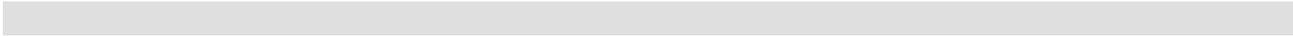




Communities Directorate

Halton Sanctuary Scheme

Policy, Procedure and Practice
June 2011



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INFORMATION SHEET

Service area	
Date effective from	
Responsible officer(s)	
Date of review(s)	
Status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory (all named staff must adhere to guidance) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional (procedures and practice can vary between teams) 	
Target audience	Borough Wide
Date of committee/SMT decision	
Related document(s)	
Equality Impact Assessment Completed	
Superseded document(s)	
File reference	

1. **POLICY**

1.1 **Introduction**

The Halton Sanctuary Scheme is an initiative which aims to make it possible for victims of domestic violence and abuse to remain in their homes and feel safe. It hopes to avoid the associated traumas and inconvenience of being forced to relocate to other areas away from family networks, employment and schooling, and reduce the need for temporary accommodation.

This protocol has been produced by the Halton Domestic Abuse Forum (HDAF) and Housing Partnership in association with specialist providers. It sets out how victims of domestic violence and abuse can access the sanctuary scheme; the process and standards to enable additional security measures to be installed in the victim's home.

1.2 **Definition**

The Government's definition, and one that the Halton Domestic Abuse Forum has adopted – describes domestic abuse as:

'Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.'

(An adult is defined as any person aged 18 years or over. Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, and grandparents, whether directly related in-laws or stepfamily). This definition also includes issues of Domestic Abuse to same sex marriages and black and minority ethnic (BME) communities such as so called 'honour killings' and forced marriages.

Sanctuary schemes are an initiative offering an innovative approach to homelessness prevention. They are designed to enable victims of domestic violence and abuse to remain in their own accommodation, where it is safe for them to do so, where it is their choice and where the perpetrator does not live in the accommodation.

Each sanctuary scheme intervention is tailored to accommodate the needs and circumstances of the individuals involved. The exact nature of Sanctuary can not be identified due to the individualistic need of each victim, property and circumstance. However, in order to ensure that a minimum standard is installed to each property an assessment that identifies the needs of the victim will be required. The Sanctuary package offered and the measures installed in accordance with this, minimum standard.

Generally Sanctuary will involve a range of target hardening measures, including fire safety elements, such as reinforced doors, locks, smoke detectors and additional window locks.

In some areas local authorities are supporting the installation and use of Sanctuary Rooms. In Halton we **do not** provide these, evidence

suggests that these can be used to effectively imprison victims / children if a perpetrator does gain access to a property. The consequences thereafter may be very dangerous and even life threatening.

2. **Sanctuary Model**

A full needs and risk assessment will be carried out for every referral by the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA). This may involve information being obtained from several partner agencies. Practical advice may also need to be provided to victims regarding personal safety outside of the home and additional measures may need to be put in place to manage the risk of the perpetrator.

Clear advice on personal safety needs to be provided to increase the safety of victims outside their home, when visiting family or friends, or going to work. The advice provided should be in the form of a safety plan, which is reviewed at regular intervals, subject to changes of risk.

Support Measures can include:

- the use of injunctions
- criminal sanctions
- the provision of personal alarms including Global Positioning System alarms
- developing safety plans and strategies for keeping safe, for example:
 - changing routes to work and school
 - avoiding isolated routes and going out alone at night
 - changing routines that the perpetrator will be aware of (for example, regular appointments, where and when service users shop or bank)
- informing schools, employers and neighbours about the situation; and,
- planning what to do in an emergency (for example, finding a safe place to wait for the police).
- Cheshire Police offer support to domestic violence victims and critical markers are put on addresses that are at risk.

The Sanctuary component should not be considered as an immediate emergency response, but rather a longer-term solution to providing professional security in order to improve the victims' quality of life. Once a referral for Sanctuary measures is made, the property should be assessed within 48 hours and the measures put in place within 5 days of the assessment in every instance.

Those requiring an emergency response should be encouraged to stay with family or friends or sign posted into service provision such as refuge until the Sanctuary measures have been installed. If the victim refuses to leave the property interim measures should be considered and provided to the victim within 24 hours.

