



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2017-250, 8 December 2017

Funding for domestic violence refuges

By Sally Lipscombe
Wendy Wilson
Alex Bellis

Summary

On 12 December 2017, there will be a general debate entitled Funding for Domestic Violence Refuges in Westminster Hall. Selected by the Backbench Business Committee, this debate is sponsored by Jess Phillips MP.

When making her [submission to the Back Bench Business Committee](#) Jess Philips said:

Last week, the Government revealed what their plans were specifically for refuge and other short-term supported accommodation, as they would term it: accommodation for care leavers and some accommodation for people with learning difficulties—basically hostel accommodation, for want of a better word. The plan put forward by the Government has set quite a lot of concern among the sector, and certainly the members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on domestic violence, of which I am chair, have real concerns about how it is going to meet the needs.

The proposal is essentially to stop using the model of housing benefit and to create a ring-fenced budget that goes down to local authorities. At the moment, 60% of all women and children who attempt to get into a refuge are turned away, and every single day in this country, 90 women and 93 children, I think it is, cannot find a bed in a refuge. There are real concerns that without statutory pressure on local authorities, even with ring-fenced budgets, we will still end up with an enormous postcode lottery in this field.

Consultation on the Government's proposals is open until 23 January 2018.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

Contents

| | |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Refuge funding: an overview | 2 |
| 2. Supported housing: funding changes | 4 |
| 2.1 Background | 4 |
| 2.2 Announcement: 31 October 2017 | 6 |
| 2.3 Reaction to the proposals | 8 |
| 3. Parliamentary material | 10 |
| 3.1 Debates | 10 |
| 3.2 Parliamentary questions | 10 |
| 3.3 Written statements | 12 |
| 3.4 Scottish Parliament | 14 |
| 3.5 Welsh Assembly | 15 |
| 3.6 Northern Ireland Assembly | 15 |
| 4. Press articles and releases | 16 |

1. Refuge funding: an overview

General background material on domestic violence is set out in [Library Briefing Paper SN06337 Domestic violence in England and Wales](#).

The provision of services to victims of domestic violence is a matter for local authorities. The Government's general view is that "Local areas are best placed to understand local needs and the Government has devolved power and responsibility for meeting those needs accordingly, including to devolved administrations".¹

In December 2016 the Home Office published the [Violence Against Women and Girls: National Statement of Expectations](#) (the NSE). The NSE sets out what the Government expects local areas to put in place in order to ensure that their response to violence against women and girls is "as collaborative, robust and effective as it can be so that all victims and survivors can get the help they need". The NSE is supported by the Home Office guidance [Violence Against Women and Girls Services: Supporting Local Commissioning](#) (December 2016).

Women's refuges receive funding from a mixture of sources. The two main types of funding required are:

- **Support funding**, which enables refuges to pay their specialist support staff and to fund additional services such as counselling and advice. Support funding most commonly takes the form of grants from local government or Police and Crime Commissioners.
- **Housing funding**, which funds the "bricks and mortar" costs of a refuge. Most of this funding is currently provided by way of housing benefit.

A Government consultation launched on 31 October 2017 is proposing significant changes to housing funding. The consultation proposes removing "short-term supported housing" – which is defined to include refuges – from the welfare system. Funding would instead be provided by ring-fenced local authority grants:

All the funding for housing costs (including rent and eligible service charges) that were previously met from Housing Benefit, will instead be allocated to local authorities to fund services that meet the needs of their local areas.²

Further details on these proposals and reaction to them is set out in section 2 of this debate pack.

