

solace
women's
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Domestic Violence and Housing

27 June 2011

The crisis : how it impacts on us?

- 1.7 million waiting for social housing
- 49,000 in temporary accommodation
- 38,000 families with children in temporary accommodation
- 8 million in social housing
- 2 million behind with rent/mortgage and repossessions rising

Women and children experiencing Domestic Violence

- Localism
- Proposed changes to social housing allocations
- Local housing allowance
- Legal aid cuts

Localism

- The localism agenda places responsibility for decision making about services into local hands.
- Good idea?
 - Decision making at a time of cuts: vulnerable people highest impact
 - Local authorities already reluctant to accept women (and children) who are fleeing domestic violence claiming they are not local

Proposed changes to social housing:

- Homelessness duty discharged where private sector accommodation offered for more than one year
- Fixed term not lifetime tenancies - increased pressure to stay in secure accommodation even if unsafe
- Loosening guidelines – examples include those with strong local connection and those on waiting list a long time
- Affordable tenancies – shorter tenancies on up to 80% market rate

Local Housing Allowance: April 2011

- Changes to LHA impact on:
 - Single women under 35 must share
 - Women with larger families (4 bed cap)
 - Women in inner London and central London – no additional payment for increased cost
 - Women who are new claimants limited to the capped amount when seeking accommodation

Legal Aid cuts

- Legal Aid retained for private family law matters where domestic violence an issue BUT ONLY IF:
- They have a domestic violence injunction in place within the previous 12 months
- Removal of legal aid for applications under the Domestic Violence Rule of Immigration Rules.

Impact on women/children experiencing DV

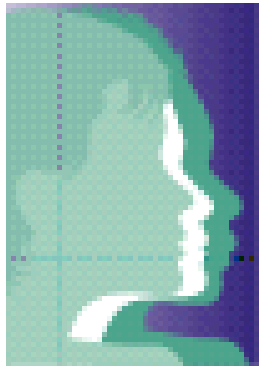
- Threatened reduction to refuge places
- Reduction of support to women and children experiencing domestic violence
- Secure housing not possible
- Moving from DV to refuge – moving again and again
- Threat to women and children where no legal aid for contact and residency disputes

Human and financial cost:

- Increase in women staying in unsafe and high risk accommodation
- Increase in deaths and injuries at huge human and financial cost
- Increase in children taken into care
- Increase in litigants in person in court and unsafe practise

A little change and a huge difference:

- Cross authority housing transfers
- Abused women exempt from room share
- Income support for 12 months
- Evidence for legal aid to include specialist agencies and health and social care
- Legal aid available for DV rule claims
- Local Housing Allowance increased for inner London



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**Raise the issues save
lives.....**