that the quality of that support was appropriate for their needs. However, it does demonstrate that the type of support required varies between the stages of the process of leaving and re-housing. It also demonstrates that more support is available at the early stages of the process and that there is a relative paucity of support once the woman has been re-housed. It also indicates the importance of Women's Aid overall in support provision. Hence women who do not access Women's Aid support, either through choice or lack of provision, appear to face a harder struggle. Certainly it can be confidently confirmed from these findings that the support offered by statutory agencies – housing, social services especially – are not the immediate resort of women leaving domestic abuse situations. Family and friends appear as important sources of support sought by many women. However, the evidence presented in the next section will illustrate that this support is not always forthcoming for many women. The next section examines the women's perspectives on the nature and quality of the support they received.

Women's perspectives of support

While many of the women in our sample share similar experiences and background, the heterogeneity of their circumstances and experiences provides an insight into the spheres of informal and formal support for women who experience and flee domestic abuse. In this section we examine the views women expressed in relation to the support

they needed and received during the process of leaving the situation in which they experienced domestic abuse and obtaining permanent housing. For ease of description their experiences will be examined at each stage of the process and both informal and formal support will be considered.

Prior to leaving (or prior to the perpetrator leaving)

Many women need information, advice and support in order to leave a relationship in which they experience abuse, either because they do not know their rights, what options may be available to them or because they fear for their own safety or that of their children. The literature and previous research would suggest the importance of informal support networks of family and friends at this stage. Our research does not support this finding. Almost all the women in our sample stated that they had received little advice from their extended families. The main reason for this was they did not ask for advice from family or friends, either because they did not disclose the abuse or they were not close to their extended families (either geographically or emotionally), or their extended families did not want her to leave the perpetrator (this was especially true for women of Asian origin).

While the advice that the women did receive from extended family members varied quite significantly, most women reported a lack of empathy:

I was getting a lot of grief from my mum because I was still with him. (White woman, 5 children, HA tenant)

I used to phone my Mum up, she would just say 'you've made your bed...'. (White woman, 2 children, LA tenant)

A few of the women found that their sisters empathised with them and they advised them to contact Women's Aid:

My twin sister said what about trying Women's Aid... My sister has been to various Refuges in England and Scotland. (Asian woman, 2 children, Owner-occupier)

Where women did receive support from their family, prior to leaving, it tended to be of a more practical nature such as babysitting or some help financially. However, the majority felt that they were not able to get emotional support at that period from within their extended families. A very few women were able to rely on a close friend who provided advice and support (both practical and emotional):

My friend ... went to Women's Aid and got a council house. So that's why I came to Women's Aid. I asked my friend for help and she said phone Women's Aid. (Asian woman, 1 child, LA tenant).

Another woman's friend helped her find a private sector flat; however, she did comment with respect to advice:

Information, I did not have much apart from my friend and what she knew. (Asian woman, 3 children, HA tenant).

Similar to a finding by Wilcox (2000), several of the women commented that they have had limited contact with family or friends over the years because of the perpetrator's controlling behaviour:

... Our friends were his friends. I wasn't allowed out; the only place I was allowed to go to was the nursery and college. (White woman, 5 children, HA tenant)

I wasn't even allowed to go to the corner shop. I am so free now, he was so possessive. The only place I was allowed to go to was work. ... I wasn't allowed any friends [at work]. (Asian woman, 2 children, Owner-occupier)

I never told [my family] he was violent, I think my dad suspected, but I didn't say anything. I wasn't allowed to go and visit them, so they never really knew. I got picked up from my work and I was in the house. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

Although women had limited opportunity to access advice and support, especially within the informal sphere, due to the perpetrator's controlling behaviour, eventually some of the women sought advice and support from formal support networks.

Even though a significant proportion of the women in our sample received some advice prior to leaving, some of the women did not know what formal support agencies offer advice and support to women who are experiencing domestic abuse.

Looking back I didn't know where to go for help, it sounds silly at my age, but I didn't really know where to go for help. (White woman, 2 children, 1 now adult)

A small proportion of the women interviewed were not aware of Women's Aid at all or that Women's Aid provided support to women who experienced abuse, whether it was physical, emotional, mental, verbal or sexual.

I didn't really think about approaching Women's Aid because I thought that was only if you were in a violent relationship. It wasn't really physical it was more verbal. (White woman, 1 child, HA tenant)

I'd no idea Women's Aid was there at that time. It was actually Samaritans that told me about Women's Aid and that's when I phoned. (White woman, 1 child, HA tenant)

When I left I didn't know anything about Women's Aid and I know the Homeless people didn't tell me about it. (White woman, 2 children, LA tenant)

Before leaving their homes, several women sought advice from Women's Aid. However, their queries reflect the fact that some women are unsure under what circumstances Women's Aid would provide refuge support:

I had phoned and spoke to someone at Women's Aid because I didn't think my situation merited it because it wasn't violence it was more mental abuse and I didn't think Women's Aid would help, but they did. I was quite amazed. (White woman, 4 children, private sector tenant)

Domestic Violence Units can be an important source of information and advice prior to leaving, especially where police are involved in a domestic abuse incident. Respondents in one area at least said that it was the police officer who gave them information about Women's Aid and the availability of temporary refuge accommodation. A number of participants commented on the advice, the emotional and practical support that they received from the women who ran the domestic violence unit:

The lassie I was in contact with [at the Domestic Violence Unit] she actually picked me up and took me through to the [housing association] office, as I had to have an interview there. Then the Domestic Violence Unit lassie took me back home, so I didn't need to bother about buses or taxis to find out where I was going. (White woman, 2 children (now adults), HA tenant)

Two of the women received advice from social workers who offered drop-in clinics within the community.

I had seen a social worker and she got the doctor to write a letter to a housing association She wrote to the Housing, the Council, Scottish Housing, and so on. She got me the form for Working Families Tax Credit I hadn't even heard of it, I've never claimed anything. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

I did not have self-confidence there, I was a quiet, shy person but I can speak up for myself. The lady from the social work did help me a lot. It was mainly through her I picked up the courage (Asian woman, 2 children, HA tenant).

Some women were referred to social services by their General Practitioner. However, although many women will have had a health visitor none mentioned this as a source of advice or support. Health Services generally were not mentioned as important at this stage.

Women who sought housing advice from the local authority prior to leaving had a less positive experience:

I went to the council and they wouldn't give me anything because the house was in joint names. They said I had to more or less walk out and leave everything and make myself homeless, then they would help me. (White woman, 2 children (now adults), HA tenant)

Some women had to resort to their own initiative, such as this woman who obtained the information she needed from her local library:

At the library, I got legal information and All about Women's Aid and how they would give you legal advice and help with benefits, it was all there. He didn't like the library, he sat outside. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

When asked to reflect on what advice and support that they would have benefited knowing about prior to leaving, many of the women commented that they received no housing advice and knowing their legal rights and housing options would have been beneficial to them:

The tenancy was in my name, but he didn't want to leave and I really didn't know what was going to happen to my house. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

Once the Participant (or Partner) Left

Either with or without advice and support 34 of the 39 women interviewed left their homes to escape abuse. Five of the women remained in the home initially after the perpetrator had left - three of the women ejected the perpetrator from the home and two of the perpetrators decided to leave. However, three of these five women were re-housed at some point afterwards.

Chapter 4 demonstrates that, on leaving the perpetrator, almost one-third of the women stayed with their extended family for a few nights before going to a Women's Aid refuge and several stayed for several months while waiting to be re-housed. Several of the women commented that, while they were extremely grateful to stay with their family, this had been a period of stress due to the lack of privacy or cramped housing conditions. In some instances this stress was exacerbated when the perpetrator decided to harass her parent(s), as well as continuing the abuse towards the woman.

I moved in with my mum and my mum started getting phone calls with me staying there. At that time she was sixty seven years old. Phone calls all night, through the night, I was being stalked and threatening phone calls if he didn't get to see his kids(White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

Practical support from the grandparent(s) with the children was one of the main benefits of staying with their parent(s):

My mum helped control [her child] a bit; in helping to calm him down. He screamed every night when he went to bed because he didn't know what was happening. (White woman, 1 child, HA tenant)

Women were more equivocal about the degree to which they received emotional support from family members during this period:

My Mum's more – pull yourself together you should be getting on with it – she's supportive, but it's just pull your socks up, I've been there and I got through it. I didn't have any emotional support really. (White woman, 1 child, HA tenant)

Domestic Violence Unit gave me a lot of [emotional] support and my mum and my sister and my friends they were all there. They kept me going and they said keep going. Just wee things helped. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

Although a few of the women decided not to seek sanctuary with their extended families, it could be argued that this was their choice.

I wouldn't go to my Dad's and bring trouble to his door. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant).

However, the majority of Asian women did not have this option as either their extended family did not reside in this country, or their extended family did not approve of the woman leaving the perpetrator and for some women it was their extended family that they were fleeing:

I had been thinking of [leaving] for quite a long time, but it was my family they don't care; they just want me in there. They don't want their name blackened either. (Asian woman, 2 children, owner-occupier).

Two women who had stayed in the home after the partner left gained emotional and practical support from a neighbour:

My neighbour helped me a lot and she stood up to my husband. She helped me get my confidence.

My neighbour says he will never change and that made me realise. He would only change for a few days ... (Asian woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

If I have problems [her neighbour] across the road would take the bairns. (White woman, 4 children, LA tenant).

All of the women who stayed in a Women's Aid refuge talked about the mutual support (emotional and practical) that they experienced from the other women in the refuge. Nearly all have established strong friendships with women who were staying in refuge with them.

It was great as you had everyone around you. I made a good friend; I usually talked to her about my problems. (Asian woman, 1 child, LA tenant)

In terms of formal support agencies, Women's Aid was the most accessed service provider within our sample at this stage in the process. Two-thirds of women had received support from Women's Aid and, of these, nearly all of the women highly praised the support they received:

They wrote to the housing department for me Just generally, they made me feel a lot better about myself. (White woman, 1 child, HA tenant)

I would say only Women's Aid, family weren't there. Twice when I was pregnant and had to get rushed into hospital, they funded my transport.

I'd say Women's Aid [helped the most], because they ensured my survival. They put me in a safe place and made me feel secure and even today if I phone they come even if I just need to talk. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

Loads of support from Women's Aid. Loads of emotional support and all that from them. Support from the girls that were in the same position as me. I think you get a lot of support in that sense. (White woman, 1 child, HA tenant)

However, not all responses were uncritical:

I was in one [refuge] and [another refuge], both times my husband came to the door and I had to phone the police. [Women's Aid Group] were glad to get rid of me they put me into a homeless unit and said they would come to see me. I never saw them again. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

I got a lot more from X [Women's Aid Group] than Y [Group] – I didn't have a good time with them. X [Group] really helped me through a lot of things.

Two women, who remained in their own homes, contacted the Domestic Violence Unit for advice and support as a result of abuse or harassment which continued after the perpetrator had left:

I got my car stolen and it was found burnt out. I was getting trouble getting the insurance money because somebody phoned the insurance company and said I had got it stolen deliberately. So I wouldn't get paid out, Domestic Violence Unit phoned and explained to the police the harassment I was getting etc and the police got in contact with the insurance company and I got paid the money. How many people know who you are insured with for your car? (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

The poor perception of local authority housing departments is reflected in the comment made by one woman who did not want to go to the homeless person unit after she had left because of the way in which she thought they would treat her:

I'd been to them before and went back [to perpetrator]. I didn't thin they would appreciate me turning up again. That's the way I was thinking at the time, but I know they would have helped me. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

Support for Re-housing

With respect to the participants in this research, Women's Aid is the most used support provider at the re-housing stage. The nature of support the women received at this stage was housing support, such as assistance to complete applications for housing and benefits, moving into their new property; social support, such as informing women of a good solicitor; and personal support, such as offering women one-to-one counselling sessions.

[The Women's Aid group] have their own van and even now I can get it for a couple of hours if I need to shift anything, they're good that way. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

...the lady at the refuge she really gets on their back and she phones and phones and hounds them until they give you a house...she gave me underlay for the carpet and the paint on the walls. (White woman, one child, L.A. tenant)

Women's Aid knew someone [who had furniture] and I also applied for a grant (White women, two children, H.A tenant)

This evidence may suggest that women who do not draw on the service offered by Women's Aid may be missing out on an important source of support. Another source of practical help during the re-housing process was family and friends.

My aunt has been brilliant, she went round her family and friends and got stuff from them and things like sheets and duvets. I didn't have cutlery, plates and all that. Some furniture like the suite was donated to Women's Aid so I got that and I got a grant which let me get carpets down. So actually I did quite well. (White woman, 5 children, HA tenant)

When we moved in I helped my Dad building the furniture and putting in lamps, everything. My Dad's good he can do anything I don't know what I'd do without him. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

After the fire the community that I lived in had a charity concert for me, it was brilliant. I got my telly from that. My tables and my unit were from a second hand shop and so was my suite. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

The range and type of informal and formal support received by women appeared to be wider in the re-housing stage. However, on reflection some women mentioned that they would have appreciated help to get the property ready for living in.