In March 2016, the Home Office published [Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Strategy 2016 – 2020](#). The Strategy set out a commitment to provide £80 million of dedicated funding:

This funding will provide core support for refuges and other accommodation-based services, helping local areas ensure that no woman is turned away from the support she needs. It will include

¹ PQ 7463 on Refuges, 12 September 2017

² DCLG/DWP, [Funding Supported Housing: Policy Statement and Consultation](#), para 57

specific provision for women from BME backgrounds, and innovative services for the most vulnerable with complex needs. The funding will also support a network of rape support centres, a network of national helplines. Critically, from 2017, this increased funding will also support the launch of a VAWG Service Transformation Fund to support, promote and embed the best local practice.³

The Strategy went on to explain that some of this £80 million would be made available by way of a Department of Communities and Local Government fund:

This two-year fund will be available to local areas who can demonstrate that they are taking steps towards meeting the NSE, and provide specialist accommodation-based support based on an assessment of local need including women from BME backgrounds and those who come from other areas. We will strongly encourage local areas to collaborate with one another through the fund so that partnerships join up across borders to meet the needs of women who may flee to seek support, and collaborate on specialist provision.

Because this provision is so critical, we will review this approach after two years. If we are not reassured that women are receiving the support they need, then we will consider if moving to a national model of provision will improve these services.⁴

The £20 million fund was launched in November 2016.⁵ In February 2017 Communities Secretary Sajid Javid announced that the funding had been allocated to 76 projects across the country.⁶

A further £20 million of funding for organisations working to combat domestic violence and support victims was announced in the 2017 Spring Budget. This brought the Government's total funding for implementing the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy to £100 million.⁷

³ Home Office, [Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Strategy 2016 – 2020](#), p11

⁴ Ibid, p32

⁵ DCLG, [New £20 million fund now open to help victims of domestic abuse](#), 3 November 2016

⁶ DCLG, [Government support for more than 19,000 victims of domestic abuse](#), 17 February 2017

⁷ HM Treasury, [Spring Budget 2017: 21 things you need to know](#), 8 March 2017

2. Supported housing: funding changes

2.1 Background

During the [Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015](#) the Chancellor announced that Housing Benefit claimants living in dwellings rented from a social landlord (local authority or housing association) would face future restrictions on the amount of Housing Benefit they would receive. The intention was to cap the amount of rent that Housing Benefit would cover in the social sector to the relevant Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate.⁸ This generated significant concerns in the sector, particularly amongst providers of supported housing, including domestic violence refuges. As a general rule, the rents in supported housing are much higher than the rents charged on other social housing units.

Analysis conducted by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) in 2016 confirmed that unit costs in supported housing tend to be 'significantly higher' than those in general needs housing. Reasons for this include: higher maintenance; repairs and renewal costs; the provision of communal facilities; security; health and safety measures; higher housing management costs; and the nature of capital funding arrangements for some schemes.⁹

Thus capping Housing Benefit at LHA rates could have meant a shortfall in providers' income, residents were concerned that they would have to make this up from other income.

In response to the sectors' concerns, the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department for Work and Pensions jointly commissioned an evidence review of supported housing in January 2016.¹⁰

On 15 September 2016, the Secretary of State, Damian Green, issued a [Written Statement](#) outlining details of the Government's decisions based on the evidence review of supported housing. He announced a further delay in implementation and said that a separate funding solution may be devised for very short-term accommodation such as hostels and refuges. The Government published the [Supported Accommodation Review](#) findings on 21 November 2016.

Alongside the publication of the evidence review, the 2015 Government published a consultation paper on the [implementation of the new funding model for supported housing](#). Submissions were invited up to 13 February 2017.

⁸ [Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015](#), November 2015, para 1.125

⁹ HCA, *Delivering Better Value for Money: Understanding Differences in Unit Costs*, June 2016

¹⁰ [HL Deb 14 January 2016 cc381-3](#)

On 25 October 2017 the Prime Minister announced that LHA rates **would not** be applied across the social rented sector, including supported housing:

I can also say today that as part of our response to the review, we will not be applying the local housing allowance cap to supported housing; indeed, we will not be implementing it in the wider social rented sector. The full details will be made available when we publish our response to the consultation.¹¹

The report resulting from the consultation exercise was published on 31 October 2017 (see section 2.2 below).

