



An Ghníomhaireacht  
Tithíochta  
The Housing Agency

# The Housing Agency

## Essay Prize Winner 2021



The Housing Agency Essay Prize is awarded for the most original student essay submitted for assessment as part of the Institute of Public Administration's Professional Diploma in Housing Studies. In order to be considered for the Prize, essays must have been submitted during the 2020/2021 academic year and awarded first-class honours and a distinction.

The jury assessed the essays on the basis of their academic originality, research capacity, and engagement with public policy.

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The Housed Homeless: The role of housing policy  
in supporting victims of Intimate Partner Violence  
(IPV)



Sarah Kennedy

*The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned.*

- Maya Angelou

## Introduction

In January 2020 I returned the keys for the private rented accommodation and moved into my own home with my partner. Having shared private rented accommodation with others, both strangers and friends for over a decade I revelled in the luxury of my own space. Two months later my fortune would only become clearer. On the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020, then Taoiseach Leo Varadkar announced unprecedented restrictions on Irish citizens in an attempt to curtail the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Included in these measures was the advice for citizens to remain at home. In the time since I have frequently reflected on how lucky I am to have a comfortable, safe and secure home to hibernate in until the worst of the pandemic has passed. Unfortunately the pandemic has also highlighted the dangers of home for many in our communities.

According to research conducted by the United Nations in 2018, the home is the most dangerous place for women (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). This finding has come into sharper focus recently as restrictions to curtail Covid-19 confine many people to their homes. Speaking in April 2020, the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted the “horrifying surge in IPV” (Guterres, 2020), which has been referred to by the United Nations as the “shadow pandemic”. He went on to note that for women and girls, the threat of violence and abuse “looms largest where they should be safest – their own homes”.

In Ireland the understanding that the home is unsafe for those experiencing IPV is reflected in the Government’s public awareness campaign on domestic abuse during the pandemic. The *Still Here* campaign tagline states “If your home isn’t safe, support is still here” (Government of Ireland, 2021). Similarly, the Department of Justice and Equality’s *What Would You Do* campaign explains that IPV is perpetrated against a person in their home (Department of Justice, 2021). Guidance and safety plans issued by the Government, An Garda and NGOs provide guidance on how to leave the home to move to a safer location. Despite these repeated and ongoing acknowledgements of the home as a site of danger and insecurity, the issue of IPV is rarely understood and treated as a housing issue.

In this essay I will demonstrate the importance of a comprehensive “whole housing approach” to the prevention of IPV and to the provision of meaningful support to victims and survivors. Drawing on Irish and international literature and research I will outline the

multifaceted relationship between IPV and housing. Following the literature review I will interrogate the relationship between IPV and housing in the Irish context. Finally, drawing on best practice from other jurisdictions, I will propose a theory of change for Irish housing policy which understands IPV as a housing issue and takes a victim-centred approach to addressing it.

## Literature Review

In recent years there have been increased calls to interrogate the gendered nature of housing and homelessness and to ensure the findings are incorporated into housing policy and practice. Research has pointed out that women experience housing, housing insecurity and homelessness differently to men (Engender, 2020). The absence of women's experiences from housing discourse has meant that the issues they face remain hidden and are not reflected in housing policy. The prevalence of homelessness among women is frequently underreported as data collection methods do not capture the type or nature of the homelessness they experience (Pleace, 2016).

Despite the fact that it has been repeatedly demonstrated that IPV plays a significant role in women's experiences of the home, housing and housing insecurity, IPV is rarely understood or treated as a housing issue. In Ireland and internationally housing and domestic violence policy and practice are typically managed by separate agencies, with limited formalised coordination in place (Baptista, 2010; Mayock, Parker, & Sheridan, 2015). The "gender-blind" approach to housing and homelessness has had significant implications for victims of IPV. As shown below, research in this area has demonstrated that IPV is particularly impactful on women's experiences of homelessness, housing insecurity and their ability to leave abusive relationships.

## Homelessness

The underreporting of women's homelessness arises because women experience homelessness differently to men. They are less likely to sleep rough or to be visibly homeless. They are also more likely to rely on support networks to avoid engaging with homelessness services (Pleace, 2016). The definition and understanding of homelessness is very important in capturing its relationship with IPV. In some countries, including Ireland, women experiencing IPV are not automatically considered homeless and even those who are living in refuges are not counted in the homelessness statistics. Feminist scholars have argued that this is the result of a housing policy that understands homelessness primarily through the male experience (Spinney, 2007). When women's experiences of homelessness are taken into consideration it becomes clear that safety, self-worth and trauma all need to be considered. It has been reported that women who experience IPV often lose the sense of having a "home" while they are still living in the accommodation, as a result of the fear and

violence experienced there (Spinney & Blandy, 2011). As such, victims of IPV can be thought of as the “housed homeless” (Chung, Kennedy, O'Brien, & Wendt, 2000).