When I got my house I applied for a grant and I got £800 and then another £500. What would have been helpful was someone to paint the house, it would have been worth giving somebody £50 to do it, that was a struggle. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

I think the thing that I needed most was somebody to come and help me like lay carpets and things like that, which I had never done myself before - that was a big task for me. What I have done here, I did it all by myself! (White woman, 4 children, Private tenant)

Most of the women felt that they did not receive enough money to set up a new home for them and their children. Women who were not working were able to apply for a Community Care Grant; there were large differences in the amounts that the different participants received, from circa £500 to £1,300. The women who were in relatively low-paid jobs or in full-time education could not apply for a Community Care Grant. They perceived the system as inequitable and that it created incentives to become unemployed.

Support following re-housing

It has been suggested that over the long term the majority of women receive most of their support from the informal sphere (Wilcox, 2000). However, in our sample, most of the women who had been through a Women's Aid refuge continued to receive support (14) and appreciated it:

We have a coffee morning one a week, but I see most of them now and I regard as friends rather than Women's Aid workers. (White woman, 4 children, Private tenant)

Well, I have a [Women's Aid] out-reach worker and she comes and visits us and they take the children out which is great, really great for me. They took her to the pictures and she comes if I need to talk about, legal stuff. I am going down south for contact for the children and I said to [the WA worker] is there anything that can fund my trip there? So, she gave me a form to fill in and I did that and it is all ready for a date to go down. Anything like that they help you. (Asian woman, 2 children, Owner-occupier)

I go to a support meeting every week at Women's Aid. It's just starting up - so we're all getting to know one another. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

Thus, women who do access Women's Aid may be gaining a substantial amount of support, which could raise their quality of life. However, some of the women felt that there was not enough or any support for them after being re-housed. This of course may have

implications for their ability to sustain the tenancy. Women generally felt that follow-on support was desirable, although it is important how the support is delivered (i.e. in a non-intrusive way). Women's Aid and other voluntary or public sector agencies must prioritise scarce resources, which unfortunately may result in a shortfall of support at this crucial point in the process:

I get support from nobody, none whatsoever. I don't hear from the refuge from one year to the other...it would be nice even once a month somebody asked how are you doing...are you struggling with anything...I think Women's Aid just don't have a lot of money' (White woman, two children, LA tenant)

I went to my doctor and she thought I was OK and I told her I wasn't, she said she would get me a community psychiatric nurse, I just needed someone to talk to...he said I was and I wasn't, they referred me to a psychologist...there's a six to ten month waiting list (White woman, no children, HA tenant)

It takes a while to realise that you can't do it all on your own. You do need more support. I used to struggle on without help. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

Some participants received support from other voluntary organisations:

I still get a lot from Women's Aid, family and friends and there is a new organisation in town called Families First. They help people decorate and put up shelves and things. You can go in just for a chat and I get support from them as well. (White woman, 1 child, HA tenant)

I think I am quite happy with the support I get, especially from Wise Women. They are a great organisation. They have taken me out of the mental health sector and brought me back into real life. (White woman, 1 child, Private tenant)

Over half of the women (22) commented that they received either social or personal support from friends and family. In particular, women referred to help from their extended family with respect to help with the children. One woman talked about how her mother stays with her overnight when the perpetrator picks up the children from her house. She likes her mother to be there to act as a witness in case anything happens and also to give her strength - as she still lives in fear of this man.

My mum is normally down, if he is picking up the kids. She comes down and then, she normally stays overnight to give me a hand with the boys when they come back. ... as [her son] he'll come home and he can be violent and punches me or his brothers, he tried stabbing one the other day, he can be really violent when he comes back. (White woman, 5 children, HA tenant)

My Mum and Dad do help out; I don't know what I'd do without them. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

For many women the abuse does not stop after separation (Shalansky, Ericksen & Henderson 1999, Wilcox 2000, Radford, Hester, Humphries et al. 1997). More than half of the sample in this research is either in hiding from the perpetrator, or is still experiencing

abuse from the perpetrator. Four of the fifteen women interviewed in Fife reported that they had or still have some safety/protection equipment provided by the Domestic Violence Unit.

I have 24 hour CCTV in the house.... If anybody comes to the door I just put the television onto the camera. I had a camera from the Domestic Violence Unit in my kitchen so that anybody coming to my door, it was recording all the time, 24 hours. I have a personal alarm box as well. ... It is peace of mind. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

Five women, who reported receiving support from the DVU in Fife, said that the support was emotional as well as practical. The women commented that they felt that they could call up one of the workers at the unit if they needed to talk to someone. However, some women in Glasgow felt police support for women experiencing domestic abuse could be improved, as there is a lack of understanding from the police.

The police said he wasn't threatening me – he is terrifying me! He is just out of jail and is phoning me. (White woman, grown-up children, HA tenant)

Women in all three of the study areas felt aggrieved, and referred to being treated inequitably by the judicial system. Their perception was that all of the relevant information was not being taken into account by the courts. Moreover, women felt disillusioned that they had not been kept informed of the proceedings.

The second time.... I was in the police station for about six hours getting interviewed and then I was taken to [] to get examined by a doctor. [The perpetrator] got lifted on the Saturday again, taken to court on the Monday and there wasn't enough forensic evidence. I just want to forget all about it. He must have got off with it because I haven't heard anymore. if I had gone back a third time and it had happened again I wouldn't have pressed charges because he would get off with it again. He has done it before in the past and got off with it. (White woman, grown-up children, LA tenant)

More police support, I think that it should be a lot more accessible. The courts as well have their views on [domestic abuse]. ... I got him lifted out my flat one night. He fell asleep and I went to the police and they came and lifted him out the flat, my flat was trashed at the time and he has got a terrible criminal record and all they did was keep him overnight and sent him home the next day. So obviously, it has to do with the way lawyers and judges are looking into [domestic abuse] as well. The legal system as a whole needs something done. (White woman, 1 child, HA tenant)

More support and understanding from the courts [is needed]. I need to say what happened in the past, but the curator wants to know the future. (White woman, 5 children, HA tenant)

Two women talked of their fear of not knowing when the perpetrator would be released from prison and how this fear controlled their daily lives.

I phoned the prison he was in to find out when he would be coming out, they couldn't tell me. I asked who would have the information and they said my

lawyer would. So, I went back to him and told him. He said no, it is confidential and he couldn't get it. I have to know when he is coming out. He was sending me funeral brochures from prison and life assurance things! (White woman, no children, HA tenant)

I don't want to move because I really like the house, it's quite nice. But, I know I am going to have to because I am sure when he gets out of jail, he'll contact me again. Whether it is by phone, or standing out there in the corridor waiting for me to come in and asks where have you been and I say it's nothing do to with you and then he starts hitting. The intimidation is horrendous because he says hit me back, hit me back, but I don't hit him back. (White woman, grown-up children, HA tenant)

These examples illustrate that, where the abuse continues after separation and after the woman has moved to her own tenancy, the legal system fails to provide adequate support or to prevent the abuse continuing. This was mentioned by some women in our sample as a reason why they had left a home in the past. If changes are not implemented, women in this situation will be further marginalised and penalised.

I have thought of moving, but he would spend his time looking for me. His brother is just the same. His family went away to a safe house and they found her in the morning, when she put her wee ones to school. I can't believe I am just going through this. (White woman, 4 children, LA tenant)

Going into hiding should not be the only solution for women who want to live a life without abuse.

Support Needs of Children and Young People

In this section, the support needs of the children, who have experienced and/or witnessed domestic abuse, are considered both in terms of their own support needs and the family support. This discussion is set within the context of the availability and nature of support for children in relation to the decision or ability of women to sustain a tenancy. This support involves the child's own support needs (here referred to as support for children and young people), the support needs of the woman and her children (here referred to as family support) and the support needs which may arise as a result of contact arrangements (here referred to as contact support).

The prevalence of domestic abuse has been well documented (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Jasinski & Williams, 1998; Mama, 1989). In a study by Ford, Marsh & McKay

(1995:12), 40% of lone-parent participants reported at least one type of domestic abuse before the end of the relationship. Hence, a substantial number of children live with, or have lived with, domestic abuse. Furthermore, one estimate suggests 90% of children whose mothers have experienced domestic abuse will have been a witness to it (Mullender & Morley, 1994).

The literature suggests that children who witness domestic abuse react to these experiences in many different ways. However, these reactions can be divided into two broad groups; externalised behaviours and internalised behaviours. Examples of externalised behaviours are aggression, tantrums, misbehaving and truancy. Examples of internalised behaviours are withdrawal, sleeplessness, failure to thrive, eating disorders, anxiety and depression. Although all children can exhibit these types of behaviour, researchers⁴ have found that children who witness domestic abuse exhibit them more. However, there is uncertainty whether such symptoms are directly caused by witnessing domestic abuse or caused by 'other problems prevalent in violent homes' (Jasinski & Williams, 1998:p81).

Given this wide range of symptoms, the ODPM⁵ in a recent report recommended that children's support should include: play, support, counselling, therapy, and advocacy. With respect to temporary accommodation, the report found that refuges had more facilities for children than the other forms of temporary accommodation.

For almost 30 years, Women's Aid has been the main organisation that has offered family support for women and children who have witnessed and/or experienced domestic abuse (Mullender et al., 1998:p87). In the main, this family support is limited to women and children who are staying in a refuge. More recently, many Women's Aid groups have been able to employ specific workers (or to allocate specific staff time) to meet the needs of the children who are staying in the refuge and a small number of groups (7 out of the 40 affiliated groups) in Scotland have children's follow-on workers, who offer support for children after being re-housed. The scarcity of children's workers and follow-on children's workers is a direct result of limited funding. In November 2002 the Scottish Executive appeared to address this issue by announcing interim funding (for a year) to ensure that

⁴ (Fantuzzo et al., 1991; Hughes 1988; Maker, Kemmelmeier & Peterson, 1998; Sternberg et al. 1993) cited in Edleson (1999); (Dodge, Pettit & Bates, 1994; McCloskey et al., 1995; Copping, 1996) cited in Jasinski & Williams (1998)

⁵ (Levison & Kenny, 2002)

the eleven Women's Aid groups in Scotland, who did not have a children's worker would be able to employ such staff.⁶ Also, other local authority agencies (such as local authority homeless person units) can refer women and children to a Women's Aid group for support.⁷

With reference to service provision for children in the refuges, Fitzpatrick, Lynch & Goodlad (2003) found that the most frequently provided services, in Scotland, were: advocacy on behalf of children (provided by 83%), for instance with schools and social services; day-time play activities for pre-school children (provided by 78%); after-school play activities for school-age children (provided by 81%); and individual counselling/support (provided by 69%). Of course, children may also receive services from other agencies.

Social Work Departments are one of the primary service providers for children in Britain. Although there is no statutory obligation towards women who are experiencing domestic abuse, social service departments do have a statutory duty for children. It has been argued that a fundamental reason for this is because, during the 1980's, 'domestic violence was conceptualised as distinct and unrelated to child abuse' (Stanley, 1997:p138). However, more recently, practitioners are becoming more aware of the correlation between domestic abuse and child abuse (see the seminal research by Mullender and Morley, 1994).

With respect to social work services and domestic abuse, one of the key findings in the literature,⁸ and in this research, is that women are very wary of the involvement of social workers, because of their fear that their children may be taken away from them. Stanley (1997:p143) suggests that children who are not abused but live with domestic abuse could be assessed as 'children in need' and that therefore there would be a case for child protection intervention under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 – the corresponding section for Scotland is Section 22 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. More recently, Humphreys et al. (2001:p183) commented on the struggle that social workers had in trying to find a 'better balance' between family support and child protection.

⁶ These posts are part-time positions (averaging twenty hours per week) and with respect to funding, the money for these new posts came from the annual budget allocated to the National Group by the Scottish Executive.

⁷ The women's support workers and the children's workers are funded directly from the local authority budgets.

⁸ (McGee, 2000; Stanley, 1997)

McGee (2000:84) argues that frustration from mothers towards social workers is due to the social workers lack of understanding of domestic abuse. However, it also reported⁹ that when the domestic abuse was taken seriously, 'what mothers really appreciated about social work support was ... that both the mother's and the children's needs were addressed'.

The services that social work can offer to women and children include counselling, respite care and play therapy. Problems can occur due to the organisation of social services. For example, Humphreys et al (2001:p186) suggest that, due to budget constraints, only priority cases will gain access to the essential resources, which implies that families must be steered inappropriately into child protection.

With respect to social services and the decision to sustain a tenancy, if a woman fears that social services will take her children into care due to continued abuse from the perpetrator after separation, the woman may abandon the tenancy to move to another area.

Pahl (1995) purports that women and children experiencing and/or witnessing domestic abuse are more likely to have contact with health professionals than any other public service.¹⁰ Many of the participants in this sample have had regular contact with health professionals – some positive and some negative. Women with small children will generally have a health visitor, who they see at intervals depending on the age of the child. Frost (1999) reports that 'many health visitors were aware of families where domestic violence was occurring and were actively supporting women with young children who sought help'. Frost (1999) also suggests that more training for health visitors is essential to educate them in how to support women with children who are experiencing/ have experienced domestic abuse. More training will help health visitors pick up on the children's symptoms and the health visitor would be able to refer the child for further support, if needed.

