

Options for setting up a Sanctuary Scheme

Sanctuary Scheme Workshop
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Practice note for discussion, prepared by the ODPM

Introduction

Councils play the vital and central role in tackling domestic violence through their own actions and helping through funding and coordinating the actions of partners. To highlight the need for sustained local authority action, and demonstrating that domestic violence is not an issue for the criminal justice system alone, the government has published a revised Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI 225) for domestic violence.

There are many reasons why local authorities need to tackle domestic violence. Local government has statutory responsibilities to work in partnership with other agencies to reduce crime and disorder. And, with domestic violence making up 25% of all recorded violent crime, the impact is obvious. What is less well documented is the impact that domestic violence has on local authority services such as housing, homelessness, and social services.

The revised domestic violence indicator (BV 225) came into force on 1 April 2005. Its purpose is to assess the overall provision and effectiveness of local authority services designed to help victims of domestic violence and prevent further domestic violence. It includes 11 questions covering a range of activities. The indicator will be measured as a percentage score of the number of questions to which an authority can answer 'yes'.

A key part of this new indicator is the requirement for a local authority to develop a sanctuary scheme enabling victims of domestic violence to choose whether to remain in their home with professionally installed security measures. As a result many local authorities are in the process of developing local sanctuary schemes and this short practice note is aimed at helping them to develop schemes that are effective.

What is the Sanctuary requirement in BVPI 225?

It is contained in section seven of the indicator:

“7: Has the local authority developed, launched and promoted a ‘sanctuary’ type scheme to enable victims and their children to remain in their own home, where they choose to do so and where safety can be guaranteed? (For smaller district authorities, of fewer than 35,000 households this can be arranged in partnership with neighbouring authorities).

Definition: A sanctuary type scheme must provide security measures to allow the woman to remain in her home where she chooses to do so, where safety can be guaranteed and the violent partner no longer lives within the home. It must be available across tenures where the landlord of a property has given permission for the work to be carried out. It must consist of additional security to any main entrance doors to the accommodation and locks to any vulnerable windows. Wherever possible it must provide a safe room in the home secured with a solid core door and additional locks. It is essential that this service is only provided where it is the clear choice of the victim. The scheme should be implemented through a partnership with the police and/or the voluntary sector that could provide supplementary support. It may be provided directly by the local authority or through a third party funded as part of the local authority’s homelessness prevention work through grants that may be available for crime reduction initiatives.”

Sanctuary projects are designed to enable victims to stay in their own homes where this is possible and desired, rather than being forced to move and disrupting education,

employment and family networks. These problems can be exacerbated by victims of domestic violence frequently being forced to move on numerous occasions. It should also be noted that, apart from the social benefits, the cost of keeping a victim and their family in their home can be considerably less expensive than the provision of emergency accommodation.

Important components of the model include:

- The scheme is voluntary and available to women living in any tenure.
- It provides additional security, enabling victims of domestic violence to remain in their own homes where they wish, and it is appropriate, for them to do so.
- It should operate in conjunction with the police and the voluntary sector.
- As well as installing new or extra locks and lighting, a 'secure sanctuary' is created by creating a safe room with reinforced doors and bolts.
- Arrangements are tailored to the needs and circumstances of the individuals involved.

Fifty schemes were established in 2003/04, using funding from the ODPM's Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate's grant programme. Other forms of housing outreach and target hardening initiatives have also proved successful in assisting victims of domestic violence.

A key factor for authorities to consider is the level of support for women leaving refuges as well as services for victims who wish to remain in their own homes. Physical security arrangements are not enough on their own, but need to be promoted alongside a range of other options such as outreach and advocacy services. Sanctuary schemes will not be appropriate, or safe, in all instances.

How did Sanctuary schemes start?

The 'sanctuary scheme' is a victim centred initiative, which aims to make it possible for victims of domestic violence and hate crime to remain in their homes and feel safe.

Partners working in the field have long identified that despite all of the good work being done to help victims of domestic violence, many survivors felt isolated and often gripped by the fear of repeat incidents. This frequently resulted in them having to move home on numerous occasions, with the associated problems of moving away from family and friends and finding new schools for their children.

