



DOMESTIC ABUSE SAFE ACCOMMODATION RAPID REVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

v1.6

June 2025



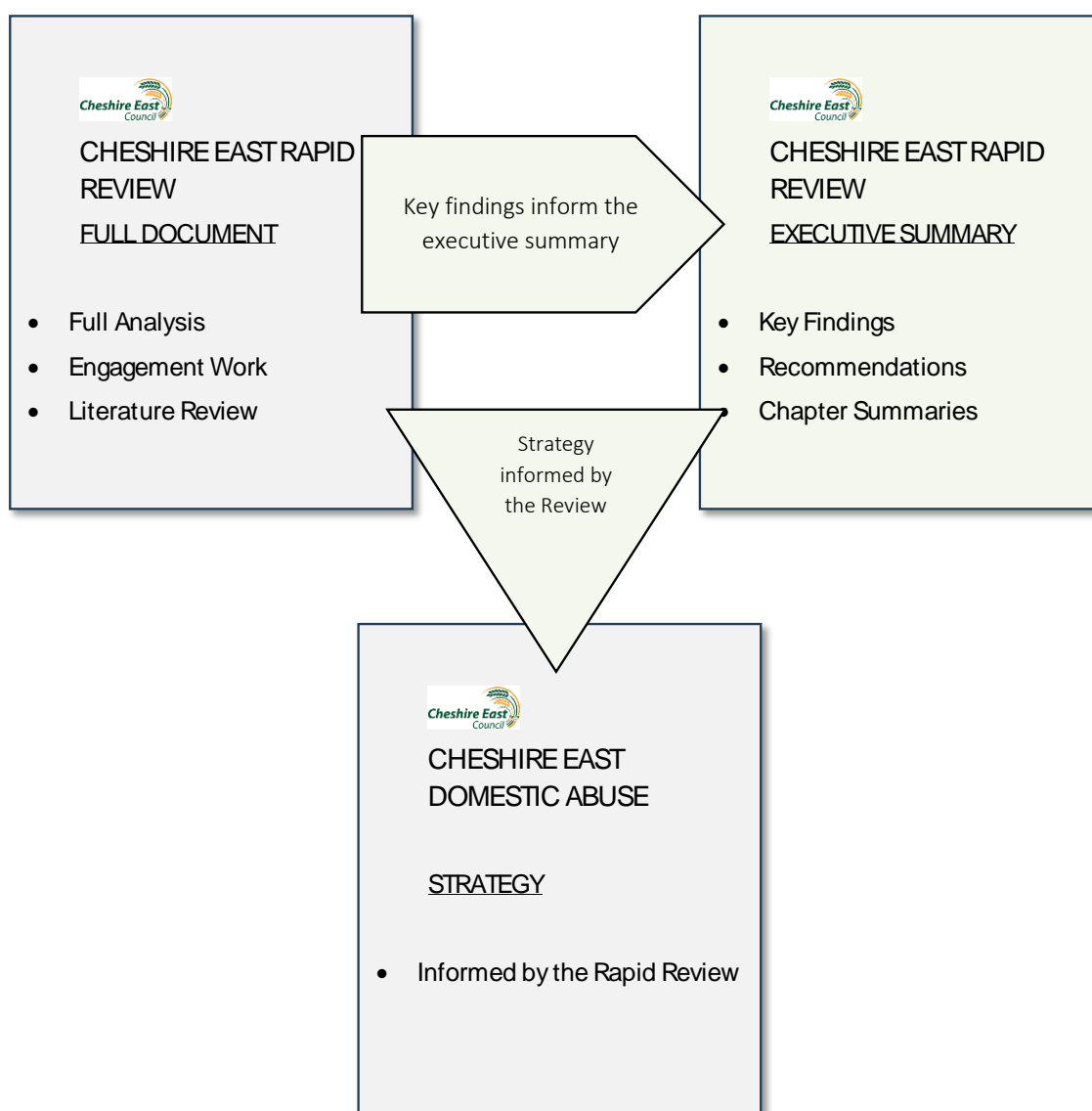
INTRODUCTION

This document provides an Executive Summary of the Rapid Review of Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation in Cheshire East. The assessment meets Cheshire East’s statutory duty under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which requires local authorities to assess the need for, and ensure the provision of, support within safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and their children.

As part of the Rapid Review, we took the opportunity to consider the wider approach to domestic abuse in Cheshire East. However, the recommendations presented here are specifically focused on safe accommodation.




This Executive Summary is a condensed version of the full Rapid Review and contains:

- Recommendations: This chapter provides the key evidence from the Rapid Review and suggested recommendations.
- Key Findings: This chapter provides additional key findings from the Rapid Review.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations arising from the Rapid Review Process are presented in the following format:

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER: <i>[The number of the recommendation]</i>	
TITLE: <i>[Summary of the recommendation]</i>	
	KEY FINDING(S)
<i>[Key finding(s) relating to the recommendation]</i>	
	RELEVANCE TO CHESHIRE EAST
<i>[The impact of the key finding on Cheshire East]</i>	
	RECOMMENDATION
<i>[A detailed description of the recommendation]</i>	

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

REC	PG.	RECOMMENDATION TITLE
1	5	To increase the number of safe accommodation bed spaces.
2	8	To increase the mix of communal/ dispersed refuges.
3	10	To develop the support offered to children and young people in safe accommodation.
4	12	To improve the pathway between Housing Options and the safe accommodation provider.

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER: 1

TITLE: To increase the number of safe accommodation bed spaces



KEY FINDING

FINDING 1 – CHESHIRE EAST CURRENTLY HAS 16 DISPERSED SAFE ACCOMMODATION UNITS

- Using the Council of Europe's minimum recommendation of one space per 10,000 population¹, 41 specialist accommodation spaces are recommended in Cheshire East.
- Currently, Cheshire East commissions 16 bed spaces. The provider recently opened a 6-bed multi-occupancy property specifically designed for 18 to 25-year-olds (not commissioned by Cheshire East), increasing the number of safe accommodation units to 22.
- With the expansion to 22 spaces, there is still a deficit of 19 spaces compared to the recommended 41. This does not account for properties that can be target-hardened.

DISPERSED SAFE ACCOMMODATION

16 dispersed properties for single people and families



SANCTUARY SCHEME

83 properties target hardened (2024/25)



COMMISSIONED SAFE ACCOMMODATION SPACES EXCLUDING THE SANCTUARY SCHEME
16 SPACES

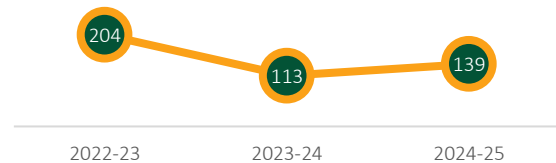
COMMISSIONED SAFE ACCOMMODATION SPACES INCLUDING THE SANCTUARY SCHEME
99 SPACES

RECOMMENDED 41 SPACES

FINDING 2 – 139 HOUSEHOLDS WERE NOT ABLE TO BE SUPPORTED IN THE DISPERSED SAFE ACCOMMODATION PROPERTIES IN 2024-25.

- Provider referral data shows the number of households that were unable to be supported in 2022-23 was significantly higher than in 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- Capacity constraints account for the majority of the reasons why a household could not be supported.

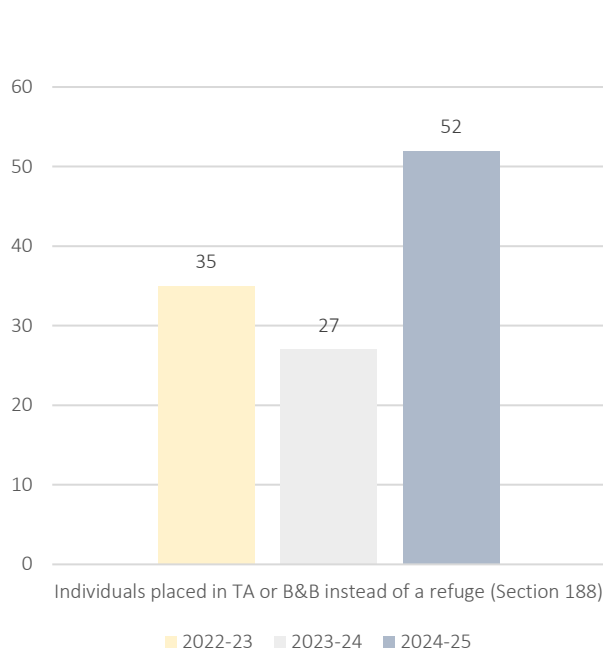
number of instances a household was unable to be supported



¹ Council of Europe, (2008), "...safe accommodation in specialised women's shelters, available in every region, with one family place per 10,000 head of population." (p. 51). Council of Europe (CoE). (2008) The Final Activity Report of the Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence (EG-TFV) Strasbourg: Gender Equality & AntiTrafficking Division Directorate General of Human Rights & Legal Affairs, Council of Europe.

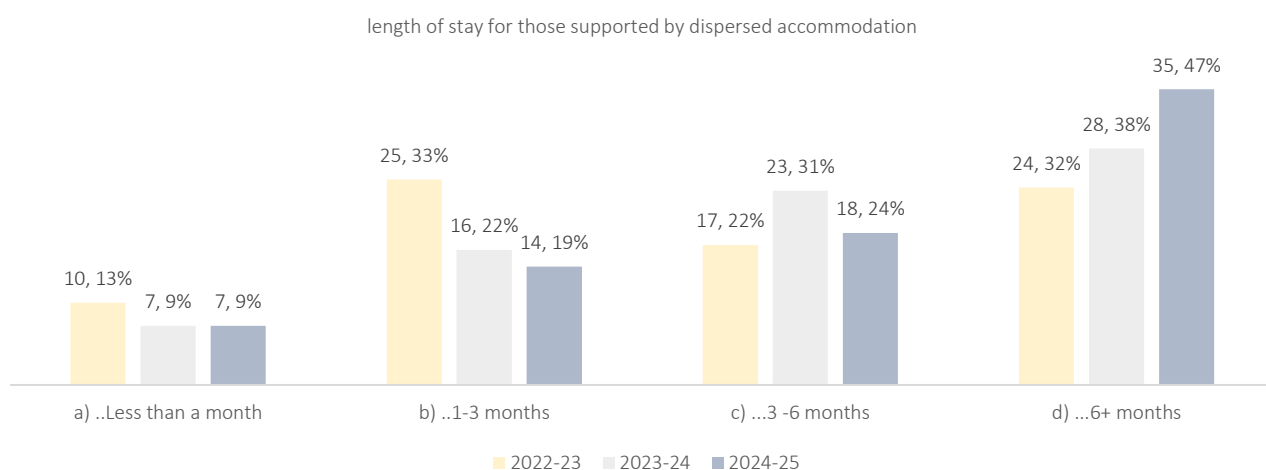
FINDING 3 – INDIVIDUALS FLEEING DOMESTIC ABUSE MAY INITIALLY BE PLACED IN BED & BREAKFAST ACCOMMODATION VIA THE HOUSING OPTIONS SERVICE

- Individuals who approach the Housing Options service as homeless, including those fleeing domestic abuse, are often initially placed in bed and breakfast accommodation, particularly when presenting in crisis.
- They are subsequently moved to more suitable accommodation when this becomes available.
- However, the ability to provide safe, appropriate accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse is constrained by the availability of suitable properties at the time of need.
- In 2025-25, 52 households (homeless due to domestic abuse) were placed in Temporary Accommodation², including Bed & Breakfast (which was not a refuge). This exceeds the 27 in 2023-24 and the 35 in 2022-23.



FINDING 4 – THE PERCENTAGE OF THOSE STAYING IN DISPERSED ACCOMMODATION FOR OVER 6 MONTHS IS INCREASING. THIS WILL IMPACT THE NUMBER OF AVAILABLE BEDSPACES.

- Of the 74 instances of individuals supported in dispersed services during the 2024-25 period, 47% remained for over 6 months. This is an increase from the previous years.
- Feedback from domestic abuse practitioners attributed the increase in lengths of stay to the increase in those with no recourse to public funds, complex needs, and a lack of move-on options.
- The increase in those staying for longer periods means that throughput is reduced, which affects the number of available bedspaces.



² Households were placed in TA under Section 188 of the Housing Act. Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996 places a legal duty on local authorities in England and Wales to provide interim accommodation to certain homeless applicants while their case is being assessed.

- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021³ and its accompanying statutory guidance are clear that survivors of domestic abuse should be placed in safe and suitable accommodation, and that bed and breakfast accommodation is not considered appropriate, except in very limited circumstances.
- According to the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities⁴, bed & breakfast accommodation is generally unsuitable for households with children or where domestic abuse is a factor, due to the lack of privacy, safety concerns, and the potential for retraumatisation.
- The statutory guidance on Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act (Safe Accommodation Duty)⁵ emphasises that safe accommodation must be:
 - Self-contained or have adequate facilities for privacy
 - Specialist and trauma-informed
 - Secure, in terms of physical safety and emotional wellbeing
- Not taking into account the Sanctuary Scheme, Cheshire East has a shortfall in the amount of safe accommodation available to those affected by domestic abuse. This may be contributing to the use of bed and breakfast accommodations.



RECOMMENDATION

- Cheshire East Council should consider commissioning additional safe accommodation units to address the shortfall in suitable units.

³ Legislation.gov.uk, (2021), Domestic Abuse Act 2021

⁴ Gov.Uk, (2018), Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities

⁵ Gov.UK, (2021), Statutory Guidance: Domestic Abuse Support

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER: 2

TITLE: To increase the mix of communal/ dispersed refuges

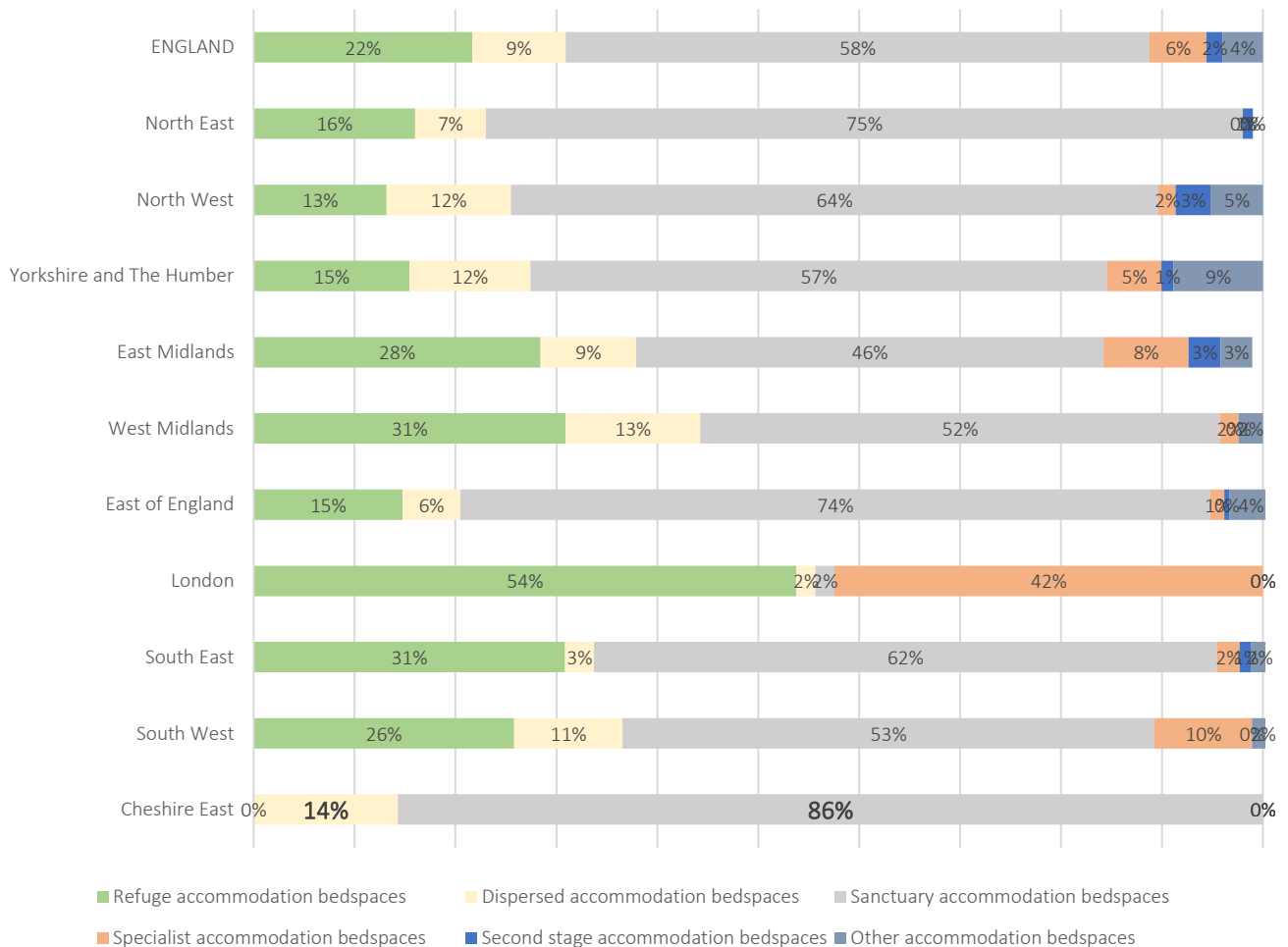


KEY FINDING

FINDING 1 – CHESHIRE EAST SAFE ACCOMMODATION MIX APPEARS AS AN OUTLIER WHEN COMPARED TO OTHER AREAS

- In Cheshire East, the current provider is commissioned to provide 16 dispersed safe accommodation units. Other safe accommodation spaces are made available via the Sanctuary Scheme.
- In Cheshire East, 0% of safe accommodation bedspaces are communal properties, 14% are dispersed bedspaces, and 86% are sanctuary bedspaces (2023-24 data).
- The England average is 22% communal refuge, 9% dispersed, 58% sanctuary bedspaces, with 11% other (2023-24 data).
- Of the 121 Tier 1 local authorities in England, only 8 have no communal refuge bedspaces (2023-24 data).
- The current provider recently opened a 6-bed multi-occupancy property specifically designed for 18 to 25-year-olds (not commissioned by Cheshire East), increasing the number of units to 22.

referrals and bedspaces in domestic abuse safe accommodations by accommodation type; 2023-24



FINDING 2 – THERE ARE NO SET GUIDELINES ON THE MIX OF DISPERSED AND COMMUNAL PROPERTIES

- There are no clear guidelines on the mix of safe accommodation that a local authority should provide. However, research and guidance do favour having a range of accommodation types to provide a flexible response to those who have experienced domestic abuse.
- For example, the London Mayor’s Safe Accommodation Strategy proposes a ‘greater range of safe crisis accommodation’.⁶
- Refuge, the Domestic Abuse charity, also highlights the benefit of having a range of provision: “When it comes to how a refuge should look, there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution. Each survivor’s journey is unique and will come with different needs.”⁷
- ‘More than Bricks and Mortar’,⁸ a feasibility study by Refuge, argues that dispersed accommodation can offer the same benefits as communal refuge settings, provided that appropriate support structures are in place.
- The types of support suggested include out-of-hours support, support for children, and peer support.

