Pan-London Housing Reciprocal
Year 2 Report
(Feb 2018 – Jan 2019)

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Summary of key learning from two years of the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal

The Pan-London Housing Reciprocal (PLHR) was launched on 30th January 2017 at City Hall. This housing pathway is a voluntary collaboration between all London local authorities and 47 registered housing providers and support agencies, centrally coordinated by Safer London and funded by the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC). It increases options for people with a social housing tenancy in London who are at high risk of harm and need to relocate to another area of London in order to remain safe and not lose their social tenancy. This summary outlines emerging trends from the first two years, alongside a breakdown of PLHR activity, including comparisons between year 1 and 2. Referral forms were completed with varying levels of detail, therefore we highlight indications of trends and need, based on available data.

Overview of activity in year 2
The activity of the PLHR has seen an increase in all areas between the first year and the second year of operation, with more enquiries, requests circulated and households moved, to a point where we have now moved over 200 adults and children to safety (200 was reached in March 2019). Over the two years there was a total of 284 property offers made. On average, there were just over 4 moves per month in the second year compared to 3 in the first year, and a total of 189 adults and children were moved to safety. Requests have been made for applicants from all boroughs apart from two. The two boroughs where no tenants have made requests have made offers of accommodation to other areas so that has been some engagement now from every part of London. All boroughs have been requested at least 80 times. In addition, we have reached over 1,500 professionals through training, workshops and events over the two years. This includes housing professionals, alongside other support agencies.

Primary Reason for Referral
The majority of referrals were for households fleeing domestic abuse. The below graph shows the primary reasons for referrals across the two years of operation:

Overview of households referred
80% of our referrals have children in the household, and almost nine in ten applications (88%) have been for women-led households including single parent women (74%) and single women (14%). This was the case across all referrals, regardless of the type of violence the family was fleeing from with the exception of hate crime. For two thirds (66%) of the referrals made due to a risk of serious youth violence, the person most at risk was a female tenant’s son (or grandson), and in three cases the tenant’s daughter.

The biggest age group for lead applicants was 35-49 year olds. However, (61%) of applicants fleeing domestic abuse were aged under 35 including 12% that were under 25. Over two years, for 68% of referrals the lead applicant has been from a BME background. A similar percentage (66%) of successful referrals were for households where the lead tenant was from a BME background. We have gathered disability and sexuality data since 2018 and for 17% of referrals, the lead applicant identified themselves as having a disability. We had four referrals for applicants identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual in the diversity section. We also
had three applications mentioning that the applicant was transgender and at risk from transphobic hate crime.

**Multiple forms of violence and disadvantage**

For 144 referrals (30%), it was identified that the individual or family were fleeing multiple forms of violence. In our first year 47% of referrals had an additional needs identified and in our second year this increased to 59%. In **35% of referrals we received over the two years, someone within the household reported having a mental health need**, compared to just 29% in year 1. For Domestic abuse referrals this percentage was higher over the two years at 38%.

**Additional housing barriers facing households fleeing violence**

**Rent Arrears**

The proportion of applicants in rent arrears increased in year two, with **41% of applicants in arrears compared with 32% in the first year**. For most mobility schemes for social tenants, having no rent arrears is a requirement. We do not as our applicants are often experiencing economic or financial abuse. Applicants are asked to outline plans in place to address arrears and we found that having arrears did not negatively impact the likelihood of successful move.

**Overcrowding**

Overcrowding continues to be prevalent for households referred to the reciprocal scheme. Over the 2 years of operation, **37% of all non-single households referred were overcrowded** – that is almost three times the overcrowding rate in the social housing sector in London (13%: Trust for London). We found that overcrowding did have a negative impact on the likelihood of receiving an offer. A number of housing providers informed us that they are not able to sign a new tenancy for an overcrowded household. However through the reciprocal some partners have put households forward for larger properties on an agreement that they will reciprocate a larger property.

"I have now got a future as I feel safer and more secure."

**Floor requirements**

Ground floor properties are in short supply in London’s social housing stock. Over the two years, over one third of all applicants (39%) had a specific floor requirement in their property request. 8% had a ground floor need and 31% had a lower floor or another requirement (e.g. a lift). This includes cases where applicants may have a physical disability or have sustained injuries that restrict their physical mobility, as well as mental health needs linked with the trauma they experienced that might make a high floor level unsafe for them.

**Learning on the PLHR process**

The biggest factors affecting the probability of receiving an offer were still the number of bedrooms requested (fewer larger properties available); types of referrals (serious youth violence related referrals received fewer offers); the number of boroughs requested; and whether there were any floor requirements. The below graph shows total number of property requests and offers year 1 and 2 combined by number of bedrooms.

![Graph showing property requests and offers by number of bedrooms](image)

These factors intersect, for instance the probability of receiving an offer for a 3 bed property request was 31% on average, but only 13% of the 3 bed property requests with a ground floor need have received an offer compared with 42% of the 3 bed referrals that had no floor requirement.

**Property refusals**

We found that almost half of property refusals were related to property type, most often due to the floor level being too high. Other reasons included: the property being part of an estate/tower block, requests for further bedrooms (which were not outlined on initial referral) and the property being too small. The other main categories for offer refusal were location (in 22% of refusals) and risk (19%), most often due to the new property being too far from support networks or close to a risk area. Only 7% of property refusals recorded were due to change in rent or tenancy type. As coordinators, Safer London do not take any applicant off the list for refusing a property, it would be up to the referrers to withdraw the application if they no longer wish to move. If a property is refused, we re-match it with another reciprocal applicant.
Waiting Times
Waiting times to access social housing in London are very high and averages are sometimes published on councils’ websites. Redbridge, for instance, published an average waiting time in 2016/2017 of 6 years for a 1-bed, 8 years for a 2-bed and 11 years for a 3-bed (Redbridge website). Our analysis has shown that for all the applicants who received at least one offer through the scheme, the average waiting time before receiving an offer was 2 months.

Tenancy Types
As in year 1, most applicants had a secure tenancy (55%), 33% had an assured tenancy and 8% had an assured shorthold tenancy agreement. In most cases, equivalent tenancies have been offered by the partner housing provider. There have been occasions when a greater security of tenancy was received, and a small number of examples where a less secure tenancy was accepted based on property type/location.

Referring and Supporting agencies
The majority of referrals over the two years (approximately two thirds) are from housing professionals. The main other sector making referrals is the VAWG/DV sector (19%). Then other voluntary sector organisations (5%) and Social Services (4%). Referrals from Social Services increased from 2 in the first year to 19 in the second year, due to our awareness raising work.

Across years one and two we saw similar levels of contact with statutory services at 89% compared to 88% last year, this includes housing, social services and police. We saw a slight decrease in support from the voluntary sector at 52% compared to 63% in year 1. This could suggest a decline in voluntary sector support provisions, due to commissioning and funding impacts. The most common support agency was specialist VAWG or DV agencies. We see that voluntary sector support positively affects the PLHR process. Over 2 years, 57% of applicants overall had support from the voluntary sector, and this was higher for successful applicants at 66%.

Developing the Reciprocal in Year 2
In year two we have focussed on expanding the reciprocal’s reach, for instance by mapping and reaching out to new partners, delivering presentations and awareness raising sessions, and holding targeted meetings with our housing partners. We have also been working to improve accessibility for different groups. This included a focus on survivors leaving care or prison. We have seen an increase in enquiries or referrals for both these groups as a result.

We have also been aligning with other housing mobility schemes, to increase the amount of properties available. For instance, we are working to link with the GLA’s Housing Moves team, who have also have access to properties across London. Through this arrangement, PLHR applicants fleeing domestic abuse or other forms of Violence against Women will have a high priority to bid on properties in safer boroughs via Housing Moves.

Finally in our second year we were delighted to be a winner of The London Homelessness Award 2018, and recognised as good practice in expanding housing pathways for households at risk. Safer London is now also working with a range of partners including DAHA and SEA to share our learning nationally on managed reciprocals as part of The Whole Housing project, funded by MHCLG.

