

# Pan London Housing Reciprocal

## Year 1 Report (Feb 2017 – Jan 2018)



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## Summary of key learning from year 1 of the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal

The Pan-London Housing Reciprocal (PLHR) was launched on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2017 at City Hall. This new housing pathway is a **voluntary collaboration** between **local authorities** and **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** (including domestic abuse, other forms of violence against women and girls, hate crime, gang-related violence and other high-risk community safety concerns) and need to relocate to another area of London in order to **remain safe and not lose their social tenancy**.

This report outlines some of the emerging trends from the past year alongside a breakdown of PLHR activity.<sup>1</sup>

### Overview of activity in year 1

By the end of the first year of operation, **32 local authorities** and **38 registered housing providers** (including all of G15 group) had signed up to the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal, representing housing stock across every London borough.

In year 1 Safer London circulated **214 referrals** to support individuals and families who needed to move borough, in addition to responding to 344 enquiries who were provided with support to make a referral, advice or signposting. Partners **offered 155 properties** over the year. **On average**, there were just under **3 moves per month**, and a total of **82 individuals were moved to safety**: 39 adults and 43 children. The relocations were made **across 25 London boroughs and supported by 37 different housing partners**. Requests have been made from residents in every London borough and overall **all London boroughs have been requested at least 30 times** (some applicants request all boroughs apart from risk areas).

*'The collaborative approach was very effective in both securing a move and facilitating as smooth as possible transition.'* Voluntary Sector Support Worker

### Overview of households referred

The majority of referrals made (78%) were for **single women with children**. This was the case across all referrals, regardless of the type of violence the family was fleeing from with the exception of hate crime. The next biggest category was single women (13%).

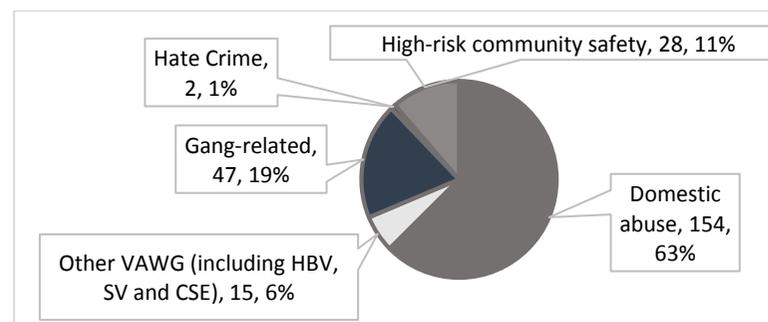
<sup>1</sup> Property request forms were completed with varying levels of detail, therefore we can only highlight indications of trends and need at this stage, based on available data from the first year of operation.

83% of referrals were made for individuals aged between 25 and 54. 11% of referrals were made for those aged 18-24, and 3% were for 55 and over. 60% of referrals were for people from BME or mixed heritage backgrounds.

### Risk from violence/abuse and support needs identified

The majority of PLHR referrals were made to support households whose **primary reason** for the referral was **domestic abuse**. Other forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) included sexual violence, child sexual exploitation (CSE) and so-called honour-based violence (HBV). Community safety included witness of violent crime, and all hate crime referrals so far have been homophobic hate crime.

Graph: primary reasons for referral in year 1



### Multiple forms of violence and disadvantage

28% of households referred to the scheme recorded that they were also fleeing another form of violence. 18% of domestic abuse referrals had another form of VAWG as secondary reason for referral, mainly sexual violence (15%). We also saw an intersection with CSE and gang-related violence.

For **47% of applications**, **additional support needs were recorded for a household member** (other than violence/abuse). In **29% of referrals we received**, someone within the household reported having a **mental health need**.

### Additional housing barriers facing households fleeing violence

#### Arrears

Many housing schemes will not re-house individuals with rent arrears. The PLHR allows applicants to be referred to move who have arrears, recognising this as a common factor for households affected by violence and abuse. We found that **29% of applicants whose**

**primary reason for referral was domestic abuse had arrears.** This was often highlighted as due to financial abuse, or being unable to maintain or secure employment due to the abuse they were experiencing.

### Overcrowding

Research has suggested that in London approximately 14% of socially renting households were overcrowded.<sup>2</sup> Of 179 referrals for non-single applicants, **almost half (45%) were living in overcrowded conditions.**

Overcrowding can act as a barrier to re-housing as some providers will not offer properties to overcrowded households. Through the PLHR some partners have put households forward for larger properties on an agreement that they will reciprocate a larger property to another household.

### Floor requirements

Ground floor properties are in short supply in London's social housing stock. **Over one third of all applicants (35%) had a specific floor requirement in their property request.** 12% specified that they needed a ground floor and 23% needed a lower floor or another requirement (e.g. a lift).

About half of the applicants who had a floor requirement specified that this was due to a physical health need or disability. **15% of applicants recorded a physical disability within the household.** Other reasons included a mental health need, learning or development disability, and being pregnant or having young children.