Education is another sector in which training about domestic abuse and the impact this has on children is needed. McGee (2000:88) suggests that schools would be the best

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Cited in Frost (1999).

place to support children since the surroundings are familiar. However, her findings suggest that there is 'no evidence of an active response from teachers in terms of supporting' children and no advice or referrals to other agencies.

Moreover, given that many children may have to move school as a result of moving house, support for children in this initial stage is vital to help children feel safe and secure, in this new environment. If children settle in well at the new school, it may increase the likelihood of women sustaining their tenancies. The counter argument is that if children do not like the new school and want to return to their previous one, this may increase the guilt that their mothers feel and thus increase the likelihood of her return to the perpetrator, thus causing the tenancy to fail.

The lack of training is also an issue for the judicial system. In recent years, the voices of children have started to be listened to. Section 88(2) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 sets out that it is a child's right to have reasonable contact with 'parents'. Children may have contact with their father either through their own choice, their mother's choice to maintain contact¹¹, or due to a contact order.

If their father applies to the court to have contact with his children, a curator will assess the child's best interests. Furthermore, the Act states the children's views have to be considered in the assessment, taking into account the child's age and maturity.¹² However, the judicial service's lack of attention to the link between domestic abuse and child abuse has been well documented in the literature.¹³ Also, the literature suggests that the judicial system appears to ignore evidence that women are more likely to experience further abuse from the perpetrator after they leave¹⁴. By ignoring this, curators can put children and women in further danger and this may in turn endanger the tenancy.

Furthermore, Eriksson & Hester (2001:791) suggest the legal system's 'presumption of contact combined with the gap between violent men and fathers seem to mean that regardless of the previous pattern of behaviour, most fathers are deemed able

¹¹ See Hester, Humphries, Pearson et al. (1994:109) for a discussion on why women wish to maintain contact between the perpetrator and her children.

¹² This reflects Article 12 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.

¹³ Eriksson & Hester (2001); Hester, Humphries, Pearson et al. (1994); Mullender & Morley (1994); Radford, Hester, Humphries & et al. (1997)

¹⁴ Mantle (2001:71); Hester, Humphries, Pearson et al. (1994:108); Shalansky, Ericksen & Henderson (1999); Radford, Hester, Humphries & et al. (1997)

to offer some benefit to their children'. The conclusion is made that 'the child's right appears in practice to be a parent's right and almost a child's obligation'.¹⁵

In addition, it has been well documented that many perpetrators may use the contact with the children to continue the abuse by telling the children to pass on threatening messages to their mothers, or by abusing the mother at 'handover' meetings¹⁶. Thus, the controlling behaviour and abuse continue even though the relationship has ended. In this way the women are further undermined and fear for their own safety and that of their children. Moreover, due to this continuation of abuse after the separation, women may feel that their only option is to leave the area and 'go into hiding' and to abandon their new house – consequently, this means that the tenancy has failed.

Although Women's Aid groups may offer contact support to children and women (e.g. transporting and accompanying women and their children to the 'handover' venue, providing counselling or emotional support), it is also necessary for the judicial service not to award contact inappropriately and to provide contact support by providing neutral venues, where women and children can feel safe and by keeping women and children's addresses confidential. Only in this way can the tenancy be safeguarded. Moreover, contact support may be required (in some circumstances) for the long term; one participant in this research reported experiencing threats from the perpetrator ten years after separation. In addition, it is fundamental that curators assess the risk to women and their children and not, as some researchers have suggested, minimise the experiences and fears of women.

There is very little literature concerning Asian women, their children and domestic abuse. Imam (1994) and Mama (1989) have raised the awareness of the problems faced by Black and Asian women in the UK. Imam (1994:189) comments that black and minority ethnic children can experience racial abuse daily from the outside world, and their home, family and community provide security from this abuse. However, if there is abuse in the home, then this adds to the child's insecurity and vulnerability.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Hester, Humphries, Pearson et al. (1994:108); Shalansky, Ericksen & Henderson (1999); Mullender & Morley (1994);

An Australian study¹⁷ analysing the adjustments in children's behaviour pre and post-separation reported that over half of the women interviewed noted an improvement in their child's behaviour since separating from the perpetrator. Moreover, one of the many reasons that the Australian participants gave to explain this improvement was that their relationship with their child had improved. Smith, Berthelsen and O'Connor (1997:129) suggest that 'once the stress of the relationship [with the perpetrator] was removed through separation, the mothers' parenting was likely to be more consistent and responsive, with the consequence of improved parent-child relationships'.

Children's resilience has also been commented upon by Mullender, Debonnaire, Hague et al. (1998:89). With respect to resilience, the literature¹⁸ suggests that formal and informal support networks are essential for women and children. Resilience is not a static state – it can be developed over time. A number of the women interviewed in our research explicitly stated that the improvement of their children's behaviour post-separation had made them more determined to keep their new house.

For formal support networks to operate more efficiently for the service users, a more "joined-up" approach is necessary. A Scottish Executive report¹⁹ made a number of recommendations to improve integrated work between agencies. One of the recommendations is that effective multi-agency work requires "a shared understanding amongst partner agencies about what is meant by "children in need". Also, with respect to the planning of children's services, all stakeholders should be involved from the start - hence, children, families and the voluntary sector (such as Women's Aid and NCH) should be active in the planning process. One of the key reasons that integrated working is desirable is because service users may have to repeat the same information to each agency that they use. Thus, early information sharing and communication between agencies would increase efficiency and prevent women having to repeat their story if issues of confidentiality can be addressed.

Thus, child support, family support and contact support are essential to increase the well-being and safety of children and their mothers. All of the different agencies discussed above can improve the support provided to children and their mothers. Training about the

¹⁷ Smith, Berthelsen & O'Connor (1997)

¹⁸ Maurice, Reynolds, Cousins et al. (2002); Criss, Pettit, bates et al. (2002); Goodkind (2002)

¹⁹ Better integrated children's services (2001)

impact of domestic abuse on children for professionals who are involved with children is essential. The availability and effectiveness of such support should increase the likelihood of women sustaining their tenancy. In Chapter 4 we suggested that the continued harassment of women following their re-housing is a major reason for tenancies failing. In this context, our review here suggests that the lack of contact support may be a significant reason why women leave a tenancy.

The Women's Perspective of Children's Support

Women were asked their views on how the whole experience, from living with the perpetrator up to the time of the interview, had affected their children and their relationship with their children. They were also asked about the support their children received/are receiving or would, in their view, benefit from.

Almost two-thirds of the women reported that they had concerns about their children. Furthermore, of the women who said that they did not have any explicit concerns regarding their children, a proportion went on to discuss behaviour that their children had exhibited prior to leaving the perpetrator. Thus, we can infer that they may have had concerns in the past.

The Impact of Witnessing and/or Experiencing Domestic Abuse

Many participants discussed their perceptions of how the abuse affected their children in terms that broadly correspond with the findings²⁰ discussed earlier in this chapter:

She [her daughter] saw things she shouldn't have, she remembers a lot. She is a lot better now, but she still likes to check up on me. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

It did affect my daughter because she wasn't doing too well at school. I thought they were young; they don't understand, but I think they do. My boy, [his father] told him he can be cheeky etc.; he was confused by what his father was telling him. (Asian woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

²⁰ (Fantuzzo et al., 1991; Hughes 1988; Maker, Kimmelmeier & Peterson, 1998; Sternberg et al. 1993) cited in Edleson (1999); (Dodge, Pettit & Bates, 1994; McCloskey et al., 1995; Copping, 1996) cited in Jasinski & Williams (1998)

She [her daughter] has been affected by this – she hates men – she’s always very wary when men are around, she says she doesn’t like her Dad. ... I don’t think she needs that [follow-on support] – it’s not that bad, basically, this is the first time in her life that things are stable and steady. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

I think my daughter is a very emotional person now; she was a confident, strong willed person whereas now she cries when she has to stay at her gran’s and it would never have bothered her before. She is worried about what is going to happen to me when nobody is here. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

It has affected both of them. They should be together. But I wasn’t going to stay any longer to be abused. Some people may think I am a bad mother because I left him [her son] behind. I did ask him to come with me and he said no. If he had been any younger I would have just taken him. (Asian woman, 2 children, Owner-occupier)

A number of the participants reported that their children had experienced some degree of learning difficulties. However, it would be impossible to suggest any causal effect of the children’s experience without further research.

Changes in Children’s Behaviour since Leaving

Many of the women interviewed who had children, reported that they noticed a positive adjustment in their child’s behaviour since separation from the perpetrator. This supports research findings elsewhere (Smith, Berthelsen & O’Connor, 1995).

At that stage [prior to leaving], he [her pre-school son] had no speech, he used to just go about screaming all the time. People don’t see this and think I’m joking that he had no speech. Now, he doesn’t be quiet, he speaks so well now. He was scared of what had been happening. I still have difficult days with him. He keeps me going. (White woman, 1 child, HA tenant)

[Her young son] was formally on learning support – he couldn’t read, couldn’t write. We got him into the new school and he has done brilliant – he was off learning support the week after, so he’s come on really well at school. [Pre-school aged son] - we didn’t think he was getting into school this year as when we left he was still in nappies day and night. ... Basically he couldn’t talk when we left. He came out of nappies within one week both day and night after moving to the new house. (White woman, 5 children, HA tenant)

She’s [her daughter] getting more confidence. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

He [her son] is a lot better. He is fine. His school work was lacking but now it has picked up. (Asian woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

In addition, the women in this sample also reported positive changes in their own relationship with their children. Nearly all of the women commented that their relationship with their children had improved since leaving the perpetrator. Women commented that they were no longer ‘walking on eggshells’, scared that the children’s playing may provoke the perpetrator. Now that they were able to relax, they enjoyed playing and spending time with their children.

I would say I am more loving towards them now because when they were younger their dad would say don't sit beside that slut, sit here with me, don't kiss her. Now they know I am here for them, whereas before I couldn't really say, or do anything. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

I have always felt close to them. I feel that I can give them more time now. Their dad wanted a lot of attention; he was just like another child. He wanted them to play in their rooms and things like that. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

While many women discussed the positive adjustments in their child's behaviour, some described how their child's behaviour initially deteriorated. Thus, we cannot forget the time dimension since, for some children, the whole experience is still very close. Furthermore, several women were still experiencing abuse from the perpetrator and a few women reported that the perpetrator used the child contact to continue the abuse.

Contact Issues

The majority of participants with children reported that the perpetrator still had contact with their children and many of the women wanted their children to see their fathers. Moreover, several women explicitly said that they felt that they themselves were in control now, which stemmed from the fact that they now had their own homes. However, some women expressed concern about the perpetrator still seeing the children and their fear that this would be used to control and undermine them. Further, these women also discussed how the child's contact with their fathers had affected the children:

We have a court hearing for him to see the children. I had no objection to him seeing them, but he tried to turn them against me and he also tried to get custody of my children. I had no objection of his contact with him. He hadn't bothered with them when he visited his own family, but when we moved, he then bothered about them. (Asian woman, 3 children, HA tenant)

It has been harder for me [due to a lack of support] as far as her dad was concerned to make the right decision for us. What was best for her to see her dad or not? I try and get her to see him. I feel as though he is using the wee one to get to me, whether it is through mentally or emotionally. (White woman, 1 child, HA tenant)

It really hurts my girls having to go there. That's the hardest bit, seeing her Daddy and [his new partner] drinking, falling asleep on the settee and [her daughter] having to wake them up to ask where she was sleeping. I told the solicitor I wouldn't let them go if that was what was going to happen, but then she comes back and says she had a lovely time – but you know she's lying. She says things like I don't have to go this week-end and I say no you're staying with me. (White woman, 2 children, LA tenant)

He [her young son] still gets violent when he comes back from his dad's, sometimes he can come back brilliant. At first when they started seeing him – it was "oh, we're going to see dad!" but now, they're getting to the stage where it's "oh, dad takes us up to the house and we do nothing", so [he's] getting back to the stage where he is being violent and he is taking it out on me. (White woman, 5 children, HA tenant)

When he came back to me after seeing his dad, [her pre-school son] would be very difficult, thumping and kicking me and screaming. I think it's his way of releasing all the tension. The next day I have to keep him very occupied. It is his way of coping. (White woman, 1 child, HA tenant)

Some women talked about the fear and dread of the 'handover' meetings. There is an apparent lack of understanding of the woman's situation in the judicial system. One woman described how, when the father had arrived late at the 'handover' venue on several occasions, her address had been passed on to allow the perpetrator to pick-up the children from her house:

I did [feel secure] until he got to find out my address via the courts. The past does not affect what happens in the future. You're not allowed to bring up anything that has happened in the past, so nothing that he did. The curator talked to the children and they said they didn't want to see him when we were fighting to withhold my address and everything else, but because nothing had happened in the time I was in the Refuge he hadn't found out where I lived so there had been no violence and there had been no phone calls, nothing. He didn't because he just didn't know where I was. (White woman, 5 children, HA tenant)

He's been told by solicitors now that he can't come to this house. He picks the girls up at the bus station, or the Health Centre. [I feel better] because just recently [her daughter] told me, "Mummy, this is our safe happy home". I thought maybe I have done well for them. (White woman, 2 children, LA tenant)

The key conclusion made by Shalansky, Ericksen and Henderson (1999) with respect to women with children, who have ended the relationship with the perpetrator, is that they are "in danger and feel unable to heal and move forward in life because of ongoing abuse and harassment; they perceive themselves as having defeated futures".