In the meantime, on 15 December 2016 the Work and Pensions and Communities and Local Government Select Committees announced a joint [inquiry into supported housing funding](#). The report of the inquiry, [Future of supported housing](#), was published on 1 May 2017. The Committees supported efforts to find a long-term sustainable funding mechanism for the sector but said “we share the concerns expressed across the sector that the funding proposals, as they stand, are unlikely to achieve these objectives.”¹² In regard to short-term supported housing, submissions to the inquiry called for a clear definition of this sort of accommodation. There was some support for defining this accommodation based on intended use rather than length of stay and for its removal from Universal Credit:

We heard that very short-term supported housing was at a particular disadvantage under Universal Credit. St Mungo’s highlighted that 20 per cent of their residents in 2015 and 2016 had stayed for less than thirty days. With payment for Universal Credit calculated on a monthly basis, and money taking at least five weeks to arrive, providers were unlikely to receive rent owed from residents who moved out of accommodation before their first payment, or between two monthly payments. The Minister for Welfare Delivery acknowledged this and told us the Government was “keen to remove the very short-term accommodation from this model, because we can see that it does not work and is not going to work”.¹³

Direct payments to providers attracted support with some preferring direct payments based on a scheme by scheme basis rather than on individuals “to ensure services were available when people need them”.¹⁴ The LGA suggested a separate grant for authorities to commission short-term crisis housing to remove the need for individuals to rely on Housing Benefit altogether.¹⁵ The inquiry supported consideration of a separate funding solution for short-term accommodation and recommended consideration of a system of grants along the lines of that suggested by the LGA.¹⁶

¹¹ [HC Deb 25 October 2017 c292](#)

¹² [HC 867](#), 1 May 2017, p3

¹³ *Ibid.*, para 93

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, para 94

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, para 95

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, para 97

Detailed information on the proposed changes to funding for supported housing up to 31 October 2017 can be found in Library Briefing Paper [Paying for supported housing](#).

2.2 Announcement: 31 October 2017

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 25 October, the Government published a policy statement and launched a further two consultation exercises: [Funding supported housing: policy statement and consultations](#) on 31 October 2017. One of the consultation exercises concerns sheltered and extra care housing, while the other focuses on short-term supported housing.

Alongside this, the Government published the results of four Task and Finish Groups that had been asked to independently consider some of the key issues included in the consultation document: [Supported Housing Task and Finish Group: independent reports](#).

The following supporting documents were also published on 31 October:

- [Government response to Communities and Local Government and Work Pensions Committees joint report on 'Future of supported housing'](#).
- [Government response to the November 2016 consultation 'Funding for Supported Housing'](#).
- [London School of Economics report on the projected demand for supported housing in Great Britain 2015 to 2030](#) which was published in March 2017.
- [Press notice](#) on the announcement of the policy package.

The Government proposes to define short-term supported housing as:

Accommodation with support, accessed following a point of crisis or as part of a transition to living independently, and provided for a period of up to two years or until transition to suitable long-term stable accommodation is found, whichever occurs first.¹⁷

The proposed funding model for this type of supported housing will involve a ring-fenced grant paid to local authorities which will be used for commissioning local services:

This means provision will be commissioned at a local level, funded locally through a ring-fenced grant, and underpinned by a new local planning and oversight regime. All the funding for housing costs (including rent and eligible service charges) that were previously met from Housing Benefit, will instead be allocated to local authorities to fund services that meet the needs of their local areas. This will give local authorities an enhanced role in planning, funding and commissioning short-term supported housing in their area. It will entirely remove short-term supported housing from the welfare system (Housing Benefit and the housing element in Universal Credit). However, an individual's entitlement for help with their housing costs (through Housing Benefit or the housing cost element of Universal Credit) will be unchanged.¹⁸

¹⁷ [Funding supported housing: policy statement and consultations](#), 31 October 2017, para 53

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, para 57

The new model is scheduled to come into effect in April 2020. The level of funding “will be set on the basis of current projections of future need (as informed by discussions with local authorities) and will continue to take account of the costs of provision in this part of the sector.” The Government has said that the ring-fence will be retained in the long term.¹⁹

The devolved areas of Scotland and Wales will receive equivalent funding to that under the welfare system:

