

Review of the Provision of Accommodation for Victims of Domestic Violence

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Foreword

Ireland as a society better understands the incidence of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence that victims are suffering across all parts of our island every day. The provision of refuges, other safe accommodation and appropriate support services, for adults and children, who are victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, is a critical component of the State's overall response to this violence.

This Accommodation Review, commissioned by Tusla, provides an overview of the existing provision of refuges and safe accommodation in Ireland, the gaps and challenges in provision and recommendations for interagency planning, collaboration, funding, and delivery into the future.

It is clear, that no one Agency, or Government Department alone will deliver the changes that are required, but rather a commitment of all Departments, statutory and non-statutory agencies, and victims of this abuse, working together to deliver the accommodation and support service that will meet the diverse needs of these men, women and children.

The Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced the extent of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence in our communities, and State agencies such as Tusla have prioritised the provision of services to victims, and the commitment and flexibility of frontline services has been clearly evident.

The pandemic has also highlighted both the importance of and success of communities and organisations working together. Tusla is committed and looks forward to working with all partners to achieve a coherent approach nationally and locally, to provide increased shelter and support for adults and children living with fear, trauma, abuse and violence at home.



Kate Duggan
Director of Services & Integration Tusla

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- Members of the Project Management Group; Project Steering Group and sub-groups
- Members of the Monitoring Committee for the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence
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- Participants in the Traveller and Roma workshop and to Pavee Point
- Participants in the regional workshops and focus groups
- Representatives from departments of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; Department of Justice and Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and from HSE
- Tusla colleagues who provided information and feedback
- Representatives of ethnic minority support and advocacy organisations and networks who participated in consultation
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Glossary

Glossary terms - abbreviations explained

AGS:	An Garda Síochána
AHB:	<p>Approved Housing Body or AHBs (Approved Housing Bodies). These are also called housing associations or voluntary housing associations. They are independent, not-for-profit organisations. They provide affordable rented housing for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people who cannot afford to pay private sector rents or buy their own homes • particular groups, like older people or homeless people. <p>https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/53ab7-approved-housing-bodies-ahbs/#what-are-approved-housing-bodies</p>
CAS:	Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS). Under this voluntary and co-operative scheme, approved housing bodies provide accommodation to meet special housing needs. This scheme is run by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
CLG:	<p>Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG). A CLG is usually used when a separate legal entity is needed, in organisations like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • charities • trade associations • societies • sports clubs • social clubs. <p>This company type is appropriate for non-profit companies or NGOs (non-governmental organisations).</p> <p>https://www.companyformations.ie/company-formations/irish-company-limited-by-guarantee-clg/</p>
Coercive control:	<p>The use of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • threats • humiliation • intimidation • assault. <p>These are used to make a person dependent and isolate them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploit them • deprive them of their independence • exercise control over their behaviour and choices. <p>Coercive control can include some or all forms of abuse (emotional, physical, financial, and sexual) between two adults, who are in close contact with each other.</p> <p>This can have a serious impact by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • damaging a person's physical and emotional well-being • causing them to lose contact with family and friends • causing them to change their routine behaviours.

Glossary terms - abbreviations explained

Commissioning:	<p>When we commission, we make sure that all resources available to children and families are used to improve outcomes (results) for the people they are intended to benefit in a way that is the most:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • efficient • effective • equitable • proportionate • sustainable. <p>https://www.tusla.ie/commissioning/</p> <p>Commissioning involves identifying a need and actively seeking to provide a response to meet needs.</p>
Complex needs:	<p>Domestic violence is complex and the impact on the lives of victims is recognised in all cases. In this review, the term ‘complex needs’ includes intersecting needs. This may be in relation to things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addiction • mental ill-health • disability • being part of a vulnerable, excluded or minority group • particular challenges around the safety and welfare of children living in domestic violence situations.
CSO:	Central Statistics Office.
CYPSCs:	<p>Children and Young People’s Services Committees. The CYPSC is a key structure identified by Government to plan and co-ordinate services for children and young people in every county in Ireland.</p> <p>https://www.cypsc.ie/</p>
DSGBV:	Domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.
DV:	Domestic violence.
Family Place:	In this review it refers to emergency accommodation in, or provided by, a domestic violence refuge service for a domestic violence victim and their children.
HAP Scheme:	The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Scheme is a form of social housing support provided by all local authorities. Under HAP, local authorities can provide housing assistance to households with a long-term housing need, including many people who receive rent supplement long term.
HRC:	Habitual residence conditions.
Independent units	Single houses or apartments located within the community as distinct from accommodation in congregated settings such as refuges or supported accommodation campuses.

Glossary terms - abbreviations explained

IPV:	Intimate partner violence – a descriptor often used to describe domestic violence or domestic abuse.
LA:	Local Authority – refers to County and City Councils.
LGBTI:	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex.
Meitheal:	<p>Meitheal is an Irish word meaning teamwork. Tusla has developed the Meitheal approach to help children where they may need the support of more than one service. Meitheal co-ordinates services for families with additional needs who require help from more than one agency, but who do not qualify to be referred to the social work department under Children First.</p> <p>https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/prevention-partnership-and-family-support-programme/meitheal-national-practice-model/</p>
MOU:	Memorandum of Understanding.
PPFS:	<p>The Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Programme is a comprehensive programme of early intervention and preventative work undertaken by Tusla.</p> <p>https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/prevention-partnership-and-family-support/</p>
Refuge:	Emergency accommodation needed for safety in times of crisis due to domestic violence. This accommodation may be individual units or in a large building or shared campus. The term ‘shelter’ is also used to describe refuge-type accommodation providing safety.
Refuge Place or ‘Family Place’	A unit in a refuge or other accommodation that can be occupied by an individual woman or a woman and any children accompanying her.
Safe Accommodation:	A general term that refers to accommodation needed in times of domestic violence crisis. It provides shelter for those who need to leave their homes because of domestic violence or gender-based violence.
Safe at Home:	<p>This term is used in this document to describe a way for women who experience domestic violence and their children to stay in their own home, although there is no formal approach on Safe at Home in Ireland. Those subjected to domestic violence receive extra support services to keep them safe and give them protection. Typically, in countries where ‘Safe at Home’ mechanisms operate, the perpetrator of violence must be excluded from the shared (family) home.</p> <p>See Murray, S. and Powell, A. (2011) Domestic Violence: Australian Public Policy, North Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing.</p>
Safe Home:	Emergency domestic violence accommodation needed in times of crisis. It is usually provided as a separate unit of accommodation (for example a flat or a house) at a community or local level. It generally suits those at low to medium risk of serious harm.

Glossary terms - abbreviations explained

Safety Plan:	A plan developed in collaboration with victims of domestic violence to deal with risk and safety needs. The safety plan is usually developed with a DV service or other trusted professionals dealing with DV issues https://www.womensaid.ie/help/options/safetyplanning.html
Section 39 of the Domestic Violence Act 2018:	This refers to the commission of an offence where a person knowingly and persistently engages in behaviour that is controlling and coercive with serious effect. http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/6/section/39/enacted/en/html
Step-down Accommodation:	When the immediate safety need is met and emergency or temporary accommodation services end, a person may need access to other interim accommodation before a long-term solution is found. This temporary fix is sometimes referred to as step-down accommodation and is usually of less than six months duration.
SV:	Sexual Violence.
Transitional Housing:	As the term is used in this review, transitional housing refers to medium-term accommodation, for example 18-24 months where service users live independently but in facilities with medium to high levels of ongoing support. In the case of domestic violence-specific transitional housing, there are additional safety measures on-site. This is primarily a housing service. Residents have a licence to reside agreement rather than a tenancy arrangement with the service operator and do not obtain the rights of tenants. The terms 'transitional' or 'step-down' housing are sometimes used to describe this type of accommodation. Although some Tusla funding is allocated to the cost of support staff in one service with transitional DV housing, Tusla does not commission or provide funding for transitional housing initiatives.