FINDING 3 – FEEDBACK RECEIVED FROM THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC ABUSE SHOWED THAT INDIVIDUALS HAD A RANGE OF VIEWS CONCERNING COMMUNAL REFUGES

- Residents in safe accommodation properties described themselves as happy to be accommodated in their own [dispersed] property.
- Cheshire East Council staff conducted focus groups with individuals who had experienced domestic abuse. Participants were generally positive about communal spaces and highlighted several benefits, including peer support and therapeutic play for children.



RELEVANCE TO CHESHIRE EAST

- The safe accommodation mix in Cheshire East appears atypical, particularly concerning the absence of communal refuge provision. There is no clear evidence on what the ideal mix of safe accommodation should be.
- Those who have experienced domestic abuse and were engaged with as part of this assessment highlighted the benefits of both communal and dispersed accommodation.



RECOMMENDATION

- To ensure that accommodation is available that meets the needs of as wide a range of people as possible, communal refuge facilities should be explored in Cheshire East.

⁶ Mayor of London, (2021), Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy

⁷ Refuge, (2025), Dispersed accommodation: the inclusive approach to helping more survivors

⁸ Refuge, (2023), More Than Bricks and Mortar

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER: 3

TITLE: To develop the support offered to children and young people in safe accommodation



KEY FINDING

FINDING 1 – IN CHESHIRE EAST, SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN IN SAFE ACCOMMODATION IS PROVIDED BY THE EARLY HELP SERVICE

- Children placed in safe accommodation in Cheshire East are referred to the Early Help service for support.
- However, feedback from the provider suggests that there are low levels of engagement from children and young people in safe accommodation with the Early Help offer.
- Since April 2025, 4 out of 15 children have engaged with Early Help Support. Domestic abuse practitioners suggested that the lack of engagement could be related to the stigma attached to social care involvement for families.
- Domestic abuse practitioners believed that domestic abuse support workers are best placed to work with children affected by domestic abuse as they build trust and relationships with families through their frequent visits and meetings with those in safe accommodation.

FINDING 2 – CHILDREN CAN BE AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC ABUSE AND REQUIRE TARGETED HELP AND SUPPORT

- Children and young people can be directly or indirectly affected by domestic abuse, whether as victims in their own right, through exposure to abuse in the home, or through harmful behaviours in adolescent relationships.⁹
- Young people experience the highest rates of domestic abuse of any age group. They may be involved in abusive intimate relationships or may use harmful behaviours toward family members.¹⁰
- As such, they require tailored and age-appropriate support, including:
 - Domestic abuse awareness and education
 - Safety planning adapted to their developmental stage
 - Emotional and therapeutic support that addresses trauma and risk

FINDING 3 – IN 2024-25, 80 CHILDREN WERE SUPPORTED IN THE DISPERSED SAFE ACCOMMODATION PROPERTIES.

- In 2023-24, 118 children were supported. In 2022-23, the figure was 102. On average, around 100 children are supported in dispersed accommodation each year.

FINDING 4 – IN 2024-25, 26% OF MARAC CASES HAD CHILDREN IN THE HOUSEHOLD.

- During 2024-25, there were 1167¹¹ children in the households of the cases discussed.
- Of the 939 cases covering July 2024 to March 2025, 240 had children in the household. This equates to 26% of the total.

⁹ Home Office, (2022), Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance

¹⁰ ONS, (2024), Domestic Abuse Victim Characteristics

¹¹ 11 months; June 2024 data missing.

FINDING 5 – ENGAGEMENT CONDUCTED BY CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL STAFF SUGGESTED A NEED FOR SPECIALIST CHILDREN’S WORKERS WITHIN SAFE ACCOMMODATION.

- To meet the needs of children and young people in safe accommodation, children’s workers were suggested as a valuable resource.
- Participants also suggested a dedicated children’s space within a refuge.
- A respondent to the survey conducted as part of this needs assessment highlighted the benefits of communal refuges in providing social interactions for children housed in safe accommodation.



RELEVANCE TO CHESHIRE EAST

- The current delivery model for support for children and young people in safe accommodation has been in place since April 2025. There has been low engagement, which suggests a potential gap in support for children experiencing domestic abuse. However, the sample size is small.



RECOMMENDATION

- Updating how support to Children and Young people in safe accommodation is offered should be explored. To ensure vulnerable children are being supported, the following interventions could be explored:
 - Children and young people specialist support provided directly by the safe accommodation provider.
 - The Early Help service offering support to children and families on an opt-out basis.

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER: 4

TITLE: To improve the pathway between Housing Options and the safe accommodation provider



KEY FINDING

FINDING 1 – DOMESTIC ABUSE FAMILY SAFETY UNIT (DAFSU) PRACTITIONERS INDICATED THAT THE SAFE ACCOMMODATION PATHWAY SHOULD BE CLARIFIED

- Practitioners reported that although all referrals for safe accommodation should be sent via the Housing Single Point of Access (SPoA), some referrals are still directed to the Domestic Abuse Navigators (part of the DAFSU).

FINDING 2 – THERE WAS CONFUSION ABOUT HOW VACANCIES IN SAFE ACCOMMODATION PROPERTIES ARE COMMUNICATED TO THE HOUSING OPTIONS SERVICE.

- Housing Options practitioners noted occasional gaps in the information they received about safe accommodation vacancies.
- The Commissioners are working with the provider to ensure there are systems in place for the reporting of any vacant safe accommodation spaces.

FINDING 3 – IN 2024-25, THERE WERE 23 REFERRALS FROM CHESHIRE EAST HOUSING OPTIONS TO SAFE ACCOMMODATION.

- This indicator was introduced in April 2023 to address an information gap.
- In the 2023-24 period, there were 15 referrals.



RELEVANCE TO CHESHIRE EAST

- The lack of clarity in the referral process could result in delays for individuals seeking support.
- The lack of up-to-date information about available safe accommodation places could create barriers to access.



RECOMMENDATION

- There should be a clear system in place so that information on safe accommodation vacancies can be shared with Housing Options practitioners in a timely manner.
- The referral pathway for safe accommodation should be clearly articulated to all practitioners.

KEY FINDINGS

PROVISION

SPECIALIST SERVICES

DOMESTIC ABUSE FAMILY SAFETY UNIT (DAFSU)

- DAFSU provide various interventions aimed at helping those who have experienced domestic abuse.
- The service is made up of:

Those Who Have Experienced Domestic Abuse

DOMESTIC ABUSE NAVIGATORS
Front door and referrals

OUTREACH IDVA TEAM
STANDARD/ MEDIUM RISK

MARAC IDVA TEAM
HIGH RISK

HOSPITAL IDVA
ALL RISK LEVELS

Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

INTERVENTION HUB
STANDARD/ MEDIUM RISK

HIGH HARM CASE MANAGERS
HIGH RISK

DOMESTIC ABUSE NAVIGATORS (DANs)

- The DANs service is the front door service for domestic abuse support.
- Three members of staff work alongside the Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS) and the Early Help front door.
- The service:
 - Offers advice and guidance on cases where domestic abuse is a feature
 - Accepts all self-referrals and referrals from the police, provided there are no children involved and the DASH score is 10-13
 - Provides domestic abuse support and advice to all professionals.
- The DANs have a role in offering support to ChECS practitioners regarding domestic abuse. Any ChECS cases that are categorised as parental abuse are followed up by a DAN.

“There is a potential lack of knowledge about domestic abuse [from practitioners in other partner areas].”

DAFSU Practitioner

“The DAN’s role is to provide independent advice to survivors of domestic abuse.”

DAFSU Practitioner

“Part of the DAN’s role is to make sure that domestic abuse is being considered when vulnerable people are identified.”

DAFSU Practitioner

“Survivors said that being contacted by multiple agencies following a police call out, encourages disengagement from services”

DAFSU Practitioner

OUTREACH IDVA TEAM

- The Outreach IDVA Team consists of six staff members, overseen by a Team Leader.
- The team is split between North and South (Crewe and Macclesfield).
- The Outreach IDVA Team receives referrals through two routes: the Domestic Abuse Navigators and as step-down cases from the MARAC IDVA team.
- Outreach IDVAs run the Gateway Recovery Programme that focuses on helping people understand domestic abuse.
- The Outreach IDVAs have been trained to deliver the therapeutic offer across Cheshire East and will work with clients on their assigned programme. The Outreach IDVA completes any follow-ups during the delivery of their programmes. Two team members specialise in working with those under 16.
- The Team run the NSPCC DART (Domestic Abuse Recovering Together) and the Healing Together Course.

HOSPITAL IDVA

- The Hospital IDVAs are based at Leighton and Macclesfield hospitals.
- The post works across all departments in the hospital. The majority of their work is within the A&E department. The IDVAs are part of the Safeguarding Team.
- IDVAs complete triage, signposting, and referral work.
- The Hospital IDVA continues to hold hospital cases and staff who are employed by the trust.
- The Hospital IDVA is responsible for providing the training offer across all NHS hospital sites, aligning with the NHS training package.

“Hospital IDVAs also casehold NHS staff members. It is a safe place to get support.”

DAFSU Practitioner

“The Hospital IDVAs are also a qualified older person IDVA and Sexual Violence IDVA. In the hospital the IDVAs may see needs that other IDVAs may not come across (e.g. rape victims).”

DAFSU Practitioner

INTERVENTION HUB

- The Intervention Hub consists of a range of online interventions (addressing issues such as domestic abuse, alcohol use, cannabis use, shoplifting, as well as positive change, such as well-being, anger management, and thinking skills).
- All interventions are based on CCBT (computer-based cognitive behavioural therapy) principles and are designed to address and change behaviours in standard- to medium-risk perpetrators. Any professional within Cheshire East Council can access them via the DANs.

MARAC IDVA TEAM

- Based on SafeLives' calculations, it is recommended that in Cheshire East, around 6.8 full-time equivalent (FTE) IDVAs are needed to cope with the number of cases heard at MARAC.
- The MARAC Team consists of six IDVAs, overseen by a Team Leader.
- The intervention period is typically six to eight weeks.
- Individuals/ families can be transitioned to the Outreach IDVA Team if required.
- The referral pathway for the MARAC IDVA team is via MARAC. Cheshire Police currently administer these referrals.
- The MARAC IDVA team is split between the North and South offices.

"MARAC cases are heard within 10 working days of a referral. Dealing with MARAC cases is very resource intensive."

DAFSU Practitioner

"The team have had to think about how to stop the High-Risk IDVAs holding cases for a long time."

DAFSU Practitioner

"Within the high-risk team, one of the challenges is how does the MARAC support children victims."

DAFSU Practitioner

HIGH HARM CASE MANAGERS (HIGH RISK/ HIGH HARM PERPETRATORS)

- The team consists of two staff members and operates according to the DRIVE principles, as outlined by DRIVE Central.
- Practitioners work with high-risk/ high-harm perpetrators of domestic abuse, working to disrupt further offending.
- High Harm Case Managers run the Respect Drive Programme.

"The team have recently completed a 12 month pilot with the Central Drive Office. The pilot tested a reduced Drive model."

DAFSU Practitioner

"Partners are supported by Children's Social Care or IDVAs."

DAFSU Practitioner

SAFE ACCOMMODATION

- Cheshire East commissions 16 units of dispersed safe accommodation.
- A Sanctuary Scheme is in place.

PERPETRATOR SERVICES

ENGAGE

- MyCWA run the Engage Perpetrator Programme in Cheshire East.
- The Engage Programme is a brief intervention designed to engage perpetrators.

CARA

- MyCWA run the Cautioning and Relationship Abuse (Project CARA) in Cheshire East.

CUSTODY INTERVENTIONS

- MyCWA run custody interventions with perpetrators of domestic abuse across Cheshire.

HIGH HARM CASE MANAGERS

- See previous page (Part of DAFSU)

PROBATION – BUILDING CHOICES PROGRAMME

- Probation runs the Building Choices Programme for individuals released from prison on licence or serving a community sentence.
- The programme is run in Crewe and Chester (Cheshire West & Chester) and is for medium and high-risk offenders.
- Probation Practitioners report that the programme appears to be within agreed timeframes for those needing to access the course.

“There are not programme delays in Cheshire East.
Delivery is where it needs to be.”

Probation Practitioner

DOMESTIC ABUSE FAMILY SAFETY UNIT (DAFSU)

The DAFSU provide various interventions aimed at supporting those affected by domestic abuse.

DOMESTIC ABUSE NAVIGATORS (DANs)



3 members of staff who work alongside Cheshire East Children's Service and the Early Help Front Door.

Staff offer advice and guidance on cases where DA is a feature.

FRONT-DOOR & REFERRALS

The DANs take all direct referrals (self-referrals) and referrals from the police.

OUTREACH IDVA TEAM

Standard/ Medium risk victims (adults and children)



6FTE IDVAs

GATEWAY RECOVERY PROGRAMME

Team are trained to deliver the Gateway Programme.

Focuses on understanding domestic abuse.

FOLLOW UP WORK

Team are trained to deliver the Gateway Programme.

Focuses on understanding domestic abuse.

WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- NSPCC DART TOOLKIT
- HEALING TOGETHER

2 team members are trained in working with those under 16.

HOSPITAL IDVA



Based at Leighton and Macclesfield Hospitals

INTERVENTION HUB

A range of online interventions based on computer based cognitive behavioural therapy

MARAC IDVA TEAM



6FTE IDVAs overseen by a Team Leader.
Individual IDVAs hold a caseload of no more than 30 clients.

HIGH HARM CASE MANAGERS

Two staff members and work to DRIVE principles.

MyCWA

SAFE ACCOMMODATION PROVISION

DISPERSERD SAFE ACCOMMODATION

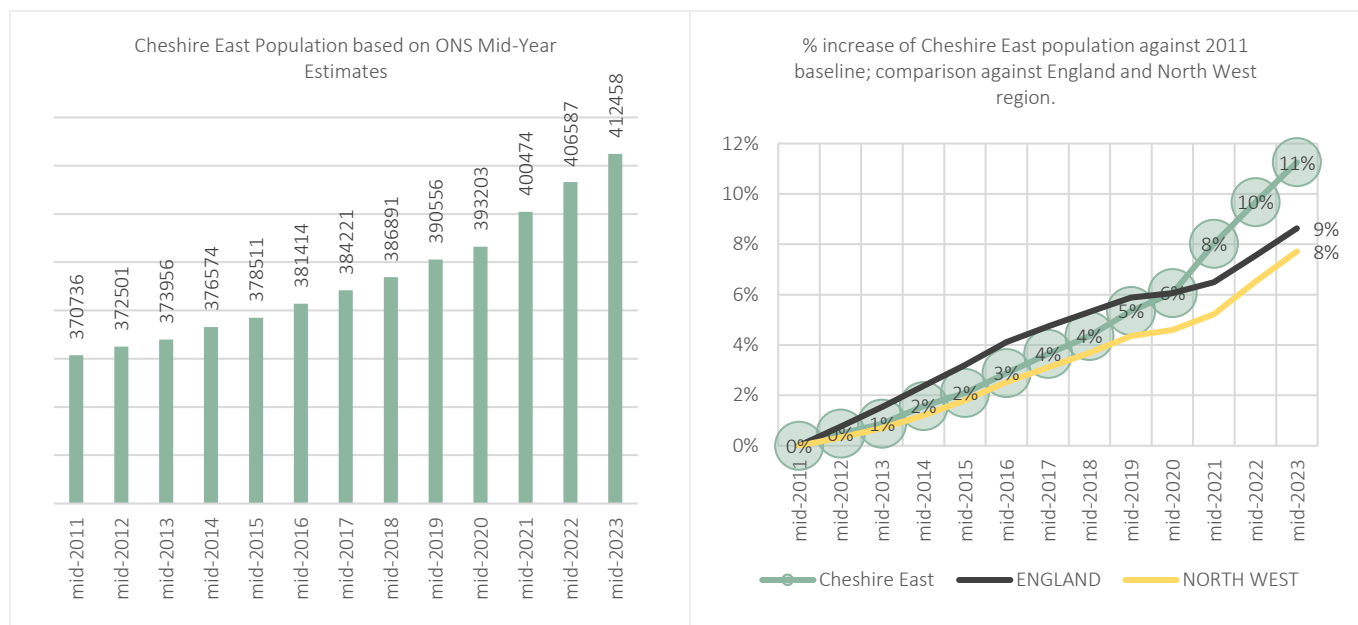
16 Dispersed Properties for single people and families



POPULATION

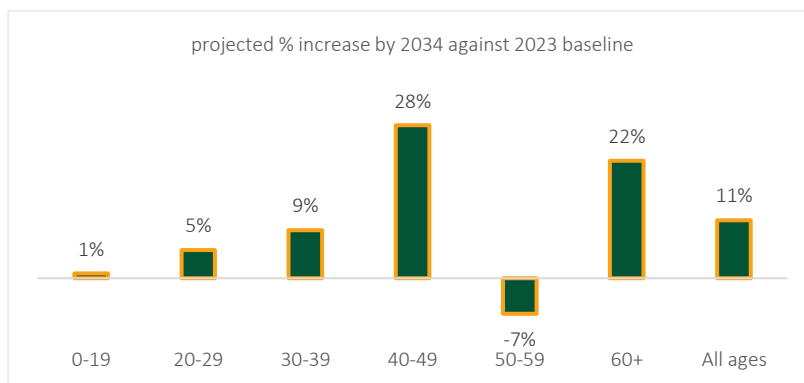
The population of Cheshire East has been increasing at a slightly higher rate than the regional and national rates; however, there has been a notable increase in recent years.

