

THE DOMESTIC ABUSE REPORT 2021

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# THE ANNUAL AUDIT



**women's aid**  
until women & children are safe



Authors

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Women's Aid

With support from Women's Aid staff

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the domestic abuse services who have provided the vital data for this report through their responses to the Women's Aid Annual Survey, case study interviews and their use of On Track, the Women's Aid case management and outcomes monitoring database.

We are also grateful to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for its funding contribution to Routes to Support (the UK violence against women and girls service directory run in partnership with Women's Aid Federation of Northern Ireland, Scottish Women's Aid and Welsh Women's Aid) and the Women's Aid Annual Survey, and for its full funding of the No Woman Turned Away (NWTa) project. Thank you also to London Councils for supporting additional data collection and analysis of information from London refuges on provision and use of refuge services. To read about London Councils' grants funding and the work of some of the groups they support please visit [www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/services/grants](http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/services/grants). Data from all these sources contribute to this report.

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Women's Aid is the national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children. Over the past 46 years, Women's Aid has been at the forefront of shaping and coordinating responses to domestic abuse through practice, research and policy. We empower survivors by keeping their voices at the heart of our work, working with and for women and children by listening to them and responding to their needs.

We are a federation of nearly 180 organisations which provide just under 300 local lifesaving services to women and children across the country. We provide expert training, qualifications and consultancy to a range of agencies and professionals working with survivors or commissioning domestic abuse services, and award a National Quality Mark for services which meet our quality standards. We hold the largest national dataset on domestic abuse, and use research and evidence to inform all of our work. Our campaigns achieve change in policy, practice and awareness, encouraging healthy relationships and helping to build a future where domestic abuse is no longer tolerated.

Our support services, which include our Live Chat Helpline, the Survivors' Forum, the No Woman Turned Away Project, the Survivor's Handbook, Love Respect (our dedicated website for young people in their first relationships), the national Domestic Abuse Directory and our advocacy projects, help thousands of women and children every year.

# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Summary of key findings</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Section 1: The service users</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 Introduction	11
1.2 Key findings	12
1.3 Age	13
1.4 Children	14
1.5 Disability	15
1.6 Sexual orientation and gender identity	16
1.7 Ethnicity	18
1.8 Nationality and citizenship	19
1.9 Experiences of abuse	21
1.10 Support needs	24
<b>Section 2: The provision of services</b>	<b>27</b>
2.1 Introduction	27
2.2 Key findings	28
2.3 Who are the service providers?	29
2.4 Specialist support for women from marginalised groups	30
2.5 Types of services	31
2.6 Refuge services and spaces	33
2.7 Dedicated services for children and young people	37
2.8 Services for men	38
<b>Section 3: The work of support services</b>	<b>41</b>
3.1 Introduction	41
3.2 Key Findings	41
3.3 A lot to be proud of during challenging times	43
3.4 Demand	44
3.5 Funding: commissioning by the local authority	49
3.6 Funding: working without dedicated funding	53
<b>Section 4: The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic</b>	<b>56</b>
4.1 Introduction	56
4.2 Key findings	56
4.3 Availability of refuge vacancies	57
4.4 Impact of emergency funding for refuge spaces	58
4.5 Challenges in service delivery	60
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Glossary</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Methodology</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Definitions of service types</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Appendix 4: Women's Aid Annual Survey 2020 respondents (regional distribution)</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>70</b>

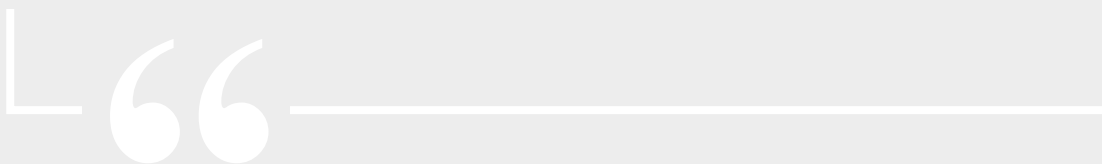
# Foreword

Each year we report on the state of the national domestic abuse sector, and each year, there have been challenges and successes. This year, our report is published at a particularly historic point in time. The report primarily looks at the landscape of domestic abuse services pre-pandemic in the financial year 2019-20, but also reflects the changes in the final month of that year as the Covid-19 pandemic took hold and the country went into national lockdown.

In our monitoring of the impact since then, we know that perpetrators have used the pandemic and the associated measures to heighten their abuse and control, with many survivors and their children trapped at home with abusers, and others left isolated and re-traumatised. Frontline staff have worked round the clock to support survivors through increasingly complex processes of recovery, coping with challenges including lost income, staff shortages and remote working to adapt and respond in new and creative ways. More than ever before, it has become clear how important the expertise and dedication of specialist services are in reaching and supporting all survivors. This is particularly true of the specialist services provided by and for marginalised women, who have documented the severe impacts of Covid-19 on Black and minoritised, migrant and disabled women.

On the 25th May, the killing of George Floyd sparked global resistance to racism under the banner of Black Lives Matter. In our own sector we have reflected deeply on the impact of racism on Black and minoritised women in our organisations and Black and minoritised survivors. We know that we need to embed sustainable change so that this does not just become a popular moment in time, and we recognise the importance of doing this in solidarity with organisations across the violence against women and girls (VAWG) sector, listening to and being guided by the expertise of our sister organisations led by and for Black and minoritised women. On 10th December, International Human Rights Day, we supported the launch of a sector-wide call for action to end racism in the VAWG sector, which we hope will begin a long journey of systemic change. As this report shows, this includes addressing the needs of the severely depleted and chronically underfunded services run by and for Black and minoritised women.

The forthcoming domestic abuse bill presents us with a unique opportunity to deliver a step change in the response to domestic abuse and other forms of VAWG. In order to do so, however, it needs to go further than currently proposed. The statutory duty on local authorities to fund support in safe accommodation is welcome,





but it must require councils to fund specialist refuges – not general forms of housing. It also must be accompanied with national oversight and sustainable funding beyond 2021. As this report demonstrates, even prior to the pandemic, services were struggling to meet demand. About a fifth of all referrals to refuge were declined due to a lack of space or capacity, and over half of the respondents to our annual survey who ran community-based services told us that they had seen an increase in average waiting list times for their community-based services over the last three years. We estimate that £393m is needed annually for a safe and sustainable national network of women's domestic abuse services, including £173m for refuges.<sup>1</sup>

Survivors subjected to additional forms of discrimination – including Black and minoritised women, disabled women, migrant women and LGBT+ survivors – face acute barriers to safety and support. As outlined in this report, only 4.0% of all vacancies posted on Routes to Support in 2019-20 could consider women who had no recourse to public funds. Whilst the bill crucially ratifies the Istanbul Convention, the legislation does not meet key commitments in this landmark treaty on VAWG – including, most urgently, equal protection and support

for migrant women. No survivor should be left without access to a safety net and it is essential that the bill delivers reforms to 'no recourse to public funds' rules and to safe reporting for migrant women.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also highlighted the importance of joined-up, high-level decision-making and action to support survivors. Whilst improvements to the criminal justice response proposed in the bill are certainly needed, survivors' priorities for change are housing, the welfare system, the family courts and protection and support for their children. The bill must go far wider to deliver the changes survivors need in areas such as housing, welfare and health, including mental health. The report finds that over a third of service users in our sample reported feeling depressed or suicidal as a result of the abuse, rising to half of those in refuge services. It is vital that we do not miss the opportunity provided by the domestic abuse bill to deliver urgent reform.

**Nicki Norman**  
**Acting Chief Executive**  
**Women's Aid Federation of England**

1 See Women's Aid (2019) Funding Specialist Support for Domestic Abuse Survivors Bristol: Women's Aid.

# Summary of key findings

*The Domestic Abuse Report 2021: The Annual Audit* presents information on the provision and usage of domestic abuse services in England, mainly focusing on the financial year 2019-20. This year we have included an additional section on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## The service users

Our analysis of national On Track<sup>2</sup> data gives us the following key findings. Our sample was 27,130 survivors (supported by 68 organisations running 101 domestic abuse services in England and using On Track during 2019-20).<sup>3</sup>

- ▶ 57.8% of service users in community-based support (CBS) had children<sup>4</sup> and 5.8% were pregnant.<sup>5</sup>
- ▶ 62.5% of women in refuge services had children<sup>6</sup> and 8.3% were pregnant.<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ There were 32,094 children of service users in the sample, averaging 1.2 children per service user across all services.
- ▶ Of the service users who were not British nationals (3,262), only just over half (54.5%) were able to access public funds.<sup>8</sup>
- ▶ The length of abuse experienced ranged from less than a month to 64 years; the average was six years.<sup>9</sup>
- ▶ 88.1% of a sub-sample of service users<sup>10</sup> had experienced emotional abuse and 66.9% had experienced jealous or controlling behaviour.
- ▶ 36.6% of service users had support needs around their mental health; for service users in community-based support, this was 35.3% and for those in refuge services this was higher at 48.9%.
- ▶ 36.9% of service users in a sub-sample (where a detailed abuse profile was available)<sup>11</sup> reported feeling depressed or having suicidal thoughts as a result of the abuse. In community-based services, this was 35.6% of service users and in refuge services the percentage was much higher at 48.0%.

- 
- 2 On Track is the Women's Aid case management and outcomes monitoring database. It is used by over 60 local service providers throughout England. At the time of writing (November 2020), On Track contains information on 112,903 survivors who have accessed local services since the system was launched on 1st April 2016. On Track is based on the Imkaan and Women's Aid Outcomes Framework. Imkaan developed and run a sister database, Synthesis, which centres the work of 'by and for' organisations.
  - 3 Service users of 68 organisations running community-based and/or refuge services, where their case was closed during 2019-20.
  - 4 Missing data unknown. We cannot differentiate between a woman having no children and a woman for whom information about her children has not been entered (i.e. missing data).
  - 5 Missing data=0.01%; Declined to answer=0.09%; Don't know=11.35%; Not asked=3.62%
  - 6 Missing data unknown
  - 7 Declined to answer= 0.03%; Don't know=3.2%; Not asked=1.1%
  - 8 Missing data=1%; Declined to answer=0.5%; Don't know=12%; No recourse=29%; Not asked=3%
  - 9 Out of 9,216 service users where length of current abuse was recorded. Current abuse: any service user who is experiencing/has experienced abuse within the last year
  - 10 From sub-sample of 18,832 community-based support and refuge service users within the overall sample of 27,130 for whom an abuse profile on current abuse is available.
  - 11 A sub-sample of 23,132 community-based service and refuge service users within the overall sample of 27,130 for whom a detailed abuse profile is available (includes both current and historic abuse).

## The provision of services

We took data from Routes to Support<sup>12</sup> to examine the types of domestic abuse services provided in 2019-20, the number of bed spaces available in refuge services, the people supported by these services and changes to provision over time.

- ▶ On the 1st May 2020, there were 222 domestic abuse service providers running 370 local services throughout England.
- ▶ These 370 services deliver a range of service types including community-based support, open-access support such as helplines and therapeutic support like counselling. Of the 370 services, 263 included refuge services and 222 included dedicated services for children/young people.
- ▶ Between 1st May 2019 and 1st May 2020, 63 local services had a net increase in the number of service types they offered. Only 30.2% of these had a corresponding increase in staff, and four services were actually operating with a smaller staff team despite providing more service types.
- ▶ The number of spaces in refuge services increased by 21 from 3,914 on 1st May 2019 to 3,935 on 1st May 2020, although this is net change; it does not give a full picture of change in the sector as it does not account for services opening or closing during the year. This figure still falls short of the number of spaces recommended by the Council of Europe<sup>13</sup> by 1,694, which represents a 30.1% shortfall.
- ▶ Only 4.0% of all vacancies posted on Routes to Support in 2019-20<sup>14</sup> could consider women who had no recourse to public funds.

- ▶ Less than half of refuge vacancies posted on Routes to Support in 2019-20<sup>15</sup> could accommodate a woman with two children, this fell to less than one in five for a woman with three children. In both cases the percentages have fallen slightly since last year.

## The work of support services

We looked at responses to the Women's Aid Annual Survey 2020<sup>16</sup> to examine the work of domestic abuse services in 2019-20.

- ▶ Services were especially proud of their successful partnership working in 2019-20, their response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the dedication and passion shown by their staff teams.
- ▶ 55.9% of respondents to the annual survey that ran community-based services in 2019-20 told us that they had seen an increase in average waiting list times for their community-based services over the last three years
- ▶ Of those 68 organisations responding to the annual survey that provided refuge support in 2019-20, 50 (73.5%) were commissioned by their local authority to run refuge services in 2019-20.
- ▶ 40 of the 59 responding organisations that ran community-based services in the last financial year (67.8%) were commissioned by their local authority for community-based support.
- ▶ However, for most organisations local authority commissioning did not cover all or most of the costs of running the service. Only 26.0% of those organisations

12 Routes to Support is the UK violence against women and girls directory of services and refuge vacancies, run in partnership by Scottish Women's Aid, Welsh Women's Aid, Women's Aid Federation of England and Women's Aid Federation of Northern Ireland

13 Council of Europe (2008): "...safe accommodation in specialised women's shelters, available in every region, with one family place per 10,000 head of population." (p. 51)

14 April 2019 to March 2020.

15 April 2019 to March 2020.

16 A survey sent to all domestic abuse services for women and children in England. This year's response rate was 40.1%.



commissioned by the local authority to run refuge services indicated that the funding covered all of the support staff costs. For those commissioned to run community-based services, 10.0% indicated that the funding from commissioning covered only half or less than half of the support staff costs.

- ▶ 54.5% of respondents to the annual survey indicated that they were running an area of their domestic abuse service without dedicated funding in 2019-20.

This year our baseline and estimated figures on numbers of referrals are taken from national On Track data, rather than annual survey responses (as they have been in previous years).

- ▶ Using On Track national data as our baseline data, we calculate that all refuge services in England supported an estimated 10,592 women and 12,710 children in 2019-20, and all community-based services supported an estimated 103,969 women and 124,762 children.
- ▶ 57.2% of all the referrals received in refuge services using On Track were rejected (for various reasons). The main reason why referrals to refuge services were rejected was a lack of space or capacity (18.1% of all referrals received were rejected for this reason).

## The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

We used information from our annual survey and from Routes to Support to examine the impact of Covid-19 on domestic abuse support services. This included the challenges services have faced, availability of refuge vacancies in the first months of the pandemic and changes to refuge spaces available between 1st May and 1st November 2020.

- ▶ During the first lockdown in England (Spring 2020), the number of vacancies available at a given time was consistently around half the number available in the same week in 2019.
- ▶ A special mid-year snapshot of refuge spaces on Routes to Support to determine the impact of emergency Covid-19 related funding showed an additional increase of 361 to 4,251 spaces by 1st November 2020, although not all of these spaces will remain when temporary emergency funding comes to an end.
- ▶ The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on domestic abuse services, including services having to rise to the challenge of meeting increased demand following changing government guidance, changing their way of working, adapting to new service formats and new technologies, all at a very fast pace.

For a more detailed insight into the impacts of the pandemic on domestic abuse services and on survivors, see the following reports:

*A Perfect Storm: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Domestic Abuse Survivors and the Services Supporting Them* (Women's Aid, 2020)

*The Impact of the Two Pandemics: VAWG and COVID-19 on Black and Minoritised Women and Girls* (Imkaan, 2020)



# Introduction

The *Domestic Abuse Report 2021: The Annual Audit* presents information on the provision and usage of domestic abuse services in England. We mainly look at the financial year 2019–20, but have also included a section on the impact of Covid-19 on domestic abuse services (from March 2020 onwards).<sup>17</sup> This is the latest in our series of Domestic Abuse Report publications, which offers a comprehensive evidence base on the national picture of domestic abuse support work year on year.

Three of Women's Aid's data sources are used to provide a statistical analysis of the provision of domestic abuse services in 2019–20, and the survivors they supported. These data sources are On Track, Routes to Support and the Women's Aid Annual Survey 2020.

We also include case studies produced from phone interviews with domestic abuse service providers. This report answers the following key research questions:

1. Who are the survivors using domestic abuse support services?
2. What is the provision of domestic abuse support services in England?
3. What challenges are domestic abuse support services facing, how many of them are commissioned by a local authority and what work are they most proud of?
4. What has been the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on domestic abuse services?

## Methodology

We draw on evidence from the following Women's Aid data sources:

### Routes to Support<sup>18</sup>

Routes to Support is the UK violence against women and girls directory of services and refuge vacancies, run in partnership by Scottish Women's Aid, Welsh Women's Aid, Women's Aid Federation of England and Women's Aid Federation of Northern Ireland. The directory gives us comprehensive data on all domestic abuse services including, but not limited to, those run by Women's Aid members. This includes information about the types of

domestic abuse services provided, the number of bed spaces available in refuge services, the people supported by these services and changes to provision over time. The directory is updated on a rolling basis by dedicated staff at Women's Aid, meaning each entry is fully updated every year in addition to any updates received from services during the year. Entries are added and removed throughout the year as providers change. This report includes information about the services in England only from snapshots taken on 1st May each year. It also includes information from Routes to Support on vacancies added to the site during the year 2019–20 and an additional snapshot

17 For more information on the impact of the pandemic on domestic abuse support services and on survivors of domestic abuse, see: *A Perfect Storm: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Domestic Abuse Survivors and the Services Supporting Them* (Women's Aid, 2020C); *The Impact of the Two Pandemics: VAWG and COVID-19 on Black and Minoritised Women and Girls* (Imkaan, 2020)

18 Both Routes to Support and the Women's Aid Annual Survey are part-funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

taken on 1st November 2020 to reflect the impact of emergency Covid-19 funding on refuge spaces.

## Women's Aid Annual Survey 2020

This survey is sent to all domestic abuse services in England which run both or one of refuge and/or community-based support (CBS) services. 77 organisations running 150 service entries on Routes to Support responded to this year's survey. This gives a response rate of 40.1%.<sup>19</sup> Of these 77 respondents, 68 responded that they ran refuge services (nine indicated that they did not), and 59 responded that they provided community-based services (fourteen indicated that they did not, and four did not respond to this question). The survey was sent out in June 2020 and was shorter than previous annual surveys in order to encourage responses. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has clearly had an impact on the response rate, with fewer organisations responding this year. Some non-respondents told us that they had wanted to take part, but they were finding it difficult to find the time with all that was going on with adapting to working conditions during a pandemic.

This year the survey asked questions about the key challenges and achievements during the previous financial year, experiences of funding and commissioning, and the initial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Women's Aid continue to monitor the impact of the pandemic on survivors and services, see our website and our report 'A Perfect Storm', August 2020.

