

Appendix 2 - Comments from Survey (free text)

Q1- You are responding as ?
golden key
Drug and alcohol worker - charity sector
Probation Officer working in field managing victims of DV
I know someone who has been through DV
Primary school Pastoral Lead (child protection and safeguarding)
Researcher into domestic abuse who has written 2 books on the subject and currently works for the university of bristol
Someone who has been exposed to domestic violence since birth.
Health Visitor
Supporter of the ACORN campaign
Bristol Zero Tolerance is a Bristol Women's Commission initiative run by Bristol Women's Voice and funded by Public Health as prevention work. The aim of the project is to work towards Bristol becoming a city free from gender-based violence, abuse, harassment and exploitation.
Bristol Women's Voice is a powerful voice for women aiming to make women's equality in Bristol a reality. We make sure that when key decisions are taken in Bristol, women's voices have been listened to and their ideas and concerns acted upon. We bring together women to share ideas, exchange experiences, support campaigns and events and celebrate success so that together we can make Bristol a showcase for women's involvement, empowerment and equality.

Q2 Do you agree with these aims?
Not all victims of abuse want to move, how can victims be made to feel safe and feel supported in their current homes if they want to stay
Vitally important to provide safe, secure space for people fleeing abuse. I support this key need.
Although the Safe Lives definition of high risk is 14+ ticks on the Risk Indicator checklist, therefore those DV victims discussed at pre-MARAC should also have the same means to access priority banding - just because they aren't discussed at main MARAC meeting, does not mean they are not high risk
Full negotiation/representation from IDVA/ISVA.IDSVA essential to determine risk & most importantly what the survivor wants - i.e not all victims want to move home

Whilst the aims of the policy are admirable it lacks an overarching aim of ensuring victims of DV remain within their home environment and a vision that it is perpetrators who will be removed from the situation. It seems a missed opportunity to address the continuing unfairness of victims being the ones to have their world turned upside down.
There will be a need for a clear criteria as to high risk victims. What criteria will MARAC use?
With support from a support worker
We should be aiming to significantly reduce the time it takes to rehouse all victims, not jut those at high risk and especially those with children.
Although I think there are equitable risks for other cases, particularly for residents affected by hate crime
I think all safe house residents should be given Band 1 priority.
I think all domestic violence victims are high risk. As someone whose mother has been a victim of this for over 25 years and has never left because she felt there was no support, there needs to be as much support available right from the start. The longer someone is subject to such relationships, the more vulnerable (and mentally unwell) they may become, thus making them unable to live life away from the household. This may be due to financial reasons, trying to maintain their pride, not being able to take pets with them, not actually wanting to leave their home, lack of employability, lack of self worth or just general dependence on the abuser, just to name a few.
'Significantly reduce' is not good enough when women are at such high risk
<p>I do not think the original campaign was to significantly reduce the amount of time taken to rehouse "high risk" victims of domestic abuse. Rather, the aim should be to significantly reduce the amount of time taken to rehouse victims of domestic abuse once they have made the decision to leave their abusive situation. This is because:</p> <p>1) Taking the decision to leave can come at any point in what is sometimes a process that will take years, and it takes multi-agency working to support the victim and to ensure that all the measures (including safety planning) are in place. A decision to leave will often be thought through carefully and will take into account the school year where there are dependent children involved, and so on. It may be time critical for a variety of reasons. Not all victims will require rehousing from a refuge/safe house. Some will prefer to be rehoused directly from their current home.</p> <p>2) "High Risk" of death or injury should not be a criterion. Emotional abuse and financial abuse are human rights abuses and every citizen and child who is being abused in their home deserves to be rehoused swiftly.</p> <p>3) As the recent report for Standing Together clearly shows (http://www.standingtogether.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/STADV_DHR_Report_Final.pdf) most victims of domestic homicide were in any case not classed as "high risk" by MARAC and those that were assessed were almost all assessed as medium or 'standard' risk. MARAC is a tool which is not perfect and which does not perfectly protect all victims from violence.</p>
Third statement should be present which commits Bristol to providing an example at a national level regarding best practice in DV, and which underlines that Bristol will not accept a nationally handed-down status quo which harms women and children most at risk.

We need to do better than this.

But this should not just be focused on 'high risk' survivors, all women in refuges and safe houses should be rehomed as quickly as possible. This could be achieved by giving women band 1 priority housing and generally increasing the amount of social housing available in the city.

While there is nothing inherently wrong the aims, victims of domestic abuse (DA), whether they apply through the homelessness or rehousing routes, are already given a high priority for the purposes of HomeChoice Bristol (HCB). I do not feel that sufficient consideration has been given to whether it is necessary to further elevate the HCB priority of DA victims above that of other homeless households who are also in that position through no fault of their own. The HCB criteria already allow for exceptional cases, whether DA victims or otherwise, to be given additional priority if this is considered appropriate. Additionally, because in most cases DA victims are not required to prove that violence or abuse has actually occurred, there is the potential for misuse of the system. Once it becomes public knowledge that DA is a quick route into the highest priority band on HCB, there is clear scope for people to falsely claim that they have been victims of DA in order to obtain this priority. I do not suggest that the majority of those claiming to be victims of DA are likely to do so falsely, but clearly in the current housing climate, it would be naïve not to consider the likelihood of this occurring in a minority of cases. I am aware that the campaign to give DA victims greater priority originated on social media and, while I have no doubt that it was well intentioned on the part of the person who started it, I do not feel that it is a policy which the Council should adopt without first giving full consideration to any unintended consequences which may result from its implementation.

As a male victim I was not picked up via MARAC

The percentage rate from MARAC does not meet national standards of victims proportionate to gender.

ONS data shows one in three survivors are men.

MARAC works with a gender biased slant.

Equality Legislation requires the Council to be more inclusive than this.

At no point do you say that high risk victims will receive priority which is surely the whole point of the policy. Reducing the length of time is meaningless without that assurance.

Prioritising one group over others at a time of severe [increasing] housing shortage, simply shifts the burden of the crisis to other [less 'powerful'/'attractive'] groups. When there is so little housing to go around; any restriction on treating each case on its merits will simply move the risk to other high risk households.

Of course the risk of domestic abuse must be addressed; but this policy does not identify who will lose out in the rationing process, and without that information it is impossible to support this initiative

Ideally extend the policy to include vulnerable women who could be "at risk" due to their fragile mental health. Prevention is always better

than cure. Within the framework of the NHS things move too slowly for the majority of people who need support. People are not seen as "at risk" until they have self-harmed or attempted to end their life.

Forward to the 19 century when workhouse provision was allocated to the deserving poor as against the undeserving poor.(Current government policy) Now we propose the deserving victims of domestic violence and abuse to the undeserving.

Q3 Do you feel the policy will achieve these aims?

It will always come down to having all the information and the ability to make a professional, informed, qualitative judgement. Lack of experience training or overly large caseloads loads impact significantly on this. The policy in action needs to be followed up regularly To establish whether it is working.

It needs to be backed up with long term sustainable funding that allows the services to plan and resource helping survivors of abuse dealing with the trauma and enable them to rebuild their lives

I feel it is a start in addressing these problems. A small step in the right direction.

The policy is only going to be implemented for only those survivors with a MARAC in place. As it is highly evidenced, people who experience domestic abuse do not necessarily access the services that would be involved in the MARAC process. Only 10% of cases will have a MARAC provision in place, so is far too small a field of use for this proposal. I will not reduce the amount of time spent within Safe Houses therefore not enabling Safe House spaces are available for those in need as quickly.

The petition and motion mentioned in your reasons for this consultation were to place all survivors in Band 1. The key emphasis of this was ensuring ALL who enter a Safe House in Bristol would be in Band 1, not just the very small percentage who have the MARAC in place.

It will depend on the number of cases that will achieve Band 1 and the amount of properties that meet the needs of this group of people. The more people that will be in band 1 will increase the waiting time of all those in band 1

Obviously the total number of housing available is still an issue

Does the council "that the level of risk for victims of domestic abuse varies greatly" could also mean certain cases of severe abuse might be seen as a snapshot, and thus categorised as minor/not major?

These aims are dependent on more than just the priority bands of the victims of DV. There needs to be more done to support them in the bidding process. It is also unlikely this will increase the availability of safe houses and refuges as these fulfil a very different role to the possibility of a council property 3 months down the line and require resources to be able to continue to offer availability which are not covered by this proposal.

It will depend upon the availability of housing. This will need to be available in areas which are safe for victims/families of domestic abuse, and

may need to be in a part of Bristol that is specific, due to need to be away from the perpetrator, and my concern is how this will be achievable
There simply are not enough homes in Bristol !