3. Children and Young People

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 acknowledges that Domestic Abuse can pose a significant risk of harm to children, both through direct abuse and indirectly through compromised care and associated psychological impacts by witnessing Domestic Abuse. This is evidenced by the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2010-14 that highlighted that during 2009-10 over half the referrals made by the police to Children's Social Care in Halton related to Domestic Abuse.

It also needs to be recognised that Domestic Abuse is more frequently being identified within young people's relationships. Therefore, it is important that agencies undertaking Sanctuary Assessments and Referrals are aware and alert to potential safeguarding children concerns.

All agencies identifying safeguarding issues for children and young people will need to follow internal organisational policies regarding reporting and responding to Safeguarding Children Concerns. This may include in some instances the instigation of a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) assessment. This process can be supported via the local Integrated Working Support Teams (IWST).

In order to ensure that safeguarding children concerns are effectively identified and responded to, all staff involved within Sanctuary work will need to undertake the appropriate and necessary safeguarding training as commensurate with their role and outlined within Working Together 2010 and any subsequent updates, revisions and amendments.

4. Eligibility /Referral Process

A simple referral form is available for agencies and for self-referral to complete which, includes essential biographical data and confirmation that the victim:

- a. Is experiencing domestic abuse
- b. Is being offered target hardening as part of a wider safety plan
- c. Intends to stay at the property for the foreseeable future
- d. Does not share their accommodation with the perpetrator

This form requires the referrer to identify if their client requires a standard package or enhanced measures.

The provision available and offered as part of the standard and enhanced measures should be used as a guide, a degree of professional flexibility to these two approaches should be applied depending on the individual circumstances to each case.

Installing Sanctuary measures should be agreed by the victim, regardless of the package being offered no one option should be forced upon the victim.

Sanctuary measures should be provided to all households and individuals at risk of domestic violence regardless of tenure or gender. The level of service provided should be consistent across the borough; this will be continually monitored to ensure compliance is achieved.

Where a victim resides at a Registered Social Landlord owned property, it will be the responsibility of that housing provider to install appropriate Sanctuary measures, minimum standards apply depending whether the victim is identified as requiring a standard or an enhanced package.

Where the victim resides in owner/occupier property or a private rented property it will be the responsibility of Halton Borough Council to provide Sanctuary measures as determined by the level of risk.

Sanctuary provision forms one aspect of a range of alternatives, where a victim does not want Sanctuary measures, or the perpetrator is considered to be too high risk for Sanctuary measures to be considered viable, alternative accommodation options should be available, suggested provision:

- Emergency transfer to alternative accommodation
- Mutual transfer
- Refuge
- Emergency and temporary housing
- Private sector lease including access to Bond Guarantee Scheme to facilitate a move in the private sector

Assistance and entitlement to housing under homelessness legislation must be adhered to if safety cannot be assured by Sanctuary.

5. Risk Assessment and Installation

1. An assessment of the victims risk must be completed using the DASH assessment and/or by a trained member of staff.
2. An assessment of the property that is to be considered for Sanctuary measures is to be conducted using standard assessment form (to be developed & attached as appendix).
3. When the perpetrator still resides at the property, and the victim wants them to be removed positive action must be undertaken to facilitate the removal of the perpetrator when possible.
4. Any measures installed in a property should not impede exit in a fire, the client should be advised and understand what actions they need to undertake in the event of a fire. Properties identified as requiring Sanctuary measures should be highlighted to Cheshire Fire and Rescue, so they can offer a Home Safety Assessment subject to the agreement of the victim.

5. Permission from both the victim and the owner of the property must be sought before any alterations to the property can be undertaken. If the property is owner-occupied provided permission is granted for the adjustments Sanctuary measures can be installed. If the property is owned by an RSL, provided that the measures form part of the agreed packages described within this policy, the RSL will complete the installation of required measures. When the property is owned by a private landlord, permission must be obtained from the landlord. If the victim does not want their landlord to be notified of the request for Sanctuary measures, for whatever reason, Sanctuary measures can not be offered.
6. Regular contact with clients in receipt of Sanctuary measures should be maintained especially with those rejecting support at time of installation this is to ensure that know who to contact if measures are not working and they require additional support. In cases where the RSL has supported the Sanctuary measures the most appropriate support mechanism will be through the dedicated housing officer either to the locality of the address or if a housing officer with a domestic violence remit has been identified. Contact must be made at least once per month for six months and then longer intervals as determined by the service user and the housing officer, this arrangement will have no time limits.