- The latest Mid-Year Estimates (2023) provide a population figure of 412,458. Between 2011 and 2020, the population grew at an average rate of approximately 2,500 per year; however, this rate increased to around 6,400 per year since then.



The population of Cheshire East is expected to increase by 11% by 2034.

- Based on the latest population projections¹², the population of Cheshire East is expected to increase by 11%¹³ to 456,452.
- The 40-49 and 60+ age groups are expected to see the highest % increase.



10.4% of the population in Cheshire East is from an ethnic minority group¹⁴.

- Looking specifically at those from a White Ethnic Group, this cohort accounted for 94.4% of the total population compared to 96.7% in the 2011 Census.
- This rate is significantly higher than in the North-West Region (86%) and England (81%).

¹² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections>

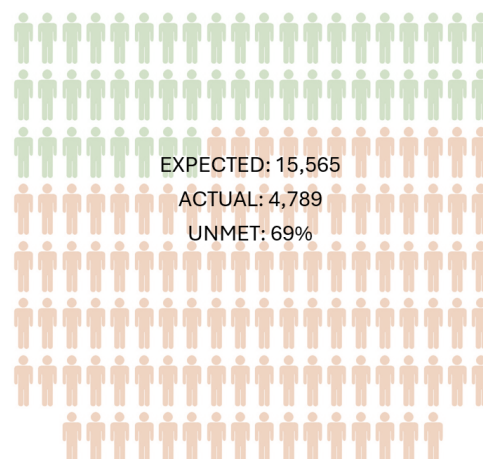
¹³ Using 2023 year of 411,917 population published in the population projections

¹⁴ Those who are non-white British are classified as an ethnic minority group. 2021 Census.

PREVALENCE

It is estimated that less than half of domestic abuse incidents are reported to the police.

- Based on the latest estimates¹⁵, it is estimated that the number of individuals in Cheshire East experiencing any form of domestic abuse and those reporting:
 - Expected = 15,565
 - Actual¹⁶ = 4,789
 - Underreporting = 69%

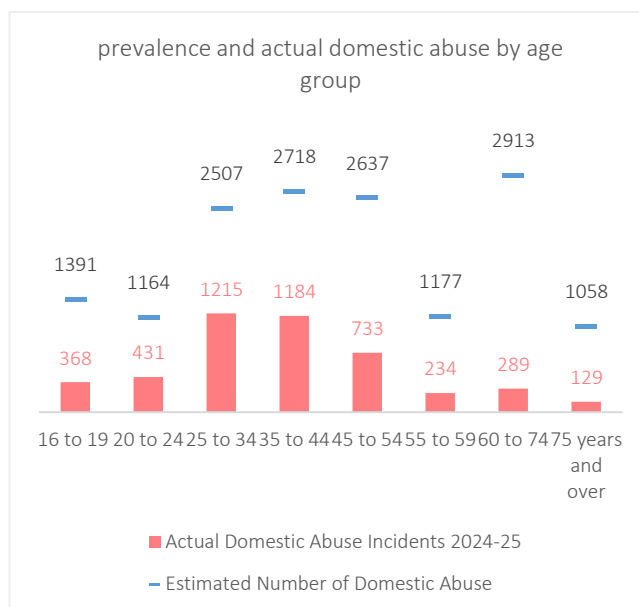


It is estimated that males have higher underreporting rates than females.

- For females:
 - Expected: 10,861
 - Actual: 3,244
 - Unmet: 70%
- For males:
 - Expected: 4,704
 - Actual: 1,224
 - Unmet: 74%

The older age group is expected to have the highest rates of underreporting.

- Comparing reported domestic abuse incidents to the police against expected prevalence by age group shows that the highest underreporting is for the older age groups.
- The younger age groups also exhibit high rates of underreporting.
- The high underreporting rate for younger individuals could be attributed to stigma.



¹⁵ Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2024.

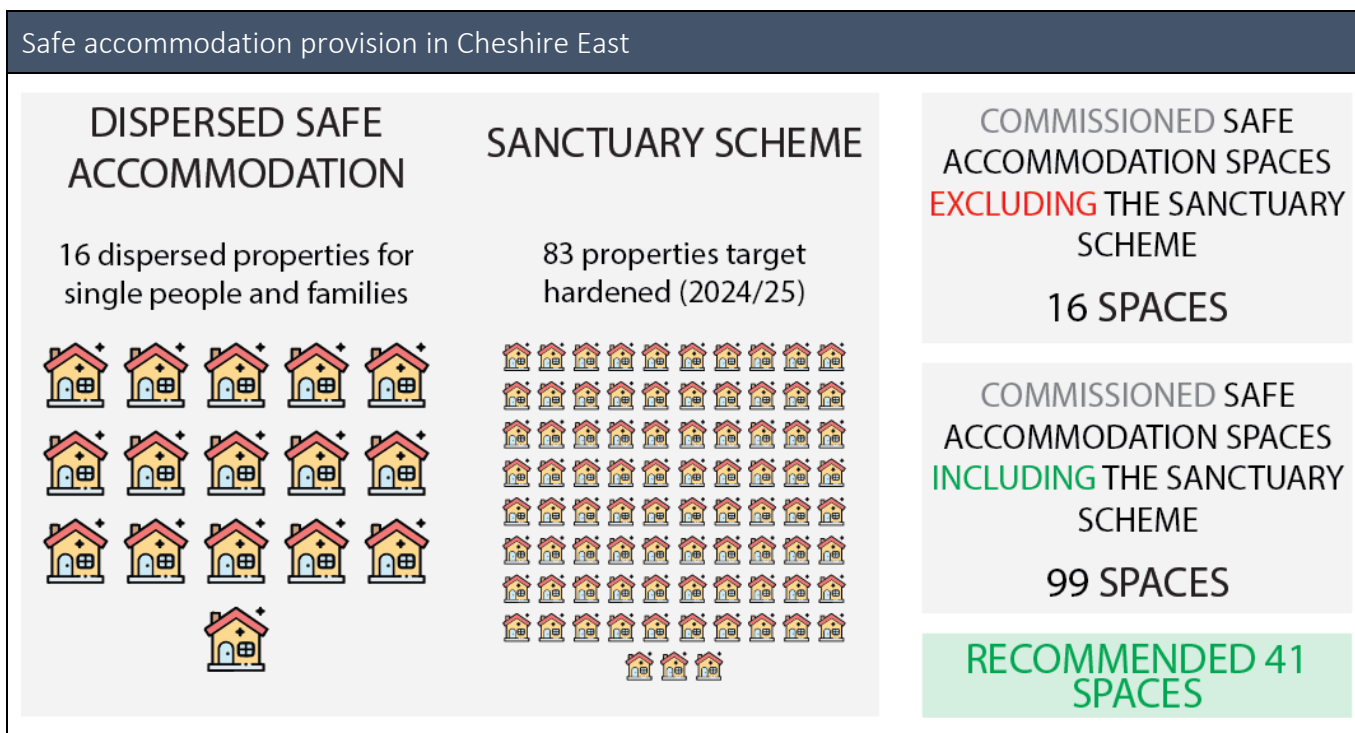
¹⁶ Data from the "Domestic Abuse Performance Pack; 2024-25". The figures are from aggregated data, therefore it is possible that there is double counting.

SAFE ACCOMMODATION

SPACES

Cheshire East falls short of the recommended 41 specialist accommodation spaces.

- Using the Council of Europe's minimum recommendation of one space per 10,000 population, 41 specialist accommodation spaces are recommended in Cheshire East. This excludes properties that could be Target Hardened via the Sanctuary Scheme.
- In Cheshire East, there are:
 - Dispersed Properties: MyCWA runs 16 dispersed properties across Cheshire East.
 - Safe Accommodation Communal Living: MyCWA recently opened a 6-bed multi-occupancy property specifically designed for 18 to 25-year-olds.
 - Sanctuary Schemes: 83 properties target hardened in 2024-25.

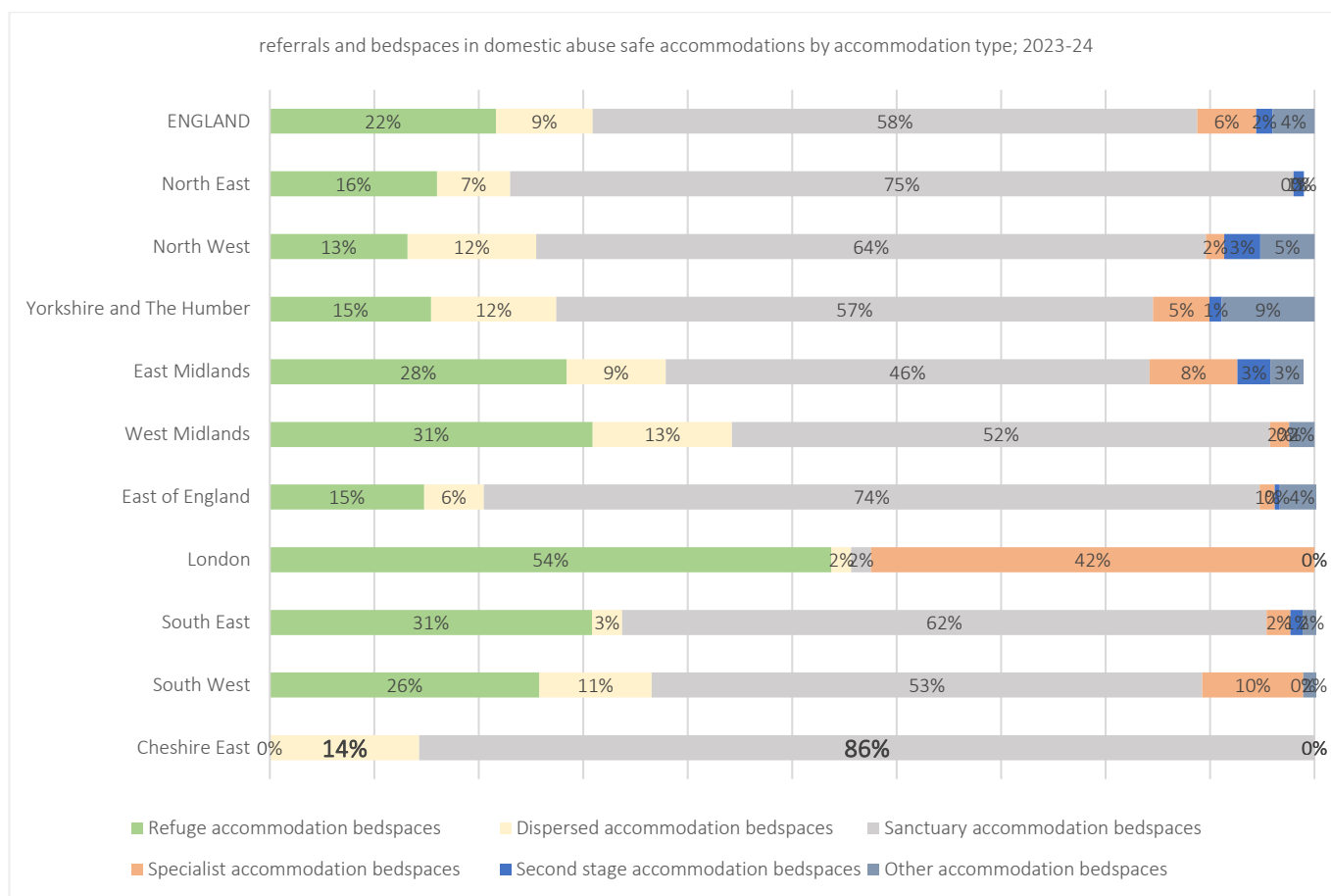


Of the 121 authorities in England¹⁷, only 8 have no communal refuge bedspaces.

- Cheshire East is one of only eight authorities that do not have any communal refuge bedspaces (2023-24 figures).
- The Routes to Support process allows individuals to access refuges outside the area.

A high percentage of the available bedspaces in Cheshire East are Sanctuary Schemes.

- 86% of referrals and bedspaces during 2023-24 were Sanctuary Schemes.
- Please note that this is based on the 143 figure for 2023-24. The figure in 2024-25 was 83¹⁸.



¹⁷ Greater London Authority (GLA) and 120 Tier 1 authorities that were in existence in 2023-24 in England.

¹⁸ Data provided locally. National data not yet published.

There are no clear guidelines on the mix of safe accommodation that a local authority should provide. However, research and guidance do favour having a range of accommodation types to provide a flexible response to those who have experienced domestic abuse.

- In 2024, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner stated that she was pleased to see local areas commissioning a variety of accommodation types.¹⁹
- ‘More than Bricks and Mortar’²⁰ is a feasibility study into dispersed accommodation published by Refuge. The report describes how “Refuge buildings are part of the ecosystem that ensures survivor safety and recovery. They offer a secure place to stay, with an environment that is well-maintained. The support that is available within that environment is much valued by residents and includes practical support, such as help to access benefits or legal advice; emotional support helping survivors to come to terms with their experiences of abuse and peer support, which helps to normalise the abuse and supports survivors to realise that their experiences were not their fault.”.
- The report also acknowledges that “We know there will always be a need for traditional refuges”.

¹⁹ DLUHC, (2024), Annual progress report from the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation National Expert Steering Group 2022 to 2023

²⁰ Refuge, (2023), More Than Bricks and Mortar

The diagram below compares safe accommodation in Cheshire East against good practice identified in the Refuge Feasibility Study into dispersed accommodation – More Than Bricks and Mortar.²¹

Safe accommodation characteristics	
REFUGEE FEASIBILITY STUDY	IN CHESHIRE EAST
<h3>LOCATION OF PROPERTIES</h3>	
 <p>A cluster model consisting of several properties dispersed within a discrete geographical location, within easily travelling distance from each other.</p>	<p>Dispersed properties are located within towns although they are not all grouped within close proximity.</p>
 <p>Properties should be within walking distance of amenities.</p>	<p>All properties are located near amenities.</p>
 <p>There should be a central support hub for survivors to access support.</p>	<p>There is one MyCWA hub in Crewe.</p>
<h3>TYPES OF PROPERTIES</h3>	
 <p>There should be a variety of unit sizes.</p>	<p>3 x three bedroom houses 5 x two bedroom houses 8 x two bedroom flats</p>
 <p>There should be at least one property suitable for those with disabilities.</p>	<p>No dispersed properties in Cheshire East are fully accessible to those with a wheelchair.</p>
 <p>Some properties should accommodate pets.</p>	<p>Properties can accept pets.</p>
 <p>Properties should be furnished.</p>	<p>MyCWA properties are furnished.</p>
<h3>SUPPORT</h3>	
 <p>Out of hours support should be available.</p>	<p>MyCWA offer 24 hour support.</p>
 <p>There should be support offered to children and young people in safe accommodation.</p>	<p>There is no dedicated support, instead children can be referred to the Early Help service.</p>
 <p>Peer support should be available.</p>	<p>Survivors can access peer support at the MyCWA hub in Crewe</p>

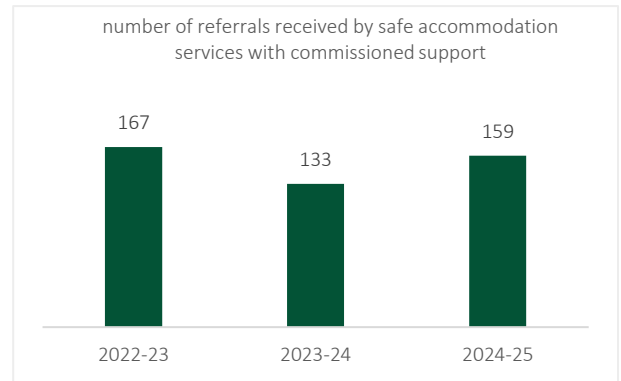
²¹ Refuge, (2023), More Than Bricks and Mortar

LOCAL ANALYSIS

DISPERSED ACCOMMODATION

On average, safe accommodation services with commissioned support receive 153 referrals per year.

- Between April 2022 and March 2025, on average, 153 referrals are received by safe accommodation services with commissioned support per year.
- This figure varied from 133 to 167 during this period.

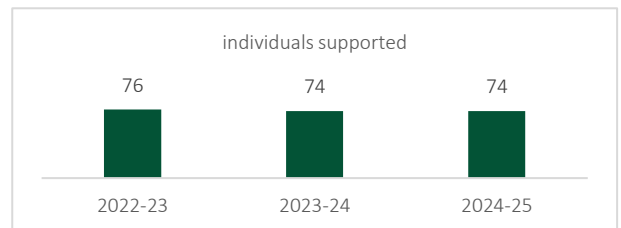


On average, there have been 19 yearly referrals from Housing Options services to safe accommodation services.

- This indicator was introduced in April 2023 to address an information gap.
- In the 2023-24 period, there were 15 referrals. This increased to 23 in 2024-25.

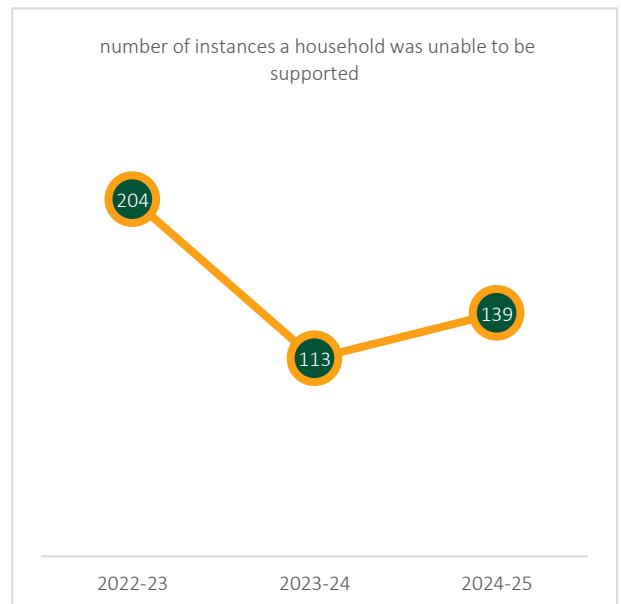
The number of individuals supported each year has remained stable.

- The number of individuals supported has remained stable over the 3-year analysis period.



