

# The Warwickshire Safe Accommodation Strategy

2021 - 2024



**safe in...**  
warwickshire

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# Why is the Safe Accommodation Strategy required?

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# Foreword

We are delighted to present to you the Warwickshire Safe Accommodation Strategy. This strategy outlines how Warwickshire County Council will work with partners to meet new duties to provide safe accommodation and support in Warwickshire for adult and child victims as part of the Council's statutory requirements within the Domestic Abuse Act. We will work to ensure that all victim-survivors are supported to remain safe in their own home if they wish, or access alternative safe accommodation and support.

Domestic abuse is a leading cause of homelessness for adult and child victim-survivors. SafeLives Insights data shows that 22% of people accessing support from a domestic abuse service were living with the perpetrator when they entered the service. However, it is an even wider group whose accommodation is destabilised by abuse; whether or not, they were living with the perpetrator, over half (52%) needed support to secure new accommodation or stay safe in their own home<sup>1</sup>.

Victim-survivors in Warwickshire have said that a lack of suitable accommodation options, the trauma of fleeing abuse and leaving their home and the fear of perpetrators not being held to account for their behaviour, can prevent victim-survivors from seeking support.

In Warwickshire, we do not believe that homelessness, inappropriate accommodation or remaining in an abusive relationship is a choice that any victim-survivor should be faced with. The Safe Accommodation Strategy outlines how all agencies will work collaboratively to provide victim-survivors with a range of options to remain safe at home or access suitable alternative safe accommodation and support.



**Cllr Andy Crump**

Chair of Safer  
Warwickshire  
Partnership Board



**Cllr Margaret Bell**

Portfolio Holder for Adult  
Social Care and Health  
(Warwickshire County  
Council)

# Executive Summary

The Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021 – 2024 outlines how Warwickshire will implement the statutory duties associated with the provision of safe accommodation, as required by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. It describes how safe accommodation and support for domestic abuse (DA) victim-survivors will be provided over the next three years and outlines five objectives that will be the focus of delivery. These include:

1. **Early intervention and prevention:** victim-survivors (adults and children) are supported at an early stage and provided with options to remain safe at home to prevent homelessness. This includes holding perpetrators to account for their behaviour.
2. **Accessible services:** victim-survivors and professionals know how to access safe accommodation options, both inside and outside of Warwickshire.
3. **Appropriate safe accommodation:** accommodation options and appropriate support is in place for all victim-survivors who need it
4. **Multiagency delivery:** victim-survivors needs will be met by effective, collaborative multi-agency support
5. **Support to return home or move on:** victim-survivors are supported to return home safely and/or move into alternative permanent accommodation.

This strategy will complement existing work that is taking place across the county to address the health and wellbeing, community safety and housing needs of those who experience domestic abuse in Warwickshire. Ultimately it aims to enrich the lives of victim-survivors and their children by providing safe accommodation options and appropriate support to those who need it.

This strategy has been produced by Warwickshire County Council and received support from the Safer Warwickshire Partnership Board[1] whose remit is to create safer communities through the reduction of crime and the promotion of safety. The membership of the Board is as follows:

- **Warwickshire County Council**
- **Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service**
- **Warwickshire Police**
- **Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner**
- **North Warwickshire Borough Council**
- **Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council**
- **Rugby Borough Council**
- **Stratford District Council**
- **Warwick District Council**
- **NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Group**
- **Warwickshire CAVA**
- **Equality & Inclusion Partnership**
- **Warwickshire Association of Local Councils**
- **National Probation Service**
- **Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company**
- **Warwickshire Criminal Justice Board**

The implementation of the Safe Accommodation Strategy will be led by the Safe Accommodation Working Group (SAWG) and overseen by the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Board. A delivery plan and joint financial plan will be developed which will be monitored on a quarterly basis. Each year, the strategy will be reviewed within the context of a statutory Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment and regular updates will be provided to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHCLG).

# Context

## The Scope of the Warwickshire Safe Accommodation Strategy

The Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021 – 2024 outlines how Warwickshire will implement the statutory duties that relate to safe accommodation, included within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

It seeks to describe how safe accommodation and support for domestic abuse victim-survivors will be provided. During 2021 Warwickshire's Violence against Women and Girls partners will be developing a holistic Domestic Abuse Strategy. The strategy will articulate the broader partnership response to domestic abuse and provide further detail about elements, such as, the early intervention approach and the partnership response to perpetrators.

Whilst the Safe Accommodation Strategy covers a three-year period, it will be reviewed annually to ensure it is responsive to the emerging needs of victim-survivors of domestic abuse who access services in Warwickshire. A delivery plan, with an accompanying financial plan, will be developed outlining how the objectives within this strategy will be met. This will focus on both the immediate and longer-term actions that need to be taken to enrich Warwickshire's safe accommodation offer.



## What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse causes significant harm to individuals, children, families, and communities.

The scale and impact is vast. In Warwickshire during 2019/20 there were an estimated 23,500 cases in adults aged between 16-74 years. Warwickshire's Domestic Abuse Service supported 806 victims-survivors. 30 - 40% of victims experienced domestic abuse (DA) multiple times and around 1,600 children and young people were impacted. DA has a lasting impact on physical and mental health, as well as resulting in financial and housing insecurity.

