

# Statutory Duty Toolkit

## A best practice guide for local authorities

### Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act places a statutory duty on Tier 1 authorities to:



Conduct a needs assessment



Publish a local strategy



Set up a partnership Board



Commission specialist services



Monitor and evaluate strategies

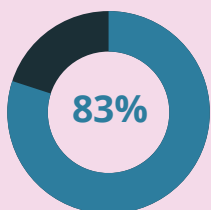


Report back to national government

### How do you accurately assess local need?

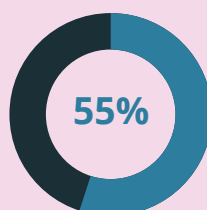
The quality of local service provision relies heavily on the accuracy and robustness of your needs assessment. Councils are required to consult the board to identify the level and types of need. To ensure assessments reflect the needs of all survivors, councils should also:

- Work closely with local specialist services - both commissioned and non-commissioned - equipped with frontline expertise and sophisticated case management systems e.g. On Track.
- Specialist services will also be able to provide data on survivors from out of area.
- Consult 'by and for' services to capture the needs of Black and minoritised survivors.
- Respect the often limited capacity and resources of specialist refuges by giving appropriate timeframes for data requests and resourcing organisations for their work.
- Collect both qualitative and quantitative data as not everything can be captured in numbers.
- Data and insights on women being turned away is also key to addressing gaps in provision - a statutory requirement under the duty. You can reach out to Women's Aid for more information and tailored support for your needs assessment.



**Over 80%** of women cross local authority boundaries to reach safety.

Women's Aid On Track Data, 2020-21



**Over half** of 'by and for' services in 2021 received no commissioned funding from their local authority.

Women's Aid Annual Audit, 2023

### Publishing a local strategy

Based on the needs assessments, councils must prepare and publish a local strategy. To ensure the strategy effectively serves the needs of survivors, councils should also:

- Include granular information about the needs of different groups (including but not limited to Black and minoritised & LGBTQ+ survivors), as well as details about how identified needs and barriers will be addressed through commissioning.
- Commit to widespread consultation and co-production with survivors and specialist services. This should include a diverse and wide range of input, which requires allocating sufficient time and resources for participation from smaller 'by and for' services.
- Adopt a flexible approaches to engaging, such as offering to meet out of office hours, to ensure the process is accessible for all survivors.
- Make clear how complaints can be made by survivors and other stakeholders.

The Home Office violence against women and girls (VAWG) commissioning toolkit is a useful tool setting out best practice for strategies.

## Setting up a local partnership board

Authorities are required to appoint a domestic abuse local partnership board which they must, by law, consult on exercising their Part 4 duties. To ensure local boards create an equitable partnership that reflects the needs of survivors in the local area, councils should:

- Ensure that survivors, who are experts by experience, are centred in board decisions. Careful consideration should be given to survivor engagement to ensure it's safe and meaningful.
- Convene frequent meetings and employ flexible mechanisms that allow a broad range of input. Voluntary services should be resourced for their time on the board.
- Consider how wider provisions in the Act help to form a coordinated multi-agency response to domestic abuse. For instance, how can the duty to give survivors 'priority need' for social housing improve survivors' pathways to 'move-on' from refuge?

Councils are required to include **at least one** person to represent interests of each of these groups:



## Commissioning domestic abuse services

The 'do's'	The 'don'ts'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioning doesn't always mean procurement - consider alternatives including grant funding for specialist services.</li> <li>• Support migrant victims and women with no recourse to public funds.</li> <li>• Commission on a long-term basis to allow services to encourage sustainable service provision.</li> <li>• Support services with limited capacity to get quality standards accreditation.</li> <li>• Recognise the diversity of organisations in size, financing, and bid-writing experience and ensure there is enough time for all services to engage in the tender process.</li> <li>• Ensure your Board is represented by specialist and 'by and for' domestic abuse services, including non-commissioned organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt a 'one size fits all' approach to provision e.g. offering a single contract for all support services across the authority.</li> <li>• Commission privately owned accommodation.</li> <li>• Fund services not tied to accommodation e.g. commissioned outreach support must be delivered by a refuge service.</li> <li>• Commission services that cannot evidence their expertise in domestic abuse. Brand new services are unlikely to have the technical skills and understanding needed to safely support survivors. Poor quality provision costs the council more in the long-term.</li> <li>• Commission services without sector-recognised quality standards.</li> </ul>

**Specialist women's domestic abuse services are specifically designed to support survivors** - their core business is to help women and children impacted by abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG).

Please contact Isabella Lowenthal-Isaacs at [i.lowenthal-isaacs@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:i.lowenthal-isaacs@womensaid.org.uk) for support with your needs assessment and other Part 4 duties.