Overview

A review of domestic violence accommodation provision in Ireland was initiated by Tusla in November 2019. This report documents the findings of the review, with reference to existing domestic violence accommodation in Ireland, analysis of relevant literature, consultation with key stakeholders and recommendations to inform and guide decision making in relation to the future provision of domestic violence accommodation (refuge and other forms of safe accommodation) across the country.

Context of the Review:

- It was widely acknowledged that there is inadequate provision of, and inequity in access to, appropriate accommodation for victims of domestic violence.
 - At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, there were 155 units of emergency domestic violence accommodation operational in Ireland, 145 of these units were in refuges and 10 were in Safe Homes.
 - Data returned to Tusla by funded services indicates that, in 2018, 4381 enquiries about access to refuge did not result in access to refuge, almost two thirds of these because of a lack of available or suitable space.
- Further clarity is required on both resourcing and operational responsibility for the provision of accommodation for victims of domestic violence. Tusla does not currently have capital funding for the provision of accommodation.
- There is no stated position nationally on plans and processes to achieve greater provision of ‘shelter’ (term used by the Council of Europe), nor of how safe accommodation fits into a wider scope of response to domestic violence and wider issues of DSGBV.
- In addition to the above drivers, the Second National Strategy on Domestic Sexual and Gender based Violence 2016-2021 and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention (The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence) by Ireland in March 2019 both provide a policy framework and mandate for action on domestic violence

against which Tusla and other statutory bodies will be held accountable.

Scope of the Review:

- To map existing accommodation provision for victims of domestic violence in Ireland.
- To consider relevant data and literature in analysis and to guide recommendations.
- To engage with key stakeholders to seek their views on existing provision and recommendations for future provision, promoting increased collaboration on decision-making.
- To make recommendations to inform and guide decision-making on future provision of accommodation for victims of domestic violence in Ireland.

This Review does not consider:

- Existing service quality
- All aspects of domestic violence policy and responses
- All minimum standards set out by the Council of Europe

Methodology:

Several data gathering methods (quantitative and qualitative) were employed:

- Desktop research and mapping of current services
- Data analysis on demand for accommodation and estimate of need

- Geospatial mapping of current and potential future services options
- Consultation with key stakeholders through focus groups, interviews and surveys
- Financial and cost analysis

Key Findings:

The Review clearly indicates that the following issues need to be addressed to improve the provision of safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse:

- Increased provision of accommodation in terms of number, location and type of accommodation for victims of domestic abuse.
- Explicit responsibility to be given to a lead agency for the planning and delivery of emergency safe accommodation for those fleeing domestic violence.
- A multi-annual plan for the provision of safe accommodation with clear governance structures and processes for design and implementation of the plan.
- Integrated working at department and agency level in planning, provision, and resourcing of accommodation.
- Further engagement and consultation with key stakeholders on the development of services to support the holistic needs of the individual needing safety.

Recommendations:

The key recommendations of this Review are:

1. Provide more safe accommodation: The number and range of safe accommodation spaces (or 'family places') available to victims of domestic violence needs to increase substantially to meet current needs, projected future needs and international obligations. There should be a focus on short-term safe 'emergency' accommodation but mechanisms to enable victims to stay at home safely and addressing longer-term housing needs are important. Based on our analysis, at least 60 new family places/units need to be prioritised urgently to address areas of under-provision on a per-population basis.
2. Explicitly designate a lead department/agency responsibility for progressing future safe domestic violence accommodation developments.
3. Develop an inter-departmental commissioning plan setting out a framework for the

development and delivery of additional safe accommodation for victims of domestic violence accommodation over the next 10-year period, to achieve the optimal configuration of services within available resources (including the range, scope, capacity and location of new services) and to consider capital funding for future domestic violence accommodation services. Specific targets should be determined in response to identified need, with a model of resourcing for both capital and revenue funding identified so that plans can be implemented over the ten-year period.

4. Establish an inter-departmental/cross-agency group to develop and oversee the implementation of this commissioning plan: A cross-departmental/inter-agency group should be given the mandate to develop and oversee the implementation of this commissioning plan for the provision of safe emergency accommodation in Ireland, based on explicit criteria on coverage and accessibility.
5. Ensure integration with local areas: In addition to the national structure proposed, a structure is required at local level to progress the commissioning of DV services and support developments into the future.
6. Further consultation to develop an explicit model of accommodation-with-services provision: Integrate evidence informed approaches and quality standards supported by professional practice developments. In addition there should be a focus on strengthening DV training and early intervention approaches for practitioners. The needs of specific groups will be considered in responses – particularly women from Traveller, Roma and other ethnic minority groups; those with disabilities; those with mental health, substance use or other health issues, along with the needs of male and other gender victims, children and others with complex needs.
7. Engagement with key stakeholders to develop a stated national policy position to maintain the safety of adults and children at home. This is beyond the scope of this review, but it is evident that further consideration from a range of stakeholders is required, particularly around the legal framework that would be required. Whilst refuges and other safe accommodation are critical in maintaining the safety of adults and children who are subjected to the effects of domestic violence, the ability to remain at home safely, or return home as quickly as possible and manage the exclusion of the perpetrator is a desirable outcome.

1. Introduction

A Review of Domestic Violence Accommodation Provision in Ireland was initiated by the Tusla Chief Operations Officer in November 2019. Following a suspension in early 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was recommenced in late 2020.

This report documents the findings of the review, with reference to existing domestic violence accommodation in Ireland, analysis of relevant literature, consultation with key stakeholders and recommendations to inform and guide decision making in relation to the future provision of domestic violence accommodation (refuge and other forms of safe accommodation) across the country.

1.1: Role of Tusla in domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services:

Tusla is the dedicated State agency responsible for improving well-being and outcomes for children. The Agency operates under the Child and Family Agency Act (2013) and has a wide remit that includes child protection, early intervention and family support services, as well as statutory responsibility for educational welfare and a number of regulatory responsibilities. Domestic violence and its impact on children and families feature in many referrals made to Tusla under Children First legislation. Within the Agency's legislative mandate, Tusla has a specific responsibility assigned for the care and protection of victims of domestic sexual and gender-based violence, which includes adult victims in their own right i.e., not just in the context of child protection and welfare concerns.

Tusla funds and supports over 40 organisations in the community and voluntary sector to provide services to victims of domestic violence – 22 of these provide specialist emergency accommodation within their range of services. Tusla also supports specialist rape crisis/sexual violence organisations.

1.2: Context of the review:

Tusla's commissioning approach looks to assure that all of the resources available can be used to achieve the best possible outcomes for women, men, children and families who experience DSGBV. Tusla's Commissioning Strategy¹ aims to commission services that are "evidence based" or are at least evidence informed. This requires that, in the first instance, evidence regarding the types and level of DSGBV services needed within geographical areas and communities is established and thereafter that the specific services commissioned have an evidence base supporting their effectiveness and efficiency in delivering the best outcomes for service users. Clarity was needed about both funding levels and responsibilities regarding provision.

The key motivations for carrying out this review were:

- Concerns there was a critical shortfall of domestic violence refuge spaces nationally and parts of the country were not adequately provided for.
- There was a requirement for clarity on the locations and quantity and type of domestic violence accommodation available to inform and support future planning.
- There was a need to bring a strategic focus to future development, prioritisation and provision of domestic violence accommodation.

This review was undertaken during a time of change and development in responding to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. There are several parallel and interconnected pieces of work that are ongoing, within a similar timeframe to this review that are relevant to the outcomes of this review.

