

local authorities should be cautious about bringing domestic abuse services in-house. The Domestic Abuse Commissioner found that confidentiality and independence of services were of critical importance in her survey of victims and survivors. There were particular concerns from victims and survivors around potential for sharing information with social services and the Family Court, with victims and survivors fearing that their children would be removed if they sought help for domestic abuse. This was particularly important for victims and survivors from minoritised communities.

72. Independence from statutory agencies represents a major mechanism for building trust, and so the report recommends local commissioners should only bring services in-house in exceptional circumstances and should inform DLUHC when they do so. Therefore, DLUHC's annual data collection to monitor the domestic abuse support in safe accommodation duties will include a question to ask local authorities whether they have any services in-house, or plan to bring them in-house.

Local residency requirements

73. The Domestic Abuse Commissioner's report also found that residency requirements were attached to accommodation-based services in 30% of services she surveyed. This is concerning. The statutory guidance is clear that needs assessments should consider the number and needs level of victims who need to flee out of the local authority area to access relevant safe accommodation within a different area.

Importance of tailored services for all victims

74. This report has highlighted that while a good start has been made, there is still much more to do to meet the needs of all victims who need safe accommodation. The issues highlighted throughout this report underline the importance of tailored support services. The Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation statutory guidance states clearly that a 'one size fits all' provision available through e.g., offering a single contract for all victim support services across the authority is unlikely to be the right approach. It is critical that authorities continue to consider the needs of all victims, including male victims, female victims, and those from minoritised groups (including because of race, disability, sexual orientation, transgender identity, or other experience of disadvantage). The need for tailored services supporting children should be emphasised and is a point DLUHC are keeping a close eye on. The improved national data will enable better understanding of these needs. Local authorities should ensure their commissioning approach does not exclude smaller voluntary organisations, including 'by and for' services, women-led services, or male-led services.