Of course many women are forced to leave their homes and become homeless as a result of IPV. Violence from a romantic male partner is consistently reported as a primary contributor to women’s homelessness (Mayock, Bretherton, & Baptista, 2016). A report on women’s homelessness in Scotland reported that IPV was the third most common reason given when making a homeless application, although the authors suspect the figures understate the scale of the problem. Research conducted by the UK domestic abuse charity SafeLives found that 32% of homeless women stated IPV contributed to their homelessness (SafeLives, 2018). Moreover, a very high percentage of women who experience homelessness report a history of IPV. A report comparing female rough sleepers in four European countries found that 100% of Spanish, 93% of Swedish, 70% of UK and 50% of Hungarian respondents had experienced abuse by an intimate partner (Mayock, Bretherton, & Baptista, 2016).

Official data on domestic violence and women’s homeless is lacking in the Irish context. As mentioned, women living in refuges are not counted in the homelessness figures, nor are figures published by Tusla despite this service being advertised on the Department of Housing’s website. However, homelessness figures published in 2019 stated that 41% of homeless adults in Ireland are women. This has fallen to 33% in February 2021 but it remains to be seen if this is a long-term trend or a short-term impact of Covid-19 measures. The European average of the percentage of women who make up the homeless population ranges from 20-33% (Focus Ireland, 2018). It is clear that women’s homelessness is a particular issue in Ireland. Furthermore, qualitative research conducted by Mayock and Sheridan (2012) found that two thirds of homeless women in Dublin had experienced intimate partner violence. This compares to 25% of women in the general populace who report abuse by a current or former partner (Women's Aid, 2021). It is possible further information is available from Cosc, the national office for the prevention of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, but this agency’s website has been inaccessible since at least January, when I began researching this essay.

### [Housing Insecurity](#)

Women’s experiences of the housing sector are informed by structural gender inequalities. Their economically disadvantaged position and role as primary caregiver can have a direct and negative impact on their housing situation (Engender, 2020). Furthermore, in Ireland the social welfare system has been criticized for being designed around the concept of the “male breadwinner”, which can leave women in poverty later in life, particularly if they are separated or divorced (Power, 2020). These factors already make women disproportionately vulnerable to housing insecurity. IPV drastically increases this burden, making it four times

more likely a woman will face housing instability (Pavao, Alvarez, Baumrind, Induni, & Kimerling, 2007).

IPV has been shown to reduce the security of tenure of victims and make it more difficult for women to find secure tenure in the future. Seeking safety damages women's housing prospects. Women are frequently required to leave their homes and sacrifice secure accommodation in order to escape violence. A 2016 study in the UK found that 22% of women who entered a refuge had a secure tenancy. This number fell to 13% on departure (Solace Women's Aid, 2016). Fleeing IPV and leaving one's home often places women under financial strain and the cost of starting over can be prohibitive. It can mean paying high rents as well as trying to furnish the new property. This struggle is often compounded if the woman is a mother and now the sole caregiver while dealing with the trauma experienced as a result of IPV (Walker & Hester, 2019).

Furthermore, the likelihood that a woman will experience IPV and the severity of this abuse is correlated to security of tenure. It has been demonstrated that the percentage of UK women who live in rented accommodation increases in line with the number of repeated IPV crimes – 66% for a single crime and 84% for more than 10 crimes (Henderson, 2019). Housing insecurity has also been found to compound and worsen the impact IPV has on victims. Research conducted by Baker et al. (2010) found that increased housing instability was related to more severe PTSD and depression, and a poorer quality of life for those who had experienced IPV. They reported that the higher the number of risk factors for housing instability, the more likely victims are to report PTSD, depression, reduced quality of work, failure to attend work and school, and increased emergency department attendance. These findings remain when the level of danger in the relationship and drug and alcohol abuse are controlled for.

## Summary

The literature demonstrates that IPV, housing, homelessness and women's quality of life are inextricably linked. Despite significant gains in women's equality and the growth in awareness of women's issues, IPV is still not understood as a housing issue and housing policy largely fails to address it. This is evidence of "gender-blind" housing discourse that excludes women's experiences and serves to make invisible the particular housing issues they face, such as IPV. In order for housing policy and practice to serve women, and for IPV interventions and support to succeed, the lived experiences of women need to be taken into consideration to inform a holistic policy.

## Domestic Violence and Housing in Ireland

The “shadow pandemic” of increased violence against women and girls highlighted by the UN has been evident in Ireland. Safe Ireland, the national agency for the prevention of IPV, has published several reports throughout the pandemic that emphasise the increased reliance on the agency’s services since the onset of Covid-19. In “Tracking the Shadow Pandemic”, its report on the first 6 months of Covid-19, Safe Ireland reported 575 “new” women looking for support each month (Safe Ireland, 2020). The same report highlights a 25% increase in the average number of calls to their helpline in the first six months of the pandemic. A second report from Safe Ireland covering the second lockdown from September 2020 to December 2020 indicated that experiences of violence in the home were worsening (Safe Ireland, 2021). In this period more than 600 women accessed support for the first time and calls to the helpline continued to rise. Furthermore, in December 2020, it was reported that An Garda had seen a 17% increase in IPV compared to the same period the previous year.

