



A safe space

Dún Laoghaire Rathdown refuge – A feasibility study

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Edited by Paula McGovern



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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This feasibility study examines the need for a refuge in the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown (DLR) County Council area. The study aims to progress Strategic Aim 39 of the Homeless Agency's strategy: *A Key to the Door: Homeless Action Plan 2007-2010*.¹ It was funded by the Homeless Agency, DLR County Council and Sonas Housing Association and was co-ordinated by a steering group made up of the funders as well as Southside Addressing Violence Effectively (SAVE), Southside Women's Action Network (SWAN) and Safe Ireland. The HSE and Cosc were also asked to partake in the steering group.

1.2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this study is:

- To assess the need for refuge and other services in the DLR area.

This has been carried out by:

- Framing refuge provision and domestic abuse services within the current reconfiguration of homeless services in Dublin
- Identifying levels and nature of refuge provision, with reference to local, national and international evidence

- Interviews with key stakeholders in the DLR area
- Examining the need for refuge provision in the DLR area
- Recommending appropriate refuge responses to meet the identified needs and gaps.

1.3 MAP OF STUDY

Section two gives a background and context to this report and looks at prevalence studies of domestic violence. It also places domestic violence in the context of homelessness, with a particular focus on the pathway approach to homeless services. It examines how domestic violence refuge services could fit within the pathway model.

Section three examines the profile of the DLR area in detail and reviews the current level of domestic violence services and indicated prevalence of domestic abuse in the area, using empirical and qualitative data. It also applies international standards on refuge provision to the DLR area.

Section four concludes the study and outlines the recommendations arising from the research.

¹ S39 Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council (with the Health Service Executive) will perform a needs/feasibility study on the need for a women's refuge, and implement the findings.

Section 2: Context of study

2.1 DEFINING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In Ireland the standard definition of domestic violence emerged from the 1997 government's Report of the Task Force on Violence against Women. It defined domestic violence as:

... the use of physical or emotional force or threat of physical force, including sexual violence in close adult relationships. It can also involve emotional abuse; the destruction of property; isolation from friends, family and other potential sources of support; threats to others including children; stalking; and control over access to money, personal items, food transportation and the telephone.²

There has been an international shift in recognising the gendered nature of domestic violence, taking into account the fact that women still have an unequal position in society and in the majority of circumstances domestic abuse is perpetrated by men and experienced by women.³ For the purposes of this report, we use the internationally agreed definition found in the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This defines domestic and gender-based violence as:

...violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm

or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty.⁴

2.2 THE PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN IRELAND

It is difficult to give a real indication of the prevalence of domestic violence in Ireland for the following reasons:

- Domestic violence is often a hidden and under-recorded issue. If a woman does experience it, it can take a long time before she discloses. On average a woman experiences 35 incidences of abuse before making a disclosure of domestic violence to a professional.⁵
- There is a serious inadequacy in the recording of domestic violence at present. Data is not gathered in any systematic or consistent form across services and agencies, making analysis, interpretation or evaluation very difficult.

Studies from recent years have shown varied but high prevalence rates of domestic violence in Ireland:

- Since 1996 there have been 166 women murdered in the Republic of Ireland. 102 (61%) of these women were killed in their own homes. In 51% of the resolved cases, the woman was killed by her partner or ex-partner.⁶
- Recent figures from national women's organisations indicate a high level of abuse. In 2009, the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline responded to 10,076 calls and the

2 Office of the Tánaiste, 1997

3 Parsons & Watson, 2005

4 United Nations, 1979, General Recommendation 19

5 Kenny, N., Ní Riain, A., 2008,

6 Women's Aid, 2009

Rape Crisis Network responded to 12,393 calls. In 2009, 7,512 individual women accessed domestic violence support services and 1,543 women with 2,334 children were admitted to refuges.⁷

- A Cosc survey found over 70% of the general population considered domestic violence against women to be common, with 44% stating that they personally knew of someone who had been a victim of domestic violence.⁸
- National Crime Council research indicates a lifetime prevalence of physical, sexual or emotional violence by an intimate partner of 15% for women. While a number of men reported abuse (6%), women were nearly twice as likely as men to require medical treatment for their injuries and ten times more likely to require a stay in hospital.⁹
- A national study on sexual violence in Ireland, found that 42% of women in Ireland had experienced some form of sexual violence in their lifetime, 70% of perpetrators were known to the victim and almost one quarter (23.6%) of perpetrators were intimate partners or ex-partners.¹⁰
- In a study of pregnant women attending the Rotunda Maternity Hospital in Dublin, 12.5% of women had experienced violence and abuse during pregnancy and 75% of those women had been subjected to violence during their current pregnancy.¹¹

- A 1995 national prevalence study on the extent of violence against women within intimate relationships with men, demonstrated a domestic violence prevalence rate of 18%.¹²

2.3 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS A CAUSAL FACTOR OF HOMELESSNESS

Domestic violence is a major cause of homelessness, although again this can be under-recorded given the hidden nature of the issue. Domestic violence has been highlighted as an important issue that needs to be addressed in homelessness strategies and plans¹³ and it is now listed as a cause of homelessness in the four local authorities in Dublin.