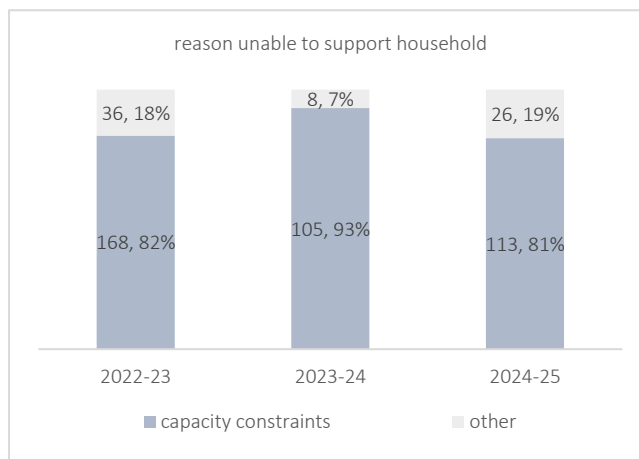
In 2024-25, there were 139 instances where a household was unable to be supported in the local authority area.

- There has been a slight increase in the number of households that could not be supported when comparing the 2024-25 period against the 2023-24 period.
- The number of households that were unable to be supported in 2022-23 was significantly higher than in 2023-24 and 2024-25.



Capacity constraints account for the majority of the reasons why a household was unable to be supported.

- In 2024-25, 81% of the reasons why a household was unable to be supported were due to a capacity constraint.
- This means that MyCWA had appropriate accommodations, but they were not available.
- ‘Other’ primarily consists of clients being offered space but declining to accept it.



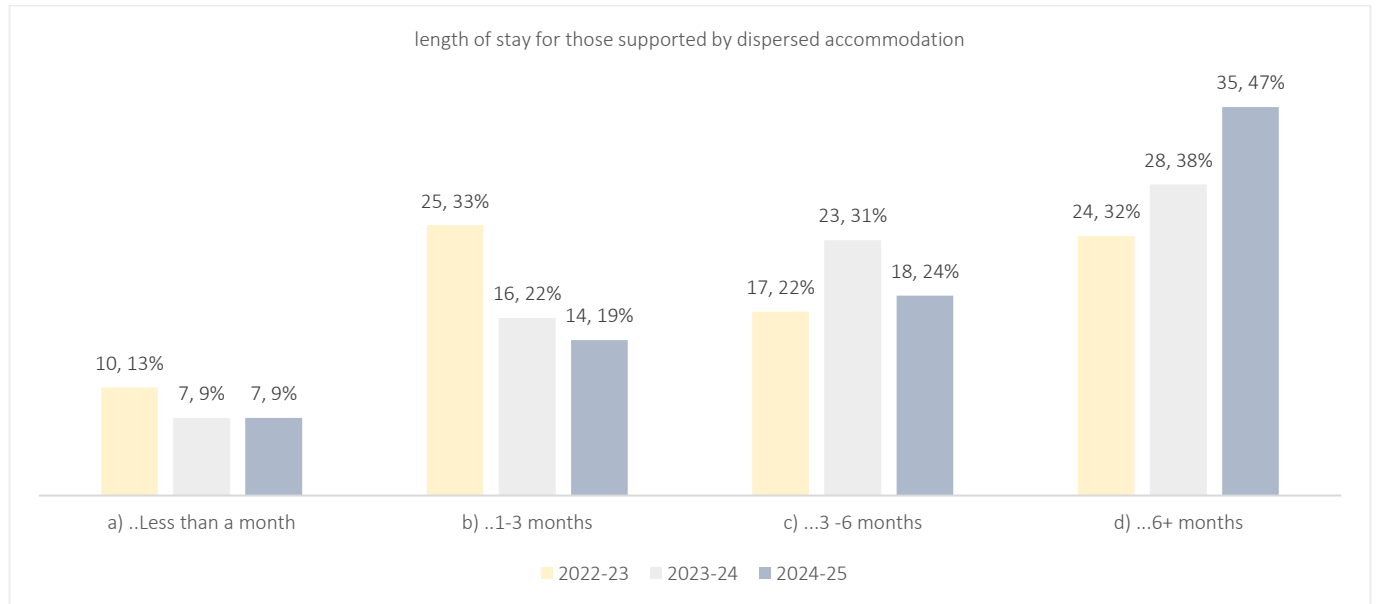
For the majority of households that could not be supported via safe accommodation, support was provided by an appropriate IDVA, Housing Agency, or MyCWA.

- Across the 3 years, 80% of the households that could not be supported via safe accommodation in Cheshire East were supported by an appropriate IDVA, Housing Agency, or MyCWA.
- Alternative refuges outside the Cheshire East area, as well as alternative housing within the Cheshire East area, were also prevalent.

Total number of instances a household was unable to be supported:	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Average
Alternative Refuge (OOA)	16	3	14	11
Alternative Housing within LA	15	14	15	15
Supported by an appropriate IDVA, Housing Agency, or MyCWA	170	93	104	122
Support to find Private Rent Options	1	0	0	0
Contact Local Homeless Team	2	2	0	1
Other	0	1	6	2
Total	204	113	139	152

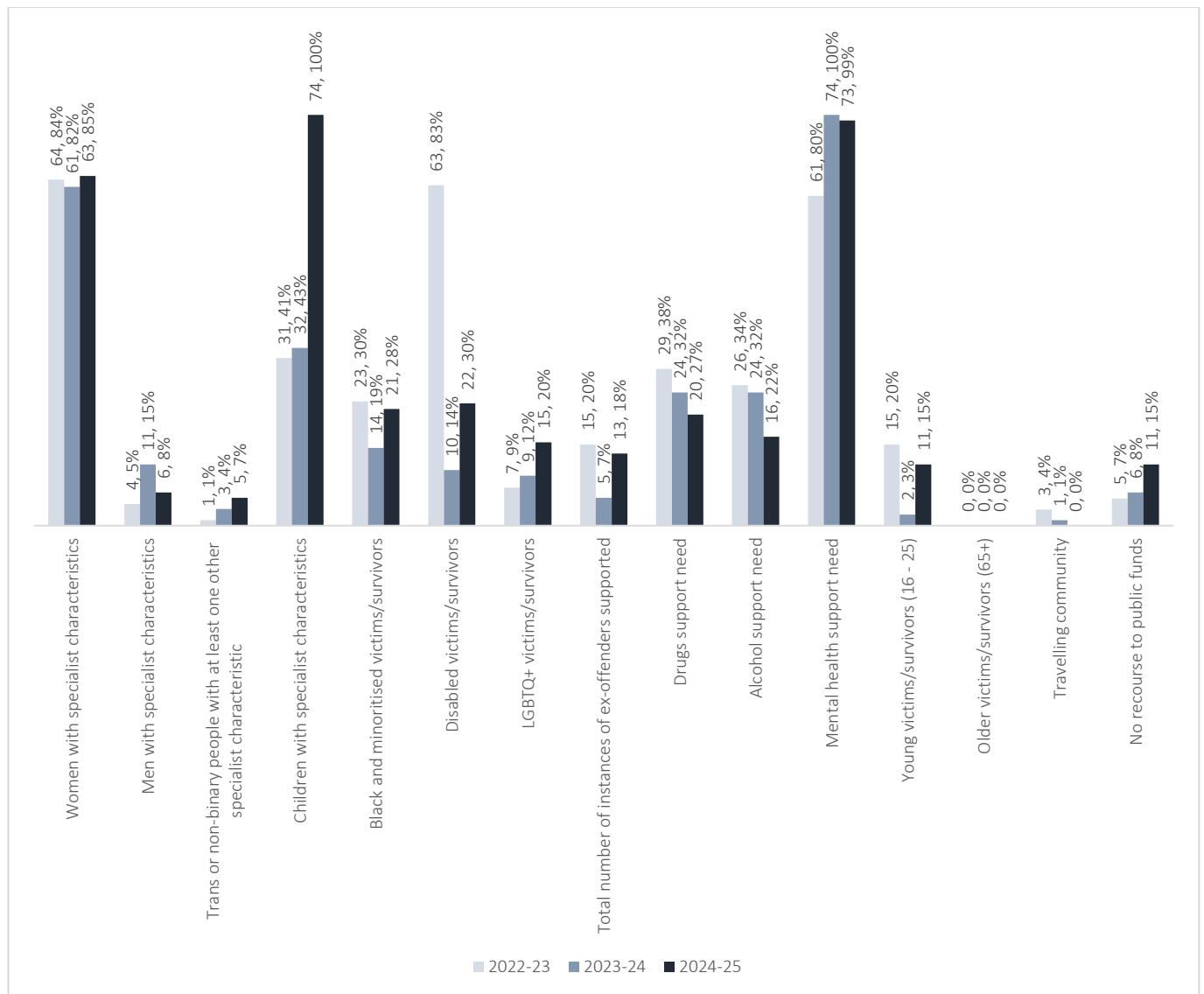
The percentage of those staying in dispersed accommodation for over 6 months is increasing.

- Of the 74 instances of individuals supported in dispersed services during the 2024-25 period, 47% remained for over 6 months. This is an increase from the previous years.
- Feedback from MyCWA practitioners attributed the increase in lengths of stay to the increase in those with no recourse to public funds, complex needs, and a lack of move-on options.



A range of support needs and characteristics is recorded as part of the workbooks.

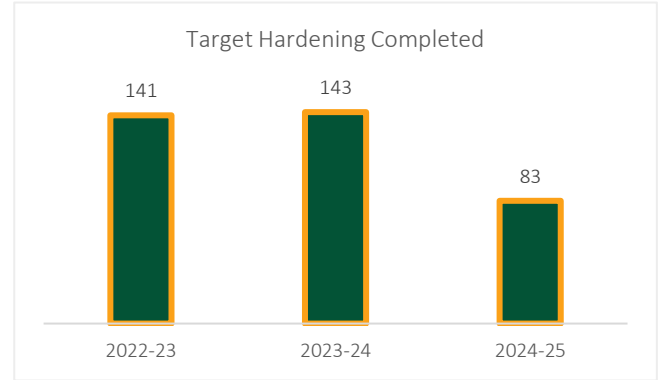
- Nearly all of those supported in dispersed accommodation received **mental health** support.
- **No recourse to public funds** increased from 8% (6) in 2023-24 to 15% (11) in 2024-25.
- **Black and minority** victims/survivors account for 28% of those supported in 2024-25.



SANCTUARY SCHEMES

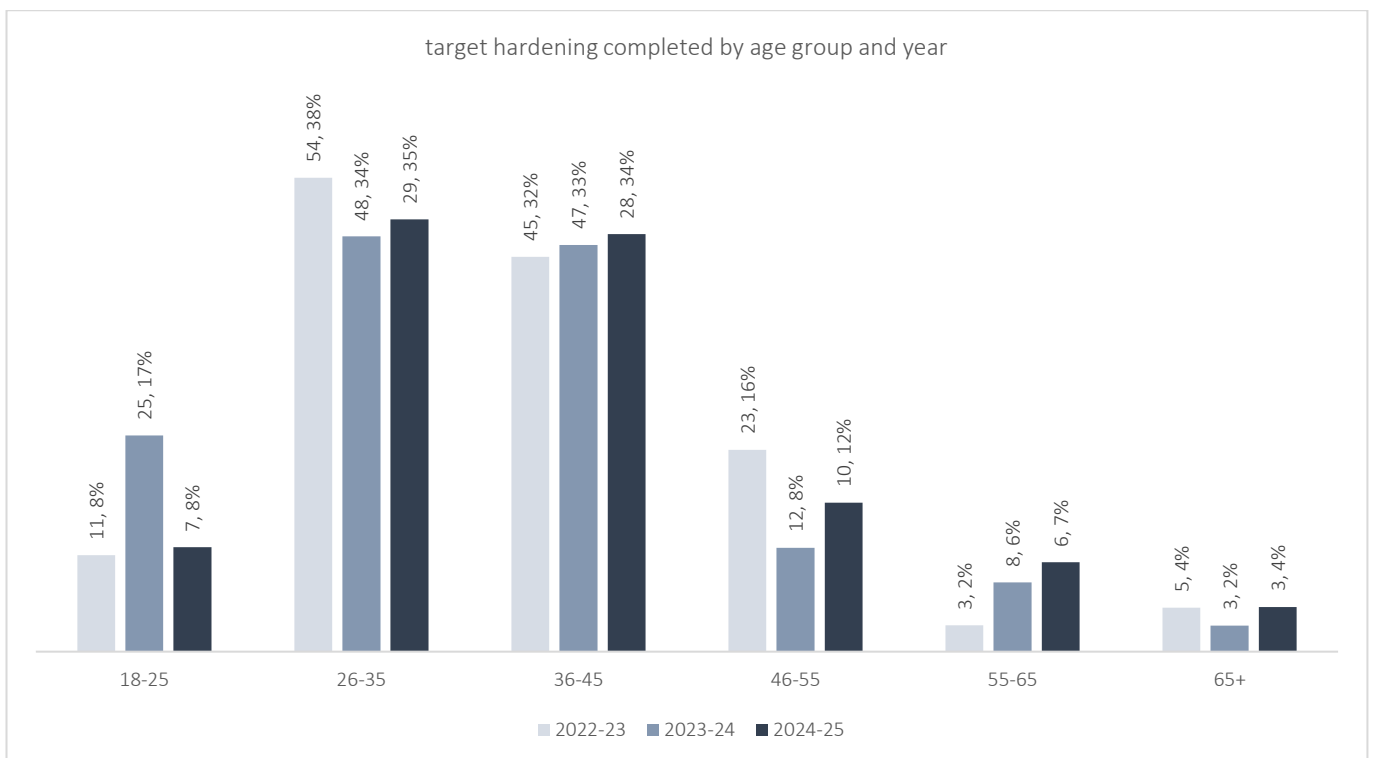
There has been a significant decrease in the number of target hardening completed.

- 83 properties were target hardened during 2024-25.
- This represents a 42% decrease from the previous two years.
- DAFSU practitioners reported that the scope of the scheme changed in October 2024. Since then, only privately rented and owner-occupied properties are supported in the scheme.
- Also, under previous target hardening measures (2022-23 and 2023-14 data), 'Ring' doorbells were included in the figures. This is no longer the case.



The majority of those receiving target hardening were in the 26-35 and the 36-45 age groups.

- The 23-35 (35%) and the 36-45 (34%) age groups accounted for 69% of the total in 2024-25.
- The 55+ age group accounted for 11% of the total in 2024-25. This age group accounts for 14% of the victims/survivors in the police data.
- There has been a notable decrease in the % of 18-25 year olds receiving target hardening when comparing 2024-25 against the previous year.
- The 55-65 age group has seen slight year-on-year increases.