## On Track: The Women's Aid case management and outcomes monitoring database

On Track is used by over 60 local service providers throughout England. Services contribute to a national dataset by recording information on women's experiences of abuse, the support they are offered, and the outcomes

achieved. At the time of writing (November 2020), On Track contains information on 112,903 survivors who have accessed local services since the system was launched on 1st April 2016. Every region is represented by the organisations contributing data to On Track. On Track is based on the Imkaan and Women's Aid Outcomes Framework. Imkaan developed and run a sister database, Synthesis, which centres the work of 'by and for' organisations.

Information about service users for this report was taken from cases closed during 1st April 2019 - 31st March 2020. These data relate to 27,130 female survivors<sup>20</sup> and were collected by 68 organisations running community-based and/or refuge services (of which seven started using On Track during the reporting period). This year we have used On Track national data to examine the number of referrals received, accepted or declined by domestic abuse services over the previous financial year; previously we had asked questions about referrals as part of our annual survey.

## Case studies

We conducted telephone interviews with two organisations which provide domestic abuse services, to explore their work and experiences over the previous financial year. We approached organisations that had indicated in their annual survey response that they might be interested in being a case study. These interviews were then used to produce written case studies, which help to provide a detailed picture of the issues facing domestic abuse service providers and survivors using their services. The case studies focus on the issues of pet abuse and coercive control, and the challenges of running a non-commissioned service.

19 The survey was sent to 374 service entries.

20 On Track collects information about female and male survivors and survivors who do not define as either male or female. This report will only present information on female survivors.

# Section 1: The service users

## 1.1 Introduction

The first section of this report looks at the needs and experiences of the survivors who accessed the domestic abuse support sector in the year 2019-20 (the service users). This is done by analysing data from On Track<sup>21</sup> on a sample of 27,130 survivors who finished a period of support during the year 2019-20 from domestic abuse services using On Track. Of these:

- ▶ 3,348 survivors accessed refuge services
- ▶ 24,334 survivors accessed community-based support (CBS) services<sup>22</sup>

Some survivors used both refuge and community-based services during the year, so the sum of the two figures above is more than the total sample.

Throughout the analysis presented here, we show information across the whole sample of 27,130 women (each woman represented only once even where she accessed more than one service type). We only highlight demographics for the refuge or community-based services where there is a noteworthy difference in the results.

Women and children escaping abuse come from all backgrounds, have a diverse range of experiences and require support that meets their needs. This report presents demographic information on service users. It does not set out to explore commonalities in the needs and experiences of different groups of women.

In this report we are looking at those women who have successfully accessed support services. There are many other survivors of domestic abuse who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to access specialist help or are delayed in doing so for a long time. If we were to look at a profile of support needs and demographic background for these survivors it would likely be different to that of the survivors in our sample from On Track.

This is because accessibility is about more than just availability of space in a refuge or a place in a community-based service; we need to look at how well services are resourced to provide for women with specific support needs such as substance use and high-level mental health support needs, or whether they can accommodate a service user's children and any support and access needs the children may have. Women's Aid's No Woman Turned Away project has consistently found that the most marginalised women tend to face the greatest barriers in their search for refuge provision, with intersecting structural barriers and inequalities (such as poor agency responses and the immigration policy context) impacting on women's ability to access appropriate safety and protection.<sup>23</sup>

21 On Track is the Women's Aid case management and outcomes monitoring database. It is used by over 60 local service providers throughout England.

22 Community-based services include floating support, outreach, IDVA/DAPA and advocacy services

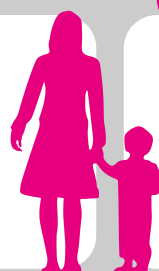
23 See <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/no-woman-turned-away/>

# 1.2 Key Findings

Information in this section is from On Track

## 27,130 women

Data based on 27,130 survivors (supported by 68 organisations running 101 domestic abuse services in England and using On Track during 2019-20).<sup>i</sup>



## 32,094 children

of service users were recorded in this sample

### In refuge services...

62.5%<sup>ii</sup>

8.3%<sup>iii</sup>

1.2<sup>iv</sup>

### In community-based services...

57.8%<sup>v</sup>

5.8%<sup>vi</sup>

1.2<sup>vii</sup>

had **children**

were **pregnant**

**average children**

Of the service users who were not British nationals (3,262) only just over half (**54.5%**) were able to **access public funds**.<sup>viii</sup>



### Of a sub-sample of service users<sup>ix</sup>...

**88.1%** had experienced **emotional abuse**

**66.9%** had experienced **jealous or controlling behaviour**



**36.6%** of service users had support needs around **mental health**

→ Community-based **35.3%**  
→ Refuge-based **48.9%**

### Of a sub-sample of service users<sup>x</sup>...



**36.9%** reported feeling depressed or having suicidal thoughts as a result of the abuse

→ Community-based **35.6%**  
→ Refuge-based **48.0%**



**years**

The length of abuse experienced ranged from **less than a month** to **64 years**; the average was six years.<sup>xi</sup>

**i:** Service users of 68 organisations running community-based and/or refuge services, where their case was closed during 2019-20. **ii:** Missing data unknown. **iii:** Declined to answer= 0.03%; Don't know=3.2%; Not asked=1.1% **iv:** Missing data unknown. **v:** Missing data unknown. **vi:** Missing data=0.01%; Declined to answer=0.09%; Don't know=11.35%; Not asked=3.62% **vii:** Missing data unknown. **viii:** Missing data=1%; Declined to answer=0.5%; Don't know=12%; No recourse=29%; Not asked=3% **ix:** From sub-sample of 18,832 CBS and refuge service users within the overall sample of 27,130 for whom an abuse profile on current abuse is available. **x:** A sub-sample of 23,132 CBS and refuge service users within the overall sample of 27,130 for whom a detailed abuse profile is available (includes both current and historic abuse). **xi:** Out of 9,216 service users where length of current abuse was recorded. Current abuse: any service user who is experiencing/has experienced abuse within the last year

## Note on comparisons

This report presents data on service users under many of the same categories presented in the previous report, *The Domestic Abuse Report 2020: The Annual Audit*. Although this may appear to show change over time, we cannot be confident that we are measuring change over time in service user profiles; rather, we are measuring difference between two samples of service users. This sample changes as more

services start using On Track during the year we are looking at. No additional selection criteria are applied to the sample and we cannot be sure that differences between them are the result of change due to time passing rather than other factors, for example structural inequalities faced by marginalised groups, and differences in representation of those from marginalised groups in each sample.

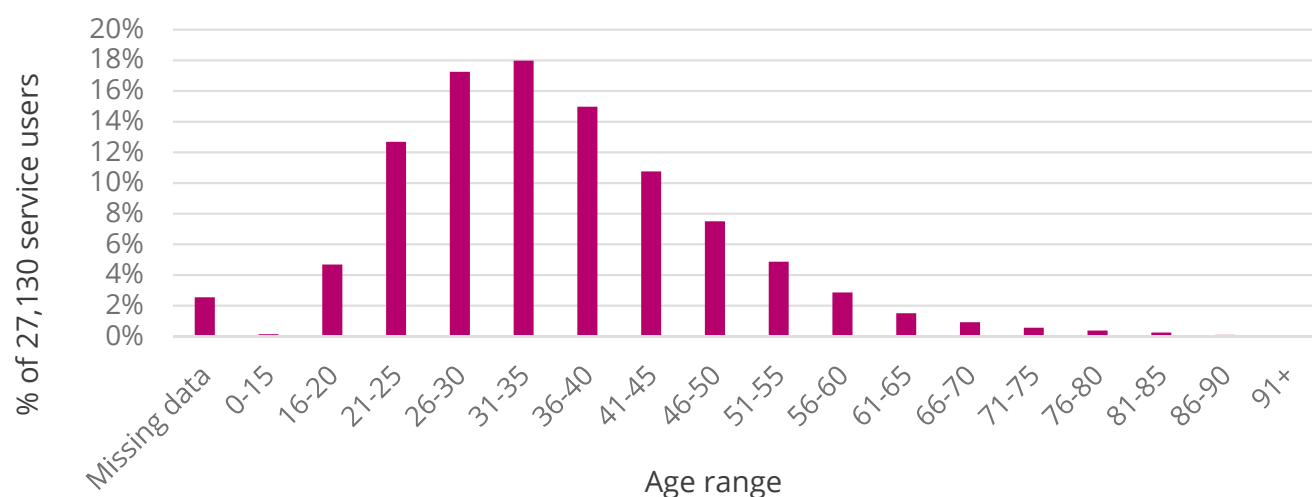
## 1.3 Age

- ▶ The ages of survivors in our sample ranged from under 18 to over 90, with the most common age group being 31-35 years (18%), closely followed by 26-30 years (17.2%).
- ▶ Older women were underrepresented in the sample. Only 3.8% of service users in the total sample were 61 or over and this fell to 1.9% in refuge services. This is unlikely to reflect need, as we know that older women experience particular barriers in accessing support. The most recent Femicide Census Report showed that between 2009 and 2018, 14% of femicide victims were aged 66 and over. Of these, 34% were killed by intimate

partners, and 25% by their sons (Femicide Census, 2020).

- ▶ Most recent figures from the Crime Survey for England and Wales for the year ending March 2020 showed that women aged 16 to 19 years were significantly more likely to be victims of any domestic abuse in the last year than women aged 25 years and over (ONS, 2020). Data collected from London refuge services during the year 2019-20 showed that less than 1% of women placed were aged between 16 and 18, yet 25% of instances of unsuccessful referral recorded were from this cohort.<sup>24</sup>

**Chart 1.1: Age of service users, 2019-20 (On Track)**

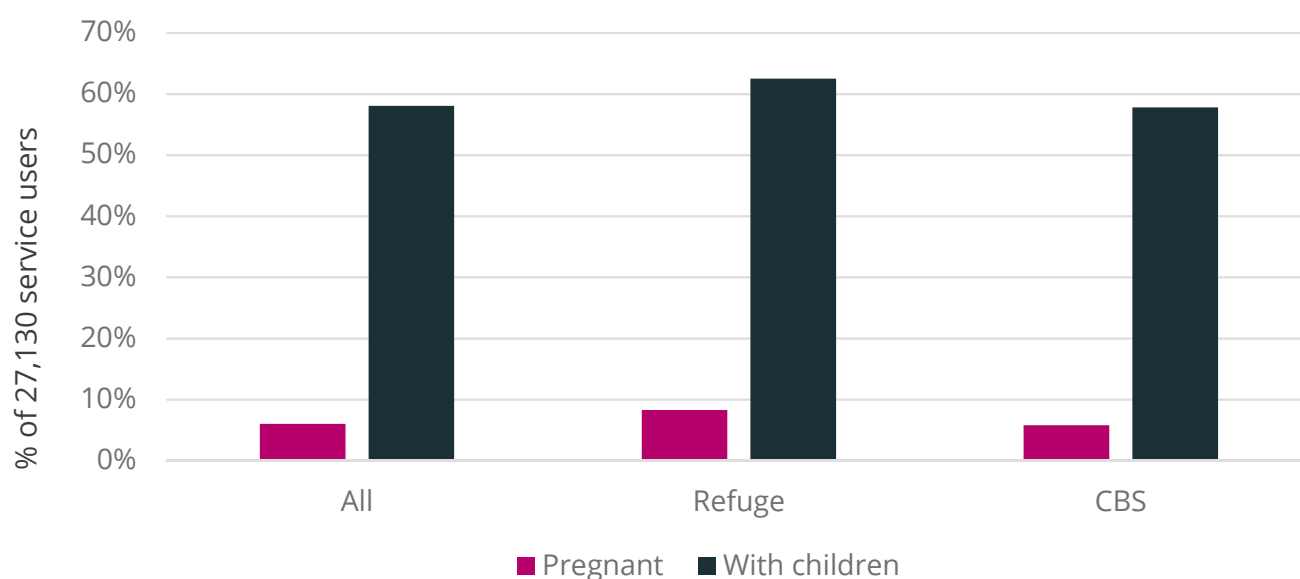


24 Data collected by Women's Aid through Routes to Support.

## 1.4 Children

- ▶ There were 32,094 children of service users in the sample, averaging 1.2 children per service user across all services.
- ▶ 57.8% of service users in community-based services had children<sup>25</sup> and 5.8% were pregnant.<sup>26</sup> There were 1.2 children per service user on average.<sup>27</sup>
- ▶ 62.5% of women in refuge services had children<sup>28</sup> and 8.3% were pregnant.<sup>29</sup> There were 1.2 children per service user on average.<sup>30</sup>

**Chart 1.2: Women with children and pregnant women accessing services 2019-20 (On Track)**



25 Missing data unknown. We cannot differentiate between a woman having no children and a woman for whom information about her children has not been entered (i.e. missing data).

26 Missing data=0.01%; Declined to answer=0.09%; Don't know=11.35%; Not asked=3.62%

27 Missing data unknown

28 Missing data unknown

29 Declined to answer= 0.03%; Don't know=3.2%; Not asked=1.1%

30 Missing data unknown

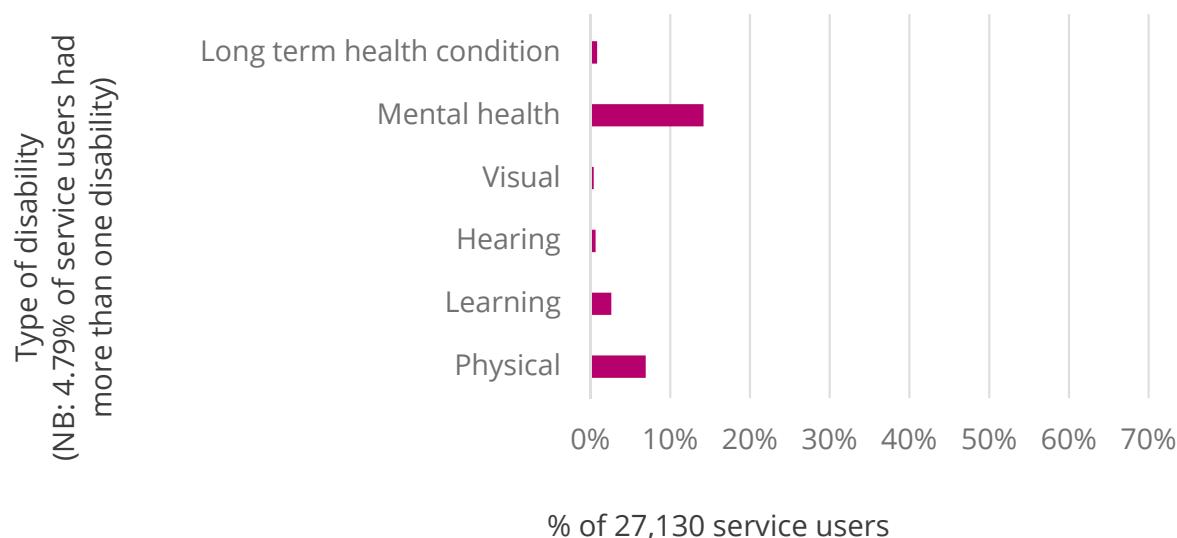


## 1.5 Disability

- ▶ Overall, 21.9% of all survivors in the sample had at least one disability that they disclosed.
- ▶ In refuge services 25.9% of service users were disabled; most common were mental health disabilities (18.5%) and 5.7% of women had more than one disability.
- ▶ In community-based services 21.5% of service users were disabled; most common were mental health disabilities (14.4%) and 4.7% had more than one disability.

Women with physical disabilities make up a small percentage of women using domestic abuse services although we know that disabled women are more likely to experience domestic abuse (14.7% of disabled women experienced domestic abuse in the last year compared to 6.0% of women who were not disabled (ONS, 2020)). Of the survivors in the sample, only 6.9% of women in refuge had physical disabilities, yet demand is likely be much higher than the accessible space available.

**Chart 1.3 Service users and disability 2019-20 (On Track)**



## 1.6 Sexual orientation and gender identity

- ▶ 2.2% of service users overall identified as lesbian, bisexual, gay, pansexual or queer.<sup>31</sup> In refuges, this number was 3.3%<sup>32</sup> and in community-based services it was 1.9%.<sup>33</sup>
- ▶ 0.6% of services users overall (155) identified as trans.<sup>34</sup>

It is important to note that 14.9% of women did not disclose or were not asked about their sexuality and 10.3% did not disclose whether they identify as trans. As we know from research on LGBTQ survivors' experiences of abuse that survivors experience a range of challenges in accessing support (Stonewall, 2018; Galop, 2020), it may be that these women did not feel comfortable disclosing or did not feel it was necessary. This can particularly be the case if a lesbian or bisexual woman is seeking support around abuse experienced in a heterosexual relationship, or if a woman does not feel comfortable disclosing her sexuality or gender identity without specialist support.

Sexual orientation data should not be used to assume the sex of the perpetrator(s). The perpetrator may be a family member or, for example, the perpetrator may be from a heterosexual intimate partner relationship, but the service user self-defines as lesbian.<sup>35</sup>

Data on **page 17**.

.....

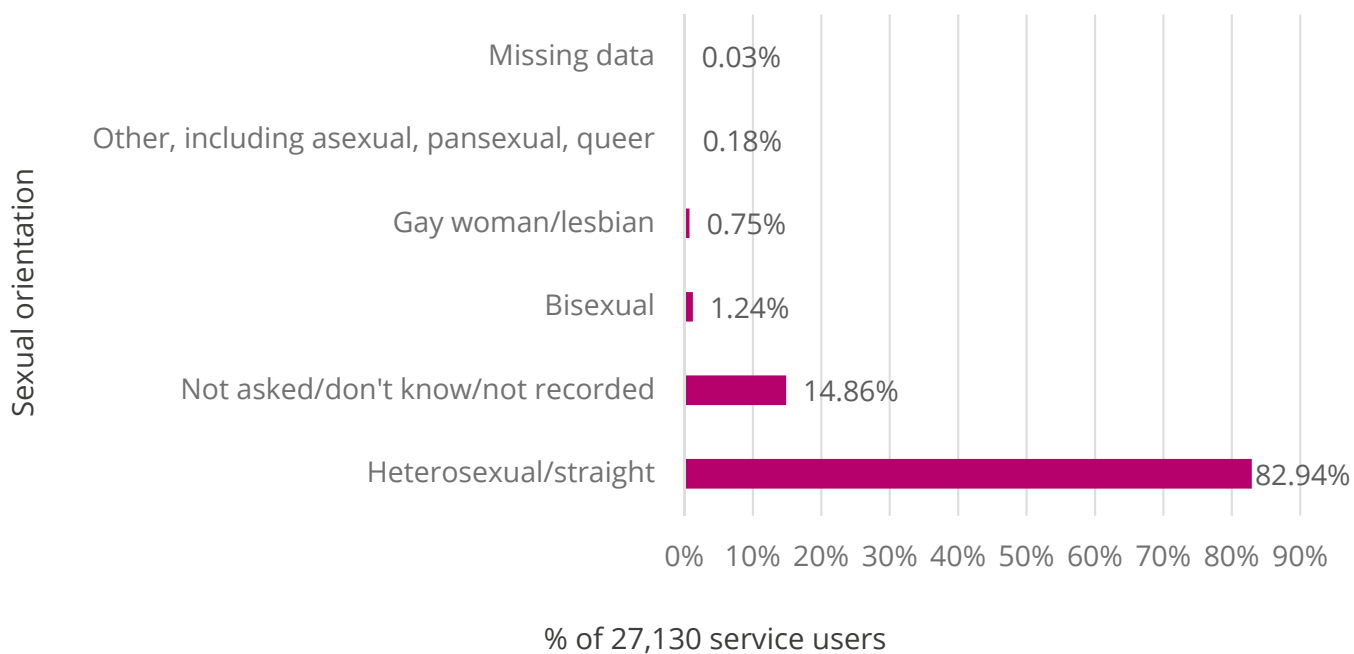
31 Missing data=0.03%; Not asked=6.49%; Not specified=0.13%; Declined to answer=0.38%; Don't know=7.83; Not known=0.03%; Not recorded=0.01%; Asexual=0.01%; Other=0.07%

32 Missing data=0.03%; Not asked=5.20%; Not specified=0.18%; Declined to answer=0.15%; Don't know=2.69; Not known=0.12%; Not recorded=0.01; Asexual=0.06; Other=0.03

33 Missing data=0.02%; Not asked=6.67%; Not specified=0.13%; Declined to answer=0.41%; Don't know=8.41; Not known=0.01%; Not recorded=0.01; Asexual=0.01%; Other 0.08%

34 Missing data=0.04%; Declined to answer=0.05%; Don't know=5.79%; Not asked=4.4%;

35 On Track collects information about female and male survivors and survivors who do not define as either male or female. This report only presents information on female survivors.