¹ Tusla Commissioning Strategy 2019-2023 https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/TUSLA_CommissioningStrategy_report_FINAL.pdf

Key reports/reviews include:

- Audit of segmentation of responsibility for DSGBV Services across government departments, under the aegis of the Department of Justice, which was included in the Programme for Government.
- Review of the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence and preparation for the Third National Strategy
- The transformative actions as part of the Tom O'Malley Report, outlined in the action plan Supporting A Victim's Journey: A plan to help victims and vulnerable witnesses in sexual violence cases. The Citizen's Assembly on Gender Equality included DSGBV issues as part of its gender equality agenda.²

The Covid-19 pandemic brought additional risk for victims. It also brought incredible challenges for organisations to maintain and adapt their domestic violence services. It changed how accommodation was arranged, but also provided insights and opportunities for learning which is included in this report.

1.3: Scope of the Review:

- To map existing accommodation provision for victims of domestic violence in Ireland.
- To consider relevant data and literature in analysis and to guide recommendations.
- To engage with key stakeholders to seek their views on existing provision and recommendations for future provision, promoting increased collaboration on decision-making.
- To make recommendations to inform and guide decision-making on future provision of accommodation for victims of domestic violence in Ireland.

This Review does not consider:

- Existing service quality
- All aspects of domestic violence policy and responses
- All of the Minimum Standards³ set out by the Council of Europe

The focus of the review was on the provision of safe accommodation for victims of domestic violence and extends beyond traditional 'refuge' accommodation. The review focused on the needs of women and children, as the primary users of refuges and other safe domestic violence accommodation. The needs of men and other genders will be considered both during the review and in implementation of the findings, as will the wider holistic response to issues of gender based violence.

² The Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality was established in July 2019 and concluded its work in 2021 with completion of its report in June 2021 www.citizensassembly.ie/en

³ Combating Violence Against Women – minimum standards for support services. Council of Europe (2008) www.coe.int/dg2/equality

2. Methodology

A number of data gathering methods (quantitative and qualitative) were employed:

- Desktop research and mapping of current services
- Data Analysis on demand for accommodation and future requirements
- Geospatial mapping of current and potential future services options
- Consultation with key stakeholders through focus groups, interviews and surveys
- Financial and cost analysis (see Appendix 1)

Key contributors included:

- Stakeholder Advisory Group for the review
- Victims of domestic abuse – women, men and children
- Safe Ireland
- DSGBV service provider organisations
- Representatives of local authorities, government departments and statutory agencies
- Representatives of organisations working with people and communities with additional needs and vulnerabilities
- Tusla staff

There was ongoing communication with the monitoring committee of the National Strategy on DSGBV and relevant government departments as the review progressed.

In undertaking the review, a gender-sensitive approach, which is particularly important as gender-based violence primarily affects the safety and well-being of women, was used. It was important to include the needs of all victims of domestic violence throughout the review.

2.1: Literature Review:

Tusla commissioned a review of literature⁴ on the policy and practice issues related to domestic violence, findings of which, underpin the review.

The literature review is presented as a separate report and is useful to read alongside the review. https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Somewhere_Safe.pdf

This literature review examined several key themes including:

- Domestic violence issues, services, and accommodation provision in Ireland
- Obligations under the Istanbul Convention, the EU Victim's Directive, and the goals under the Second National Strategy on Domestic Sexual and Gender based Violence 2016-2021
- International approaches to domestic violence in four countries, with a particular focus on the provision of safe emergency accommodation to victims

The Istanbul Convention⁵ is referenced repeatedly throughout this report as it is an important international and binding agreement which was ratified by Ireland in March 2019 and entered into force in July 2019.

The literature review notes that the Istanbul Convention requires that general support services (including housing) that facilitate recovery from domestic violence are provided (article 20), and that specialist support services are also available to provide for immediate-, short- and long-term needs (article 22). Article 23 specifically refers to shelters, stating:

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide for the setting-up of appropriate, easily accessible shelters in sufficient numbers to provide safe accommodation for and to reach out proactively to victims, especially women and their children.

Article 23 of the Istanbul Convention.

⁴ Flynn, A. & Crowley, L. (2019) Somewhere Safe. Informing Ireland's Provision of Domestic Violence Emergency Accommodation through an International Lens. (Tusla, 2019)

⁵ The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Council of Europe, 2011)

Following the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in March 2019, Ireland is subject to examination by GREVIO (the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence) regarding the State's adherence to the obligations of the Convention.

A key learning from GREVIO's review of implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Austria and Denmark is the emphasis on the importance of emergency accommodation being accessible to all, including migrant women, women with disabilities, and women with mental health or substance misuse related needs. Adequacy of spaces in numerical terms was not found to be sufficient as a response in meeting Istanbul Convention obligations.

The literature review also highlights the impact of the housing crisis on victims of domestic abuse. Many women who are homeless cite domestic violence as the cause of their homelessness. Some victims have reported that they have continued to live with their abuser believing that becoming homeless may be the only alternative.

A lack of housing stock results in limited and unsatisfactory accommodation options for survivors who are ready to transition from a refuge. This challenge contributes to 'bottleneck effects' within refuges, which is a key factor in refuges being full. It is also reported that the legal and housing systems can be very difficult to navigate for survivors of domestic violence.

The findings from the literature review indicate that an inter-agency approach is necessary to ensure that pathways to housing would be part of the range of options available to victims of abuse and their children when being supported by domestic violence services or other key stakeholders.

The literature review suggests consideration of the following in shaping recommendations:

- The Council of Europe minimum standards in terms of the numbers of safe accommodation units (or 'family places' in Council of Europe terms) on a per population basis should be met, and surpassed where necessary in proportion to the real needs of Ireland's population.
- It is important to make sure that there is fair access to services for women and victims of domestic violence according to their individual support and location needs.
- A suite of wider accommodation options is needed i.e., moving beyond commonly understood models of 'refuge' to finding models of safe accommodation that are feasible and adaptive to local communities.
- More consultation is needed with a diversity of women when considering improved equality of access.⁶
- Evidence from other countries and overall international policy shows that the key to improving the response to violence against women is an integrated, cross-governmental and cross-societal response.
- Socio-legal change regarding barring orders will be needed to respond more fully to the safety needs of victims.
- This response needs to come from different groups including, legal, policy makers and those who work directly with people affected by domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.
- Enhanced data collection is necessary to better understand needs over time and in different geographical regions.
- Further research is necessary to understand the needs of particular groups that may have additional vulnerabilities and/or specific needs — children, members of ethnic minority communities including Traveller and Roma, people with disabilities, those experiencing mental health and substance misuse issues, and men.

⁶ Flynn, A. & Crowley, L. (2019). Somewhere Safe. Informing Ireland's Provision of Domestic Violence Emergency Accommodation through an International Lens. (Tusla, forthcoming)

2.2 Determining Need:

Detailed analysis is required to allow for an informed understanding on the extent of the experience of domestic violence and the need for services generally – need for refuge/shelter and the unmet needs of victims of domestic violence presents challenges in Ireland and in other countries.

The survey on the experience of gender-based violence undertaken by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) across European countries (2014) indicated that more than one in four women experienced domestic or sexual violence since 15 years of age and approximately 80% did not make contact with victim support services.

Data on service activity, particularly unmet requests for refuge, provide some information on needs and demand for services.

Data reported to Tusla about activity in domestic violence refuges in 2019 showed that 1,134 women and 2,918 children were accommodated in 2019. The average length of stay was 34 days, with 40% of stays lasting between 3-6 weeks and 80% of stays less than six weeks' duration. Only a relatively small number (2% of cases), stayed beyond six months. Nine cases stayed over one year. Anecdotally, the ability to access suitable housing for service users is a feature of most long-stay cases. Although the numbers of long-stays are small, they account for a significant proportion of 'bed-nights' and have an impact on the availability of safe accommodation for women and children at acute risk.