Home security and personal safety advice was always given, however there were no provisions in place for providing the victims with additional physical security measures to make the option of remaining in their home was a realistic one.

The scheme started in September 2002 in Harrow as a partnership between the police Crime Reduction Unit (CRU), the London Borough of Harrow (LBH) Housing Department and Harrow Women's Aid. The sanctuary scheme was developed to assist victims of domestic violence and hate crime to feel safe and remain in their homes, without having to leave their home and become homeless. It is not limited to council or housing tenants and includes any person who is threatened with violence.

The main feature of the project is the creation of a 'Sanctuary Room', which consists of having an internal door replaced with a solid core door, reversing it to open outwards, so that the door jamb acts as an additional barrier. Two Europrofile locks are fitted to the top and bottom of the door, keyed to the same key with thumb turns on the inside along

with three large steel hinges, hinge bolts and a memo door viewer. This provides a safe room or 'Sanctuary' for victims to call for and await the arrival of police.

Additional security can be provided, i.e. locks on windows and doors, gated security to the outside of a property, fire hammers, fire blankets and emergency lighting.

Given the scheme's early success many similar schemes have, or are being, developed across the country. The new BVPI 225 has given a further boost to such schemes with all district and unitary local authorities required to develop a scheme in order to fully meet the new BVPI.

Sanctuary schemes are now seen as a positive response to domestic violence and hate crime when developed through a close working partnership between all key local agencies.

What is a 'Sanctuary'?

Every 'Sanctuary Project' must be tailored to accommodate the needs and circumstances of the individuals involved. The security recommendations generally fall into three categories:

'Sanctuary' – this is where a door to a main room, generally the master bedroom, is replaced with a solid core door, reversed to open outwards and the frame reinforced. Two Europrofile locks are fitted to the top and bottom of the door, keyed to the same key with thumb turns on the inside, three large steel hinges, hinge bolts and a memo door viewer. This provides a safe room or 'Sanctuary' for victims to call for and await the arrival of police.

Window locks, front and back door locks and fire safety equipment are also provided.

'Sanctuary Plus' – this would normally have all of the above elements plus additional security features, i.e. in extreme cases grilles, extra 'Sanctuary' doors to the front and rear of the property, 'London' and 'Birmingham' bars, etc.

Victims are provided with fire safety equipment, which includes intumescent fire seals rebated into the Sanctuary doors, smoke detectors, break glass hammers, emergency lights and fire blankets.

Who is eligible for a 'Sanctuary'?

The criteria used should be very simple. It is available free of charge to victims regardless of type of tenure. It should be available, regardless of whether the victim is a woman with a family or living on her own. The only test is that agency referring must be satisfied that without the work the victim would be likely to become homeless.

In short anyone who may be in danger of losing their home as a result of being a victim of domestic violence or hate crime. Under Section 177 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, a local authority has the responsibility to assess whether someone is homeless through it being not reasonable for them to continue to occupy their home.

The Act states that it is not reasonable for a person to continue to occupy accommodation if it is probable that this will lead to domestic violence, or other violence against them, or against:

- a) a person who normally resides with them as a member of their family, or
- b) any person who might reasonably be expected to reside with them

A sanctuary should not be limited to council or housing association tenants, but should also be available for those who own their home or those who live in the private rented sector.

Referrals to a 'Sanctuary Project' are normally made through key local agencies such as the police, housing services, Women's Aid and social services.

Would you provide a Sanctuary for domestic violence victims where violence is from a partner inside the home?

Where the partner still lives in the home, clearly a sanctuary is not appropriate. However, where a woman wishes to pursue legal action to remove her partner from the home, the availability of sanctuary security measures may help her make a decision to seek to exclude her ex-partner. Where she has been a joint tenant with the perpetrator it is possible, subject to the woman requesting such action, for a council or housing association to dissolve the joint tenancy grant a sole tenancy for the victim.

Guide to the referral process

Pre referral stage: Agencies need to decide who can refer to the sanctuary scheme, who will receive referrals and the referral process. An example of a possible referral process is detailed below.