”Mentally I’m in a better place, I’m happy and so are the children”

”I have no idea what I would do to support clients needing to flee a borough if the reciprocal did not exist, you are life savers!” Feedback from support professio
Timeline

31st Jan’ 17: Launch of the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal in City Hall

Feb’ 2018: Launch London VAWG and Housing Operational and Strategic Groups with Solace Women’s Aid

Mar’ 17: First move through the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal

Nov’ 17: First Named Leads workshop delivered

27th Mar’ 18: 100 people moved through the PLHR!

Oct’ 18: PLHR is a prize winner at the London Homelessness Awards

Mar’ 18: Launch of 1st year report at VAWG and Homelessness event at City Hall

Jun’ 18: start work on developing the PLHR to increase accessibility including for survivors leaving care or prison

Nov’ 18: Become partner in the MHCLG funded ‘Whole Housing’ Project to share the PLHR model in two new areas nationally for survivors of domestic abuse.

Achievements to date...
- Over 200 people have moved through the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal
- 76 Registered housing providers are now signed up to the scheme including all London local authorities
- Award winning scheme that has been recognised as good practice nationally
- Over 1500 professionals reached through training, workshops and events

Jul’ 17: PLHR recognised as good practice in APPG for Ending Homelessness. National rollout recommended

Support professional via Twitter

Thank you @SaferLondon1 for making this project so accessible. One of our service users told us yesterday “I’m so happy. I finally feel I can put this horrific ordeal behind me and make a bright, fresh new start with my life.” Keep up the good work. We cannot thank you enough!
Introduction & methodology

The Pan-London Housing Reciprocal (PLHR)\(^1\) is an innovative housing pathway in London that enables social housing tenants who are at risk of violence or abuse where they live to move across borough while keeping their social tenancy. The scheme has been set up and is coordinated by Safer London. This report presents our learning from the first two years of operation since the launch of the scheme on 30\(^{th}\) January 2017.

Throughout this report, data relating to the PLHR’s first year of operation corresponds to the period from February 2017 to January 2018; data relating to the second year of operation corresponds to the period from February 2018 to January 2019 (inclusive). This report mirrors our first report published last year presenting the learning from our first year of operation, available on Safer London’s website\(^2\).

All the data collected by the PLHR team comes from the property request forms sent to Safer London by referring agencies. These property request forms do not contain the applicant’s name or address for confidentiality and safety purposes as well as to comply with data protection regulation (GDPR). Alongside information required to make a referral, such as age and number of household members, reason for referral and type of property occupied/required, we also captured information on risk, vulnerability/additional support needs and support provided.

Referrals were completed with varying levels of detail, by a wide range of professionals and it is likely that there will be an underreporting, for instance of applicants additional vulnerabilities and support needs. We promoted the inclusion of as much detail as possible as best practice, where applicants were happy for this information to be shared.

Where comparisons are made between the two years, for instance increases in additional needs, this needs to be caveated with the fact that through our awareness raising work we have been encouraging professionals to complete their forms in more detail.

Our aim for the implementation and design of the PLHR was to be as flexible as possible applicants. We know that many individuals fleeing violence have to retell their experience to a range of professionals and agencies involved in supporting them, which can be a traumatising experience. We therefore did not want to set the inclusion of information which was not fundamental to a move being facilitated as a prerequisite to referrals being circulated. Furthermore we were concerned that requests may be blocked or put on hold while this was gathered, delaying applicants journey in to safe housing.

The data presented in this report is taken from 468 property requests. It is important to note that numbers are still relatively low, especially when looking at specific groups, for example VAWG-related referrals only and across demographics. These can’t be taken as indicative of whole populations or for London as a whole. This does give us some interesting indications of trends and need based on our first two years of operation.

“I have now got a future as I feel safer and more secure.”
Feedback from applicant

“The reciprocal is an underused and undervalued resource.”
Feedback from Housing professional

Overview of Activity in Year 2

With more housing partners involved in the scheme, Pan-London Housing Reciprocal activity has seen an overall increase between the first year and second year of operation. There have been more enquiries (36% increase), more requests circulated (19% increase) and more moves facilitated (58% increase).

\(^1\) For more information about the scheme please see: [https://saferlondon.org.uk/plhr](https://saferlondon.org.uk/plhr)

The graph below represents a year a quarterly breakdown of the number of enquiries received, property requests circulated and number of successful moves.

**Overview successful moves**

Over the two years of operation, 80 households were able to move through the scheme, totalling 189 adults and children.

“I feel like I can accomplish things and make my kids life better”

Feedback from applicant
**Geographical spread of requests**

There is social housing stock in all London boroughs, however it is not spread evenly. Inner London boroughs have a larger proportion of stock. The proportion of PLHR applications follows a similar pattern to the repartition of social housing stock across London.

*Map: social housing stock including Local Authorities and Registered Providers*¹

The map to the top-right shows that PLHR applications have come from all but two London boroughs. The map to the bottom-right shows that boroughs have been requested at least 80 times (some applicants request all boroughs apart from risk areas). The two boroughs where no tenants have made requests (Sutton and Bexley), have made offers of accommodation to other areas so that there has been some engagement now from every part of London. These maps show that there is a high engagement with the scheme from Inner London Boroughs (Islington, Hackney, Southwark, Lambeth) and that property requests are high across the board.

**Geographical location where requests have been made from, (including from Local Authorities and Registered providers) – year 1 and year 2:**

The maps to the left show the boroughs where successful applicants have moved to and from over the two years. The borough of Southwark, which has the largest housing stock in London, is also the borough where there have been greatest number of moves in and out. This highlights the mutually beneficial aspect of the scheme as a borough: where the borough is risk area for some applicants can be a safe place for others. Two applicants have accepted properties outside London boroughs, in Essex. These were properties offered by housing associations signed up to the scheme.

**Reciprocal Partners and Stakeholder Engagement**

The list of housing partners signed up to the scheme is the Appendix of this report. Over the second year, 10 new housing associations joined the scheme bringing the number of partners to 47 housing associations and 32 local authorities. Over two years we reached over 1,500 professionals through training, workshops and events (estimated 1,718). This includes housing professionals, alongside voluntary sector VAWG and other support agencies and social services.

"Good to find out how the reciprocal works."

"Very good course - well presented."

Housing Officers in a partner Housing Association following training.

**Referring and supporting agencies**

Any professional working with a social tenant can make a referral to the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal. When the agency is not the tenant’s landlord, Safer London contacts the Reciprocal Named Leads for that landlord to receive approval. We have found that it is very valuable to enable support workers such as IDVAs to act as nominating officers This avoids the applicant retelling their story to other professionals, which can be re-traumatising. As the graph below shows, VAWG or domestic abuse services are the second largest sector to be nominating applicants. Where there was more than one agency making the referral, we recorded the referring agency as which was not the landlord.
The graph below shows that in year 2, there has been an increase of referrals coming from social services as well as housing. Sometimes crisis support such as IDVAs would initiate the referral, with the support of a housing officer to be the point of contact for any offers that might come after crisis support has ended.

**Supporting agencies** We saw similar levels of contact with statutory services at 89% compared to 88% last year, this includes social services and police. We saw a slight decrease in referrals with support from the voluntary sector at 52% compared to 63% in year 1. This could indicate a decrease in numbers of voluntary sector support services available due to funding availability. The most common support agency was again specialist VAWG or DV agencies. We see the importance of multiagency work in supporting applicants throughout the PLHR process. This includes support around completing the form with clear requirements and safe boroughs and with attending viewings. Over 2 years, if applications had voluntary sector support 66% were successful, compared to the average of 57% of all applications so far.