Support for Children and Young People

Many of the participants with children who had stayed in a Women's Aid refuge, talked about how they were grateful for the children's workers and the services that were provided, as it gave the women some time to reassess their situation and how they might move on. In addition, some of the women gained reassurance from the children's workers about their concerns:

He goes out playing activities. In the summer they take us out for trips. He likes to take part in the art work. He goes to the child play area and plays on the play station. (Asian woman, 1 child, Temporary Accommodation)

They had a child worker, the young one would go for play sessions from half ten till twelve and the other one would go when she came in from school. The kids were all right through it all.

I did speak to the child worker at the refuge about her behaviour, but she just put it down to what she had been through. (White woman, 2 children, HA tenant)

There was children's workers there and I mean the bairns still do see the [follow-on] children's workers. (White woman, 4 children, Private tenant)

The participants' feedback was positive about the children's services provided by the Women's Aid groups. However, a few women suggested that they would have liked the children's workers (including follow-on workers) to be able to offer counselling. In one area, two of the participants talked of their anticipation of the new children's worker starting at their local group. The overall impression was that women appreciated these services being offered by Women's Aid groups. Furthermore, Women's Aid was seen as a non-threatening organisation, unlike social services.

Only a few of the participants' children had social workers and the women, in general, regarded the level of service received as inconsistent and poor. Of the women who did not have contact with social services, many feared social services intervention in case their children were removed from their care:

They don't seem to listen to what you're saying to them. They form their own opinions and that is it and they stick by them, it doesn't matter what you say or anything, they just don't listen! (White woman, 4 children, Private Tenant)

His new social worker – that he has just got – says he shouldn't have contact [with his father]. First they say he can, and then they say he can't. Too late now to say he can't! He knows where we are. So, I don't know what was happening. (White woman, 7 children, HA tenant)

However, a few women commented that their children did not want to share their worries or discuss what had happened. These mothers, therefore, wanted support from an agency to help their children.

She's holding so much inside, that's what gets to me that she's hurting. (White woman, 2 children, LA tenant)

[Counselling] I felt would have benefited them, especially with [her young son] He has seen a lot of the problems between me and his dad and each time seems to have taken its toll. I felt he needed a lot more support than what he got and we've been on waiting lists for years to see a child psychologist. I just felt there was no support there for him – the likes of him. (White woman, 5 children, HA tenant)

On this evidence, there is a clear need for support for children and young people. For these needs to be met, additional resources will be required. It is not possible, on the basis of this research, to detail the nature or estimate the extent of this requirement. Further research is needed to elaborate these issues. Our impression from the interviews

with both the women and the agencies is that this support should be distinct from that provided to women. However, the services need to be not only appropriate for the children's needs but to be accessible and provided in a way with which women and children feel comfortable.

Accessing Support and Support Availability

Our analysis so far has considered the range of support that women may need, the support they have sought and received and their views regarding that support. This analysis has suggested a number of issues which arise in relation to access to support, availability of support and the delivery of appropriate support to women at each stage in the process of re-housing. This section considers these issues in relation to the provision of formal support, using information both from the women's experiences and the interviews with support providers.

The first important aspect to stress is the limited scope and availability of support for women leaving a domestic abuse situation. Women's Aid is the only agency nationwide to provide comprehensive support to women and their children in this situation. However, the resources of the 46 groups in Scotland are limited and, even if significantly increased, could not meet the scale of the need which exists. Equally, our analysis suggests that women who do not access refuge accommodation with Women's Aid have very limited access to support services as a result. It is also evident that, despite increased levels of publicity, there are women who are unaware of the services that Women's Aid offers, assume that their non-violent abuse would mean they are not eligible for support, or are unaware that they can access support without having been accommodated in a refuge.

It is perhaps an obvious observation to state that the support requirements of women involve almost all the statutory agencies, including social services, housing, the police and health services and (where children are involved) education. It is equally obvious, even from a very limited sample of interviewees, that there is a lack of co-ordinated planning of support services for women who have experienced domestic abuse. While Domestic Abuse Forums exist to provide a strategic framework for policy development, support provision and delivery remain largely un-coordinated, patchy and subject to uncertain or irregular funding. The clearest example of an integrated strategy

which provides a model of good practice is to be found in Fife. The Domestic Abuse Unit was established in 1996 and is managed and resourced jointly by Social Work and the Police. In addition, the appointment of a (non-departmental) domestic abuse co-ordinator post was made specifically to improve integration of policy and service delivery.

Although some authorities have made considerable progress in developing protocols and procedures to improve service provision and co-ordination of action (especially between housing and social work), these remain dependent upon the relationship between front-line staff in different departments and their awareness of the issues involved. This lack of an integrated approach to support provision is also, on occasions, evident within Departments:

'[we] need a more integrated response within social work – domestic abuse can crop up in very different contexts and in different sections'

Overall our impression from the agency interviews is that considerable efforts have been directed to improve staff training and departmental procedures and this has, in the perception of service managers, improved awareness and performance among staff. However, the evidence cited here demonstrates that women have not always received the support they needed or have perceived that their needs were not understood. Thus the simple, though time-consuming, support of accompanying women to interviews is perceived to be an effective way of improving the support they receive. However, even this form of support is not available to most women. Thus continued improvement in staff training and monitoring of departmental procedures is a necessary basis for formal support provision.

There is evidence that there remains a lack of awareness of the support needs of women among some professional groups – sheriffs / magistrates and GPs were cited by several respondents. In particular, even in our relatively small sample, there were several instances, cited both by the women interviewees and by agency staff, of inconsistent decisions made in relation to child contact and access arrangements and of release of the woman's address to the perpetrator. Staff at the Fife Domestic Abuse Unit stated that it was stalking and harassment from an ex-partner that caused most problems once a woman was re-housed. Given the evidence presented here, that half of the women experienced continued harassment and abuse following re-housing, which jeopardised their ability to sustain that tenancy, then lack of awareness on the part of magistrates and lack of support for women in relation to child contact becomes a significant issue.

Although some regional variation in support provision is to be expected, there was also evidence of universal gaps in support services. There is evident regional variation in child support, although this may be addressed by recent policy decisions by the Scottish Executive. However, there was a strongly expressed view in all areas of a lack of mental health and counselling support. One agency interviewee indicated that, unless a woman was already a patient, referral was to consign a case to 'the mental health black hole'. Women in south Fife who may require counselling would have to travel to Dundee to find the nearest Health Service facility. Another respondent indicated that referral for counselling or mental health services for children involved a two-year waiting list.

There are limits to support provision in both housing and social work departmental structures. Housing departments do not have the resources to provide support to women in temporary accommodation. Housing associations did not generally provide specific support services for women beyond housing management support available to all tenants. Women could access community care support in associations that provided such support, but none of our respondents knew of any instances where this had occurred. One association respondent frankly stated that *'the support doubles the rent'*, while another respondent stated that *'women who are not on housing benefit do not come forward for support'*.

In all three authorities studied the role of Social Services has been to finance and support the development of Women's Aid services. Only in Fife did the authority offer its own support services for women experiencing domestic abuse. As one respondent explained, 'social work is increasingly specialised but there is no specialism in domestic abuse'. Hence, child protection and community care packages drive service provision in social services and there is little or no support specifically for women who flee domestic abuse and, by implication, for childless women or women without other support needs.

The police are an important source of assistance and advice where a domestic abuse incident is reported to them. This occurs both when the woman is living with the perpetrator and when she has been re-housed and is still experiencing harassment or abuse. All three police forces provide domestic abuse protection kits which include physical safety support packages involving alarms, mobile phones, security fittings and even (in one case) closed circuit television. Beyond this, Grampian and Strathclyde police

see their role as being to provide advice on agencies and support. Their only on-going support role is in relation to criminal or civil law and incidents. The integrated police and social work service in Fife, on the other hand, aims to provide a one-stop shop. The staff usually do a joint visit and will 'do anything that is required', including housing benefit and charity applications, criminal justice support, social work emergency payments, housing application support, attend meetings and house viewing. They continue to visit after re-housing especially where children are involved and suggest there is a critical period of 3-6 months for ongoing support (following re-housing). While there is some duplication of service with Women's Aid there is no perceived overlap because of the scale of demand and the distinctive referral routes. All three police forces indicated that their primary aim is to enable the woman to remain in the home. However, since they only have the evidence to act to remove the perpetrator in as little as 10-20% of cases the reality is that they act to enable the woman to move to a place of safety.

This overview of the role of statutory agencies confirms that the 46 Women's Aid Groups in Scotland remain the main source of support for women (and their children) leaving a situation where they experience domestic abuse. In addition to accommodation, almost all the refuge groups provide a range of core services described by Fitzpatrick et al (2003) as:

- ◆ Practical help with moving into the refuge
- ◆ Transporting women and children to other agencies
- ◆ Accompanying women to meetings / interviews
- ◆ Individual counselling / emotional support
- ◆ Structured group work
- ◆ Social activities, events
- ◆ Material help in the refuge (clothes, food, toys)
- ◆ Practical help with moving on (removals, furniture etc).

In addition, specialist groups such as Hemat Gryffe and Shakti provide translation services and help with the immigration process. Services commonly provided to children and young people living in the refuge include:

- ◆ Individual counselling
- ◆ Liaison with schools, social work, youth organisations
- ◆ Day-time play activities for pre-school children

- ◆ After school play activities for school age children
- ◆ Excursions

The provision of in-refuge support and the availability of drop-in support are important aspects in enabling women to successfully move on to permanent housing. However, it is the availability of out-reach or follow-on support which will be required to help a woman to sustain her tenancy. Follow-on support refers to support which is available to women who leave refuge accommodation, while out-reach support refers to services provided by Women's Aid and available to all women whether or not they have been in a refuge. A majority (28) of the Groups in Scotland provide out-reach support or follow-on support to women who leave refuge accommodation. This involves 26 full-time and 17 part-time paid staff (see Fitzpatrick et al 2003). However, 18 of these staff are funded from time-limited resources. The existing staff resources would suggest that less than two-thirds of groups have a full-time worker for out-reach or follow-on support. This means that less than half of women who leave a refuge can access follow-on support. On the basis of even a very conservative estimate of need this appears to be an under-provision. If we establish a target that 75% of women should be able to access follow-on support then there is a need for an average of one full-time equivalent post for each Women's Aid group. The basis for our tentative (and conservative) estimate of this resource requirement is shown in Table 5.6. This has to be a very tentative estimate, in part because of the lack of research evidence of the need for follow-on support and in part because of different organisational and work practices operated by groups across Scotland. In many groups drop-in centres effectively provide follow-on support and hence 'generic' Refuge Workers also provided follow-on support to women who used the drop-in sessions. The groups we interviewed indicated that services were offered on an opt-in basis, and this tended to be welcomed by women themselves. However, this does mean that the level of need for follow-on support is probably under-estimated by Women's Aid workers. For most of the groups interviewed the support provided tended to be demand-led and reactive and hence it is difficult to gain an estimate from case-work management of the appropriate staffing level required to meet relevant needs. Equally, all the Groups interviewed had a clear perception that there needed to be a cut-off point to prevent dependency, although opinions on the extent of this cut-off point varied. Some took the view that 1 to 3 months is appropriate for intensive support – although our perception was that this view was coloured by experience of resource constraints and by the view that after that period women could come to the drop-in centre for support. Others took the view that a longer period of intensive support may

be required. One group mentioned 12 to 18 months; another group indicated that they at one time had a worker providing support for up to 6 months but funding for the post had ended. Whichever perspective is adopted, our tentative estimate demonstrates that this has a clear resource implication and should be a priority for action.

Table 5.6 Estimate of the need for follow-on support staff

	Assumption	Estimate
(1)	Women leaving refuge accommodation in a year	1500
(2)	Target for 75% of women to access follow-on support	1162
(3)	Assume an average 'case-load' of 25 per full-time equivalent worker	45 (fte)
(4)	Existing FTE staff for out-reach / follow-on work	34.5
(5)	Short-fall	10.5

These strategic, organisational and resource constraints provide the framework against which support services for women experiencing domestic abuse are delivered. In the remainder of this section we consider the support process in relation to the pathways and stages women move through in leaving a situation of domestic abuse. Firstly, there is no single point at which a woman's support needs can be assessed and indeed, as we have demonstrated, her needs change during the process of re-housing. However, this does mean that there is little shared understanding between agencies concerning her circumstances and needs, which may constrain co-ordinated action. Several agency respondents indicated that the issue of information sharing was under consideration in their local domestic abuse forum.