In a soon-to-be completed qualitative study by Trinity College Dublin on the lives and experiences of homeless women in Ireland, gender-based violence and abuse featured prominently in the life experiences of the women interviewed through the study. Some 48 of the 51 women interviewed reported that they had witnessed or experienced violence or victimisation in their lives. Of the 51 women interviewed to date, 94% reported the experience of violence or abuse, either as victims or witnesses (mainly the former) during childhood or as adults.¹⁴

7 SAFE Ireland, 2010
8 Cosc, 2008
9 Parsons & Watson, 2005
10 McGee et al, 2002
11 O'Donnell et al, 2000

12 O'Connor, 1995
13 Pillinger 2005, Brook, Pillinger and Associates, 2008, Homeless Agency 2004, 2007 and 2009, DEHLG 2008
14 TCD research currently being completed by Paula Mayock and Sarah Sheridan, Children's Research Centre

If a woman does leave a situation of domestic violence, she is not only homeless but she can also be at high risk of post-separation violence. The most dangerous time for a woman is when she is just about to leave or has just left a situation of violence.¹⁵ More than one fifth of separated women in Finland experienced violence including threats, unauthorised entry of the woman's home, stalking or physical attacks after their relationship ended. Some 36% of men who were violent throughout the relationship continued to behave in this way after the separation.¹⁶ This post-separation violence is particularly important to consider in developing appropriate responses to domestic violence.

2.4 RECOGNITION OF THE NEED FOR REFUGE PROVISION

Because of the risk of post-separation violence, women and children fleeing a violent situation need more than just a roof and a bed. They also need safety, security and support.

Refuges are recognised by the Irish government as the most appropriate emergency accommodation for women and children who have experienced domestic violence.¹⁷ There are no targets on the number of domestic violence refuge spaces needed, however there are international guidelines.

The Council of Europe has a standard of one family space¹⁸ per 10,000 of the general population.¹⁹ This has been a UK local authority performance target since 1977.²⁰

Based on this standard, Ireland should have 424 family spaces (using the CSO population profile in 2006 of 4,239,848). However Ireland's current refuge provision is only 131 family spaces in Ireland hence a ratio of 1 family space per 32,365 of population which means we have just over one third of the Council of Europe recommended number of family spaces.

If the Council of Europe performance target was applied to the Dublin area alone (encompassing the four different Dublin local authority areas – Dublin City, DLR, Fingal and South Dublin), a minimum of 122 refuge family spaces would be needed but the four refuges currently in operation only provide a total of 34 family places as Table 1 demonstrates.

Table 1: Refuge provision in the Dublin area

| Refuge | Number of Units |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Rathmines Women's Refuge | 10 |
| Aoibhneas Women's Refuge | 10 |
| Saoirse Women's Refuge, Tallaght | 6 |
| Viva House, Blanchardstown | 8 |

15 Kelleher and Associates and O'Connor, M., 1995

16 Heiskanen and Pisspa, 1998

17 Office of the Tánaiste, 1997

18 The language around refuge provision can be confusing as different standards and reports refer to units, family spaces and family places. In this report we use the term family spaces. We take this to mean the equivalent of a Council of Europe 'family place', a bed space for the mother and the average number of children in Ireland.

19 Council of Europe, 2008

20 Select Committee on Violence in the Family, 1997

The fact that we fall way behind the Council of Europe recommendation has a massive impact on access into refuge services. A huge amount of women are turned away from refuges due to lack of space. In 2009, women were refused admission into refuges around the country because they were too full on 1,700 occasions.²¹ In one refuge alone, Viva House, two out of every 5 women who enquired about the service were refused due to lack of space in its first six months of opening.²²