In March 2019, Ireland ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention. Ireland meets several of the requirements of the Istanbul Convention but falls drastically short of the standards for women’s shelter provision. Under the recommendations of the Istanbul Convention Ireland should be providing 483 beds in women’s shelters. In reality only 145 beds, 30% of this complement, are provided. This is significantly below the European average of 49%. Unsurprisingly, the primary reason women were declined referrals to shelters in 2018 was a lack of capacity (Women against Violence Europe, 2019). This finding is supported by reports finding that from March 2020 to December 2020 2,159 requests for refuge could not be met. This equates to eight victims a day (Safe Ireland, 2021).



Country	Total Population	Total number of shelters accessible to women	Existing number of beds	Number of beds needed	Number of beds missing	Percentage of beds missing
Austria	8,822,267	30	766	882	116	13%
Belgium	11,398,589	25	597 <sup>24</sup>	1,140	543	48%
Bulgaria	7,050,034	11	120	705	585	83%
Croatia	4,105,493	18	296	411	115	28%
Republic of Cyprus	864,236	3	36	86	50	58%
Czech Republic	10,610,055	4	96	1,061	965	91%
Denmark	5,781,190	48	451	578	127	22%
Estonia	1,319,133	16	75	132	57	43%
Finland	5,513,130	28	202	551	349	63%
France	66,926,166	52 <sup>24</sup>	2,797 <sup>24</sup>	6,693	3,896	58%
Germany	82,792,351	360	6,408	8,279	1,871	23%
Greece	10,741,165	25	470	1,074	604	56%
Hungary	9,778,371	25	167	978	811	83%
Ireland	4,830,392	22	145	483	338	70%
Italy	60,483,973	232	789 <sup>24</sup>	6,048	5,259	87%
Latvia	1,934,379	11	140	193	53	28%
Lithuania	2,808,901	0	0	281	281	100%
Luxembourg	602,005	10	216	60	0	0%
Malta	475,701	6	111	48	0	0%
Netherlands	17,181,084	N/A	800	1,718	918	53%
Poland	37,976,687	35	20 <sup>24</sup>	3,798	3,778	99%
Portugal	10,291,027	39	679	1,029	350	34%
Romania	19,530,631	84	920	1,953	1,033	53%
Slovakia	5,443,120	9	232	544	312	57%
Slovenia	2,066,880	31	445	207	0	0%
Spain	46,658,447	265 <sup>24</sup>	2,726 <sup>24</sup>	4,666	1,940	42%
Sweden	10,120,242	161 <sup>24</sup>	354 <sup>24</sup>	1,012	658	65%
United Kingdom <sup>24</sup>	66,273,576	364	4,904	6,627	1,723	26%
England	55,977,178	271	3,847	5,598	1,751	31%
Northern Ireland	1,881,641	14	332	188	0	0%
Scotland	5,438,100	36	481	544	63	12%
Wales	3,138,631	43	244	314	70	22%
<b>TOTAL (28)</b>	<b>512,379,225</b>	<b>1,914</b>	<b>24,962</b>	<b>51,238</b>	<b>26,276</b>	<b>51%</b>

### Wave Country Report (2019)

The ability of services to support women experiencing IPV is also severely limited by the impact of the housing crisis (Safe Ireland, 2016). A lack of available accommodation has resulted in women remaining in refuge accommodation for a longer period of time. Not only are refuges unsuitable for long-term accommodation, the inability of those who are ready to move on to do so has reduced the available refuge space for women who need to leave their homes (Safe Ireland, 2016). Data from Safe Ireland in the latter part of 2020 has shown that each month an average of 59 women who were ready to move on were unable to do so because of a lack of suitable accommodation (Safe Ireland, 2021). The cost of private rented accommodation is a significant barrier. Moreover, unrealistic rent caps often require women to “top up” the rent to secure a property. This is not possible for many women (Safe Ireland, 2016).

As mentioned previously, a woman who has to leave her home as a result of IPV in Ireland is not necessarily regarded as homeless by the law. This means she is not automatically considered an emergency case by local authorities, which thus retain a high level of discretion in dealing with her case. Research by Safe Ireland with specialist IPV services

reports significant difficulties in interacting with local authorities (2016). Experiences vary between individual local authorities or staff members. As such, service providers find they need to invest significant time and resources into relationship-building in order to support their clients. There is no standardised response to IPV cases and local authorities can use their discretion to “gate-keep” access to resources, requiring more and more documentation, proof and qualification (Safe Ireland, 2016). Women exiting unsafe accommodation are often impacted by the requirement that they must already live in or have a connection to the area where they are applying for social housing. This is not always suitable for women fleeing abusive partners. Guidance on IPV provided by the Department of Housing (Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, 2017) affirms local authorities’ approach, stating “it is a matter solely for the housing authority concerned to determine whether an applicant for social housing support is eligible for and in need of that support” (5). The document does state that local authorities do not need to require a local connection when assessing IPV applications, however the discretion remains with the local authority.