Once they have left the perpetrator the majority of women move either to family or friends, to a Women's Aid refuge or to temporary accommodation. The shortage of suitable emergency or temporary accommodation or women's perceptions of the nature of such accommodation (including their perception of refuge accommodation) is probably a key reason why many return more than once to the perpetrator. Equally, the lack of support in temporary accommodation, other than Women's Aid refuges, can only make it more difficult for women to access suitable permanent housing and hence may contribute to the likelihood of the failure of that tenancy. This confirms our view of the need for

interim or transitional accommodation in which support may be available if required and which allows a greater degree of privacy and independence than is possible in emergency or existing temporary accommodation. The argument for the development of Women's Aid accommodation on the basis of a core and cluster model has been made elsewhere (see Chapter 4; Fitzpatrick et al, 2003). However, to meet the evident need (see Chapter 3) it would be necessary for additional furnished Scottish Short Secure Tenancies to be available (with floating support) provided by local authorities and housing associations. Although furnished tenancies exist in two of the three authorities we studied, these do not appear to be managed and allocated specifically for women who have experienced domestic abuse. While it may be possible to provide accommodation, the revenue funding of the support element is a key resource issue which would have to come through Supporting People. Equally the funding of the furnishing of accommodation is a key housing management issue if such accommodation is to be affordable to women in employment as well as to women who receive housing benefit.

The process of moving into a new home has to occur at a point that is appropriate for the woman (and her children). Moving before she is ready or has adequate support networks in place increases the risk of that tenancy failing. On the other hand, a lengthy wait for appropriate housing means maintaining a life in temporary housing and can place too much strain on the woman, leading to the risk of her return to the perpetrator. The reality, however, is that the offer of a tenancy will often occur not at a time of her choosing. It is therefore important that she has time to prepare for the move. However, women in employment cannot afford to pay a rent as well as the charges in a refuge for an extended period. If the woman is eligible for housing benefit then it should be possible for her to obtain double payment for a period of four weeks. This is a reasonable period in which to facilitate the adjustments to her living situation and to ensure adequate support with the move in and resettlement. However, we found confusion among workers in relation to the eligibility for this payment and, more importantly, clear evidence of divergent application of the rules between different authorities. There should be a clear recognition of the need for a reasonable period for resettlement.

The moving in period, perhaps one to three months, is a stressful time involving a wide range of decisions, expenditure and negotiation with a wide range of agencies. Obtaining financial assistance – a community care grant for furniture, assistance with decorating costs, essential housing repairs – is a lottery. Unless she is in a Women's Aid

refuge a woman has no obvious support during this process. The concept of a 'resettlement support worker' for women who have experienced domestic abuse (or for other vulnerable groups) does not exist to our knowledge in Scotland. In some countries in Europe Social Rental Agencies operate to provide such support to vulnerable groups and to negotiate with landlords.

Following the move the continuation of support lasts for only a very short period (if at all). Resource constraints as well as, in some areas, the ethos of operation prevents some Women's Aid groups from offering support for more than a short period after the move. However, many women continue to go to Women's Aid groups for drop-in support and group sessions. Housing associations will generally make a post-allocation visit (normally within the first three months), but they do not have the resources or the staff training to use this as an opportunity to assess the woman's support needs or assist her in obtaining support. Once again women who do not access support from Women's Aid find themselves without any formal support and reliant on friends and family and their own resources.

Conclusions

This analysis has demonstrated that women, children and young people have a wide range of support needs which change during the process of re-housing. Throughout the process, it should not be assumed that women can access support from family or friends (and this is especially true of women from an ethnic minority background). Therefore a range of formal support services are required, including information and advice, housing support, social support and personal support which is targeted to the changing needs of the woman and her children during the process of re-housing.

Although advertising campaigns in the media may have had success in raising the profile of the issue of domestic abuse in Scotland, our evidence strongly indicates that there remains a lack of targeted information and advice accessed by women prior to leaving the perpetrator. This issue should be addressed in local authority homelessness strategies and in local domestic abuse strategies.

The predominance of Women's Aid as the main source of information, advice and formal support is evident in our findings and suggests the difficulty of women who do not access Women's Aid services and, in particular, refuge accommodation. However, it is

also clear from our findings that there remains a lack of knowledge among women about the information and support services available from Women's Aid for women who have not accessed refuge accommodation.

Whichever pathway a woman takes on leaving the perpetrator, she requires intensive and diverse 're-settlement' support to negotiate the process of achieving a permanent, independent and sustainable housing outcome. Unless a woman goes through the Women's Aid pathway her chances of receiving such support in a formal and co-ordinated manner are remote. Only in Fife, where the Social Work department and the Police have established a joint Domestic Abuse Unit, can women who have not accessed a Women's Aid refuge gain support during the whole re-settlement process. Even where the organisational structure exists to provide formal support either through Women's Aid or the Fife Domestic Abuse Unit, there remain difficulties of co-ordination of the re-settlement process involving housing allocation, housing repairs, benefit negotiation, funding or grants for furnishing. This lack of co-ordination is exacerbated by the fact that women still report negative experiences in seeking advice, assistance or support from local authorities and benefit agencies. This suggests that the procedures and protocols already in place in many authorities need to be reinforced continually by adequate training and monitoring.

For support to be effective during the re-housing stage of the process several components of housing allocation and housing support need to be addressed. First, there is a need to clarify the guidance in relation to the 4-week double payment rules in Housing Benefit to remove discretionary interpretation and ensure women have adequate time to move in and for re-settlement support to be effective. Second, the housing allocation process needs to understand the support process for women and allow appropriate time in refuge or transitional or short assured tenancies. There is evidence of women being re-housed while they still have intensive support needs and when there are insufficient resources to provide follow-on support for them. Third, there is a need to provide financial assistance for women so that they do not have to give up their job as well as their home. It is evident that women who require support during the re-housing process are at a severe disadvantage if they are in employment and especially if that is low-paid or part-time employment.

Support for women who have been re-housed (i.e. in the post housing stage) is either almost entirely absent or, where it exists, is of short duration. Although many

Women's Aid Groups provide some follow-on support this is constrained by a lack of resources, is time-limited and is subject to uncertain and complex funding. Follow-on workers were a relatively recent addition in Moray Women's Aid group (2001) and have recently been reinstated, after a five-year gap, in Glasgow (January 2002). Dunfermline Women's Aid had prepared a draft funding proposal (June 2001) to offer all women who are leaving refuge accommodation or have used Women's Aid support services while in temporary accommodation, a standard follow-on support service for a period of six months. Using the evidence available to us we have estimated a need for a minimum provision of 1 full-time equivalent follow-on support worker in each Women's Aid group. This estimate is distinct from the need for follow-on support for children and young people. Given the paucity of 're-settlement support' for women who flee domestic abuse each year, other than that provided by Women's Aid, it is reasonable to propose that good practice models such as that provided by the Fife Domestic Abuse Unit are examined in each area to augment services. This also points to the need to improve co-ordination of support and develop more robust inter-agency protocols and strategies.

The longer-term support needs of women are hidden. For some women in our sample their support needs only became evident some time after they had been re-housed. Furthermore, half our sample experienced continued harassment of a level and nature that jeopardised their tenancies. These needs are not presently addressed and there appears to be no clear focus of responsibility.

The support provided for women should be separate from that provided for children and young people. While our research cannot comment in detail on the support needs of children and young people nor on the suitability of the existing level of support, it is apparent that Women's Aid are again the predominant source of support both within the refuge accommodation and in relation to out-reach and follow-on support. While it is our clear impression that the level of support available within refuge accommodation as well as out-reach and follow-on support represents an under-provision in relation to need, more research would be needed to substantiate this view and to estimate the level of need. Our evidence, both from the women's interviews and the agency interviews, suggests a need for more 'formal' support (e.g. counselling and therapy as well as play and social support). While child-minding support is necessary for the women involved to re-establish their lives and obtain permanent re-housing, this should not be perceived to be support relevant to the needs of children and young people themselves. Although contact arrangements are

not strictly speaking concerned with the support needs of children and young people, it has been clear from this study that the problems associated with contact arrangements, and court treatment of the issues involved, points to the need for training of judiciary and for practical support for women. The absence of appropriate arrangements and procedures endangers the sustainability of tenancies.

Organisational Procedures and Inter-Agency Working

This Chapter integrates the housing and support discussion of the previous two chapters and in particular concentrates on strategic issues, multi-agency working and gaps in current provision in the case-study areas. In all three areas, attempts are being made to develop a strategic approach to domestic abuse based on multi-agency working with the local authority as the co-ordinating body. The analysis is set within the context of the National Domestic Abuse Strategy and specifically with reference to the following priorities for action:

- ◆ the development of transit accommodation for women and children who leave in an emergency and who require short-term support
- ◆ the development of immediate and appropriate housing for people who are homeless because of domestic abuse or threat of violence
- ◆ the provision of the required level of refuge spaces to meet the needs of the population, recognizing the diversity of needs and meeting the needs of disabled women and women from black and minority ethnic groups
- ◆ the provision of refuge services to meet the needs of women who may not currently have access to provision, including women using drugs or alcohol, lesbian women, women from travelling communities, women with learning difficulties, older women, women working as prostitutes and women with mental health problems
- ◆ the provision of mainstream housing, as required, to meet the needs of women experiencing domestic abuse, and the provision of a range of housing to meet the needs of women at various stages
- ◆ the provision of support for the development of outreach and follow on work and specialist services to meet the needs of particular groups, including women with children.

The emphasis is on the last two of these objectives, but as surviving abuse is a process the other priorities cannot be ignored. The empirical material derived from the interviews with the women and the agencies is considered within the modelling of the

process of leaving a relationship in which domestic abuse is experienced described in Chapter 2.

Fife

Strategy Development

Fife has a Domestic Abuse Forum on which all the relevant statutory and voluntary agencies are represented. These include Social Work Services, Housing, Education and Community Development from Fife Council, Fife Police, the Health Board and the three Women's Aid Groups in Fife. The Forum has the responsibility for strategy development and there are six separate working groups dealing with criminal justice, awareness raising and training, children and young people, rape and sexual assault, gaps in service provision and black minority ethnic issues. In addition, groups in service areas in housing, education and health also report into the Forum. One of the issues the Forum intends to address is a possible shift to floating support rather than support tied to accommodation, on the grounds of flexibility and the ability to convert temporary to permanent accommodation.

The lead Department on the Forum is Social Work Services, who were instrumental in setting up the East Fife Refuge where there was an identified gap in service provision. The Homeless Persons' Unit of the Housing Department has found it difficult to attend Forum meetings due to staff shortages and indeed has been unable to develop a strategic approach to domestic abuse (based on a model of the re-housing process from Refuge to supported accommodation to independent living) within the Housing Department because of lack of resources. Housing services for women experiencing abuse have been driven by opportunity and resource availability rather than strategic considerations and there is a recognition that housing services offered by the Council have been too housing focused and need to be more integrated with other services.

Procedures and co-ordination

Services in Fife for women experiencing abuse are provided mainly by the following:

- ◆ three Women's Aid groups covering different parts of Fife
- ◆ the Domestic Abuse Unit, a joint Police /Social Work initiative
- ◆ Social Work Services Enquiry and Information Service in local offices

- ◆ Fife Council Housing Department and local housing associations for temporary and permanent accommodation.

The Women's Aid groups offer Refuge accommodation, support and outreach services for women in independent tenancies, and also general information and advice. The Enquiry and Information Service offers information and advice and can refer women on to other agencies, and can offer financial help if children are involved. The Domestic Abuse Unit offers information and advice, provides links to other agencies and trains other agencies' staff in domestic abuse issues. Because it is a joint Police/Social Work unit it acts as a one-stop shop and can facilitate women's access to all the services they need. The WPCs and social workers in the Unit can work interchangeably. A measure of its success has been the more than doubling of the number of women it helps each year since it was set up in 1996.

The Council funds a Domestic Abuse Strategy Co-ordinator, line managed by Social Work Services, to co-ordinate multi-agency work. Links between the agencies are generally good, although when the Domestic Abuse Unit was established there was initially some confusion with the Women's Aid Groups concerning overlap of functions. Since there are more cases than either can deal with alone this is no longer an issue, and links between these agencies are now good.

With respect to housing, if the Refuges are full, the Council can offer women temporary accommodation in the form of 50 furnished flats (although these are not dedicated to women fleeing abuse). Women's Aid supply an outreach worker to support women helped in this way. The Homeless Persons' Unit has a dedicated Homelessness Officer for each Women's Aid group in Fife. These officers conduct interviews at local Housing Department offices or Women's Aid offices. The Unit has produced a guide to the housing options for women experiencing abuse, which is used by other agencies. A Women's Aid worker can accompany a woman to the Homeless Persons' Unit when an application for re-housing is made and can also inspect offered properties. Allocations are made by local offices, not the Homeless Persons' Unit. Women get two offers, with a right of appeal. Fife Council sometimes fast track applications, but Women's Aid ask them to delay for 28 days to give women more time to decide whether the offer is acceptable; the Council are willing to hold back statutory notification of homelessness if an applicant is not ready for re-housing. Prior to October 1, 2002 very poor offers were being made to

women experiencing abuse by the Council, mainly in difficult-to-let areas. Since then, the quality of offers has improved as a result of a new allocation policy, under which women experiencing abuse get maximum points, but most offers are still walk-up flats.

Relations between the Women's Aid Groups and the housing associations are good; Kingdom has nominations agreements with all three and Fife Special treat applications from women fleeing abuse sympathetically. The quality of the accommodation offered by the housing associations tends to be better than that available from the Council but the numbers of vacancies arising is small. Some women may apply to the Council, and the housing associations, but hope for an offer from a housing association. This can create difficulties because the Council can usually make offers more quickly; if two offers are made and turned down while the applicant waits for a housing association offer, she may lose her priority homeless status.