6. Security Measures

6.1 Emergency Repairs

At times it may be necessary to undertake emergency repairs before the Sanctuary assessment has been completed. These may include:

Repairs to door frames, boarding of windows / or door, padlocks to repair and make safe both internal and external damage which poses a threat to personal safety.

This is a basic level of service that pre-empts any long-term Sanctuary measures.

Sanctuary measures

6.2

All products used to support the sanctuary component must comply with British and/or European Safety Standards and come with a minimum 6 month guarantee and could include, though not limited to;

- Reinforced doors – (44mm min), ½ hour fire rated, min) with Intumescent strips.
- Frames to be secured with 5” fixers and 1/8” steel screws, min
- London or Birmingham bar (technical specification) to support the frame
- New locks – (Europrofile, using 6 pinned patented system, min) BS 3621 or European Standard EN 12209

- Bolts/padlocks for doors/windows
- Reinforced windows, any replacement windows to comply with BS 7950 kite mark
- Door jambs secured with 1/8" steel screws, min.
- Steel hinges (4inch/200mm min)
- Security lighting
- Door/window alarms
- Fireproof letterbox
- Window grills – (LPS 1175 standard)
- Safety glass
- Window film
- Memo door view
- Gates
- Erecting fences or walls
- Fire detection and Alarm system to comply with BS 5839; part 6; 1995
- Alarms, CCTV and/or video entry phone
- Fire extinguisher/fire blanket
- Collapsible security grilles
- Any other security measures that may be needed.

The Sanctuary measures required will depend on individual cases, the needs of the client and the address where they reside. In every case it should always be a joint decision with the client. Clients must be advised how to use Sanctuary measures effectively and should be given a demonstration by the installer when appropriate.

Sanctuary Measure packages:

Sanctuary Standard – this is a basic level of service that all those benefitting from Sanctuary measures should be provided with, and includes front and back doors being of the approved standard (stated above) in conjunction with door frames of the same standard. Front and back door locks being changed when doors are not replaced. All downstairs windows should be fitted with window locks as well as upstairs windows where they may be easily accessible ie off a flat roof. Fire safety equipment and door viewers.

Sanctuary Plus – in addition to the measured described within Sanctuary Standard additional security features are offered such as window grilles: additional security doors to the front & rear of the property, 'London' and 'Birmingham' bars and window locks. (This does not exclude other similar security measures deemed as appropriate by the assessor).

7. Perpetrators

- 7.1 Sanctuary measures should only be agreed and put into place if the perpetrator no longer resides at the address. If a perpetrator returns to an address Sanctuary measures should be removed as soon as practicable if they are likely to make it more difficult for a victim to escape. This is not always feasible however as victims may not advise service providers that they have allowed the perpetrator back into the property.

It must be noted that some perpetrators may be so dangerous as to make Sanctuary inappropriate.

7.2 **Holding perpetrators to account**

RSLs will need to be mindful of victim safety in relation to taking action against perpetrators. There are a number of actions available to RSLs to protect victims of Domestic Abuse and these should be used where it is agreed and if it safe, reasonable and proportionate to do so.

Protection through the courts can be obtained in the form of an Anti Social Behaviour Injunction (can be issued against anyone who poses a significant risk of harm regardless of their tenure status) under the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003. These orders will be made without the knowledge of the perpetrator and would usually carry a Power of Arrest (which would be lodged at the local police station should there be any breach) and also an exclusion from a property or even a specific area should the risk of harm be that great.

Under the Housing Act 1988 – Ground 14A will enable RSL's to apply for possession under section (c) 'one Partner has left the dwelling house because of violence or threats of violence by the other towards – (i) that Partner, or (ii) a member of the family of that Partner who was residing with that Partner immediately before the Partner left, and (iii) the court is satisfied that the partner who has left is unlikely to return.

Joint Tenancy Agreements can also be ended by the victim and, dependant on Policy/circumstance, reinstate the victim as the sole tenant or apply to court (as above).

RSLs can also re-charge tenants (perpetrators) who cause damage to property belonging to the RSL and enforce payment through the County Court.