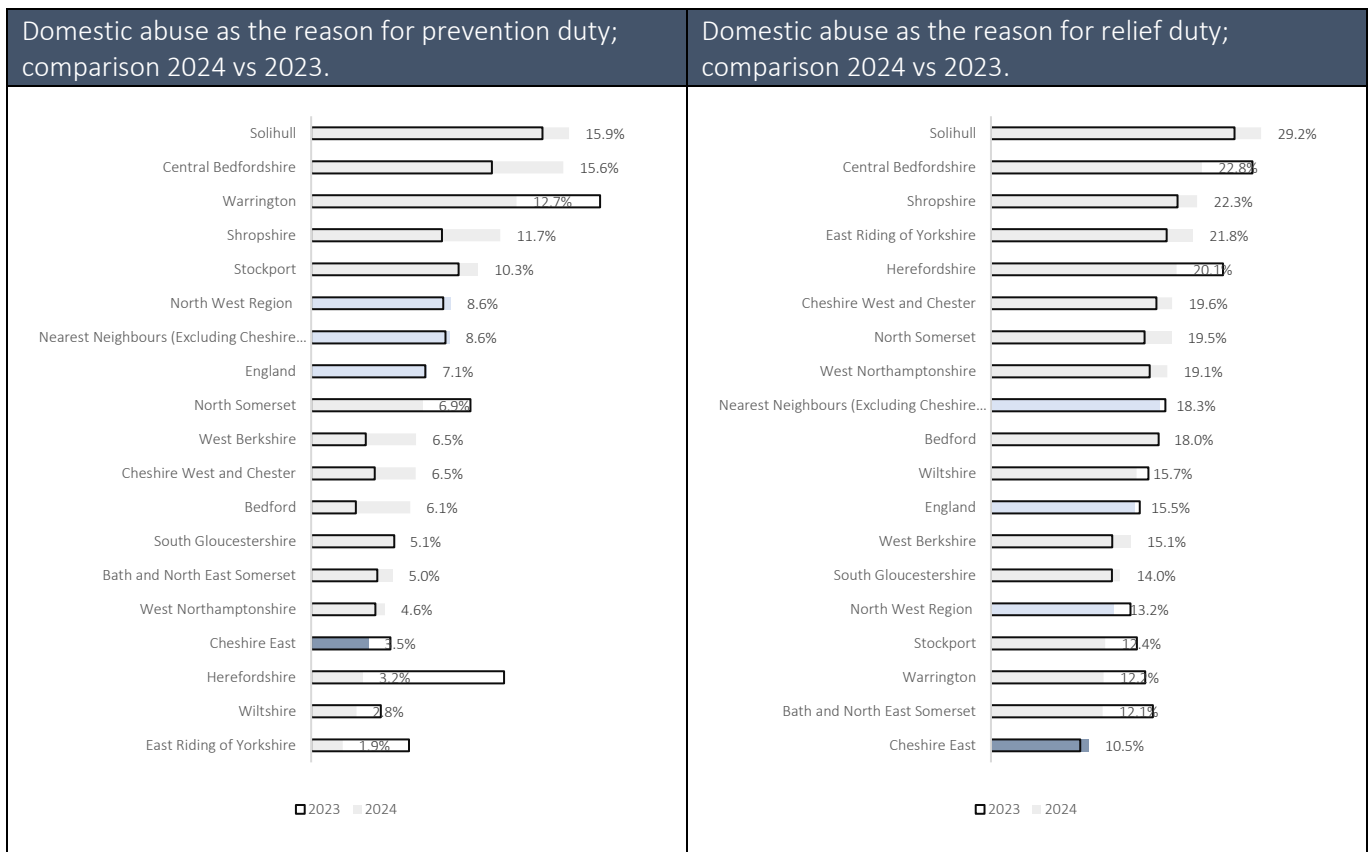


HOUSING

HOMELESSNESS APPROACHES

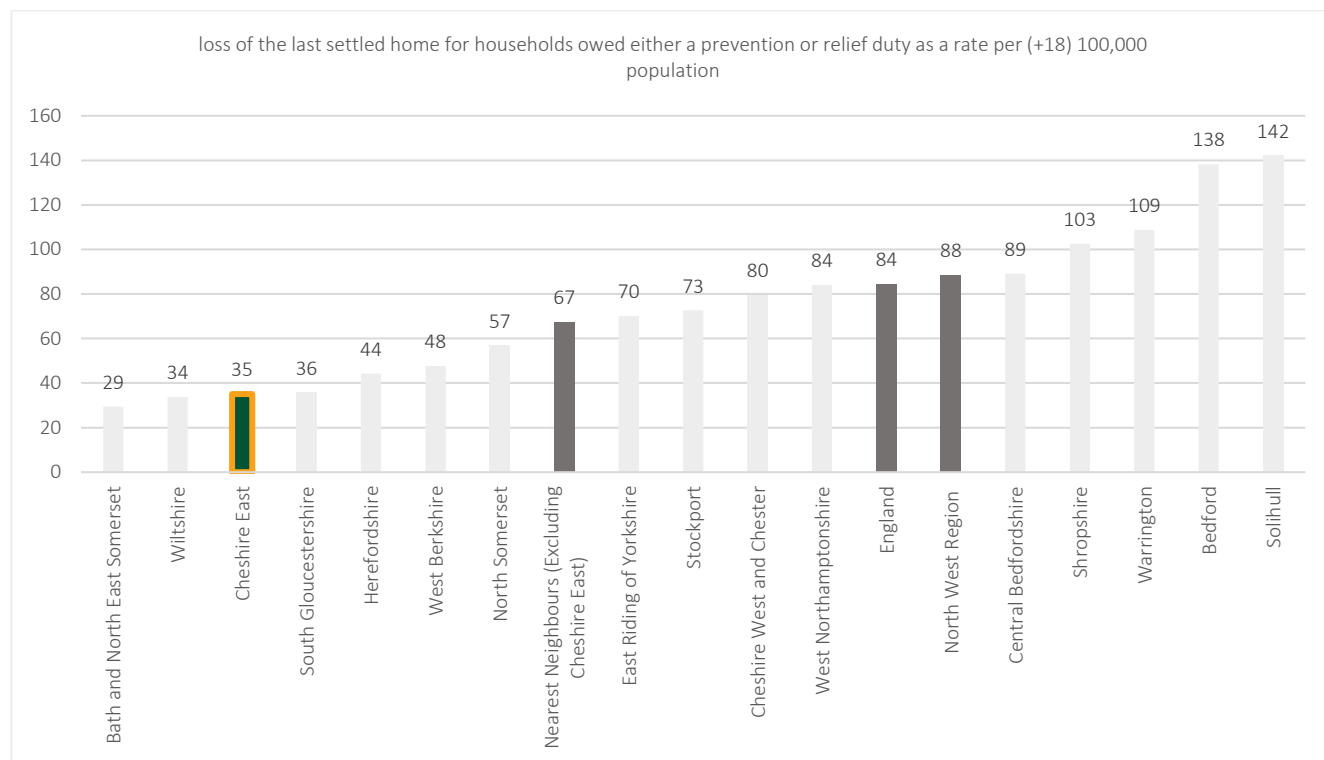
Domestic abuse as the reason for loss of the last settled home is low in comparison to the NSNs.

- Housing practitioners fed back that the lower numbers managed on the prevention duty pathway were related to how Housing Options manages individuals made homeless or at risk of homelessness due to domestic abuse in Cheshire East.
- Cheshire East’s implementation of the Whole Housing Approach means that individuals are diverted away from the homelessness route at an early stage.
- Over the past three years, an average of 19 cases per year have moved into a property as a result of a MARAC priority move (Part 6 priority, rather than a homeless prevention application).
 - 2022-23 – 17 cases
 - 2023-24 -25 cases
 - 2024-25 – 15 cases



The rate for homelessness approaches where domestic abuse was the reason for loss of the last settled home was low in comparison to the NSNs.

- In Cheshire East, the reason for the loss of the last settled home for households owed either a prevention or relief duty as a rate per (+18) 100,000 population is low in comparison to the NSNs.
- This figure will be impacted by the number of people diverted away from the homelessness route due to the application of the Whole Housing Approach in Cheshire East, which reduces the bureaucratic burden on individuals affected by domestic abuse.



PERPETRATORS

As part of the Whole Housing Approach Evaluation, the housing response to perpetrators was reviewed. The evaluation found that more perpetrators lost their settled homes due to perpetrating DA, and more were rehoused under the pilot compared with the baseline year.²²

- The reasons for increased action on perpetrators are not entirely clear, as stakeholder interviews indicate that less action was taken under the perpetrator component compared with other components, so there is no clear driver of increased action on perpetrators.
- However, the provider did increasingly work with perpetrators as well as survivors over these years, including offering a (limited) number of bed spaces for those who were harming. This increased activity may explain some of the rehousing data. As well, increased action from housing on perpetrators may be linked to increased awareness and understanding of domestic abuse across the local authority.

²² UCL, (2025), Final Evaluation Report: WHOLE HOUSING APPROACH PILOT IN CHESHIRE EAST

Housing data where the reason for loss of last settled home was 'DA alleged perpetrator excluded from property' shows a large increase in perpetrators removed in the pilot years.²³

- 29 perpetrators in year 1, 24 in year 2 and 25 in year 3, compared with just 3 in the baseline year.
- As well, housing data shows that the outcome 'perpetrator causing harm moved out' rose substantially, from 40 in the baseline year, to 154 in pilot year 1, 201 in year 2, and 124 in year 3.

As with removals, more perpetrators were rehoused during the pilot year compared with the baseline year.²⁴

- Just three perpetrators secured new accommodation in the baseline year, which rose under the pilot to 16 in year 1, 11 in year 2, and 10 in year 3.
- Most commonly, these perpetrators were rehoused in supported housing/hostel, with smaller numbers achieving a Registered Provider tenancy, private rental or staying with family and friends.

²³ UCL, (2025), Final Evaluation Report: WHOLE HOUSING APPROACH PILOT IN CHESHIRE EAST

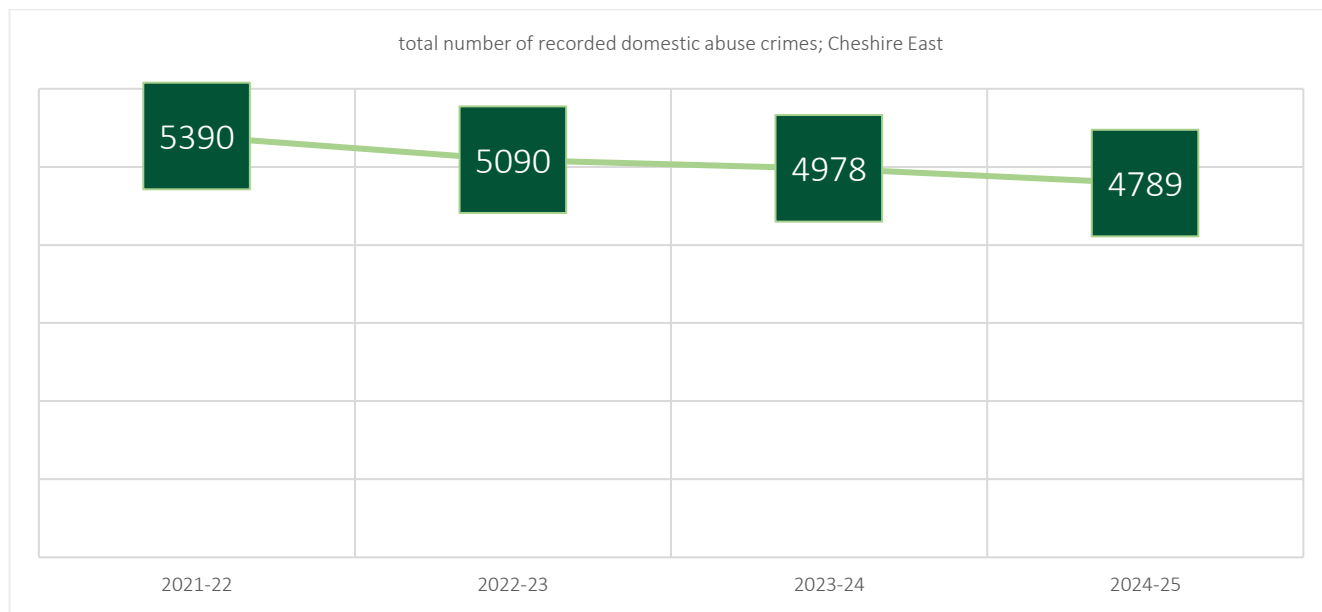
²⁴ UCL, (2025), Final Evaluation Report: WHOLE HOUSING APPROACH PILOT IN CHESHIRE EAST

POLICE

CRIME TRENDS

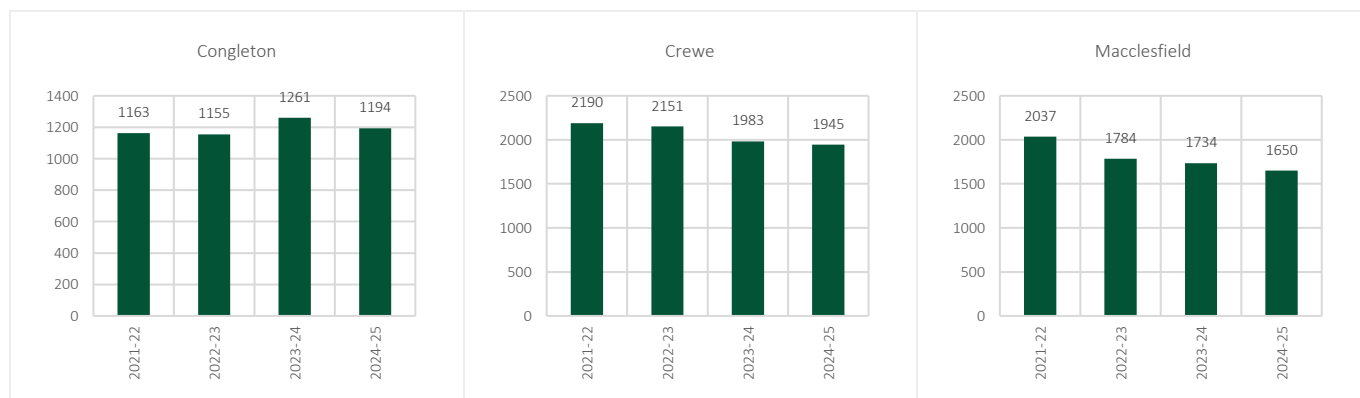
Recorded domestic abuse crimes are decreasing.

- There were 4,789 recorded domestic abuse crimes in Cheshire East during 2024-25. This represents a 3.8% decrease from the previous year.
- During the analysed period, which covers 2021-22 to 2024-25, there have been year-on-year decreases.



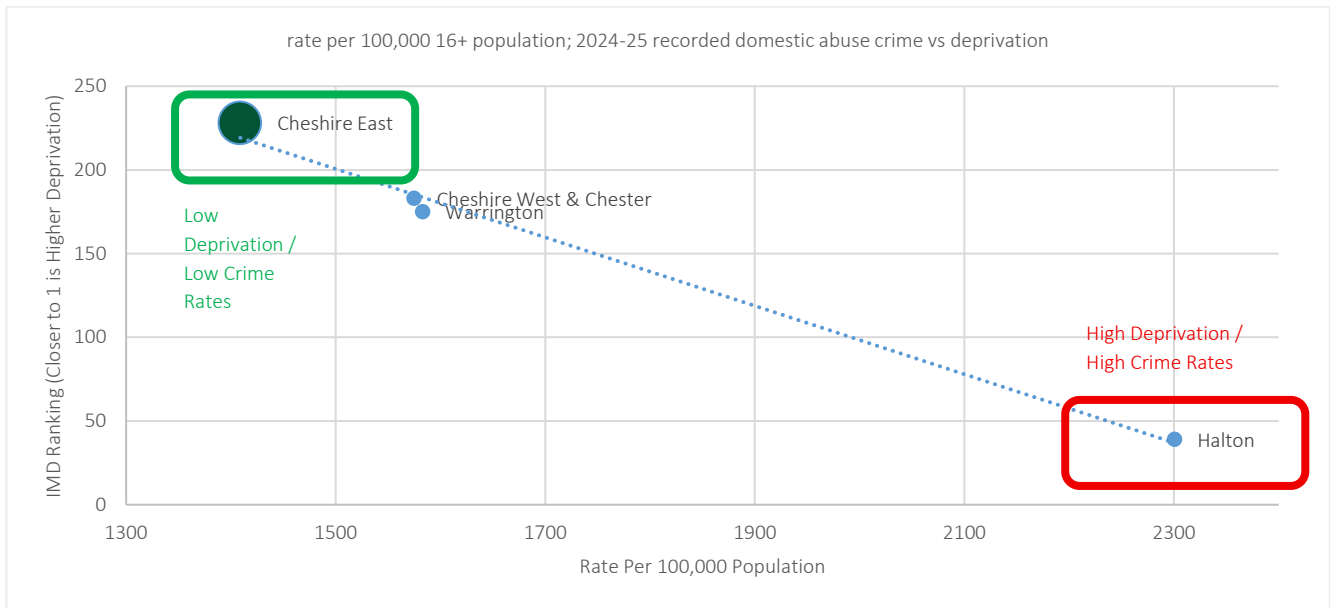
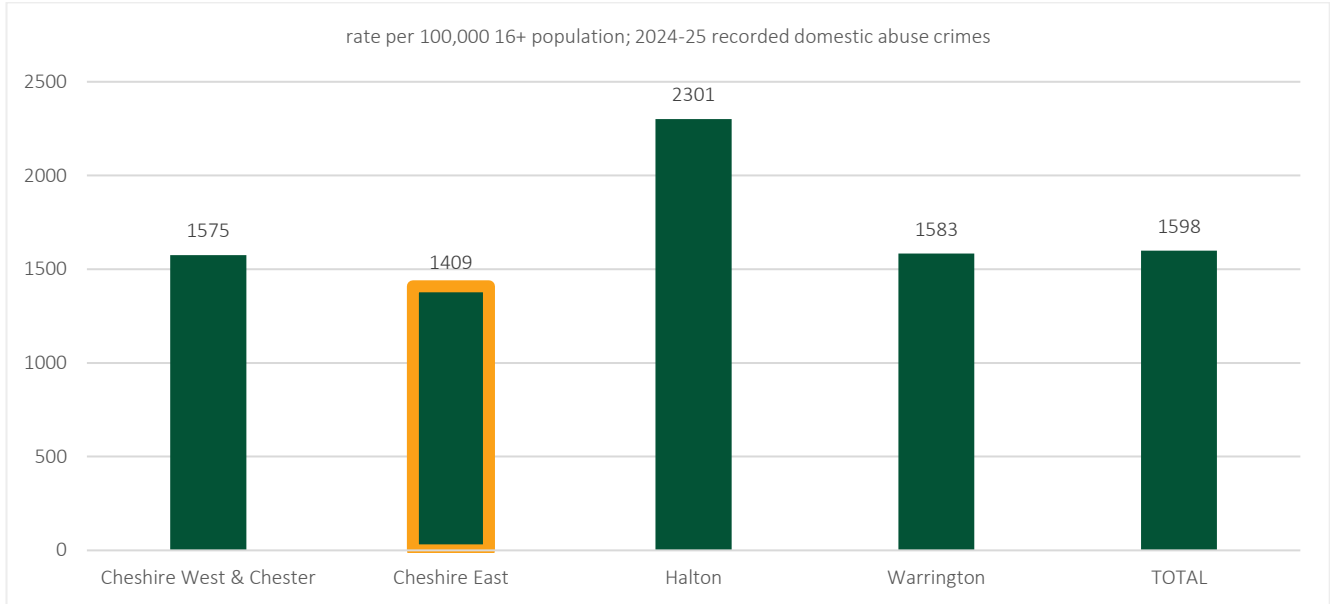
Macclesfield has seen the largest decrease.

- At -19%, Macclesfield has seen the largest decrease when comparing 2024-25 against the 2021-22 baseline.
- Crewe saw a decrease of 11% whilst Congleton saw an increase of 3% over the same period.



Cheshire East exhibit the lowest rates across the Cheshire region.

- As a rate per 100,000 population aged 16 and above, Cheshire East reports the lowest rates in 2024-25 among the Cheshire Police force area.
- There is a strong correlation between deprivation rates and domestic abuse rates across the Cheshire region.
- Analysis by locality is not possible due to how the geographical boundaries are defined.

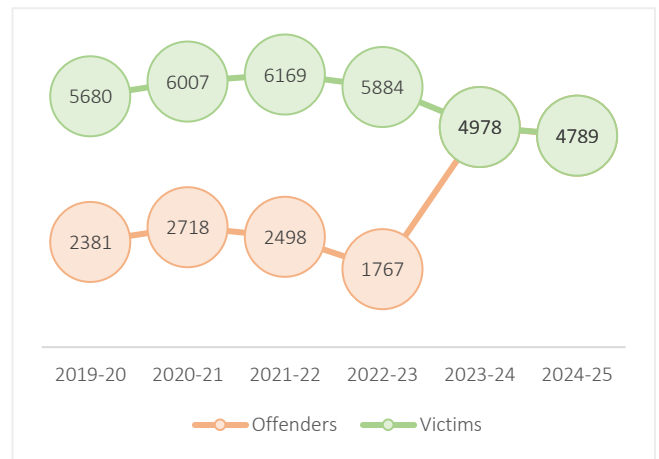


80% of offences flagged with domestic abuse were violence against the person related.

- Violence against the person accounts for the highest proportion of crimes where domestic abuse was flagged. This level has remained relatively stable over the past three years.
- Sexual offences have increased from 3% of the total in 2022-23 to 6% in 2024-25.
- Conversely, the rate of criminal damage has decreased from 5% to 3% during the same period.

The number of recorded offenders has increased over the past few years.