From my experience, there seems to be an unrealistic expectation on the type of stock is available via social housing so some victims are not actively bidding as they are waiting on the ideal property so this would need to be closely monitored through HCB

There needs to be a balance - as a MARAC representative and sometimes Chair I recognise that there is a need for additional action in some of the highest risk cases, and that it is not viable or necessary to issue band 1 for all instances of DVA.

I'm uneasy with pinning the success of the policy on MARAC when no independent evaluation of the forum's effectiveness has taken place and with the lack of internal monitoring by the MARAC over the effectiveness of the agreed actions for individual cases

So long as cases are monitored to ensure that bids are made and rehousing takes place within a specific time

Evidence needed.

Although there is a clear draft policy, it is not yet clear that MARAC arrangements will ensure the safe rehousing of domestic abuse survivors in bands 1 and 2 of HCB, partly because the policy has not yet been tested against the (limited) availability of social housing in Bristol, bearing in mind housing types and locations that may be safe for relevant survivors and their families.

Not without more investment in building homes for people on the housing waiting list, there are many other groups who are also at high risk and vulnerable with mental health and disability issues too.

Having women stay in refuge for long period of time blocks up space for other victims needing a safe environment to come to. In addition, women need intensive support when they first come into refuge and then they start to move forward. Unfortunately, however, their emotional health begins to deteriorate once more after six months and continues to decline the longer they remain in refuge living in one room with their family becomes extremely stressful affecting routines for children. Children look forward to moving into a more secure environment and we notice that they also become stressed living in a temporary environment.

The policy may have the intentions to reduce the length of waits and availability of refuges but this doesn't recognise shortage of social housing and refuge spaces.

There are a number of current weaknesses in banding decisions for DV.

The process of confirming the genuine existence of DV and classing it as 'high risk' needs to be extremely robust for a number of reasons.

1.) A number of people present as homeless to BCC stating they are victims of DV with no corroborating evidence. Some of these claims are in fact made dishonestly, in some cases to try and gain a Band 2. Granting Band 1 will inevitably encourage more people to claim DV dishonestly or contrive situations. This will have a negative impact on the many genuine cases as well as the other people in significant housing need who are in Band 2.

2.) DV services in Bristol are not always robust enough in their corroboration of DV. Stating that someone is 'high risk' and in need of a Band 1 needs to be extremely well documented and supported by the police, social services, etc.

3.) In the world of housing 'word gets around'. Implementing a new policy that is not robust or reserved for the most high risk cases will leave housing staff open to increased homelessness applications based on DV which is clearly not the intention.

4.) The nature of DV means that victims often return to the perpetrator. There should be a contractual clause stating that an historic perpetrator should not be allowed to reside in any property agreed under Band 1. Otherwise BCC is essentially rewarding DV perpetrators and setting victims up for further homelessness applications in the future. If Band 1 is granted because of the behaviour of an individual, that individual should by rights be excluded from benefiting from the outcome.

I believe that there should be a definite commitment to the most high risk cases being awarded a Band 1. Low risk DV cases should remain in Band 2 alongside other households in comparable need.

I have concerns about using MARAC as a way to determine priority. On average, only 1 in 10 of the most high risk survivors of domestic abuse have a MARAC in place. Furthermore, employing multi agency risk assessment conferences is a managerialist approach to personal crisis that is unlikely to reduce delays in moving on survivors from refuge and increasing the availability of refuge places.

At no point does the policy address move on from Safe House/Refuge provision at all.

I consider initiatives such as MARAC (multi agency risk assessment conference) to be very costly and that the funding taken up employing a whole range of professionals in this decision-making process could be better spent if decisions could be allocated to two or three responsible professionals or individuals who have the time to really unravel the needs of women who seek housing support because of the abuse they've experienced. The issue here is one of trust - trusting that a few well chosen individuals can arrive at sound decisions. I believe in the principle of 'need' rather than 'risk' because it is in the area of 'need' that preventative measures can be introduced. The concept of 'need' is based on the views of the women who suffer violence whereas allocating resources according to 'risk' tends to be based on professionals' decisions - and often involves comparing one form of 'risk' situation with another but where prediction is inevitably very difficult and often subjective but masked in the language of so-called 'evidence'.

More can be done in co-operation with other services to prevent a band 1 application after three months being reverted into band 2. Re-housing isn't necessarily the best/ only option. Special requirements within an application may suggest more people (i.e. children) or a more vulnerable person may be at risk within those households.

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 2. The policy does not address move-on from safe house/refuge provision

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A MARAC (multi agency risk assessment conference) is a meeting where information is shared and decisions are made on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), probation and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. The DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence) risk assessment is completed by individual agencies, which then determines which cases get considered by MARAC.

The proposal is that only women who are engaged with a MARAC are moved into housing Band 1.

Would it not be best for all high risk to be placed in band 1?

There needs to be more funding put into this to allow appropriate training and action to be taken

This change in policy does little in the way of securing more social housing to meet the ever growing housing crisis the city is facing. These women are fleeing horrendous situations and we need to prioritise building more social housing in the city to tackle this issue. The proposal does not acknowledge that many women are not engaged with a MARAC and as a result they would not be moved into housing Band 1.

But see my comments on 1)

Only using MARAC will not ensure the move-on times are quicker for all those in refuge

The policy does not address move-on from safe house/refuge provision

I am not convinced that the policy will achieve what is needed within the current funding reality, and without significant pressure applied to the Govt.

I don't see a clear statement promising more safe houses to be provided for victims and children within the family.

I think this is the first step in resolving the issue of the effects of DV on both parties and children.

I am shocked to find out there are no safe houses for women and children in Bristol city. A victim is asked to leave the city boundaries. You can apply from outside for housing in this situation, but surely you will be coerced to apply to near you temporary address away from your friends and support systems?

I am a survivor and happy to have had an excellent experience at Dean crescent Hostel Bedminster.

The policy says that even if a household urgently needs to move due to abuse and significant risk of harm they still only get band 2. Decisions are also based on a victim's case being agreed at MARAC, which only around 10% of people get.

I hope so. I know women who have been told by CURO workers in Bath that they have made themselves "intentionally homeless" by leaving their housing when trying to leave abusive partners, and therefore not been given any priority in further housing. This runs counter to stated

policy, yet is happening. So the policy will only be as good as the staff who implement it. Staff training is essential alongside a good policy in the first place!

I believe the policy as set out above will achieve its stated aims, but as I explained above, I am not convinced that automatically giving further priority to DA victims is necessarily desirable in the current housing climate.

Because MARAC discriminates see above

Repeat above.

1. Only using MARAC will not ensure the move-on times are quicker for all those in refuge
2. The policy does not address move-on from safe house/refuge provision

For the reasons above, and if implemented the inevitable corollary that others will be placed more at risk. The focus of the Council's efforts should be on increasing the supply of accommodation; not more complex rationing processes.

This proposal does not go far enough to prioritise housing for women, and their families, who have experienced domestic abuse and are living in refuge provision. The Council motion which gained cross-party support at the Council meeting in March 2016 and was passed with full support from the Council members and the Mayor, pledged that all those fleeing domestic abuse in Bristol would be in Band 1 in terms of housing priority. This policy does not reflect this decision and will not ensure that those in this position receive housing priority.

The policy also does not specifically address move-on from safe house/refuge provision and the issue of 'bed blocking' which was the original aim of the Council motion.

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The policy also does not specifically address move-on from safe house/refuge provision and the issue of 'bed blocking' which was the original aim of the Council motion.

The policy is only as good as the staff who monitor and implement the policy.

Do you have any further comments about the role of Marac?

There are no time frames in this policy or in how the committee works. The client is also not directly involved. Could a video link be set up to address this?

In cases of domestic abuse HBV the need to move quickly is essential and saves lives

Marac should also look into making moves safer when victims can't or don't want to move

Important that recommendations from Marac are implemented and resourced

I think the MARAC recommendations are vital and key in relation to safe and secure move on for people fleeing domestic abuse.

However.. I think using this over a DASH report is not going to be effective. It is evidenced nationally that victims of domestic abuse do not engage with police/criminal justice/social services. Many enter Refuge's with no prior contact at all and not wanting to report. The DASH 'score' assesses risk and need for safe accommodation. The initial petition was for all survivors within safe houses to be Band 1. Using the DASH score would be a much more appropriate and effective level. Meaning local domestic abuse service providers can directly be the recommending agency without women feeling pressured into legal system or other involvement.

The whole point of this is to ensure safe house spaces are used appropriately, providing the support and emergency housing women and their children need. To provide an appropriate move on time to ensure others in need can access services and are not left in danger.