8. **Monitoring and Review**

Monitoring will be undertaken by all agencies involved with the Sanctuary service and will include the following areas:

- The impact on homeless presentations from people fleeing domestic abuse
- The level of need for alternative accommodation
- Details of referrals to sanctuary scheme and measures installed
- Maintenance of sanctuary measures
- Success of scheme including service user views
- Database of properties with sanctuary measures installed

Typical monitoring data will include:

- Number of referrals
- Number of unsuccessful referrals and reasons
- Number of households choosing not to have Sanctuary installed and reasons
- Number, type and cost of measures installed

- Response time
- Breakdown of referral agency, tenure, household type, gender, ethnicity, age and disability
- Number of homeless presentations from people fleeing domestic violence (including those where sanctuary measures have been installed)
- Number of people requiring temporary accommodation
- Number of housing transfer requests due to domestic abuse or fear of abuse
- Number of requests for assistance through the Bond Guarantee Scheme
- Number of households remaining in their homes following installation of Sanctuary measures (for over 6 months & 12 months following installation)
- Number of repeat incidents of domestic violence, attempted breaches and breaches, at addresses where Sanctuary measures have been installed and the outcome (for example, whether the household had to move as a result of the breach)
- Number of repeat incidents of domestic violence or harassment to people who are living at addresses where Sanctuary measures have been installed, and the outcome.
- Take up of additional support services to include number of households, type of support & agencies providing the support

In addition to the monitoring data, the following measures will also be undertaken:

- Maintenance of sanctuary measures – a minimum of 2 maintenance checks should be undertaken annually by the agency responsible for the installation
- Service user views – feedback to be obtained from everyone having sanctuary measures installed to include quality of the security, support provided, professionalism of contractors, and whether they feel safer as a result of the measures installed
- Central database of properties with sanctuary measures installed to be developed and maintained to give the opportunity for properties to be reallocated based on need

9. Training

TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES IN THE HOUSING SECTOR

Cases involving domestic abuse can be complex. It is important that staff have specialist skills to deal effectively with the situation and to work in partnership with colleagues from other sectors.

All housing staff should receive training on domestic abuse.

The Safeguarding Children's Board provide free domestic abuse training courses they are offered at:

- Course 1 - Domestic Abuse Basic Awareness. This is a basic awareness ½ day course to promote recognition.

- Course 2 – Domestic Abuse: Practitioner. This is a one day course, which covers practical issues for risk assessing, supporting MARAC and working with victims of Domestic Abuse.

As domestic abuse is closely linked to safeguarding children and adults it is important that housing staff receive a level of training in these issues according to their role.

- Staff with authorisation and responsibility for the installation of Sanctuary measures should be provided with the Domestic Abuse Course 1 & 2 training, to ensure that they have adequate background knowledge and training to equip them better to understand Domestic Abuse. In addition it would be useful for them to understand why victims will often reject the safety advice given and reconcile with perpetrators.

Safety protocols for installers – it will be the sole responsibility of each RSL to develop safety protocols for their staff who will be employed to install Sanctuary safety measures within each of the properties identified. This protocol must detail what action is to be taken in the event of the perpetrator being at the address when they arrive and action to be taken if the perpetrator arrives at the address when the installation is in progress.

10. Promotion

1. The availability of Sanctuary measures should be publicised on Halton Borough Council website.
2. The availability of Sanctuary measures to be publicised on Registered Social Landlord websites.
3. Access and availability of Sanctuary to be widely publicised in housing offices, council, children's centres, police and other partner agency building identified as suitable locations for Domestic Abuse publicity.
4. Use of Halton Borough Council produced newsletters and Registered Social Landlord publications.
5. Commissioned domestic abuse services will advise their clients in relation to accessing Sanctuary.

11. Working in Partnership

Halton Domestic Abuse Forum brings together all voluntary and statutory sector agencies which have a remit to address domestic abuse in order that we deliver a co-ordinated community response locally and ensure that we maximise our collective resources. The Housing Sector is represented at both strategic and operational levels and their contribution highly valued.

For more information about the Sanctuary scheme and the Halton Domestic Abuse Forum email sarah.ashcroft@halton.gov.uk, or visit <http://www3.halton.gov.uk/healthandsocialcare/domesticviolence/>

12. Appendices

- i. Dash Referral
- ii. Sanctuary Referral Form
- iii. Home Assessment Form
- iv. Safety Plan
- v. Feedback Form