This strategy adopts the Government definition of domestic abuse which is outlined in the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act<sup>3</sup>. The new definition emphasises that domestic abuse is not only physical violence, but can also be emotional, coercive or controlling behaviour, and economic abuse.

**Behaviour is classed as "domestic abuse" if:**

Both individuals are each over 16 years of age

Both individuals are personally connected to each other and the behaviour is abusive.

**Furthermore, behaviour is considered abusive when it consists of any of the following:**

Physical or sexual abuse

Violent or threatening behaviour

Controlling or coercive behaviour

Economic abuse

Psychological, emotional, or other abuse

## The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced a number of tools and powers<sup>2</sup> that will positively impact on Warwickshire's victims-survivors, their children and perpetrators. According to Victoria Atkins MP, Minister for Safeguarding:

"This landmark Bill will help transform the response to domestic abuse, helping to prevent offending, protect victims and ensure they have the support they need."<sup>3</sup>

The Domestic Abuse Act also introduces a new 'Safe Accommodation' duty for tier 1 local authorities, this Safe Accommodation Strategy outlines WCC and its partner's response to this new duty.

### The Act seeks to:

Raise the awareness and understanding of the devastating impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families.

Improve the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice.

Strengthen the support available to victims of abuse by statutory agencies.

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**"This landmark Bill will help transform the response to domestic abuse, helping to prevent offending, protect victims and ensure they have the support they need."<sup>4</sup>**

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## The Safe Accommodation Duty

### Definition

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines Safe Accommodation as:

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“...solely dedicated to providing a safe place to stay for victims of domestic abuse, including expert support...”<sup>5</sup>

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### Safe Accommodation Types:

**Refuge accommodation** – a refuge offers accommodation and intensive support which is tied to that accommodation. Victims, including their children, must be refuge residents to access expert emotional and practical support.

**Specialist safe accommodation** – specialist refuges for Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Questioning and other (LGBTQ+) communities, and disabled victims and their children. These may provide single gender accommodation with dedicated specialist support to victims who share a protected characteristic(s). This includes services that are led by those that also share the protected characteristic and/or have complex needs.

#### Dispersed accommodation:

- i. Safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of DA), self-contained accommodation with the same level of specialist domestic abuse support as provided within a refuge but which may be more suitable for victims who are unable to stay in a refuge with communal spaces due to complex support needs or for families with teenage sons for example.
- ii. Safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse), self-contained ‘semi-independent’ accommodation which is not within a refuge but with support for victims who may not require the intensive support offered through refuge, and are still at risk of abuse from their perpetrator(s).

Accommodation such as Bed and Breakfast accommodation is not considered relevant safe accommodation and for this reason are specifically excluded in the Regulations.

### **Safe Accommodation Types continued:**

**Sanctuary Schemes** – properties with local authority installed Sanctuary Schemes or other similar schemes, which provide enhanced physical security measures within a home. A Sanctuary Scheme is a survivor centred initiative which aims to make it possible for victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes, where it is safe for them to do so, where it is their choice, and where the perpetrator does not live in the accommodation.

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

**Other accommodation designated by the local housing authority, registered social landlord or registered charity as domestic abuse emergency accommodation**– i.e. a safe place with support. To give victims an opportunity to spend a temporary period of time to make decisions in an environment which is self-contained and safe. This would include access to wrap around support and specialist support for victims with complex needs (including mental health needs and substance misuse).

## Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation

The Domestic Abuse Act statutory guidance describes Domestic Abuse Support within Safe/ relevant Accommodation as<sup>6</sup>:

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

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has committed to providing a three-year settlement for the delivery of the Safe Accommodation duty. WCC and the district and borough councils across Warwickshire have each received additional funding and there is potential for this to be pooled in the future. For 2021/22 the amount is outlined in table one, along with details of how much each district and borough council has been allocated:

**Table 1:** MHCLG funding allocation to Local Authorities in Warwickshire

LOCAL AUTHORITY	FUNDING ALLOCATION
Warwickshire County Council	£1,040,132
North Warwickshire Borough Council	£34,867
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council	£31,944
Rugby Borough Council	£34,240
Warwick District Council	£34,498
Stratford-upon-Avon District Council	£34,416
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,210,097</b>

It is not clear whether the financial allocation awarded in 2021/22 will be reflected at the subsequent years of this strategy. Both years 2 and 3 are tied to a Central Government spending review. A joint financial plan will be developed in tandem with this strategy and outline how funding will be allocated to the specific requirements of the duty.

## Wider Strategic Context

To fulfil the requirements of the safe accommodation duty, Warwickshire has established a 'Safe Accommodation Working Group' (SAWG) as a sub-group of Warwickshire's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Board. Consisting of both county and local district councils and providers, the SAWG seeks to:

- Assess the need and demand for accommodation-based support for all victims and their children, including those who require cross-border support. This will be conducted via an annual safe accommodation assessment of need.
- Support joint working required between Tier one and Tier two Local Authorities.
- Develop and publish strategies for the provision of support to cover the locality and diverse groups of victims.
- Give effect to strategies by making commissioning decisions.
- Meet the support needs of victim – survivors and their children.
- Monitor and evaluate local delivery, reporting back to central Government.