If it's not safe as the perpetrator lives in the same city you should be able to apply to local councils in the surrounding areas.

If you are extremely limited in what areas you can bid on because the perpetrator is around a lot of the areas of the city that person should go higher in the list than someone who can bid on lots of areas in the city as they aren't as limited and would move on a lot quicker.

This could include the type of property that they are being offered,

Final say should still be down to HCB re: banding - Band 1 recommendations only in cases with significant evidence and support from police / other agencies and no alternative accommodation available, ie: safe house.

As a social worker (adults) I haven't always been invited to marac meetings in the past (managers from dept attending instead) - it should be ensured that people with relevant knowledge are able to attend and/or be included

- to comment on the ability of the victim/ reporter to maintain a general needs tenancy

- to comment on the ability of the victim/ reporter to be able to use the bidding system and place appropriate bids

MARAC is a process not a meeting, therefore, the victim does not need to be physically discussed at a MARAC for an action in relation to housing being considered. For example, a housing letter can be written by a MARAC Coordinator ahead of a meeting if thought to be appropriate.

In relation to Q.4 & 5, if MARAC are recommending a Band 1, the location and suitability could be imperative to ensure the on-going safety of the victim.

That the conditions people are moved into fit their needs. I.e. children have their own space, not ask sharing one room for example I.

Re enforcing the housing teams duty in the safe guarding of children and that they need to be part of this process when requested by partner agencies such as health and social care.

The Marac route in theory should help the victim. However through personal experience i have found the Marac team need to work alot more closely together with one person being accounted for. This will allow the victim to not go from pillar to post considering the stress anxiety and fear they are already going through. I found Marac has failed miserably with my sister and not until I got the MP involved did any authority listen seriously. A more robust approach needs to be taken

Would there always be a professional from a housing perspective at every MARAC meeting?

MARAC & those high risk victims discussed at pre-MARAC

I feel negotiation with IDVA/ISVA/IDSVA more necessary - those attending MARAC may not know any depth of knowledge about each case
MARAC in Bristol has excellent multi agency representation, including housing - it is the best forum to accurately assess risk of DVA for our highest risk victims and enables proposal of creative solutions to the many issues that they face.

As stated in previous answer - I'm uneasy with the MARAC making this decision due to there being no evaluation/monitoring of the effectiveness of its risk management of cases.

When there are children/young people involved it may be worth looking at changing their school. It may not be safe for the children to carry on going to the same school especially if this was really close to their previous address and might mean they may come across the person/people perpetrating the abuse, or relatives and friends that may inform the perpetrator(s). It's a difficult decision to disrupt children's education especially when they're already going through difficult times living in emergency accommodation, but I think their safety should be priority. Obviously each case would need to be looked at individually.

The case will be heard at marac only if the risk assessment triggers it.

Emotional abuse and coercion which is also considered domestic abuse, would not meet the threshold for marac.

There should be some other ways of making recommendations and decisions than MARAC.

Victims are not invited to marac panels, therefore their wishes will not be heard and the decisions will be made for them, rather than with them.

But need to ensure that rehousing is seen as fair to all - for example there is no unnecessary betterment.

Although MARAC would be a useful forum for some women to be recommended for band 1, I feel that this should be extended to all women who are in refuge. Not all women who use refuge are referred to MARAC, meaning they would be excluded from this priority. However, the longer a woman and her children are in refuge, the more detrimental it becomes to her recovery and moving on. Many women in our refuges suffer from depression and the longer they are in refuge the more they doubt they made the right decision to leave. This makes them and their children vulnerable to returning to an abusive relationship, or their mental health deteriorating further.

marac is a very helpful tool to diminish risk when used correctly... I think prioritising women who are at risk of DV to move quickly is absolutely the way forward through marac and clear discussions with housing professionals and others

A concern is that there may be domestic abuse survivors who's cases are not referred to / known to MARAC.

Due to the nature of domestic abuse and the urgency of rehousing needs two meetings per month seems inefficient in terms of decisions being made in a timely fashion.

MARAC isn't the best place as its too process driven and no one ever reviews the actions that were requested to be undertaken to keep a victim safe. If not independent in its role. There needs to be a way to check that each person identified is a high risk case.

Some high risk DVA cases may never go to a MARAC either and once victims know that they need to be reviewed at MARAC they will make sure the agency looking after them push them there as high risk. Which is understandable if someone needs to move.

I think it should be MARAC and Refuge Providers as not all women who are High Risk will be referred to MARAC once they are in refuge so I would like to see Local DV Refuge Agencies can also refer to priority banding..

Band 1 recommendations should be made at MARAC but there are other forums ie. from the IDVA working with the victim who should have a clear understanding of risk.

Band 1 for MARACs victims should not be a given as should be a case by case situation.

Other recommendations regarding housing could be around actions for housing officers and ASB teams.

That banding and bids are offered on a like for like basis and that the banding is not granted to address other housing preferences size of property etc.

Council houses should not be only for more extreme cases but for a victim of violence which are homeless because they had to escape violence for their and their children life

Marac should be able to identify 'high risk' and 'non-high risk' in order to differentiate between the need for Band 2 and band 1.

MARAC is too limiting for ensuring survivors can secure priority housing. They do not necessarily recognise survivors as key experts in their risk assessment and safety needs as research shows they are often excluded from meetings along with the practitioners that support them.

The majority of MARAC referrals are made through criminal justice services. It is highly evidenced DVA survivors (especially those in BME communities, disabled survivors and trans survivors) often do not report this way.

The policy should be able to support all who are in Safe Houses.

I have already said what I think about Marac and similar bodies. I believe that as far as possible the decision-making process needs to be transparent, open and fair - and I do not believe there is value for money having a whole range of expensive professionals meeting together to form a view. I consider this to be too costly and of limited advantage - it strikes me as a defensive reaction on the part of a local authority or group such as Marac to justify decisions and the decision-making process. We know from child protection conferences that 'groupthink' can operate to interfere with sound decision-making because professionals can too easily comply with the voice that carries the greatest authority.

I just think it's disgusting that an organisation can make a decision on how dangerous a household is. No one can truly witness what goes on behind closed doors and no one should make judgement on what case is more severe or not. All cases should be dealt with the same. Someone should be able to be rehoused to prevent the inevitable increasing of the severity of the situations.

Many survivors do not go through MARAC. People who experience domestic abuse often don't access the services (e.g. the police) who undertake the MARAC process. This is particularly true for women of colour, LGBTQ women and disabled women. (Bristol Gov, 2015 & Safe Lives, 2014)

When women are in a refuge they can bid on Council housing that becomes available. This should exclude areas of Bristol where they might be at risk and they should not be penalised for not bidding on houses in areas where they might be at risk.

1. MARAC is too limiting for identifying priority in housing
2. Survivors are the key expert in their risk assessment and safety needs
3. MARAC should not form the basis of who gets referred for priority housing banding – the policy should address ALL women in safe houses
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I think perhaps there are women who do not go through Marac?

MARAC is great but it is excluding many women. Many BAMER victims slip through the net. Some of the most vulnerable are the least heard. This needs to be addressed immediately

MARAC is too limiting for identifying priority in housing as not everyone goes through this system.

Survivors are obviously the key experts in their risk assessment and safety needs as they have directly been through their situation. MARAC should not form the basis of who gets referred for priority housing banding – the policy should address ALL women in safe houses.

See my response to 1)

MARAC is too limiting for identifying priority in housing

Survivors are the key expert in their risk assessment and safety needs

MARAC should not form the basis of who gets referred for priority housing banding – the policy should address ALL women in safe houses

Marac should also make recommendations about the safety measures that should be put in place (ex: new locks, CCTV, etc.)

However, it is to be noted that not all cases go to MARAC who could benefit from priority band 1 housing

Stop penalising the victim. Ban the perpetrator from areas!

Advocates should be present. GPs and other professionals should be given sufficient funding and capacity to attend. MARAC does not work if the GP is too busy to go to it. The health and social care system is exactly that - a system, which relies on good integration and proper funding from the Govt.

I don't believe that Missing Link is a strong enough agency to be doing this job. This is also what I have heard experienced by support workers in the homeless housing agencies in Bristol.

I have first hand experience of ML as a service user and I found staff negligent, subjective, and over stressed by in house ego politics which is the general consensus of most agencies around them. They are difficult for male support workers to work with for example.

Objectively coming from a non drug and alcohol background, I find their criteria for women to be worked with over harsh and patronising. It is so common and understandable that women drink in DV situations just to cope and I feel it's a throw back to a 1960's mentality of 'it only happens to women like that!'. I was actually told on the quiet to say I was T total when I applied which made things a lot easier. So next links criteria is to be 'dry' for 3 months from drug or alcohol use before being accepted into a hostel. So what do women do? Sleep on the streets / return to offender?