In Wales and Scotland an equivalent amount will be provided and it will be for those administrations to decide how best to allocate the funding. As previously committed, the UK Government will ensure that the devolved administrations receive a level of funding in 2020-21 equivalent to that which would otherwise have been available through the welfare system.²⁰

Under this model it is expected that residents in short-term supported housing will not pay rent:

It will fund the provision, rather than the individual – tenants in short-term accommodation will no longer pay rent, as this will be funded by local authorities through the grant. This will provide more funding certainty to providers in the short and long-term. We will work with local government and the welfare system to ensure that grant allocations for short-term supported accommodation in 2020-21 match the sums that would otherwise have been paid out in each local area to pay for housing costs through the welfare system.²¹

Consultation on the proposals is open until 23 January 2018.

Universal Credit & short term accommodation

The Government intended that claimants in temporary accommodation would receive housing support as part of their UC and that this would be based on the appropriate Local Housing Allowance rate for the household and would take account of household size as opposed to property size.²²

The consultation paper [Funding for Supported Housing](#) (November 2016), acknowledged that UC presents challenges for providers of short-term accommodation and sought views on how best to respond:

For providers of certain types of short term accommodation, Universal Credit, which is typically paid monthly, presents challenges. Shorter term accommodation may include provision such as:

1. hostels for homeless people or domestic violence refuges;
2. short term emergency accommodation provided by a local authority whilst their duty to house a homeless person is assessed; and
3. other supported housing settings where stays may be short term.

¹⁹ Ibid., para 58

²⁰ Ibid., para 59

²¹ Ibid., para 60

²² HB/CTB Circular G10/2010

The Government also recognises that different funding models for the short term accommodation types set out above may also be applicable to Temporary Accommodation provided by local authorities in discharging their homelessness duties.

We are seeking views on how best to provide support for short term stays alongside the monthly assessment and payment in Universal Credit. Challenges include ensuring we remain responsive to housing needs at the start of someone's Universal Credit claim while entitlement is determined and first payments are made.²³

The Government has now announced that from April 2018 stays in all temporary accommodation will continue to be paid through Housing Benefit until a longer term system is devised. If someone is claiming Universal Credit and in temporary accommodation, then the housing costs claim will be transferred to Housing Benefit. Any new tenants will claim Housing Benefit. This change requires secondary legislation.

[Funding supported housing: policy statement and consultations](#) (October 2017) makes reference to the new funding model and the need for it to work with UC:

The funding model must also work with the modernised welfare system. Universal Credit is designed to reduce welfare dependency and mirrors the world of work, where most people are paid monthly. However, for short-term supported housing we have designed a tailored approach to meet the particular circumstances of the vulnerable people who live there, who may have only a short stay of less than a month or require payments to more than one landlord in order to move on to more appropriate housing at the right time.²⁴

2.3 Reaction to the proposals

The charity [Women's Aid](#) has commented that the proposals "mark the full devolution of responsibility and resourcing for domestic abuse refuges to local areas". It considers that this is "wholly inappropriate for, and risks the end of, the national network of specialist domestic abuse refuges".²⁵

It conducted a survey of refuge providers following the launch of the Government's consultation, which it said had prompted the following responses:

Providers responding to our survey tell us that over a third, 39%, of their refuge services would have to close completely, seeing the loss of a total of 446 refuge spaces.

A further 13% of the refuge services in our survey would reduce the spaces available in their refuges, by a total of 142 spaces between them.

From the sample in our survey, just over half of refuges (52%) would either have to close the refuge service entirely

²³ DWP & DCLG, [Funding for Supported Housing](#), November 2016

²⁴ [Funding supported housing: policy statement and consultations](#), 31 October 2017, para 85

²⁵ Women's Aid, [SOS: Save Refuges, Save Lives Campaign: Briefing on Supported Housing Reforms](#), November 2017

or reduce the number of spaces available - a loss of 588 refuge spaces in all.

In total, we estimate that these 588 spaces lost would have supported 2,058 women and 2,202 children during the year - resulting in 4000 more women and children turned away from the lifesaving services they desperately need.

Women's Aid is, instead, calling for the Government to develop "a sustainable future funding model for refuges while they are undertaking their refuge funding review", which should cover both housing and support costs.