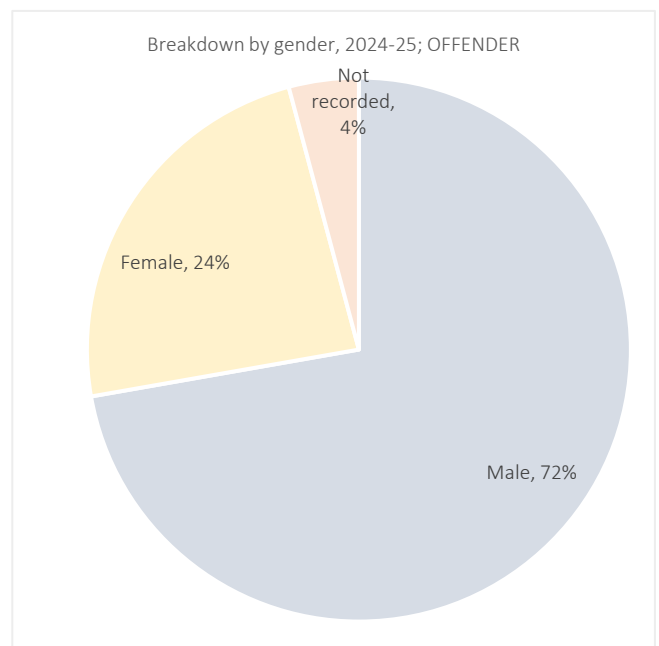
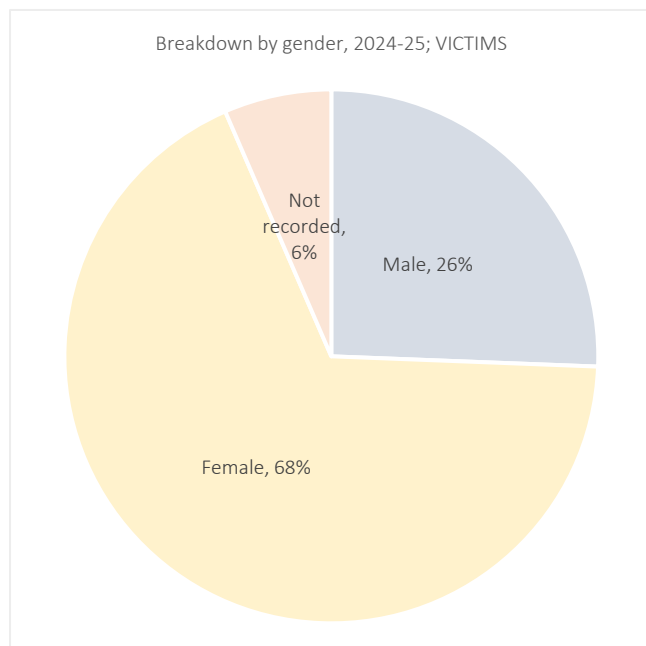
- The analysis is based on aggregated monthly counts over a year, which means there will be double-counting of individuals.
- Police practitioners highlighted that the increase in the number of recorded offenders could be attributed to improved recording and increased scrutiny by the police.



DEMOGRAPHICS

Females account for 68% of victim/survivors and 24% of offenders.

- The analysis looking at the victim/survivor and the offender data, shows that domestic abuse is a gendered crime.
- However, the underreporting of victims is expected to be higher for males.

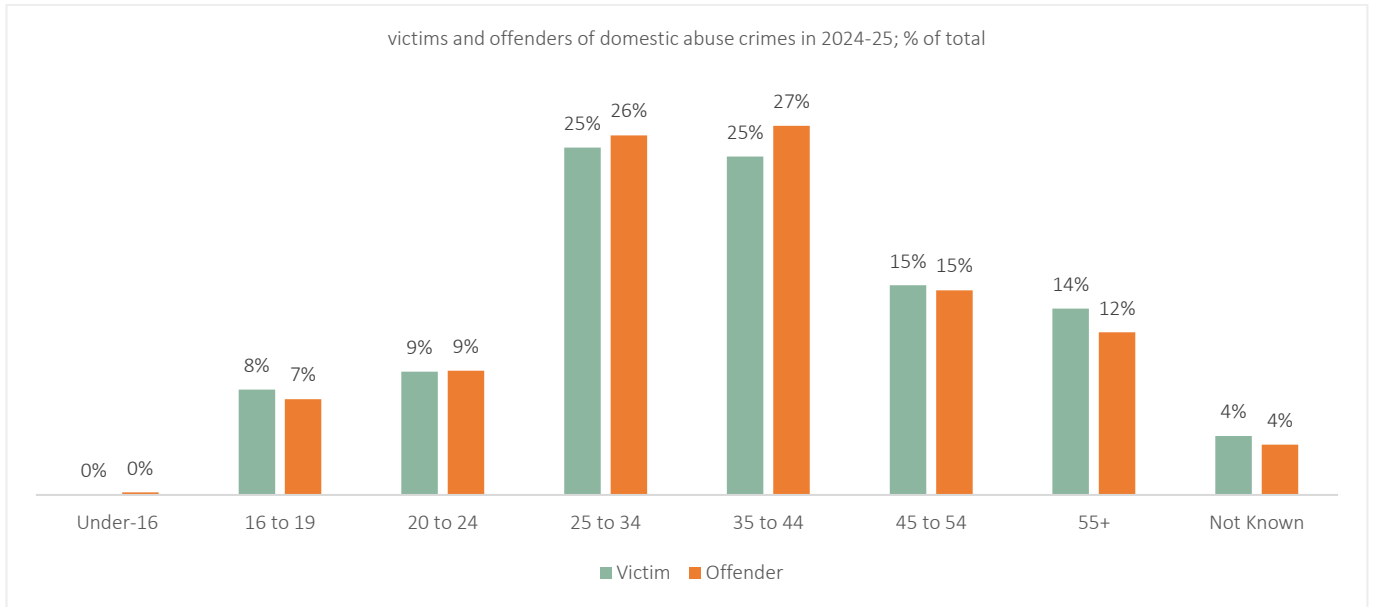


The recording of ethnicity is poor.

- Analysis around ethnicity is limited. In 2024-25:
 - 48% of victims had 'not stated' or 'not recorded'.
 - 32% of offenders had 'not stated' or 'not recorded'.

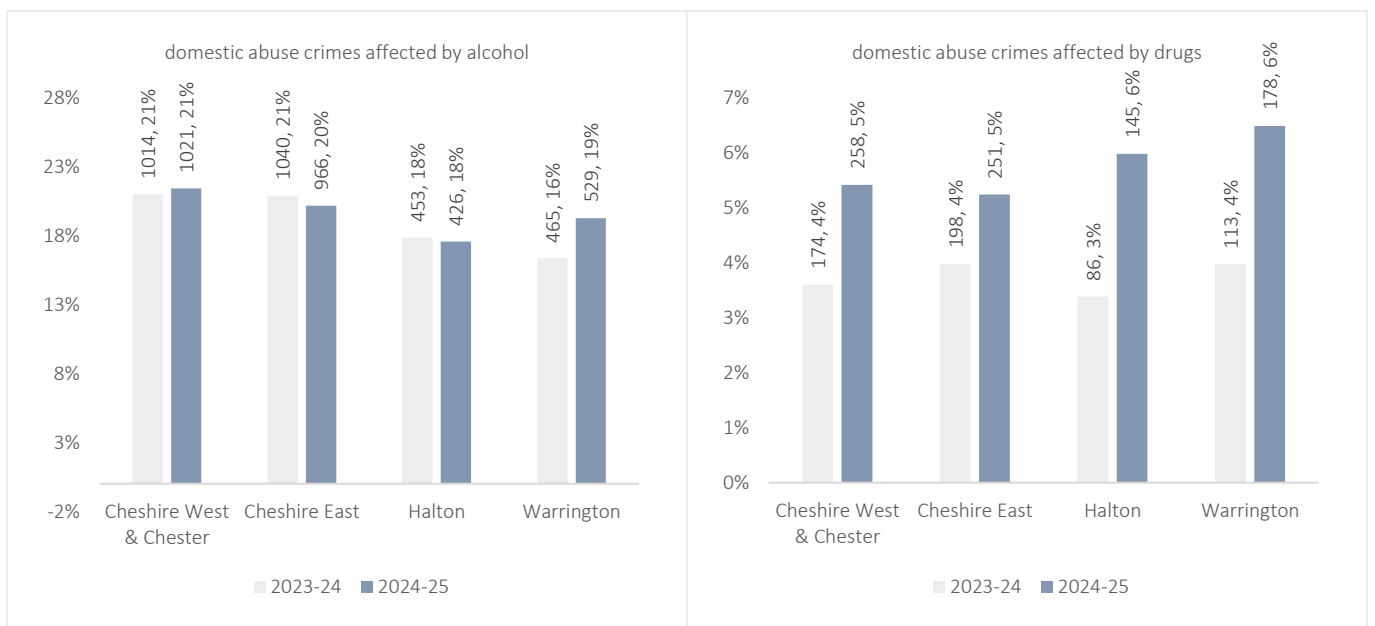
For both victims and offenders, the 25 to 34 and the 35 to 44 age groups account for a high proportion of the total.

- The long-term analysis shows that the 55+ age group has increased from 11% of the total in 2019-20 to 14% in 2024-25.
- The 25-34 age group has decreased from 31% to 25% over the same period.



20% of the domestic abuse crimes recorded in 2024-25 were affected by alcohol.

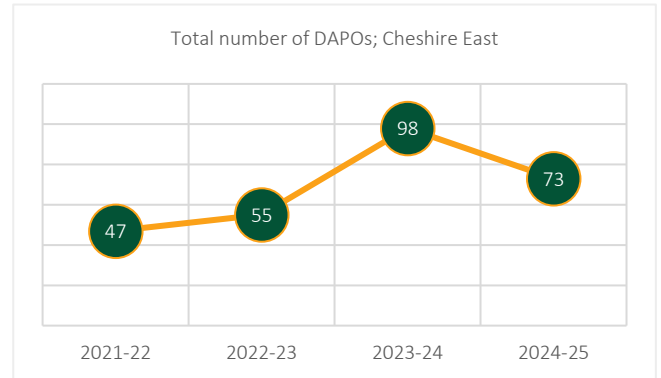
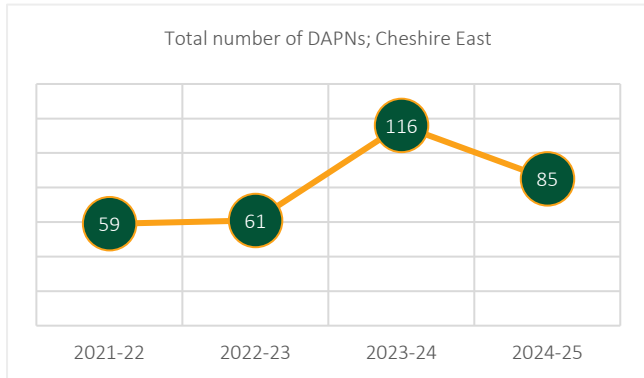
- In 2024-25, 20% of domestic abuse crimes recorded were affected by alcohol. This is similar to the previous year.
- In Cheshire East, 5% of domestic abuse crimes recorded were affected by drugs, which is slightly higher than the previous year.



DOMESTIC ABUSE PROTECTION NOTICES/ ORDERS

Following a peak in 2023-24, both DAPNs and DAPOs saw a decrease in 2024-25.

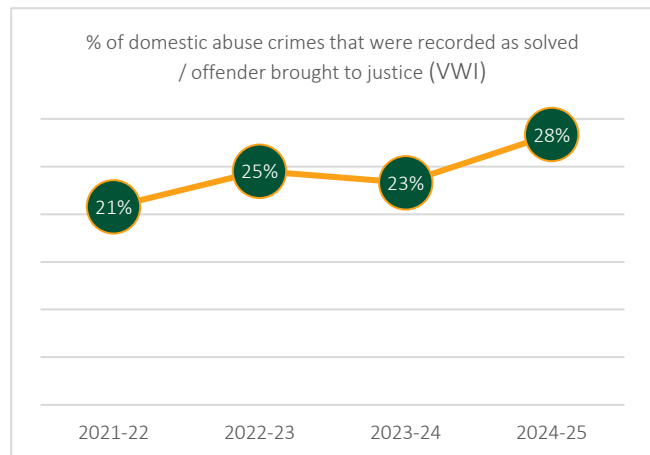
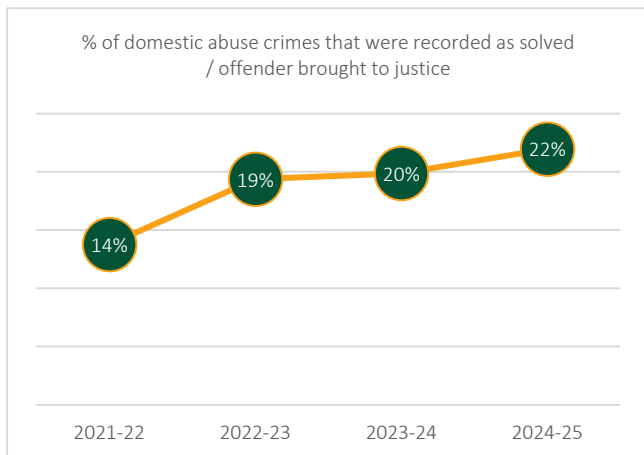
- Data is available at a locality level. Congleton has seen year-on-year increases, whereas Crewe and Macclesfield have both seen a decrease in 2024-25.



CRIMES SOLVED / OFFENDERS BROUGHT TO JUSTICE

There has been an increase in the % of domestic abuse crimes that were recorded as solved / offender brought to justice²⁵.

- 22% of domestic abuse crimes in 2024-25 were solved. This is an increase from the previous years.
- This rate increases to 28% when looking specifically at Violence with Injury crimes where domestic abuse was flagged.



²⁵ Count of domestic abuse crimes recorded as solved / count of domestic abuse crimes in the same period.

HEALTH

IRIS PROGRAMME

The IRIS Programme is not commissioned in Cheshire East.

- The IRIS Programme²⁶ is a collaboration between primary care and third-sector organisations specialising in domestic abuse. Core areas of the programme include:
 - Ongoing training
 - Education and consultancy for the clinical team and administrative staff
 - Care pathways for primary health care practitioners
 - An enhanced referral pathway to specialist domestic violence services for patients with experience of domestic abuse.

Healthcare representatives who covered Cheshire West & Chester, where an IRIS programme is in place, highlighted the positives of the programme.

- Practitioners highlighted a positive response to the IRIS programme in Cheshire West & Chester. GPs can see the benefit of having a pathway to direct an individual who discloses domestic abuse to.

“[Regarding the IRIS Programme] It is ideal to have domestic abuse support for GPs”.

ICB Representative

²⁶ IRIS Programme

HOSPITAL IDVA

Two hospital IDVA posts are operating in Cheshire East.

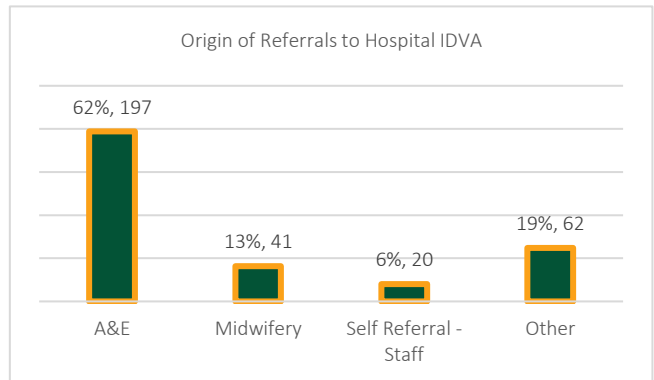
- The Hospital IDVA posts cover Leighton and Macclesfield Hospitals.

The hospital IDVA receives around 9-10 referrals a month.

- Data covering the 11th of August 2022 to the 25th of June 2025 was provided for use in this Needs Assessment.

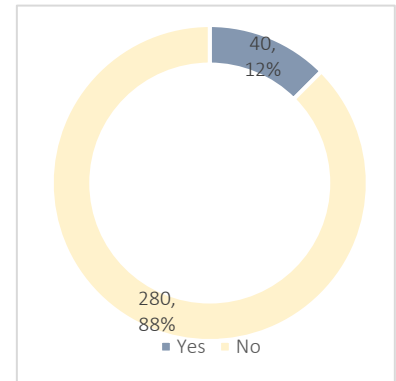
The majority of referrals originated from the Accident and Emergency department.

- 62% of referrals were from A&E.
- During this period, 41 of the referrals were from midwifery.
- The data shows that 32 of the individuals were pregnant.
- “Other” encompasses referrals from the 11 wards and other departments, such as physiotherapy.



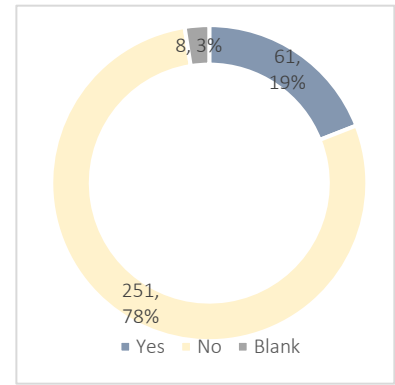
12% of referrals were further referred to Adult Social Care.