I know there is evidence that women return to an abuser but I have never known the safety and assurance that I experienced at Dean Crescent. I rested and I have held onto my tenancy for 14 years. I think it's not trusting or giving women the right to their own use of intellect and support to cap there means to support. There are flaws and gaps in this system and it's barbaric and inhumane. Years ago I experienced judgement from the police for experiencing DV. I feel these judgements have not been reassessed in housing support. Where is the statistical evidence that women return or don't stay within a tenancy? Women are more independent now especially younger women.. Things take time once out of immediate abuse and I think all victims should be band 1 even if the waiting list stretches by 3-6 months. That's nothing when you're in a bad situation but it's purgatory when you're in and even worse one resulting in self harm, suicide or neglect! To quote 'to enable (victims) to remain in the home is contradictory in itself? We should all know the stress or lies of a bully or abuser. Would anyone like to be made to live with that by law? Waiting?

Surely it would be cheaper giving women and children a place in a secured hostel environment rather than long-term sub standard bedsit rentals paying full HB. Having staff to work on cases in the environment of safety could be in the long run quicker for re housing. It took me ages to open up to staff. I was there 3 months in 2002? I think they should be trained in MARAC. they can far see the reality of whether a

person is ready for a tenancy. You might as well pay HB to the hostel?

I do think if the policy change happens that the time to find a place on band one is cutting it fine . I think at least four months or to be kind six months. The stress of someone to find a place is immense anyway but the clock ticking while sometimes there is nothing on the website would be terrifying. I also think the victim should tick a box to say ' they would consider' the locality where they have been in danger. That means if a place came up they would have to bid for it. I think it should be suggested as an option but there choice.

Only 10% of survivors get MARAC. There is also evidence to show that BME women and other marginalised groups are under-represented in MARAC.

ensuring police and community safety officials take steps or make sure housing providers take steps to ensure house is as safe as possible, lighting, locks etc.

Yes. MARAC is prone to fall foul when cases of high risk have no previous history.

Such cases tend to be instinctive not reasoned and often happen prior to being heard within a magistrates court. The emphasis on the gender of the alleged victim does not comply with current legislation nor police practise.

A genderfree approach which encourages all victims and supports child protection is vital.

It should be implicit in any re-housing that the abuser does not have any access to the location.

1. MARAC is too limiting for identifying priority in housing
2. Survivors are the key expert in their risk assessment and safety needs
3. MARAC should not form the basis of who gets referred for priority housing banding – the policy should address ALL women in safe houses

Marac cannot see the full range of housing needs being presented to the Council at any one time - it will therefore, inevitably 'over' allocate Band 1 Recommendations linked to domestic abuse.

Focusing only on those women who are engaged in a MARAC and using this as an assessment process to determine which women go into Band 1 priority for social housing, means that the majority of women and children will be excluded. Many women do not go through MARAC and those who experience domestic abuse often don't access the services (e.g. the police) (1) who undertake the MARAC process.(2) This is particularly true for women of colour, LGBTQ women and disabled women. Therefore, only using this process will not ensure that move-on times are quicker for those in refuge as the numbers of women moved into Band 1 will be minimal. The Council estimate that "between 25-50 households each year, which currently go into Band 2, will go into Band 1 instead" but with only 36 safe house bed spaces in Bristol this will not have a huge impact.

Research(3) shows that most victims of domestic homicide were not classed as 'high risk' by MARAC and those that were assessed were almost all assessed as 'medium' or 'standard' risk. MARAC is a tool which is not perfect and which does not perfectly protect all victims from

violence therefore using the concept of 'high risk' of death or injury should not be used as the only criteria for support. Emotional and financial abuse are also human rights abuses and are included in the Government definition of domestic abuse(4) alongside controlling and coercive behaviour. Everyone who is being abused in their home and needs to leave deserves to be rehoused swiftly.

Survivors are the key experts in understanding the risk to themselves and their children and what their safety needs are. Taking the decision to leave can come at any point in what is sometimes a process that will take years, and it takes multi-agency working to support the survivor and to ensure that all the measures (including safety planning) are in place. A decision to leave will often be thought through carefully and will take into account the school year where there are dependent children involved, for example. Therefore, it may be time critical for a variety of reasons. By devolving the responsibility for this to an external body through the MARAC survivors have no voice in making these decisions that impact on their lives and are not able to make themselves and their families safe in an appropriate way.

This policy does not address the needs of all women in safe houses and refuge provision. The council argues that prioritising too many people "would negatively impact on waiting times for other high priority cases", however there are a limited number of safe house bed spaces in Bristol and many women in refuge provision have to wait up to 12 months before they are re-housed which is not enabling other women to take up these limited places. This highlights the lack of social housing in the city, where the most vulnerable are forced to compete for a scarce and substandard housing stock.

We would not want this policy to lead to other vulnerable groups not being prioritised for appropriate housing. For example, the lack of available accessible housing means that disabled people in Band 1 should continue to be prioritised for this type of housing. We therefore suggest that the Council invests in social housing in order to meet the needs of all survivors of domestic violence and other vulnerable groups in Bristol.

(1) Safe Lives., 2014. CAADA Report; Getting it right first time

<http://www.safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Getting%20it%20right%20first%20time%20-%20complete%20report.pdf>

(2) Bristol Government Report., 2015. Violence and Abuse: a strategy against violence and abuse against women and girls and domestic and sexual violence against men 2012 – 2015 <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/32635/Bristol%20VAAWG%20Strategy%202012-15-accessible.pdf/ebcdc333-5c43-47f6-bfb0-1c1c305e535f>

(3) http://www.standingtogether.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/STADV_DHR_Report_Final.pdf

(4) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-violence-and-abuse>

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I don't understand question 4. For question 5 all options need to be considered.

In relation to Q5: Cultural needs and the safety of individuals moving to new communities should also be looked at when considering areas of risk.

Q6. Do you agree that band 1 should be awarded to high risk victims of domestic abuse when all other avenues have been explored and risks cannot be reduced through mitigation?

I feel that if a person is at risk of being abused if they stay where they are they should be given help to move as soon as possible

There has been recent reporting by victims of DV who have injunctions that police are not responding or arresting perpetrators. This is a critical issue that needs to be addressed immediately by local police forces

I think this should go further.. as stated previously. I think all victims of domestic abuse who have been accepted into a Bristol safe house (based on DASH score) should be put into Band 1.

This is of course where Band 1 should be given. It should also be implemented for people without a MARAC assessment but who are living within a Safe House in Bristol.

All people in Safe Houses (who have been risk assessed on the DASH scoring system) should get priority band 1.

As I have said before it is dependant on the number of people in band 1 and do we have the stock requirements that will meet their need.

If they meet criteria for band 1 (very high) then HCB should be monitored to ensure they're bidding regularly. If they're not able to bid themselves because of vulnerabilities etc, how will this be addressed? Will we be doing Direct Offers etc?

Obviously the person involved should be given other choices where possible and be included and central to decision making, but housing priority seems like a necessary part of reducing risks

- I also think that consideration should be given to making direct offers in some cases depending on the circumstances of the individual as

they are clearly at a highly distressing and stressful time in their lives and asking them to bid is placing more stress and uncertainty on them

No question, yes.

Yes and perhaps prior to all avenues being explored.

Mitigation and Band 1 priority should be kept separate - i.e Injunctions are more and more difficult to obtain with a lack of funding (Legal Aid provision) - the victim should not be penalised for not pursuing avenues that are impossible for him/her to achieve

I believe band 1 should be awarded to high risk and medium risk due to reasons I have previously expressed about women being in refuge for long periods of time.

I do accept that there are occasions when it is safe for a women to remain in her own home with additional safety measures being put in place but this would not be sufficient in all cases and most women who come into refuge fit into this category it would not be safe for them to remain in the property even with additional security measures such as TAU or even Skyguards and the only option is to flee the property and move to another area so I believe all women in refuge should be consider Priority.

However I do not think that a banding should be delayed or a victim forced to try these measures before awarding the band.

It should be faster and easier for these people to access band one

This still seems limited - all in Safe Houses should be Band 1

1. This is still limited

2. All women in safe houses should be considered Band 1

1. This is still limited

2. All women in safe houses should be considered Band 1

The need to be less restrictions. This seems problematic. Domestic Violence Survivors need to be awarded band 1 urgently not as a last resort.

