



## Briefing for professionals regarding the domestic abuse Housing Navigator pilot



### Context: About the Whole Housing Approach pilot

The Whole Housing project's aim is to increase safe accommodation options for victims of domestic abuse through the development of robust processes, policies and pathways.

The project will initially run from April 2021 – March 2022, testing new initiatives and ways of working such as:

- a 'flexible funding pot' which domestic abuse and complex needs partners can apply for on behalf of victims to access safe housing and/or improve security of their home
- managed reciprocal arrangements between social housing providers
- working with housing partners to develop Perpetrator management strategies and policies

For more information about a whole housing approach please see: [Whole Housing Approach - daha - Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance \(dahalliance.org.uk\)](https://dahalliance.org.uk).

A small but important part of the overall approach is the implementation of a housing navigator service. The housing navigator service is a pilot project commissioned by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) through short-term grant funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The project forms part of a wider HCC Multi-disciplinary team pilot to support adults with complex needs experiencing homelessness.

### Overview of the housing navigator pilot service

HCC and Stevenage Borough Council have worked together to develop a housing navigator service model. SADA (Survivors Against Domestic Abuse) have been commissioned to provide 10 housing navigators across the county. This will enable one full time housing navigator in each district and borough. The housing navigator will build relationships with the housing sector in each Local Authority area and will be the single point of contact for victims and survivors of domestic abuse where there are housing related support needs.

#### The role of a housing navigator

The housing navigator is a conduit between the local housing sector and specialist domestic abuse sector to improve housing outcomes for victims and will support and advocate for victims specifically in relation to safe accommodation. They will:

- **Accept referrals from housing/homelessness teams** where domestic abuse is identified and conduct a thorough risk and needs assessment. They will refer on to specialist domestic abuse services for domestic abuse support whilst continuing to provide information, advice, guidance and support around safe accommodation options (including referring to refuge where required)
- **Accept referrals from specialist domestic abuse services** where victims they are working with have safe accommodation needs. They will work with the victim to provide information, advice and guidance on options and advocate for them within local housing/homelessness services where required to ensure their needs are met

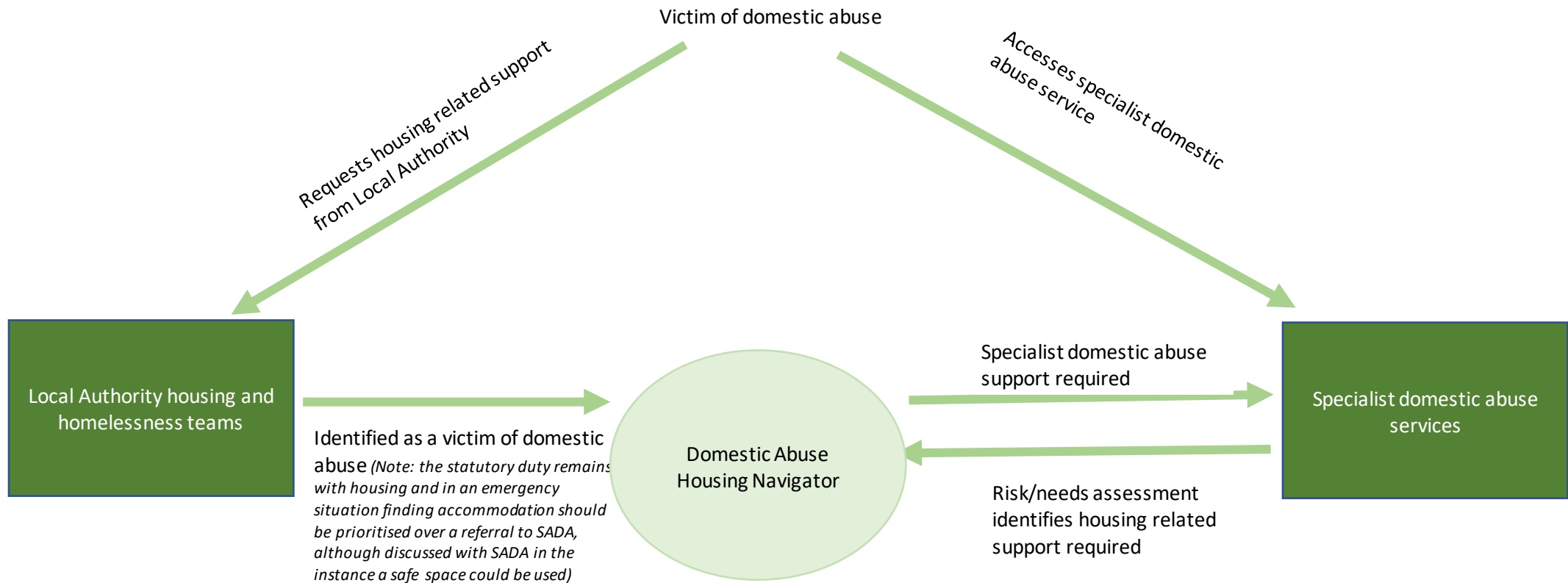
**The housing navigator should not absorb local authority housing duties, nor should it replace the specialist domestic abuse support services provided. The aim of the navigator is to add value by providing both sectors additional capacity as a 'one stop' for domestic abuse and housing.**



\*there may be some local variations in how this works operationally. Specifically, St Albans District Council have an existing localised arrangement with St Albans and Hertsmeare Women’s Refuge, who will be working closely with the housing navigator service. For more information please contact Annette Miles, Whole Housing Development Manager – [Annette.miles@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Annette.miles@hertfordshire.gov.uk).