“[The referring housing officer] has been very supportive and has done more than I could ever have asked for. You’re given a helping hand every step of the way and are never left in the dark about any choice or decision made. I am grateful for all that has been provided. Thank you!” Feedback from applicant

“The strategy behind the reciprocal is excellent, where all professional services involved can have direct communication and updates of the case”. Feedback from IDVA at Victim Support

“It really helped having safer London contact the client’s local authority as they had not been responding to emails and phone calls from other agencies. It has been extremely helpful for my client and I hope it continues as a service. Having specialist support and advice when it comes to housing is invaluable.” Feedback from IDVA at Metro charity
The graph below shows the different types of agencies supporting reciprocal applicants over the two years (some applicants were supported by multiple agencies). Almost 70% of applicants referred for domestic abuse or another type of VAWG were being supported by a specialist DV or VAWG service at the time of making the referral.

**Overview of households referred**

**Household type and demographics**

The graph above shows that 80% of our referrals have children in the household. A lower figure of 64% of the referrals with children were successful because of the higher proportion of 1 bed offers received to the scheme. The majority (88%) continue to be for women-led households including single parent women (3 in 4.

**Building relationships with specialist LGBTQ agencies**

Having observed that we had only received two referrals for hate crime in the first year, the team worked with London based LGBTQ organisations to increase awareness of the pathway. This led to an increase in referrals and stronger partnerships with voluntary organisations across London.

"Thank you @SaferLondon1 for making this project so accessible. One of our service users told us yesterday "I’m so happy. I finally feel I can put this horrific ordeal behind me and make a bright, fresh new start with my life.” Keep up the good work. We cannot thank you enough!”

Tweet by Galop, March 2018
referrals) and single women. The proportion have household types have remained the similar between the two years, with single male households (from 6 to 18 referrals having the most significant increase). ‘Other’ household type included households three generations living together (4) or where grandparents lived with their grandchildren (2).

97% of referrals made to support someone fleeing domestic abuse were for single women or single mothers. For households at risk from serious youth violence, there has been a decrease in the proportion of referrals for single mothers (from 80% to 70%), and an increase in referrals for single men (from 7% to 19%).

In year 2, the majority of referrals for single women were due to domestic abuse, and the majority of referrals for single men were for those fleeing serious youth violence. The majority of referrals for single men was to support someone fleeing serious youth violence, however we also received referrals for single men fleeing hate crime. We only received one additional referral for a single father household; they were referred due to a risk of hate crime.

Graph: Household type and reason for referral for Year 1 and Year 2

Age
Over the two years, 11% of the applicants were aged 18-24, 38% were aged 25-34, 42% were aged 35-49 and 11% were over 50. Between year 1 and 2, the most significant difference in age ranges for applicants was an increase in over 50s. It is important to note that applicants to the PLHR are often the lead tenant of the household, and therefore demographics recorded in the referral forms do not necessarily reflect those of the person most at risk. Our statistics on age often refers to that of the tenancy holder; so in cases of young people at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation or serious youth violence who live with their parents, the age recorded will most likely be their parent’s.

Graph: number of referrals by age for year 1 and year 2

Of all referrals where the lead tenant was aged 18-24 individuals were most likely applying due to domestic abuse (12%; 33) followed by those fleeing serious youth violence (8%; 9).

We saw differences between the most common age groups and reason for referral, particularly for the categories where we received most referrals, domestic abuse and serious youth violence.

Risk, Age and household composition
The majority (61%) of applicants fleeing domestic abuse were aged under 35, and 12% under 25. For other types of risk, only 18% of the applicants were aged under 35. As mentioned, most referrals where a young person at risk lives with their parent(s) who is the tenancy holder, the age of the lead tenant is recorded.
In these cases of serious youth violence, the majority (55%) of households had a lead tenant aged 35-49, most often single mothers with teenage children.

**Graph: Age and reason for referral – year 1 and year 2**

![Graph showing age distribution and reasons for referral]

For two thirds (66%; 79) of the referrals made due to a risk of serious youth violence, the household member at risk was the tenant’s teenage child (or grandchild in a few cases). Only three of referrals were for young women at risk, with the overwhelming majority (76) for young men at risk. Often, younger siblings in the household were also at risk. It is worth noting that we also received 7 referrals where the lead tenant’s daughter was at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation through serious youth violence, however these were recorded under the Other VAWG category as primary reason for referral.

**Case study: Family at risk of serious youth violence**

One referral was made to support a mother and her son fleeing serious youth violence. The son was being targeted by residents in the block. One day, while he was out of the property, two men ran in to the home with guns. The men assaulted the mother (lead tenant), and held her and her friend who was visiting at gun point, asking for her son.

Most other referrals relating to a risk of serious youth violence and where the lead tenant was the person most at risk, (17) were for single men. About half of the single men referred for serious youth violence were under 25.

**Ethnicity**

68% of referrals we received over the two years were for individuals and families where the lead applicant was from a Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic background. The proportions of the different ethnic group categories have remained similar across the first and the second year of operation. The two largest group categories are Black or Black British and White or White British, representing about a third of referrals each. We found that a similar percentage (66%) of the successful referrals were for households where the lead tenant was from a BME background.

**Graph: Ethnicity of lead applicant year 1 and 2**

![Graph showing ethnicity distribution]

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*Also includes those who have identified as “other ethnic background; category options were: Gypsy/traveller/Romany, Middle Eastern or Arab, Other*
The graph below shows the breakdown of ethnicity group categories by reason for referral. The trends echo last year’s analysis, with the main difference being an increase of referrals for Black/Black British applicants at risk of hate crime. Note that the overall number of referrals for Hate crime is very so these statistics should not be considered significant.

**Graph: breakdown of ethnicity by reason for referral – year 1 and 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Asian/Asian British</th>
<th>Black/Black British</th>
<th>Other Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Information not provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OTHER VAWG</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER HIGH RISK COMUNITY SAFETY</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HATE CRIME</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESCAPING/ EXITING A GANG</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMESTIC ABUSE</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In early 2018 we amended our referral form to improve our data collection around equality and diversity and to ensure that people from a wide range of backgrounds could access the scheme. This included capturing information on:

- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity
- Disability

The change was gradual, so some of the referrals made during this time varied in level of completion. On occasion we were able to go back to referrers to capture this information retrospectively. It should be noted that this information refers to the lead tenant of the household as opposed to the person in the household who is primarily at risk.

### Sexual Orientation and gender identity

When analysing statistics on sexual orientation and gender identity, we need to acknowledge that the representation of people who openly identify as LGBT is likely to be underestimated due to a fear of discrimination and abuse.

For the majority of referrals, the lead tenant identified as heterosexual (78%, 236 out of 304). The category “information not provided” refers to forms that have been completed in full with the exception of information regarding the applicant’s sexual orientation, as opposed to older referrals where this information was not collected. Categories of “information not provided” and “prefer not to say” may also be recorded because the applicant does not want to disclose their sexual orientation due to a number of reasons including the fact that it might not be safe for them to do so.

**Graph: sexual orientation of lead applicant year 1 and 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Woman/Lesbian</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Man</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Not Provided</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disability
Since recording disability as part of our equality and diversity monitoring, we received referrals for 51 applicants who identified themselves as having a disability. Of those referrals that completed this section of the referral, 20% applicants declined providing this information or preferred not to say, and the remaining 64% said they did not have a disability. We discuss disability in greater detail in our Additional Needs and Vulnerabilities section which better captures the needs of the entire household.

Case Study: disability and access to housing
We received a referral for an applicant over 50 years old at risk of domestic violence who suffers from multiple sclerosis. Due to their disability, the applicant needed a property on the ground floor which restricted the number of offers that could be matched. Finally, a local authority in a safe borough for the applicant offered a one bed wheelchair accessible unit in a sheltered scheme. The housing providers involved made sure the applicant felt the property was suitable because they did not want the applicant to pay for costly adjustments to the property. Once the applicant accepted the property, the previous landlord arranged a care package for the applicant.

“The housing reciprocal allowed my client to continue with her daily routines in a safe space with the potential of [her ex-partner] turning up at her property or running into her in the local area much reduced. This gave her a reinforced sense of safety and reduced her anxieties around unexpected encounters.”

Feedback from IDVA

Overview of referrals
From February 2017 – January 2019 we received 470 property requests for individuals and families. We had an increase of 19% from year 1 to year 2, largely down to registered providers making 45 more requests in the second year. Overall 61% of the property requests were from local authorities.