This still seems limited, as all women in safe houses should be considered Band 1

This is still limited

All women in safe houses should be considered Band 1

It is not clear what mitigation would mean in an individuals personal circumstances. I think all women fleeing violence and abuse should have the opportunity to rebuild their lives as quickly as possible - band 1. It is not just women who have already been beaten and abused but their children too. This proposal will benefit only a tiny fraction of women who need help. It also would therefore only have a minor impact on freeing up space in domestic violence refuges, where one in three women are currently turned away. This is a shameful and appalling state of affairs. Are there any stats on how many women/children who are murdered in DV situations have tried to access a refuge and be turned away?

I don't accept that we should be attributing high risk to an ever-decreasing list of people. This creates a scenario in which advocates and other professionals will feel pressured to jump through hoops and perform to get a client into safety. Again, we need to apply pressure nationally to

create a service which keeps all women and children at risk safe.

I can't see mitigation works unless separation

But also to all other women at risk of domestic abuse

Yes, although it should not always have to be the victim who has to move, depending on circumstances. I think the wider community safety of the individual and any children should be looked at case by case regarding need to move

It depends on what is meant by 'high risk'. However, I would suggest that the Allocation Scheme as currently drafted already allows additional priority to be given in appropriate cases without the need for the Scheme to refer to high risk DA victims specifically.

Males invariably do not refer or are referred via MARAC

They often become homeless and suicidal.

Reaching this group should be a priority.

Abusers are extremely clever at coercive control; mitigation would be fruitless in some cases and only increase the level of danger to partner.

1. This is still limited

2. All women in safe houses should be considered Band 1

Without data on who has been housed under Band 1 in the past [numbers; reasons; household composition etc] it is not possible to be certain who will 'lose' from this change in policy - but the likelihood is that people/households with complex medical/support needs will be the main losers, as their needs are not so 'simple' to prioritise as they are not so easy to summarise; compared to the victims of domestic abuse. Evidence for this view is found in the lack of 'special interest' campaigns in their favour.

This is still limited and will not ensure that the majority of women experiencing domestic violence are able to move on safely. We believe that all women in safe houses should be considered Band 1 because of their vulnerability and risks to their safety.

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The city needs to protect women who are unable to protect themselves. Women may not be ready to fully "engage" (question 7).

Award Band 1 to all referred to MARAC.

This seems the wrong way around and waters down the intent of the policy. Fleeing domestic abuse under the category of high risk surely needs immediate action - chiefly a safe house, then rehousing. The desire to FIRST explore all other avenues and mitigation increases the risks and danger for those victims!

The MARAC process should be robust enough to only recommend those for Band 1 who are evidently high risk and in need of urgent rehousing.

Constraining the policy in this way appears to add pressure on the victim at the most vulnerable time and further pressure on agencies working to keep them safe.

Q7 Should there be any conditions attached to awarding band 1

Contact with agencies to ensure support is given to the victim and their family

Engagement with support and minimal bidding (as this is already the case for everyone)!

The three month limit will somewhat exclude the other issue I witnessed.. very rarely people will only bid on houses and not flats available. As much as I understand the preference of a house over other options.. staying in safe house for extended times, blocking that room to the next person in need, seemed very wrong to me.

Taking the responsibility away from Next Link in monitoring this and 'policing it' completely!! They are the support service, they should not have to issue warnings and evictions to people who are not bidding enough etc. That side of things needs to come from the council. So many would not come back and access services again if next link are having to monitor and police homechoice bidding etc.

You should have to bid every week - but every survivor I have met does every week as they are desperate to get out of this situation and move on as it effects your mental health drastically and if there not they aren't in a desperate situation and don't deserve help.

I'm not exactly sure but I think some sort of regular engagement

Bidding requirements including the type of accommodation that that they are bidding on. If they are only bidding on houses they need to be told to bid on flats and maisonettes to ensure that they get a move as quickly as possible.

Regular bidding (ie: for any eligible properties outside of area). I'm not sure if bidding on band 1 is the best method however. If we're acknowledging that the situation is so extreme they have to be moved extremely urgently and are eligible for band 1 according to the proposed policies criteria, would it not be more efficient and faster to do a direct offer? I believe its vital that bidding is checked regularly, ie: weekly. No point doing a review in 3 months only to find that no, or very few bids have been placed as there could be numerous reasons for this. ie: They could be too vulnerable to bid, have no internet access, being prevented from bidding by the perpetrator, no suitable properties advertised... or just being too selective, all of these issues need addressing sooner rather than later.

I think this needs to be done on a case by case basis with the needs of the victim/ reporter being central and an action plan being put in place around the individual as opposed to a blanket policy. For example someone in an entrenched cycle of abuse may benefit from engaging with support or the freedom programme but for someone else this may not be necessary. Also forcing anyone to do anything is not appropriate and their safety should be paramount.

I do think their bidding should be reviewed weekly (and everyone else in band 1) to quickly identify issues and prevent the risk from dragging

on longer.

Bidding regularly

Engaging with statutory and non-statutory agencies;

Appropriate areas;

engagement with support

support with bidding

Engagement with support services

Not sure but should be guide conditions, not fixed as in some cases women are so effected by DV they may not be able to demonstrate engagement esp if struggling with Mental Health and / or substance misuse

A bid should be made at least every 2-4 weeks unless the applicant can show that there were no appropriate properties to bid on.

Appropriateness should allow for size criteria and areas at risk, but not for accommodation type (house, flat, maisonette), landlord (LA/HA) or "preferred" areas

continue to get support from a IDVA

Agreeing to bid. Difficult to make it only applicable if they are engaging with services as there are often complex reasons why they are not.

Engaging with an IDVA

To engage with services to reduce ongoing DV risk

Engage with other agencies

I think the victim should be told that address cannot be disclosed to perp/his or her associates (possibly like living in a refuge) - onus isn't on victim however as perps can go to great lengths to find victims using their network of associates

Condition should be engaging with support and regularly bidding on suitable properties

Continuing to bid.

Perpetrator not to be listed as an occupant at the new address.

Engaging with IDVA service

engaging with support, maintenance of connection to IDVA, agreement to bid regularly.

Accommodation should be similar to the accommodation family are leaving unless there is a need for a different type of larger accommodation due to family size.

Engaging with support

Acceptable behaviour contracts. Contact arrangement contracts. Engagement with appropriate professional services such as early help.

Accepting support from specialised services.

To take up support from a agency or organisation.

Agreement not to tell the perpetrator their address

Conditions could and should vary according to the particular household. It is possible to create a long list of possible conditions: some would be set on a case-by-case basis i.e. for specific households. Others, such as bidding regularly, engaging with relevant support services to increase safety/reduce risk, might be conditions for all households.

Th

I accept that the condition for them to engage in support is important so that they get the support they need after leaving refuge for example Freedom Programme.

Engagement with support services e.g.IDVA, DHI,BDP.

property type - like for like saves time for victim who wait for house

areas where they are safe

That banding and bids are offered on a like for like basis and that the banding is not granted to address other housing preferences

no contact with the perpetrator. Some women will allow the man back hoping the situation will improve. This means she has effectively jumped the queue for improved housing. I have seen this happen. If the perpetrator seeks court agreement for contact, the woman should be supported in court and the situation made clear to the magistrates

Condition that they bid on suitable properties in suitable areas.

Engaging with support

No further or reduced contact with perpetrator

Willingness to work with Police and other agencies

To accept medical advise support and treatment etc

Of course to commit to a behaviour which will not put the person in the same risk...e.g. go back to the person which was been violent

Historic pepetraors of DV towards the applicant should be excluded from residing in any property gained as a result of the Band 1 award. This would stop perpetrators from gaining from their actions and encourage victims not to return to perpetrators.

xxx

Engaging with support and agreeing to bid regularly is already the standard in place.