Despite these issues some positive changes have been introduced. In June 2020, following calls from Safe Ireland, the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty, announced changes to ensure victims of IPV could get immediate access to rent supplement for a three-month period. The usual means-testing does not apply for these three months. This is intended to ensure that women are not prevented from leaving their home by financial issues arising from IPV. After the three-month period, an extension of three months can be provided. If the tenant has a long-term housing need after the extension period, she can apply to her local authority (Department of Social Protection, 2020). Intended as a response to issues arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, the scheme has been extended until the end of 2021 (Department of Social Protection, 2021).

Another important change was the commencement of the Domestic Violence Act 2018 which replaced the previous Domestic Violence Act 1996. Some of the most significant changes included in the Domestic Violence Act 2018 relate to factors the courts must consider when deciding on a domestic violence order. These include a history of violence, exposure of children to violence, substance abuse and the applicant’s perception of the risk. Another important change relates to safety and protection orders. The 2018 Act ensures all partners in an intimate relationship are eligible for safety and protection orders with no requirement for cohabitation. Other changes include measures to improve victims’ experience of the court process, the option for children to make their views known to the court and the introduction of two new offences, forced marriage and coercive control (Women's Aid, 2018). Although the Domestic Violence Act 2018 does not specifically address housing and homelessness issues facing victims of IPV it is a very significant piece of legislation. It signals a victim-centred approach and the changes it has introduced will have a positive impact on victims’ safety, which will in turn impact their home life.

A final significant development to note is the publication of the White Paper on Ending Direct Provision. Much like IPV, international protection was almost exclusively understood as a legal issue and responsibility for asylum seekers was under the remit of the Department of Justice and Equality. However, growth in public criticism of the living conditions of asylum seekers in the direct provision system has encouraged legislators to take an integrated, holistic approach to providing for asylum seekers and the unsuitability of the direct provision system has been recognised. As indicated in the title of the recent White Paper, the Government has committed to bringing the system of direct provision to an end and has proposed a new system to provide accommodation and supports for those in need. The new system would provide asylum seekers with own-door or own-room accommodation in reception centres for an initial period of four months. After four months, applicants will move to own-door or own-room accommodation predominantly provided by Approved Housing Bodies (Department of Children, Equality, Disability and Youth, 2021). The White Paper emphasises the importance of avoiding congregated settings and the need for own-door accommodation, supports and services. The proposals outlined in the White Paper are important in the context of IPV as they represent an understanding of the unsuitability of congregated settings for long-term accommodation. The proposals also call for services and support required by vulnerable individuals interacting with the justice system beyond the mere provision of shelter. The proposals made in the White Paper published by Minister Roderic O’Gorman may represent a sea change in the Government’s approach and could potentially be used to leverage a more holistic and integrated response to IPV.

## Theory of Change – A Whole Housing Approach

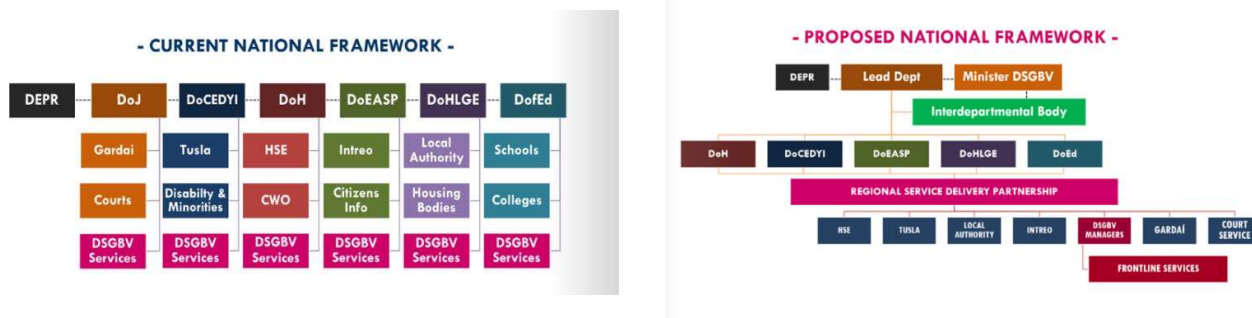
*Why do we women live in refuges when the perpetrators live in the comfort to which they are accustomed? Why must we three eke out a living on a pension of \$330 per week of which \$130 goes in rent while my husband lives on his salary of \$750 per week of which \$85 goes on the mortgage and lives alone in a four bedroom, two bathroom house.*