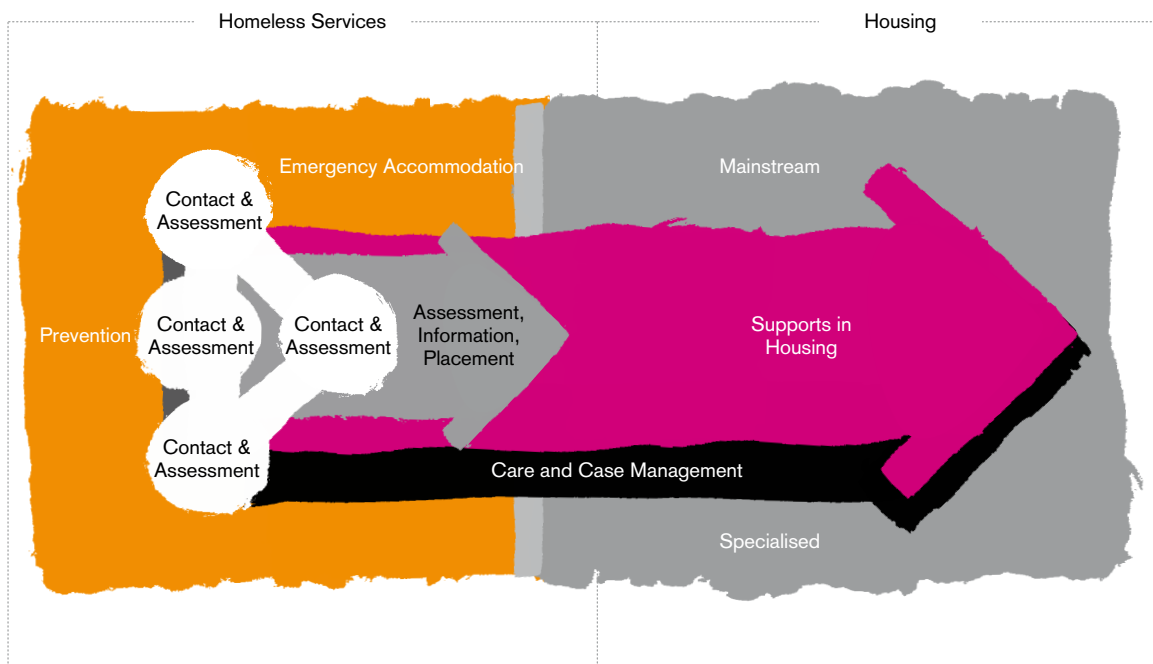
Women who can't be admitted to refuge services may consequently have to access inappropriate emergency homeless accommodation, which may lack the appropriate supports and safety measures that are needed for women and children in a domestic violence situation. Lack of access to refuge may also force a woman to return home to an abusive relationship, possibly putting herself and her children in great danger.

2.5 TOWARDS A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMELESS PATHWAY

In funding terms, refuges are a form of emergency homeless accommodation. Dublin homeless services are currently undergoing a massive reconfiguration in line with recommendations stemming from a recent evaluation of services.²³ Figure 1 shows the basis of the pathway model, based on three main elements:

- Interventions and services that prevent homelessness
- Temporary accommodation and homeless services
- Housing with supports (including visiting support).

Figure 1: Homeless Agency Pathway to Home model



Source: Homeless Agency (2009)

²¹ Safe Ireland, 2010

²² Sonas Housing press release, *Over-demand for new Viva House refuge*, 10th December 2010 <http://www.sonashousing.ie/wp-content/uploads/Overdemand-for-new-Viva-House-refuge-101210.pdf>

²³ Brook, Pillinger and Associates, 2008

The proposed models of accommodation include:

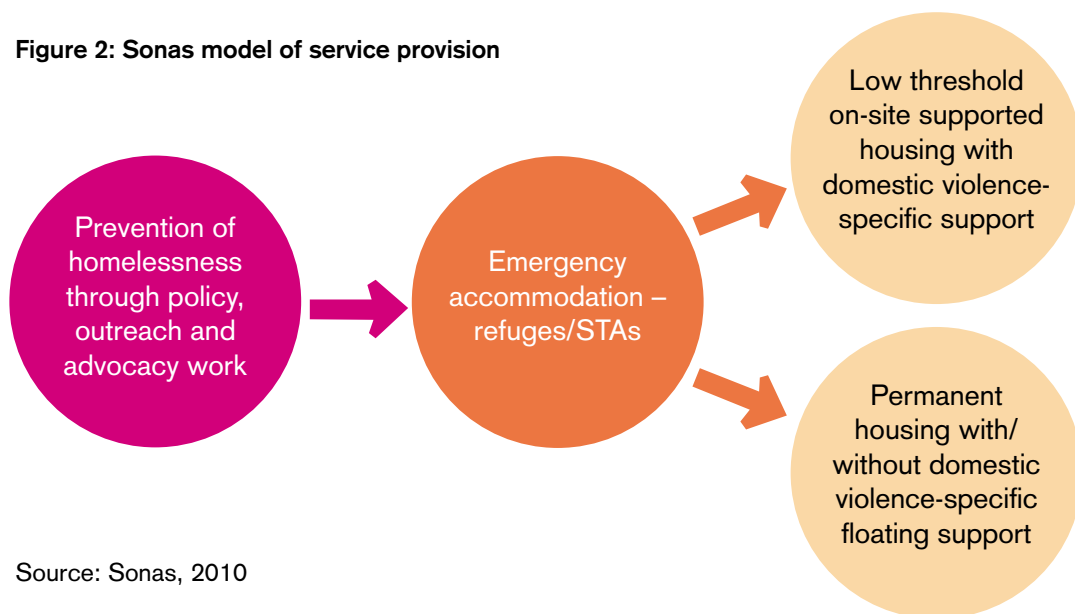
- Supported temporary accommodation (STA) for people with high support needs
- Temporary emergency accommodation (TEA) for people needing accommodation and who have low support needs
- Long-term supported housing for people with complex needs and who are unable to live independently because of complex and multiple health and social support needs.