Engaging with support is very important

Women should remain in Band 1 until a safe new home has been found

this is already a standard in place

The proposal is that Band 1 will be agreed for 3 months. Households are expected to bid on properties on a city wide basis, excluding those areas where they would be at risk, as agreed by MARAC. Our modelling shows that 3 months is enough time in Band 1 for households to make

a successful bid.
Regular bidding. Engagement with IDVA support
They should be encouraged to bid regularly
agreement to work with agencies to maximise chances of safety and rehousing
pls refer to exceptions below
That a women agrees to complete certain tasks, courses, (if necessary) and completes safety planning
Engagement with services, attendance at programmes as deemed necessary (i.e. Freedom Programme).
Engaging with support
Agreement to bid in all areas except where there is an identified risk, and for all types of properties unless clear evidence is provided that a particular property is unsuitable. There should be automatic suspension from HCB where bidding is unduly restrictive or where a suitable offer is refused.
Engagement with support
That police have determined through co investigations the validity the victim. That Victim Support can validate.
To ensure that there is a fair distribution of allocation according to need.
Fulfilling the obligations of their current accommodation agreement [including temporary accommodation agreements]
This is already a standard which is in place and should be continued. However, the conditions should not limit the ability of any survivor of domestic abuse to be placed in Band 1 as a way to house them and their family to make them safe.
This is already a standard which is in place and should be continued. However, the conditions should not limit the ability of any survivor of domestic abuse to be placed in Band 1 as a way to house them and their family to make them safe.
Engagement in necessary support, injunctions, consistent bidding, in areas identified as safe for the individual, no contact with perpetrator
Engaging with support
Engaging with services.
No contact with abuser.
Agreement to work effectively with support
Commitment to bid as required
Engaging with support if safe to do so
to bid in appropriate safe areas to ensure a speedy move
Engaging with support
engaging with support because dv is not just a housing issue and often the same victims keep re-emerging.
Engaging in support and bidding on housing

Don't know

engaging with support

Engaging, regularly bidding

Q10 Please write exceptions or further comments on Limiting time in band 1 here

This is dependent on the numbers in safe houses and access to places across the country. These services are being axed or experiencing significant cuts. In this context putting time limits on band 1 is just another bureaucratic measure to drop victims off the list and reduce impact on services elsewhere. It can't work like this. It has to address all these other issues to be appropriately

So much can change in 3 months, injunctions don't always happen in such a small timeframe especially if the abuser contests allegations and there are several court dates

3 months is a short space of time to deal with the trauma of domestic abuse and be confident enough and feel safe enough to move on.

Consideration should be given to enable survivors to extend the time in consultation with service providers

If council housing stock is able to ensure those bidding effectively can be rehoused within three months this seems reasonable to me.

I don't believe 3 months is long enough I'm in band 2 and have been here for a year and 4 months bidding every week.

That's not a realistic amount of time!!

I don't think only using a MARAC recommendation on excluded areas is appropriate. As previously stated, these are only in place for around 10% of cases as people do not report domestic abuse. With the complexity of domestic abuse being a wide range of abuse such as emotional, physical, financial, coercive control and sexual.. survivors are the best form of risk assessment for their individual needs. Not allowing all survivors to have excluded areas for them to feel safe when moving is a huge problem.

If Band 1 guarantees a move within 3 months then it seems reasonable. However if limitations on area, risk issues etc result in a survivor being unable to bid 'effectively' within that time it should be extended.

There also needs to be provision of support, accessibility for all, translation and guidance to survivors when using the HomeChoice system. Having specialised staff that can assist in using HomeChoice systems and supportive staff within HomeChoice to recognise the vulnerability of this group.

Where there are no properties that meet their specific need advertised in that time scale.

Should be addressed on a case by case basis as there are so many variables in every instance.

3 months ordinarily but perhaps there should be some scope for considering exceptions, due to complexity of the issues involved often

It's too difficult to make hard and fast rules about exceptions because there will always be a new situation and extreme circumstances and these should be assessed on a case by case basis.

I also feel that expecting someone to bid city wide could increase their level of isolation and therefore their level of risk. For example if someone has all their friends and family support in South Bristol and they feel compelled to bid on something in Avonmouth for example this could lead to them being incredibly isolated and more at risk of forming further abusive relationships.

Those suffering from the complexities of trauma may take longer to be ready to make housing decisions

Prison releases, lack of provision within the area, such as appropriate housing, school places

- I feel in areas of high risk domestic abuse that risk to the individual should not be capped by a time limit, if the risk is on going or the threat has not subsided then it seems to be wilful neglect to only give a 3 month period to that victim.

There may be additional factors that prevent someone from bidding that quickly - they may have fled area, be dealing with mental health or substance misuse issues. Need to have individualised and flexible approach

Where preexisting mental or physical health conditions means this time is not sufficient.

The DV victim's circumstances should really be taken into account and the blanket application of a 3 month maximum period seems unreasonable when it is highly likely they would have a number of other priorities in a very difficult situation. The 3 month award would only really be reasonable if it were possible to ensure that the DV victim had a significant amount of support and encouragement to ensure they can use the bidding process and feel supported in making a major step in their lives.

High risk domestic abuse victims are extremely vulnerable, often with many additional needs, and so this needs to be considered more on an individual basis, perhaps through housing and next link liaison.

I do not believe 3 months is sufficient. This is because you are not taking into account the DV victim emotional state. Usually the DV victim has not only have to care for themselves but there are children involved including babies. In this situation 3 months is too short a time for a DV victim. At worst case 6 months time should be given due to children being involved and the vulnerability of the DV victim who has had to adjust to this new change in her life.

The only exception I envisage would be when the applicant has engaged in the rehousing process during the three month period, by bidding regularly, but has been unsuccessful in obtaining a property.

There should be no limit - individuals make their own judgements about where they want to live - they also know that this is a "once in a lifetime" move so must get it right.

To be considered on a case by case basis as some people may have individual circumstances that may impact on their ability/access to bidding.

If for any reasons they have been bidding throughout the 3 months but haven't been successful with getting any properties/ a property hasn't come up in the area they need to bid in (i.e if they need to avoid certain areas in Bristol due to avoiding the perpetrator and their friends and

family).

Where a suitable or safe property has not been found, or mitigating circumstances (court, illness and other things) have prevented things from moving forward

Victims may not have regular access to systems to bid, those that have alcohol/drug misuse issues or other complex needs will need a regular review - I think a designated housing officer should be the one to negotiate with victim as to if bidding is not occurring, why and how this can be achieved?

If the household is large and therefore suitable properties not becoming available as frequently.

Court or criminal proceedings, mental or physical health considerations, needs of children

The prime focus of the policy seems to freeing up capacity rather than supporting victims to build a new life. Change can take time and forcing victims to make a life changing decision in 12 weeks as well as including an expectation 'to bid on properties on a city wide basis', thus limiting geographic choice as to where the victim will rebuild their lives, seems to put the Council's needs before the victim's

Why only 3 months?!

I agree with 3 months as long as they are definitely offered a property in this time. If they are not and they are still in refuge, it seems they would revert back to band 2 and be in the same position as women are in currently.

The Band should be awarded until they are rehomed

when nothing suitable has come up or a review process for them remaining in band 1

Perhaps being able to exercise a little discretion on individual circumstances may apply - can't think of a situation off hand but perhaps someone has been in hospital for some time or not had access to the internet or some other reason...

There may be special circumstances where 3 months may not be long enough....

when the woman is under pressure from other circumstances such as a further pregnancy or facing court proceedings to establish residency or contact. In these situations it can be very difficult to focus on bidding for accommodation due to the emotional strain

suitable housing in a location where the perpetrator of the DA is not connected or present may not always be available. To limit the Band 1 for 3 months means that the situation may not be resolved and Housing only within an area where said perpetrator resides and/or has connections might be the only housing available during this time frame.

Language barriers and technological literacy could delay or inhibit ability to use the only system. It's not clear how survivors will be supported through this process.

It is not clear if and how your modelling takes into account the depleting social housing stock in Bristol, therefore I am concerned that 3 months would not be an adequate time to find suitable accommodation.

Women should remain in Band 1 if it has not been possible to find a new home that is safe and secure

As I said before, there shouldn't be a limit

1. Limitations on areas survivors can bid on to ensure safety could result in it taking longer than 3 months to be successful
2. Accessibility through language barriers/technology barriers etc for many survivors could delay or inhibit their ability to use the online system
3. All women should stay in Band 1 until successfully finding a safe new home

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3. All women should stay in Band 1 until successfully finding a safe new home

3 months is too short when all cases of domestic violence victims have different and complex circumstances.

Extensions should be assessed on a case by case basis

All women should be able to stay in a safe space until they are no longer at risk. There should be not limit on this across the board, but rather looked at on an individual basis.

Limitations on areas survivors can bid on to ensure safety could result in it taking longer than 3 months to be successful

Accessibility through language barriers/technology barriers etc for many survivors could delay or inhibit their ability to use the online system

All women should stay in Band 1 until successfully finding a safe new home

If a women has been unable to bid for a short period of time due to external influences/circumstances

Victims have been through severe trauma and being put under pressure could be detrimental to them. Putting too many stipulations on the process with deter victims from fleeing.

I think it should be four months maybe even six. Not so much pressure, but engage with support a must

Women should remain in band 1 until they have been rehomed

If a very specific area or type of property is required

When a survivor has been unable to get support due to barriers of inclusion.

From personal knowledge through a family member, I know that it can take many months for suitable accommodation in the right area to become available. In some cases, the time limit would be penalising the victim.