Over the second year we continued to have new housing associations sign-up to the scheme, which might explain the increase in referrals made. Most local authorities had already joined the scheme by the end of the first year.

Graph: Number of referrals made – comparison year 1 and 2

Over the second year however, some of the early signatories (mainly local authorities) have had periods where they have reached their cap of receiving three properties without reciprocating a property from within their own stock back to the scheme. Where this happens the landlord is no longer able to make new property requests until they have redressed the balance. This might have contributed to the decrease in requests made by local authorities.

We’re happy to be part of @SaferLondon1 Pan-London Housing Reciprocal, a joint project to help prevent homelessness where tenants are at high risk of domestic abuse, hate crimes and gang or other serious violence. Read more on our website: #ukhousing socsci.in/pan-london_hou...
Tenancy types

Over the two years we have mostly received referrals for tenants who had long-term tenancies (88% in total, including both local authority ‘secure’ tenancies and housing association ‘assured’ tenancies). 8% of applicants had an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) agreement, mostly for 5 years but we had applications of tenants on 2 year ASTs or introductory tenancies.

Graph: types of tenancies held by applicants – year 1 and 2

Similar to year 1, most property offers have been for long-term (secure or assured) tenancies. There have been occasions when a greater security of tenancy was received, and a small number of examples where a less secure tenancy was accepted based on property type/location. Only 7% of property refusals recorded were due to change in rent or tenancy type.

“I think the principle is great, it enables clients with secure tenancies not to be faced with the choice of giving them up and spending years in temporary accommodation or PRS or remaining in an area of danger, if their reason for moving was not their fault.” – Feedback from Housing Community Safety Officer

Risk from violence/abuse and support needs

Two thirds of the property requests we received (64%, 311) were to support individuals fleeing domestic abuse or another form of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG). Another quarter was due to a risk of serious youth violence (25%, 120). The forms of VAWG identified as primary reasons for the request were Sexual Abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation and So Called Honour Based Violence.

Graph: Primary reason for referral – year 1 and 2

“It works that hate crime is seen as an area that is included for reasons for moving, and that the reciprocal trust experts in these areas to make the decision on what is or isn’t hate crime. It is fantastic that police reports are not necessary as this would exclude the most vulnerable in the LGBT community.”

Feedback from support worker at Galop

The most significant increase in referrals between first and second year of the PLHR, was for applicants fleeing serious youth violence (with the proportion of these referrals being 29% in year 1). The number of referrals for applicants at risk of hate crime almost quadrupled from two to seven referrals (see graph in the next page).
Multiple forms of violence

A third of referrals (30%, 144) were for individuals or families fleeing multiple forms of violence, and 4% (21) were fleeing at least three forms of violence.

For the applicants at risk of domestic abuse, the second form of violence most often experienced was another form of VAWG including sexual violence, Child Sexual Exploitation, Honour Based Violence and Female Genital Mutilation. Where other community safety issues were flagged as secondary reason for referral, this was in general due to the perpetrators of abuse having links to known criminals, and often due to substance use or intimidation and harassment from the perpetrators associates. We also saw that often the risk of physical violence extended to other members of the family including children.

Case study: multiple forms of VAWG

One applicant was fleeing domestic abuse perpetrated by her ex-partner. Her ex-partner had mentally, physically and sexually abused her throughout their relationship and after she ended the relationship, he continued to harass and abuse her until she fled to a refuge. Alongside the abuse perpetrated against the lead tenant her ex-partner also made several threats to take the applicant’s child to Africa for FGM.

About two thirds of households referred for a risk of VAWG (outside domestic abuse) were also experiencing another form of violence. This was most often young women at risk of CSE through serious youth violence, but also an overlap of multiple forms of VAWG.

About 20% of the individuals and families referred primarily due to risk of serious youth violence were also experiencing another form of violence. such as in case when younger siblings or other family members in the household were at risk due to the serious youth violence. Six applicants were also fleeing forms of VAWG including domestic abuse.

For the nine applicants primarily referred due to a risk of hate crime, two of them were experiencing so-called honour based violence and one was also at risk of serious youth violence.

Case study: overlap between VAWG and serious youth violence

One applicant has experienced domestic abuse from her ex-partner for several years, both when they were in a relationship and after the relationships had ended. He had exploited her vulnerabilities and dependence on drugs and was linked to groups perpetrating serious youth violence.

When the applicant became pregnant she was at even greater risk. Her partner had previously committed ABH against her after she had a termination.

Alongside being at risk from her ex-partner and his associates the applicant was at risk from Honour Based Violence from her family. She had told a cousin who lived abroad, she was pregnant, and out of fear told the cousin she was married when they responded negatively. The cousin then demanded that she send proof of a marriage certificate or they would tell family members about the pregnancy.

Her family had previously kidnapped and assaulted her after they had seen her drinking alcohol and the applicant was at high risk of further violence should her family find out about her pregnancy and if they knew where she lived.
Additional need or vulnerability

We’ve seen an increase in the number of referrals where additional needs or vulnerabilities have been identified. In year 1, 47% of referrals had additional needs identified and in our second year 59% of referrals had an additional need identified.

Almost one in four households (23%) had two or more additional needs and one in ten (9%) had three or more additional needs.

Graph: percentage of referrals that had at least one additional vulnerability or need by reason for referral – year 1 and 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for Referral</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Abuse</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other VAWG</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escaping/ Exiting a Gang</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate Crime</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other High Risk Community Safety or Safeguarding Need</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The type of additional need most recorded was a mental health need. This was the case across all the forms of violence that applicants had experienced.

“Mentally I’m in a better place, I’m happy and so are the children”
Feedback from applicant

“Without moving I believe my client would have ended up on a downward spiral of being seen as voluntary homeless, risked losing custody of his children, and getting to the stage where he would attempted suicide. Thanks to the reciprocal this potential future was avoided. I have no idea what I would do to support clients needing to flee a borough if the reciprocal did not exist, you are life savers!”
Feedback from support worker at Galop
Learning from Year 2 PLHR process

Property offers and waiting time

Over these two years there was a total of 284 property offers made. There has been an increase in both the number of property requests and the number of property offers during the second year compared with the first year.

Graph: total number of property requests and offers by property size over the 2 years

When a housing provider offers a property to the scheme (not to a specific applicant), the coordinating team at Safer London will identify the property requests that match this property. This includes; looking at the number of bedrooms requested, boroughs requested and floor/mobility needs requirements.

We have determined that certain factors influence the likelihood of receiving an offer. For instance, housing partners have advised that there are few large properties (4 bedrooms or over) or ground-floor properties available.

Table: Percentage of property requests which received at least one offer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of bedrooms requested</th>
<th>Number of property requests</th>
<th>% of requests with at least one offer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bed</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bed</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 bed</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 bed</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reason for request

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for request</th>
<th>Number of requests</th>
<th>% of requests with at least one offer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Abuse</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other VAWG</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate crime</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious youth violence</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other high-risk community safety need</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mobility need/floor requirement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobility need/floor requirement</th>
<th>Number of requests</th>
<th>% of requests with at least one offer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ground floor requirement</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower floor or other requirement</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No requirement</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of boroughs requested

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of boroughs requested</th>
<th>Number of requests</th>
<th>% of requests with at least one offer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 5</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 5 and 10</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows a breakdown of the likelihood of receiving a property offer. Factors relating to offers depend on the number of bedrooms requested.

Please note the smaller the number of requests is the less significant the probability will be.


6 Please note the smaller the number of requests is the less significant the probability will be.
the reason for referral, mobility need/floor requirements and number of
boroughs requested. We can see for instance that 62% of the property requests
for a 1 bed property have received an offer, compared with only 19% for the
property requests for a 4 bedroom property.

These percentages show aggregated numbers and do not reflect individual
situations. For instance the probability of receiving an offer for a 3 bed property
request is 32% on average, but it will significantly vary depending on other
criteria for instance only 13% of the 3 bed property requests with a ground floor
need have received an offer compared with 42% of the 3 bed needs with no floor
level requirement.