## Warwickshire's Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Board's role:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Accountable to the Safer Warwickshire Partnership Board</li></ul> <hr/>   | <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Develops and implements an over-arching strategy and action plan that identifies Board priorities and facilitates integrated and innovative solutions and activities</li></ul> <hr/> |
| <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Supports the Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Board</li></ul> <hr/>  | <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Seeks to identify, develop and undertake joint commissioning and service development opportunities</li></ul> <hr/>   |
| <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Seeks to maintain a 'gendered' approach to working collaboratively with statutory and Third Sector agencies to prevent, protect and reduce violence</li></ul> <hr/> | <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Acts as a conduit to consider and respond to national guidance and policy for VAWG related items</li></ul> <hr/>   |

## The Safe Accommodation Strategy has also been informed by, and will support the delivery of:

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|--|--|
| <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Preventing Homelessness in Warwickshire Strategy- 2020 - 2025</li></ul> <hr/>                                | <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy - 2021-2026</li></ul> <hr/> |
| <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Warwickshire County Council Council Plan - 2020 - 2025</li></ul> <hr/>                                       | <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Local Community Safety Partnership (CSP) priorities</li></ul> <hr/>    |
| <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Safer Warwickshire Partnership Board's Community Safety Agreement priorities for 2021 - 2022</li></ul> <hr/> | <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ District and Borough Councils Homelessness Strategies</li></ul> <hr/>  |

# Summary of Domestic Abuse in Warwickshire

**Warwickshire County Council has conducted a holistic DA Needs Assessment, which found:**

- ❑ There were an estimated 23,500 cases of DA in 2019 in adults aged between 16-74 years in Warwickshire.
- ❑ Out of the estimated 23,500 cases, this is made up of approximately 15,600 females and 7,800 males.
- ❑ In 2019/20, the Warwickshire's Domestic Abuse Service provided short-term support, long-term support or refuge accommodation to 806 victims-survivors in Warwickshire. This means that roughly 3.4% of the estimated need for DA services is currently being met through commissioned DA services.
- ❑ Nuneaton and Bedworth has a higher rate of DA offences (13.29 per 1,000 people) compared to the other four district / boroughs, whilst Stratford-on-Avon has the lowest rate (7.36 per 1,000 people).
- ❑ Between 30-40% of victims in Warwickshire in 2019 have experienced DA multiple times.
- ❑ Referrals to DA Services were lower in 2019/20, than in 2018/19 and 2017/18.
- ❑ For the vast majority of DA offences (11,000) no action is taken despite having evidence and a named suspect because the victim didn't want to pursue it. This suggests that two thirds of DA perpetrators in Warwickshire are not being brought to justice.
- ❑ The Police refer the largest proportion of people to the Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Service, with the second highest proportion being self-referrals.

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Warwickshire's Domestic Abuse Service operates as part of a national model called "Routes to Support" which provides a database of refuge provision available nationally, (including specialist provision) this allows for victim-survivors and their families to be placed out of their county in order to be accommodated for their needs and to ensure their safety.

# Summary of Safe Accommodation needs:

As part of the 'Safe Accommodation' duty, Tier One Local Authorities are required to undertake an annual Needs Assessment to determine the level of demand for accommodation and DA support needs within their local area. The Safe Accommodation Strategy will be reviewed annually throughout its duration in light of this.

A key part of the Needs Assessment has been to determine the demand for safe accommodation and the areas of Warwickshire where it is needed most. Table two illustrates the number of households who presented as homeless as a result of domestic abuse across Warwickshire within each District and Borough area for the last 3 years.

It is important to note that due to the nature of DA, victims and their families will often be placed outside of the county boundary for their safety. This means that the data shown is not solely focussing on the demands and needs of Warwickshire only residents. For context, in 2020/21, Warwickshire's

DA Accommodation Service received 241 referrals, 43 of which were from Warwickshire residents, 198 of which were from out of county.

**Table 2:** Households who presented as homeless as a result of Domestic Abuse broken down by District and Borough in Warwickshire (2018-2021)

DISTRICT/BOROUGH	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Warwick	70	78	139
Stratford	95	107	110
Nuneaton & Bedworth	53	74	94
Rugby		60	50
North Warwickshire	28	12	27
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>420</b>

## The Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment also found:

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□ In the last three years, the numbers of victim-survivors presenting to services have increased in those aged 45 years plus.

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□ Though most victim-survivors are predominantly cisgender females, the numbers of cisgender male victim-survivors are increasing as well as those who are transgender.

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□ Data suggests that there that there is an over-representation of victim-survivors of ethnic minorities and minoritised British groups engaging with services.

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□ Data also highlights that there is an over-representation of victim-survivors with disabilities/ health conditions being affected compared to Warwickshire equivalent figures. Specifically, Warwickshire understand that there is a high prevalence of victim-survivors reporting mental health needs. Over the last

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3 years, Warwickshire's commissioned provider, Refuge supported 109 victim-survivors with disabilities or health conditions, of which 71 had mental health problems.