Pathway to Home does acknowledge the need for specialist housing support services for women and their children leaving domestic violence, taking into account the specialist support, safety and security that people in this situation require. They are included as one of the target groups for STAs in the reconfiguration plan produced by the Homeless Agency Partnership in late 2010, which also sets out a plan to establish a specialist regional domestic violence visiting support team.

Sonas Housing Association, which is a specialist domestic violence organisation that provides support, housing and refuge, has developed a model for women and children who are made homeless due to domestic violence that fits within the pathway model. Figure 2 sets out how the model could operate with regards to prevention, emergency accommodation, supported housing and routes into permanent housing.

Women's refuges sit within the domestic violence pathway as an emergency accommodation solution alongside more permanent options such as a domestic violence visiting support service and longer-term supported accommodation for women with multiple needs.

Figure 2: Sonas model of service provision



Source: Sonas, 2010

However if an appropriate response to domestic violence is to be integrated into the pathway model, the following will be required:

- Funding, development and roll-out of refuge and specialist supported housing provision
- Implementation of specialist domestic violence visiting support teams
- Preventative and outreach services combined with an effective courts system and Gardai response
- Training and protocols to ensure appropriate referrals to specialist domestic violence outreach and support services are made
- Specific tools and training to implement specialised care and case management in the area of domestic violence which integrates risk assessment and security with an enhanced Garda response.



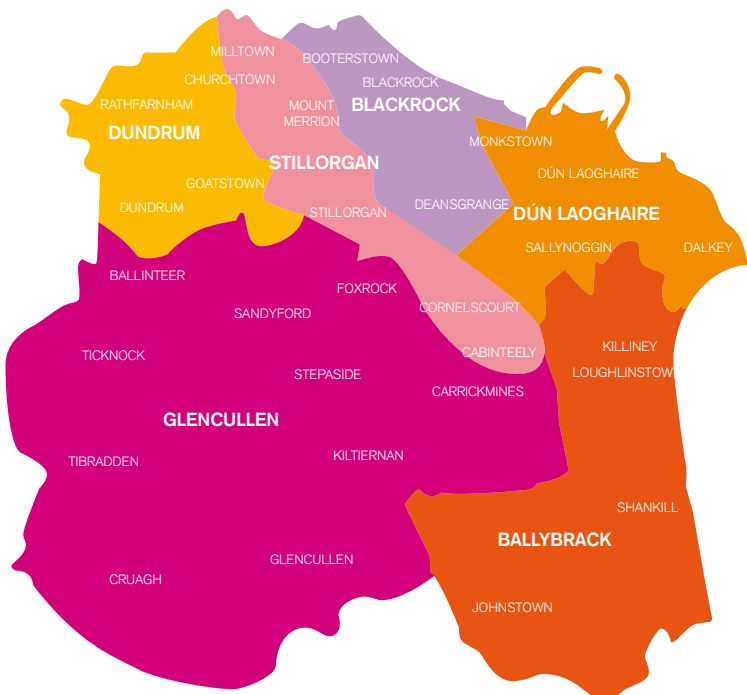
Section 3: Assessing the need for refuge accommodation and domestic violence services in the DLR area

In this section we look at the DLR area in detail and examine domestic violence prevalence, service provision and stakeholder feedback. We use data from international, national and regional sources, including information from specialist women's services, from the civil and criminal justice systems and other agencies. These sources of data provide a valuable, comprehensive and evidence-based approach in assessing the need for refuge provision.

3.1 OVERVIEW OF DLR

DLR County is located between the outer suburbs of Dublin City and the Dublin/Wicklow Mountains on the east coast of Ireland. It covers the electoral areas of Dundrum, Glencullen, Stillorgan, Blackrock, Dun Laoghaire and Ballybrack.