“The reciprocal enabled me to put a robust plan of action in
place to safeguard the client. Knowing that they would not be
returning back to their primary address empowered the
individual to support Police investigation and give evidence in
Court against the perpetrator.” Feedback from Housing professional

Offer refusals

When a property offer is refused, we ask the nominating officer to discuss the
reason for refusal with the applicant. We understand that for applicants, the
decision to move is often is not a choice and has been imposed on them by the
people who pose a risk to applicants. risk. We therefore encourage all housing
partners involved with this scheme to adopt a sensitive approach when offering
assistance to applicants and to take into account the impact of the experience of
trauma on someone’s behaviour, sometimes leading them to take decisions that
might appear unreasonable... For instance we received a referral for a woman
fleeing domestic abuse from her ex-partner, who had pushed the applicant out of
the window. Despite not having mobility needs and floor level requirements on
medical grounds, she might not feel safe to live above the ground floor. Another
referral however was for a couple whose ground floor property was raided and
attacked by a local group of people; in turn these applicants specifically
requested to move to a higher floor level.

As coordinators, Safer London does not take any applicant off the list until the
referring agency or the landlord asks us to withdraw the application. If a property
is refused, we always try to re-match it with another reciprocal applicant. In order
to understand the emerging trends and improve our practice of matching
properties with applicants, we keep a record of the reasons given for refusing a
property offer. We have organised these reasons into different categories,
however we acknowledge that each reason for refusal has to be considered on a
case-by-case basis.

Graph: Categories of offer refusal

Almost half of the property refusals were motivated by the type of property. We
found that this was most often due to the floor level being too high. Other
reasons for property type refusal include; the property being part of an estate or
a tower block, disagreements over the number of bedrooms an applicant was
entitled to (this was addressed at the point of circulating a property request
however was not always agreed between the applicant and their landlord – see
section on overcrowding), and the property being too small.
The other main categories mentioned for offer refusal were location (in 22% of refusals) and risk (19%), most often due to the new property being too far from support networks or close to a risk area. Each property request includes information about which boroughs an applicant would be safe and willing to move to, however we have found that many people including applicants and professionals do not visualise London by borough, resulting in misunderstandings on where people would actually be able to move to. The team at Safer London now asks nominating officers to discuss the boroughs requested for each new application.

Rent being too high was also mentioned as well as the tenure not being the same, most often where the applicant wanted to keep a council tenancy rather than changing for a housing association tenancy.

“I’m safe, I’m stronger, I’m where I want to be, it’s not perfect but I’m the happiest I’ve been in a long time.”

Feedback from applicant

For households referred due to a risk of serious youth violence-related risk, the referring agency has to carry out a risk assessment on the new address to ensure that the move is safe for the family. Often the nominating officer and/or other agencies supporting the household have to contact the police/gang’s unit in both boroughs to make this risk assessment. When the right professionals are available, the risk assessment outcome can be obtained in a couple of days; however occasionally the delays in getting hold of the right people and obtaining the risk assessment can delay the process. On three occasions over the two years the risk assessment flagged a specific risk to the family. The property would then be offered to another applicant where there is no risk related to serious youth violence.

Finally, the coordinating team has been looking at following up on applications that have been waiting for a long time to check whether the applicant still needed to move. This helped decrease the instances when a property offer is made but the referring agency did not inform us that the applicant had moved through another pathway, resulting in delays letting the property.

Case study: risk assessing properties for applicants at risk of serious youth violence

We received a referral for a single mother family where the oldest child was at risk of serious youth violence due to being affiliated with local criminal groups in their area. The property request was for a three bed ground floor property as the mom had medical needs. After some time, a housing association made an offer for a suitable property that was in the borough where the lead applicant said she had family support. However the police flagged recent incidents of serious youth violence in the same area where the property had been identified. The tenant was disappointed but agreed that it would not be safe for her children to move there. At the time of writing, another housing association had made an offer to rehouse this family and the risk assessment was being carried out.

Waiting times

As this is a voluntary scheme, we cannot guarantee when and if housing partners will make property offers. We always advise referring agencies to support their clients to access temporary accommodation if needed, while also continuing to pursue other housing pathways such as internal management transfers or mutual exchange schemes.

The tables below show the average waiting time for the applicants on the reciprocal scheme who have received at least one offer, and for those who have been able to move. While these can be useful to have an idea of averages, it’s important to note that each property request is specific. Applicants are likely to experience shorter or longer waiting times than those described in these tables.
Table: average waiting time for applicants who have received an offer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of bedrooms requested</th>
<th>Number of requests with at least one offer</th>
<th>Average waiting time between circulation date and 1st offer date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.0 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bedroom</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1.5 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bedrooms</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>2.5 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 bedrooms</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.0 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 bedrooms</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.7 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>2.3 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: average waiting time for applicants who have been able to move

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of bedrooms requested</th>
<th>Number of applicants who have accepted a property</th>
<th>Average waiting time between circulation date and date new property was accepted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bedroom</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3.8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bedrooms</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 bedrooms</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 bedrooms</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.0 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3.9 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tables above show that for all the applicants who received at least one offer through the scheme (204), the average waiting time before receiving an offer was 2.3 months. For those who were able to move (80), the average waiting time before accepting the property was 3.9 months. For both groups, the average waiting time increased with the size of the property (note however that the numbers of requests for studio and 4 bed properties are too small to be significant).

“...It had been very difficult and protracted to try and rehouse the resident within our stock so the reciprocal was much welcomed by all” Feedback from Housing Officer

Additional housing barriers facing households fleeing violence

Arrears

The proportion of applicants with rent arrears has increased in year 2, with 41% of applicants in arrears compared to 32% in year 1. However, year 2’s information on arrears was better captured.

Graph: Arrears at the time of referral – comparison of year 1 and 2

Most other mobility schemes for social tenants such as mutual exchange schemes or Housing Moves in London, having no rent arrears is a requirement. For the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal, it is crucial not to have this requirement as many people experiencing domestic abuse might be experiencing economic or financial abuse.

Having arrears did not negatively impact the likelihood of successful move. 20% of applicants who had arrears moved compared with 16% of those who did not have arrears as well as 16% of those who did not provide information on arrears.
Overcrowding

Overcrowding continues to be prevalent for households referred to the reciprocal scheme: 30% of all non-single applicant households referred were overcrowded – that is more than twice the overcrowding rate in the social housing sector in London (13%). The number of overcrowded applicants decreased in year 2 compared with year 1 where the proportion of non-single applicant households that was overcrowded was 45%.

We found however that the definition of overcrowding varies on each partner’s allocations policies. For instance while most housing associations do not count living rooms in the property bedroom number, many Local Authorities in London count a living room with a door that can be closed as an additional bedroom when evaluating overcrowding through the bedroom standard. Some allocation policies give young adults an entitlement to their own room, while others state that two same sex siblings can share a room until their 21st birthday.

Graph: Overcrowding situation for the reciprocal applicants over the 2 years

In 2018 Safer London collected Local Practice Sheets from all the housing partners signed up to the scheme to find out what their policies were around a range of issues. On overcrowding, only a third of those who answered said they could sign a new tenancy for a household that is already overcrowded, however only half would agree to refer their tenants for a larger property if they needed one.

Several housing providers fed back that they have strict policies around internal management transfers, which only enables them to address the most urgent need, safety. In order to embed the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal into each partner’s practice, this type of decision remains with each applicant’s landlord.

Case Study: Overcrowding

We often receive referrals for families who are living in properties that are severely overcrowded. One referral we received was for a single mother with three children where the applicant was at risk from domestic violence, sexual violence and other high risk community safety concerns. The family was living in a two bedroom property and their landlord signed off a three bedroom property request to enable them to move to a property that would match their need. The referral highlighted that on occasions the applicant would stay with family members and pay to stay in a caravan.