### How the pathway works

The below highlights how the housing navigator should be utilised to add value to the local housing offer, and to support specialist domestic abuse services in accessing safe accommodation options for their service users.





## FAQs

### Who is my area's housing navigator and how do I refer a victim to them?

Local Authority area	Housing navigator	Contact details	How do I refer to them?
Broxbourne	Carol Warren	<a href="mailto:Carol.warren@stevenage.gov.uk">Carol.warren@stevenage.gov.uk</a>	<a href="mailto:SADA@stevenage.gov.uk">SADA@stevenage.gov.uk</a>
Dacorum	Farhana Kamali	<a href="mailto:Farhana.kamali@stevenage.gov.uk">Farhana.kamali@stevenage.gov.uk</a>	<a href="mailto:SADA@stevenage.gov.uk">SADA@stevenage.gov.uk</a>
East Herts	Melissa Bingham	<a href="mailto:Melissa.bingham@stevenage.gov.uk">Melissa.bingham@stevenage.gov.uk</a>	Via East Herts housing team
Hertsmere	Chloe Stewart	<a href="mailto:Chloe.stewart@stevenage.gov.uk">Chloe.stewart@stevenage.gov.uk</a>	Via Hertsmere housing team
North Herts	Bea Wright	<a href="mailto:Bea.wright@stevenage.gov.uk">Bea.wright@stevenage.gov.uk</a>	Via North Herts housing team
St Albans	Bethany Parsons	<a href="mailto:Bethany.parsons@stevenage.gov.uk">Bethany.parsons@stevenage.gov.uk</a>	Via St Albans housing team
Stevenage	Katie Armstrong	<a href="mailto:Katie.armstrong@stevenage.gov.uk">Katie.armstrong@stevenage.gov.uk</a>	Via Stevenage housing team
Three Rivers	Tania King/ Georgia Wynn- in post shortly at the end of July	<a href="mailto:Tania.king@stevenage.gov.uk">Tania.king@stevenage.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:Georgia.wynn@stevenage.gov.uk">Georgia.wynn@stevenage.gov.uk</a>	<a href="mailto:SADA@stevenage.gov.uk">SADA@stevenage.gov.uk</a>
Watford	Bethany Parsons	<a href="mailto:Bethany.parsons@stevenage.gov.uk">Bethany.parsons@stevenage.gov.uk</a>	<a href="mailto:SADA@stevenage.gov.uk">SADA@stevenage.gov.uk</a>
Welwyn and Hatfield	Emma Andrews	<a href="mailto:Emma.andrews@stevenage.gov.uk">Emma.andrews@stevenage.gov.uk</a>	Via Welwyn and Hatfield Housing team

### How will the housing navigator help districts and boroughs meet their obligations under the Homelessness Reduction Act?

Where a victim or survivor of domestic abuse presents as homeless, we would recommend an immediate referral to the housing navigator. Although districts and boroughs cannot discharge their duty to the navigator, they can help and support housing staff and the victim throughout the assessment process and where a duty is owed can support the route to safe accommodation as part of the Personal Housing Plan (PHP).



### **How will the housing navigator work with existing domestic abuse services?**

The housing navigator caseworkers do not replace the specialism of domestic abuse services. The role of the navigator is specifically to meet the safe accommodation needs of victims, this means domestic abuse services can use the service for their clients. The housing navigator role will support domestic abuse service providers if they identify a victim or survivor they are working with has a housing related need. For example, they might need additional support to stay safe in their own home, they may need to flee for safety or they might be leaving refuge accommodation and need support finding somewhere to move on to. The housing navigator will work with the victim and specialist domestic abuse service until the safe accommodation need is met, after which the domestic abuse service will continue longer term support.

### **How will the housing navigator pilot align with the local Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) model for complex needs?**

Victims and survivors of domestic abuse can have additional needs such as mental health and/or substance use. In these instances, it is possible the individual might benefit from a referral to the local MDT. If victims are identified at the point of a homelessness application and referred directly to a housing navigator, the navigator will continue to work and support that victim and attend relevant MDT meetings as required. If domestic abuse is the primary need in the case, the housing navigator will lead the case.

### **Will the housing navigator service work within the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (Marac)?**

Yes. There are five double district Maracs at the moment and they will be attended by SADA who deliver the housing navigator service. It may be that a representative of SADA attends on behalf of your housing navigator to alleviate the need for all 10 workers to attend. Housing navigators will be involved in providing information to the Marac and taking housing related actions where required. All high-risk victims of domestic abuse should be referred to the IDVA service provided by Refuge, SADA will work with Refuge where a victim is at high risk of harm or homicide.

### **What will happen when the pilot finishes?**

The pilot will be evaluated by Public Health colleagues at HCC. The evaluation will help us to understand the outcomes of the pilot and whether it is a service that adds value to our local offer. To properly evaluate the service we will speak to professionals from local housing and specialist domestic abuse services as well as victims and survivors who have used the service. The evaluation will help us to decide if and how the service continues after April 2022.