Data on unmet requests for refuge accommodation can provide some indication of immediate unmet need, although there are some limitations in interpreting this data. In 2019, 4,381 enquiries about availability of a refuge place did not result in access to refuge, almost two thirds of these because of a lack of available or suitable places. This demand represents only the visible aspect of need i.e., women who have sought help either directly from a domestic violence support service or through a referring professional or service.

Other sources of data provide some indications of the extent of domestic violence and therefore potential need. Courts' Services data from 2019 shows that 23,500 applications were received for legal protection under Domestic Violence legislation, within which there was an increase of 30% for people seeking interim barring orders (which provide immediate protection). Domestic violence incidents to An Garda Síochána for 2020 showed 43,000 reports of domestic violence related incidents in that year. This is an increase of 16% on 2019 figures and seen to be related substantially to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions.

Whilst the data above gives some indication of the extent of domestic violence, it is not possible to use this directly to determine the extent of unmet need and need for services, particularly considering that under-reporting is a feature.

In the absence of a body of population-based data, projection of need and demand for services, this review relies on actual use at current level of provision, along with prevalence data and the Council of Europe guidance about minimum levels of provision related to population size.

2.21 Analyses of need previously undertaken by Tusla

In 2017, as part of its commissioning processes, Tusla commenced six ‘Needs Analysis Projects’ (NAPs) across the Midlands, Roscommon, Wicklow, Fingal, Carlow/Kilkenny, Galway, and Cork, to identify:

- The level of need for the different types of DSGBV services within specific geographical areas and communities
- The extent to which current provision was meeting that level of need
- The gaps in current provision
- The types of services required to fill identified gaps and deliver the desirable outcomes for victims of DSGBV and for children exposed to such violence

This indicated that access to services can be affected by things like:

- Location
- Cultural background
- Age
- Gender⁷

Specific groups face intersectoral challenges and barriers to accessing appropriate services, these include:

- People in isolated rural communities
- People with disabilities
- People with mental health challenges
- People with substance abuse issues
- Travellers and Roma
- Migrants
- Men

Whilst the focus of these earlier processes was much broader than the current review, there are comparisons to be made and thematic crossover in the findings that suggests there are a core set of concerns to be addressed, in order to assure that those most in need can access appropriate support and safety when they experience domestic violence.

2.3: Mapping of existing Accommodation Provision:

This review included a detailed analysis of existing accommodation by:

- Type
- Structure
- Location

A mapping exercise was completed to document the current provision of all refuges across Ireland.⁸

For this review, a family place is defined as a single Tusla funded refuge unit. This is a unit that can accommodate one woman and a number of children. At the time of this analysis, there were 141 family places in Ireland.

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, there were 155 units of emergency domestic violence accommodation operational in Ireland, 145 of these units were in refuges and 10 were in Safe Homes.

This information was compared to the requirements as outlined in the Istanbul Convention requirements.⁹

The Council of Europe Minimum Standards document indicates:

- Two levels of minimum standard
- A method of calculating a ‘family place’.

⁷ Tusla (2019) Needs Analysis Projects Summary Report

⁸ AIRO, Maynooth University was commissioned to undertake this work (which was completed in 2021)

⁹ The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Council of Europe, 2011)

The explanatory report¹⁰ to the Istanbul Convention states there should be one family place for every 10,000 of population, indicating there should be 476 family places provided in Ireland, based on 2016 Census data.

This indicates Ireland currently provides just fewer than 30% of the higher standard required. If Ireland were to achieve a target of meeting 70% of the recommended number of units, an additional 198 family places would be required. To achieve 100% of the target, a further 335 family places would be required.

The situation becomes more critical looking ahead. Using CSO population projections for a moderate population growth¹¹ the population in Ireland would increase to 5.39 million by 2031 and over 6 million by 2051, indicating an additional 398 family places required, reaching 70% of Istanbul Convention requirements in numerical terms by 2031.

An analysis of the proximity of communities to family places was also completed, exploring the proportion of the national population currently within a 30-minute drive time from a refuge. The result is set out in the chart in Apprenix 4.

Almost three quarters (73.6%) of the population in the State is within 30 minutes of a refuge location. However, there are major regional variations:

- In 11 Local Authority Areas, less than 50% of its population are within 30 minutes of a unit or family place (chart showing details are included at Appendix 4).
- The lowest results were in Midlands/North-West (Leitrim, Sligo, Cavan and Longford).
- In total, 1.255 million people are more than 30 minutes from a unit or family place.
- The largest population bases further than 30 minutes from a unit or family place are in the following Local Authority areas:
 - Cork County, 202,000 population
 - Galway County, 94,000 population
 - Tipperary, 88,000 population
 - Donegal, 84,000 population
 - Cavan, 71,000 population
 - Sligo, 65,000 population

¹⁰ Explanatory Report to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. (Council of Europe, 2011) www.coe.int/t16800d383a

¹¹ The project team (AIRO) used the M2F2 scenario – a moderate growth scenario with population increase of 1,290,900 (+27.2%) over the period to 6.03 million persons, equivalent to a 0.69 per cent annual average increase [www.cso <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/population/populationandlabourforceprojections/>](https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/population/populationandlabourforceprojections/)

3. Analysis & Conclusions

3.1: Overview:

Analysis of the data gathered during the review shows evidence of high levels of consistency about core issues, both in describing the current situation and proposing solutions. The breadth of information is themed across four dimensions in Figure 1 below¹².

It is evident that responding to the needs of victims of DSGBV is complex. A response system must go beyond dealing with individual victims and towards well-developed planning, focusing on prevention, combating gender-based violence and holding perpetrators to account.

Most definitions of ‘Safe Accommodation’ refer to:

- Access to specialist DV services to ensure safety
- A means through which those affected can move on from violent situations

It is evident that to support safe accommodation, specialist DV services are required to support victims and engage in:

- risk assessment
- safety planning
- care planning

As referenced at the outset, while the focus of this review is the provision of accommodation for victims of domestic violence, it is evident that specialist DV support services and potentially support services targeted for members of minority communities are required in tandem with the provision of accommodation. Further consultation is required to advance the specifics of this.

Stakeholders described the need for reform across several areas that are beyond the scope of this review but are captured in Figure 1, to inform future considerations in the planning of services for victims of domestic violence, particularly the current review of the DSGBV Strategy.

¹² More detailed overview and analyses are included in the supporting documentation for this Review at https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Review_of_the_provision_of_accommodation_for_victims_of_domestic_violence.pdf

Figure 1: Framework capturing what stakeholders considered important in the provision of safe accommodation options for victims of domestic violence



3.2: Provision of Accommodation for Victims of Domestic Violence:

It is widely acknowledged that the provision of accommodation for victims of domestic violence should include:

- Safe at Home – with necessary AGS (police) involvement, involving outreach DV services. This would mean victims would be supported and could:
 - stay safe at home
 - maintain employment
 - maintain children in schools
 - provide any other support needs
 - have community support
- Very short-term hotel or B&B stays with support services
- Refuge - campus setting, adjacent or community-based family units — all with ‘own front door’ access.
- Pathways to transitional or step-down housing