Over the two years, approximately half of applicants that were overcrowded in their property at the point of referral, were referred for a larger property by their landlord. If they are rehoused, their original landlord will owe that larger size property to the scheme.

We found that being referred for a property size that keeps the family overcrowded has a negative impact on receiving an offer. Many housing providers are unable to sign a new tenancy for an overcrowded household. The rate of successful moves over the 2 years was 18% for applicants who were not overcrowded households, compared to 15% for households that were overcrowded.

7 https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/overcrowding/

8 For more information on overcrowding please see: http://england.shelter.org.uk/legal/housing_conditions/overcrowding/what_is_overcrowding
Access needs and other requirements

For all applications to the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal, there is at least one household member who has been exposed to a traumatic experience. As detailed in the first part of this report, 57% of applications had additional vulnerability needs highlighted in their referral. A number of these vulnerabilities are closely linked with the experience of abuse or violence, such as mental health needs or physical disabilities caused by injuries.

A number of these needs can act as additional barriers to access safe housing, particularly as it can impact the type of property someone can live in. For instance a family pet can be an essential reassuring and protective factor to the children and survivors. However research revealed that in London, a fifth of councils and 64% of the largest housing associations ban owning dogs in flats with no direct garden or street access. This considerably restricts access to property offers to households that are not ready to rehome their pet.

“We were able to move [the applicant] from a place of vulnerability to a place of safety. He was very anxious and scared and is now very happy with the move..”

Feedback from Housing staff

Floor level restrictions are also often a barrier to a number of reciprocal applicants. This includes cases where applicants may have a physical disability or applicants have sustained injuries that restrict their physical mobility, as well as mental health needs linked with the trauma they experienced that might make a high floor level unsafe for them. Also women with young children may need a lower floor level if they would have to carry prams up many flights of stairs.

Ground floor properties are in short supply in London’s social housing stock. Over the two years, over one third of all applicants (39.2%) had a specific floor requirement in their property request. 8% specified that they needed a ground floor and 31.3% needed a lower floor or another requirement (e.g. a lift).

Specific requirements on access to the property such as secure entry through an intercom system, or direct street access to the property, as well as parking access, have all been requested in a number of cases.

Case Study: Pets policy

We received a referral for a single man in his early twenties who was at risk of serious youth violence due to childhood friends pressuring him to get involved in criminal activity. He was experiencing high levels of anxiety as a result and his mental health was worsening. He was offered a property by a housing association, however the property had a no dog policy. As his dog was part of his mental health plan, he had to decline the offer.

Feedback from professionals and tenants following moves

Each time an applicant accepts a property through the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal, Safer London gets in touch with the professional who supported the application to ask for feedback on the process, and a month after the move with the new landlord to ask for feedback from the applicant directly.

Overall in the two years we received feedback (from either the professional or applicant) for almost half of the moves (48%). We received feedback from a professional for 39% of moves and directly from the applicant for 24% of the moves.

Feedback from applicants

All the applicants who gave feedback said they felt safer in their new property. The applicants who commented on what worked for them highlighted good communication from their old and new landlord and the fact that the referral

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process is very straightforward. One applicant appreciated that her new landlord gave her advice on how to access benefits and guidance on purchasing furniture. Themes that came up most often on what didn’t work were that the scheme was not explained properly to them, and that the wait was too long.

Feedback from professionals

Most professionals who gave feedback on what worked mentioned strong communication from the reciprocal team at Safer London. Many also mentioned the collaborative approach taken by the different agencies involved as well as trust between agencies as key to successful outcomes. Several professionals pointed out the possibility for their clients to choose the boroughs in their application as another key strength of the scheme. Receiving training from Safer London on the scheme was also mentioned as a great advantage.

“The reciprocal opened up hope for this client in particular. He has been experiencing abuse for a long time from both of his sons and for him to have the option of moving out of the Borough rather than just moving via an emergency transfer has enabled him to think about how he can rebuild his life and creating much needed distance from the perpetrators”.

Domestic abuse support worker

Suggestions from applicants and professionals to improve the scheme included:

- Information on support services or funds to help with moving costs
- Support to find children centre or secure a school place in the new area
- Ensure the new property does not have outstanding repairs
- Support to transition to Universal Credit when needed
- More information on timescales
- Advance information on rent for a property offer
- Expand outside London

“This scheme has allowed my children and I to live a new life. I believe this scheme will also be very helpful for others who need to move from where they are, whatever their situation may be.”

Feedback from applicant
Developing the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal in Year Two

Improving access to the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal

The core funder of the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal is the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime, who support work to make the pathway as accessible as possible to households at risk from across London. We are also grateful for support from the Pilgrim Trust and Goldsmith’s Charity who have specifically supported work to make the pathway accessible to particular groups outlined in the following section. Work has included mapping and reaching out to new partners, delivering presentations and awareness raising sessions and holding specific meetings to look at adapting the pathway to make it more accessible.

We have also been working with our current housing partners to ensure buy-in to adapt the pathway. In November 2018 we delivered two workshops for our Named Leads which focussed on accessibility, particularly for young people leaving care and women leaving prison, attended by approximately 40 housing reciprocal Named Leads in total (mainly borough housing managers). Feedback from the workshops is incorporated below.

Young People leaving Care

Care leavers are particularly vulnerable to homelessness: one third of care leavers become homeless in the first two years immediately after they leave care and 25% of homeless people have been in care at some point in their lives. Care leavers are also more likely than other young people to be at risk of violence or abuse, such as Child Sexual Exploitation and/ or serious youth violence. This may be due to the reasons why they were placed in care, or may be related to experiences of violence and abuse that occurred after they were placed in care. If this risk takes place in the borough that holds care duty over them, this can prevent the local authority being able to offer them social housing within their housing stock. The Pan-London Housing Reciprocal is an opportunity for local authorities to house young people to whom they owe a duty and who are at risk of harm in their borough.

From our focused work and awareness raising we have seen an increase in enquiries/referrals for applicants who have been in the care system. For instance in 2018 we successfully moved 4 women who were at risk from violence/abuse/exploitation and had left local authority care. This is in comparison to just one successful move for this group the previous year.

We also received an increase overall in enquiries about and referrals for young people who have left care in 2018, in comparison to the previous year. From January 2018-December 2018 we received 11 enquiries from this group and the previous year we received only 4.

Housing Leads at our Workshop in November 2018 highlighted that they have previously moved care leavers across borough boundaries through reciprocal agreements, however these were through informal agreements and were not monitored.

”Care leavers [reciprocal] would be beneficial. As a local authority we often receive referrals from other boroughs but this is captured manually”

”We accept reciprocals but these are often direct swaps within our existing quota. It would be good to have this process managed through Safer London with maybe a percentage of the quota put towards the scheme, keeping it transparent.”

Many local authority housing departments implement a quota system for social housing allocated to care leavers. This would usually be a set number or percentage of properties to be allocated each year to young people leaving care. Social services (usually Leaving Care Teams) nominate those who are ready for independent living. Often Housing teams hold a panel to review the supporting evidence brought forward by social services for the young people they nominated. Safer London reviewed local authority allocation policies and found

that 24 out of 33 make reference to quota arrangements with Social Services and the Leaving Care team.

**Barriers for young people leaving care**

**Lack of readiness for independent living and/or support**

Named Leads reported that often young people were nominated for social housing when they were not ready, or did not have the support required, to start holding a tenancy independently. Alongside not being prepared for the financial responsibility and management of a tenancy, named leads highlighted the lack of continuity of support after foster placements or other supported living arrangements. Young people often face isolation and a lack of emotional support once they reach 18 and leave supported placements. A number of attendees reported stories of how this absence of support and preparation led to ASB reports, high rent arrears and eventual eviction and risk of homelessness.

**Lack of identification/information sharing**

Registered providers raised that they are often unaware whether their tenants nominated by the local authority had been in contact with the care system previously. Consequently they often do not identify potential risks or support needs until other issues arise. Local authorities reported facing similar problems when someone accesses housing support through the homelessness route. Often whether a young person has been in care is not identified, particularly if their primary priority need is recorded due to a different vulnerability (e.g. if the young person is pregnant or has a child).