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□ Victim-survivors had varied experiences of accessing safe accommodation, temporary accommodation and permanent accommodation within the county

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□ Lack of availability of suitable accommodation and/or support services (there are instances where needs are so high that victim-survivors have had to be referred to refuges out of county where dedicated support is provided – Warwickshire does not have any refuges with 24 hour support)

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□ Almost one third of all children in families presenting as homeless as a result of Domestic Abuse, were under 5 years old highlighting how frequently young families are affected by DA.

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□ There are examples where (temporary) generic accommodation provided was not suitable for the individual(s) needs (examples including; accommodation with no cooking facilities, no outside/garden space, poor/unfit condition, not suitable for children, lack of ground floor accommodation for those with disabilities or pregnant mothers, lack of accommodation suitable for males, those with a disability, non-British survivors)

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□ There needs to be more of a focus on the victim-survivor's experience and empowering them to make decisions for themselves

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□ Consideration of the child(ren)'s needs and perspectives

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The Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment has revealed what Warwickshire must do to improve the offer for victim-survivors and their families. It has also highlighted some inconsistencies in the way agencies collect and record demand for services and for accommodation.



# Warwickshire's Safe Accommodation gaps

**The Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment and the holistic DA Needs Assessment 2021 highlights the following issues and gaps which will be addressed by this Safe Accommodation Strategy:**

- 
- Demand for safe accommodation for domestic abuse victim-survivors in Warwickshire, outstrips current supply. Victim-survivors are routinely being placed in temporary accommodation due to a lack of available and suitable local safe accommodation.<sup>7</sup>
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- The majority of victim-survivors accommodated within Warwickshire's refuge provision are from outside of the county. Reciprocal arrangements are in place to meet the needs of Warwickshire's victim-survivors who require out of county accommodation provision.
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- There are limited numbers of refuge accommodation spaces which are accessible for victim-survivors with a physical disability and / or older victim-survivors.
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- Demand for self-contained refuge accommodation is higher than for communal accommodation and demand for multiple bedrooms outstrips supply. Women with more than two children and / or teenage sons regularly find it challenging to access appropriate and safe accommodation within and outside of Warwickshire.
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- The safety of victim-survivors may mean that their preference is to be accommodated out of area and / or out of county.
- 
- There are significant numbers of women that are pregnant and / or have children that require safe accommodation.
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- The perception of a "refuge" can prevent women and men from seeking support or safe accommodation.
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- Temporary accommodation is routinely used to house victim-survivors of Domestic Abuse. Depending on the appropriateness of it this can be re-traumatising and may result in victims returning to a perpetrator.
- 
- There is a high prevalence of mental health needs of victim-survivors that access the DA accommodation and support services which is not currently being met due to demand outweighing supply.
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- “Moving-on” from temporary accommodation and / or refuge accommodation into permanent accommodation can be challenging for victim-survivors:
  - High cost of private rented accommodation and an unwillingness of landlord to accept universal credit as payment
  - Impact of debt / rent arrears
  - Availability of social housing stock
  - Accessing social housing “out of area” with no local connection

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□ There is no safe accommodation provision for those that require intensive / 24-hour support.

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□ There is no dedicated domestic abuse accommodation or support provision for LGBTQ+ victim-survivors and / or male victim-survivors.

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□ There is a growing need for safe accommodation for male victim-survivors and older victim-survivors.

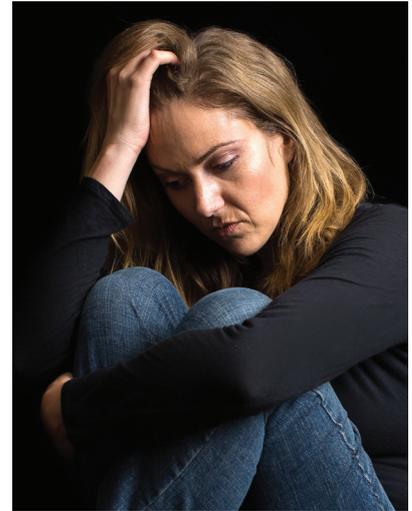
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□ There is a lack of awareness amongst professionals about the Sanctuary Scheme and an opportunity for it to benefit more people.

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□ It is estimated that there is a large “unseen” safe accommodation demand which is met by victim-survivors “sofa surfing” and living with friends or family.

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WHAT WILL  
WARWICKSHIRE'S SAFE  
ACCOMMODATION  
STRATEGY ACHIEVE?

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## SafeLives Insights data shows that 22% of people accessing support from a domestic abuse service were living with the perpetrator when they entered the service.

However, it is an even wider group whose accommodation is destabilised by abuse; whether or not they were living with the perpetrator, over half (52%) needed support to secure new accommodation or stay safe in their own home<sup>8</sup>. The Safe Accommodation Strategy will address this need through the delivery of five objectives:

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Warwickshire will ensure that victim-survivors are at the centre of their provision. We will listen and understand their wishes and provide appropriate options for accommodation and support. This strategy will support our partnership efforts to hold perpetrators to account for their behaviour and ultimately reduce the devastating impact of domestic abuse on individuals and our communities.