- Stage 1** After receiving a referral, directly from a client or from a referral agency, the local authority (normally the homelessness service), by way of either interviewing the client or contacting the referring agency, will decide whether the case meets the sanctuary criteria, i.e. if a sanctuary wasn't provided the person would be likely to become homeless.
- Stage 2** If agreed the local authority should refer the case onto the Police Crime Reduction Unit (CRU) with as much background information as possible to enable them to arrange for a technical inspection of the property to be carried out.
- Stage 3** The CRU contacts the client to make an appointment to view the premises. The visit could be carried out jointly with Women's Aid or the organisation appointed to provide the support to the victim in making a decision on whether to opt for sanctuary security measures. If a joint visit is not possible, separate visits will suffice. This is an area where many Women's Aid organisations may struggle regarding any additional costs. The costs of providing support need to be considered in planning sanctuary schemes.
- Stage 4** The CRU will attend the premises and complete a security survey and risk assessment based on any known police knowledge of the perpetrator. The survey should be undertaken in the presence of the victim in order that all security options can be fully explained.

- Stage 5** The victim decides on whether to opt for a sanctuary.
- Stage 6** Once permission to proceed given by the victim the CRU sends their recommendations for work to the local authority and the approved contractor.
- Stage 7** The local authority will establish who the property belongs to and either give authority (for their own properties) or seek authority from the housing association or private landlord for the work to be carried out.
- Stage 8** The local authority will instruct the contractor when authority has been granted.
- Stage 9** The local contractor will arrange to install the 'Sanctuary' recommendations.

The 'Sanctuary Project' should not be seen as an immediate emergency response, but a considered solution to providing proper professional security with support.

The likely timescale for the above process might range from 5 days to 2 weeks. Whilst the process is followed the victim may need respite temporary accommodation either through homelessness duties or where a social housing landlord has a duty of care to their tenant and will provide safe accommodation pending a decision on a sanctuary.

Suggested Specification for Sanctuary Project Security Adaptations

The following is a suggested specification that partnerships seeking to develop a sanctuary scheme may wish to consider for tendering purposes.

The main feature of the project is the creation of a 'Sanctuary Room', which consists of having an internal door replaced with a solid core door and reversing it to open outwards, so that the doorjamb acts as an additional barrier. This provides a safe room or 'Sanctuary' for victims to call for and await the arrival of police.

The following specification is a guide to the minimum standard.

The component parts are made up of various security products, which must comply with British and/or European Standards where available.

- 1 x 44mm solid core door ½ hour fire rated (minimum).
- 1 x intumescent strip rebated to the full perimeter of the door.
- 2 x Europrofile locks with internal thumb turns.
- 3 x 200mm (4") steel hinges secured with 30mm x 5mm (1" x 1/8") steel screws.
- 2 x hinge bolts
- 1 x memo door viewer

- Collapsible security grilles where appropriate, i.e. ground floor flats.

Sanctuary doors are not suitable for stud partition walls.

- Frames are to be secured with 130mm (5") frame fixers, positioned at 400mm (8") centres.
- The door jambs are to be secured with 50mm x 5mm (2" x 1/8") screws positioned at 200mm (4") centres.

The list of security products that can be used throughout the remainder of the property is not exhaustive, but should include blanking off letterboxes and fitting external mailboxes, provision of fire safety equipment, i.e. fire blanket, fire extinguisher, break-glass hammer and torch.

All other security products should be tailored to the needs of the client, based on the risk assessment.

Fire Safety

Fire safety is paramount and the fire service should be fully involved in planning local sanctuary schemes. Consideration should always be given to Fire Brigade access and where possible, sanctuary rooms located at the front of properties to facilitate rescue.

The 44mm solid core Sanctuary doors must be ½ hour fire rated (minimum).

Intumescent fire seals are rebated into all internal Sanctuary doors and in the event of a fire, expand (intumesce) to many times their original volume to seal the gap around the door. This provides a safe and effective barrier against the passage of fire, smoke.

Front door letterboxes are sealed up and wall mounted letter boxes fitted externally.