### Learning on the PLHR process

#### Property Requests: Probability of receiving an offer

50% of the applicants referred in the first year have so far received a property offer. The biggest factors affecting the probability of receiving an offer were: the number of bedrooms requested (fewer larger properties available); types of referrals (gang-related referrals received fewer offers); the number of boroughs requested; and whether there were any floor requirements.

#### 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.<sup>3</sup> For the 34 households that accepted a property in the first year of the PLHR, the waiting time on average was a little over 2 months.<sup>4</sup>

### Tenancy Types

Most applicants (62%) referred to the scheme held Secure or Assured tenancies, others had AST or starter tenancies. 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 an example where a less secure tenancy was accepted based on property type/location. Applicants can refuse offers and are not taken off the list by Safer London; however, we need to continue to monitor this to ensure no household feels compelled to take a less secure tenancy. Only 4% of property refusals recorded so far were due to change in rent or tenancy type; most were based on property size/type or location.

### Referring and Supporting agencies

In total, over a third of referrals (36%) were referred by a non-housing sector agency. Of these, 23% were referred by a VAWG agency. Nearly all referrals (97%) reported being supported by at least one additional agency apart from a housing provider; 91% of referrals mentioned support from a statutory service and 73% mentioned support from a voluntary sector service. Support from the voluntary sector was higher for applicants who successfully moved, at 87%.

*'I feel more secure and safer, I feel I can start making decisions that don't involve thinking about him or looking over my shoulder.'* Feedback from applicant

*'[The tenant] is overjoyed and is able to get her life back together again without fear to her life.'* Feedback from a professional supporting the applicant

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/overcrowding/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-options/waiting-times-for-housing/>

<sup>4</sup> Please note that this is only for the 34 households who have been offered a property and have accepted it.

## Introduction

In 2016 Safer London conducted the Pan-London Domestic Violence Needs Assessment. The report examined the need for domestic abuse services in London, the current provision of support (2016), a strategic overview of domestic abuse services and funding, and a focus on housing for survivors in London.

The report highlighted clear gaps in housing support and provision across London. While some links were being made at a strategic level between housing and experiences of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), these links were often not manifesting into actions. There was inconsistency across both local authority and registered housing approaches in identifying and supporting their tenants who were experiencing abuse.

We found that housing providers were struggling to facilitate moves for their tenants across borough boundaries. 36% of local authorities we spoke to identified this as the main barrier in addressing the needs of people experiencing domestic abuse, and the majority of registered providers highlighted the need and desire to use reciprocal arrangements. There was a call for a transparent system that could support survivors to move to a new, safe area of London away from their abuser(s) and retain their social housing tenancy.

The Pan-London Housing Reciprocal (PLHR) was launched on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2017. It is a housing pathway which enables social tenants who are at risk of or experiencing abuse where they live to move to another borough in London, while keeping their social tenancy. The scheme is a voluntary collaboration between local authorities and housing providers in London and is centrally coordinated by Safer London. Informal sub-regional reciprocal agreements which operated in London before January 2017 have merged with the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal.

This report presents an analysis of the data collected from the first year of operation of the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal from the official launch on January 31<sup>st</sup> 2017 until January 31<sup>st</sup> 2018.

All the data collected by the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal 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. 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.

When implementing the PLHR, the team at Safer London wanted the scheme to be as flexible as possible while also collecting information that could inform our understanding of the experiences of those fleeing violence and abuse in London. 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.

As a result 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.

The statistics presented in this report are taken from 214 referrals. It is important to note that at this stage numbers are small, especially when looking at specific groups, for example gang-related referrals only, VAWG-related referrals only and across demographics. These can't be taken as indicative of whole populations or for London as a whole, however give us some interesting indications of trends and need based on our first year of operation.

## Reciprocal Partners and Stakeholder Engagement

By the end of the first year of operation, 32 local authorities and 38 housing providers had signed up to the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal, representing housing stock across every London borough. All the G15 housing associations are partners.<sup>5</sup>

During the first year, the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal Team at Safer London has delivered 20 awareness raising presentations or training sessions locally or sub-regionally across London to Housing, VAWG and Community Safety partners. Another ten presentations have been delivered at a Pan-London or national level including the first Reciprocal Named Leads Workshop in November 2017.

All but one of the partners we delivered an awareness raising presentation to have now made at least one referral. The two partners who have submitted the highest number of requests for their tenants have both had multiple meetings and trainings for professionals working in the borough.

The team also organised quarterly steering group meetings with housing and VAWG partners. This has now been merged into the London VAWG and Housing group which is co-run by Safer London and Solace Women's Aid, meeting on a quarterly basis.

The Pan-London Housing Reciprocal has been included in the Mayor's draft Housing Strategy published for consultation in the autumn 2017 and the Mayor's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy published in March 2018.