- Woman with two children who had experienced domestic violence  
(Chung, Kennedy, O'Brien, & Wendt, 2000)

## Theory of Change Methodology

Housing and IPV are inextricably linked in a complex relationship. Unfortunately, the importance of housing policy to responses to IPV is often overlooked in Ireland and the current approaches are fractured. Government Departments, organisations and agencies work in silos and in response to immediate crises, without a clearly defined strategy or objective to inform policy-making and practice. In this section of the essay I will propose a theory of change methodology, advocating an approach to preventing and treating IPV modelled on the Whole Housing Approach scheme developed by the Domestic Abuse Housing Association in the UK.

The theory of change methodology is a framework for designing solutions to complex social problems (Anderson, 2005). This framework involves the identification of a long-term goal. Policy-makers then work backwards to identify what is required to achieve that goal (Anderson, 2005). This methodology encourages an integrated approach, with individual stakeholders identifying which areas they can influence and what impact they can expect to have. In a recent discussion paper, Safe Ireland notes that the theory of change methodology has become the preferred approach to managing domestic and gender-based violence (Safe Ireland, 2021). Safe Ireland proposes a new national framework for IPV services which takes into consideration the complexity of women’s journeys through IPV and provides an integrated, interventionist response. This section will outline my understanding of the actions and interventions required to achieve this in the housing sector.



(Safe Ireland, 2021)

### Whole Housing Approach

The policy proposed in this essay is based on the Whole Housing Approach programme introduced by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) in the UK. DAHA is a partnership of three agencies; domestic abuse charity Standing Together and Peabody and Gentoo, two housing associations which own and manage over 100,000 homes in England.

“The Whole Housing Approach (WHA) endeavours to improve the housing options and outcomes for people experiencing domestic abuse so that they can achieve stable housing, live safely and overcome the abuse and its harmful impacts.”

(Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance, 2021)

I adopt the same long-term objective in my proposal for the Irish context.

There are three key principles I believe should guide a similar model in Ireland:

- **Rights-based policy-making**

The Whole Housing Approach recognises that IPV violates women’s right to safety and shelter. It advocates for policy and legislation that enshrines and vindicates these rights as appropriate to the housing sector.

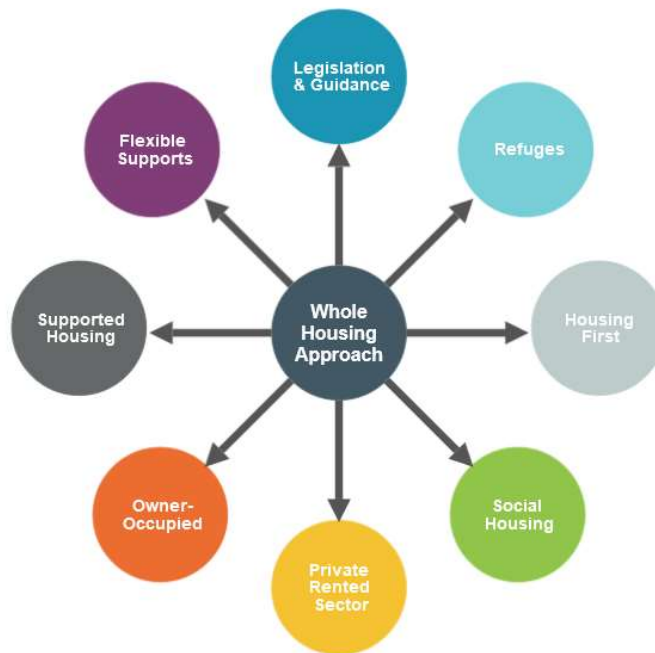
- **Victim-centred services and supports**

Policy and practice should support the housing needs of victims of IPV as a priority and not an afterthought. Policy and practice should strive to prevent women’s housing situation from suffering as a result of exiting IPV.

- **Integration and flexibility**

The housing journeys and requirements of victims of IPV are meandering and complex. Flexibility and integration across sectors and organisation is required to effectively support women.

What would a *Whole Housing Approach* in Ireland look like?



The above diagram outlines the eight key areas for change that I believe are essential to providing an effective Whole Housing Approach to IPV in Ireland.

## Legislation and Guidance

A key difficulty faced by IPV service providers trying to secure housing for their clients is the discretion available to local authorities when managing an IPV case. It is recommended that women fleeing IPV are automatically considered homeless in legislation. Local authorities should be required to have a publicly available policy on IPV as they do for anti-social behaviour. This removes the discretion from local authorities and recognises the severity of the housing situation for victims of IPV.

Guidance documents provided by the Government should be victim-centred. They should advocate empowering victims to overcome IPV by increasing their housing options and prioritise enabling them to remain in their own homes if this is what they want and it is safe to do so.