During recent PQs, DCLG minister Jake Berry said:

On the long-term funding of women's refuges, it is fair to say that nothing is off the table. The Government have not ruled out a national funding scheme, if our consultation shows that that is correct.

(...)

We have been absolutely clear that we will continue to review the funding for care and support, and whether housing costs should be paid direct as grants to local authorities or not. We continue to explore all the options, including a national model for refuge provision.²⁶

Some key questions have been identified to which the sector is seeking answers, including:

- Sufficient assurance over the ring-fence. There are frequent references in the sector to the Supporting People funding ring-fence which was subsequently removed. Any lack of confidence around future funding could impact on long-term certainty and reduce provision.
- If the ring-fence remains in place, will the size of the pot increase in line with costs?
- How will uncertainty over funding affect investment in new provision?
- Do local authorities have sufficient commissioning capacity? Will they be resourced to make informed decisions over future funding?

There are repeated references to the potentially 'discretionary' nature of grant funding via local authorities:

Needless to say, there are no guarantees about the future size of the new discretionary pot. So far from providing greater security of funding, the new proposal removes funding certainty altogether. It is, quite literally, even worse than the LHA cap policy (which at least guaranteed funding at LHA levels).²⁷

²⁶ [HC Deb 23 November 2017 cc1171-2](#)

²⁷ *Inside Housing*, "The Supported housing cap replacement is even worse," 8 November 2017

3. Parliamentary material

3.1 Debates

[Domestic Violence Refuges](#), HC debate, 11 May 2016, cc. 279WH – 304WH

- The Library produced a corresponding debate pack called [Government support for domestic violence refuges](#)

3.2 Parliamentary questions

Oral Questions: [Women's Refuges](#), HC Deb 23 Nov 2017, cc. 1170 – 1172

- An exchange which covers how the Government intends to increase provision of refuges and concerns about the new funding model announced in October 2017

WPQ 8955 [[Refuges: Gloucestershire](#)] 14 Sep 2017

Asked by: Drew, Dr David | **Party:** Labour Party · Cooperative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure the increase in provision of refuges in Gloucestershire.

Answering member: Mr Marcus Jones | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Communities and Local Government

Domestic abuse is a devastating crime and we are determined to ensure that victims, regardless of their circumstances, receive the support they need when they need it.

Refuges provide a critical bedrock of support for victims of domestic abuse and their families.

Since 2014, we have invested over £33.5 million in services to support victims of domestic abuse, including refuges.

Local authorities in Gloucestershire have benefitted from this funding during the same period. They have used the funding to provide refuges, specialist accommodation-based support, community and outreach services to ensure no victims of domestic abuse is turned away from the support they need.

The funding is also being used to provide dedicated support to victims from minority communities and their families in the Gloucestershire area.

WPQ 7463 [[Refuges](#)] 12 Sep 2017

Asked by: Saville Roberts, Liz | **Party:** Plaid Cymru

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, if the Government will place a duty on local authorities to (a) ensure that sufficient places of safety are available for victims of domestic violence and (b) encourage local authorities to have in place reciprocal arrangements so that the issue of victim safety is paramount.

Answering member: Mr Marcus Jones | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Communities and Local Government

We are determined to ensure that victims get the help they need, when they need it.

Our Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy is clear that refuges and other forms of specialist accommodation based services play a vital role in supporting victims of domestic abuse to move from danger to safety and independence.

We have provided £20 million funding to 76 projects in England, creating more than 2,200 bed spaces and giving support to over 19,000 victims. This is in addition to the £13.5 million awarded in 2014/15 and 2015/16 to strengthen refuge and other safe accommodation provision.

Local areas are best placed to understand local needs and the Government has devolved power and responsibility for meeting those needs accordingly, including to devolved administrations. However, we expect local areas to provide services that are responsive to the needs of victims fleeing from domestic abuse and make decisions on the provision of safe accommodation and support to fit the identified needs for all domestic abuse victims, both those from within and those who flee across local area boundaries. Our Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services reinforce the expectation that local areas should plan to support victims of domestic abuse who have moved to another area to stay safe.