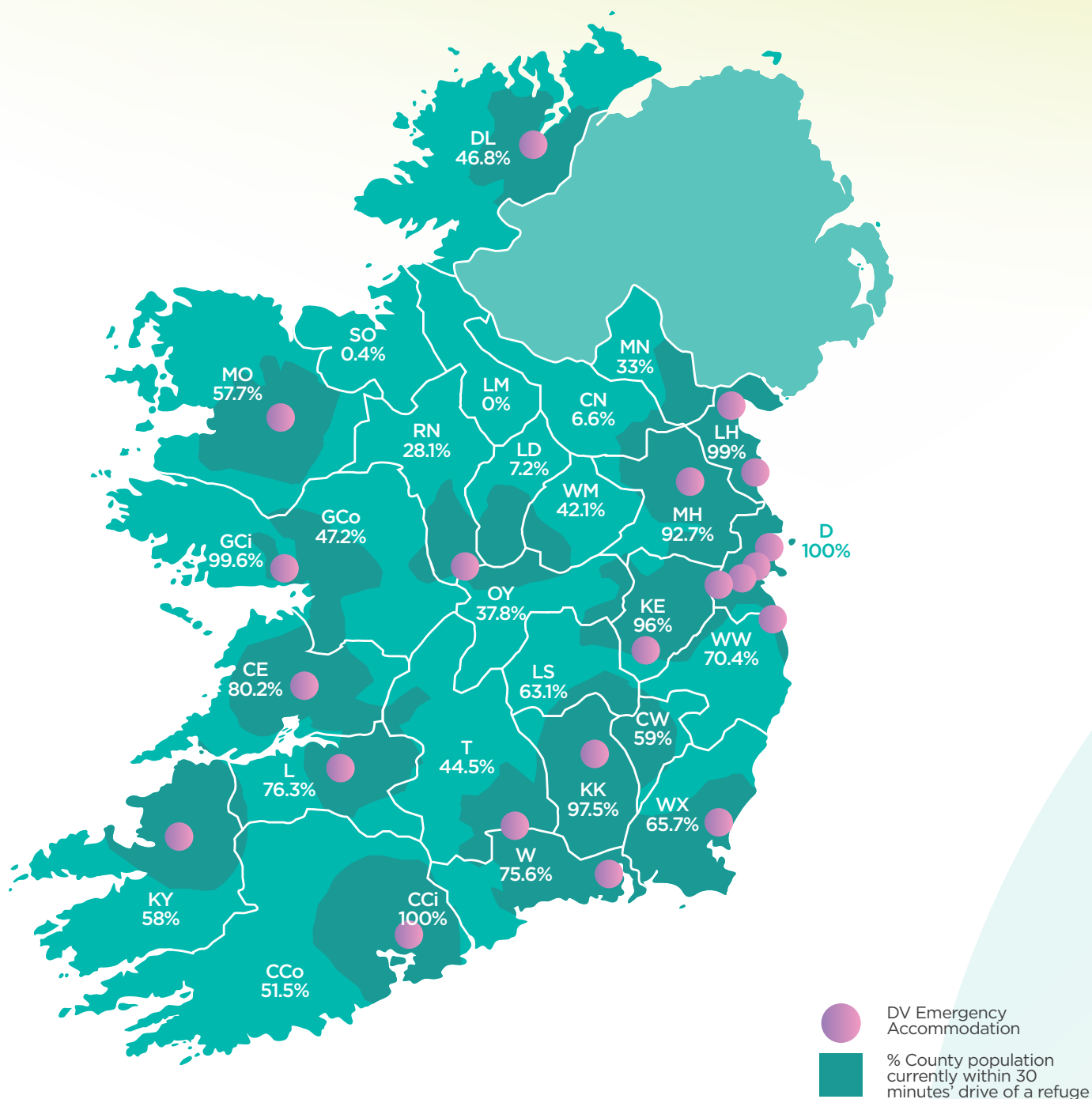
Learning from service provision during the pandemic emphasised the requirement for a flexible range, type and source of accommodation options particularly as communally based provision became unusable.

Figure 2 below outlines the proportion of the population by area¹³ within a 30 min-drive time to current domestic violence accommodation. The improved situation with additional DV accommodation in place is shown in Figure 3.

This review indicates that additional family places are required, in particular locations, to improve accommodation provision for victims of domestic abuse in Ireland.

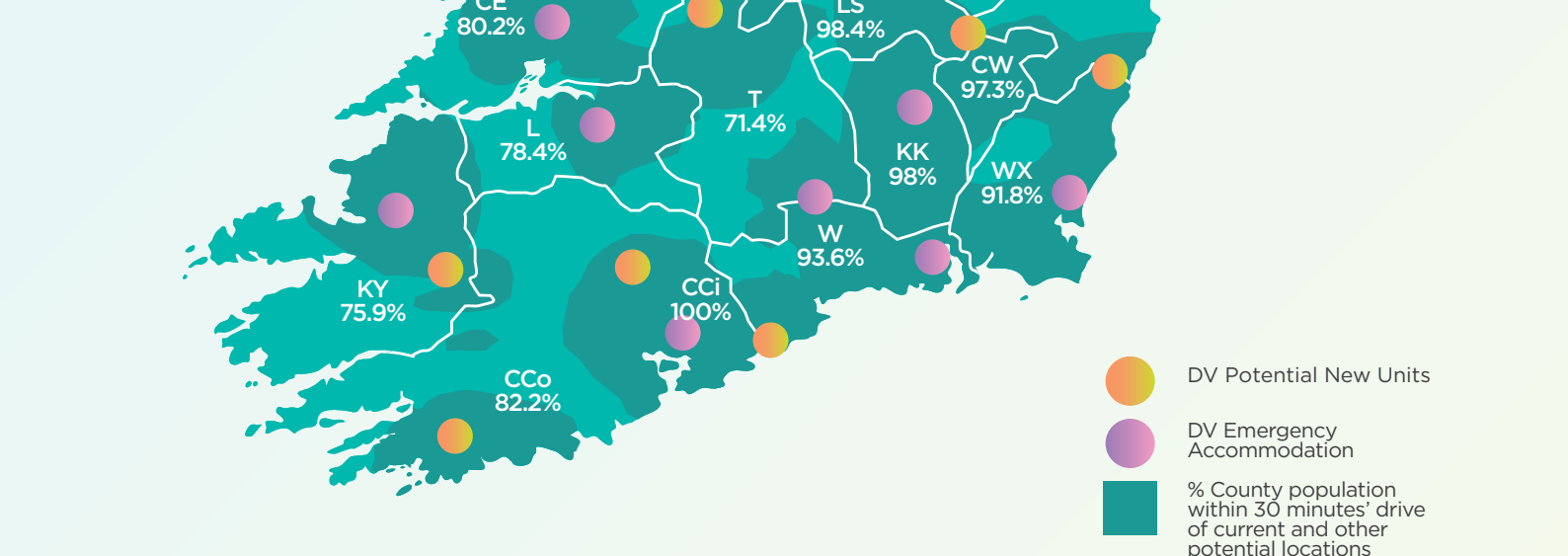
¹³ This is set out by Census Small Area, which is central Statistics Office administrative unit created for population statistics at a local level. Census small areas are a sub-division of the Electoral Division administrative unit. A Census Small Area (CSA) generally covers 65-90 households. Census Small Area - Datasets - data.gov.ie

Figure 2: Percentage of population within 30 minutes' drive of a refuge in each Local Authority area in 2021



Proximity Analysis to Tusla Domestic Violence
Emergency Accommodation Analysis based on
30 minute proximity analysis from Small Areas

Region	Percentage
MO	73.9%
SO	92.2%
MN	99%
LM	91.5%
CN	87.8%
RN	64%
LD	98.5%
LH	99%
WM	99%
MH	98.4%
GCi	99.6%
GCo	62.8%
OY	88.5%
KE	99%
WW	94.2%
D	100%



Proximity Analysis to Tusla Domestic Violence
Emergency Accommodation Analysis based on
30 minute proximity analysis from Small Areas

3.21 Responding to the needs of men:

The focus in the review has been primarily on the needs of women and children, taking into account well-documented gendered patterns in domestic violence and abuse, and the international obligations on gender based violence. However, the need to provide shelter for men in domestic violence situations is clear. Evidence gathered through this process either through stakeholder engagement or through the literature review, did not point to the need to replicate high support refuge type accommodation for men but rather to retain a gendered approach to services and to create a distinct model of service, with pathways to safe accommodation and support for men.