## Refuges

Refuges play a crucial role in supporting women who are fleeing IPV. As outlined above, Ireland currently only provides 30% of the refuge capacity called for by the Istanbul Convention. Additional funding is required to provide and staff the outstanding 338 beds. However, it should be acknowledged that refuges are not appropriate for long-term accommodation for victims of IPV. With a functioning Whole Housing Approach-type model in place refuges will be equipped to provide victims with suitable options when it is appropriate for them to move on.

## Housing First

Housing First is a participant-centred model for the provision of accommodation and support for homeless people. Proponents of Housing First in Ireland currently focus on providing support for people who are sleeping rough or are long-term homeless. The Whole Housing Approach recommends extending the Housing First model to include women who are experiencing homelessness and are victims of IPV. This model would continue to emphasise the importance of providing people with a stable home and intensive wraparound supports, but would incorporate a gendered approach that recognises the nature of women's experiences. In practice this would involve widening the definition and understanding of homelessness to capture "hidden homelessness" among women. Women-only service provision and trauma-informed care would also be required. Research conducted by Sullivan & Olsen (2016) found that of 681 households who had received Housing First accommodation as victims of IPV, 96% retained accommodation after 18 months.

## Social Housing

Local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies can play a significant role in the prevention of IPV and support of victims. Housing providers should strive to provide a victim-centred approach to responding to IPV within the homes they manage. They should aim to ensure that women do not lose security of tenure as a result of leaving a home due to IPV. This might include facilitating victims to remain in their homes by offering sanctuary schemes. It

also might include introducing managed reciprocal schemes to facilitate victims moving from one local authority or housing provider to another without losing their tenancies. Currently in Ireland victims who are in a joint tenancy are only eligible for re-entry to the waiting list once a deed of separation is in place. It is worth noting that housing providers are ideally placed to identify signs of domestic violence. This is particularly true for those working in estate management and repairs. Training and information should be provided to staff to enable them to direct individuals to services where appropriate.

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#### *A Sanctuary Scheme*

is 'a multi-agency victim/survivor centred initiative which aims to enable households at risk of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes and reduce repeat victimisation through the provision of enhanced security measures (Sanctuary) and support.'

(Vagi, 2018)

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#### Private Rented Sector

Several actions can be taken to improve the private rented sector's response to IPV. A presumption of transfer of tenancy to a victim can be introduced when a perpetrator has been convicted of an offence against their partner who is a joint tenant. This should be accompanied by access to relevant financial supports if required. The financial costs a victim may face in leaving a private rented tenancy, such as loss of deposit, should be considered. Local authorities could be advised to reimburse victims. It would also be beneficial for training on IPV to be provided to landlords and letting agents, as they are in a prime position to notice signs of IPV.

#### Owner-Occupied

The Crime Survey of England and Wales reported that homeowners make up 47% of IPV victims in the jurisdiction (Orr, 2018). As the rate of homeownership is higher in Ireland, we can reasonably expect a similar or higher percentage of victims to be homeowners. Homeowners are often linked to their abusive partners through a mortgage. This creates barriers to women seeking to secure safe accommodation and gives perpetrators significant power. Safe Ireland has reported that solicitors advise many women to remain in the family home to secure their financial share, which can potentially put them in grave danger (Safe Ireland, 2016). Homeowners who are victims of IPV require free and readily available access to legal advice and the flexibility to delay mortgage repayments temporarily. Women's access to services and supports should also not be restricted due to their homeowner status.