We are clear in the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy that we will review this approach after two years. If we are not reassured that women are receiving the support they need, then we will consider if moving to a national model of provision will improve these services for victims.

WPQ 3426 [[Refuges](#)] 17 Jul 2017

Asked by: Gwynne, Andrew | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the availability of domestic violence refuges for women across local authorities.

Answering member: Mr Marcus Jones | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Communities and Local Government

Domestic Abuse is a devastating crime and we are determined to ensure that women, regardless of their circumstances, should receive the support they need when they need it, as we made clear in the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

Local areas are best placed to understand local needs and the government has devolved power and responsibility for meeting those needs accordingly. However, we expect local areas to do the right thing and provide services that are responsive to the needs of victims of domestic abuse. Local areas should assess their need for domestic abuse services and make decisions on the provision of refuges and support to fit the identified needs for women and children, both from within and outside of their local area.

To help meet this challenge, since 2014 we have provided £33.5 million in direct government funding to support victims of domestic abuse. We were clear in the prospectus for our £20 million fund that we were looking for local authorities to join up and work collaboratively across boundaries to strengthen provision of specialist accommodation, including refuges, as well as protect assets of national significance such as the very specialist refuges which provide culturally specific and sensitive services.

Alongside the fund, we published our new 'Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services', developed with partners from the domestic abuse sector, which set out for the first time what local areas need to do to ensure an effective response to meeting the needs of all domestic abuse victims.

In line with our commitment in the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy we will be working with local authorities to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of our interventions, so that we can be assured that victims of domestic abuse are receiving the help they need when they need it, and that all areas are rising to the level of the best.

Oral Questions: [Domestic Violence Refuges](#), HC Deb 24 April 2017, c893

- An exchange covering funding to increase the availability of beds in refuges.

3.3 Written statements

[Future funding of supported housing](#), HCWS209, 31 October 2017

Mr Marcus Jones (Minister for Local Government)

Supported housing is a lifeline for vulnerable older people, for individuals with learning and physical disabilities, for those at risk of domestic abuse, and for many others. It is an investment in our society and our economy, with the savings it brings to other parts of the public sector, such as health and social care. The Government has been clear that it is committed to protecting these homes and the people who live in them. Reforming the funding model for supported housing costs and putting it on a sustainable and stable footing is therefore vital.

In the Autumn Statement 2015, we announced our intention to apply the Local Housing Allowance rates to social rents, including supported housing, with effect from 2018. The implementation date was subsequently deferred to April 2019.

Since then, we have listened carefully to the concerns raised by the supported housing sector and other key stakeholders about the issues that this measure would present, because supporting the most vulnerable people in our society is a priority for the government. We value the important role that supported housing plays and we are committed to protecting and boosting the supply of supported housing, and ensuring tenants are able to enjoy the best quality of life.

In response to those concerns the Prime Minister announced last week that the Government will not apply the Local Housing Allowance rates to tenants in supported housing, nor to the wider social rented sector.

Last year we also committed to reform the funding model for supported housing costs, in order to ensure it provides good

outcomes for tenants, better oversight and cost control, and compatibility with the modernised welfare system. This covers the funding for housing costs only, as the support costs are funded separately; there will be no change to how these are provided. We have worked with the sector since then to develop a workable funding model, and we have heard their views and concerns. We are therefore bringing forward a flexible funding model that works for this very diverse sector, as set out in more detail in our policy statement published today.

All long term supported housing will be retained in the welfare system. We heard calls for a separate model for older people's housing to ensure we are building more of these vital homes. We will therefore be introducing a 'Sheltered Rent' for sheltered and extra care housing, a type of social rent that will see the social housing regulator use existing powers to control rent inclusive of eligible service charges. This approach means that we will set an overall limit on the amount that providers can charge in sheltered rent (rent inclusive of eligible service charges) on each unit of sheltered or extra care provision. It will also, as we currently do for net rents, limit annual increases. We will work closely with the sector to set these limits at an appropriate level.