**Chart 1.4 What is the sexual orientation of service users? 2019–20 (On Track)****Table 1.1: Does the survivor self-define as trans? 2019-20 (On Track)**

Response	% of 27,130 service users
Missing data	0.04%
Declined	0.05%
Don't know/not asked	10.19%
No	89.14%
Yes	0.57%

## 1.7 Ethnicity

- ▶ Most service users (62.1%) were White British.
- ▶ 8.8% of services users were from Asian/Asian British ethnic backgrounds, and 6.5% were from Black/African/Caribbean/Black British ethnic backgrounds.

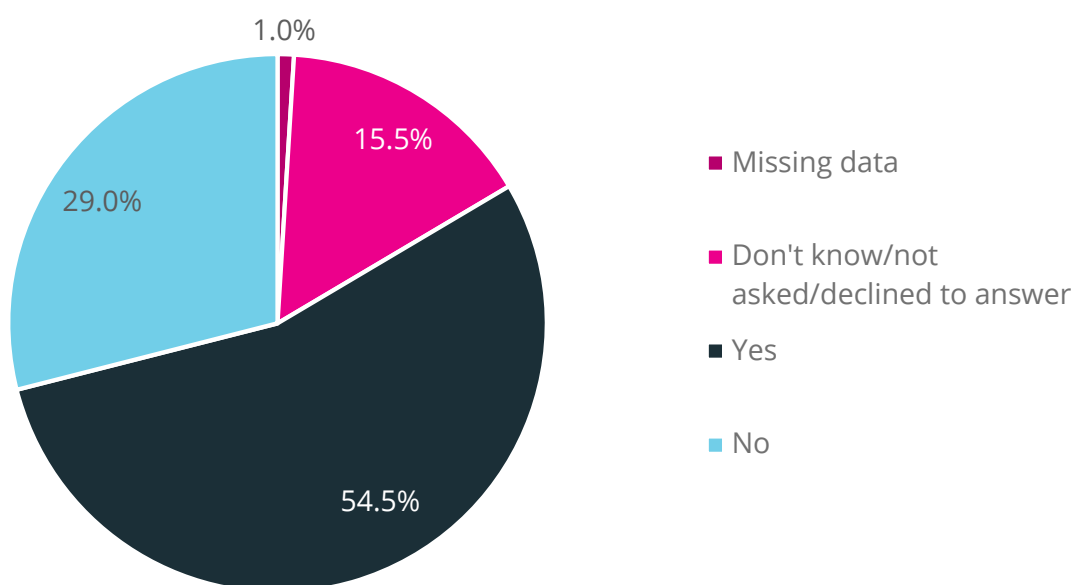
**Table 1.2: What are the ethnic backgrounds of service users? 2019-20 (On Track)**

Response	% of 27,130 service users
<b>White</b> British	62.1%
<b>White</b> Irish	0.6%
<b>White</b> Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.3%
<b>White</b> Eastern European	3.7%
<b>White</b> Any other White background	2.7%
<b>Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Background</b> White and Black Caribbean	1.3%
<b>Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Background</b> White and Black African	0.3%
<b>Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Background</b> White and Asian	0.3%
<b>Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Background</b> Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background	1.0%
<b>Asian/Asian British</b> Indian	1.7%
<b>Asian/Asian British</b> Pakistani	4.0%
<b>Asian/Asian British</b> Bangladeshi	0.9%
<b>Asian/Asian British</b> Chinese	0.3%
<b>Asian/Asian British</b> Any other Asian background	1.9%
<b>Black/African/Caribbean/Black British</b> African	3.6%
<b>Black/African/Caribbean/Black British</b> Caribbean	1.6%
<b>Black/African/Caribbean/Black British</b> Any other Black/African/Caribbean background	1.3%
<b>Other ethnic group</b> Arab	0.9%
<b>Other ethnic group</b> Any other ethnic group	1.4%
Don't know/Not asked	9.3%
Declined	0.2%
Missing data	0.6%

## 1.8 Nationality and citizenship

- ▶ Of the service users who were not British nationals (3,262), just under a third (29.0%) had no recourse to public funds.<sup>36</sup>
- ▶ Service users who were not British nationals had a wide range of immigration statuses. Most common was indefinite leave to remain (16.9%), followed by spouse visa (14.9%).
- ▶ There were a higher percentage of service users with indefinite leave to remain in refuge than using community-based support (24.4% compared to 14.7%), and a higher proportion awaiting an asylum decision using community-based support than in refuge (3.3% compared to 0.5%).

**Chart 1.5 How many service users (who were not British nationals) had recourse to public funds?\* 2019–20 (On Track)**



\*Percentage of service users who are not British nationals (3,262)

36 Missing data=1%; Declined to answer=0.5%; Don't know=12%; No recourse=29.0%; Not asked=3%

**Table 1.3 What are the immigration statuses of service users? 2019-20 (On Track)**

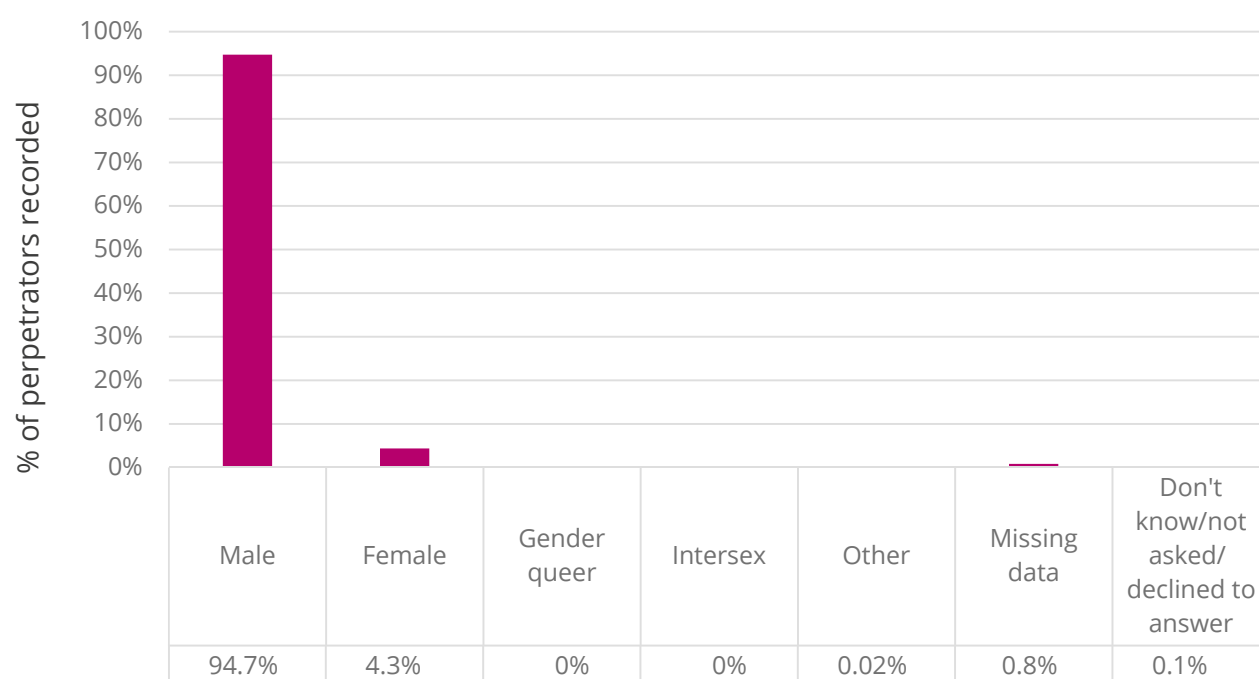
<b>Response</b>	<b>% of 3,262 service users who were not British nationals</b>
Asylum seeker awaiting decision	2.9%
Dependent on husband/wife's visa	2.7%
Discretionary leave to remain	1.7%
EEA family member	4.8%
EEA national	0.03%
EEA national currently working	12%
EEA national financially self-supporting	1.7%
EEA national in UK studying	0.6%
EEA national other	5.1%
EEA national receiving welfare benefits	4.8%
Humanitarian protection	0.03%
Husband/wife sponsorship	0.12%
Indefinite leave to remain	16.9%
Insecure/no status	3%
Limited leave to remain	5.9%
Refugee	1.5%
Spouse visa	14.9%
Study visa	0.9%
Visitor's visa	0.3%
Work visa	1.0%
Missing data	0.6%
Not specified	0.03%
Declined to answer	0.3%
Not asked	4.7%
Unclear/unknown	13.5%



## 1.9 Experiences of abuse

- ▶ The length of abuse experienced before accessing the support service ranged from less than a month to 64 years; the average length was six years.
- ▶ 94.7% of perpetrators were male.

**Chart 1.6 Sex of alleged perpetrator,\* 2019–20 (On Track)**



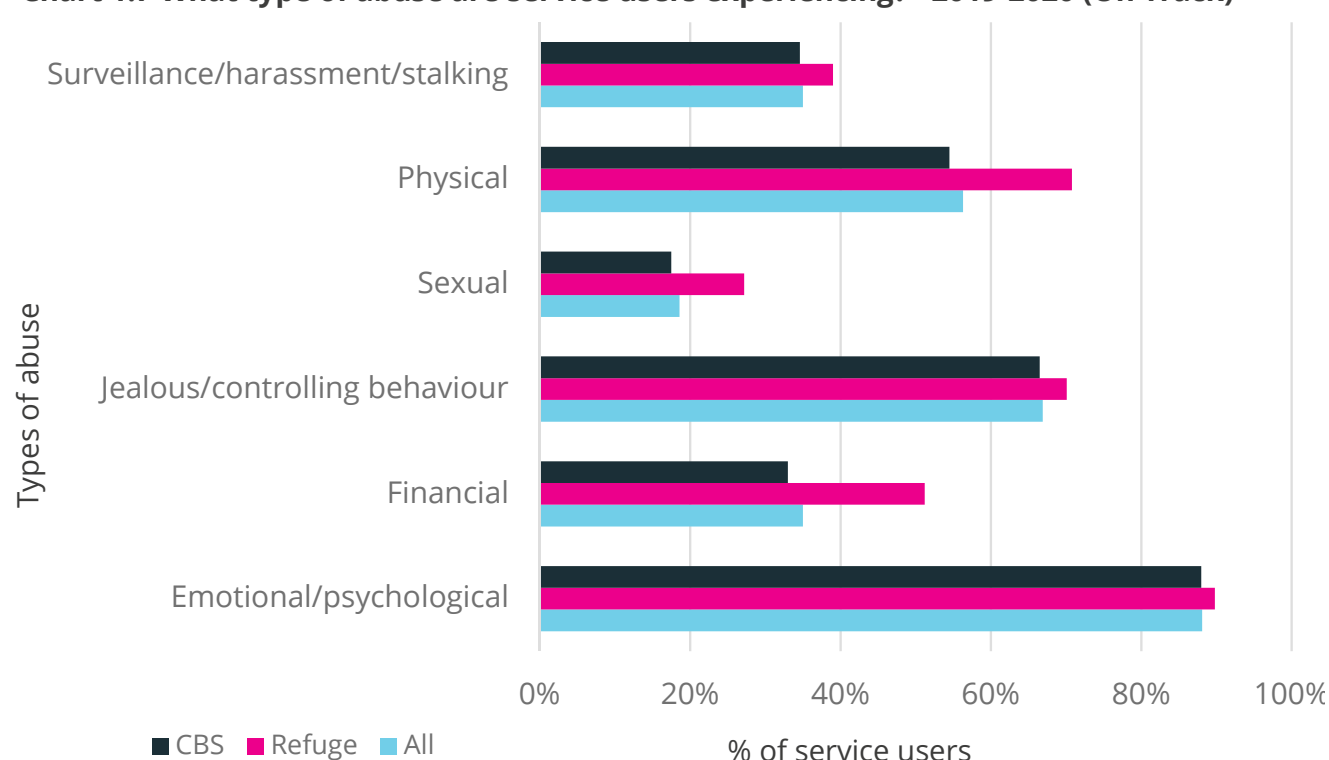
\*These are the perpetrators recorded on On Track in cases of domestic abuse against female service users. Information about perpetrators was recorded in 22,271 cases, there was not a perpetrator(s) recorded for every service user and some service users had multiple perpetrators recorded. Services users where no alleged perpetrator recorded: 4,859.

- ▶ 88.1% of a sub-sample of service users<sup>37</sup> had experienced emotional abuse and 66.9% had experienced jealous or controlling behaviour. It should be noted that a service user is likely to experience multiple abuse types and many types of abuse are underpinned by controlling behaviour.
- ▶ 56.3% of this sub-sample had experienced physical abuse. In refuge the number was much higher at 70.8%.
- ▶ 51.2% of service users in refuge, and 33.0% of community-based service users in the sub-sample had experienced financial abuse.
- ▶ 39.0% of service users in refuge, and 34.6% of community-based service users in the sub-sample had experienced surveillance, harassment or stalking.
- ▶ 27.2% of service users in refuge in the sub-sample had experienced sexual abuse, compared to 18.6% using community-based services.

37 From sub-sample of 18,832 community-based and refuge service users within the overall sample of 27,130 for whom an abuse profile on current abuse is available.

- ▶ 22.9% of a sub-sample of service users<sup>38</sup> had experienced attempted strangulation or suffocation.<sup>39</sup> In refuge the percentage was 29.7% and in community-based support it was 22.0%.
- ▶ 27.8% of this sub-sample<sup>40</sup> had experienced threats to kill.<sup>41</sup> In refuge the percentage was 37.8% and in community-based support it was 26.5%.
- ▶ 36.9% of service users in this sub-sample<sup>42</sup> reported feeling depressed or having suicidal thoughts as a result of the abuse.<sup>43</sup> In community-based support, this was 35.6% of service users and in refuge services the percentage was much higher at 48.0%.
- ▶ 9.3% of refuge service users in this sub-sample<sup>44</sup> said they had self-harmed as a way of dealing with the abuse.<sup>45</sup>

**Chart 1.7 What type of abuse are service users experiencing?\* 2019-2020 (On Track)**



\*From sub-sample of 18,832 community-based service and refuge service users within the overall sample of 27,130 for whom an abuse profile on current abuse is available. A service user is likely to experience multiple abuse types and many types of abuse are underpinned by controlling behaviour. Multiple abuse profiles may be recorded if survivors access more than one service or return to a service.

38 A sub-sample of 23,132 community-based service and refuge service users within the overall sample of 27,130 for whom a detailed abuse profile is available.

39 Includes both current and historic abuse

40 A sub-sample of 23,132 community-based service and refuge service users within the overall sample of 27,130 for whom a detailed abuse profile is available.