Figure 3: Map of DLR County – from www.dlrcoco.ie



The current population of DLR is 194,038 - 92,899 or 47.9% are male while 101,139 or 52.1% are female.²⁴ A social inclusion profile of DLR found that DLR is a county of considerable concentrations of disadvantage and deprivation as well as contrasting areas of wealth and affluence. The study found that women who are socio-economically disadvantaged form a significant proportion of those who are at risk of social exclusion, poverty and homelessness. Data from the study shows that in the area there are:

- 7,926 lone parents (the third largest of 22 Area Partnership catchments)
- 6,413 living in social housing (the third highest after Dublin Inner City and Tallaght)
- 12,517 having no formal education / primary education only (sixth highest of the 22 Area Partnership catchments) and 15,995 having lower secondary education only (third highest after Tallaght and Northside Partnership catchment areas)
- 13,866 living in social classes 5 and 6 (semi-/unskilled workers) (eighth highest of the 22 Area Partnership catchments)
- 5,021 unemployed (tenth highest of the 22 Area Partnership catchments)
- 363 members of the Travelling Community (184 men, 179 women)
- 3,535 foreign nationals (data not broken down by gender).

3.2 CURRENT REFUGE AND SUPPORT SERVICE PROVISION IN AND AROUND DLR

There is no crisis refuge for women or full-time domestic violence support service in the DLR region. There are some specialist part-time domestic violence services providing a range of supports to women in the DLR area. These are:

- Women's Aid holds an outreach clinic in the DLR area one half day per week
- St. Columcille's Hospital in DLR has a specially designated social worker assigned to the Accident and Emergency Unit whose specific remit is domestic violence
- A domestic violence specific housing project (15 units) in DLR, run by Sonas Housing
- While not in the county itself, the nearest refuge in Bray runs a 24-hour helpline, outreach service and follow-up service to all women who have been in the refuge
- Southside Women's Action Network (SWAN) provided an information, advocacy and support service and counselling for women experiencing domestic violence 17.5 hours a week in Loughlinstown. Since April 2010 this service is no longer available and there is no dedicated domestic violence support worker
- The inter-agency group Southside Addressing Violence Effectively (SAVE) offers an information service and links with other organisations in the area.

The above services are small, under-resourced, cannot cater for the existing demand and are limited to certain

economic groups and/or limited in geographic area. For example there is no domestic violence service on the west side of the county. There are also limitations in terms of time, space and resources. A woman may be refused access to a service if it is too busy/there is no space. Even if a woman manages to access one of the services, time is often limited and her needs may not be fully met due to lack of resources. Currently women and children who are homeless as a result of domestic violence have limited options in their area other than emergency homeless accommodation, which may pose risks to their safety and well-being.

Numbers presenting to existing services

- In 2010, the Bray Refuge helpline responded to 3,144 calls and supported 803 women through their outreach service. Approximately 100 of the women who accessed the outreach service were from the DLR County Council area
- In 2009, the half-day Women's Aid outreach service in DLR responded to 24 women
- Between 14 November 2008 and 21 December 2009 63 cases related to violence by a partner or husband or ex-partner were referred to St Colmcille's domestic violence social worker
- During 2009 21 clients attended 224 appointments in SWAN
- 15 women from the DLR area who were homeless because of domestic violence were housed in a Sonas supported housing project in 2009.

3.3 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGAL PRESENTATIONS IN DLR AREA

The lack of standardised reporting mechanisms and consistent data collection makes it difficult to assess the level of domestic violence crime in a community or the effectiveness of intervention from statutory agencies and support services alike. There is no monitoring or tracking of the outcomes of domestic violence cases.

Published data in relation to the treatment of domestic violence in the family law courts is very limited. Court service data on orders that were granted, refused or withdrawn in Dun Laoghaire can be found in Table 2.

In comparison to the national figures the percentage of Protection Orders refused in the Dun Laoghaire Court is extremely high (nationally 91% of Protection Orders are granted).²⁵ This is a problem for the area as the high refusals has a knock-on effect of deterring women from presenting to court for safety reasons.

There was no data available on the numbers of civil orders breached, criminal charges, prosecutions or convictions for domestic violence crime. There is no data available, for example, on the reason for applications, or the grounds for granting or refusing orders.

Table 2: Dún Laoghaire orders granted, refused or withdrawn (January-June 2009)

| | Total number of applications | Granted | Refused | Withdrawn / Struck out |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------|----------|------------------------|
| Protection Order applications | 28 | 12 (43%) | 5 (18%) | 11 (39%) |
| Safety Order applications | 30 | 13 (43%) | 12 (40%) | 5 (16%) |
| Barring Order applications | 19 | 10 (53%) | 4 (21%) | 5 (26%) |
| Interim Barring Order applications | 6 | 4 | 0 | 2 |

²⁵ Courts Service Annual Report 2009

3.4 APPLICATION OF NATIONAL PREVALENCE INDICATORS IN DLR

National studies indicate a lifetime prevalence of physical, sexual or emotional abuse by an intimate partner of between 15% and 18% of women in Ireland.²⁶ When applied to the DLR area this would suggest that between 15,000 and 18,000 women from this area will experience domestic abuse in their lifetimes.