3.3 Determining Future Provision:

Based on the 2016 Census data and looking only in numerical terms against Istanbul Convention requirements, an additional 198 family places, distributed across 22 or more identified locations, would reach approximately 70% of the Istanbul Convention requirements and an accessibility criterion of less than 30 minutes driving time for 90% of the affected population.

Table 1: Overview of additional provision required to reach 70% of Istanbul Convention implications for Family Places

Tusla Region	Total pop 2016	Istanbul Convention/ Council of Europe family place implications based on population in this area (1 per 10,000 population)	Existing units	Number of extra units needed to meet 70% of Istanbul Convention	Total number of extra units, needed to meet 100% of Istanbul Convention
1.0 Dublin North East	1,084,174	108	36	40	72 (40 + 32)
2.0 Dublin Mid Leinster	964,919	96	19	50	77 (50 + 27)
3.0 South East	927,319	93	36	60	87 (60 + 27)
4.0 West/North West	709,880	71	18	32	53 (32 + 21)
5.0 South West	690,575	69	12	38	57 (38 + 19)
6.0 Mid West	384,998	38	20	8	18 (8 + 10)
7.0 State	4,761,865	476	141	198	335 (198 + 137)

3.4 Prioritising Responses:

The need for social distancing and other measures arising from Covid-19 put an additional focus on the current building stock of refuges, some of which are old and requiring replacement or modernisation. Refuge developments are in train across counties Meath, Wexford, and Dundalk which include provision of 24 units. Just 11 of these units are additional to current capacity. Works that are in train involve redevelopment of the 3 refuges to improve living accommodation and facilities for providing support to service users.

Whilst looking at developing a full suite of accommodation options as part of a national commissioning plan, there is a level of urgency to prioritise a number of locations for refuge developments that could come on stream within 3 years. The associated model-of-service needs to be included in planning from the start.

Given the shortfall in safe accommodation places, the challenges in determining the actual level of need, and the nature of capital developments, an immediate priority step in responding would be to reach and pass the lower minimum standard provided for in the Council of Europe minimum standards, i.e. 1 family place per 10,000 female population. As 35 is the absolute minimum in numerical terms, a minimum of 50-60 places should be considered.

The optimum number of family places and configuration of accommodation will best be considered in the course of developing a commissioning plan for domestic violence accommodation and informed by strategic goals around prevention and overall response to domestic, sexual and gender based violence nationally.

The specific needs of particular groups with additional or multiple disadvantages that are at additional risks, such as Travellers and those from other ethnic minority communities, should be factored into planning for any new developments, with direct representation of those communities as part of developments.

Prioritisation of developments to be progressed immediately following this review should focus on:

- Locations in Local Authority areas that would have the greatest impact in increasing the proportion of population to within 30 minutes' drive of a refuge.
- Locations in Local Authority areas that would address adequacy on a population basis, where, despite having a high proportion of the population within 30 minutes' drive of a refuge, are still under-served with family places in numerical terms – with areas of rapid population growth a consideration.

3.5 Projecting Refuge Costs:

The estimated operational costs for a refuge, with between 5 and 9 units are outlined in the table below. This is based on a proposed staffing model, using Tusla/HSE salary scales plus proportional overheads costs.

Estimated Annual Operating Costs of Typical 24/7/365 Refuge with Support Services and Facilities on Site ¹⁴	Total Pay	Overhead	Total Annual Running Cost
Amount €	729,600	82,100	811,700

¹⁴ Based on analysis of operational costs across a number of refuges with 5-9 spaces

Estimated capital costs (buildings and physical facilities) will vary. But approximate costs for capital works based on current market are about €2m-€2.5m for an eight-unit refuge with facilities such as therapy rooms, social spaces and children's rooms.

Looking at prioritising, for example, 56 family spaces in refuge-type settings, to meet the lowest threshold of minimum provision, based on current costs, the following is a guide to indicative costs of first-phase implementation of refuge-type accommodation:

- 7, 8 unit refuge-type services = 56 family spaces
- Capital cost based on typical current costs: €20m based on €2m-€2.5m per refuge
- Revenue costs when fully operational: €5.6m annually for fully staffed model including children's support services
- Costings are based on more traditional refuge-type accommodation and approach to service – innovative approaches to provision may cause variation in how resources would be used, but are unlikely to result in lower costs.

Recent funding for refuge buildings has been sourced through the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) operated through the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Some Local Authority funding has also been provided.

Currently, the specialist DV service providers are all non-governmental organisations, are independent entities and have the structure of company limited by guarantee (CLG).

CLGs are independent of each other. Some provide specialist DV support and accommodation and are also Approved Housing Bodies (AHB).

This review indicates that any applicant for access to public capital funding for refuges must be structured as an AHB. The obligations involved in becoming an AHB in order to develop accommodation-based services, along with providing services and accommodation, can be onerous for the organisations' Boards of Management in terms of governance, oversight and complying with legislation.

For future developments, the role of the AHB on building developments should be considered distinctly from an organisation's role in providing specialist DV Services.

During this review, a range of housing related issues were also identified:

- Pathways from refuge to housing should minimise length of stay in refuge
- Access to services should be as efficient as possible
- Barriers to housing for victims should be addressed
- Pathways to provide accommodation for people with complex needs are needed.

3.6 Interagency Responsibilities:

Support and services for victims of domestic violence operate within a complex system in Ireland, including the provision of safe emergency accommodation.

Tusla has statutory responsibility under the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, for the care and protection of victims of domestic sexual and gender-based violence and funds a number of non-statutory agencies to provide services on their behalf.

Government Departments, including the Department of Justice, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and the Department of Children, Equality,

Disability, Integration and Youth and statutory and non-statutory agencies also hold key responsibilities in the provision of accommodation and services.

These partners operate in the context of:

- Different levels of specific responsibility
- Different legislative frameworks (an overview of the legal and policy framework around DSGBV is set out in Appendix 3)
- Different funding sources
- Different governance structures, with different lines of authority, responsibility, and accountability.

Figure 4: Key Government Departments & Agencies that have responsibilities in relation to DSGBV.



Figure 5: List of other agencies that deal with domestic violence responses



This complexity means there are multiple layers of relationships in responding to DSGBV, which leads to fragmentation in the planning and provision of services to victims of domestic abuse.

Evidence from other countries and international policy shows that the key to improving the response to domestic violence is an integrated response from a cross section of:

- Government Departments
- Services in the community

This supports the need for robust interdepartmental and interagency working, at national and local level, to respond to the needs of victims of domestic violence, particularly in respect of the provision of safe accommodation.

It is important that:

- All stakeholders have a shared understanding of the problem and the underlying causes
- Outcomes for victims inform the work and approach of the different service providers
- Various inter-related strands of work are aligned
- There is an inter-departmental and inter-agency approach to policy, planning and funding
- Stakeholders use clear and consistent terms for definitions and understanding of domestic violence (DV) terminology (reflected in DV data)
- There is a focus on further education, training and awareness raising.

It is evident in the literature and analysis that in responding to victims with more complex needs, e.g., disabilities, addiction, minority issues, welfare issues, or, child protection concerns, a multi-agency approach would need to clearly define:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Case management
- Cost allocation
- Data collection
- Cross-disciplinary training for staff in the different organisations.

In summary, this review identified key elements for consideration in the provision of accommodation for victims of domestic violence, which include:

Evidence based plan: To ensure evidence-based decision making is used in the planning and provision of safe accommodation that meets the needs of the local population and distributed across the country.

Accessibility: Services need to be available within a reasonable distance, and accessible.

Variety of responses: There needs to be a range of support services and safe accommodation possibilities developed so we can respond appropriately to each individual.