**1. Early intervention and prevention:** victim-survivors (adults and children) are supported at an early stage and provided with options to remain safe at home to prevent homelessness. This includes holding perpetrators to account for their behaviour.

**2. Accessible services:** victim-survivors and professionals know how to access safe accommodation options, both within and outside of Warwickshire.

**3. Appropriate safe accommodation:** accommodation options and appropriate support is in place for all victim-survivors who need it

**4. Multiagency delivery:** victim-survivors needs will be met by effective, collaborative multi-agency support

**5. Support to return home or move on:** victim-survivors are supported to return home safely and/or move into alternative permanent accommodation

# 1. Early intervention and prevention:

Victim-survivors (adult and children) are supported at an early stage and provided with options to remain safe at home to prevent homelessness. This includes holding perpetrators to account for their behaviour.

## What is Warwickshire already doing?

### **Warwickshire has a comprehensive community based Domestic Abuse Service –**

The service provides a range of support to all victim-survivors over the age of 16, at all levels of risk. Warwickshire's Domestic Abuse Service can support people living within their own home, to remain safe at home. This includes:

- A helpline / single point of contact for anyone requiring advice and support about domestic abuse
- 1:1 support by Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA), outreach workers and GP based domestic abuse workers
- Drop-in sessions in community venues across the county and group recovery programmes.
- Sanctuary Scheme provision (home adaptations that seek to improve security of a home).

### **Warwickshire has strong partnership arrangements in place to share information and develop joint plans to protect victim-survivors and hold perpetrators to account –**

Warwickshire Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings take a joint approach to risk assessment and safety planning for victim-survivors living in Warwickshire. Agencies work together to consider the wishes of the victim, options for keeping individuals safe in their own home and powers that can be used to hold perpetrators to account for their behaviour.

**Warwickshire County Councils' Childrens Services provide a range of support to families to recognise and respond to the early signs of domestic abuse and provide support to families in need.** This includes the Caring Dads Programme and support by the Early Help team to facilitate and respond to disclosures of domestic abuse. There is also the expansion of the Domestic Abuse Team in Children's Services and the development of multi-disciplinary teams (Domestic Abuse Social Workers, Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol services) to better support families where domestic abuse is occurring.

**Warwickshire agencies use existing duties and powers to hold perpetrators to account** – Warwickshire Police and other criminal justice agencies deploy a range of tools and powers, which includes but is not limited to: Domestic Abuse Protection Orders and Notices, Non-Molestation Orders, Integrated Offender Management and promotion of Claire's Law (Domestic Abuse Disclosure Scheme). By deploying these duties, victim-survivors can be supported to remain in their own homes.

## What opportunities will Warwickshire take to improve services further?

**Warwickshire partners will promote the range of support available to victim-survivors to remain safe in their own home,** this includes but is not limited to greater use of the Sanctuary Scheme and 1:1 support provided by Warwickshire's Domestic Abuse Service.

**Warwickshire agencies will work together to protect the safety of survivors so that staying at home is a safe and realistic option for more people.** This will include utilising the new Domestic Abuse Act duties and powers, increasing awareness of new offences, and encouraging reporting.

**Warwickshire will work with social landlords to:**

- Explore whether domestic abuse can be considered by social landlords as a breach of tenancy conditions so that perpetrators can be held accountable and potentially evicted as part of a multi-agency response.
- Consider whether a mechanism can be introduced to facilitate the early identification of properties where property damage and repairs indicate that abuse is present.

**Victim-survivors will be supported to remain safe in their own home through the delivery of broader work that Warwickshire partners have committed to.**

**This includes:**

- Responding to the recommendations that emerge from the Independent Review of Warwickshire's Perpetrator Offer.
- Implementation of the DA specific elements of the Children's Transformation Programme e.g. the Caring Dads and Parenting Practitioners work.

**Warwickshire will consider what further early intervention and prevention offer is required in Warwickshire to:**

- Encourage and assist families to access support early.
- Support children, young people and adults to recover and move on from their experience of witnessing or being in a household where abuse is occurring.



## 2. Accessible services:

Victim-survivors and professionals know how to access Safe Accommodation options, both inside and outside Warwickshire.

### What is Warwickshire already doing?

**Warwickshire has a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for access to Domestic Abuse Support and Refuge provision** – Any victim-survivor or professional in Warwickshire can call Warwickshire’s Domestic Abuse Service SPOC to access refuge provision within or outside of the county. The SPOC is signed up to “Routes to Support” which provides a database of refuge provision available nationally, including specialist provision. Victim-survivors are also able to access 1:1 support, access an immediate risk assessment and support to develop a safety plan. This can include plans for leaving an abusive partner and / or safety measures to enable the victim-survivor to remain in their own home such as use of the sanctuary scheme.

**Victim-survivors of Domestic Abuse that require accommodation routinely present to housing teams at the District and Borough Councils** and are prioritised for temporary accommodation whilst a move on plan is established. Permanent housing solutions are also considered, and referrals made into the DA Accommodation and Support Services are routinely conducted.