Rechargeable, battery operated emergency lights are fitted directly outside Sanctuary rooms, in case of a mains failure.

Fire safety packs containing fire safety literature, fire extinguishers, fire hammers and fire blankets may also be provided. Clients are reminded to devise an emergency escape plan, including bedtime key routine, especially where additional security has been added to front and back doors.

In cases where there are direct threats of arson, hard wired smoke alarms and domestic sprinkler systems can also be supplied.

Local Fire Safety Officers should be consulted for advice when developing sanctuary schemes.

Security Products

Clients with mobile phones must be advised to keep their phone with them at all times and the charger in the Sanctuary room.

'Pay as you go' or '999 only' mobile phones can be supplied to clients who do not have mobile phones.

This list of security products is not exhaustive, but any items used must comply with British/European Standards.

- 44mm solid core door ½ hour fire rated (minimum).
- 5-lever mortice lock
- Europrofile lock
- Rim latch lock
- Hinge bolt
- Mortice bolt
- Key operated multi-purpose bolt
- 200mm (4") steel hinge
- 'London' bar
- 'Birmingham' bar
- Memo viewer
- Key operated door chain
- Window lock
- Locking window handle
- Collapsible grille
- Fixed grille
- Security film
- CCTV camera
- Security light
- Combined CCTV and security light

Sensibly, security companies should be asked to quote a price for providing and fitting each of the above products both individually and as a combined package. Each partnership seeking to develop a sanctuary scheme should decide what basic package of measures is appropriate for their own scheme. As can be seen above a sanctuary scheme provides proper, professionally installed, security which does not compromise with victim's safety. As such schemes that consist of minor security work such as hand

held alarms and window locks should not be considered as providing a level of security appropriate to a sanctuary scheme.

All sanctuaries must be tailored to the needs of the individual. In extreme cases this may mean providing more than one safe room to protect children. There is no set list of standard work, what is appropriate to the needs of the individual is what should be provided.

How successful have sanctuary schemes been?

There has been to date no national figures for the number of sanctuary schemes in place or for the number of victims who have benefited from the instillation of sanctuary security measures. In Harrow where the scheme started over 250 sanctuaries have been installed with an 80% completion rate compared to referrals.

Out of those referrals not carried out. Half were cancelled by the Police Crime Reduction Team who visited and either did not consider the property could be made safe or were not able to proceed due to the scope of the work. The other half was cases where the victim did not want the work to be carried out.

There is no doubt that schemes work best where:

1. All partners are fully committed to the scheme.
2. Where referral processes and funding streams are made simple.
3. Where support is available to victims in helping them to explore the option of a sanctuary.

Two short case studies from local authorities who have developed a Sanctuary scheme are given below.

Croydon Council's Sanctuary Project provides practical help for those who have escaped from an abusive relationship by installing new security measures, such as reinforced doors, new locks and camera door-entry systems.

The project was set up in partnership with the police and domestic violence support agencies, helping those who have taken legal action against an aggressive partner. And because victims of domestic violence often need specialist advice and support as well as physical security, it is only available to those who are already in contact with local support agencies. Tenants with sanctuary works are listed with the police for an urgent response, so any incidents at these known properties will be met with an immediate response.

The project is fast becoming a key part of Croydon's homelessness strategy, with local statistics showing that the number of people forced to leave their homes because of domestic violence was growing. In the year up to April 2004, more than 150 people contacted the council after fleeing domestic violence and since April a further 66 have become homeless because of abuse. As well as helping victims feel more secure in their own homes, the sanctuary project reduces the chance that these people will be made homeless through no fault of their own.

East Staffordshire's sanctuary scheme was set up in October 2004 and is a partnership between the Council, Stoneham Housing Association (Kiaura project) and South Derbyshire CVS. The rationale behind the project is to allow those who have suffered domestic violence to stay in their own homes, rather than going through the stress and stigma of becoming homeless and having to move away from the area they currently live in. The scheme secures the victim's property so that they can return in the knowledge that the perpetrator has been removed and cannot get access.