**Adapting the Reciprocal Pathway for young people leaving care**

Despite the concerns above, Named Leads had many examples of good practice to mitigate against these risks and effectively support young people leaving care to access and sustain social housing tenancies.

**Partnership working**

Named leads highlighted the value of working in partnership with social services and voluntary sector agencies to provide both resettlement and on-going support to young people moving in to independent living. They also stressed the need for tenancy maintenance training for both young people and the professionals supporting them. Some local authorities described having agreements in place for young people leaving care such as a specific furniture allowance, or a fast-tracked system for Discretionary Housing Payments.

**Case Study:** A young person who had left care and was at risk from gang-related violence has successfully moved through the scheme. Social services paid arrears as DHP request was unsuccessful. The new landlord worked with the young person to set up direct rent payments as well as provided him information on who to contact should he be worried about finances.

**Case study:** One local authority provides tenancy sustainment group training sessions for young people leaving care who are allocated social housing within their borough.

**Support**

Support needs to be put in place around young people moving into independent living. Landlords are in a position to offer some of this support when someone has signed a tenancy. For example tenancy sustainment teams or equivalent can support around budgeting, explaining the tenancy contract (for example providing an explanation on what may be counted as anti-social behaviour e.g. having parties) and signposting tenants to internal contacts who can provide help should they have an issues.

The need for emotional support or equivalent for those moving through the scheme was also emphasised. Named leads asked for resettlement and ongoing support to be captured on any referral, including who would be providing this support and how. Care Leavers Pathway Plans could provide this information and would need to be updated if a care leaver moves through the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal scheme.

Following the above feedback from our Housing Leads we then held a Roundtable chaired by the Deputy CEO of Camden Council Martin Pratt, in February 2019 with over 20 Heads of Leaving Care Services from different London boroughs, in order to improve access to our housing reciprocal for young
people leaving care who are at risk from violence. At the meeting a new process and checklist was agreed and the team have since seen an increase in young people leaving care being referred, including before they have been allocated a social tenancy locally, therefore giving them a safer start at independent living in a new borough.

**LGBTQ+ applicants**

Research conducted on LGBTQ+ experiences of domestic abuse in the UK has raised barriers to accessing mainstream services:

> LGBT people are reluctant to go to mainstream services. There’s no mentioning of us anywhere. If I’ve had my share of homophobic abuse I need to see that staff is aware of my needs. But if they don’t even acknowledge that in their publicising…?
> (Helpline worker, LGBT organisation)

In 2017 Stonewall also found in their report “LGBT in Britain, Hate Crime and Discrimination” that one in five LGBT people have experienced a hate crime or hate incident due to their sexual orientation and or gender identity in the past year.\(^\text{12}\) With this in mind we wanted to make sure that the reciprocal was as accessible as possible for this group by working with specialist LGBTQ+ organisations.

Until the end of 2017, we did not collect information on the sexual orientation or gender identity or reassignment of applicants. We also did not receive any referrals where applicants were at risk of hate crime. We included information on the gender and sexual orientation of applicants in the Equality & Diversity section of the referral forms at the end of 2017 using advice from specialist agencies.

Following our proactive engagement with Stonewall Housing and Galop in 2018, we received eight referrals for applicants at risk of hate crime due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, four of them for applicants identifying as male and four for applicants identifying as female. That is approximately 3% of all applications opened in 2018. Out of these eight, five were recorded as homophobic hate crime and the remaining three as transphobic hate crime. Of these, so far we have moved two households with a LGBT lead applicant fleeing homophobic and transphobic hate crime successfully through the scheme, compared to none the previous year.

In 2018 we had four referrals for applicants identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual in the diversity information recorded in the referral forms. This is approximately 1.6% of all applications opened in 2018. Two of them were for applicants identifying as gay men and two for applicants identifying as lesbian women. This percentage however is likely not be the full picture as applicants might not disclose this information on a housing referral form. Six percent of applications ticked ‘Prefer not to say’ and the information was not provided in 15% of applications in 2018. In 2018 we had three applications mentioning that the applicant was transgender. All three were at risk of transphobic hate crime. Two of them disclosed in the diversity section of the referral form that their gender identity was not the same as the one at birth, and one ticked the category ‘Prefer not to say’. In total in 2018, 3.4% of applications ticked ‘Prefer not to say’ for the question on gender reassignment and the information was not provided for 18% of applications. This is an area where we will continue to seek out specialist advice and learning to make the pathway as accessible as possible.

**Women affected by the Criminal Justice System**

More than half of women in prison in England (53%) report having experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse as a child and 57% report having been victims of domestic violence as adults. Experiences of domestic abuse are likely to be underreported, Women in Prison report that 79% of their clients have experienced domestic and/or sexual abuse\(^\text{13}\). Women are often experiencing


abuse when they enter prison. 34% of the population at HMP Bronzefield, the UK’s largest female prison, reported experiencing abuse at the time they were sent to prison. The abuse and coercion women experience is often linked to their offending behaviour; for example 48% of women report having committed offences to support someone else’s drug use.14 The risk of homelessness when leaving prison then increases reoffending. Intervening when a woman with a social housing tenancy enters remand or custody and utilising the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal could lead to more women leaving prison with stable housing in an area where they are safe, offering a chance to start rebuilding their lives.

We have been working to reach out to, train and raise awareness with Criminal Justice agencies on the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal and through this work have seen an increase in enquiries for women affected by the Criminal Justice system. We have received enquiries where the applicant was in prison from the St Mungo’s resettlement teams, but none of these have yet progressed to a full referral/move. We have also received enquiries following our awareness raising on cases from agencies such as CRC, Probation, Women in Prison, Advance, Hibiscus charity and Housing4Women. Now that we have built up new partnerships and are receiving referral enquiries we want this to translate into more full referrals/moves for women. Complications on some of the enquiries have arisen when arrears and eviction notices are already in progress because of contact with CJS (this has to be negotiated with housing providers), and also when negotiating flexibility from the secure estate and probation regarding timescales. Our conversations with housing leads and CJS staff has shown a willingness in this regard that we will now utilise and build on.

Our Housing Named Leads workshop in November 2018 fed back that women can access Housing Benefit or equivalent for up to 52 weeks while they are on remand, and up to 13 weeks if they have been sentenced. Named Leads reported that if they are made aware that their tenant is going to prison, they could work with them to relinquish the tenancy in order to avoid arrears, and offer an alternative property upon release. They could also work with different support agencies to ensure that the tenancy is sustained.

Some local authorities reported that previous tenants who went to prison have often come back to their attention through a homelessness application after their release. With the Housing Reduction Act, prisons and probation services now have a duty to refer anyone at risk of homelessness. There is therefore likely to be an increase of referrals for this group. Housing Options services can include the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal in the Personal Housing Plans where relevant, as part of their prevention duty.

“We hope this will be improved via HRA! Groups that require pathways [such as women involved in the criminal justice system] should be identified and supported through the duty to refer.”

Barriers for women affected by the criminal justice system
Lack of identification/information sharing
The key barrier identified was the lack of information sharing between agencies, resulting in housing providers not knowing if their tenants were in prison. Named Leads reported that they are often unaware someone has been sentenced until substantial arrears build up, prompting the tenancy sustainment teams to get involved. Eviction processes might already be instigated before providers are aware that their tenant is in prison.

Adapting the Reciprocal Pathway for women affected by the criminal justice system
• Early Identification
  Our housing leads fed back that to address the barrier of information sharing and identification, work needs to be done with non-housing agencies. This work needs to include awareness raising around the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal, housing options and pathways available to women. If someone has a tenancy when entering prison, there needs to be support in place as early as possible to sustain this tenancy, well before the release date. This could be done through prison tenancy

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14 Ibid. p.8
rescue services (for example Crisis, Shelter) to identify those who have a social housing tenancy and are at risk.