1. Limitations on areas survivors can bid on to ensure safety could result in it taking longer than 3 months to be successful
2. Accessibility through language barriers/technology barriers etc for many survivors could delay or inhibit their ability to use the online system
3. All women should stay in Band 1 until successfully finding a safe new home

The policy does not take into account those who do not have access to the internet or may need support with making bids for housing which will impact on many women in refuge.

By limiting it to a three month window to find appropriate housing and penalising those who are unable to find suitable accommodation in this time, this policy disadvantages survivors who have accessibility issues in terms of language barriers and technology barriers such as not having access to the internet. There is a general lack of Internet access in safe houses/refuges and many residents do not have smart phones or laptops. If technology is available many older women or women from certain groups also struggle to use it. Women who do not have English as their first language and/or have poor/low literacy skills will also need support with this process. The Housing Allocation scheme itself is difficult to navigate and women may need support with this and/or arranging access to the internet which will inhibit them from using the online system for bidding which may also delay their opportunity to bid.

There should not be a time limit on being able to access priority housing, all women should stay in Band 1 until they have successfully found a safe new home.

If there are limitations on the areas that survivors can bid for housing in to ensure their safety then this could also result in the bidding process taking longer than three months to be successful and so bed spaces in refuge will still not be available to more women. There is a limited provision of safe house/refuge accommodation in Bristol which does not meet current demand. On average households stay for nine months before they move on even if they feel ready to do this much earlier so the reality of being able to offer suitable accommodation within three months is unlikely.

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When court cases are taking time, benefits claims still going through, perpetrator still attempting to make contact/intimidate.

Although BCC modelling may show 3months is enough, in reality this may not be the case.

I think 3 months is a very short time-frame. Vulnerable women will need support; forms and procedures by their very nature are obstacles for vulnerable people.

In relation to Q8: 3 months may, through modelling, prove to be enough time to make a successful bid. However, 6 months is a more realistic timeframe given that you are dealing with victims of domestic abuse, with or without children.

victims with Learning disabilities, mental health and find it difficult to engage because of safety

Every case and situation is different but when there are clear complex difficulties and the risk is of significant harm, then I do feel that the 3 months will need to be extended

Safe Area's etc

Don't know, get safe

If they are only able to go to a certain area, 3 months is not a sufficient time to get a property-in the north of Bristol especially, which seems to rarely have more than a handful of properties. Where a client has identified they want to be in a certain area for support from networks such as family and friends, this should be taken into consideration rather than MARAC or Housing choosing and playing God. It is also empowering for the individual.

Q13. If you have any further comments about moving on from refuge/safehouse, please write here

This must be a judgement made on a case by case basis.

Refuges and safe houses are temporary and a last resort? So victims should be given time to decide what best suits their needs

As you state.. there is limited provision of safe house rooms available. Everyone in safe house should be in Band 1! This was the whole point of the petition and campaign.

I understand concerns about move on being too quick and reducing support systems and need. However, the current waiting time for

Homechoice applications to be processed is up to 9 weeks. That is two months in to the safe house stay. Then add the average 8 months and you are looking at close to a year.

Safe house is temporary emergency accommodation for those in serious danger with nowhere to go. The support staff are there to work with their clients in that initial crisis point and working towards gaining independence. They do this by setting up support systems and linking clients to outside support and help. They are amazing at what they do! Once you move on from safe house the support doesn't stop. The resettlement team support and continue to support once moved out. Other agencies and help are in place and working with individuals during time in safe house which continues on after.

Three months in Band 1 (plus two months of processing time to get your application approved!) is more than adequate time to have established support needs and sources. Every individual case of course will vary.. and if a client needs longer then the safe house staff can of course advise this to home choice.

There will of course be exceptions where the safety of the individual dictates that a longer stay within a safe house/refuge may be required and of course should be.

However in general terms, safe houses are supposed to be temporary/emergency accommodation where support and services are set up. Initial trauma and life changes are addressed and the person is taken in for their safety. This support does not end once you have left safe house and services are involved in all aspects of safety provision, support and access to other services outside of safe house provision. When someone makes the massively brave decision to leave an abusive environment, and they have no other options than a stay within a refuge or safe house, they are stripped of everything and have to re start their lives. Keeping them for insurmountable amounts of time in the limbo state that being a resident here provides is actually detrimental to their recovery. It is detrimental to the council also as it costs significantly more in resources, housing benefit, provider costs etc. Please read Solace Women's Aid longitudinal research entitled 'Finding the Cost of Freedom'. <http://solacewomensaid.org/press-release-finding-the-costs-of-freedom/>

It is probably better to treat it as the same as priority move on. When they think that they are ready to leave the refuge they should be then placed in Band 1.

It is very hard to answer question 11 as this is subjective to the person in that situation.
support from Domestic Violence staff and protective measures/ safe environment.

Yes - there are a range of other issues that may take longer to resolve, often victims have experienced high level psychological harm that it may take considerably longer for them to plan and make appropriate decisions. They may also need to address other areas first.

Succubus should feel ready to move on. If they feel that they might end up going back to this person or ending up in another abusive relationship they should not move on from a supportive atmosphere.

People need to be supported in the move, and for it to be the right move for them.

I have witnessed this situation personally. Moving into a refuge with children can cause more stress anxiety and alone. Moving single mother with her children into a home will allow the DV victim to learn to become independent and grow confidence within herself to move forward with her children. The children will feel more safe if they are given stability.

Certain cases may require longer stays in supported accommodation. In particular individuals who have been placed in services such as the Complex Needs Safe House, where premature moving to independent living may be counterproductive in terms of safeguarding them in the future.

mental health - possibly those that would prefer more supported living as they have multiple complexities

Mental health and safety issues

I'm not an expert but there may be cases where it might be beneficial for the parent and children to live in a safe house for longer and have intensive support, e.g. parents and children who have severe mental health issues because of the trauma suffered and might benefit from having that period of intensive support.

If person is not moving on, what are the reasons for this? Engaging in support is vital.

A woman should keep her band 1 award even when she moves into a refuge due to concerns previously raised about women being in refuge for long periods of time.

There may be instances where women would benefit from additional support if they move on quickly, but this could be through things such as outreach support if necessary, or support groups such as the Freedom Programme.

The sooner a long term solution is found the better. Refuge can be a difficult place to live.

Support from agencies, time to build their confidence, to get adjusted to their new life.

for some women, 3 months is only long enough to calm down. It can take 6 months before they are ready to move on with a fair chance of successful transition to independent living.. Sending them out earlier is a recipe for them returning, or needing additional support by other agencies. This would not apply to all women, but can be an important factor for others.

It can be difficult for families or victims to move on from safe houses too quickly as it can be the first time they have felt safe, particularly considering the support attached. Different people will require different things.

Where there is still a significant risk from the perpetrator

If the victim is at high risk of returning to the perpetrator then moving on too quickly puts the tenancy at risk of failure, and increases the chance of a future application. It also increases the chance of a perpetrator benefitting from housing awarded to the victim.

Whilst situations do arise where staying longer in a refuge/safe house environment is appropriate, it takes up to 9 weeks for HomeChoice to process new applications, so survivors are likely to spend over two months in the supportive environment of safe house before bidding can begin. Refuge/safe house spaces are limited and classed as emergency accommodation yet many survivors end up staying for over a year. The lack of social housing in Bristol is causing 'bed blocking' in safe house which can result in women and children being turned away.

Given the lack of appropriate provision (through no fault of the council) some flexibility is needed here to ensure the best possible option are on offer. A bigger issue involved campaigning with the government for adequate funding for women and children struggling with the impact of domestic violence.

If mental health isn't strong, it may take those people longer to get themselves prepared for life outside the safe house. If it doesn't work out, they may revert to returning to the partner for dependence.

1. Refuge/safe house spaces are limited so all women should be Band 1
2. It is classed as temporary/emergency accommodation – however many live there for over a year
3. 2/3 women and children are turned away daily as there is no room
4. Women's Aid research shows staying longer than necessary can have serious detrimental effects for survivor's mental health and future
5. Lack of social housing in Bristol is causing 'bed blocking' in safe houses as women who are ready to move on cannot do so
6. Note - It takes up to 9 weeks for Home Choice to process new applications, so that is good couple of months in the supportive environment of safe house before bidding even begins.

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I think it sounds likely that in some cases some would want to stay longer, but others might not.

This is not a yes or no answer again it is a case by case situation. Each case will be complex that needs to be understood.

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It is important for someone to feel safe and learn how to live independently before moving into their own accommodations. If the right measures are not put in place, then she will still be vulnerable, either to the previous abusive partner, or a new partner or friends who may exploit that vulnerability and her property

People should be able to move on and rebuild their lives as soon as possible. 8 months average time means 8 months of having your life on hold. Being stuck in hostel accommodation with a whole family in one room is just extending the suffering of people who have already suffered enough.