Gaps in provision

There are significant gaps in provision for women fleeing domestic abuse in Fife, covering both accommodation and support services. Refuge accommodation is not considered here and the emphasis is on the move to independent tenancies.

With respect to accommodation, there is a shortage of quality affordable rented housing in Fife. This makes it very difficult for the housing agencies to offer women quality accommodation. The Domestic Abuse Unit estimates that 75% of women visited are willing to leave their abusive partner but cannot do so because no suitable refuge or temporary accommodation is available. These shortages also apply with respect to transitional and permanent accommodation. There is no transitional accommodation in Fife between Refuge or emergency accommodation and independent living. For permanent accommodation, there is an acute shortage of good quality properties of the right size in popular areas. Women with children prefer gardens but most of the available rented stock consists of flats. Flats also pose security problems because of a lack of open space near the dwelling. Most of the vacancies that arise in the Council's stock are in unpopular areas, which create difficulties for women already stressed and possibly traumatised by their experiences; this can be particularly difficult for women from owner occupier or Asian backgrounds. There is a particular shortage of larger properties, making it difficult to find accommodation for women with more than two children.

The consequence of the lack of transitional accommodation is that some women have to move to an independent tenancy before they are ready to do so, thus increasing the risk of a failed tenancy. The consequence of the lack of quality permanent accommodation is that when they do move to independent living it is likely that they will experience a significant deterioration in the quality of their housing and neighbourhood, again increasing the risk of a failed tenancy.

The process of accessing permanent accommodation in Fife can also be needlessly difficult and stressful. Although the Council, through the Domestic Abuse Forum, has a policy of staff training so that domestic abuse cases are treated sympathetically by all Departments, this has still to reach all areas of service provision. In Housing there is currently a decentralisation of policy from the centre to service delivery points and staff in local offices (who make the allocations) are not always sensitive, although the Homelessness Officers are more aware of domestic abuse issues. The active training for staff in Social Work Services needs to be rolled out to all Housing Department staff. In addition to sensitising staff to women surviving abuse, the widening of staff training across agencies and Departments would also allow women to access the help they need wherever their first referral occurs.

There are also significant gaps in support services provision in Fife. The lack of transitional supported accommodation has already been referred to. There is some provision of set-up and ongoing support for women who move to independent tenancies, but it is not available for all women and is unco-ordinated. The Council and the housing associations can offer no initial or ongoing tenant support and look to other agencies to provide this²¹, although the Council is about to appoint a Special Needs Officer in the Housing Department to co-ordinate and arrange support for women experiencing abuse in new tenancies, using Supporting People funds. Those women who have used Women's Aid will get some support, and services to a limited number of women are provided by a variety of charities, dependent on a woman's particular needs.

Professional counselling is available through Women's Aid but resources are limited and waiting times are very long. There is also very little help provided with retraining and employment. Women's Aid do not have the resources to provide support to women who have not been through the Refuge route. The Women's Aid groups do not accept in the

²¹ Each Housing Officer employed by Kingdom Housing Association has to deal with over 1,000 tenants.

Refuges women with drug, alcohol or mental health difficulties and hence these groups who are most in need of support are unlikely to receive any if they move to an independent tenancy, although they may be picked up by Social Work Services. Even those women who have contacted Women's Aid get no support if they move outwith the local group's reference area. Children's welfare is a significant influence on the success of a tenancy, as indicated by the testimonies of some of the interviewed women, and there is a particular need for more outreach children's workers, especially in East Fife.

All the support services deal mainly with crisis management and there are few resources available for service development or strategy implementation.

Moray

Strategy Development

Moray has at present no integrated strategy for domestic abuse involving all agencies and covering all needs, although such a strategy has been developed for young persons in the form of Moray Youth Action. This can form a model for a similar multi-agency strategy for domestic abuse. There is a Domestic Abuse Forum which is maturing, but at present it is mainly concerned with inter-agency liaison and information sharing rather than strategy development. Moray has obtained Scottish Executive funding for the provision of a new refuge in Elgin consisting of self-contained accommodation. This will have fewer places than the existing Refuge and it is intended to supplement this with supported scatter flats provided by the Council.

Housing and Social Work have been joined in one Department, Community Services, since 1996. This is a slowly developing partnership which should yield benefits to all vulnerable groups, including women surviving domestic abuse. The main benefits thus far have been at strategic level rather than with service delivery. With respect to domestic abuse, the focus has been on children's issues and has raised the question of whether help is being offered in a way that is acceptable to women. It is important that women do not feel that they are being policed and that support is offered in a non-intrusive manner.

Procedures and co-ordination

Services in Moray for women experiencing domestic abuse are provided mainly by the following:

- ◆ Moray Women's Aid
- ◆ Grampian Police Domestic Abuse Unit
- ◆ Social Work Services within Community Services
- ◆ Moray Council and local housing associations for temporary and permanent accommodation.

Moray Women's Aid has Refuge accommodation and also three scatter flats, with support, sublet from the Council. The scatter flats are used for women with sons aged 16 or over, as overflow accommodation from the Refuge, and also as transitional accommodation to independent living. Women's Aid support an outreach worker for the scatter tenancies, who could cope with more than three properties. Moray Women's Aid help women obtain permanent accommodation from the Council or local housing associations, but mostly from the Council, who have most vacancies. Re-housing is discussed with the women and the Council, and advice given to the women as to when they are ready for independent living. The Council is willing to defer re-housing if necessary, without loss of priority status. The Council offer women fleeing domestic abuse the same choice as all applicants for permanent housing: one offer which can be reasonably refused. Grampian and Langstane Housing Associations are sympathetic to women fleeing abuse and are willing to make more than one offer without penalty, but have few vacancies because of limited stock. Relationships between Women's Aid and the housing agencies are good.

Multi-agency working with respect to domestic abuse is developing in Moray, but more information sharing is needed. Moray Women's Aid feel that this is often one way and that the professional agencies do not always share information with them. Women may have to tell their story several times to different agencies, if information is not shared. The voluntary sector is not used to the full to support women in independent tenancies; Victim Support stated a willingness to provide this service (practical and emotional), but they have not been asked to do so and are not integrated into service provision for women fleeing abuse.

Gaps in provision

The main gaps in provision in Moray are in housing support for women in independent tenancies. The main providers of support are Women's Aid. They have a dedicated housing support worker and also support is available at the Refuge. This support is available only to women who have been through the Refuge route. Women who have been re-housed by the Council or the housing associations with no contact with Women's Aid receive very limited housing support. The Council's Housing section has few resources for housing support, which is limited largely to some set-up support for women who have been in one of the Council's hostels; this is largely help to obtain a Community Care grant for furniture. Women in Council or housing association tenancies who have had no contact with Women's Aid will receive support from Social Work Services only if there are child-care, drugs, alcohol or mental health difficulties. Childless women are most unlikely to receive any support since social work provision is driven by child-care issues. Grampian and Langstane Housing Associations make one visit to new tenants after 4-6 weeks, but can offer no ongoing support and currently rely on other agencies to provide this. Grampian are however seeking Supporting People funding for a Housing Support Worker for all vulnerable tenants, who will help them get the specialist help they need.

Given the scale of abuse in Moray and the number of women turned away by the Refuge²², there is also a need for more accommodation, both transitional and permanent. Langstane Housing Association are to build the new refuge in Moray and will offer move-on accommodation to childless women or women with one child. They are exploring with the Council the provision of interim furnished accommodation which could be converted to permanent accommodation, to be replaced by new furnished units as conversion occurs. Provision of more scatter flats, both as emergency and transitional accommodation, would require more support workers. As more women move on to independent tenancies, then the need for additional support for the more vulnerable grows.

Moray Women's Aid also highlighted the difficulties many women fleeing abuse have in retaining or obtaining employment. Whilst in the Refuge, these difficulties are mainly due to Housing Benefit issues, but once in an independent tenancy they are more related to child-care. The provision of crèche and nursery facilities would be helpful here.

²² In 2001/2002, Moray Women's Aid turned away 35 women and 64 children due to lack of space. Grampian Police Domestic Abuse Unit dealt with 535 incidents in the same period.

As in Fife, there are also training issues connected with the manner in which women fleeing abuse are treated by officials. Whilst at a strategic level there is an awareness of the importance of empathy and sensitivity, this is still lacking at service delivery level, especially within the re-housing process by the Council. This needs to be addressed through all agencies receiving training in domestic abuse, preferably organised and delivered in a multi-agency manner under the auspices of the Domestic Abuse Forum.

Glasgow

Strategy Development

The provision of housing and support for all vulnerable groups in Glasgow, including women fleeing abuse, is at present in a state of flux due to the Glasgow City Council stock transfer to Glasgow Housing Association. In addition to provision by the Council, Glasgow has a large voluntary sector with varied approaches to homelessness. There are 1,100 hostel places plus refuges and little integration between homeless agencies. Vacancies can exist in one area simultaneously with queues elsewhere. There is at present no integrated supply of housing and support for women experiencing abuse, but there is a strategy for dealing with homelessness post transfer that will encompass women fleeing abuse. This strategy recognizes that homelessness in Glasgow is essentially a support problem and not a housing problem.

Under the strategy, following stock transfer the Homelessness Unit from the Housing Department will transfer to Social Work Services. The Council is currently recruiting nine casework teams to replace the homelessness service at the neighbourhood offices, which will be coterminous with Social Work team areas. The service will concentrate on families and be driven by child-care considerations. Women fleeing abuse will be given temporary furnished accommodation while being assessed or referred to a Refuge, and will be eventually referred to the housing associations for re-housing. Assessment will be multi-agency.

With reference to domestic abuse, the Women Against Violence Partnership has been established to develop a strategy for dealing with domestic abuse. This involves Social Work Services, Housing (to be replaced by Glasgow Housing Association), the

Chief Executive and the voluntary agencies including the Women's Aid groups. The WAVP were involved in developing the Council's Homelessness Strategy.

Procedures and co-ordination

A variety of agencies, statutory and voluntary, provide accommodation and support for women fleeing abuse in Glasgow. The Council and a large number of housing associations provide temporary and permanent housing of varied quality; there are 14 Women's Aid groups providing refuge accommodation and support (including one for women from ethnic minorities), Social Work Services provide some support for women with children and women with drug, alcohol or mental health problems, and there is a newly established (October 2002) Police Domestic Abuse Unit covering south Glasgow.

For women who contact the Council when fleeing domestic abuse, the first point of contact is one of the Neighbourhood Housing Offices during working hours. Priority is given to women with children. The Hamish Allen Centre is open 24 hours and deals with childless presentations, plus families out of hours. After assessment, women are sent to a Refuge or allocated to temporary furnished accommodation. The ready availability of flats in Glasgow often means that permanent accommodation without support is provided at the Neighbourhood Office to decrease vacancies, thus by-passing the homelessness procedures. Twenty of the (1500) furnished flats are dedicated to women fleeing domestic abuse and allocated through Women's Aid, but the non-dedicated flats are also available. The availability of furnished flats has increased homeless presentations by women, especially with children.

The Women's Aid groups in Glasgow help women to be re-housed, as in Fife and Moray. They will accompany women to Neighbourhood Offices and help them assess the one offer they receive. Glasgow City Council gives women 24 hours to decide on the offer. After signing the missive, women have four weeks on double Housing Benefit before they move in. Sometimes the missive is dated at signing but the woman is told she cannot move in because repairs are needed; this reduces the vacancy rate to the advantage of the Council, but means less time for the woman to prepare and get furniture. Most need to apply for a Community Care Grant to buy furniture. Almost every application is appealed, because the initial award is inadequate, creating extra work. Relationships between the Council's Housing Department and the Women's Aid groups have been distant and

bureaucratic. This may change with the stock transfer and a move to more decentralised administration, but the personnel will be the same. Relationships with the housing associations have been better and more personal. The housing associations sometimes contact Refuges asking for nominations.

The Council has developed a Domestic Violence Code of Practice as a joint protocol between Housing and Social Work for staff dealing with domestic abuse and has begun to provide training for staff; the Housing Department has used Easterhouse Women's Aid to do some of this. This Code of Practice is often not observed at service delivery level and priority has been given to the training of frontline workers. There is also a protocol on joint working between Housing and Social Work at strategic level, but again this has not always worked at service delivery level.

Gaps in provision

Women fleeing abuse in Glasgow have few attractive options in terms of both housing and support at present. There is a shortage of quality rented accommodation in popular neighbourhoods for permanent re-housing, a dearth of quality transitional accommodation with support, and a lack of housing support for those who move on to independent tenancies. There is a surplus of low-quality stock in some neighbourhoods and its ready availability has led to some women being re-housed quickly without adequate support; such premature re-housing increases the risk of tenancy failure and a return to an abusive partner. Where housing and support is provided, this is often not coordinated and there is no strategy to guide future provision or fill the gaps that exist. The reform of the homelessness service that will take place as a consequence of stock transfer offers a framework within which a domestic abuse strategy can be developed.

Most women fleeing domestic abuse at present are re-housed in flatted properties in difficult-to-let areas. If they have had no contact with Women's Aid, they are unlikely to receive much housing support, especially if they are childless. Women with children may receive support for the children, but specific support for the woman herself is scarce. Children in family situations where domestic abuse is experienced sometimes need therapeutic help as well as general child-care, and this is lacking. Asian women are likely to face particular difficulties in unpopular areas because of cultural differences and isolation from their families.