Studies on sexual violence find that 42% of women in Ireland experience some form of sexual abuse or assault in their lifetime, with almost one quarter (23.6%) of perpetrators intimate partners or ex-partners.²⁷ Applied to the DLR area, that would suggest that 42,000 women in DLR will experience some form of sexual abuse or assault in their lifetime and more than 6,250 women will be subjected to sexual assault by male intimate partners in their lifetime in the DLR area.

3.5 FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

As part of the study, key stakeholders in DLR and relevant national organisations were interviewed. The stakeholders included representatives from community-based women's services, the HSE, An Garda Síochána and DLR County Council.

The following issues emerged from discussions with stakeholders.

i) Agreement on need for refuge

- There was a broad consensus that there was a need for good-quality emergency refuge accommodation in the area.
- All interviewees recognised that refuges and women's services need to be part of a broader model of safe domestic violence service intervention which responds to all women in the community.

ii) Lack of suitable supports for domestic violence victims

- Some commentators expressed their concern that women who have been abused, controlled and traumatised can find it difficult to cope on their own when in unsupported emergency accommodation or when they move on to independent housing. Follow-up support was seen as essential and this should be adapted depending on whether she has low, medium or high support needs.
- The Gardai discussed how violence against women in the home is widespread, irrespective of class. There is an absence of services for middle-class women and minority ethnic communities. For example, a joint homeowner cannot present as homeless even if she is forced to leave her home for safety reasons.
- Many of those interviewed expressed their concern that women with the highest needs are not getting into refuges or appropriate services. In particular it was thought that women with mental health and alcohol/drug addiction issues

²⁶ Parsons & Watson, 2005

²⁷ McGee et al, 2002

were being treated as too difficult or risky to accommodate, rather than women exhibiting the impacts of severe abuse. High-support accommodation was identified as an urgent requirement.

iii) Lack of protection from the legal system

- The failure of the civil and criminal justice system to provide protection for women in their homes was cited by all the interviewees as the single biggest reason women are forced to leave home and make themselves and their children homeless. Interviewees spoke about a number of factors which will precipitate a woman leaving her home such as: being too afraid to get him to leave; the civil order has been breached and nothing happened; he has persuaded or threatened her into allowing him re-enter the home; his family are in the area and support him; a high level of re-offending; and no sanctions for re-offending.
- Some of the interviewees reported that they see the judges and the courts as sympathetic to abusive men with women having huge difficulty in getting protective orders. Even in cases where interim barring orders are issued on serious grounds such as physical injuries, judges have overturned the decision at the full hearing leaving the woman in an even worse position. It was thought that judges could be stronger in delivering real criminal sanctions to perpetrators.
- It was noted that while there was some good practice by individual Gardai, there could be inconsistencies at times when working with the force. Sometimes issued orders were not enforced and it could be difficult to get a quick response from the Gardai at times.

iv) Lack of domestic violence protocols in statutory agencies

- Domestic violence is not recorded within Gardai/HSE protocols as a form of abuse unlike direct physical, sexual abuse and neglect. Interviewees cited this as a major gap, as it means women may not be referred to the most appropriate domestic violence specific service but instead to a more generic unsuitable service. It also has implications on data collection and being able to authoritatively report on the prevalence of domestic violence.
- There is an absence of protocols and established policies in the area of domestic violence with an unhealthy dependence on exceptional individual practitioners and practices. In some cases discretion is exercised.
- Lack of co-ordination between local authorities – women cannot move to a more appropriate safer area as a rule. Interviewees noted the need for a universal scheme of letting priorities across the local authorities.
- There is a lack of a co-ordinated risk management approach for victims of domestic violence such as the Marac approach in the UK. Interviewees suggested setting up an inter-agency case management group which would review practice and outcomes in individual cases.

v) Lack of awareness of the sensitivity needed in domestic violence cases

- A disclosure of domestic violence is often only made after several meetings and there is always a need to work closely with a woman to find the safest housing solution. Domestic violence is often not picked up at the early stages of assessment for emergency accommodation. Therefore, women can be sent into private rented/emergency hostels with no support and no risk assessment or safety plan. Some women may have multiple needs including addictions, personality disorders, meaning domestic violence is rarely seen as the primary issue needing a specific response.
- Concern was expressed by several people interviewed that the Homeless Agency's holistic needs assessment could be inappropriate for abused women. The questions could be seen to be intrusive, with a focus on background, behaviour and parenting with many assumptions about drug and alcohol abuse which could be offensive to many survivors of abuse. There is no section contained in the assessment on the tactics or violence of perpetrators or recognition that certain behaviours and actions could be coping mechanisms or safety strategies stemming from living with severe abuse.