### What opportunities will Warwickshire take to improve services further?

**Warwickshire will have a Single Point of Contact for all Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation provision within the county.** Victim-survivors and professionals will not need to contact different housing authorities and support services to identify available, suitable safe accommodation. All safe accommodation available in the county, will be accessed via a Single Point of Contact. Transitional arrangements will be agreed between WCC and the District and Borough Councils until new additional safe accommodation has been commissioned.

### 3. Appropriate Safe Accommodation:

Accommodation options and appropriate support are in place for all victims-survivors who need it

#### What is Warwickshire already doing?

Warwickshire's Safe Accommodation offer currently includes:

**24 units of refuge accommodation in the County –**

This is commissioned by Warwickshire County Council and the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner.

- The refuge is open to women and children.
- It is open to Warwickshire and non-Warwickshire residents as per the Domestic Abuse Act.
- The accommodation is a mix of self-contained and communal accommodation.
- The provision includes Domestic Abuse Support Workers and re-settlement support.

**Sanctuary Scheme provision** is commissioned as part of Warwickshire's Domestic Abuse Service. The scheme provides homes security measures and is available for any victim-survivor living in their own home in Warwickshire that feels unsafe.

**Warwickshire residents can access refuge provision out of county** either via the Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Service helpline or via the National Domestic Abuse Helpline.

**Victim-survivors of DA routinely present as homeless to district and borough housing teams and are housed in temporary accommodation.** Victim-survivors of DA are considered a priority for accommodation and their need for temporary and / or permanent accommodation. The temporary accommodation provided would not meet the Domestic Abuse Act definition of "Safe Accommodation". It is not dedicated to DA victim-survivors however, victim-survivors would be able to access DA support from the Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Service.

## What opportunities will Warwickshire take to improve services further?

**Warwickshire will develop a model of dispersed refuge / safe accommodation across the county to address current gaps. The accommodation will be:**

- Open to male and female, cisgender, and transgender victim-survivors over the age of 16 and their children.
- Open to Warwickshire and non-Warwickshire residents as per requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act
- Self-contained
- Single gender accommodation
- Of varying sizes to accommodate families with multiple children
- Accessible for individuals with a disability and / or for older victim-survivors
- Include pet friendly accommodation (a proportion of units will welcome pets)
- Compliant with minimum standards (include white goods, curtains, beds etc)
- Accessible to amenities and public transport.



**Warwickshire will ensure that responsive and effective Domestic Abuse Support is delivered alongside safe accommodation, which will include:**

- Domestic Abuse Advocacy
- Practical and emotional advice and support
- Housing options advice and re-settlement support
- Counselling and therapy for adult and child victim-survivors
- Dedicated specialist support for children
- Provision of specialist support to address specific needs, this includes but is not limited to:
  - o Male victim-survivors
  - o Victim-survivors of Honour Based Violence, Faith Based Abuse, Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation and/or modern day slavery
  - o Victim-survivors who have No Recourse to Public Funds
  - o Victim-survivors who are older (over the age of 65)
  - o Victim-survivors with a disability
  - o Victim-survivors from the gypsy/traveller community
  - o Victim-survivors who are LGBTQ+
  - o Victim-survivors who are younger (16-21)
  - o Victim-survivors who have experienced honour-based violence, faith based abuse, modern day slavery and exploitation and / or harmful practices.
  - o Victim-survivors who have drug and / or alcohol dependencies

**Warwickshire will ensure that the safe accommodation offer is promoted to all those in need (professionals and the public).**

**WCC will work with District and Borough Councils, Homes England, Housing Providers, Domestic Abuse Specialists and other stakeholders and providers to shape and develop the market to meet our safe accommodation requirements.**

**Warwickshire's VAWG partners will work to develop new refuge provision in the county.**

**This might involve re-purposing an existing building or developing a new purpose-built refuge.**

**Warwickshire will enhance the Domestic Abuse support available to victim-survivors in Warwickshire refuges to address the needs of children and young people and for victim-survivors with mental health needs (both adult and children).**

**Warwickshire will work to ensure that all victim-survivors currently accessing temporary accommodation as part of the transitional arrangements, are provided support by our Domestic Abuse Accommodation and Support Service.**

**Warwickshire will work with neighbouring local authorities to consider options to jointly commission safe accommodation and support Services where appropriate.**

**Warwickshire County Council, Warwickshire District and Borough Councils and the Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Service will develop and agree robust transitional arrangements to deliver the Safe Accommodation Strategy.**

**Warwickshire recognises that it will take time to design and commission additional safe accommodation provision and support, and to achieve the improvements intended. Warwickshire partners will work together to identify and deliver immediate improvements to our safe accommodation offer for victim-survivors, as well as working to deliver a comprehensive responsive offer longer-term.**

## 4. Multi-agency delivery:

Victim-survivors needs will be met by effective, collaborative multi-agency support

### What is Warwickshire already doing?

Good multi-agency working:

**Partners routinely work together to support victim-survivors and reduce risk of harm.**

This includes but is not limited to: Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Service, WCC Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care, Warwickshire Police, District / Borough Housing teams, Mental Health Services, Drug and Alcohol Services, Health Visiting / Maternity Services, Primary Care and Secondary Care and schools.