The lack of attractive options means that many women may be staying in relationships that they would like to leave. It also means that women return to relationships when leaving has led to a significant deterioration in the housing conditions for them and their children. Some have also received less than sympathetic treatment from Council officials with respect to housing allocation and there is an urgent need for training of all staff who deal with domestic abuse.

There is no Glasgow-wide Police Domestic Abuse Unit at present; the new unit established in October 2002 covers only the south side of the City. The success of the Fife Unit in facilitating women's access to the help and support they need when fleeing domestic abuse suggests that this is a significant gap in provision.

Assessment and Review

Although the details differ across the case-study areas, a similar picture emerges with respect to the experiences of women fleeing domestic abuse and the provision of accommodation and support services for them. In none of the case-study areas is there a fully developed strategy to deal with the housing, re-housing and support consequences of domestic abuse. As a result, the provision of accommodation and support tends to be resource and opportunity driven. In none of the areas has an integrated assessment been made of the need for appropriate accommodation and support at the various stages of the process of leaving domestic abuse. Such an assessment would aim to ensure that whatever pathway a woman took to independent living, there would be quality accommodation with appropriate support available to her.

In all three areas, there is a lack of transitional accommodation which can provide a bridge between Refuge accommodation and independent living. This accommodation should be self-contained, furnished and have the appropriate support. Not all women will need this transitional stage, but for those that do the move from a Refuge straight to an independent tenancy may be very difficult and lead to tenancy failure. There is also a shortage of quality permanent accommodation in acceptable neighbourhoods where women can rebuild their lives and sustain independent living. Most often, the consequence of a woman fleeing domestic abuse has been that she and her children are

further punished by having to live in difficult-to-let areas exposed to high rates of crime, drug abuse and intimidation. Many women will be reluctant to impose this on their children and there will be pressures on her to return to the perpetrator.

In addition to the shortage of appropriate transitional and permanent accommodation, there are also shortages of support services in all three areas. This applies especially to outreach support for women in independent tenancies, to support for children and to outreach support for children. The support that does exist is patchy and mostly provided by Women's Aid. Women who have not contacted a Women's Aid group are very unlikely to receive support unless there are child-care, drug, alcohol or mental health issues. Women may be reluctant to use these services if they perceive there to be a risk that their children will be taken into care. Childless women are very unlikely to receive any support unless they have contacted Women's Aid. Women's Aid groups in any case do not have the resources to cope with the current scale of domestic abuse.

Evidence has been presented in Chapter 4 that when tenancies fail, this is usually the result of harassment by a former partner (sometimes legitimised by a Court Order) or re-engagement with a perpetrator. A larger number of tenancies are ended by the woman's own decision as a result of factors such as neighbourhood dissatisfaction and the desire to move on to a better area. In the former case, poor neighbourhood may be a contributory factor and so may still be relevant to the failure of the tenancy. Whether dealing with failed or terminated tenancies, questions must be asked concerning the advisability and justice of re-housing women and children who have endured the trauma of domestic abuse in neighbourhoods where their problems are compounded rather than reduced.

Some women show remarkable resilience in surviving domestic abuse and manage to rebuild their lives and sustain independent living with very little external support. For others, re-housing in a difficult neighbourhood without support is, at present, a common and distressing experience. No woman, no matter how self-sufficient, should be punished for leaving a relationship in which she has experienced domestic abuse by having her life further blighted by bad housing and having to cope with hostile neighbourhoods. The current provision of accommodation and support for women fleeing domestic abuse does just that.

This chapter summarises the findings of the research and makes specific recommendations on the basis of these findings to improve the re-housing experiences of women fleeing domestic abuse. These recommendations cover both housing and support issues. The chapter is structured on the basis of the objectives as stated in the research brief, namely:

- ◆ to establish the length of time women who have experienced domestic abuse sustain their tenancy
- ◆ to identify the factors which support or undermine the success of a tenancy and the relative weighting of each
- ◆ to identify the potential role of the various forms of support in sustaining the tenancy
- ◆ to develop recommendations for supporting the family.

Research findings

Length of tenancies

A definition of a sustainable tenancy was given in Section 1.2 and this stressed that the length of a tenancy taken on by a woman fleeing domestic abuse is not always a measure of its success. A tenancy which does not suit a woman's needs, or her children's needs, and which persists is not satisfactory; a tenancy which lasts only a short time, but which is a stepping stone to a satisfactory housing outcome, could be considered to be successful. Factors other than the duration of a tenancy need to be considered in evaluating the experience of women fleeing domestic abuse.

The definition distinguishes between a tenancy that breaks down and a tenancy that is ended by the woman in a controlled manner which leads to an improvement in her housing conditions. It also considers whether a tenancy that ends when the woman returns to a partner is a 'failed' tenancy; if abuse continues, then the tenancy she has left

can be considered to be a failure. Similarly, if a former or new partner moves in with a woman and continuing abuse causes that tenancy to end, it can be considered to be a failed tenancy.

The evidence presented in this report from the women interviewed indicates that most tenancies persist. The number of tenancies that end within a year is small. Although some failed tenancies lasted only a short time, others lasted more than a year and some more than two years. The non-failed tenancies (that is, those tenancies that had been terminated in a controlled manner and did not lead to a return to an abusive situation) tended to last longer. Some of the failed tenancies had been in the woman's name before she became involved with the abusive partner and were of long duration. Some of the tenancies which did not fail were short in duration. This re-emphasises the point that the duration of a tenancy is not the only variable in judging its success.

It should also be pointed out that many tenancies may persist because there is no alternative for the woman concerned. This may mean that she is putting up with conditions that are not acceptable to her and is in effect being punished for fleeing an abusive situation.

Factors in tenancy success

The most important factor in the success of a tenancy is the quality of the dwelling and especially the characteristics of the neighbourhood. Almost all of the women who had been re-housed by the local authority had been offered flatted properties in difficult-to-let areas, sometimes near to their former home and accessible to their ex-partner. Those who had no choice but to accept these offers often demonstrated resilience and coping strategies and sustained these tenancies rather than return to an abusive partner. Some eventually managed to be re-housed in more acceptable areas.

Most of the failed tenancies did so because of harassment by, or re-engagement with, the perpetrator of the abuse. This suggests that the re-housing process does not always take sufficient account of the woman's need for protection from the perpetrator. The sustainability of a tenancy may be further exacerbated by having to live in a difficult neighbourhood. Some women (albeit a small proportion) find it so difficult that they return to almost certain further abuse. The interviewed women who had had failed tenancies

eventually did make a final break with their partners and some are now in new independent tenancies, which they may sustain. Their chances of doing so will be greater if they have been re-housed in a quality dwelling and a popular neighbourhood. It may also be that their determination to quit the relationship is now such that they will endure temporary discomfort and move on to a more acceptable tenancy in a controlled way which preserves their independence.

The interviewed women did not indicate that lack of support, whether for themselves or for their children, was a major factor in tenancy breakdown. This does not indicate that support is not necessary or that if provided it would not make their lives easier and hasten their transition to independent living. It does indicate however that, in terms of tenancy breakdown, support is not the crucial factor. The support women receive in a refuge can be important in enabling a woman to cope with her tenancy and may, in some instances, ensure she obtains better quality housing. However, women who had not been in a refuge also managed to sustain their tenancies. Importantly, the study has shown a relative lack of on-going or follow-on support for women, children and young people following re-housing. In spite of this, most women had managed to sustain their tenancies and the level of tenancy failure was not, in our view, significantly higher than for other tenants. Furthermore, the effectiveness of that support might be reduced if it is offered in a context that is difficult or unacceptable to the woman; difficult neighbourhoods with poor quality dwellings are the context within which support is currently offered for many women fleeing abuse.

Support during the re-housing process

Support during the re-housing process is patchy and uncoordinated. It varies from stage to stage and decreases in range and intensity as re-housing proceeds. Those women who do not access Women's Aid get the least support at all stages.

Support is particularly necessary at the re-housing stage, when arrangements have to be made for Housing Benefit, Community Care Grant, and provision of utilities. Women's Aid offers this support, but women who do not access Women's Aid get less assistance. The move-in and early re-settlement phase of the re-housing process is the most stressful stage of the process for women, children and young people and is made more difficult by a number of factors. Firstly, the difficulties she faces are exacerbated by

the tightly imposed deadlines of the housing allocation process, which often mean that she has two weeks or less from the offer of a house to the time of moving in. Secondly, obtaining assistance in the relevant time is made difficult by the discretionary nature of the benefit / assistance system in relation to housing benefit (double payments, disregard of previous arrears), community care grants (and budgeting loan). Thirdly, obtaining assistance with housing decoration, furniture and housing repairs involves contact and negotiation with a range of agencies. To accomplish this and re-arrange the family situation (e.g. schooling and child-care) in such a short time period, even with support, is difficult.

Whilst the lack of support causes a range of, sometimes severe, difficulties for women, it is not in itself a significant cause of tenancy breakdown. There is a lack of ongoing support for women once they have been re-housed and it is not co-ordinated. It is possible that longer-term support needs are hidden. As indicated above, however, many women may end up in neighbourhoods that are not acceptable to them, because they have nowhere else to go. Living in these neighbourhoods may cause them particular problems and impose upon them a low quality of life. Lack of appropriate support may not cause their tenancies to fail, but its provision may make their lives easier and help them to maintain their independence until such time as they can obtain housing elsewhere. It would be a mistake to evaluate the need for support solely on the basis of its role in sustaining tenancies.

Supporting the family

This needs to be considered in terms of support for children and young people, family support and parental access issues as discussed in Chapter 5. With respect to child support, Social Work Services tend to interpret their role in a narrow statutory way to mean child protection. This not only restricts the type of support they offer to women fleeing abuse but also acts as a deterrent to some women seeking support because they fear that their children may be taken into care. This is understandable since many women are re-housed in difficult areas, where their children are unhappy. It is also regrettable, since the woman's attempt to regain her independence through obtaining a tenancy may be jeopardised if her children are distressed and missing their former home, school and friends. Where child support is offered, it rarely covers therapy and counselling even

though some of the women interviewed said that their children had been disturbed by the abuse they had witnessed and the disruption of the woman leaving the perpetrator.

In terms of family support, women reported little help available or received. Some Women's Aid groups have children's workers in the Refuges, and a small number have follow-on children's workers for women who have been re-housed. This support was valued by the women who received it, but its provision is patchy and where it is offered is time limited because of resource constraints.

Child-contact arrangements for the man caused difficulties for some of the women interviewed and were also raised by the agencies as a problem. The difficulties mainly concern security and the desire of the women to keep their new address secret. This requires neutral venues for access to the children, but arrangements for this often break down. In these circumstances the Courts sometimes place parental rights of access before the woman's security and reveal her address to the father.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings reported here, the following recommendations are made with respect to the re-housing of women fleeing domestic abuse. These recommendations cover both housing and support issues.

The overall recommendation is that all local authorities should make an assessment of the need for accommodation and support services for women fleeing domestic abuse. This assessment should be multi-agency and done under the aegis of the Domestic Abuse Forum, where such a body exists. The assessment should then be incorporated into a Domestic Abuse Strategy which would have an Action Plan for the provision of the required accommodation and support related to the Homelessness Strategy and Local Housing Strategy.

More specific recommendations are as follows:

1. *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. More research is needed on the type of support that would be required for this to be a realistic option.

2. *Emergency and transitional accommodation*

There is a shortage of quality emergency accommodation for women fleeing domestic abuse, and also of transitional accommodation which offers a step towards independent living. Traditional communal and shared living arrangements in emergency accommodation (in Refuges and Homeless Persons' Units) can deter some women and should be replaced by self-contained accommodation (or self-contained rooms with shared communal facilities). However, there is a need for transitional accommodation with support as a transition to independent living, in addition to emergency accommodation.

Communal or shared Refuges should be phased out and replaced by 'core and cluster' accommodation in which crisis, transitional and longer-term support can be accommodated. In addition, local authorities and housing associations should provide self-contained furnished accommodation as a transition to independent living. Floating support should be provided for this accommodation by Women's Aid, whether the accommodation is linked to a refuge or not. Arrangements could be made for this accommodation to be made permanent with Scottish Secure Tenancies, with units being replaced as this occurs.

3. *Housing assessment*

Although women fleeing abuse have considerable statutory housing rights, recently strengthened by the Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003, the process of homelessness assessment is often unsympathetic at best and callous at worst. This is especially true of local authority housing departments. All housing officers in local authorities and other

housing agencies should receive training in domestic abuse; those dealing with homelessness assessment and the allocation of dwellings should receive in-depth training on all aspects of domestic abuse and the difficulties women fleeing abuse face in re-establishing independent living.

4. Housing allocation

Women fleeing domestic abuse should be treated as unintentionally homeless, in priority need and allocated the same number of points as other homeless households. They should not be required to provide proof of abuse. Women fleeing abuse should not be allocated inappropriate dwellings in unpopular neighbourhoods. In particular, they should not be allocated a dwelling close to their former abuser unless this is a preferred option. Examples of inappropriate dwellings include flatted dwellings with no gardens for women with young children.