41 Includes both current and historic abuse

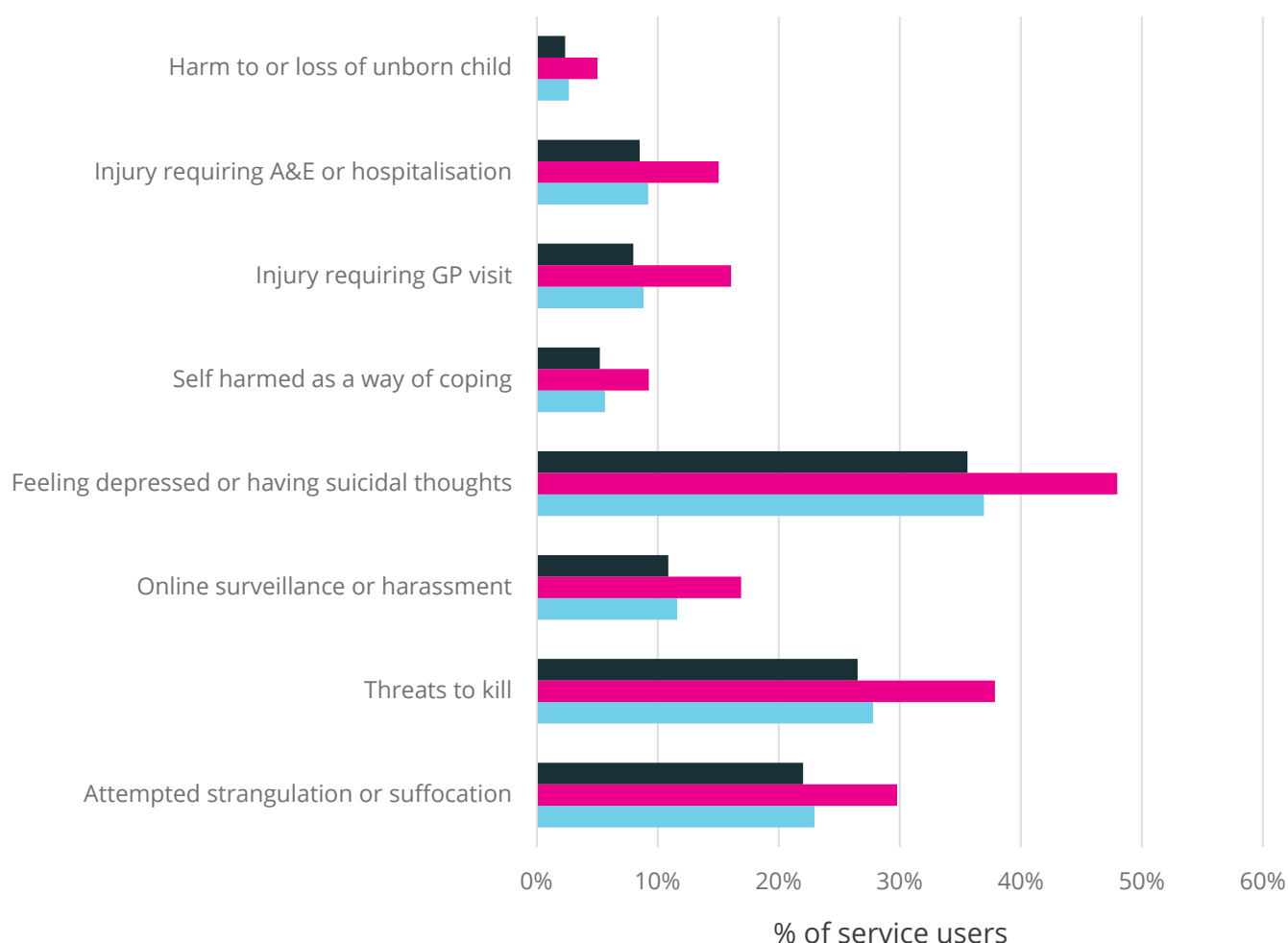
42 A sub-sample of 23,132 community-based service and refuge service users within the overall sample of 27,130 for whom a detailed abuse profile is available

43 Includes both current and historic abuse

44 A sub-sample of 23,132 community-based service and refuge service users within the overall sample of 27,130 for whom a detailed abuse profile is available

45 Includes both current and historic abuse

**Chart 1.8 Has the survivor ever experienced...? (current and historic abuse)  
On Track 2019-20\***



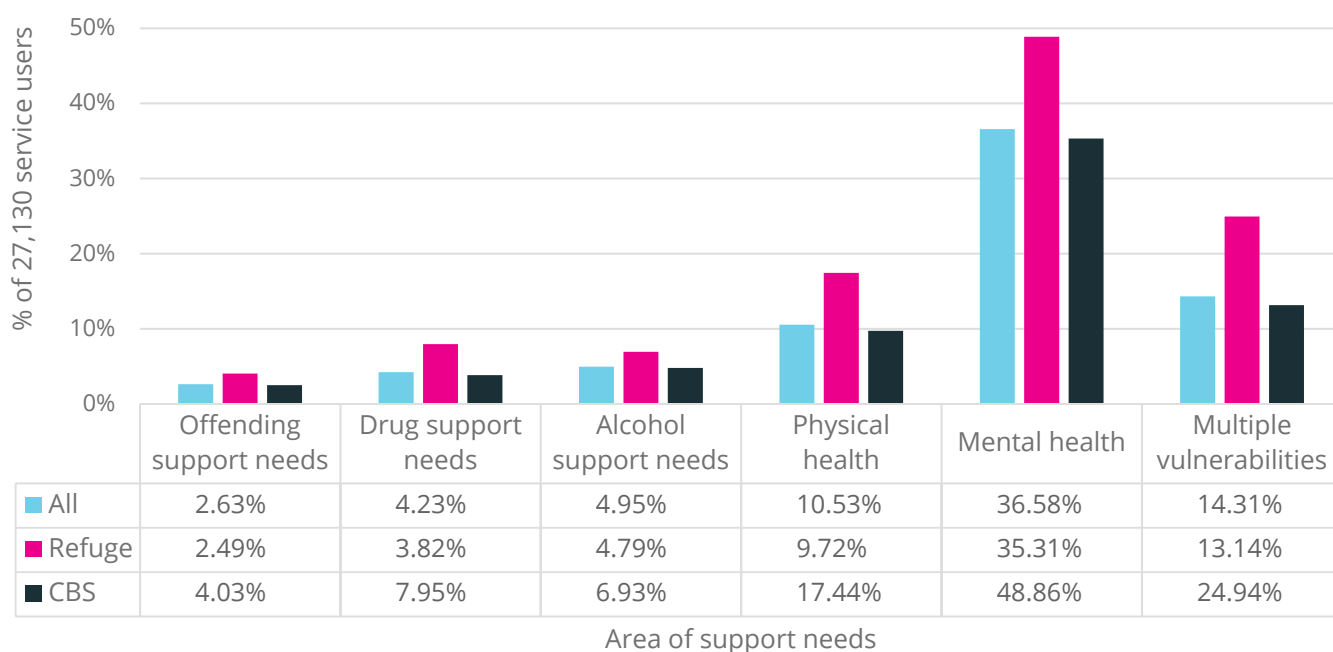
	Attempted strangulation or suffocation	Threats to kill	Online surveillance or harassment	Feeling depressed or having suicidal thoughts	Self harmed as a way of coping	Injury requiring GP visit	Injury requiring A&E or hospitalisation	Harm to or loss of unborn child
■ CBS	22.0%	26.5%	10.9%	35.6%	5.2%	8.0%	8.5%	2.4%
■ Refuge	29.8%	37.9%	16.9%	48.0%	9.3%	16.1%	15.1%	5.0%
■ All	23.0%	27.8%	11.6%	37.0%	5.7%	8.9%	9.2%	2.7%

\* From sub-sample of 23,132 community-based support and refuge service users within the overall sample of 27,130 for whom an abuse profile is available. Of these 23,132 service users, 15,948 were seeking support for current abuse and 4,657 were seeking support for historic abuse. This information was missing for 1670 service users (some service users were seeking support for both current and historic abuse). Multiple abuse profiles may be recorded if survivors access multiple services or return to a service.

## 1.10 Support needs

- ▶ 36.6% of service users had support needs around their mental health; for service users in community-based services, this was 35.3% and for those in refuge services this was higher at 48.9%. 5.6% of service users said they had a 'dual diagnosis' - mental health as well as an alcohol and/or drug misuse issue.
- ▶ 10.5% had support needs around their physical health; for service users in community-based services this was 9.72% and for those in refuge services this was higher at 17.4%.
- ▶ 4.7% of women accessing support services required an interpreter for a spoken language other than English. 0.6% were d/Deaf<sup>46</sup> or hearing impaired, some of whom will require a British Sign Language interpreter or other forms of reasonable adjustment to ensure they can access support services.

**Chart 1.9 What were the support needs of service users?\* 2019-20 (On Track)**



\* Some survivors will not have been able to access services because the service was not resourced to meet their specific support needs

46 The word deaf is used to describe or identify anyone who has a severe hearing problem. Deaf with an uppercase D is used by many organisations to refer to people who have been deaf all their lives, or since before they started to learn to talk. Many Deaf people have a sign language as their first language and may need specific language support. For more information please see [www.signhealth.org.uk/about-deafness/deaf-or-deaf/](http://www.signhealth.org.uk/about-deafness/deaf-or-deaf/)

## CASE STUDY: PET ABUSE AND COERCIVE CONTROL

We spoke to a manager of a dog fostering domestic abuse service. She told us of the work of her service and how pet abuse is used by perpetrators as a means of exerting control.

The Freedom Project at Dogs Trust is a specialist dog fostering service for survivors fleeing domestic abuse. A specialist team with an in-depth understanding of domestic abuse supports dog owners when escaping domestic abuse, finding temporary homes for their dogs until they have permanent accommodation. Dogs usually stay for six to nine months with a foster family and the survivor is kept up to date with photos and information about their dog. The vast majority of dogs are eventually returned to survivors, but in about 10% of cases the dog has to be permanently rehomed because the survivor is in accommodation which won't accept pets or her circumstances have changed for other reasons.

Abuse of the family dog is part of a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour, used by perpetrators as a way of controlling survivors and making them afraid. In many cases, the dog is physically abused by the

perpetrator (this may be presented to vets as 'accidents'). The abuse sometimes takes the form of neglect, for example, the perpetrator says he alone is responsible for feeding the dog but then neglects to feed it until it becomes emaciated, or refusing to allow the dog to get veterinary attention when needed. Even when there is no physical abuse, clients of this service often talk about the power of threats to the animal; for example, with the perpetrator saying to the survivor, "If you do this, I will hurt the animal or put it to sleep." The service has heard of a lot of cases involving the perpetrator holding a dog somewhere high up and threatening to drop it.

As well as being traumatic for survivors, it is also very distressing for children to witness abuse and threats to pets. Perpetrators may also use pets to try to damage the relationship between a survivor and her children, for example giving a dog away or threatening to do so, and saying, "It was your mum who did this."

The abuse, or threatened abuse, of pets is a powerful tool for a controlling perpetrator to use. Research carried out





by Dogs Trust found 97% of professionals said that pets are often used as a means of controlling someone experiencing domestic abuse and almost half (49%) were aware of domestic abuse cases where the pet had been killed.<sup>47</sup> The service manager gave one example of a perpetrator who would dangerously let the dog out into the road when the survivor was out of the home. As a result, the survivor stopped going out alone because she was afraid of what would happen to the dog. In other cases the perpetrator has threatened to kill the survivor and the dog; he then kills the dog and the survivor is terrified that she will be murdered next. Pet abuse is also used as element of economic control, with the perpetrator refusing to let the survivor spend money on pet care (including vet bills), or only giving her money for the pet/ allowing her to spend money on the pet if she behaves in a way he dictates.

Dog ownership can be used by a perpetrator to create a very effective barrier to a survivor leaving. She has very limited options,

especially as many refuges and other forms of emergency accommodation cannot accept pets. She could - if the perpetrator did not prevent it - give the dog up for rehoming, which would be traumatic for her and any children she may have. She could ask a friend or family member to have the dog, but it is not easy to find someone who can take on caring for a dog for maybe six to nine months. There is also the risk the perpetrator could find the dog and harm it, especially as a dog cannot be confined to a home and must be taken out for walks. She may feel she has to leave the dog at home with the perpetrator, where the dog may not be safe. Even if the perpetrator has never abused or threatened to abuse the dog, the dog is still a tie to the perpetrator and can be used by him to try to continue the relationship (and his abuse). The Freedom Project at Dogs Trust offers another option - temporary fostering of the dog where it will be safe, supported by a staff team which understands the abusive tactics of perpetrators and the barriers survivors face when trying to leave.

.....  
 47 See <https://www.moretodogstrust.org.uk/freedom-project-parent/news-and-updates>  
 Survey had 369 responses from professionals who support survivors of domestic abuse.



# Section 2: The provision of services

## 2.1 Introduction

This section of the report uses a format employed in previous editions of the Annual Audit to provide the best insight into the numbers and accessibility of local domestic abuse service services in England. At the time of writing, the Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact on demand for and provision of these services.<sup>48</sup> The period covered in this report includes only the first weeks of the pandemic (see Section 4 for an analysis of the initial impacts on refuge services). Further evidence of the impact of Covid-19 on service provision will be available when we review data for the full year from April 2020. Full analysis and comment of this will be covered in the 2022 Annual Audit report. Women's Aid continues to carry out specific research looking at the impact of the pandemic, building on our August 2020 report, *A Perfect Storm*.

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48 For a detailed insight into the impacts of the pandemic between March – July 2020 see Women's Aid, 2020: *A Perfect Storm: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Domestic Abuse Survivors and the Services Supporting Them*. Published online: Women's Aid

## 2.2 Key Findings

Information in  
this section is  
from Routes to  
Support

On 1st May 2020, in England there were...

**222 domestic abuse** service providers, running...

**370 local** services. Of these...

**263** included **refuge** services

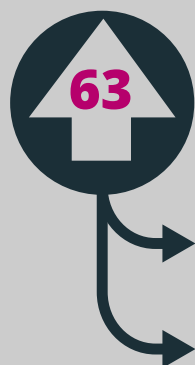
**222** included dedicated **children and young people's** services

Local services deliver a  
**range of service  
types** including...

**community-based support**

**open-access**  
(eg helplines)

**therapeutic**  
(eg counselling)



**63** local services had a net increase in the  
**number of service types** offered between 1st  
May 2019 and 1st May 2020.

**only 30%** had a corresponding  
**increase** in staff

**4** services actually had a  
**smaller staff team**



There is a  
**30.1% shortfall**  
in the number  
of refuge spaces  
compared to that  
recommended by the  
Council of Europe<sup>i</sup>.



Only **4%** of all vacancies listed posted on Routes to Support in 2019-20<sup>ii</sup> could  
consider women who had **no recourse to public funds**.



Less than **half of  
refuge vacancies**  
posted on Routes to  
Support from April  
2019 to March 2020  
could accommodate  
**a woman with two  
children**.



Less than **one  
in five** could  
accommodate  
**a woman with  
three  
children**.

<sup>i</sup> Council of Europe (2008): "...safe accommodation in specialised women's shelters, available in every region, with one family place per 10,000 head of population." (p. 51) <sup>ii</sup> April 2019 to March 2020.

Data are taken from snapshots of Routes to Support data on 1st May each year and do not show fluctuations between the dates

All charts are about services for women and children, unless otherwise stated.

## 2.3 Who are the service providers?

There were 222 domestic abuse service providers with services listed on Routes to Support in England in May 2020. These organisations were running 370 local services between them throughout England. 263 of these included refuge services and 220 included dedicated services for children/young people. Of the 222 providers, 159 (running 277 local services) are members of Women's Aid and 23 (running 28 local services) are members of Imkaan<sup>49</sup>. Of these 23 Imkaan members, 21 (26 local services) are members of both Imkaan and Women's Aid. 45 providers (running 75 local services) hold the Women's Aid National Quality Standards.<sup>50</sup>

The majority (69.8%) of local domestic abuse support services are run by dedicated

providers<sup>51</sup>, with 71.2% of those running a refuge service. Just over a third of local domestic abuse services are run by organisations that also offer other types of services or have a wider remit, including housing associations, other charities or local authorities.

International conventions and frameworks include domestic abuse within a wider definition of violence against women and girls, a term which also encompasses other interlinked forms of violence such as sexual violence and so called 'honour'-based violence<sup>52</sup>. Of the domestic abuse services included in this report, most also support women who have experienced/are experiencing another form of VAWG, as shown in **Table 2.1** below.

**Table 2.1: Support for women experiencing other forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG), May 2020 (Routes to Support)**

Form of VAWG	Number of refuges	% of refuges	Number of CBS services	% of CBS services
Female genital mutilation (FGM)	229	87.1%	211	67.0%
Forced marriage	258	98.1%	257	81.6%
'Honour'-based violence	246	93.5%	237	75.2%
Sexual violence	188	71.5%	193	61.3%
Trafficking	173	65.8%	158	50.2%
<b>All</b>	<b>263</b>		<b>315</b>	

49 <https://www.imkaan.org.uk/> : "We are the only UK-based, second-tier women's organisation dedicated to addressing violence against Black and minoritised women and girls i.e. women which are defined in policy terms as Black and 'Minority Ethnic' (BME)."

50 <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/national-quality-standards/> : "The Standards support dedicated specialist domestic abuse services by providing a set of criteria against which they can evidence their quality."

51 Organisations constituted solely for the purpose of delivering violence against women and girls (VAWG) support services.

52 The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence recognises "the structural nature of violence against women as gender-based violence, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men" <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168008482e>

We have seen only a small net increase of two local services compared with 1st May 2019, when 220 providers were running 368 services. Net change however does not reflect the changes to provision that happen throughout the year, for example where new services are established in some areas, others may be closing elsewhere due to lack of funding. Tendering processes can

also result in services shifting to other providers over the course of the year. 22 local services were added to Routes to Support and 20 services removed from the system during 2019-20<sup>53</sup>. Of the 20 services removed from Routes to Support, the majority of these (12) were removed because the tender for the service changed hands to another provider.

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## 2.4 Specialist support for women from marginalised groups

In recognition of the specific needs and experiences of women from marginalised groups and the interlocking forms of discrimination that women face, across the country there are expert services providing specialist support dedicated to certain groups of women. There are 36 refuges in England which are run specifically for a particular group of women. Not all of these services are 'by and for' expert services run by women from the group they support. Nineteen of these refuges are run by organisations that are members of Imkaan. Availability of these services is very low: spaces in dedicated services make up just 11.2% of all refuge spaces in England, and just over half

of these are located in London. This proportion of spaces in dedicated services has dropped from 13.3% of spaces in 2019, as between May 2019 and May 2020 three dedicated refuges for Black and minoritised survivors<sup>54</sup> were absorbed into wider services and one complex needs refuge ceased operating. **Table 2.2 (page 31)** gives a full breakdown and shows that the services are based in London.

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53 Between 1st May 2019 and 30th April 2020

54 None of these three refuges were delivered by members of Imkaan

**Table 2.2: Organisations (with number of refuge bed spaces) exclusively for groups, May 2020 (Routes to Support)**

Specialism	London	All England
Black and minoritised women*	20 (209)	37 (394)
Women from specific religious group	2 (8)	2 (8)
Eastern European women (no refuge services)	1 (0)	3 (0)
Women with substance use support needs or complex needs	1 (6)	2 (13)
d/Deaf women (no refuge services)	1 (0)	2 (0)
Forced marriage (no refuge services)	0 (0)	2 (0)
LGBT+ survivors (no refuge services)	2 (0)	3 (0)
Women over 45	0 (0)	1 (4)
Young women (16-24)	0 (0)	2 (12)
Women with learning disability	2 (12)	2 (12)
<b>Total</b>	<b>29 (227)</b>	<b>56 (443)</b>

\* Includes one refuge (with 62 bedspaces) for refugee, trafficked and women with insecure immigration status.

## 2.5 Types of services

Local domestic abuse service providers in England offer a range of service types to meet the needs of the survivors and child survivors they support (**Table 2.3, page 32**). Service types include:

- ▶ Refuge services (including a range of accommodation types such as shared, self-contained or dispersed, which meet the different needs of women and children accessing the service);
- ▶ Resettlement services for women moving on from refuge services;
- ▶ Community-based support (CBS) services (including outreach, floating support and advocacy, such as IDVA services);
- ▶ Open access services (such as a helpline, drop-in services or other non-referral services);
- ▶ Dedicated support for children and young people (CYPS);
- ▶ Therapeutic services (such as formal counselling, support groups or group work programmes); and
- ▶ Prevention work (such as educational work with schools).

Full definitions of these service types and the work they do can be seen in Appendix 3. Both refuge and community-based support services run CYPS and therapeutic support as part of

their core work, alongside delivering a planned programme of emotional and practical support, and facilitating peer support between service users.

As shown in **Table 2.3 (below)**, there has been an increase in the number of all service types compared with figures in May 2019, with the exception of refuge and floating support services. Most notable are increases in prevention work and support groups. There is also regional variation in changes to the availability of these service types. The South East of England, for example, had an increase of seven outreach services whereas in Yorkshire & Humberside the number of outreach service types decreased by three. The number of resettlement services increased by six in the East of England but decreased by one in the South East.

