

Needs Assessment Q&A

Background and General Questions

MHCLG have developed a standardised form to support authorities in undertaking a local needs assessment to meet the duty for providing support within safe accommodation for all victims and their children. The form acts a useful tool to aid data capture and to promote consistency across the country, better ensuring authorities are considering the needs of all victims in their area. The draft standardised Needs Assessment Form has been emailed to our LA contacts and will be added alongside the Statutory Guidance [here](#).

This Q&A has been created to help local authorities in the completion of the assessment form.

Questions on Form

Q: How does the form help us?

- The Needs Assessment forms follow a structure that highlights useful data sets and is a tool to help you further understand the make-up of Domestic Abuse in your area, in order for you to appropriately estimate the needs on domestic abuse safe accommodation.
- The form will aid in the exploration of:
 - Local population make up, including DA prevalence
 - Safe accommodation mapping
 - Identification or victims/survivors and referrals, including understanding their journey's into safe accommodation
 - Demand for, and barriers in accessing, support within domestic abuse safe accommodation
 - Housing options
 - Survivor / victim experience
- By gathering data for each category, a solid evidence base should have formed, which will help in the creation of a robust, evidence-based strategy, that meets the demand for support within the authority area.

Q: Who needs to complete the Needs Assessment?

- Tier One authorities, with support from their Local Partnership Boards, must conduct a local needs assessment to determine the level of need for domestic abuse support for victims /survivors residing in safe accommodation in their area.
- Tier Two authorities must, so far as reasonably practicable, comply with a request to cooperate with Tier One authorities in the completion of this form.

Q: Do Tier 2 LAs need to complete the form?

- The requirement to complete a needs assessment sits at Tier 1 level, and we do not expect all tier 2 authorities to complete their own forms.

Q: Do I need to use the form?

- The form has been created as a useful tool to aid your data capture for your local needs assessment, which will inform your local strategies.

- Use of this form will assist you to meet the requirements of the new duty to undertake a comprehensive assessment of need for support in safe accommodation in your area.
- However, it is not compulsory to use this form, provided an adequate needs assessment is undertaken which meet the requirements of the duty and takes account of the accompanying statutory guidance.

Q: When does the first Needs Assessment need to be done by?

- MHCLG asks that tier one authorities publish their first local strategy by August 2021.
- The Needs Assessment will inform the local strategic approach. Therefore, it is expected that the assessment is completed in good time, ahead of the formation of the strategy.

Q: Do we need to submit the Needs Assessment to Government?

- No. Local authorities will not be required to submit their needs assessments. The duty requirement is to create and publish an evidence-based local strategy. The basis for this will be your needs assessment, which will need to be completed and recorded, but not formally published.
- However, there is a duty to report back to Government on the delivery of the duty, including demonstrating that authorities have undergone robust needs assessments, as well as how these needs have been met.
- Local authorities will be required to consult locally ahead of publishing their strategies, including with their Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board. You may wish to refer to information in your Needs Assessment Form to evidence the demands on services, as justification for your local approach.

Q: Is there funding available to cover the cost of the Needs Assessment?

- £125 million new burden funding is being provided to local authorities to cover the costs of the new duty. This includes the costs of administration, including preparation of needs assessments and strategies.
- In the spirit of the New Burdens Doctrine, the new duty will be funded in future years.

Q: I can't find the local data for demographics, what do I do?

- The duty requires that Local Partnership Boards be convened up with members from a range of agencies and services across the authority, that perform specific functions.
- Board members representing each function should be able to support the authority in accessing specific data sets and information relating to their function.

Q: What if we can't find all the data requested?

- The form sets out Government's expectations on the level and kind of data LAs should be considering as part of their needs assessment under the duty.
- We understand some information may be more difficult to collect for the first year or so – this is the level we expect local authorities to work to in future years.

- As the duty embeds, authorities will need to ensure the appropriate mechanisms at a local level are developed and put in place to support them in the delivery of their duty.
- The more you can gather, the more evidence and reasoning you will have for effective tailored local strategies, that meet the needs and demands placed on your area.

Q: What time period does this form cover? What time period should we look at for data gathering?