The scheme was introduced because over the previous two years there had been a significant increase in victims coming from social housing tenancies. Domestic violence was the main reason for homelessness in the borough.

Although the scheme has assisted 27 victims to date, it has come across a significant problem in that it has been unable to achieve one of its key aims: changing locks. The reason for this is that all the victims who have come forward are owner-occupier households where there is joint ownership of the property. There has also been a dramatic down turn in victims from social housing. This has prompted the Council to re-evaluate how the project can now be used, in particular how it can work with the Police and CPS to help owner-occupiers.

A positive outcome is that the media attention from the launch of the project has highlighted the work of the Kiaura Project. Subsequently it has increased the number of victims it helps three fold.

What might the typical tenure be for those referred so that we can estimate costs and funding methods?

Clearly, it will depend of the typical tenure for each area, although to date the majority of reported cases are occupying some form of social housing. Below is the tenure breakdown for Harrow Council, a breakdown that might be reflected in many other London or large city areas.

(i)	Council tenants	30%
(ii)	Housing Association tenants	25%
(iii)	Housing Association leased temporary accommodation properties	15%
(iv)	Private rented or owner occupied	30%

What is the cost of a sanctuary instillation and how can schemes be funded?

Councils report the average cost at between £750-£1000 per sanctuary.

There are a number of options. Obviously the BVPI 225 requires the local authority to have 'developed, launched and promoted a sanctuary type scheme' therefore the responsibility for considering how this should be funded falls to them. A local authority's Homelessness Service could pay for the work through its 'Invest to save' approach to homelessness prevention. Alternatively, money could be held centrally and used for specific tenures, if for example an RSL required funding just to be spent on their tenants.

Sources of funding can be quite flexible as follows:

1) It could be funded from homelessness savings through a homeless prevention fund or an 'invest to save' approach. Many local authority homelessness services have developed just such an approach or are looking to set one up. Given that domestic violence in England and Wales is the third biggest cause of homelessness the use of money in this way is a sensible way to help prevent homelessness.

2) Schemes could be funded through a council's Private Sector Renewal Strategy. Each council was required to develop a private sector renewal strategy by July 2003. The result is that a council now has far more flexibility over how it spends its capital private sector grants. Grants can be used for any sector and providing small grants for say crime reduction and anti burglary are often in existing Strategies giving councils the power to pay such grants for sanctuary schemes already. Alternatively, a council may need to make a small amendment to its PSRS allowing small grants of up to say £1000 to be paid for sanctuary work. Spending grant money out of capital resources can often be easier than trying to obtain resources from general fund revenue.

3) Funding could be paid for from the landlord. Up to 60% of sanctuary cases in some local authority areas are existing council, LSVT, ALMO or RSL tenants. All social landlords have a duty of care to their tenants therefore a duty to keep them safe. Sanctuary security work is an obvious practical example of meeting this duty.

4) Often the police or the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership may have grant, or one off funding to target crime reduction which could be directed to funding sanctuary schemes.

Funding is largely the cost of carrying out the work. Other costs can normally be assimilated into the core work of partners. For example:

- **Setting up the scheme** - officer time for council officers, police and voluntary sector. Clearly in setting up a partnership this will be time consuming and the capacity of the voluntary sector to respond needs to be taken into account.
- **Support to woman in helping them to deciding whether to opt for a sanctuary** - could be provided by Women's Aid outreach; another voluntary sector group; a housing management officer if the victim is a tenant; Victim Support, or a councils' Homelessness Prevention Officer.
- **Specifying the work to be carried out and carrying out a risk assessment** - Specifying the work is often best left to the contractor who will do the work, but could also be carried out by the police crime reduction officer or even a technical officer from the council, RSL, or Grants team. Risk assessments should be part of the police responsibility.
- **Carrying out the work** - contractor. Logistically, one contractor should be appointed for the scheme and trained in domestic violence awareness. Some schemes are looking to contractors to appoint female engineers as part of the tendering process.
- **Ongoing support post sanctuary** - Women's Aid, other voluntary sector outreach service, or tenancy support paid for through supporting people funding.