- Of those who were not referred to ASC, 44(16%) were “Already known, Social Worker has made aware of attendance”



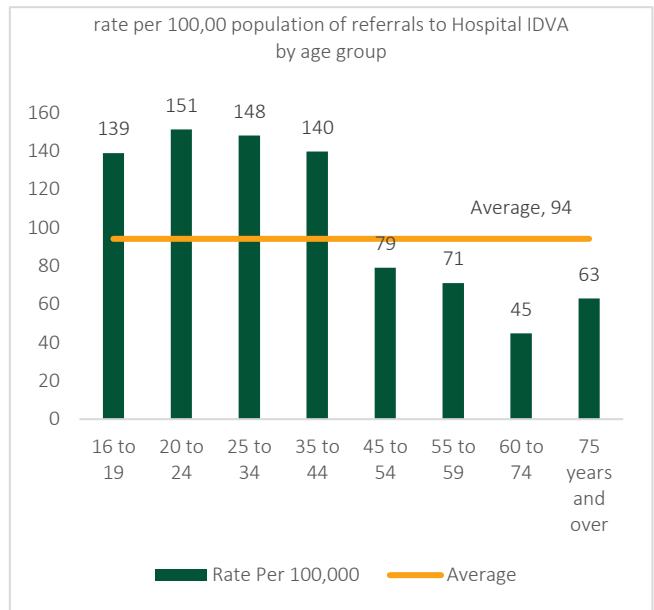
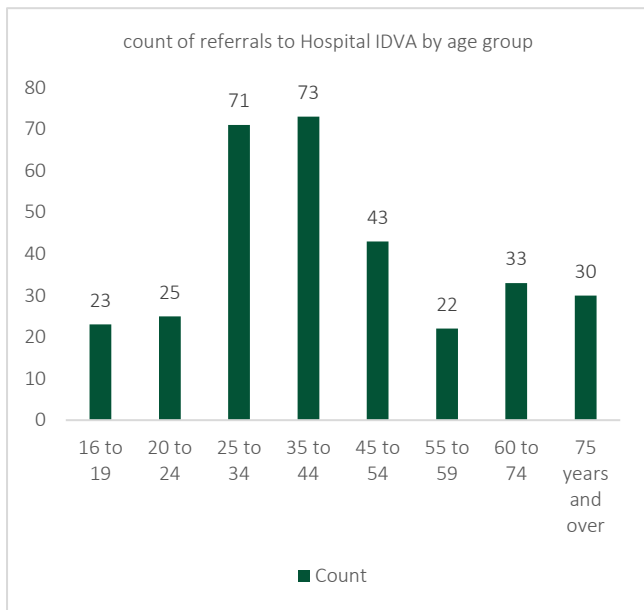
19% of referrals were further referred to CSC Social Care.

- Of those who were not referred to ASC, 16 (18%) were “Already known, Social Worker has made aware of attendance”, and 168 (67%) had no children.



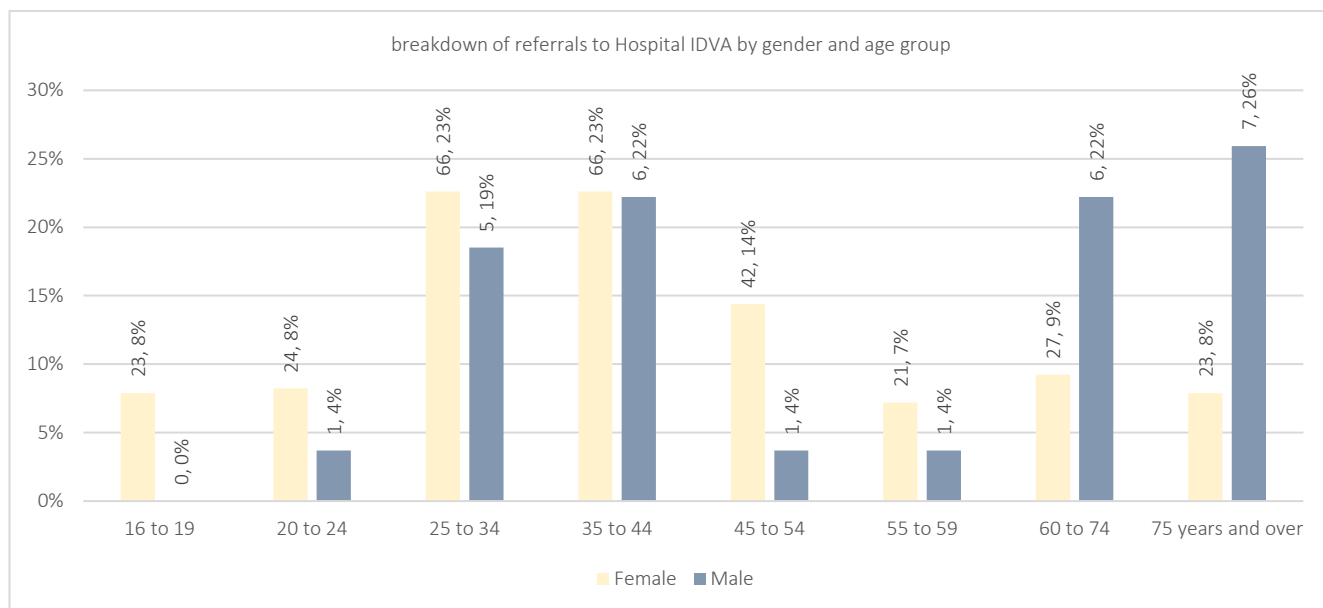
The 25-34 and the 35-44 age groups have the highest number of referrals.

- The 25-34 and the 35-44 age groups have the highest number of referrals across the analysed period.
- In terms of rates per 100,000 of the population, all age groups up to 44 exhibit similar rates.
- 27% of referrals were for individuals over the age of 55.



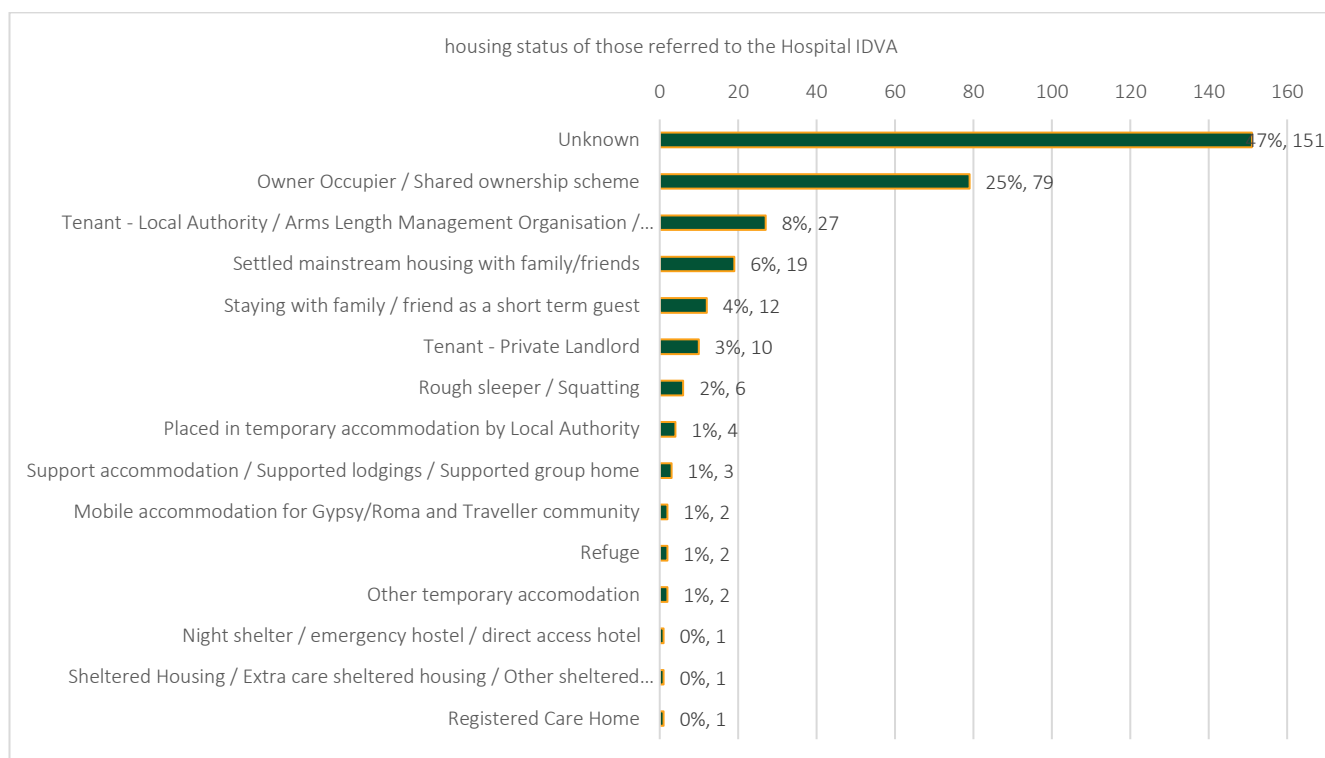
91% of the referrals were for females.

- A high rate of referrals was for females.
- A breakdown by age group and gender shows that a high percentage of referrals for males were for the 60+ age group.



Where the housing status was recorded, the majority were 'owner-occupied/shared ownership scheme'.

- Nearly half of those referred to the Hospital IDVA did not have their housing status recorded.
- Where the housing status was recorded, the majority were 'owner-occupied/shared ownership scheme'.

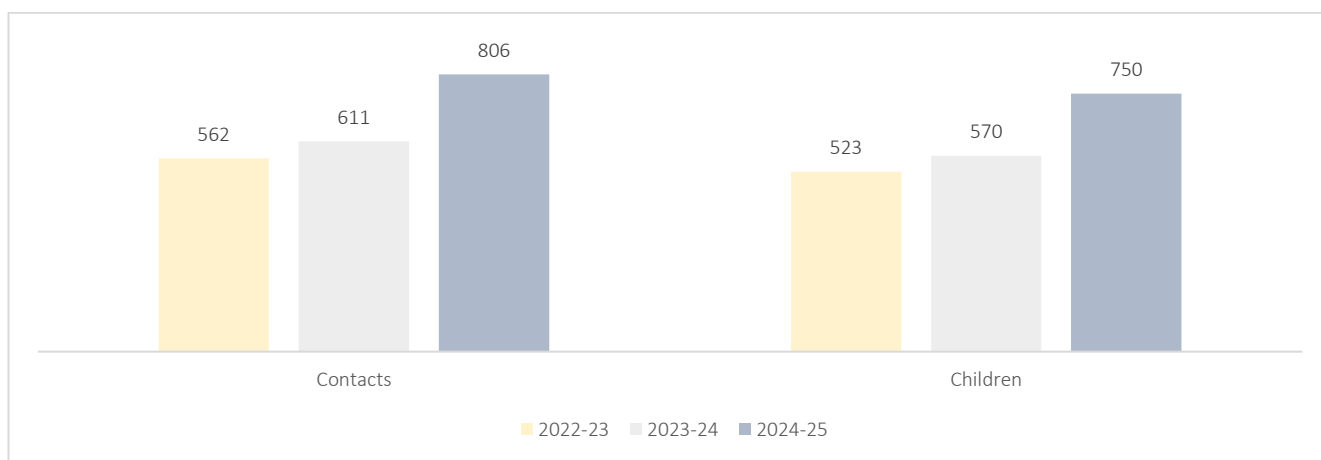


CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

CHESHIRE EAST CONSULTATION SERVICE

The Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS) is the ‘front door’ for access to services, support and advice for children and their families, from early help and support through to safeguarding and child protection.

- For this assessment, we were provided with high-level figures of the number of cases seen by ChECS where domestic abuse was identified as a need.
- The number of contacts and the number of children included in referrals have increased over the past three years.
- In 2024-25, there were 806 contacts with ChECS where domestic abuse was highlighted as a need.



CHILDREN IN NEED

- The following analysis is based on the data from “Characteristics of Children in Need: Statistics on children referred to and assessed by Children's Social Services for the year ending 31 March 2024.”²⁷ 2024-25 data is not expected until October 2025.
- Children in need are a legally defined group of children (as defined under the Children Act 1989) who are assessed as requiring help and protection due to developmental or health risks. This group includes those on child-in-need plans, those on child protection plans, children looked after by local authorities, care leavers and disabled children. Children in need also include young people aged 18 or over who continue to receive care, accommodation or support from children's services and unborn children.
- Children in need statistics provide information on:
 - children in need of social care services;
 - children referred to social care services;
 - assessments undertaken, primary need at assessment and factors identified at the end of assessment;
 - Section 47 enquiries (carried out by a local authority if they suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm) and initial child protection conferences;

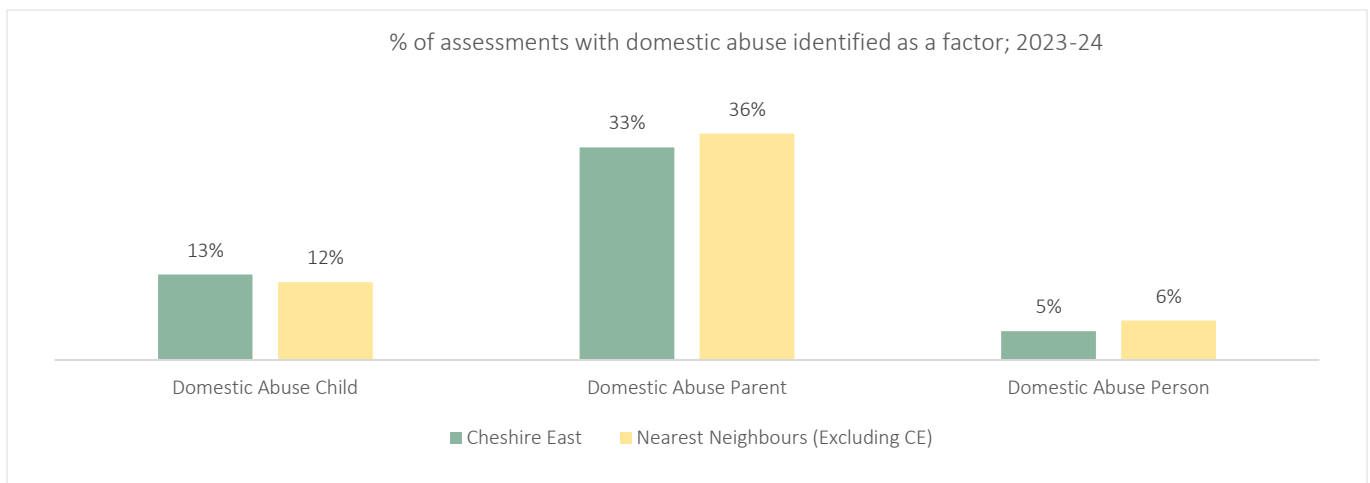
²⁷ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-in-need>

The analysis looks at the “factors identified at the end of assessment by local authority”:

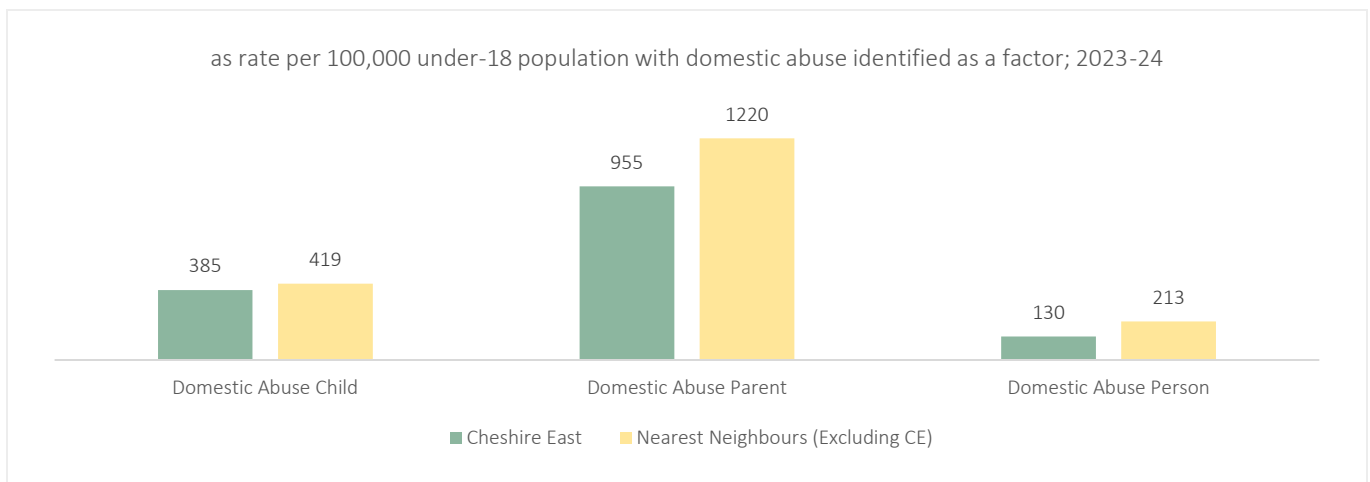
- “Domestic Abuse Child” - Domestic abuse: concerns child is a victim
- “Domestic Abuse Parent” - Domestic abuse: concerns parent is a victim
- “Domestic Abuse Person” - Domestic abuse: concerns another person is a victim

For “domestic abuse parent”, the rates in Cheshire East are lower than the Nearest Statistical Neighbours (NSNs).