- When gathering data, the latest figures and data sets should be used, as these would provide the most accurate picture.

Q: When you refer to “Area” what do you mean?

- Area refers to the geographic make up of a Tier One local authority unless stated otherwise.

Q: How do you define disabled?

- The definition of disability used by ONS is consistent with the core definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010. A person is considered to have a disability if they have a long-standing illness, disability or impairment which causes difficulty with day-to-day activities.

Q: What does By and For mean?

- Safe accommodation that provides dedicated specialist support to victims with relevant protected characteristics and/or complex needs can also be known as a ‘by and for’ service. This is where the personnel running and / or working in the service has the same demographics and or experience as the victim types group they specialise in supporting.
- By and For safe accommodation can include specialist refuges for BAME, LGBT, and disabled victims and their children. Please see the Statutory Guidance for further information.

Q: Are socio-economic characteristics really relevant? Do we need to know about victim's finances or education?

- All data requested in this form will give a picture of the domestic abuse landscape, the more data you can gather, the better informed the strategy, and the more victims/survivors helped.
- Knowing more about victims can give more background and information on trends which can help forecast demand and help plan for future provisions, making safe accommodation support more accessible to the people who need it.

Q: What are the quality standards?

- The MHCLG Quality Standards were developed together with the Domestic Abuse sector and a link can be found in the Statutory Guidance.

Q: Why don't we just look at the numbers of victims/survivors placed in temporary or other accommodation following being turned away from domestic abuse safe accommodation, to assess need?

- It is important to understand the numbers of victims/survivors that can and can't access domestic abuse safe or other accommodation.
- By exploring referral numbers for each type of accommodation listed, including temporary accommodation, you should be able to see how many referrals are being met and unmet from inside and outside your area and also, how many referrals struggle to be met and how long the duration of stay is for each type of accommodation.
- This will data will provide great insight into the referrals that are going well and those areas that may need further attention to make further successful routes for victims/survivors to access domestic abuse safe accommodation.
- Exploring data on the make-up of DA will also support you in understanding and anticipating future demand on services, and will take account of those victims that for whatever reason, have not come forward to date and therefore will not be captured by data on victims being turned away.

Q: The Housing Options section is missing references to local housing market conditions and profile, PRS and social housing availability, rent levels and affordability etc.

- This needs assessment is specifically for Part 4 of the DA Bill which focuses on domestic abuse and support within safe accommodation.
- The section on housing options has been added to aid local authorities to assess the options available for move-on and secondary accommodation following the intense, short term accommodation in places such as refuge.
- Local authorities are free to do further exploration of local housing markets and add this to their assessment, if helpful.

Q: How do we capture data on other areas that aren't our own?

- We encourage local authorities to collaborate and communicate when developing their needs assessments, sharing data to help create a joined-up approach. Under the duty, all Tier 1 authorities will be required to conduct a needs assessment and therefore should have the required information available in order to share.

Q: Pathway mapping, is that per Tier 2 level or as a whole?

- This will need to be agreed by Tier 1 authorities and their respective Tier 2 authorities. At a minimum it will need to be across the Tier 1 area as a whole, but naturally, pathways at Tier 2 level will inform this.

Q: Are we required to assess the sustainability of services when conducting service mapping?

- When mapping services, it will be useful to understand and record details on who they are, the support they currently provide or could provide, quality standards etc. If you wish to explore sustainability as part of this exploration, please do and add this to the notes.

Q: Referrals and barriers: this may be difficult to collate and may require a trawl of paperwork and qualitative analysis to fully understand the reasons applicants are refused, making it an extremely time-consuming process.

- It is important to explore referrals of victims/survivors and the process undertaken when accessing support within safe accommodation.
- It is crucial to know how victims/survivors are identified and referred on to support and, if they are able to successfully access the support they need, when they need it. If they aren't able to access support, why is that? By understanding this, unmet need will become apparent.
- Local strategies can then start to meet this unmet need and help more victims/survivors rebuild their lives after the trauma of domestic abuse.
- We recognise that this process may take time and resource. This is why £125m of New Burdens funding has been allocated to cover both, the cost of unmet need in support within safe accommodation and, the extra administrative burden.