Increases in the numbers of service types do not give the whole picture. Analysis of staffing levels at local services and the numbers of service types being delivered indicate that

some local services extended their provision without a corresponding increase in staffing. For example, of the 63 services that had a net increase in the number of service types they offered between May 2019 and May 2020, 63.5% (40 services) reported no change to staffing level and four services actually reported they were operating with a smaller staff team despite providing additional service types. Two local services which increased the number of bedspaces in their refuge service reported an overall reduction in the number of staff providing support to women and children. Some services were able to continue offering the same level of service provision despite operating under precarious circumstances. For example, one service had a £50,000 cut in income during 2019-20 due to council spending cuts, meaning they were reliant on financial reserves to continue their services (see Section 3 for a discussion on the use of reserves).

**Table 2.3: Types of support service for women available in England, May 2020 (Routes to Support)**

Service types	Refuge	Resettlement	Floating support	Outreach	IDVA service*	Prevention work	Helpline	Drop-in	Formal counselling	Support groups	CYPs
<b>Number of services in England</b>	263	207	84	195	135	140	137	96	122	253	220
<b>Change from May 2019</b>	-6	+8	-1	+6	+3	+26	+2	+9	+9	+35	+7

\*This is the number of Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) services, not the number of individual staff members working as IDVAs.



## 2.6 Refuge services and spaces

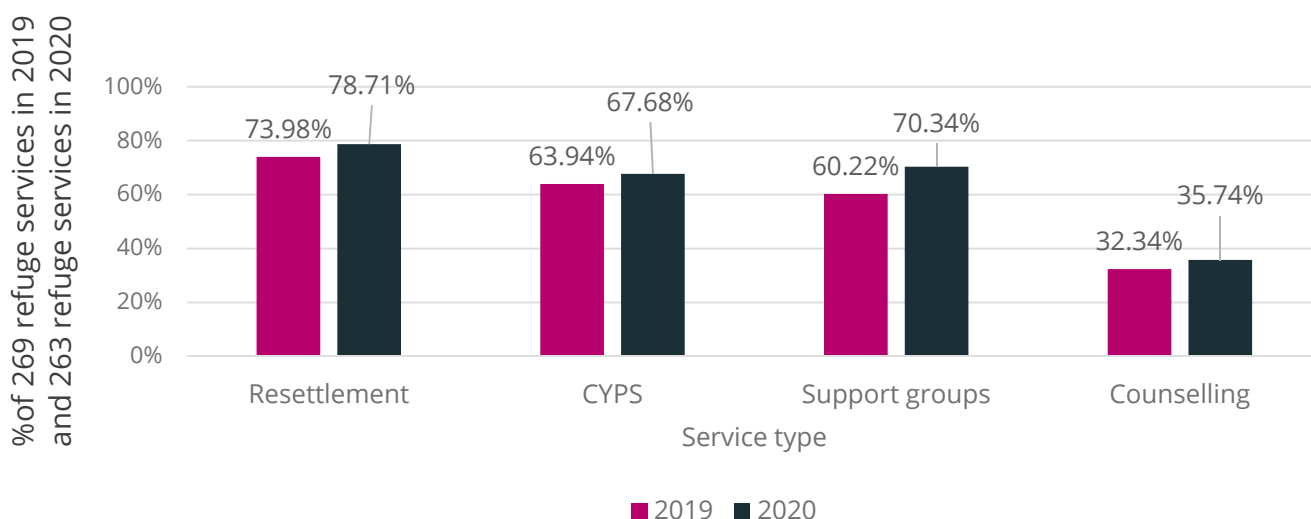
As mentioned in Section 2.3, 263 of the 370 local services available in England on 1st May 2020, were running refuge services. Refuge services are distinct from other types of emergency accommodation because residents receive a planned programme of therapeutic and practical support designed to facilitate women's recovery from experiences of domestic abuse. This support is informed by women's strengths, choices and needs and can involve (but is not limited to): one-to-one emotional support, group work with other residents, legal advice and support with housing. Other service types are often run alongside refuge to assist with different aspects of a woman's recovery, such as a formal counselling service to process the emotional and psychological effects of domestic abuse or a resettlement service to support with the transition from refuge to independent living. As shown in **Chart 2.1**, many local services running a refuge service do not have the resource to provide these additional service types. Although there has been a slight increase from 2019 in the proportion of refuge services that offer additional services types, it was still

the case that less than three-quarters (70.3%) of local refuge services were able to provide support group/group work programmes to residents, and only 35.7% - just over a third - were able to provide a formal counselling service.

Refuge services varied in size from just one shared house with space for two households, to a refuge service with over 70 units of accommodation across different sites. This variation means that, to examine the current level of refuge provision and changes over time, we need to look at the number of spaces available in refuge services. One space is one unit of accommodation for a woman and her children (one household), regardless of how many beds or cots are in the unit.

We have seen an increase in the number of spaces in England every year since 2010. In the year ending May 2020 there was an increase of 21 spaces from 3,914 bed spaces for women at May 2019 to 3,935 bed spaces (153 of these spaces are not exclusively for women and can be used to accommodate men or women

**Chart 2.1: Service types in refuge services for women available in England, May 2020 (Routes to Support)**



– see Section 2.7). Although the number of spaces increased, the overall number of refuge services actually decreased by six services. This continues a trend seen in previous years of fewer, larger providers being commissioned to cover a large geographical area<sup>55</sup>.

Despite the increase in spaces, the figure of 3,935 still falls short (by 1,629) of the Council of Europe’s minimum recommendation<sup>56</sup> (see **Chart 2.2**), which represents a 30.1% shortfall. There is regional variation in this shortfall and although refuge space shortfall in England has fallen slightly overall (compared to 1,689 on 1st May 2019), some regions have seen the shortfall rise.

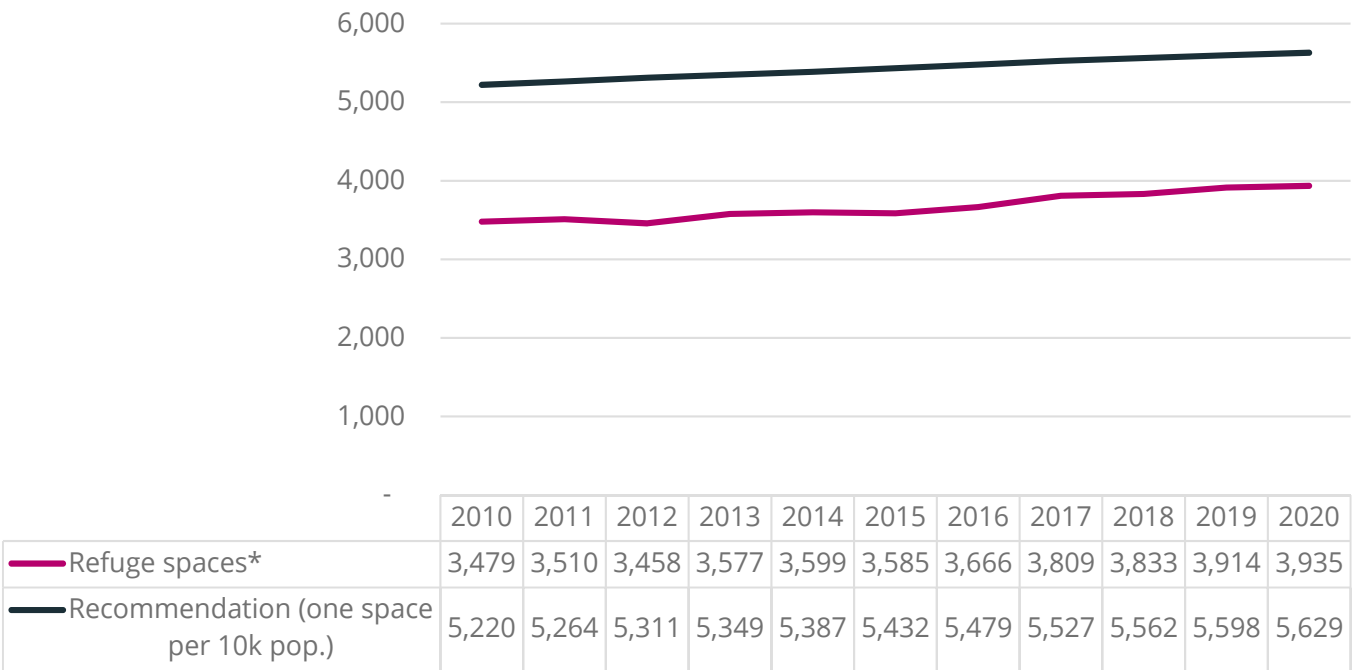
The shortfall in refuge spaces means there will only be a limited number of spaces available on any given day. As shown in **Table 2.4 (page 35)**, there were 437 fewer vacancies posted during 2019-20 compared to the number made

available in 2018-19. The actual number of spaces available to a woman looking for refuge will also be dependent on whether available spaces are appropriate for her specific needs and circumstances. To determine how many spaces will be suitable a referring agency will ask a number of questions. These questions can include the following:

1. How many children does she have?

Units of refuge spaces vary in size and will be able to accommodate either single women only or families of different sizes. The availability of suitable spaces will depend on the number of children the woman is fleeing with. Of the vacancies listed on Routes to Support in 2019-20, 43.0% were suitable for a woman with two children. Less than one in five vacancies (15.7%) could accommodate a woman with three children.

Chart 2.2: Refuge bed spaces since 2010 by year (Routes to Support)



\*A refuge space is a unit of accommodation for 1 woman and her children, regardless of how many beds/cots are in the unit.

55 Women’s Aid (2018) *Survival and Beyond: The Domestic Abuse Report 2017*. Bristol: Women’s Aid. Published online: Women’s Aid

56 Council of Europe (2008): “...safe accommodation in specialised women’s shelters, available in every region, with one family place per 10,000 head of population.” (p. 51). Based on ONS mid-year population estimate for 2018: 55,977,178.

## 2. Is she in paid employment?

Rents in refuge are typically higher than standard as rent includes both housing and support costs, meaning women in low-paid employment may need to quit their jobs in order to access benefits to cover the cost of staying in refuge. For women in paid employment who are able to cover these costs, going into refuge may still mean having to leave her job for safety reasons. If a woman does wish to remain in paid employment and it is safe for her to do so, this can restrict the geographical area in which she can search for refuge as she will generally need to be located close to her place of work.

## 3. Does she have additional support needs?

Refuges are only able to accept a referral if they have the staff capacity, suitable facilities and specialist support that may be required to meet a woman's specific needs. As the information on vacancies (**Table 2.4**) and the availability of specialist workers (**Tables 2.5** and **2.6** on **page 36**) shows, it can be difficult for a woman to access a refuge space if she has additional support needs around mental health, or drug/alcohol use. Only 15.2% of all refuge services have a specialist mental health support

worker(s), only 9.9% have a specialist drug use worker and only 9.9% have a specialist alcohol use worker. Refuges also have to consider the needs of existing residents and dynamics in the refuge when assessing the suitability of a referral. For women who need vacancies in physically accessible rooms (for themselves or their children), options are very limited. During 2019-20 only 0.9% of vacancies were in rooms fully accessible for wheelchairs and a further 1.2% were suitable for someone with limited mobility. These figures vary from region to region.

## 4. Does she have recourse to public funds?

If a woman is denied recourse to public funds<sup>57</sup> the spaces available to her will be limited. As shown in **Table 2.4** only 4.0% of all vacancies listed during 2019-20 could consider women who were not eligible to access public funds. In many cases this was conditional on another agency, such as social services, guaranteeing funding to cover her stay.

## 5. Where does she need to go?

There may be many reasons why women wish to access refuge in a certain area of the country, for example, to be near to family and support

**Table 2.4: Refuge vacancies posted in 2019-20, % vacancies for each group (change from 2018-19)**

Types of vacancies	# All vacancies posted, England	Woman plus two children	Woman plus three children	No recourse to public funds	Full wheelchair access	Person with limited mobility
Vacancies available to different groups	10,340	43.0%	15.1%	4.0%	0.9%	1.2%
Change since 2018-19	-437	-0.5%	-1.6%	-1.4%	0.0%	+0.2

<sup>57</sup> If someone's residence permit to live in the UK includes the condition 'no recourse to public funds' then that person will not be able to claim most state benefits.

networks, or to be able to access places of worship. It may be necessary to remain in a particular area to complete a course of medical treatment or to maintain contact arrangements with her children. Geographical restrictions can, then, along with the factors outlined above, further limit women's options.

The availability of spaces will be further reduced where a combination of these factors is present, for example, a woman with four children who is denied recourse to public funds.

**Table 2.5: Community-based services with specialist support workers, May 2020 (Routes to Support)**

Specialist worker type	Mental health support needs	Drug use	Alcohol use
Number of community-based services	30 (9.5%)	18 (5.7%)	17 (5.4%)
Change from May 2019	-3	-1	-2

**Table 2.6: Refugees with specialist support workers, May 2020 (Routes to Support)**

Specialist worker type	Mental health support needs	Drug use	Alcohol use
Number of refuge services	40 (15.2%)	26 (9.9%)	26 (9.9%)
Change from May 2019	-3	-3	-2

## 2.7 Dedicated services for children and young people

Of the 263 refuge services running in England in May 2020, 228 (86.7%) were running at least one dedicated children and young people (CYP) service.<sup>58</sup> 85 (32.3%) refuges employed a dedicated CYP worker, whose primary role it is to engage young people, offer them emotional support, and assist families with essential tasks such as school admission. Dedicated children's

workers create a separate space for children in refuge where they can begin to understand life there and their experiences that led them to it. As shown in **Table 2.7**, refuge services offer a range of other dedicated services, such as play therapy and mentoring, to support children and young people and help them recover from their experiences of abuse.

**Table 2.7: Dedicated services for children and young people (CYP) in refuges, May 2020 (Routes to Support)**

Service	Number of refuges	% of refuges
Dedicated emotional support	101	38.4%
Outings/activities/play sessions	98	37.7%
Individual support	88	33.5%
CYP worker	85	32.3%
Advocacy	59	22.4%
Play therapy	54	20.5%
Support group	52	19.8%
Mentoring	28	10.6%
CYP counselling	26	9.9%
Family support worker	7	2.7%
Art therapy	2	0.8%
Refuges with a dedicated CYP service	228	86.7%
<b>Total number of refuges</b>	<b>263</b>	

<sup>58</sup> Data in this section has previously been published in Women's Aid, 2020: *Nowhere to Turn for Children and Young People: Documenting the journeys of children and young people into refuges* Available online: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/no-woman-turned-away/>

## 2.8 Services for men

Routes to Support is primarily a directory of services available for women and children. The information in this section is not therefore an exhaustive account of support services available for men experiencing domestic abuse because dedicated specialist services for men (such as the Men's Advice Line, the national helpline for men run by Respect<sup>59</sup>) are not listed in the directory. Routes to Support does, however, tell us where services for women and children also offer support for men, including the numbers of refuge spaces available for men.

It is important to note that there are differences in the domestic abuse typically experienced by women and by men, in that more women experience domestic abuse than men, and women are more likely to be repeat victims, to be seriously harmed or killed, and to be subjected to coercive control.<sup>60</sup> There is some evidence that male victims need different services to female victims. A report published by the organisation Respect notes:

**"From our helpline data from nearly 17,823 male victims it seems that men do not have the same needs as female victims. It would not be helpful for male victims simply to replicate the services or ways of helping female victims – projects working with male victims need to continue to monitor male victims' needs and ways of presenting for help, in order to help them best and to make best use of our resources." (Respect, 2019)**

The report also notes that very few of the men contacting the Men's Advice Line were looking for a space in a refuge (only 1.2% of

17,823 male helpline callers were signposted to refuge services) and that the most common forms of help requested were legal advice, help in accessing the Criminal Justice System and accessing a local male domestic abuse service. However, the report acknowledges that more research is needed into the reasons behind this (Respect, 2019).

On 1st May 2020, 175 out of 370 entries (47.0%) on Routes to Support had one or more services for men, including 33 out of 263 refuges (12.5% of refuges) which could also accommodate men. There were 181 refuge spaces available for men, 24 for men only and 157<sup>61</sup> for either men or women. This is a slight decrease from 25 for men only and 161 for men or women in May 2019. However as detailed later in Section 4, an additional 37 spaces were made available to men between 1st May and 1st November 2020 as a result of funding to address the impact of Covid-19. We have seen an increase in all other services types provided for men, continuing a trend for service provision for men overall rising year on year. See **Tables 2.8 and 2.9 on page 39**.

There were 23 services that reported a net increase of one or more service types for men. Only 7 (30.4%) of these had a corresponding increase in staff. Of the services reporting a net increase in service types for men, 14 (60.9%) reported no change to staffing level and two services actually reported a decrease in the number of staff, despite providing these additional services.

59 Respect describes its work as "a pioneering UK domestic abuse organisation leading the development of safe, effective work with perpetrators, male victims and young people using violence in their close relationships." <https://www.respect.uk.net>

60 See the Women's Aid blog, "Why data matters when talking about domestic abuse." By Acting CEO of Women's Aid, Nicki Norman (November 2020) <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/why-data-matters-when-talking-about-domestic-abuse/>

61 These 157 spaces are also included in the 3,935 spaces for women mentioned earlier in this report.

**Table 2.8 Services for men in England\*, May 2020 (and change from May 2019) (Routes to Support)**

Service types	Refuges with space for men	Floating support	Helpline	Outreach	Project based	Domestic violence advocacy project	Sexual violence advocacy project	Information and advice	Total entries with one or more services for men
<b>Number of services in England in May 2020</b>	33	29	87	115	29	83	24	118	175
<b>Net change since May 2019</b>	-2	+1	+8	+6	+2	+10	+7	+13	+4

\*This is not an exhaustive list of the services provided for male victims, rather these numbers are for services offering support to women that also work with male victims.

**Table 2.9 Refuge bed spaces for men in England\*, May 2020 (and change from May 2019) (Routes to Support)**

	Bed spaces available to men	% of all refuges with space for men	% of all spaces available to men
<b>Number at May 2020</b>	181	12.5%	4.6%
<b>Net change from May 2019</b>	-5	-0.5%	-0.1%

\* This is not an exhaustive list of the services provided for male victims; rather these numbers are for services offering support to women who also work with male victims.



## CASE STUDY: THE CHALLENGES OF BEING A NON-COMMISSIONED SERVICE

We spoke with a manager from an organisation offering community-based domestic abuse support that is not commissioned by their local authority. However they do receive some grant money from them (although this is not guaranteed each year). In order to fund this service, they have successfully applied for several pots of money from trust-giving bodies. They are very grateful to these funding bodies, but having to meet different criteria for different funders is challenging and it means that a lot of staff time is taken up in writing monitoring reports.

