

Service Summary

(1) The authority currently spends £1.74m annually on providing housing related support services for victims of domestic abuse. These services have the capacity to support 264 households at any one time.

(2) There is refuge provision in all but one district in the county totalling 100 household units. Planning permission for the development of the remaining borough is well underway. Accommodation costs are met by the local housing authority. In 2013/14 175 women and 142 children were supported within refuge accommodation.

(3) In providing structured support in safe accommodation, these services provide a valuable resource to children's social care, minimising the interventions required by social services, particularly in relation to the removal of children from violent and dangerous household environments.

(4) Whilst refuge accommodation provides an immediate place of safety for women and their children, it is the support provided that enables them to recover from their traumatic experiences and to go to live safe, healthy and successful lives. Those entering refuge often have little experience of managing money and need help to access to healthcare, training and employment as well therapeutic services and education for their children

(5) Refuge providers in Kent deliver supplementary services, such as playworkers, support groups and counselling that build upon and complement those commissioned by KCC. Funded is attracted through other charitable grants such as Comic Relief or the Big Lottery fund. These deliver significant added value to the services commissioned through Kent County Council particularly in the reduction of repeat future victimisation in both adults and children.

(6) Refuges prepare women for managing the transition into safe independent accommodation which include taking on a new tenancy, transferring to a different refuge, or returning to their home in a safe and controlled manner to a life free from abuse. In 2013/14, 126 households were supported to move on in this way.

(7) In addition to refuge provision, there are two floating support services for men or women who are experiencing domestic abuse. These services are able to help those who have fled, are planning to flee or who need help to stay in their own accommodation, safe from the perpetrator. The services can help up to 164 households at one time and in 13/14 helped 314 households.

(8) In addition to reducing demand on emergency services and in particular Accident and Emergency departments, by enabling victims and their families to remain at home, floating support services play a key role in improving future resilience for victims and reduce the long term effects and costs of disrupted education for children associated in these households.

(9) The domestic abuse services in Kent are delivered by a range of 6 specialist providers including local charities, voluntary and other third sector organisations, employing over 40 FTE.