#### Supported Housing

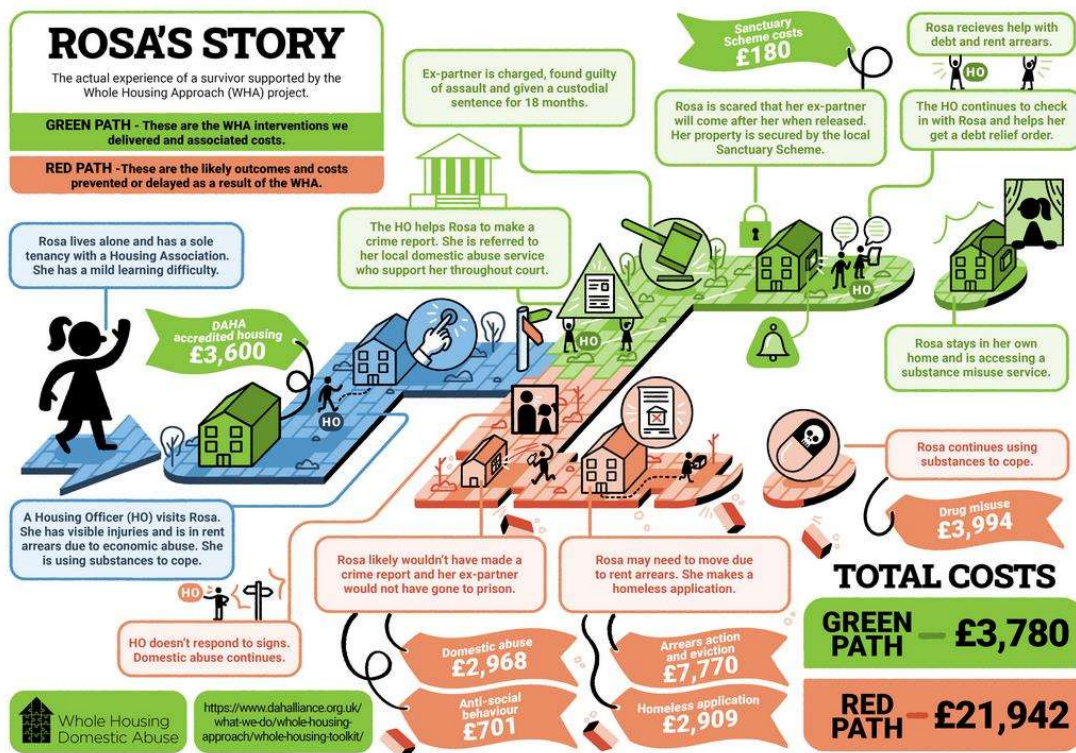
Women who have suffered IPV may have additional needs and as such may live in supported housing. These settings include homeless shelters, family hubs, direct provision centres and supported housing for older people. Supported housing providers should be trained in trauma-informed care and the recognition and prevention of IPV. In some cases women-only services and support centres may be required.

## Flexible Supports

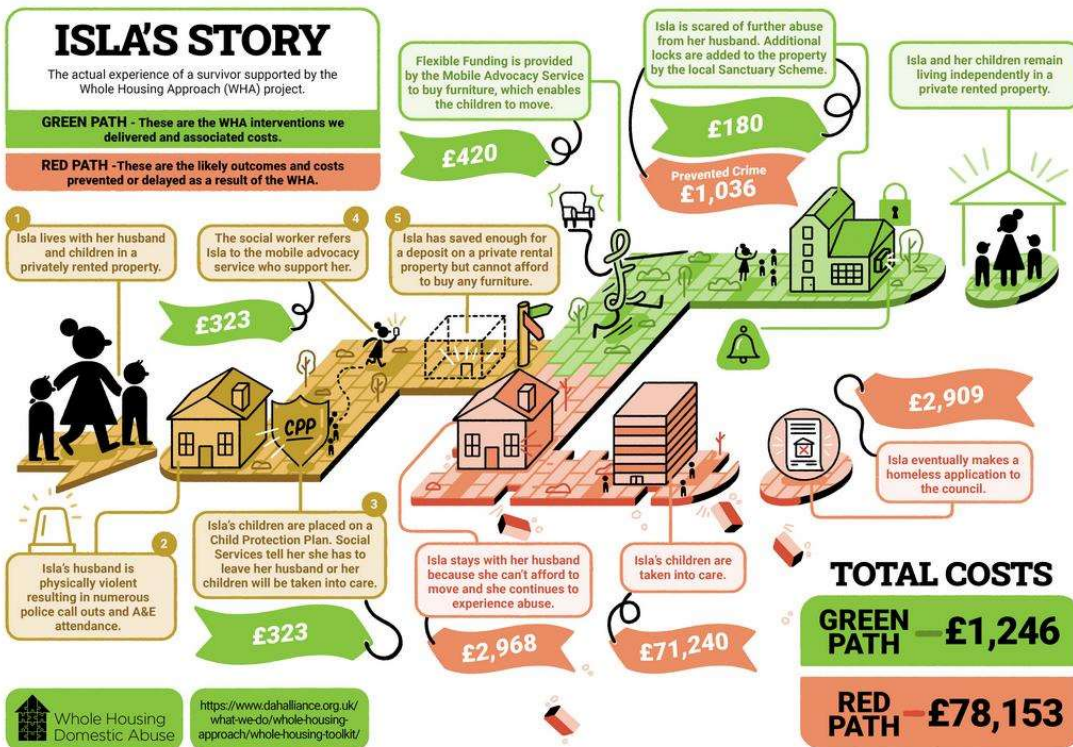
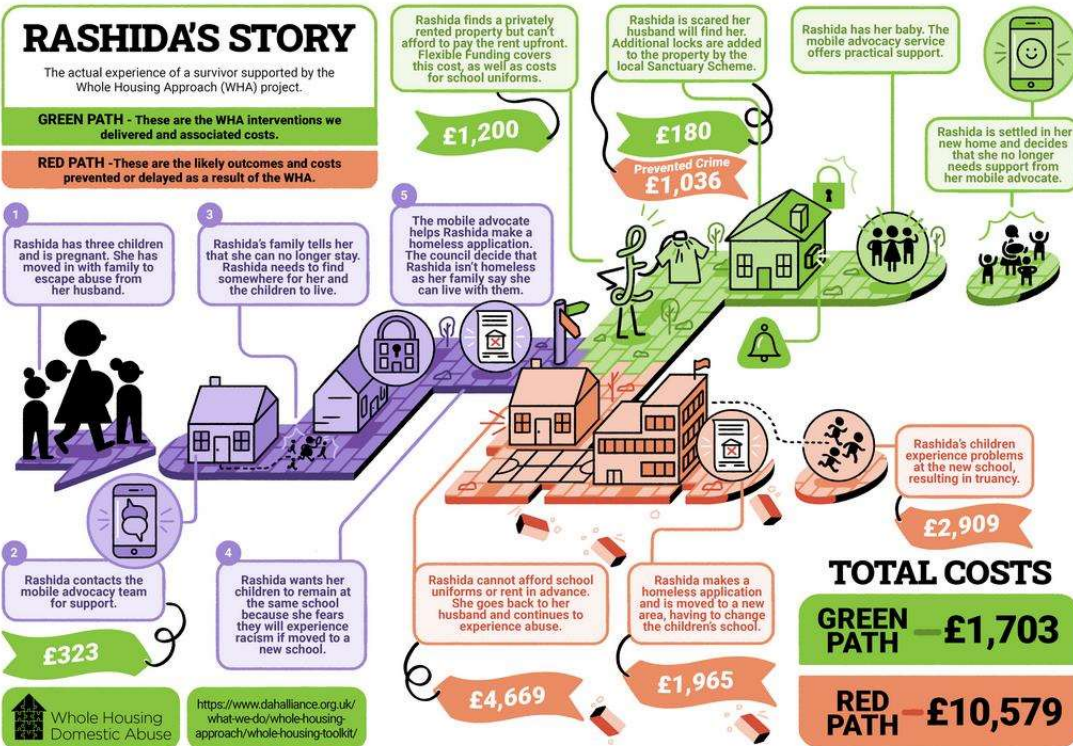
The housing requirements of victims of IPV are varied and complex. It is essential that the funding and supports available to them are flexible and easy to obtain to enable them to retain security of tenure and prevent homelessness. Funding may be required to pay a deposit for a rented accommodation, purchase goods to furnish a home or meet utility expenses, rental arrears or damage costs resulting from an abusive partner.