She spoke about the limitations of the 'high risk' model that she feels has dominated funding decisions locally and categorised survivors in a way that is unhelpful. She said that only a small number of survivors meet the threshold of 'high risk' and they can quickly move in and out of that threshold. The risk model also sends the dangerous and disempowering message to survivors who do not meet the 'high risk' threshold that their needs and their experiences are less important. Although assessing risk is important, she feels that zooming in on risk is problematic because women's needs become minimised. It is important to understand that risk can quickly change because of a perpetrator's actions.

She feels that community-based support for survivors of domestic abuse is not seen as a 'high risk service' and so deemed

less important by national funding strategies, which are then mirrored by local commissioners. While 'high risk' services (such as IDVA services) are important, they should be one part of a wider picture of support services based on the range of survivors' needs. She stressed that community-based services are not 'add-on' services, they are rather a core function of the response to domestic abuse and that funders largely did not recognise that women need long-term support with what is often deemed 'historic abuse'. The trauma from past experiences is often ongoing for survivors.

She spoke of the hugely competitive tendering process for local authority funding and her concern that smaller, specialist domestic abuse organisations like theirs could not compete with big organisations with dedicated bid writing teams.

Finally, she spoke of her pride in the work of her organisation. In particular, that they keep survivors at the heart of everything they do. She is also proud of the survivors that take part in their services and those that participate in their survivor engagement panel. Their experiences and insights are shaping the organisation's work and strategic priorities.

”



# Section 3: The work of support services

## 3.1 Introduction

The third section of this report focuses on the work of domestic abuse services during 2019-20, including how they were funded, the challenges they met and the work they were most proud of. This section mainly uses results from the Women's Aid Annual Survey 2020.

This is a semi-structured, online survey sent to all domestic abuse services in England which run refuge or community-based support (CBS) services, or both. The respondents are self-selecting and, in 2020, 77 organisations running 150 service entries on Routes to Support responded. This gives a response rate of 40.1%. Of these 77 respondents, 68 responded that

they ran refuge services (nine indicated that they did not), and 59 responded that they provided community-based services (fourteen indicated that they did not, and four did not respond to this question).

This year our baseline and estimated figures on numbers of referrals are taken from national On Track data<sup>62</sup>, rather than annual survey responses (as they have been in previous years). We made a decision not to ask for referral numbers in this year's annual survey to reduce the number of questions we were asking services in the difficult time of the Covid-19

## 3.2 Key Findings

Information in this section is from Women's Aid Annual Survey

### Numbers supported, 2019-20

#### Refuge services



**10,592 women**  
**12,710 children**



#### Community-based services

**103,969 women**  
**124,762 children**



**57.2% of refuge referrals were declined** (for any reason).  
The main reason was **lack of space/capacity**.



**54.5%** of respondents were running an area of their service **without any dedicated funding** in 2019-20.

62 On Track is the Women's Aid case management and outcomes monitoring database. It is used by over 60 local service providers throughout England.

pandemic. We also feel confident that we have sufficient number of services using On Track to use this as our data source for referrals.

- ▶ Services were especially proud of their successful partnership work in 2019-20, their response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the dedication and passion shown by their staff teams.
- ▶ Using On Track national data as our baseline data, we calculate that all refuge services in England supported an estimated 10,592 women and 12,710 children in 2019-20, and all community-based services supported an estimated 103,969 women and 124,762 children.<sup>63</sup>
- ▶ 57.2% of all the referrals received in refuge services using On Track were rejected for various reasons. The main reason why referrals to refuge services were rejected was a lack of space or capacity
- ▶ 55.9% of respondents to the annual survey that ran community-based services in 2019-20 told us that they had seen an increase in average waiting list times for their community-based services over the last three years
- ▶ Of those 68 organisations responding to the annual survey that provided refuge support in 2019-20, 50 (73.5%) were commissioned by their local authority to run refuge services in 2019-20.
- ▶ Forty of the 59 responding organisations that ran community-based service in the last financial year (67.8%) were commissioned by their local authority for community-based support.
- ▶ However, for most organisations local authority commissioning did not cover all or most of the costs of running the service. Only 26.0% of those organisations commissioned by the local authority to run refuge services indicated that the funding covered all of the support staff costs. For those commissioned to run community-based services, 10.0% indicated that the funding from commissioning covered only half or less than half of the support staff costs.
- ▶ 54.5% of respondents to the annual survey indicated that they were running an area of their domestic abuse service without dedicated funding in 2019-20.

### Note on comparisons

We would advise caution when making comparisons between findings from different annual surveys. Although differences in findings may suggest year-on-year change, because of differences in sample composition each year these would require further investigation.

63 Estimates are based on referral data from On Track and average number of children per service-user from On Track.

### 3.3 A lot to be proud of during challenging times

Many of the annual survey responses indicated a challenging time over the last financial year, including facing funding challenges, running areas of service without dedicated funds and, in the latter part of 2019-20, dealing with the

impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite these difficulties, services reported having a lot to be proud of, including many achievements over the year and pride in the way staff had risen to challenges.

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#### Successful partnership working / collaborations

Seventy organisations responded to the survey question: 'What aspect of your domestic abuse service/work were you most proud of in 2019-20?' The most common theme in response to this was pride in successful partnership working or collaboration. Comments grouped under this heading covered a range of different partnerships or alliances, including working with local safeguarding boards, with other domestic abuse and VAWG (violence against women and girls) organisations, and other external agencies (including a local university and perpetrator

services). Respondents wrote about the benefits that successful partnership work had for service improvement, and how it ultimately improved service user experiences. One respondent wrote about being proud of:

**"Our partnership work around supporting women who would otherwise be unable to access temporary accommodation to flee safely and be supported to sustain tenancies."**

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#### Continuing to provide services during the pandemic, through innovation and flexibility

Although the Covid-19 pandemic only affected the final months of the last financial year, several respondents (13) wrote about their response to the pandemic as the thing they were most proud of in the year. Respondents described the changes they had made to the format of service provision where face-to-face support was not possible, so that they could continue to support women and children

throughout the early stages of the pandemic. One organisation wrote:

**"We have facilitated phone support for clients and have utilised our positive working partnerships with external agencies to allow us to facilitate this."**

### Dedicated, expert, passionate staff

Eleven respondents wrote of their pride in their staff. Their comments under this heading focused on the expertise and dedication of staff teams and the ways that teams worked together under difficult circumstances to provide the best support they could for women and children experiencing domestic abuse. Respondents used words that painted a picture of devoted and talented staff, including “passionate”, “dedicated”, “passion and spirit”, “a plethora of skills and experience” and “commitment”. One respondent wrote:

**“Despite recent financial challenges and the logistical challenges of delivery that have arisen due to the pandemic, we are**

**proud that all of our staff continue to devote themselves to the clients they support; and remain passionate and dedicated in their pursuit of a world free from abuse despite seeing colleagues being made redundant due to lack of funding.”**

Another commented,

**“We are proud that we have a diverse board, staff and volunteers’ team at [service name] who have a plethora of skills and experience to deliver services that provide the best outcomes for women and children using our service.”**

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### Supporting women and children during very difficult times in their lives

Respondents were also proud of the impact that their services were able to make on the lives of women and children experiencing domestic abuse. Ten respondents wrote about their pride in supporting women and children during very difficult times in their lives and the rewards that came from seeing families moving forward to safer and more independent lives. One organisation wrote about the satisfaction in seeing:

**“The number of survivors and families we are able to support through their journey. Seeing families move on is a great happy ending.”**

Another wrote:

**“We are very proud that we provide a comfortable and homely environment and continue to save lives and see ourselves as enablers for women to leave the refuge with a positive outlook and independence to have happier and safe lives with their children.”**

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## 3.4 Demand

Again this year, this annual audit shows the great need for domestic abuse services and the gaps that exist between capacity and demand for support. This year we have looked at referral

numbers to services using national On Track data from 68 organisations running 101 domestic abuse services in England and using the On Track case management system during 2019-20. In

previous years we have used data from annual survey responses.<sup>64</sup>

Domestic abuse services supported large numbers of women and children over the previous financial year. Using On Track national data as our baseline, we have produced national estimates of what the referral numbers would look like if 100% of services had been using On Track (see Appendix 2 for methods). We calculate that all refuge services in England supported an estimated 10,592 women and 12,710 children in 2019-20, and all community-based services supported an estimated 103,969 women and 124,762 children.<sup>65</sup> (See **Table 3.1** on national referrals estimates.)

Analysis of these referral numbers makes it clear that many domestic abuse services do not have the capacity or the resources to meet the demand for their support. We found that 57.2% of all the referrals received in refuge services using On Track<sup>66</sup> were rejected for various reasons. The main reason for these rejections was a lack of space or capacity; 31.8% of all those referrals rejected were for this reason (see **Chart 3.1, page 46**). This can also be expressed as 18.1% of all referrals received were rejected because of a lack of space or capacity. For other reasons, see **Chart 3.1**.

41.1% of all the referrals received in community-based services (**Table 3.1**) were rejected (for various reasons). The main reasons for

rejection were that the survivor did not want support (28.7% of all those referrals were rejected), and that the service was unable to contact the survivor (27.1% of all those referrals were rejected) - see **Chart 3.2, page 47**. As discussed in previous reports, it is important to bear in mind that the decision to access and accept support can be a very difficult one for a survivor. A survivor may be scared of a controlling perpetrator discovering that she has accessed support. Also her situation may have changed since the referral was first made, for example, she may have moved out of the area or is accessing support elsewhere. A referral may have been made on her behalf by a third party without her permission or full support.

It is also important to bear in mind that these figures for declined referrals are unlikely to tell the whole story of demand. There are likely to be survivors who could have benefitted from accessing domestic abuse services but were never referred because the referring agency already knew that the service was over-subscribed or full, or that it was not resourced to support women with specific needs (for example, needs around drugs and alcohol use, needs around a mental health diagnosis). In addition, many survivors do not reach out for support or will delay doing so for a long time, or they are prevented from doing so by a controlling perpetrator(s).

**Table 3.1 National referrals estimates.** See Appendix 2 for methods. Referrals to all services in 2019-20 (estimates calculated from baseline data from On Track)

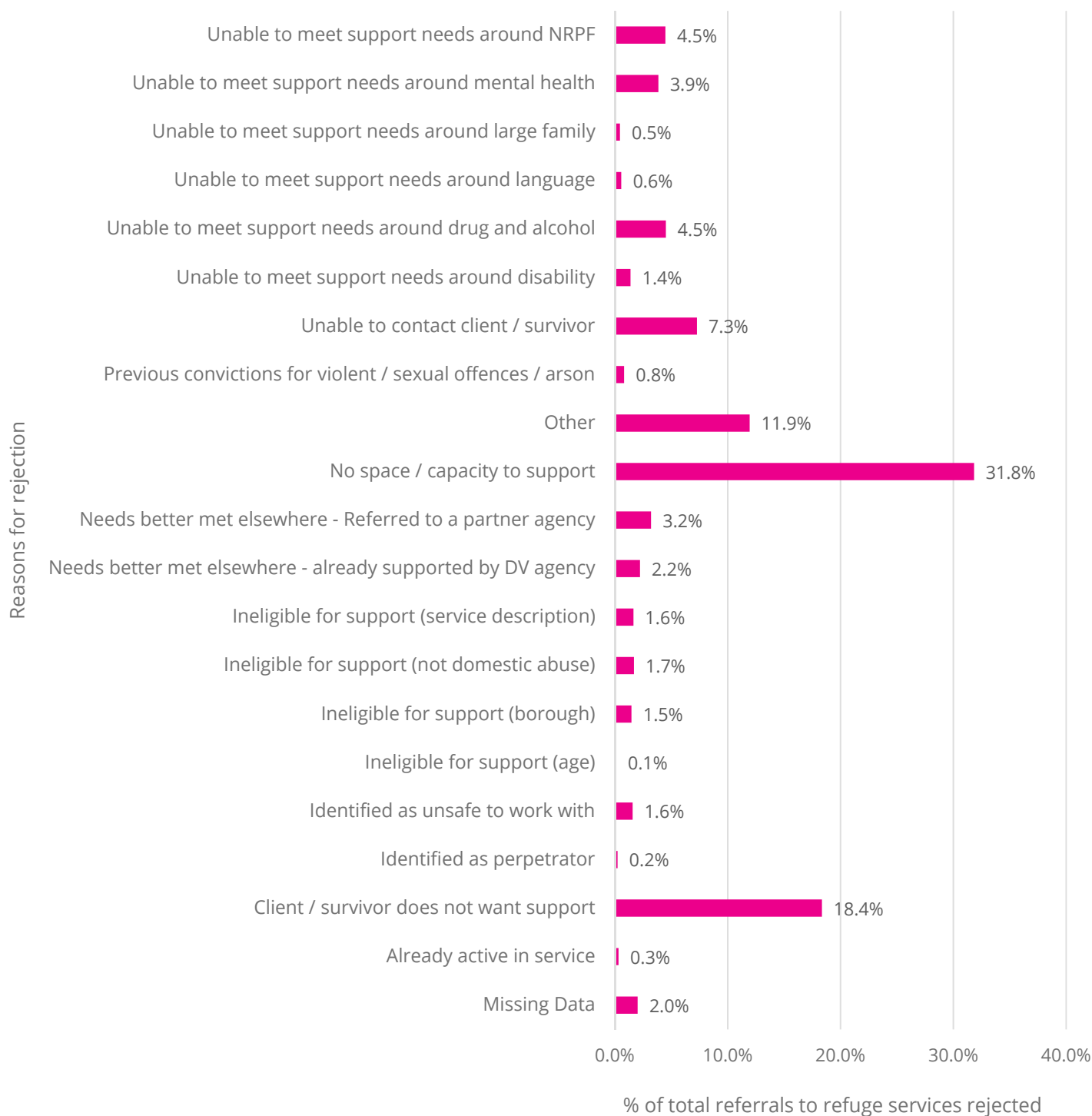
	Refuge	CBS
Estimated referrals accepted/women supported during the year	10,592	103,969
Estimated children supported during the year	12,710	124,762
Estimated referrals declined during the year	14,156	72,549
Estimated total referrals received during the year	24,748	176,518

64 As this is a different method of sampling, we would caution against comparisons with previous years' referral figures.

65 Estimates are based on referral data from On Track and average number of children per service-user from On Track.

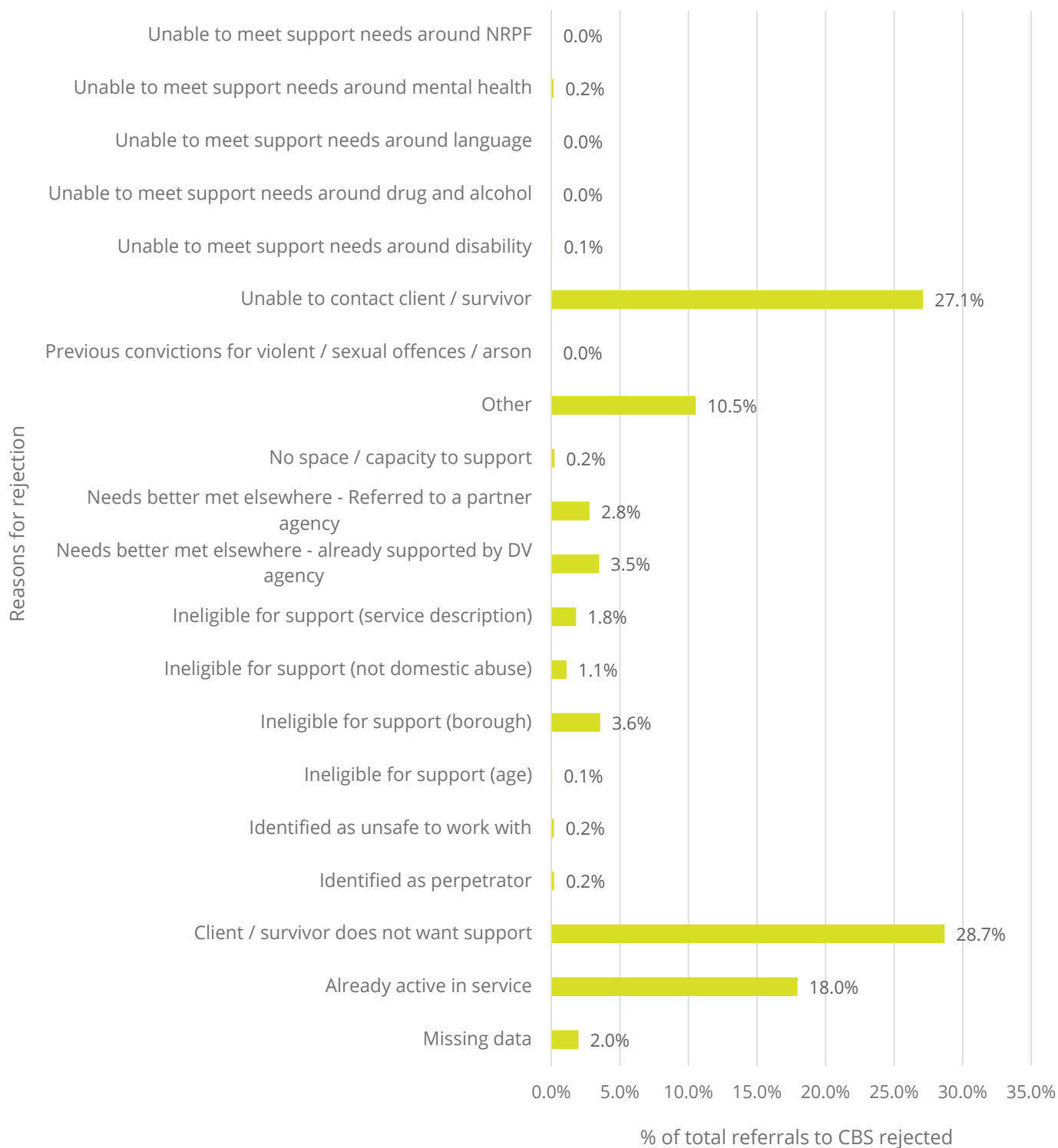
66 These and other referral numbers cited in this report are instances of referrals. A woman may be counted more than once in these numbers if she was referred to several services. For example, one woman may be referred to five refuge services, the first four services decline her referral but the fifth service accepts the referral.

**Chart 3.1: Reasons for rejected referrals in 2019-20, refuge services  
(Analysis of baseline data from On Track)**



Please note: There are likely to be survivors who could have benefitted from refuge services but were never referred because the referring agency already knew from the Routes to Support directory that the refuge was full or that it was not resourced to support women with specific needs.

**Chart 3.2: Reasons for rejected referrals in 2019-20, community-based services (CBS)  
(Analysis of baseline data from On Track)**



Please note: There are likely to be survivors who could have benefitted from community-based services (CBS) but were never referred because the referring agency already knew that the service was over-subscribed or that it was not resourced to support women with specific needs.