**Specialist advice is gained to support victim-survivors in relation to No Recourse to Public Funds (NRFP), honour-based violence, FGM, modern slavery, forced marriage and faith-based abuse.**



## What opportunities will Warwickshire take to improve services further?

**Warwickshire will continue to engage with victim-survivors about their experience of accessing local services**, this will inform improvements across agencies.

**Multi-agency awareness raising** - There is an opportunity to enrich the broader understanding of DA across partner organisations further to ensure the early identification of DA concerns, effective responses are facilitated and referral pathways into services are fully understood.

**Warwickshire partners will address improvements raised in the independent review of the Warwickshire Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARACs)**. The review recognised strong practice in place, and this will be promoted. Actions to enhance practice further across Warwickshire agencies, will be delivered.

**Expanding dual diagnosis to consider domestic abuse** – Within Warwickshire, a Dual Diagnosis policy operates between the providers of substance misuse and adult mental health services to ensure that appropriate, collaborative interventions are provided to those who have a dual diagnosis. There is an opportunity to expand this to incorporate those who are also experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse.

## 5. Support to return home, or move one:

Victim-survivors are supported to return home safely and / or move on into alternative permanent accommodation

### What is Warwickshire already doing?

#### **Warwickshire's Domestic Abuse Service includes:**

- Refuge accommodation and re-settlement support - ensuring victim-survivors can move on and re-settle within a community of their choice, through the provision of effective re-settlement support within the community
- 1:1 support based in the community to understand housing and legal options to move back home safely or access alternative accommodation.

**Warwickshire District and Borough Council Housing teams respond to victim-survivors who present as homeless because of DA and provide temporary and permanent accommodation solutions.**

### What opportunities will Warwickshire take to improve services further?

**Victim-survivors will be supported to return home safely if that is their preference.**

Perpetrators will be held to account for their behaviour and the emphasis will be on them to move to alternative accommodation. This will be through the utilisation of police powers, supporting victims to understand their legal options, access to Sanctuary Schemes, close working between housing, criminal justice agencies and the Domestic Abuse Service.

**Warwickshire will support victim-survivors to understand their options for permanent accommodation (be this within or outside of Warwickshire) and provide practical support to re-settle should they require it.**

This may include support to complete applications for housing, signing up to new schools, accessing charitable donations to source furniture.

**Warwickshire will treat all survivors of domestic abuse as having a priority need for accommodation.**

The Domestic Abuse Act introduces a requirement for all domestic abuse victim-survivors to be automatically considered in priority need and therefore benefit from the statutory homelessness process and receive an offer of settled housing.

**Warwickshire will address “Move On” challenges for victim-survivors of Domestic Abuse.**

Housing allocation schemes in all five D&Bs will be reviewed to ensure that arrears, debts, anti-social behaviour and other factors that may limit rehousing options always require an evaluation of whether these may have arisen from, or be a consequence of, domestic abuse. Where this is the case these factors should not be regarded as behaviour of choice but because of the domestic abuse.

**Warwickshire will ensure that all victim-survivors of domestic abuse in social housing, are provided with a secure lifetime tenancy as required under the Domestic Abuse Act (where tenancy has been granted.)**

**Warwickshire County Council will work with District and Borough Councils to inform housing development strategies.** Work will take place to develop plans that secure sufficient housing stock to meet safe accommodation needs now and in the future.

HOW WILL THE SAFE  
ACCOMMODATION  
STRATEGY BE DELIVERED?

3



# How will the Safe Accommodation Strategy be delivered?

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**1** Warwickshire's Safe Accommodation Working Group will develop and implement a delivery plan, that is annually refreshed and reviewed by VAWG on a quarterly basis. This will identify short-term transitional arrangements and improvements as well as medium to long-term work that is required to deliver the strategy. A set of measures will be developed to monitor the impact of the strategy.

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**2** To address current gaps, service commissioning options for additional safe accommodation and support will be developed and delivered.

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**3** A joint financial plan will be developed and agreed via SAWG to spend tier 1 and tier 2 safe accommodation funding allocations. This will be spent on "safe accommodation" and accompanying DA support as defined by the Statutory Guidance. This will be annually refreshed and may include options to pool resources.

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**4** A single point of contact for safe accommodation will be developed and implemented alongside the introduction of expanded safe accommodation provision.

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**5** Awareness raising, training and communications on the safe accommodation offer will be delivered for professionals across Warwickshire's agencies.

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**6** Warwickshire will raise awareness of Domestic Abuse and communicate safe accommodation and the broader DA offer to residents of Warwickshire.

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**7** Warwickshire will monitor progress to deliver the strategy and report to VAWG Board on a quarterly basis and the Safer Warwickshire Partnership Board, Health and Wellbeing Board and the ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) when required.

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HOW WILL WE KNOW  
WE ARE MAKING A  
DIFFERENCE?