The rest of long term supported housing, such as housing for people with learning or physical disabilities or mental ill health, will remain in the welfare system as it currently is. We will be working with the sector in England to develop and deliver an approach that will ensure greater cost control across the sector while driving up outcomes for vulnerable people.

We recognise the need for a distinct model for short-term supported housing. Funding for this part of the sector will be provided through locally administered ring-fenced grants. This means that all the funding that was previously provided by Housing Benefit will instead be allocated to local authorities to fund and commission services at a local level. An individual's entitlement for help with their housing costs (though Housing Benefit or the housing cost element of Universal Credit) will be unchanged. In Wales and Scotland, an equivalent amount will be provided for short term supported housing, and it will be for those administrations to decide how best to allocate funding. We intend to retain this ring-fence in the long term to protect this important provision and the vulnerable people it supports. The amount of short term supported housing grant funding will continue to take account of the costs of provision and also our current understanding of future need.

We are also seeking to improve local planning for supported housing and commissioning across service areas. Our policy announcement sets out proposals for a National Statement of Expectation and local level strategic planning to underpin the new funding regime.

These important and necessary changes will take time to implement and it is crucial that the support provided to people is not interrupted or put in doubt, which is why these changes will now commence from April 2020 rather than April 2019.

Alongside our policy statement, we are launching two consultations on specific elements of the model, and a draft National Statement of Expectation. We have today published the independent reports of our Task and Finish Groups, which were instrumental in helping us design a new model that will work for the sector. We have also published our response to the November

2016 consultation 'Funding for Supported Housing', and our response to the joint Select Committee report 'Future of supported housing'.

We have also considered the important role of refuges and calls from some of the sector to nationalise the funding and commissioning of this. The Government was clear in its Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy that refuges provide a vital service. We believe that local authorities are best placed to deliver the better outcomes for vulnerable renters in crisis and emergency supported housing as they understand local needs and can take a holistic view on both housing and support provision. They will be funded as set out in the model above, on a local basis, protected by a ring-fence on the grant funding. The supporting oversight regime will also set out our expectations, including on supporting those without a local connection. The Government has already committed (in the 2016/20 Violence Against Woman and Girls Strategy) to review the current approach to refuge provision in England by November 2018. We will need to pay particular attention to the funding of care and support costs as we do this, and will continue to work closely with this sector to make good our commitment to the victims of these terrible crimes.

It is our aim through making these changes to provide funding security to the sector, allowing them to make long term investment and therefore secure future supply. It will also ensure value for money for the taxpayer, and enable councils to have a stronger role in providing appropriately for their local areas. Most importantly, it will support positive outcomes for some of the most vulnerable people in this country.

I am placing copies of our policy announcement made today (comprising a policy statement, two consultations, and a draft National Statement of Expectation), and the government response to the joint Select Committee inquiry in the library of both Houses.

3.4 Scottish Parliament

Question S5W-07957: Gordon Lindhurst, Lothian, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, Date Lodged: 09/03/2017

To ask the Scottish Government how much financial support it has given to support organisations working to tackle domestic violence and abuse in each of the last five years.

Answered by Angela Constance (23/03/2017):

Funding for support organisations working to tackle domestic violence and abuse over the last five years has been published on the Scottish Government Web Pages. These can be found at:

2012-2015 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/violence-women/VAWFund2012-15>

2015-2016

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/Funding/funding/ViolenceAgainstWomenFunding>

2016-2017 <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/equality-funding-2016-17-violence-women-and-girls-fund/>

Question S5W-04110: Liam McArthur, Orkney Islands, Scottish Liberal Democrats, Date Lodged: 28/10/2016

To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the potential impact of reductions in local government budgets on the provision of housing for people affected by domestic abuse.

Answered by Kevin Stewart (11/11/2016):

The Scottish Government has treated local government fairly despite the cuts to the Scottish Budget from the UK Government and is providing local government with a funding settlement of over £10.3 billion in 2016-17. There are 461 **refuge** spaces in Scotland.