We also know that the referrals declined figures given previously are not the full picture of unmet need as many services have women waiting for support on waiting lists. 55.9% of respondents to the annual survey that ran community-based services in 2019-20 told us that they had seen an increase in average

waiting list times for their community-based services over the last three years (see **Table 3.2, below**). It is worth noting that 17 respondents commented that they did not run waiting lists or had not done for the whole of the previous three years.

### COMMENTS ON INCREASE IN AVERAGE WAITING LIST TIMES

“Waiting list for mentorship increased to six months, counselling four months, group family work six months, group empowerment work six months.”

“Waiting times for our programmes such as Freedom Programme and Power to Change have increased as many professionals refer and signpost women to our service.”

“We have seen wait times increase for counselling and groups which we have no specific funding to provide.”

“Our waiting times three years ago were under a week. They are now approaching a month but with a more effective triage system in place.”

“We only hold waiting lists for our groups, the demand exceeds what is possible to deliver with courts and social workers making group work as part of their plans and orders.”

”

WOMEN'S AID ANNUAL SURVEY 2020

**Table 3.2: Average waiting list times for community-based service. Women's Aid Annual Survey 2020.**

Have you seen an increase in average waiting list times for your community-based services over the last three years?	Number of responses	% of those who ran CBS in 2019-20 (59 respondents)
Yes	33	55.9%
No	20	33.9%
Unsure	4	6.8%
No response	2	3.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

NB 17 respondents commented that they did not run waiting lists or had not done for all of the past 3 years. Answers to a tick-box question.



## 3.5 Funding: commissioning by the local authority

Our annual survey asked organisations whether they were commissioned by the local authority to provide refuge or community-based domestic abuse support services. It is important to note that saying that a service is locally commissioned does not mean that it is fully funded by the local authority. For most organisations local authority commissioning did not cover all or most of the costs of running the service (see **Charts 3.3** and **3.4**) and this will impact on what they are able to deliver. For instance, one organisation told us:

**“We are extremely fortunate to be the commissioned providers in our area which means that the majority of our adult community-based services are funded. We are not funded for counselling, therapeutic work, programmes or children and young people/family support which leaves aching gaps in our provision.”**

Of those 68 organisations that provided refuge support in 2019-20:

- ▶ Fifty (73.5%) were commissioned by their local authority to run refuge services that year.<sup>67</sup>
- ▶ 26.0% of these organisations indicated that the funding covered all of the support staff costs.

- ▶ 16.0% responded that the funding covered all of the activity costs.
- ▶ 24.0% that it covered all of the associated central costs.
- ▶ 26.0% that it covered none of their activity costs.

Of those 59 organisations that provided community-based support in 2019-20:

- ▶ Forty (67.8%) were commissioned by their local authority for community-based support.<sup>68</sup>
- ▶ 10.0% indicated that the funding from commissioning covered only half of support staff costs or less.
- ▶ 22.5% responded that it covered none of their activity costs
- ▶ 30.0% responded that it covered half or less of central costs.

See **Table 3.3** for details on these types of costs.

Four respondents (5.9%) indicated that their refuge service was commissioned by their office of the police and crime commissioner, none by the local clinical commissioning group and 10 (14.7%) were commissioned by other bodies (these included central government

**Table 3.3: Description of type of costs**

Type of costs	Description
Support staff costs	Salaries, additional employment costs, clinical supervision, staff training
Activity costs	Direct activity costs, accessibility costs, external contractors
Central costs	Admin/finance staff, management/governance staff, premises and other central costs

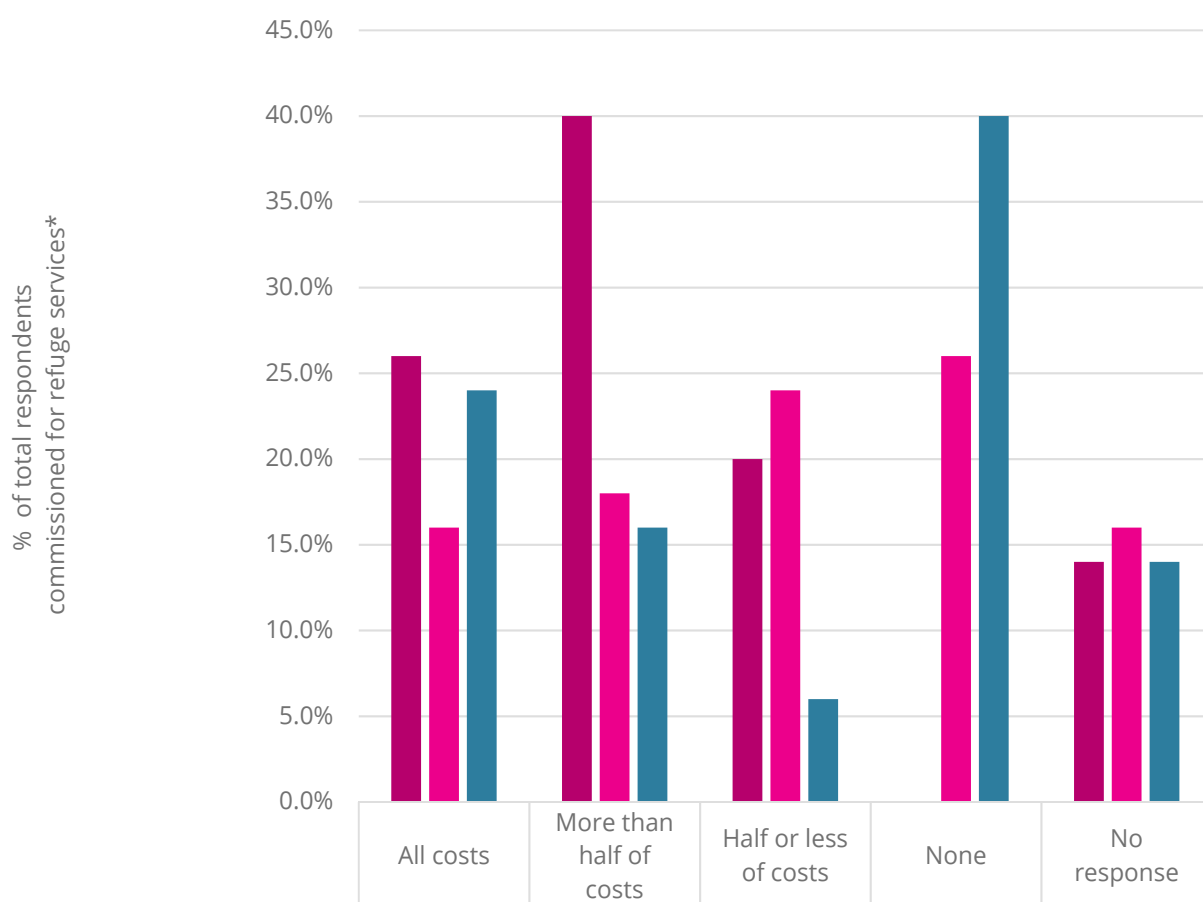
<sup>67</sup> Seventeen (25.0%) were not, and one did not answer this question.

<sup>68</sup> Nineteen were not commissioned and there were no missing responses.

and public health bodies). Nineteen responding organisations (32.2%) wrote that their community-based services were commissioned by their Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner in 2019-20, six (10.2%)

by the local clinical commissioning group and 11 (18.6%) by other bodies (including joint commissioning by different bodies coming together, being commissioned by a trust and a social investment scheme).

**Chart 3.3: Amount of funding received from local authority commissioning of refuge services, 2019-20. Women's Aid Annual Survey 2020**



\*50 respondents were commissioned by their local authority to run refuge services in 2019-20. In total 68 respondents ran refuge services in 2019-20.

**Chart 3.4: Amount of funding received from local authority commissioning of community-based support, 2019-20. Women's Aid Annual Survey 2020.**



\*40 respondents were commissioned by their local authority to run community-based support in 2019-20. In total 59 respondents ran community-based support in 2019-20.

**Table 3.4: Commissioning by another body (other than the local authority) in 2019-20  
Women's Aid Annual Survey 2020**

Did you have a contract with another body to deliver services in 2019-20?	% total with CBS in 2019-20 (59 respondents)	% total with refuge services in 2019-20 (68 respondents)
No	55.9%	70.6%
Yes - with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)	32.2%	5.9%
Yes - with the clinical commissioning group (CCG)	10.2%	0.0%
Yes - other	18.6%	14.7%
No response	0.0%	10.3%

Tick-box question. Respondents can tick more than one answer.

## COMMENTS ON FUNDING CHALLENGES

“Our community-based services are under constant pressure due to inadequate funding from local authorities and as a result of the lack of funding from continued year on year serious erosion of service budgets, services are now cut to the bone.”

“The funding received through the commissioned service continues to not provide the level of service required, and so we supplement the commissioned service with grant funding [...] We had to reduce the number of attempts we made to contact women referred, and operate waiting lists for one-to-one services, which we previously did not do.”

“Funding for this service is derived from a whole host of funders and most of the management time is taken up fundraising.”

“There is concern that PCC only fund for high-risk cases, and the demand for support in low-medium risk is increasing vastly. We work with women to prevent escalation and to avoid them becoming high risk, yet PCC is funded based purely on MARAC numbers, which is not suitable to the service and its users' needs.”

“We manage to keep our projects afloat but there is no room for development work and the accommodation standards are deteriorating as we are unable to improve on provision.”

## 3.6 Funding: working without dedicated funding

**Table 3.5: Were you running an area(s) of your domestic abuse service for women WITHOUT dedicated funding in 2019-20? Women's Aid Annual Survey 2020**

Running an area of service without dedicated funding	% of total respondents (77)
Yes	54.5%
No	45.5%
No response	0.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Tick box question	

54.5% of respondents to the annual survey indicated that they were running an area of their domestic abuse service without dedicated funding in 2019-20 (**Table 3.5**). The most common area of work to have been run without dedicated funding was domestic abuse prevention and educational work (21 respondents), followed by community-based domestic abuse services for women (outreach, floating support, advocacy) (18 respondents) and therapeutic support services (counselling, group work) (18 respondents) - see **Table 3.6, page 54**.

Respondents told us of a variety of ways that this lack of dedicated funding had impacted on the delivery of their domestic abuse services (see **Table 3.7, page 55**). Seventeen responding organisations had relied on the work of volunteers to continue areas of work without dedicated funding. Twenty-nine respondents had gone into their financial reserves to cover the costs of services without dedicated funding. Financial reserves are funds set aside to protect a charity from loss of income, therefore they must be replenished to protect from future uncertainties. Clearly, using reserves to fund services is not a sustainable solution, and raises questions about the future of these areas of work. As one respondent put it, "It means that

you can only guarantee the service for a short period of time. This impacts service users using our services, such as our recovery group." One organisation wrote of the dilemma of wanting to be able to continue essential support work but having to weigh up whether they should risk weakening financial reserves:

**"We deemed it essential that our young survivor worker be able to continue in post, especially in these difficult times. We took the decision to fund from reserves until we were able to secure further funding for the post. This has depleted our reserves, reducing our future ability to be able to fund other projects."**

In their comments on running services with no dedicated funding, several respondents wrote about:

- Staff shortages and burnout, and reliance on volunteers.

**"Community-based staff are burnt out with high caseloads. Due to no funding for refuge services we are unable to recruit for example whilst a staff member is on maternity leave."**

- The struggle to meet demand and the resulting gaps in services.

**“We have (heartbreakingly) struggled to meet demand and only had basic interventions to offer clients.”**

- The burden of time spent on funding applications, which retracts from service delivery, planning and sustainability.

**“We are constantly trying to bid for funding for projects which is a time consuming and lengthy process, this takes time away from delivering the service.”**

**Table 3.6: Which areas of your domestic abuse service were you running without dedicated funding in 2019-20? Women's Aid Annual Survey 2020**

Area of service ran without dedicated funding	% of respondents running an area of service without dedicated funding (42)
Domestic abuse refuge provision	28.6%
Accommodation-based services (other than refuge)	9.5%
Domestic abuse prevention/educational work	50.0%
Community-based domestic abuse services for women (outreach, floating support, advocacy)	42.9%
Therapeutic support services (counselling, group work)	42.9%
Children and young people's domestic abuse services in refuge	33.3%
Children and young people's domestic abuse services in the community	11.9%
Specialist domestic abuse services for Black and Minoritised women	23.8%
Specialist domestic abuse services for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans (LGBT) women	2.4%
Specialist domestic abuse services for women with disabilities	4.8%
Specialist domestic abuse services for women with complex needs	21.4%
Other	35.7%

42 respondents to this question – no missing responses

Tick box question – respondents can tick more than one category

**Table 3.7: Please tell us how this lack of dedicated funding impacted on your delivery of the service. Women's Aid Annual Survey 2020**

Impact	Number of respondents	% of those who ran services without dedicated funding (42)
We used reserves to cover the costs	29	69.0%
We relied on volunteers to deliver the service	17	40.5%
We have had to reduce the number of women we can support in the service	5	11.9%
We lost staff as a result of job insecurity	3	7.1%
Service can only continue for a limited amount of time	9	21.4%
We have had to reduce staff hours within the service	8	19.0%
We are unable to support women with more complex needs due to the level of support available	6	14.3%
We are unable to plan for the future and this impacts on the service we deliver	9	21.4%
Other	8	19.0%

40 respondents to this question, two missing responses. Tick box question – respondents can tick more than one category.

### COMMENTS ON RUNNING AN AREA OF SERVICE WITHOUT DEDICATED FUNDS

“There has never been secure dedicated funding to run a full wraparound domestic abuse service. Funding has always had to be sourced from grant bodies, fundraising, and the generosity of the general public, without whom our services would not exist.”

“We don't have secure CYP funding leaving children without a consistent service.”

“No dedicated funding for specialist BME services will reduce the number of services for women to access.”

“We have to make a lot of funding applications, often to local funders which all require separate applications, monitoring and reporting. All of this takes a lot of time and resources. It impedes the opportunity to develop current services.”

“The lack of funding for key roles prevents us from engaging in partnership approaches and innovation as much as we would want to [...] Leadership is impacted by the pressures of funding, stifling innovation and impacting on support for senior managers and team leaders.”

# Section 4: The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

## 4.1 Introduction

This section looks at the impact of Covid-19 on domestic abuse support services, including the challenges services have faced, availability of refuge vacancies in the first months of the pandemic and changes to refuge spaces available between 1st May and 1st November 2020. We know these changes to spaces are in large part due to emergency Covid-19 funding. Women's Aid continues to monitor the effects of the pandemic, building on the research published in our August 2020 report, *A Perfect Storm*. The next *Annual Audit* report covering 2020-21 may show longer term change to numbers of services and refuge spaces.

For a more detailed insight into the impacts of the pandemic on domestic abuse services and on survivors, see:

- ▶ *A Perfect Storm: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Domestic Abuse Survivors and the Services Supporting Them* (Women's Aid, 2020)
- ▶ *The Impact of the Two Pandemics: VAWG and COVID-19 on Black and Minoritised Women and Girls* (Imkaan, 2020)

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## 4.2 Key findings

- ▶ During the first lockdown in England, the number of vacancies available at a given time in 2020 was consistently around half the number available in the same week in 2019.
- ▶ A special mid-year snapshot of refuge spaces on Routes to Support to determine the impact of emergency Covid-19 related funding showed an additional increase of 361 to 4,251 spaces by 1st November 2020, although not all of these spaces will remain when temporary emergency funding comes to an end.
- ▶ The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on domestic abuse services, including services having to rise to the challenge of meeting increased demand, following changing government guidance, changing their way of working, adapting to new service formats and new technologies, all at a very fast pace.

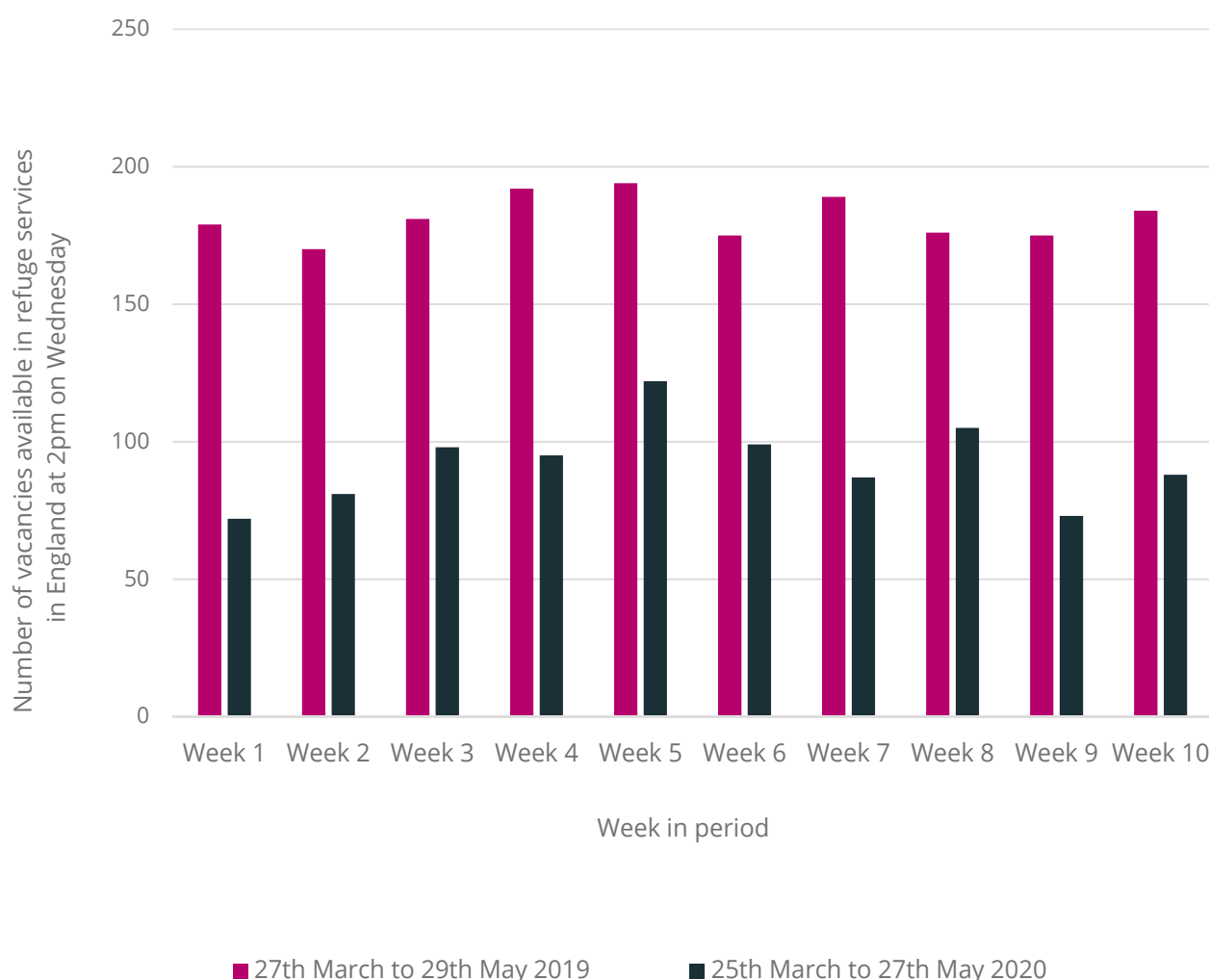


## 4.3 Availability of refuge vacancies

To determine some of the initial impacts of lockdown restrictions on refuge services, we looked at snapshots of available vacancies on Wednesday at 2pm each week during the period that full lockdown measures were in place and

compared to the same week in 2019. As shown in **Chart 4.1**, we found that the number of vacancies available at a given time in the first lockdown was consistently around half the number available in the same week in 2019.<sup>69</sup>

**Chart 4.1: Weekly vacancy snapshots for England, comparison by year (Routes to Support)**



<sup>69</sup> This information was first published in *A Perfect Storm: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Domestic Abuse Survivors and the Services Supporting Them*. (Women's Aid, 2020)

## 4.4 Impact of emergency funding for refuge spaces

During the Covid-19 pandemic, government departments launched a number of emergency funding streams to address pressures on the domestic abuse sector caused by lockdown. This included funds from The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to address short-term increased demand in the refuge sector. In order to support survivors at this time and to sustain existing provision, temporary spaces were created to increase capacity. To determine the impact of additional funding on the number of refuge bedspaces we took a mid-year snapshot from Routes to Support and analysed the change from 1st May 2020. This showed there was a net increase over the six-month period

from 1st May to 1st November of 316 refuge spaces<sup>70</sup>.

