

NOTICE OF MOTION**LABOUR GROUP
“A SAFE HOME” CAMPAIGN**

This council resolves to ask the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Communities;

- Expressing the council’s support for the “A Safe Home” campaign;
- Requesting that the Domestic Abuse Bill be amended to include a requirement that all domestic abuse survivors presenting as homeless should automatically be considered as in priority need, and that councils are fully funded to meet this new responsibility when enacted.

Proposed by: Cllr Williams

Seconded by: Cllr Evans

Supporting information

This council notes that it has been identified by the APPG (All Party Parliamentary Group) on Domestic Violence and Abuse and the APPG on Ending Homelessness that a key barrier to people leaving abusive relationships is a lack of access to safe, secure housing. This council notes that it is unconscionable that people who have managed to flee an abusive situation are required to pass the vulnerability test to be owed the main homelessness duty. This is in the context of the Domestic Abuse Bill just introduced to Parliament, and the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA)

https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/240459/cr10198_domesticabusebill_appg_report_2019_aw_web.pdf

Proving you are homeless due to domestic abuse can be distressing for survivors. Research demonstrates that there is a lack of consistency between local authorities when it comes to the level of proof required and a lack of understanding of the nature and effects of domestic abuse. The result of this is that many domestic abuse survivors are deemed ‘intentionally homeless’ (S191 Housing Act 1996). Recent research found that many local authorities are failing to adequately assist people presenting as homeless due to domestic abuse and that there was often a lack of sensitivity when dealing with survivors, with account survivors obliged to recount experiences several times to untrained interviewers. Women’s Aid findings illustrate that providing extensive evidence to demonstrate vulnerability can be traumatic and near impossible for people who have experienced domestic abuse. It should be enough to present one set of documentary evidence from an appropriate source such as domestic abuse services or a GP.

Extending automatic priority need to all survivors would remove the requirement to prove vulnerability. This should also help change the culture around how survivors are dealt with when presenting as homeless and in need of help. This would alleviate at least some of the distress experienced by survivors and not least also housing officers whose job it is to process claims.