Is there a danger of some councils putting pressure on victims to accept a sanctuary?

The fundamental basis of the scheme is that it is voluntary option and the wish of the victim to remain in the home is paramount. The success of the scheme depends on a genuine and honest partnership between the council, the police, and the voluntary sector, often Women's Aid. **If there is any question of compulsion a scheme will not work.** Nor should the offer of security measures ever be used to back up a 'tough not homeless decision', where a woman does not wish to remain.

Through building up trust all agencies are committed to helping women remain in their home whereas in the past a victim would have no other option but to move.

How can support be provided to a woman throughout this process?

Ideally a Women's Aid Outreach worker or a specialist Support Officer should accompany the Police Crime Reduction officer on the initial visit to talk about the possibility of sanctuary work. The reality is that many Women's Aid outreach services may not have access to funds to provide support in every case. There are alternatives. Links can be made to other voluntary sector agencies, such as Victim Support, to ensure that a trained support worker can be provided to help a woman make a decision and provide ongoing support after the work has been completed. More realistically support could be built into the role of tenancy support organisations.

The Police Community Safety Unit may be able to provide an officer trained in domestic violence issues to provide support. Using volunteers recruited through the local Women's Aid may provide a partial solution, for example. However it is provided, what is important is that support can be provided for anyone who is considering a sanctuary scheme.

What is described in this document is the ideal recommended partnership involving the police, the council and Women's Aid. However, where resources do not allow such an approach a scheme can still be implemented through locally agreed options as long as it meets the criteria and is based on a partnership approach.

A council could use its own surveyor to inspect and specify the work or contract this function out. A homelessness prevention officer could be used to talk through the options. A specialist post could be established to undertake all functions including discussing the options, specifying the work and providing ongoing support. A council's Direct Service (DSO) could carry out the work instead of a private contractor. All these alternatives are realistic. However using the police/council/ Women's Aid partnership has clear advantages providing.

- (i) A consistent and sympathetic service for victims.
- (ii) Encouraging victims to trust the police and therefore have more confidence in the response they are likely to receive from them.
- (iii) It makes it easier to maintain confidentiality for the victim.

Should the scheme be on 24 hour, 7 day a week response?

Initially early sanctuary partnerships considered setting up a 24 hour, 7 day a week response. However, having considered this issue carefully concluded that:

- (i) The most important first response should be to make sure the woman is safe whilst a sanctuary is considered. Respite emergency accommodation, or for the woman to stay with relatives and friends immediately following an incident, is perhaps a more sensible initial approach.
- (ii) It is important that a woman has time to make up her mind whether to stay with the help of a sanctuary. She should never be pressurised into making a decision by an artificial timescale imposed by the council.

From referral to completed work will normally take up to 2 weeks but the process can be speeded up, if that is what the victim wants.

Do women feel safer with a Sanctuary?

Partnerships that survey survivors of domestic violence who have had a sanctuary installed records that they do feel safer. Often these are victims who have had to move several times disrupting their lives and the lives of their children. The following are two examples from women who have requested sanctuary security.

"I feel 100% safer than I did before and I'm really pleased that I didn't have to move somewhere else. My baby and me are both settled in this flat and I can now sleep at night."

"I didn't think I'd be able to stay here anymore. I was terrified that he'd kill me. I now feel safe in the flat and have started to get a bit more self confidence".

Who can be contacted for further information on how to develop a sanctuary scheme?

- If you want to talk through how to set the scheme up with two councils who have. Talk to Laurence Coaker at Harrow laurence.coaker@harrow.gov.uk Tel 02084241110. Or talk to Alvin Wade at Barnet alvin.wade@barnet.gov.uk Tel 0208 359 6002. For the police talk to Stephen Sullivan at Harrow Police Crime Reduction unit stephen.sullivan@met.pnn.police.uk
- Alternatively, talk to the ODPM's Homelessness implementation team on 020 7944 4400 who can let you know which local authorities in your area have developed sanctuary schemes.
- Each English region has a named domestic violence lead based in the Government office for the Region. They may be able to provide help and advice concerning local activity.