Additional needs: Service providers need to work with other specialists so they can provide the best service to victims with additional needs.

Expenditure: Integrated planning is required in relation to capital and operational expenditure.

Co-operation between agencies: Inter-agency planning and delivery is required in a consistent way across the country.

Legal: Legal protections need to be enhanced.

Training: Consistency in training is required across all agencies through professional training. This should include:

- Justice-sector
- Local Authorities
- Child protection domestic violence services
- Other specialist service providers
- Other relevant professionals.

4. Structures and processes To Support Provision of Accommodation for Victims of Domestic Violence.

This review supports the need for an interagency approach to the planning and delivery of accommodation for victims of domestic violence.

It is suggested that the most effective means of achieving this, is the development of a 10-year inter-departmental commissioning plan, which encompasses:

Development of an Inter-departmental governance structure to oversee the implementation of the commissioning plan to provide safe domestic violence accommodation nationally.

Accountability: Agree lead responsibilities and robust accountability for putting the commissioning plan in place.

Resources: Agreement on the resources for safe accommodation, including capital and revenue funding.

Standards: Agreement on the development of standards for the provision of accommodation.

Istanbul Convention: State to set out how it intends to respond to the Istanbul Convention requirements over the duration of the 10 years.

Local inter-agency commissioning team to implement the actions from the national plan at local level:

Knowledge and expertise: The inclusion of people with the range of knowledge and expertise required to support the level of development needed.

5. Key Recommendations

The key recommendations of this review are:

- 1 Provide more safe accommodation: The number and range of safe accommodation spaces (or ‘family places’) available to victims of domestic violence needs to increase substantially to meet current needs, projected future needs and international obligations. There should be a focus on short-term safe ‘emergency’ accommodation but mechanisms to enable victims to stay at home safely and addressing longer-term housing needs are important. Based on our analysis, at least 60 new family places/units need to be prioritised urgently to address areas of under-provision on a per-population basis.
- 2 Explicitly designate a lead department/ agency responsibility for progressing future safe domestic violence accommodation developments.
- 3 Develop an inter-departmental commissioning plan setting out a framework for the development and delivery of additional safe accommodation for victims of domestic violence accommodation over the next 10-year period, to achieve the optimal configuration of services within available resources (including the range, scope, capacity and location of new services) and to consider capital funding for future domestic violence accommodation services. Specific targets should be determined in response to identified need, with a model of resourcing for both capital and revenue funding identified, so that plans can be implemented over the ten-year period.
- 4 Establish an interdepartmental/cross agency group to develop and oversee the implementation of the plan for provision of safe emergency accommodation for victims of domestic violence.
- 5 Ensure integration with local areas: In addition to the national structure proposed, a structure is required at local level to progress the commissioning of domestic violence services and support developments into the future.
- 6 Further consultation to develop an explicit model of accommodation-with-services provision: Integrate evidence informed approaches and quality standards supported by professional practice developments. In addition, there should be a focus on strengthening domestic violence training and early intervention approaches for practitioners. The needs of specific groups will be considered in responses – particularly women from Traveller, Roma and other ethnic minority groups; those with disabilities; those with mental health, substance use or other health issues, along with the needs of male and other gender victims, children and others with complex needs.
- 7 Engagement with key stakeholders to develop a stated national policy position to maintain the safety of adults and children at home. This is beyond the scope of this review, but it is evident that further consideration from a range of stakeholders is required, particularly around the legal framework that would be required. Whilst refuges and other safe accommodation are critical in maintaining the safety of adults and children who are subjected to the effects of domestic violence, the ability to remain at home safely, or return home as quickly as possible and manage the exclusion of the perpetrator is a desirable outcome.

Appendix 1 - 1.3 Data streams informing the Review.

Project management included gathering and collating data from the following:

Literature Review. Flynn, A. and Crowley, L (2020).

Review of Domestic Violence Accommodation Provision. Information Paper: Context, Scope and Approach Tusla (2021).

Commissioning Needs Analyses Project. Compilation Report from Six Regions Tusla (2019).

Consultation with Service Users. Survey 2021.

Consultation with children who had stayed in refuges 2021.

Consultation with Domestic Violence Service Provider Organisations. Focus Groups and Survey. 2020 and 2021.

Consultation with Local Authorities. Focus Groups 2020.

Consultation with Representative Organisations of particular cohorts of potential service users. Interviews and focus group. 2021.

Consultation with cross-section of Tusla staff.

Engagement meetings with statutory bodies 2020/2021.

Engagement with the Monitoring Committee for the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (at three meetings between 2019-2021).

Analysis of Admissions and Discharge policies of Service Providers. Survey 2021.

Socio-demographic mapping. Demographic Analysis. AIRO, Maynooth University 2021.

Financial analysis of service and accommodation provision Tusla 2021.

Appendix 2

Membership of Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG):

ORGANISATION REPRESENTED	NAME
Safe Ireland	Lisa Marmion
National Women's Council Of Ireland (NWCi)	Orla O' Connor
West Cork Women Against Violence	Marie Mulholland
Laois Domestic Abuse Service	Marna Carroll
Domestic Violence Advocacy Service, Sligo (DVAS)	Carmel McNamee
Adapt Services	Monica McElvaney
Amber Kilkenny Women's Refuge Clg	Lisa Morris
Aoibhneas Domestic Abuse Support For Women And Children	Emma Reidy, Marcela Bonturi
Women's Aid	Sarah Benson
Meath Women's Refuge	Sinead Smith
Daisy House	Ena Norris
Nasc (Migrant And Refugee Rights)	Fiona Hurley
Mental Health Ireland	Aisling Doherty
Pavee Point	Tessa Collins Laura Pohjolainen
Disability Federation Of Ireland	Laura O'Callaghan
Focus Ireland	Karen Doyle
Sonas	Todd Prevost Fiona Ryan (until Oct 2020)
Tusla Homeless Liaison Service	Deborah Chemhere
Survivors Informing Services & Institutions (SISI)	Mary Louise Lynch
Tusla Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence team members	Joan Mullan Thelma Blehein Sabrina Brett (until Feb 21) Suzanne Walker (until April 20) Valerie Everard Dairine Cross Dr Mary Roche (from Dec 20)
Equality Works	Patricia Prendiville (Consultant)

Membership of the Project Steering Group:

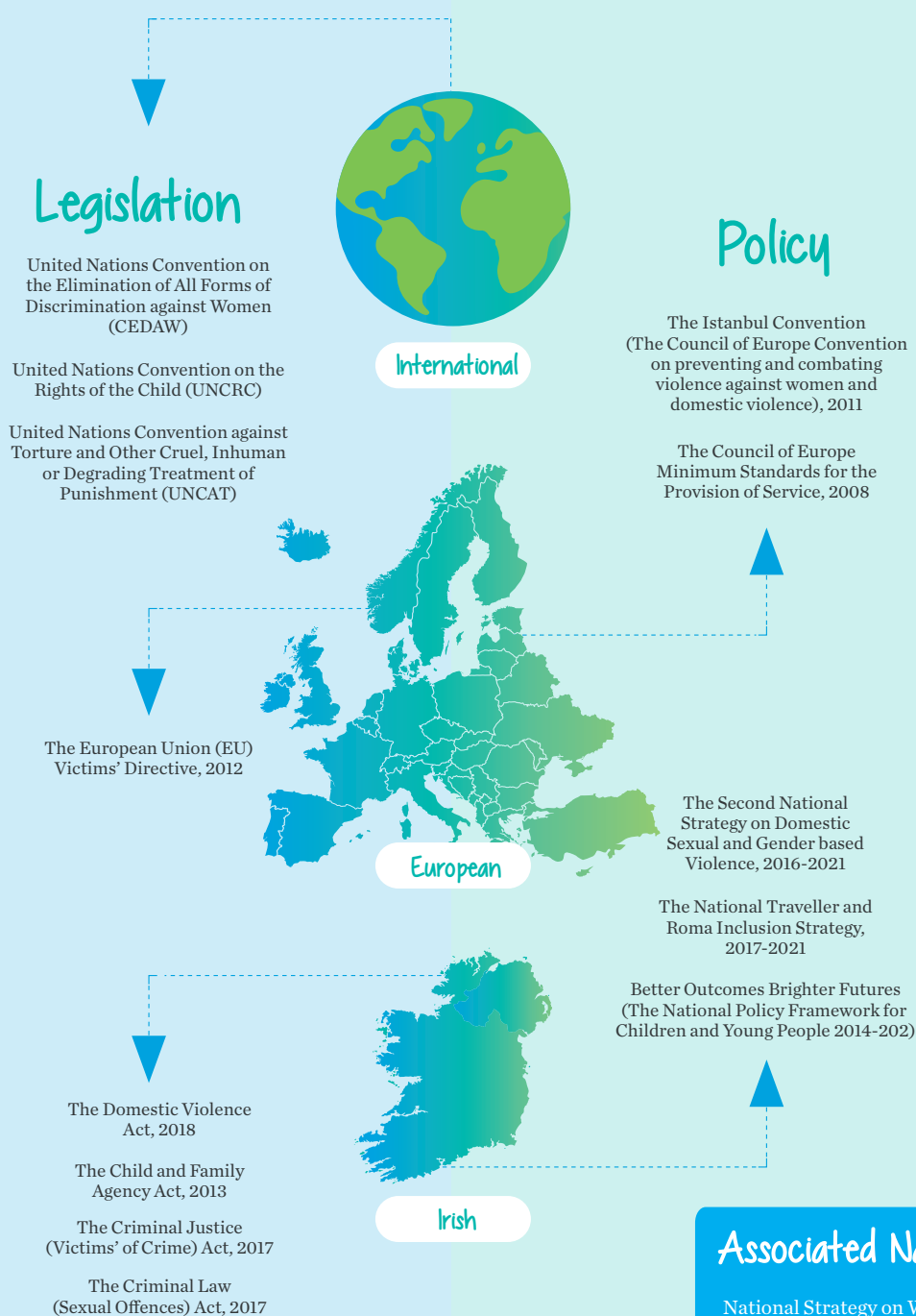
Role	Name
Chair	Eifion Williams - Director of Commissioning
Project Lead	Joan Mullan - National Manager for Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Services
Steering Group Member	Ann Butler - Commissioning Unit
Steering Group Member	Dr Mary Roche - Senior Service Co-ordinator, DSGBV Services
Steering Group Member	Thelma Blehein - Senior Service Co-ordinator, DSGBV Services
Steering Group Member	Laura Quinn - General Manager for Commissioning
Steering Group Member	Tess Noonan – Programme Management Office
Administrative Support for the Steering Group	Conor Byrne - DSGBV Business Support

Membership of the Project Management Group:

Role	Name
Project Lead	Joan Mullan, National Manager for Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Services
Project Manager/s	Suzanne Walker, Project Manager (Nov 2019 –April 2020) Mary Roche, Senior Co-ordinator for Sexual Violence Services (from Dec 2020)
Project Officer	Ann Butler - Commissioning Unit
Project Consultant	Patricia Prendiville, Equality Works
Programme Management Office (PMO)	Tess Noonan, Programme Management Office
Project Group Member	Conor Byrne, Business Support Lead*

* Susan Kennedy (Nov 2020-Feb 2021)

Appendix 3 - The International, European and Irish Legal and Policy Framework

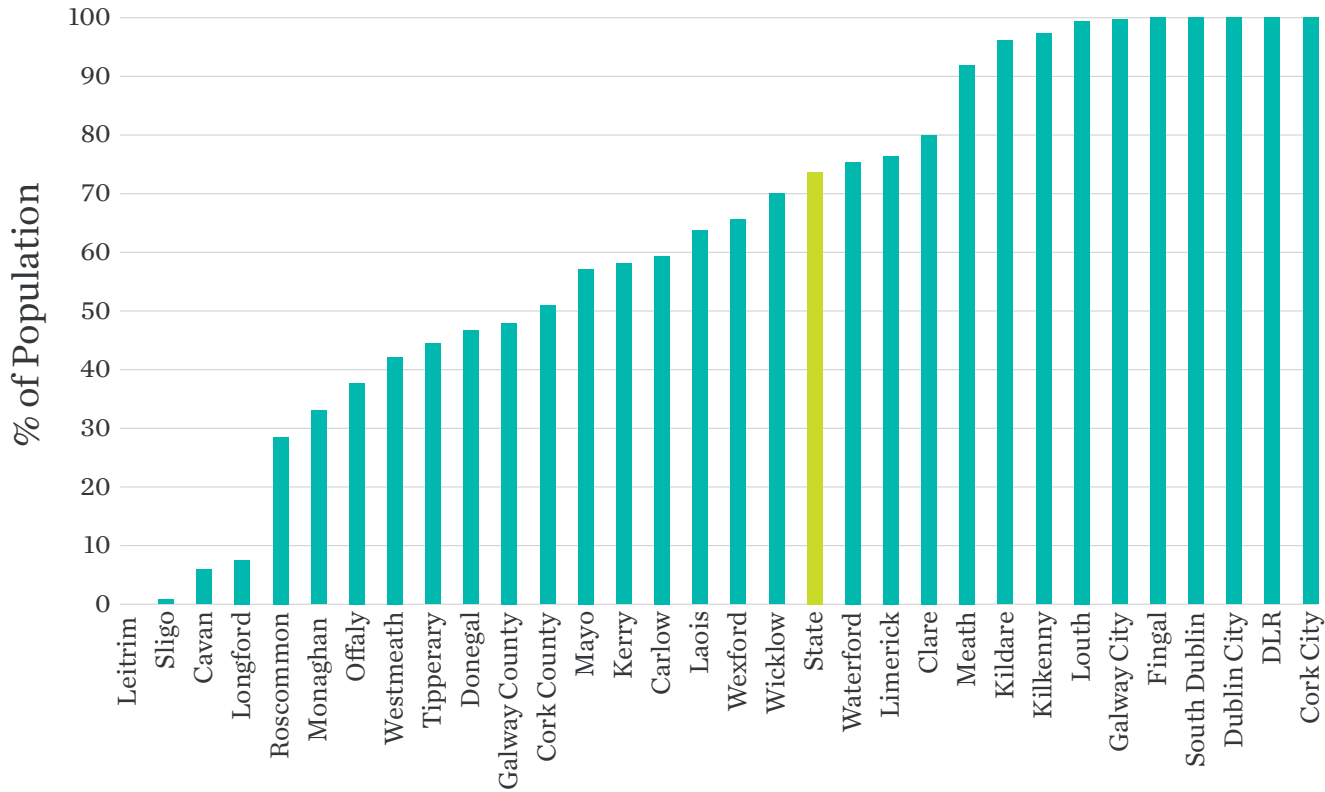


Associated National Strategies

- National Strategy on Women and Girls, 2017
- National LGBTI Inclusion Strategy, 2019
- National Disability Inclusion Strategy, 2017
- National Migrant Integration Strategy, 2017
- National Drugs and Alcohol Strategy, 2017
- Housing First National Implementation Plan, 2018
- Rebuilding Ireland.
- Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, 2018

Appendix 4 - Chart Indicating % of Population Currently Within 30 Minutes' Drive Time of a Domestic Violence Family Place by Local Authority area:

% Population* within 30 minutes of a DSGBV Unit - per Local Authority
*As per 2016 Census population



Notes:

Notes:

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dotted lines.



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