- **Support**
  Named leads suggested that further information would be needed for referrals to the Pan-London Housing for women leaving prison. This included information on medical needs, risk assessments, support networks, and family members moving with the household. They advised that case information may also be required around their conviction and restrictions in order to find an appropriate property. Finally referrals should also include information on any support in place upon the applicant’s release, agencies involved in providing this support, applicant’s financial situation and expectations.

- **Partnership working and pathways**
  Housing Leads supported continued partnership work between Safer London and resettlement teams in prisons such as HMP Bronzefield and HMP Downview.

Our meeting at Downview Prison with the Head of Resettlement led to agreement that if women get viewings through the reciprocal, they can have release on temporary licence (ROTL) to attend these. They also recently put up a Prisoner Information Notice about the scheme, so women who could benefit can come forward. We have a similar meeting at Bronzefield coming up.

We have also raised awareness at a strategic level through the Mayor’s Female Offenders Board and London Blueprint for Female Offenders Consultation, getting the Reciprocal included in the London Blueprint as a housing route. We will continue to work to improve accessibility for this group over the coming year.

### Alignment with other pathways to increase moves

**Housing Moves Development Work**

The Mayor’s Housing Strategy launched in May 2018 included the following commitment:

*Victims should be supported to remain in their own home where this is safe. However, where it is not possible, and the victim is a social tenant, every effort should be made to help them retain social housing. The Mayor therefore supports the Pan-London Reciprocal Agreement, administered by Safer London on behalf of MOPAC, and welcomes the Secure Tenancies (Victims of Domestic Abuse) Bill 2017-19. The Mayor will also introduce a new priority in his Housing Moves scheme for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.[1]*

The team at Safer London have been meeting with the Housing Moves team to set up a system so that reciprocal applicants who are fleeing domestic abuse or other forms of Violence against Women will be able to have a high priority to bid on properties in other boroughs via Housing Moves. By coordinating this via the reciprocal it will mean that the application includes a supporting professional or ‘nominating officer’ and sign off by the landlord already and questions about the risk/abuse experienced will not need to be repeated.

The household can receive a unique code (password) that will allow them to access more properties, rather than repeating another application and their story again, and Safer London will be able to monitor if an applicant receives a Housing

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[1] Page 312
Moves property so needs to be removed from the reciprocal list avoiding confusion or duplication. As with the reciprocal, by having a nominating officer involved it also means applicants can remain anonymous and do not have to share their contact details with housing providers across London until a property is offered, keeping the system safe, supported and confidential. The new IT system is currently being tested and will hopefully be launched summer 2019.

**Sharing Learning Outside of London**

**Whole Housing Project**

Safer London is now sharing our learning on managed reciprocals as part of The Whole Housing project. The project is funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and is a partnership project that is being piloted in three areas around the UK – Hammersmith & Fulham with Westminster, and Kensington & Chelsea alongside Cambridgeshire, and Stockton. The partners in the project include local authorities, housing providers, and specialist domestic violence services.

The Whole Housing Mission is:

- To improve housing options for families affected by domestic abuse through a ‘Whole Housing Approach’.
- To provide a plethora of housing options to people experiencing domestic abuse understanding families will be on a spectrum of need.

The Programme’s vision is to develop and model Whole Housing approaches across all types of housing including private housing (owned and rented), social housing,
refuges, supported accommodation and other accommodation type. The aim is to reduce homelessness, promote use of tenancy sustainment options, create early intervention and provide safe and secure move on options for families affected by domestic abuse.

The delivery project is focusing on 8 housing options (see diagram on previous page – all options in green are included in this project).

The project builds on work that we and the partners involved have already established:

- Managed reciprocals between housing providers in Greater London (Safer London)
- Credible standards for housing providers (DAHA) which are endorsed by Ministers from MHCLG and are currently expanding in England and Wales and are making links to NI and Scotland
- Work in relation to private rented landlords’ response to DVA (DAHA)
- Perpetrator management within housing and DVA (DAHA)
- Housing first and mobile advocacy for women experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage (DAHA and Advance)
- Work in relation to privately owned homes (SEA)
- Sanctuary scheme (Cambridgeshire Bobby Scheme and London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham/STADV)
- Co-located domestic abuse workers in housing services (Advance)

The project will also result in the creation of an implementation toolkit that can be used to introduce the Whole Housing Approach in other areas. For more information contact Cara Atkinson: c.atkinson@standingtogether.org.uk

Conclusion and next steps

Our year two review evidences a housing pathway that has been increasingly utilised over the two years and is now able to successfully re-house households at high risk of harm in London. On average, there were just over 4 moves per month compared to 3 in the first year, and over 200 adults and children have now been moved to safety without having to give up their social tenancy. The team at Safer London funded by the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime have coordinated referrals, monitored and maintain a cap of 3 moves so no provider can make more than 3 successful referrals without reciprocating a property. We have now seen a number of providers or boroughs meet their cap, and then successfully reciprocate properties to unblock referrals again. This can create a delay in referrals being accepted in some areas, however it has overall led to momentum being maintained and no one area or provider taking more than a fair share from the scheme.

The centralised approach has worked well to create more flexibility, for instance if a perpetrator of domestic abuse is still in the property then the survivor can still access the reciprocal, as it does not have to be the vacated property that is reciprocated. We will continue to work with a range of housing and voluntary sector partners to oversee and develop the scheme, including through our housing named leads workshops. By raising awareness of the scheme we hope to secure even more housing partners, increase property offers and reduce property refusals moving forward.

Still in year two there are challenges that need more focus, for instance securing properties for households needing larger, ground floor or accessible properties. Also making sure that different areas are using consistent and fair criteria for approving referrals and promoting equality of access across London, for instance accepting evidence from voluntary sector agencies when survivors do not report to the police.

The report also highlights learning for the broader sector on high levels of rent arrears and overcrowding experienced by households affected by abuse and violence, and the need for this not to be a barrier to safety.

We have built up evidence of households experiencing multiple forms of violence, abuse and disadvantage and therefore multi-agency work is key. Housing, specialist VAWG and other support providers working together is crucial and we found that involvement from voluntary sector support agencies was higher for those who successfully moved in the first and second year. We see that women’s refuges and other short term accommodation plays a key role if crisis accommodation is needed. We see applicants sometimes struggling to access appropriate emergency accommodation which is another gap for the sector to address.
With the Homeless Reduction Act, the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal has become even more strategically important as an option for housing professionals to prevent homelessness or housing insecurity and our priority is to sustain the pathway into the future. Also to continue to make the scheme as accessible as possible including for the groups highlighted in this report such as survivors leaving care or prison. By aligning with other housing schemes such as Housing Moves this will also support sustainability and accessibility.

We are excited for the future of this housing pathway, in London and beyond, working to ensure that no one has to sacrifice their social tenancy just because they have experienced abuse or violence.

Appendix A: List of Reciprocal Partners

Local authorities
All 33 London Boroughs (including City of London)

Registered housing providers
A2Dominion
Advance
Arhag HA
Bangla Housing Association
Catalyst
City YMCA
Clarion Housing Group (formerly Circle Housing and Affinity Sutton)
EastendHomes
East Thames
Ekaya
Estuary Housing
Family Mosaic
Gateway HA
Guinness
Habinteg
Hendon Christian Housing Association
Hexagon
Housing 4 Women

Hyde Housing
IDS
Islington & Shoreditch Housing Association
L&Q
Metropolitan
Moat
Network Homes
Newlon
Notting Hill Genesis (formerly Notting Hill)
Notting Hill Genesis (formerly Genesis)
Octavia
Odu-Dua Housing Association
One Housing
Optivo (formerly Amicus Horizon and Viridian)
Origin Housing
PA Housing (formerly Paragon and Asra Housing)
Peabody
Places for people
Phoenix Community Housing
Poplar Harca
Sanctuary Housing
Shian Housing Association
Soho Housing Association
Southern Housing Group
Swan Housing
SW9 Community Housing
Tower Hamlets Community Housing
Watmos Community Homes
Women’s Pioneer Housing

15 List of partners who have signed up to the PLHR agreement as of 10th June 2019.