4



**Warwickshire will develop and agree measures to monitor the impact of the Safe Accommodation Strategy. The objectives of the strategy will have been delivered when:**

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- 1** More victim-survivors are reporting incidents of domestic abuse to the Police and are accessing Warwickshire's Domestic Abuse Services.

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  - 2** Warwickshire has a range of safe accommodation options in place so that all victims-survivors requiring safe accommodation, can access it.

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  - 3** Victim-survivors of domestic abuse that require "safe accommodation and support" are not housed in generic temporary accommodation in Warwickshire.

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  - 4** Warwickshire has a comprehensive community based domestic abuse services in place alongside safe accommodation.

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  - 5** Adults and children referred to services report that their voices were heard; that they feel safer and support was provided at the right time.

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  - 6** That the numbers of victim-survivors experiencing domestic abuse related repeat victimisation is reduced.

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  - 7** The workforce in Warwickshire is familiar with the Safe Accommodation offer and utilise this appropriately.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# 5



# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Warwickshire victim-survivors of domestic abuse and their family and friends that have chosen to share their story with us. Many of these victim-survivors may still be recovering from abuse, and we really value their strength to share their experience with us. They have communicated their ordeal, their views of the support they have received and shared what needs to be improved. By sharing their stories, they will help Warwickshire's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) partners to ensure we are able to support all victim-survivors to remain safe in their own home, or access alternative safe accommodation and support that meets their needs.

We would like to thank members of the Safe Accommodation Working Group for their commitment and work to assist in the development of this strategy and to wider stakeholders within Community Safety Partnerships who provided their knowledge and expertise to help inform its objectives.

We would also like to thank Refuge - the commissioned provider for Domestic Abuse Services in Warwickshire and both local and national advocate for victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

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## Endnotes

- 1 [https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Safe\\_at\\_home\\_Spotlight\\_web.pdf](https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Safe_at_home_Spotlight_web.pdf)
- 2 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/section/1/enacted>
- 3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-overarching-factsheet>
- 4 *ibid*
- 5 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/993825/Domestic\\_Abuse\\_Act\\_-\\_draft\\_statutory\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/993825/Domestic_Abuse_Act_-_draft_statutory_guidance.pdf)
- 6 *ibid*
- 7 The data shown is not solely focussing on the demands and needs of Warwickshire only residents, this shows anyone placed in Warwickshire whether they are a resident or not. For context, in 2020/21, Warwickshire's DA Support Service received 241 referrals, 43 of which were from Warwickshire residents, 198 of which were from out of county.
- 8 [https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Safe\\_at\\_home\\_Spotlight\\_web.pdf](https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Safe_at_home_Spotlight_web.pdf)

# How to get help if you or someone you know is experiencing domestic abuse

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, ring or text 999.

If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have any speech impairment, please dial Minicom/Textphone 18001

If you're worried a friend, family member, neighbour or colleague might be a domestic abuse victim you can report your concerns anonymously to Crimestoppers online here: <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/keeping-safe/personal-safety/domestic-abuse>

We know this can be daunting but the services below will support you every step of the way.



**Warwickshire Domestic Violence Service** - If you are experiencing domestic violence in Warwickshire, Refuge's domestic violence service can support you and your children to keep safe. Refuge is a county-wide service that provides support to women, men and children experiencing domestic violence in Warwickshire.

T: **0800 408 1552**

W: <https://www.refuge.org.uk/our-work/our-services/refuge-warwickshire-domestic-violence-service/>



**Rights of Women** - Rights of Women aims to increase women's understanding of their legal rights and improve their access to justice enabling them to live free from violence and make informed, safe, choices about their own and their families' lives by offering a range of services including specialist telephone legal advice lines, legal information and training for professionals.

T: **020 7251 6577** (family law helpline – other numbers are available on the website)

W: <https://rightsofwomen.org.uk/>



**Galop** – Galop is a charity offering advice and support to LGBT+ people who have experienced violence or domestic abuse.

T: **0800 999 5428**

W: <http://www.galop.org.uk/>



**Mankind** – A confidential helpline is available for male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence across the UK as well as their friends, family, neighbours, work colleagues and employers.

T: **01823 334 244**

W: <https://www.mankind.org.uk/>



**RoSA** - RoSA is an independent charity working throughout Warwickshire, offering free confidential support for anyone who has experienced rape, sexual abuse, or sexual violence.

T: **01788 551151**

W: <http://www.rosasupport.org>



**Safeline** - Safeline is a specialist charity providing a range of services across Warwickshire to support all survivors of rape and sexual abuse.

T: **01926 402498** (or text **07860 027573**)

W: <https://www.safeline.org.uk/>



**The Blue Sky Centre**

(Sexual Assault Referral Centre) –

The Blue Sky Centre is a SARC where any victim of rape or sexual assault will receive medical care, police intervention (if they wish to report the crime), and various other support services.

T: **01926 507805**

W: <https://blueskycentre.org.uk/>



**Respect Phonenumber** - Is your abusive behaviour costing you your relationship? Help is available.

T: **0808 802 4040**

W: <https://respectphonenumber.org.uk/>

**A full range of support options are available at:**

<https://www.talk2someone.org.uk/>