You cannot put a timescale on how long a survivor needs supporting.

The support system needs to provide for clients once they move on. Many clients are desperate to move on - but feel there is nothing to empower them to do so.

Drug or alcohol abuse. Violence with the offender around the hostel

I think it is not bad to move on, but it is really important to have support services e.g. peer support and specialist support etc. in place to help integrate and recover. The refuge experience is often very isolating and impacts children a lot

If they have additional support needs

Every case should be treated individually and I agree that in some circumstances a supportive environment has longer-term benefits.

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Refuge/safe house spaces are limited and always in demand, therefore all women in this provision should be in Band 1. On average 2-3 women a day are turned away from refuges because of a lack of bed spaces and spaces are filled immediately because of long waiting lists. Refuge is classed as temporary/emergency accommodation, however many live there for over a year and research from Women's Aid(1) shows that staying longer than necessary can have serious detrimental effects for survivor's mental health and future.

Currently the average time for someone in Bristol bidding in Band 2 for a two bedroom property with Home Choice is nine months even if the

survivor is ready to move on. It also takes up to nine weeks for Home Choice to process new applications, this is potentially over two months in the supportive environment of a safe house before bidding even begins. Therefore, the lack of social housing in Bristol is causing 'bed blocking' in safe houses as women who are ready to move on cannot do so. This policy does not adequately address this issue and will not enable all the women who need to move on to safe accommodation to do so in a timely manner.

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People need to be empowered to live independently, they should receive support in their own homes as quickly as possible rather than becoming dependant on the support of a safe house.

Please need to feel ready to move rather than be forced into another stressful situation.

Important that ongoing support needs are considered and met - perhaps for an agreed time post move on.

The same considerations taken at MARAC should be applied at the move on stage.

I think if someone is suffering from psychological distress and is engaging well with support then moving on too quickly could in some cases hinder their recovery. Some women are totally isolated and may be in a strange city not having the support network needed for positive living

Support from Agency

Q16. Do you have any further comments or suggestions you wish to make about any of the proposals

Evaluate its impact and act to address issues

Providing long term sustainable funding to enable Refuges and safe houses provide the necessary support to survivors of abuse is fundamental to rebuilding lives after escaping domestic abuse.

I am so grateful that this consultation is happening and the council are responding to this need.

However I'm very disappointed in the approach and limited parameters it is using.

This should be a case of considering all in safe houses to be Band 1!

I think the most important thing is to help survivors with children the most as it's so isolating if you have children just like it was with your perpetrator. If I was single with no children I wouldn't have even applied to homechoice and would have moved on with my life.

If you have children there is no where affordable or livable I have looked, women are so trapped in this situation.

It would be interesting to know roughly the numbers in band 1 and an estimate of how many cases would be effected by this decision.

Those who are pregnant or have just given birth may need longer

no

No

Without very significant housebuilding of all tenures this will fail.

I do not believe that all MARAC attendees know about each & every high risk case - reps for agencies change, therefore the IDVA/ISVA/IDSVA should determine /answer questions or alternatively whoever has the best engagement with the client, i.e Golden Key worker

It would be interesting to find out if other LA's have already followed this model and whether it's been successful

I feel very strongly that all women in refuge should be awarded band 1, not just women who are high risk and referred to MARAC. This would help them to move on from their experiences quicker and would mean we could offer more refuge space to other women each year who need refuge from an abusive relationship.

refuge is a temporary solution to a crisis...it is difficult living in refuge and it should only be used when there is no other alternative in my opinion

BCC needs to build more social housing and also take back any stock transferred to housing associations. There is a need to build many more social rental homes and buy back any right to buy homes that come up for sale in Bristol.

DVA is only one group who are vulnerable and a high risk cases.

Just that this proposal is long overdue and will make a big difference to women and children coming into refuge accommodation. It will help to

free up accommodation for new families waiting to come into refuge and allow us to support more women and children flee the abuse.

Support should be made available for victims of domestic violence, this may be a long process and children especially need the support that charities like next link, survive and women's aid provide....

Providing band 1 to a victim should not be as much of a struggle as it currently is. It's unfortunate that it requires several emails to support a change in banding are currently required. This should not be the case and is a fundamental failing in the current re-banding process.

ALL IN SAFE HOUSES/REFUGES SHOULD BE BAND 1 AND USING MARAC WILL NOT ACHIEVE THE POLICY OBJECTIVES.

I'm aware of the massive cuts in funding that the local authority has to face and the failure of this government in this and other areas of social need. I wish everyone well in their efforts to provide fair and just decisions in such a desperate climate

1. ALL THOSE IN REFUGE PROVISION SHOULD BE BAND 1

2. Using the MARAC only does not achieve the policy objectives as stated

3. Majority of MARAC referrals are made through criminal justice services or police services. It is highly evidenced that survivors of domestic violence and abuse (especially those in black and minority ethnic communities, disabled survivors) do not report this way

4. This policy would not ensure safe house services in Bristol could be more effective in helping those needing to flee abuse

The council argues that prioritising too many people "would negatively impact on waiting times for other high priority cases", (though there are only 36 safe house bed spaces in Bristol.) This highlights the lack of social housing in the city, where the most vulnerable are forced to compete for a scarce and substandard housing stock.

The Council must invest in social housing in order to meet the needs of all survivors of domestic violence in Bristol.

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Please take action to implement a policy and take action that actually protects survivors and victims. This is not good enough. Women are in danger, dying, suffering physical and mental health problems and have children they need better support. It is their right!

We really need to start focusing on the issue of housing in a serious way. The council keeps telling us that austerity is necessary - but for who? It is not necessary for the people and we demand social housing for those that need it immediately! This problem is not going away and until we start building more social housing and denying developments that include no social or even the laughable "affordable" housing rates, we will get no where. Please consider the lives that these women lead, and the homeless in this city and start to build more housing!

Again emphasizing – ALL THOSE IN REFUGE PROVISION SHOULD BE BAND 1

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This policy would not ensure safe house services in Bristol could be more effective in helping those needing to flee abuse

Domestic abuse services and their staff should be consulted extensively as to how to best put this proposal into practice

Bristol needs to be brave. Stand up to underfunding. We should not accept current national policy.

Build more safe houses and provide at least a new one for women with children

I hope it makes a positive difference and if so, has an impact on neighbouring councils and housing providers. Best practice should be shared :-)

No.

That adopting a gendered view of housing not in keeping with either equality legislation nor the new policing plan by Avon Somerset police that is fully inclusive.

Those drafting this policy need far better understand the plight of so called invisible or silent survivors. That is men, women abused by women, lgtbq people, disabled and elderly.

Refer to local diverse survivors group genderfreedv.

NO

It is encouraging to see that there are several support systems working together, but in some cases people can fall between the cracks. I trust all cross-referencing is carefully followed through.

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4. This policy would not ensure safe house services in Bristol could be more effective in helping those needing to flee abuse

Following the original Council motion and agreement, all those in refuge provision should be automatically in Band 1 to enable this essential service to be available to more women and their children who need it. The aim should be to significantly reduce the amount of time taken to rehouse survivors of domestic abuse once they have made the decision to leave their abusive situation, rather than limit this to those deemed 'high risk' through the MARAC process.

Using the MARAC process only to decide housing priority does not achieve the policy objectives as stated "to increase the availability of refuge/safe house places so more households can benefit from this safe and supportive environment". This policy would not ensure safe house

services in Bristol could be more effective in helping those needing to flee abuse.

The majority of MARAC referrals are made through criminal justice services or police services. It is highly evidenced that survivors of domestic violence and abuse (especially those in black and minority ethnic communities, disabled and LGBTQ survivors) do not report in this way or engage with this process. Therefore, they will not benefit from this policy although they may be the most vulnerable groups in need of re-housing.

We would also be concerned if the relationship of housing priority to MARAC led to an increase in MARAC referrals in Bristol as this is an already overloaded and underfunded system and would not be able to cope with an increased case load. There is also a danger that this could lead to survivors using the MARAC process as a way to access housing priority by increasing their risk in a bid to be housed more quickly and this would have a disastrous impact on their safety and that of their families.

Therefore, we feel that this policy, although a step in the right direction, does not meet its stated aims, the aims of the agreed Council motion, or the needs of those experiencing domestic violence in Bristol. This policy must feed into wider improvements to social housing provision in the city in order to ensure that the most vulnerable, including those fleeing domestic violence, are being adequately housed and are able to find safety for themselves and their families.

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Stop penalising the homeless and provide enough cheap, social ,supported if necessary, permanent accommodation . Stop giving millions each year to the company that provides temporary accommodation.