Where the only vacancies available of dwellings of an appropriate size are in difficult-to-let areas, women should be allowed to refuse offers of these properties with no penalty. They should be allowed to stay in emergency, or preferably transitional, accommodation until such time as an acceptable offer of permanent accommodation has been made.

Women should be allowed a reasonable time to effect the move into a new dwelling following an offer of accommodation and receipt of the keys. A one-month period seems reasonable. Financial assistance (for those not eligible for housing benefit) or housing benefit should be payable during this period to allow the woman to remain in the refuge accommodation or temporary/supported accommodation while the moving-in process is completed.

5. Support Assessment and Provision

To be eligible for Supporting People funding, services must be part of a planned programme of support agreed between the services provider and the service user. The provision of a personal plan for support is also a requirement of the National Care Standards: Housing Support Services. However, our research has identified that a formal assessment of the support needs of women fleeing domestic abuse rarely occurs and that

there is an uncertain locus of responsibility for this purpose. This is especially true where Women's Aid are not involved. The Supporting People Strategic Plan, which will form Part 2 of the Local Housing Strategy, should address this issue and be co-ordinated with domestic abuse strategies to determine how best to implement this requirement.

To assist with the difficulties described here in relation to moving into new accommodation, the local authority Homelessness Strategy should include a strategy for re-settlement support for women fleeing domestic abuse which is relevant to local needs and resources. In some areas it may be possible to fund this as a service offered by Women's Aid; in some areas (e.g. where Women's Aid groups do not operate) new arrangements may be required. Guidance to local authorities on housing benefit eligibility during the re-housing process should be provided to ensure more consistent application of regulation. More research may be required to consider how to enable women to remain in employment during this process while obtaining appropriate temporary accommodation and making the transition to affordable permanent housing.

As a basic minimum every Women's Aid group should have resources to employ a full-time follow-on support worker funded on a permanent basis. More publicity should be given to the provision of the information and advice services and outreach support available to women and children who have not been through refuge accommodation.

In view of the high proportion of women who, following re-housing, continue to experience harassment and abuse and the potential importance of this in leading to failed tenancies, more consideration needs to be given to the support provided to women experiencing harassment. This will require a multi-agency approach and local solutions and should be an issue of priority for Domestic Abuse Forum strategies.

The negative experiences of women in relation to the judicial system, especially in the context of child contact arrangements, need to be addressed. At the very least training of magistrates/sheriffs is essential. The practical issues in relation to the provision of contact arrangements which ensure the safety and security of the woman need to be examined. These appear to differ between urban and rural areas and to require local solutions as well as clear standards and guidelines for relevant authorities.

One of the main areas of gaps in provision and lack of co-ordination which recurred in our interviews with women and with agencies related to health services and to counselling support (particularly in relation to mental health). It has not been possible in this research to elaborate the specific issues involved, especially in relation to the longer-term support needs of women, children and young people, and this would merit further research. On the basis of our evidence, however, we would recommend that Health and Homelessness action plans should include consideration of access to mental health, counselling and related support for women and their children who have been re-housed following domestic abuse.

6. *Housing and Homelessness Statistics*

Existing statistics on homelessness, temporary accommodation and local authority housing allocations do not, at present, clearly identify the number of women experiencing domestic abuse who present as homeless or in need of temporary or permanent accommodation. We recognise that the data collected through homelessness returns are intended to monitor the impact of a particular area of legislation and that the (HL1 and HL2) forms have been designed accordingly. However, the homelessness returns include a category of 'domestic dispute' which is sub-divided into violent and non-violent categories. This does not accord with the definition of domestic abuse given in the National Strategy. Clearly, the domestic dispute non-violent category will include some situations of domestic abuse, but it is not possible to identify an accurate figure for domestic abuse using these categories. Neither is it possible to identify the number of families in temporary accommodation who have experienced domestic abuse. Local and national statistics on local authority housing allocation do not identify the reason for re-housing and thus it is not possible, at present, to assess the proportion of local authority allocations which are made to women who have experienced domestic abuse. Harmonisation of terminology and operational definition of terms used in these, and related, data sources would facilitate the monitoring of domestic abuse policies at least in relation to these regulatory frameworks. This should be addressed even though the complexity of the lived experience and impacts of domestic abuse will require a range of intelligence sources, some of which are probably not amenable to routine monitoring.

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Appendix 1

List of Agencies Interviewed

Area	Agency	Person	Position
FIFE	Dunfermline Women's Aid	Bobbie Rae	Housing Co-ordinator
	Homelessness and Special Needs Unit	Eric Marwood	Manager
	Social Work Services	John MacDonald Jackie Tufft	Senior Manager Services Manager
	Domestic Abuse Unit	Jill Harper Alison Munro Sandra Smith	Police Sergeant Social Worker Social Worker
	Kingdom Housing Association	Alex McLaren	Housing Manager
	Fife Chief Executive's Department	Sheila Noble	Domestic Abuse Strategy Co-ordinator
GLASGOW	Glasgow Women's Aid	Anne Salmond	Support Worker
	Hermat Gryffe	Rita Kathuria	Support Worker
	Homeless Persons Unit	Ian Robertson	Head of Homeless Services
	Hamish Allen Centre	Vincent McDaid, Graham Casey, Elaine Haddow, Wilma Sprott	Homelessness and Hostel Staff
	Inglewood Hostel	Jim Cairns	Hostel Manager
	Elder Street Project	Lynn Logan	Project Manager
	Social Work Services	Anne Maire Mulvaney	Senior Officer
	Strathclyde Police Domestic Violence Unit	Lisa Heron	Sergeant
	Southside Housing Association	Jackie McWilliams Naheed Asghar	Housing Manager
	Parkhead Housing Association	Graham Aitken	Housing Manager
Moray	Moray Women's Aid	Eve Turner Linda Jamieson	Project Manager Housing Support Worker
	Housing Services	Mike McClafferty Richard Anderson	Senior Housing Manager Homeless Persons Manager
	Social Work Services	John Sullivan	Chair Domestic Abuse Forum
	Grampian Police	Sandra McIver	Domestic Abuse Unit
	Langstane HA	Linda Cargill	Housing Manager
	Grampian HA	Malcolm McNeil	Housing Manager
	Victim Support	Sheila Campbell	Director
	Health Promotion and Improvement	Laura Sutherland Jeanette Brown	Health Improvement Community Nursing Manager

Interview Schedule for the Women, Who Had Experienced Domestic Abuse

Introduction

Before we start, I'd like to thank-you for taking the time to be interviewed. The purpose of this interview and our research is to try and establish how women who have experiences domestic abuse could be helped, especially in finding somewhere to live of their own.

Any of the information you give me today will be completely confidential and can't be identified as given by yourself. So for example, we'll use other names in place of yours and your children's when we come to type up the interview.

There are no right or wrong answers - we are interested in hearing your story and how you perceived the process you went through. If at any time you want to stop and have a break or you feel upset, please say and we will stop the interview and only continue if that is what you want. You are the important person here and this interview will only go ahead with your permission.

Likewise with any questions you feel are unclear or are inappropriate, please just ask me and I'll do my best to make the question clearer.

(At this point explain to the interviewee some of your own background ie. your background, job, why you are involved in this study and anything else you feel is relevant and could put the woman at ease)

Lastly, I need to ask your permission to tape this interview. This is purely for our convenience as I can type up what you said later and give you my full attention now. The tapes will be wiped as soon as they have been transcribed.

Section 1 – Housing & Family

First of all I'm going to ask you some questions about your some general family circumstances and previous home.

First of all, can I ask about you and your family?

1. Do you have any children do you have?

If yes:

- i. What ages are they?
- ii. Are they boys or girls?

2. Do you work?

- **If Yes** - What is your job?

- **If No** – Do you have plans or would you wish to work in the immediate future?

3. Would you mind telling me how old you are?

< 30, 31 – 50, > 50

4. Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your home circumstances with your ex-partner before coming here?

a. Did you own your home?

- **If no** – Who was your landlord?

b. How long did you live there?

c. Were your immediate family close by – your mum, dad or sisters and brothers?

- **If yes** – Did you get much help from your family while you were with your partner?

5. How long has it been since you left that house that you shared with your ex-partner?

Section 2 – Leaving your ex-partner

Thinking about when you left your home that you share with your ex-partner.

1. Was it a sudden move when you left your ex-partner?
2. Even if it was a sudden move, had you been thinking about it for a while?
- **If yes** - what sorts of plans were you able to make?
3. Prior to leaving, what kinds of information or help were you able to make use of at this time?

Prompt if necessary – help could mean family, friends, health visitor, Social worker or an agency such as Women’s Aid, Shelter, your Church or Local Authority

4. Was that help or information good enough?
- **If no** - how do you think it could have been better?
5. About before you left, with hindsight, can you think of any help or information that would have helped you at that specific time?

Prompt if necessary – housing advice, legal advice, financial advice, information about Women’s Aid

Section 3 - Once you had left your ex-partner

Now I would like to focus on once you had left your ex-partner and the events that led to you coming here.

1. When you left your ex-partner, were you able to take your children?

If yes – did that work out well for you and the children?

- Why didn't that work out for you?
- Was there anything that could have made this better or easier for you and the children?

If no - If you had wanted your children with you do you think any form of support could have made this possible?

2. What sort of accommodation did you have?

Prompt if necessary -

with relatives / friends
emergency accommodation } ask
shelter } what
temporary housing } type
permanent housing

e.g. self contained flat, refuge communal living, B&B, shared kitchen &/or bathroom
--

3. Did you receive any help to get that initial accommodation?

Prompt if necessary

4. How long were you in that accommodation?

5. Why did you leave?

- Where did you go to?

6. What choices did you feel were open to you for accommodation at this time?

Prompt:

What or who made you feel these were your choices?

What information did you get and from whom?

7. When you approached an agency for accommodation did you declare domestic abuse as the reason for housing need?

Section 4 - Turning to this accommodation that you are in now

1. What is the story behind that?
(Note: details of the present house – type, number of bedrooms, is it self-contained)

2. How long have you been here?

3. Are you happy with this accommodation?
Or the area?
Prompt: what are they happy about, not happy about re the house / the area

4. What are your plans for the future with regards to your housing situation?

5. Have you been able to afford this accommodation?
 - a. Has this been a problem for you?
 - b. Have you had any problems with getting housing benefit and council tax benefit?

6. Have you experienced any problems with the landlord?
Prompt:
tenancy, rent arrears, getting repairs done, complaints from neighbours

Section 5 - Support

We're now going to cover some questions to do with the help and support you have been given at different times during your journey

1. After you left your ex-partner what help and support did you feel was there for you?

Prompt: where from: family / friends, Women's Aid, Social Work,
Other

2. If this help wasn't ideal, can you tell me what support you feel you needed at that specific time?

Prompt:

For yourself	}	emotional needs
Help with/ for the children		
Getting accommodation	}	practical needs
Getting benefits / money		
Legal advice		
Furniture / other practical things		
Safety from your ex		

(think here about support regarding initial safety and emotional needs and also the practical support needed to move on and be independent)

3. (Only ask if this has not been covered already!)
Thinking about getting your own place and the support you needed to do that: What help have you had to get this accommodation?

Prompt: advice, information, financial, help from family/friends?

4. Can you tell me what you felt helped the most?
- Or would have helped the most?
5. Were you given any assistance to help you set up and furnish your accommodation?
6. What would you have **most** needed to have been available for you to furnish your home?
Prompt if necessary – beds, carpets, cooker, fridge

7. What support do you feel you have had or are having in this present tenancy?

8. From your point of view, how could this support be improved?

Section 6 - Your Experiences

We're now going to go into some more depth about how you felt and perceived the experiences surrounding the process of moving and your subsequent housing situation.

1. Can you tell me how it felt for you having to leave your home you shared with your ex-partner?
2. From your perspective or view, how did the experience affect your children?

Prompt:

their emotional needs, their schooling / friends

3. If the woman has child/ren, how has it affected your relationship with your children?
4. Do you feel as if there was any help you or they could have had that would have made this experience easier for them?

Prompt – counselling, more help from schools, social work, financial help

5. Financially how did this change in circumstances affect you?
- How did this affect the choices you made?
6. Did you feel that, because of the abuse you experienced, your being able to make and keep a home was affected?

Prompt

How do you feel about yourself has it affected your own self- image or self-esteem?

7. Looking back, have there been any other times when you had to leave your home and were classed as homeless?

Can you tell me about these briefly?

Check if tenancies failed / broke down why this happened

8. If you have had a number of tenancies do you feel that this gives you a different perspective on the process of finding and keeping a house?

Checklist:

Go over issues raised to check you have the key information.

- Number of tenancies
- Length of tenancies
- Reasons for breakdown
- Where support came from?
- What support was not received?

Finally – relative importance of factors**Thinking about getting accommodation and living on your own after leaving your partner:**

1. What would you say was most important in helping you to get accommodation?
2. What would you say was most important in supporting you to maintain that home?
3. Where any tenancy has failed what would you say was the most important reason for this?
4. Do you feel you have anything to add that we haven't covered or that you would like to say?

On the information sheet I gave you earlier, our phone number is there for you if something comes to mind that you would like to add or talk about, anything at all. Thank-you so much for all the invaluable information you have given me, and for being so helpful in contributing your time and energy.