The homelessness legislation also provides a strong statutory safety net so that women and children seeking to leave an abusive perpetrator are supported into temporary accommodation immediately and then moved on to appropriate settled accommodation or, if safe, back into their original home. Housing options are continuing to develop through the Scottish Government funded local authority led housing options hubs. This work focuses on the prevention of homelessness and ensuring that people have access to good quality housing advice which should help women and children experiencing domestic abuse in accessing relevant legal mechanisms.

In March 2016 the Scottish Government published enhanced Housing Options Guidance, which recognised that those removing themselves from domestic abuse situations will have particular needs and recommended that Housing Options Services should ensure that appropriate plans, liaison and referral arrangements are in place. A national training toolkit is being developed which will cover issues of domestic abuse and how this should be addressed through housing and homelessness provision.

3.5 Welsh Assembly

[Statement: Progress on Implementation of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), Welsh Assembly Plenary, 21 June 2016

- In this exchange, the role of local authority funding for domestic violence refuges is discussed, in particular mentioning the use of the Supporting People Programme.

3.6 Northern Ireland Assembly

[Questions to the Minister of Communities](#), Northern Ireland Assembly, 5 December 2016

- In this exchange, refuges are discussed, as well as funding commitments via the Supporting People programme.

4. Press articles and releases

[Govt changes to funding for women's refuges could be devastating for victims](#), Politic.so.uk, 7 December 2017

- An article expressing concerns that removing housing benefit from the funding system for refuges will make them dependent on local authorities. Previously, it is argued, refuges had the independence to challenge local authority services; now local authorities may have a freer hand to commission cheaper, less effective services.

[Cuts To Women's Refuges Are A Measure Of Our Country](#), *Huffington Post* blog, 4 December 2017

- A blog arguing that reforms are making funding harder, not easier, to access for domestic violence refuges.

[Women are being hunted down by violent partners - when is the Government going to help?](#) *Telegraph*, 30 November 2017

- An article about the recent funding reform proposals and the general pressures that refuges face and will face in the future.

[Refuges send out SOS in response to government's proposed supported housing funding plans](#), Women's Aid, 29 November 2017

- A survey carried out by Women's Aid finds that "Over half of refuges could be forced to close their doors or reduce life-saving services if government goes ahead with plans for supported housing funding". The survey received 61 responses from refuge providers, covering around 29% of refuge services in England.
- This survey was picked up in the media. For example:
 - [4,000 women and children fleeing domestic abuse will be locked out of refuges under government proposals, warns charity](#), *Independent*, 29 November 2017
 - [Third of women's refuges face closure in government funding reforms](#), *Times*, 29 November 2017

[Keir Starmer: make funding for women's refuges mandatory](#), *Guardian*, 27 November 2017

- Commentators argue that the proposed block grant for supported housing will force refuges to compete with other services for money.

[Women's lives at risk from changes to funding for refuges, say charities](#), *Guardian*, 26 November 2017

[Women's refuges face closure due to lack of funding – the Government must take action to protect victims of domestic violence](#), *Independent*, 25 November 2017

[Mary Mason, CEO, makes a statement in response to the latest proposed supported housing reforms](#), Solace, 1 November 2017

- Solace, the women's domestic/sexual abuse charity, believes that the funding reforms will lead to 'financial uncertainty' for refuges.

[Domestic violence campaigners warn that Government could be about to 'dismantle' life-saving refuges](#), *Independent*, 31 October 2017

[Stories from around the country show a refuge system at breaking point](#), Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 10 October 2017

- The Bureau describes its self as “an independent, not-for-profit organisation that holds power to account.” This investigation looks at several areas around England where services for domestic violence are struggling.
- These reports have been picked up in the media, including the [News Statesman](#).

[Welsh Women's Aid calls for no cuts to refuge services across Wales](#), Welsh Women's Aid, 10 January 2016

- Since this press release, Welsh Women's aid has published its [response to the Welsh Government draft budget proposals for 2018-19](#). The organisation welcomes the continuation of funding, but has concerns about pressures and the 'postcode lottery' of local refuge services.

About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publically available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email hcinfo@parliament.uk.

Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).