## Economic Value of Whole Housing Approach

The moral and social case for a Whole Housing Approach would be compelling even if it were to come at a cost. However, a cost-benefit analysis of the Whole Housing Approach in the UK found that it offered significant savings to the public purse (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance, 2018). This analysis found a cost-benefit ratio of between £3.39 and £59.27 for every £1 invested. The bulk of the savings result from targeted interventions that support victims to live independently and prevent future reliance on state services and supports. The three case studies they conducted are outlined below:







## Summary & Conclusion

The restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic may have brought the intersection of housing, the home and IPV out of the shadows, but IPV service providers have been raising the alarm for several years. They have reported that women are remaining in abusive relationships as a direct result of the expectation that suitable accommodation will not be available. Service providers believe that as a result of the housing shortage women are remaining in “really difficult, dangerous situations” (Safe Ireland, 2016: 31) as they cannot see an alternative. Practitioners’ options are incredibly limited, and they report a lack of suitable accommodation as the biggest problem they face. One practitioner explained “because of the housing shortage I sometimes feel like I’m telling a woman to go home and deal with the abuse” (Safe Ireland, 2016: 31). This is a dire situation for victims and service providers and an unacceptable and unforgivable consequence of the housing crisis.

This essay has outlined the complex and inextricable relationship between IPV and housing. Beginning with a review of the literature I have argued that a “gender-blind” approach to housing policy and practice has failed to account for IPV as a significant determinant of women’s housing experiences. The impact of IPV is particularly apparent in making women more vulnerable to homelessness and housing insecurity. Many issues arise in an Irish context, including a severe lack of refuge space and alternative accommodation due to the housing shortage and the failure to recognise women fleeing IPV as homeless. There have been some positive changes, including the Domestic Violence Act 2018, the introduction of emergency Rent Supplement during the pandemic and the potential sea change indicated by the White Paper on Ending Direct Provision.

Finally this essay has proposed a theory of change methodology that aims to improve the housing options and outcomes for women who have experienced IPV so that they can find safe and secure long-term accommodation. This is based on the Whole Housing Approach programme instigated by the Domestic Violence Housing Alliance in the UK. I have outlined what would be required to introduce a Whole Housing Approach model in Ireland by focusing on eight key areas for change and intervention; legislation and guidance, refuges, Housing First, social housing, the private rented sector, owner-occupied housing, supported housing and flexible supports. I believe that this approach, integrated with a wider and more holistic IPV policy and practice would have a significant and positive impact on women who have suffered at the hands of a partner and their children.

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