As shown in **Table 4.1**, there is significant regional variation in the availability of increased bedspaces, with the highest concentration in London and the West Midlands. This may partly be explained by the existence of large providers in these two areas, accounting for the high proportion of the new spaces. Of the 351 new spaces, 38 (10.8%) were not exclusively for women, and could be used to house male victims. As previously noted, not all of these spaces are likely to remain after emergency funding streams come to an end due to the temporary nature of the funding.

**Table 4.1: Bedspaces in refuge services on 1st November 2020 (Routes to Support)**

Region	Spaces listed (change from 1st May 2020)
Channel Islands	12 (0)
East Midlands	329 (19)
East of England	378 (0)
London	997 (93)
North East England	214 (10)
North West England	495 (39)
South East England	515 (23)
South West England	292 (8)
West Midlands	640 (93)
Yorkshire & Humberside	379 (31)
Grand Total	4251 (316)

<sup>70</sup> During the period, we removed 34 spaces from four services on Routes to Support and added 351 refuge spaces to new and existing services

As outlined previously, there were significantly lower numbers of vacancies available during the period that full lockdown measures were in place. The number of vacancies remained low compared to the previous year until September 2020, when the number rose to be in line with or above vacancies available for the same period in 2019. This is likely due in part to the impact of additional refuge spaces being made available. It is worth noting however that even when vacancies are at 'normal' levels, shortfall of refuge spaces (see Section 2.6) means demand for refuge exceeds the numbers of spaces available. Services also expected to see an increase in demand following the easing of lockdown restrictions.<sup>71</sup>

### Changes to spaces in refuge services exclusively for women from marginalised groups

The changes to numbers of bedspaces included a net increase of 21 spaces in refuges exclusively for Black and minoritised women. This included 29 spaces added to the system - all but seven in specialist 'by and for' organisations - and eight spaces removed in London. Four spaces in a new refuge service for LGBTQ+ survivors were added in South West England. All providers previously had services listed on Routes to Support, though not all of these were specialist by and for services. **Table 4.2** gives a full breakdown, including how many spaces are in specialist by and for services.

**Table 4.2: Additional spaces on 1st Nov 2020 in refuges exclusively for groups (Routes to Support)**

Region	Variation from 1st May to 1st Nov	Number in specialist by and for services	Exclusive for
East Midlands	+12	+9	Black and minoritised women
North East England	+10	+10	Black and minoritised women
London	-8	-8	Muslim women
Yorkshire & Humber	+7	+7	Black and minoritised women
South West England	4	0	LGBTQ+ survivors

71 See Women's Aid, 2020: *A Perfect Storm: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Domestic Abuse Survivors and the Services Supporting Them*. Published online: Women's Aid

## 4.5 Challenges in service delivery

At the end of the Annual Survey 2020 we asked respondents to comment on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their domestic abuse services and 65 of the 77 respondents gave comments. We have summarised our analysis of their comments in **Table 4.3**.

Respondents told us about the sheer scale of the pandemic's impact on their services, including having to meet increased demand, follow changing government guidance, change their way of working, adapt to new service formats and new technologies, all at a very fast pace. Comments included:

**"Like standing on the shore watching a tsunami approaching, we knew it was coming but we had no idea how devastating this pandemic would be [...] Those first few weeks were challenging to say the least, it was a steep learning curve for us all and our priorities had to change. Adapt and overcome, they say... and adapt we did!"**

**"Needs have not gone away but have increased for BAME women during the pandemic. For BAME women racialized discrimination and the disproportionate impact of structural inequalities has become exacerbated and not alleviated; for example women with no recourse have little support and are therefore subject to further inequality."**

**"As an organisation the impact has been huge as we have had to roll out technology solutions at a fast pace and skill staff remotely. Managers have spent significant proportions of their time managing staff remotely, understanding the impact of Covid-19 in relation to safety and risk and**

**service delivery and responding to the ever-changing guidance around lockdown, social distancing, track and trace."**

Respondents told us about the impact of not being able to provide services on a face-to-face basis, meaning that service delivery models had to be quickly adapted to virtual support options and drop-in centres had to temporarily close. One organisation described the impact on survivors in the following way:

**"Clients not having access to social groups or educational, training, volunteering and wellbeing courses and programmes that play a vital role in overcoming the impacts of abuse, improving self-esteem, self-worth, physical and mental wellbeing, encouraging empowerment toward achieving positive outcomes for individual learning and attainment, increasing opportunity for employment and financial stability, enabling recovery and resilience, and increasing capability for independence and developing healthy relationships."**

Respondents also felt that the women they worked with became increasingly isolated from support during the lockdown. Many of the services they usually relied on for support were not available, and they were also separated from friends and family who were previously a source of care and assistance. Respondents felt this was having clear negative mental health impacts for survivors. One respondent wrote:

**"As well as the increased risk of further abuse during lockdown, we have seen an increase in mental health needs, substance misuse, housing issues and financial issues."**

**Table 4.3: The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on domestic abuse services (Women's Aid Annual Survey 2020)**

Impact	Number of respondents	% of total responders (77)
Inability to provide usual levels of face-to-face support	30	39.0%
Exacerbated isolation and mental health issues for survivors, and increased need for a range of support	14	18.2%
Different than usual referral numbers	14	18.2%
The cost and time spent creating additional risk assessment plans and precautionary measures, and procuring PPE	13	16.9%
Unable to meet demand	13	16.9%
Staff shortages	12	15.6%
Challenges and costs of moving to remote working and service provision	11	14.3%
Lack of safe move-on accommodation	10	13.0%
Social distancing was difficult in refuges	10	13.0%
Staff welfare	8	10.4%
Disruption to funding	7	9.1%
Unavailability of the other services survivors need and the agencies that provide them	6	7.8%
Positive changes and feedback from clients around new virtual services	6	7.8%
Survivors incurred extra costs as a result of the lockdown and school closures	4	5.2%
Services for children and young people unable to continue	4	5.2%
Other (including lack of access to interpreters, increased requests for monitoring information from funders and sense of collective responsibility during the pandemic among refuge residents)	8	10.4%
No comment	12	15.6%

# Conclusion

2019-20 was, as usual, a demanding year for domestic abuse services and, despite many challenges, there have been lots of positive achievements. An estimated 10,592 women and 12,710 children were supported in all refuge services and an estimated 103,969 women and 124,762 children in all community-based services in England in 2019-20. The women accessing specialist support have often been subjected to abuse for long periods of time. The average length of abuse experienced by service-users in 2019-20 was six years, with some service-users having been subjected to abuse and violence for up to 64 years. The case study included in this report about dog fostering (to help survivors flee perpetrators of abuse) is an example of the excellent, impactful work that specialist services are doing.

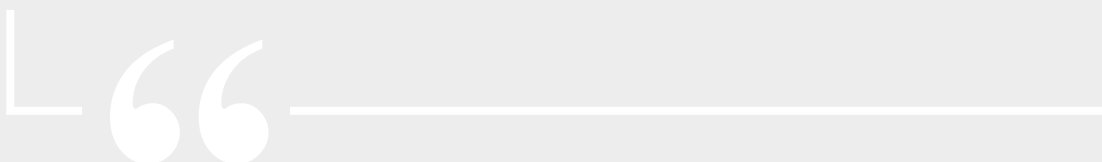
## The impact of Covid-19

The end of 2019-20 saw some dramatic changes in the way domestic abuse services had to work as Covid-19 became a pandemic and lockdown and other restrictions were introduced by the government. Several services told us that

their response to the pandemic had been the thing they were most proud of in the last financial year. Many services had embraced new ways of working, including new uses of technology, to ensure that survivors continued to get the support they needed.

## The challenge of meeting demand

Domestic abuse services continue to struggle to meet the huge demand for their specialist support. The number of refuge spaces still falls short (by 1694) of the number of spaces recommended by the Council of Europe. This is a 30.1% shortfall. 56.9% of all the referrals received in refuge services were rejected (for various reasons). The main reason for rejection was a lack of space or capacity. It is also clear that reform is needed to ensure that all migrant women can access the support they need to flee domestic abusers. Currently only 4.0% of all refuge vacancies listed during 2019-20 could consider women who were not eligible to access public funds because of their immigration status.





### Meeting the needs of children and young people

Most women using domestic abuse services in 2019-20 had children (57.8% of service users in community-based services and 62.5% of women in refuge services). On average, there were 1.2 children per service user. It is clear that meeting the needs of children and young people is an important part of the work of domestic abuse services and more resources are needed to enable services to do this work. In 2019-20, only 85 (32.3%) refuges employed a dedicated CYP worker.

### Funding challenges

Funding remains a challenge for many services. 54.5% of respondents to the annual survey were running an area of their domestic abuse service without any dedicated funding in 2019-20. Not all of the services responding to the annual survey were commissioned by their local authority: 73.5% were commissioned to run refuge services and 67.8% were commissioned for community-based support. Being commissioned by the local authority, however, usually did not equate

to having all or most of their costs covered. For instance, only 26.0% of organisations commissioned to run refuge services indicated that the funding covered all of the support staff costs, and 10.0% of organisations commissioned to provide community-based support told us that funding covered only half of support staff costs or less. The case study of a non-commissioned service shows the challenges in securing funding and the shortcomings of a local authority funding model when it is centred around 'high-risk' support and not the full range of survivors' needs.

Services told us that they were proud of their dedicated and expert staff teams, who were using their specialist knowledge of domestic abuse to support women and children at some of the most difficult times of their lives. The Covid-19 pandemic has meant that the end of 2019-20 was anything but 'business as usual' for domestic abuse services in England. However, services are rising to the challenge of adapting to pandemic conditions and have continued to meet the needs of survivors and their families through their expertise, passion and dedication.



## Appendix 1: Glossary

**Service types:** Routes to Support details which service types are offered against each entry, an entry can contain multiple service types.

**Service provider:** any organisation providing a domestic abuse service. This could be a dedicated provider or a larger organisation running a domestic abuse service, for example a housing association.

**Service user:** any woman who is accessing/has accessed domestic abuse support services.

**Dedicated provider:** an organisation constituted for the sole and specialist purpose of delivering domestic abuse services.

**Entry/entries:** one service listing on Routes to Support. A service provider may have multiple entries where they operate in more than one local authority or have services in the same local authority with different referral criteria, for example a general access refuge and another for Black and minoritised women only.

**Bed spaces:** a unit of accommodation for one woman and her children, regardless of how many beds/cots are in the unit.

**No recourse to public funds:** If someone's residence permit to live in the UK includes the condition 'no recourse to public funds' then that person will not be able to claim most state benefits.

### THE 'BY AND FOR' EXPERT SECTOR:

For this report Women's Aid uses the definition of the 'by and for' expert sector as set out by Imkaan in the Alternative Bill (Imkaan, 2018). This definition is aligned with the principles of the Women's Aid's Quality Standards, the Shared Sector Standards<sup>1</sup> and the National Statement of Expectations<sup>2</sup>.

**"We define women-only VAWG specialist organisations as the by and for expert sector (sometimes written as by and for expert services or organisations). This term refers to specialist services that are designed and delivered by and for the users and communities they aim to serve. This can include, for example, services led by and for Black and minoritised women, disabled women, LGBT women, etc. In the context of VAWG we refer to women-only VAWG services as manifesting specific expertise designed and developed to address VAWG."**

Imkaan, 2018

1 <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/national-quality-standards/>

2 The National Statement of Expectations, published by the Home Office in December 2016 as part of the government's violence against women and girls strategy, stresses that the government expects local services to put the victim at the centre of service delivery, including by having "access to a broad diversity of provision, considering how services will be accessible to BME disabled, LGBTQQI and older victims and survivors, and those from isolated or marginalised communities".



## Appendix 2: Methodology

The **Women's Aid Annual Survey** is a national survey of the whole range of specialist domestic abuse services for women and children in England. An online survey is sent to all domestic abuse services in England; respondents are self-selecting. The survey is semi-structured. Open-text questions are categorised according to common themes.

Referral estimates used in the report are calculated by using baseline data from On Track. The following steps were taken:

**a. Refuge:** ratio of women housed to refuge space for services using On Track applied to services not using On Track that are listed on Routes to Support for the same region.

**b. Community-based support (CBS):** ratio of women supported to individual service type (e.g. outreach, IDVA, floating support) for responding services applied to services not using On Track that are listed on Routes to Support for the same region. Numbers of children: average number of children per woman accessing services from On Track applied to above two estimates.

**c. Estimated number of referrals declined to refuge and community-based services:** the percentage of referrals accepted and declined from our baseline data was applied to the estimated numbers of women accepted in steps a and b above to give an estimated number of referrals declined to each service type.

**Routes to Support** provides information about the types of domestic abuse services, the number of bed spaces in refuge services, who these services can support and changes to provision over time. The directory is updated on a rolling basis by dedicated staff at Women's Aid meaning each entry is fully updated every year in addition to any updates received from services during the year. Entries are added and removed throughout the year as providers change.

**On Track** is Women's Aid case management and outcomes monitoring system. On Track allows front-line workers in local domestic abuse services to record information about service users. Using On Track, services also contribute anonymised information to the Women's Aid national dataset on the experiences and outcomes of survivors and their children. The On Track data in this report is from 68 organisations running 101 domestic abuse services in England and using the On Track case management system during 2019-20 (where sub-samples are used, this is highlighted in the report).

## Appendix 3:

### Definitions of service types

Support area	Service type	Definition
Accommodation	Accommodation (other than refuge)	Any accommodation offered to women experiencing domestic abuse which does not meet the definition below. For example this may be move on accommodation, a shelter where the address is disclosed or dispersed accommodation without the planned programme of support.
	Refuge	<p>Offers accommodation and support only for women experiencing domestic abuse which is tied to that accommodation. The address will not be publicly available. It will have a set number of places.</p> <p>Residents will receive a planned programme of therapeutic and practical support from staff and access peer support from other residents. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to information and advocacy</li> <li>• Emotional support</li> <li>• Access to specialist support workers (eg. drugs/alcohol misuse, mental health, sexual abuse)</li> <li>• Access to recovery work</li> <li>• Access to support for children (where needed)</li> <li>• Practical help</li> <li>• Key work &amp; support planning (work around support needs including e.g. parenting, finances and wellbeing)?</li> <li>• Safety planning</li> <li>• Counselling</li> </ul>
Resettlement	Resettlement	Only available to refuge residents moving on to independent living. A service is available to women staying in the refuge prior to move on and post move on.

Support area	Service type	Definition
<b>Community-based services (CBS)</b>	Floating Support	Tied to accommodation, but the accommodation is not offered as part of the service. Will also have a set number of places. These services are primarily about supporting women and children to maintain their accommodation.
	Outreach	Not offered in the project's building and it does not have a set number of spaces. The support offered is broader and not focused on accommodation. Women can access these services in a range of community centres or the service may come to the women in their home or other venues (e.g. cafes or neutral meeting places).
	Domestic abuse advocacy project	Involves the provision of advice, information and support to survivors living in the community based on an assessment of risk and its management. Operates within an inter-agency context, and is usually part of a multiagency risk management strategy or MARAC process and focuses on providing a service to victims judged to be at medium to high risk of harm to address their safety needs and help manage the risk that they face.
<b>Open access services</b> These services are available without a planned programme of support and can be accessed anonymously as and when the woman needs to.	Helpline	A helpline is a support and referral service that is accessed by phone and can be accessed anonymously to receive the service. It needs to have a designated telephone line and be a specific service offered at fixed advertised times by dedicated staff or volunteers trained for that purpose and not engaged in other tasks.
	Drop in service	Women can access support at a specified venue without a pre-arranged appointment from trained staff.
	Advice and information service	Other open access support projects, this would include crisis intervention services and other advice services whether accessed by telephone or in person.
	Online chat	Online chat is a support and referral service that is accessed via the web. It needs to be a specific service offered at fixed advertised times by dedicated staff or volunteers trained for that purpose and not engaged in other tasks.

Support area	Service type	Definition
<b>Recovery work</b>  These services do not offer accommodation, but may be offered to refuge residents. A woman and/or child has to attend the project's building to access these services.	Counselling	Counselling is formal counselling offered by qualified practitioners
	Group work programmes	Group work programmes are defined groups facilitated by trained staff
	Support groups	Support groups are attended by survivors within a refuge or community based support setting and offer peer support/self-help work.
<b>A dedicated children and young people's service</b>	Children's work	Staffed by trained children's workers. A service where they provide emotional support, group work, activities, afterschool clubs or holiday clubs for the children or do specific outreach work.
	Young people's work	Staffed by trained youth workers. A service where they provide emotional support, group work, activities.
<b>Other</b>	Prevention work	Work carried out in community groups such as schools aimed at prevention/awareness raising. Clients do not self-refer but the service may be booked by professionals.

## Appendix 4: Women's Aid Annual Survey 2020 respondents

### Regional distribution

What region is your domestic abuse service(s) based in? Women's Aid Annual Survey 2020		
Region	Responses	% of total respondents (77)
East of England	7	9.1%
East Midlands	7	9.1%
London	8	10.4%
North East England	9	11.7%
North West England	7	9.1%
South West England	4	5.2%
South East England	16	20.8%
West Midlands	7	9.1%
Yorkshire and Humberside	7	9.1%
Several regions covered	5	6.5%
Total	77	100.0%

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