vi) Particular socio-economic profile of area

- Attention was drawn to the particular social profile of the county which indicates that there are substantial numbers of women who live alone or with their children, particularly on large estates. Perpetrators of domestic violence are often visiting men not co-habitees including fathers of children, boyfriends and former partners. Sections

two and three of the Domestic Violence Act include conditions that in the case of non-married applicants the applicant has to demonstrate they have lived with the perpetrator for six of the past twelve months in order to apply for a safety order and six of the previous nine months to apply for a barring order, making many women ineligible. Women are reluctant to leave and give up their tenancies and/or go into a refuge.

vii) Other issues

- Many commentators expressed their frustration that a pilot project to co-ordinate an intervention model based on safety and accountability that has been developed in the area with the Gardai, the Probation Service and the Courts has been discontinued after three years of work.²⁸ Risk assessment tools, Garda incident checklists and in-depth referrals mechanisms had been piloted and evaluated but were not institutionalised or mainstreamed.
- There is no recording of long-term outcomes for women living in refuge or homeless accommodation, and the impact on the incidence of re-victimisation.
- In interviews with service providers in DLR, outside of the HSE, the ongoing tension about the role of child protection services and the needs of abused women was consistently raised.

3.6 ASSESSING THE NEED FOR A REFUGE IN DLR

Due to lack of reliable data it is difficult to categorically state the prevalence of domestic violence in the DLR region, however the data collected in this study demonstrates:

- Domestic violence is a big problem in the area with a high number of women disclosing abuse and national prevalence figures suggesting high incidences of domestic violence in this densely populated area
- There are inadequate domestic violence services in DLR and a lack of a comprehensive full-time service. Existing part-time services are unable to meet current demand and unable to target certain groups of women in the county
- There is also an absence of access to legal protection for many women in the area.

The conclusion from this report is that there is an identifiable need for refuge provision, given the demographics, data of the extent of domestic violence in the county, and taking into account international best practice recommendations.

As evidenced consistently throughout this report the current level of provision in Ireland does not meet current demand. It is important that given the socio-economic profile of DLR, a comprehensive domestic violence outreach service be provided, which is more typically accessed by women in the higher socio-economic groups.

Applying the UK and Council of Europe standard on refuge provision to the population of DLR of 194,038 suggests that 19 family refuge spaces for women and

children homeless because of domestic abuse are required in the area.

Taking into consideration current economic conditions and similar facilities in the Dublin area, a facility providing 8 to 10 self-contained units is recommended for the DLR area. This would need to be periodically reviewed in order to monitor occupancy levels, numbers that cannot be accommodated and level of provision in the region.



Section 4: Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to examine if there is a need for a refuge in the DLR area. It has aimed to progress Strategic Aim 39 of the Homeless Agency's strategy: *A Key to the Door: Homeless Action Plan 2007-2010*. The study has done this through first examining the context for refuge provision in Ireland, incorporating the pathway approach to homeless services provision. It attempted to gain an understanding of DLR county, the incidence of domestic violence in DLR and what domestic violence services are currently available. It examined international best practice targets for refuge provision. Stakeholder feedback was presented which covered many key areas related to refuge provision, domestic violence and homelessness.

This study shows that there is a major gap in provision of emergency refuge accommodation and domestic violence services in DLR. The data that is available is very likely to be an under-representation of the exact extent of domestic violence in the community. In examining the issue of domestic violence and homelessness we have highlighted the lack of effective and reliable data, recording and monitoring systems.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The need for refuge accommodation in DLR county council area

Through analysing empirical and qualitative research and applying international best practice standards, we identify the need for 19 family units to be provided for women and children out of home because of domestic violence in DLR. Taking into account current refuge provision in Ireland and the current economic climate, this report recommends that an initial provision of 8-10 family spaces be provided in the DLR area, with an absolute minimum of 6 family spaces.

As evidenced consistently throughout this report the current level of provision does not meet current demand, nor does it meet the internationally accepted performance targets. It is proposed that the refuge be periodically reviewed in order to monitor occupancy levels, numbers that cannot be accommodated and level of provision in the region.

Recommendation 2: A domestic violence pathway

It is recommended that DLR be a pilot for the implementation of a domestic violence pathway and that resources be provided for this purpose. The learning from the pilot will be vital for transferability to other areas.