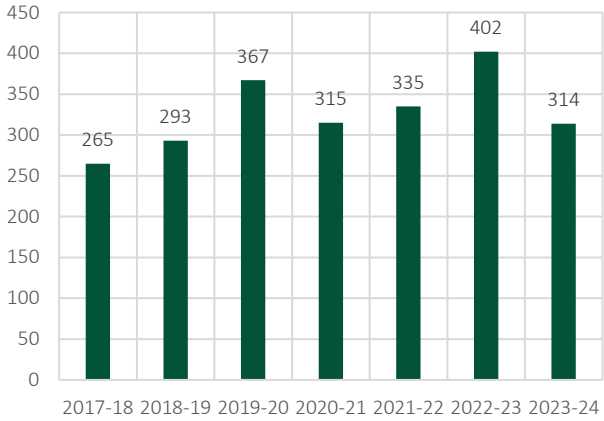
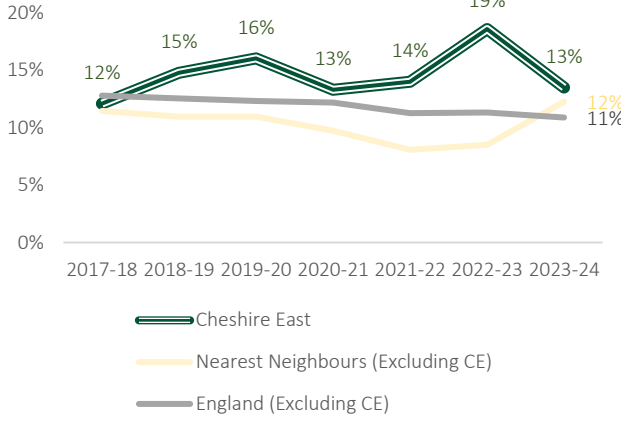
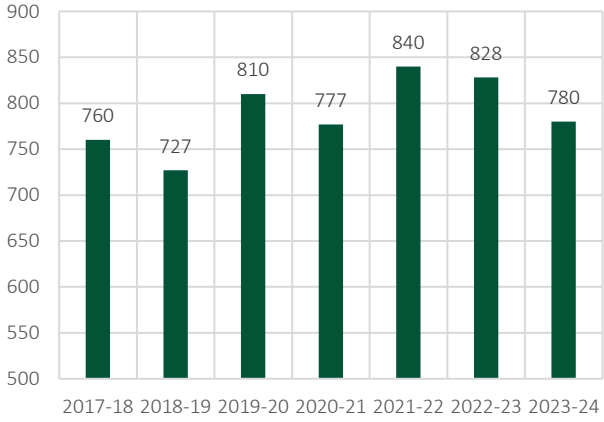
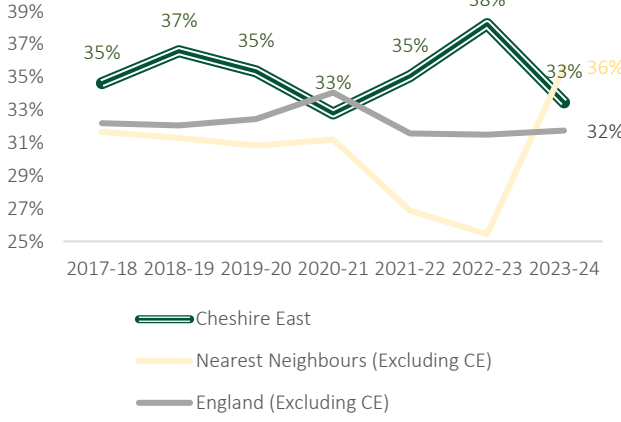
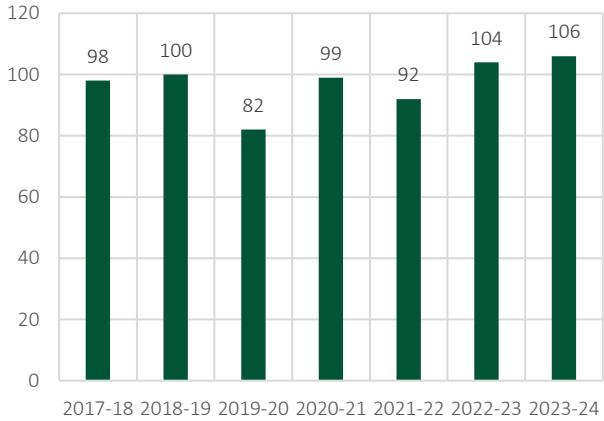
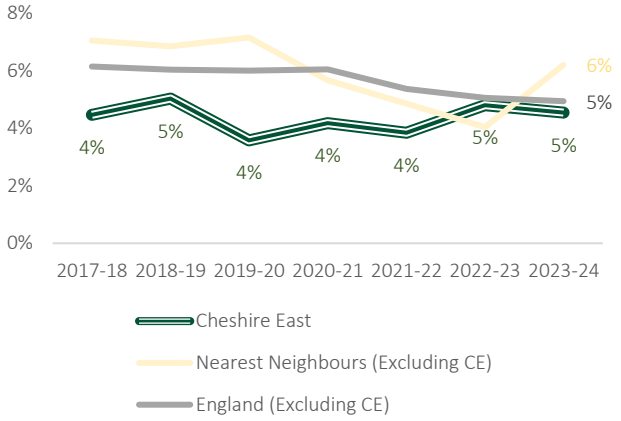
- Comparing the rates as a percentage of assessments, the 33% in Cheshire East is slightly lower than the 36% average for the NSN.



- As a rate per under-18 population instead of assessments, concerns around the parent are notably lower than the NSN average.



2022-23 saw a peak number of assessments for domestic abuse, where there were concerns around the child.

Count; Domestic abuse child.	Historical rate comparison of domestic abuse child; % of assessments.																																																
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MARAC

There is a one-month gap in the MARAC data.

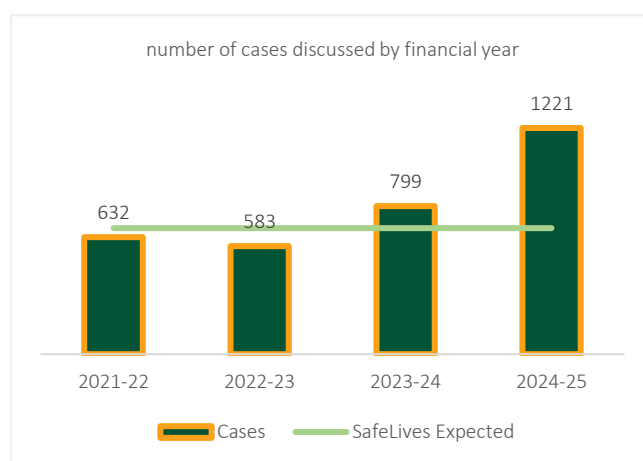
- Locally recorded data provided for this Rapid Review covers April 2021 to August 2025, however, due to a change in recording practices, there is a gap in data for June 2024.
- To address this, a monthly average was used to cover the financial years, or where the numbers are low, an estimate was used based on the monthly average during 2024-25.

Benchmarking and comparisons are provided by SafeLives guidance.

- For this Rapid Review, the local analysis is benchmarked and compared against the SafeLives guidance “Reviewing your Marac data”.
- This is the latest available guidance, however, new guidance is expected soon.

The number of cases discussed in Cheshire East far exceeds SafeLives estimates.

- SafeLives estimates an expected level of 40 cases per 10,000 of the adult female population per year. This equates to 680 cases in Cheshire East.
- During 2024-25, there were an average of 102 cases per month²⁸, which equates to 1,220 for the year.
- The historical analysis shows that there has been a significant increase in the number of cases discussed in 2024-25 compared to previous years.



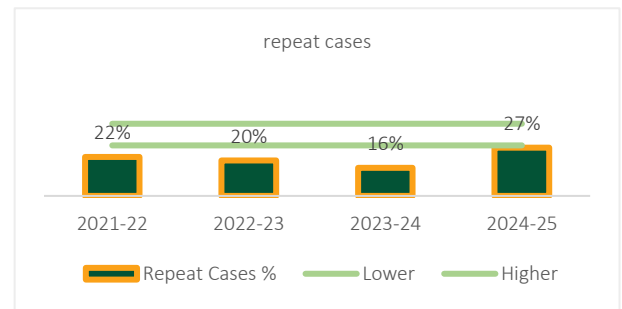
During 2024-25, 79% of referrals were from the Police.

- The 79% (81 cases) monthly average during 2024-25 exceeds the SafeLives figure of 60-75%.
- The percentage of referrals from the Police in previous years was lower (monthly average):
 - 2021-22: 56% (30 cases)
 - 2022-23: 60% (29 cases)
 - 2023-24: 59% (39 cases)

²⁸ June 2024 data missing.

The rate of repeat cases is lower than the SafeLives expected figure.

- SafeLives gives an expected figure of 28-40%.
- Historically, the rate of repeat cases in Cheshire East falls below this range.



The number and rate of referrals from the black minority community are low.

- 10.4% of the population in Cheshire East is from an ethnic minority group, however, less than 1% of the referrals to MARAC are from this cohort.

The number and rate of referrals from the LGBT community are lower than SafeLives estimates.

- Cases where the individual who experienced domestic abuse was from an LGBT group accounted for 0-1% of the total, with 2024-25 showing no cases discussed.
- SafeLives gives an expected range of 2.5-5.8%.

The number and rate of cases where the victim has a disability are lower than SafeLives estimates.

- SafeLives gives an expected figure of 23%. However, national figures indicate a 10% rate.
- The rates in Cheshire East are low, with 2024-25 showing no cases discussed.
- 2021-22 and 2023-24 saw the highest rates at 3-4%.

The number and rate of cases where the victim is male are lower than SafeLives estimates.

- The SafeLives expected rate is between the national average (6.5%) and 10%.
- Prior to 2024-25, the rates were between 5-7%, however, this dropped to 1% for 2024-25.

Young people causing harm account for less than 1% of all cases.

- This is the number of people causing harm aged 17 or below in relation to a victim discussed at MARAC.
- The Number harming others aged 17 or below saw a peak during 2023-24, where there were 10 recorded, accounting for 1% of the total cases.

Victims aged 16 – 17 years accounted for less than 1% of all cases in 2024-25.

- The number of victims aged 16-17 saw a peak during 2023-24, with 14 recorded cases, which accounted for 2% of the total cases.

The change in reporting practices has impacted the data.

- MARAC administration transferred from the local systems to Cheshire Police during 2024-25.
- The analysis indicates that this has impacted the data:
 - Referral numbers have increased.
 - Referrals from the police have increased.
 - LGBT cases are down.
 - Disability cases are down.
 - Male cases are down.
 - Victims aged 16 – 17 years are down.
 - Young people causing harm is down.

26% of cases in 2024-25 had children in the household.

- During 2024-25²⁹, there were 1167 children in the households of the cases discussed.
- Of the 939 cases covering July 2024 to March 2025, 240 had children in the household. This equates to 26% of the total.

²⁹ 11 months; June 2024 data missing.

ENGAGEMENT

INTERVIEWS

As part of the assessment, S2 researchers conducted interviews with residents of safe accommodation. Topics covered include how they accessed safe accommodation and the support they received.

In total, one-to-one interviews were completed with five residents, including a child of one of the residents.

Thematic summaries of interviews



PATHWAYS INTO SUPPORT

The referral routes into safe accommodation varied.

Interviewee 1 was referred by the police. Interviewees 2 and 4 were referred by social care and IDVAs. Interviewee 3 self-referred via the MyCWA community team.

The initial contact with MyCWA was prompt and supportive in most cases. Interviewees expressed initial anxiety about entering a refuge setting.



ACCESS TO SAFE ACCOMMODATION

Once accessed, safe accommodation was appreciated and described as a turning point. Survivors felt safe, supported, and more independent in dispersed housing or individual flats. Some interviewees had positive reactions to the accommodation after initial fears (Interview 1).

Long stays in refuges occurred due to visa or resettlement barriers (Interview 1).



IMMIGRATION STATUS AND NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS

Immigration status significantly affected interviewees ability to access safe accommodation and financial support (Interviews 1,3 and 4). Spousal visas or temporary domestic abuse visas meant they could not work or access public funds.

Interviewees described the stress of dealing with the Home Office alongside the trauma of abuse.

Legal support and advocacy was limited.



EXPERIENCE OF HOUSING

Once accessed, safe accommodation was appreciated and described as a turning point. Survivors felt safe, supported, and more independent in dispersed housing or individual flats. Some interviewees had positive reactions to the accommodation after initial fears (Interview 1).

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PARENTING AND CHILDREN

Survivors spoke about the difficulty of parenting while recovering from trauma.

Regarding child support, educational support, emotional wellbeing check-ins, and keyworker mediation was frequently mentioned.



PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT AND RESILIENCE

Survivors described feelings of isolation, fear, and emotional abuse continuing post-separation.

The act of leaving was described as "jumping off a cliff" (Interview 1), showing the emotional toll and risk involved.

Group work (e.g. the Gateway Programme) helped survivors recognise abuse patterns and regain confidence.



SUPPORT SERVICES AND EMOTIONAL RECOVERY

MyCWA support was praised across all interviews. Emotional, legal, housing, and practical support were mentioned.

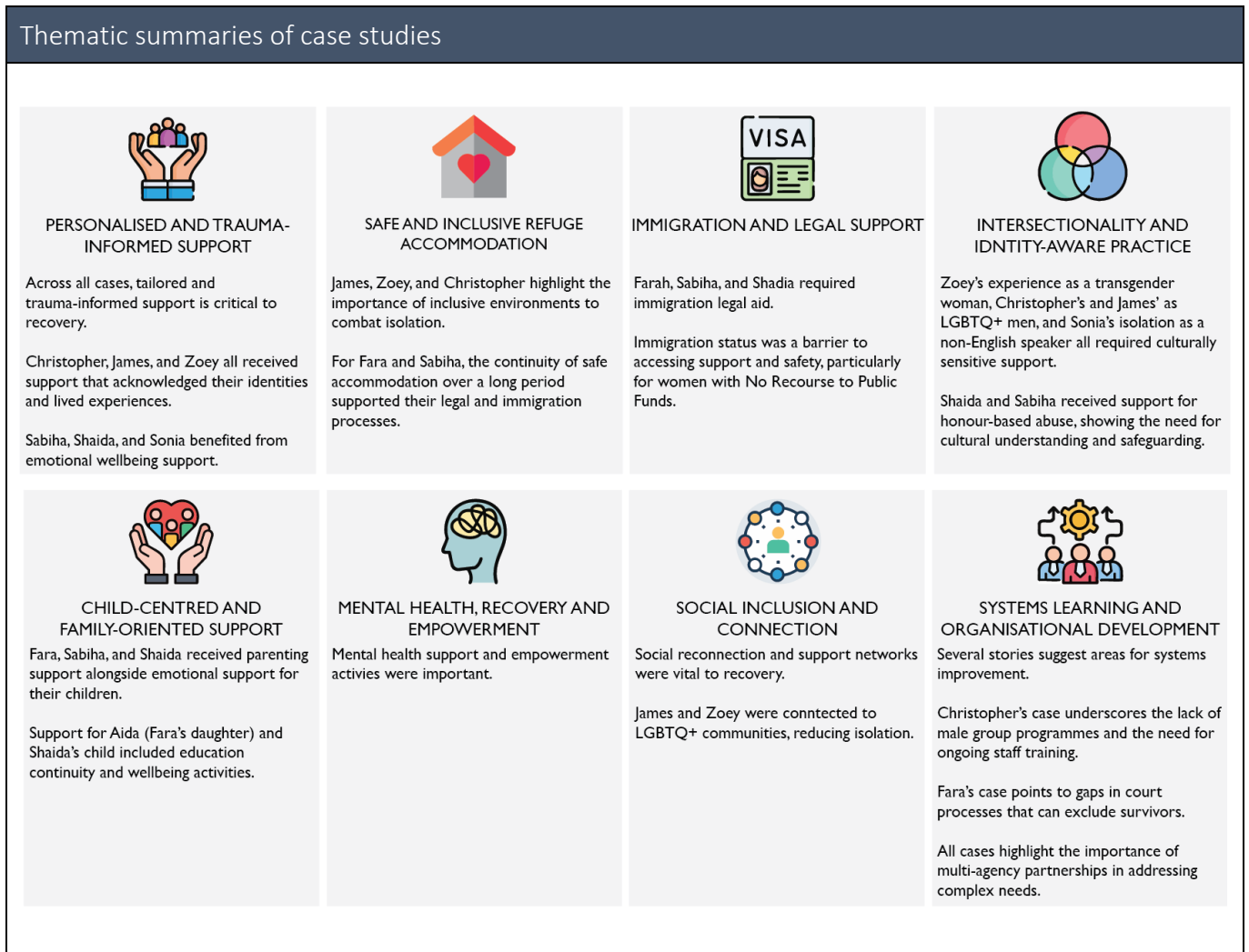
Regular check-ins, 1-2-1 support, safety planning, and group sessions contributed to recovery.

Mediation helped family relationships, particularly with teenage children (Interview 1).

CASE STUDIES

As part of the assessment, MyCWA provided the S2 researchers with 8 case studies of residents of their safe accommodation.

The diagram below provides a thematic analysis of the eight case studies.



SURVEY

As part of the assessment, the S2 researchers ran a survey with current and former MyCWA residents regarding their experiences of safe accommodation.

Four individuals responded to the survey.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Respondents emphasised safety and security.

- “My CWA refuge is the first place that I have felt safe in a very long time.”
- “I felt safe. There was always support available...”

Respondents highlighted concerns about shared or insecure environments.

- “I wouldn't like a shared space because I want my own space so I can feel safe and secure.”
- “Not having my own bathroom/kitchen space would be a big barrier...”

TYPE AND PREFERENCES FOR ACCOMMODATION

There was a strong preference for self-contained or dispersed accommodation.

- “A self-contained flat or house in the community (dispersed accommodation)...”
- “Our own property where we could live independently...”
- “I wouldn't be comfortable with a hostel environment...”

There were mixed views on communal spaces. One respondent valued communal spaces for their children's social needs.

- “Definitely a communal place, so my child would be able to make friends and get to play.”

One found communal spaces made them anxious.

- “My anxiety prevents me from group work and living in a communal space.”

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS AND ACCESSIBILITY

Respondents highlighted their physical and emotional needs.

- “I have/had mobility issues and was offered a downstairs room...”
- “Nerves around ground floor accommodation and access over garden fence.”
- “I trust that my keyworker will support my emotional wellbeing...”

QUALITY AND NATURE OF SUPPORT

Respondents placed a high value on support staff and emotional support.

- “Support has been amazing!”
- “Staff were on site regularly, and I knew that I couldn’t be found.”
- “My support worker was amazing and really helped me...”
- “The support is open and allows me to build my confidence...”

IMPACT OF SUPPORT AND ACCOMMODATION

Facilitated recovery and independence.

- “Living in refuge has lessened my anxiety...”
- “I’ve gained more understanding of what’s happened to me...”
- “The process has been difficult, but the support... has been above and beyond.”

LOCATION

Respondents valued proximity to their family

- “Able to stay in my own safe space, nearby to family and friends.”
- “Previously, only offered options extremely far away from home...”

FOCUS GROUPS

Staff from Cheshire East Council completed focus groups with those affected by domestic abuse.

The groups covered the following topics:

- Pets
- Neurodiversity
- Trauma
- Space to regulate
- Boundaries and safe space

As part of the Whole Housing Approach evaluation, Disability Positive ran engagement with people with neurodisabilities who were impacted by domestic abuse.

The engagement led to several recommendations:

1. Ask about an individual's communication needs and requirements.
2. Implement reasonable adjustments from the start of the process.
3. Provide information in accessible formats tailored to suit the individual.
4. Enable one key contact/ person for individuals to communicate with.
5. Provide a written summary of information following meetings.
6. Provide a terminology glossary.
7. Encourage staff retention to ensure consistency of support.
8. Coordinate processes across the UK to ensure consistent processes.
9. Ensure access to advocates who understand individual needs.
10. Co-produce policies and services with people who have lived experience.
11. Provide awareness training across disability, domestic abuse and intersectionality.
12. Consider using cards and lanyards to show that an individual has lived experience.

END