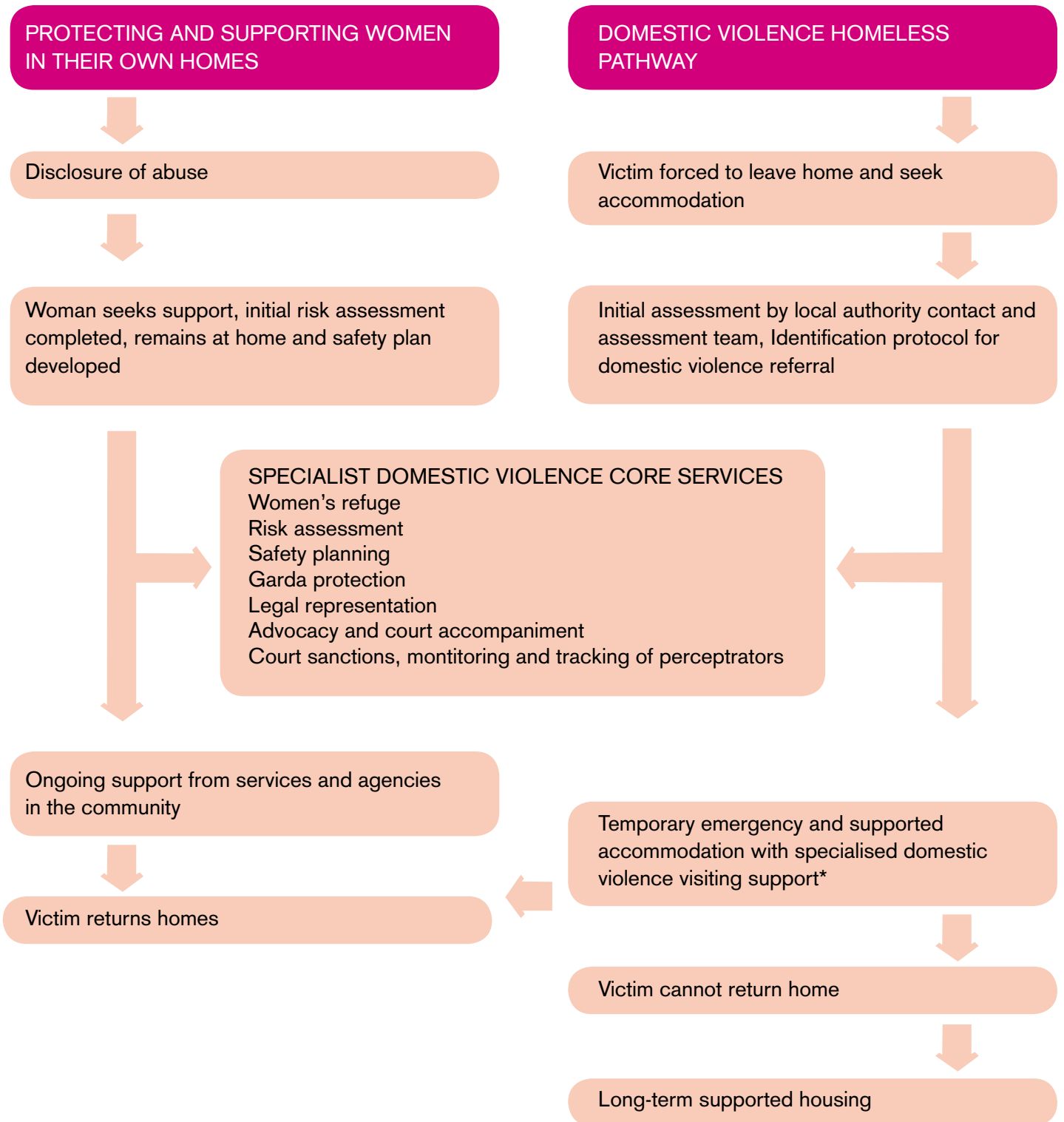
Refuge provision needs to be effectively integrated into the Homeless Agency pathway model on the basis that it is developed through a specialist domestic violence pathway,

incorporating other supports for women including visiting support into the home and longer-term accommodation for women with complex needs. There is a huge need for women to have protection and safety in their own homes and, if that fails, to have access to a crisis women's refuge and supported housing programmes.

Figure 4 demonstrates how the pathway would work. We recommend that this pathway should incorporate five key elements:

- A domestic violence pathway (integrated within current reorganisation of homeless services in Dublin) based on prevention, emergency accommodation, supported accommodation and access to mainstream accommodation. An integral part of this will be effective early intervention, safety and protection to enable the maximum number of abused women to remain in their own homes
- A co-ordinated multi-agency approach supported by domestic violence services, homeless services, the HSE and the Gardai. This should be based on a model of multi-disciplinary good practice incorporating a focus on prevention, training and awareness and the integration of civil and criminal law, to ensure safe intervention in domestic violence cases. This also includes the development of specific protocols and procedures to ensure there are effective inter-agency responses between the key agencies
- A domestic violence specific model of care planning and needs assessment which has been enhanced with risk assessment and safety planning and is implemented immediately a woman is forced to leave home
- Making mainstream housing safe with appropriate specialist supports and safety and security measures
- In depth monitoring and evaluation, including the development of inter-agency data reporting and recording systems and quality standards for refuge accommodation.

Strategy for responding to women subjected to domestic violence in the community



* Where a refuge is not available or suitable



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A safe space

Dún Laoghaire Rathdown refuge – A feasibility study