## Overview of Activity in year 1

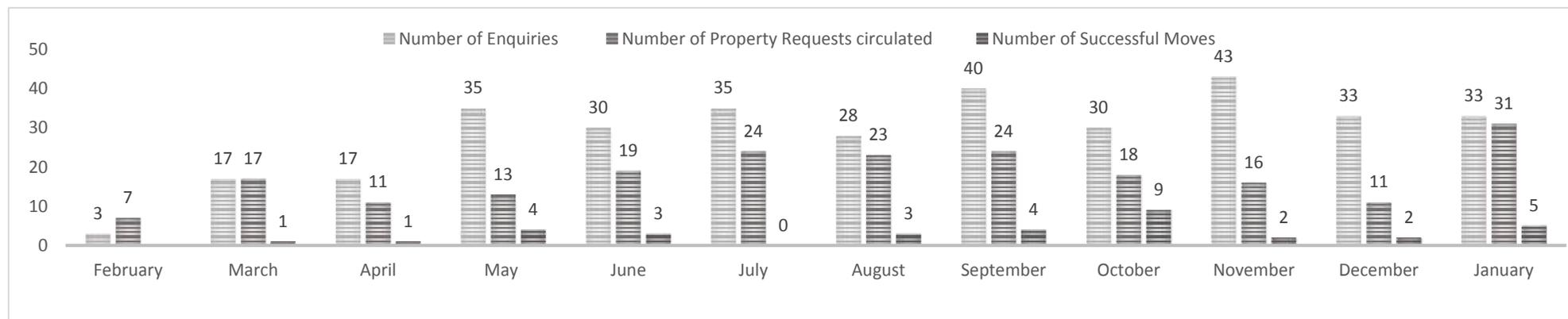
The Pan-London Housing Reciprocal team received daily phone calls and emails requesting information on the scheme or regarding specific referrals. Some referrals were received, signed off by housing leads and circulated as property requests straight away. Others required further information or discussion with the referrer and were recorded as an enquiry.

There have been a total of 344 enquiries in the first year, 124 of these have been circulated as property requests (alongside 90 requests that were circulated straight away- 214 in total). Reasons for referrals not being progressed as a property request immediately included: the social landlord not yet being signed up to the scheme, information was missing or they required sign-posting to other housing pathways.

It is important to note that the number of enquiries received and referrals circulated in any one month do not directly correlate. It can take time to gather all of the information necessary in order to circulate referrals, and therefore enquiries made in one month often won't turn into referrals within that same month, but in months to come.

That being said, sometimes enquiries do fail to turn into referrals. To explore this further we analysed data from the November 2017, in which 29 of the 43 enquiries did not turn into active referrals. The two most common reasons for this were referrers not responding to requests for key pieces of information that were missing and referrers not submitting a property request form after we sent them a blank form. Missing information

Graph showing a monthly breakdown of property requests circulated, enquiries and successful moves February 2017-January 2018



<sup>5</sup> See Appendix A for the full list of partners.

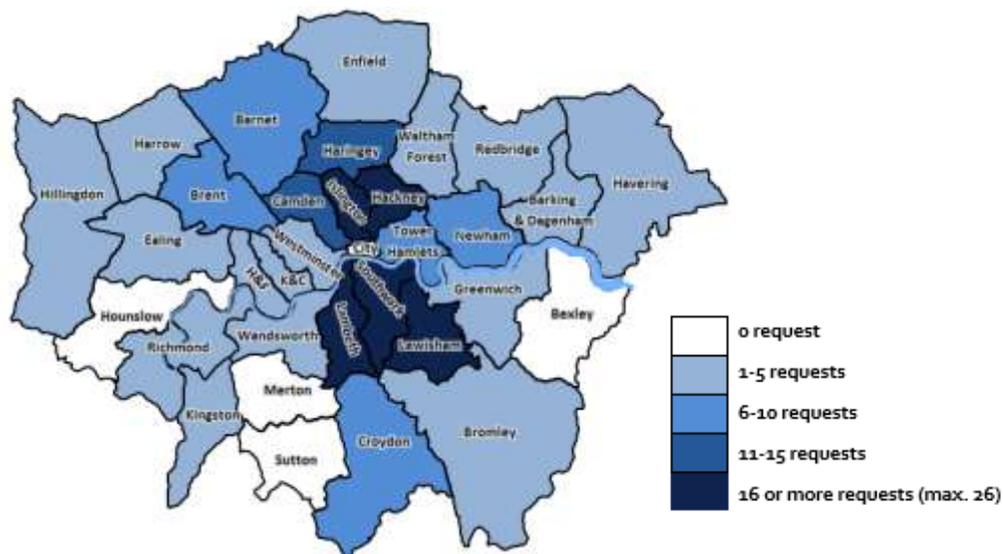
included: the boroughs in which the applicant was at risk, the number of bedrooms being requested, details of the nominating officer for the referral and the support/risk management checklist required for gang-related referrals.

In the case of five of the November enquiries, the named lead did not give approval for the referral to be processed. Other reasons that enquiries did not become referrals were: the potential applicant did not hold a social tenancy (2), the landlord was not a reciprocal partner (2), the applicant living or wanting to move outside of London (2), the applicant choosing a different housing route (1) and the enquiry being a general enquiry with no potential applicant (1).

When a potential referral was not suitable for the PLHR (for example because the applicant wanted to move outside of London), the team signposted to other pathways or services that could meet the needs of the applicant more effectively.

### Geographical spread of requests

Geographical location where requests have been made from, (including from Local Authorities and Registered providers, based on 214 requests):



Requests were made from almost every London borough, with a higher number of property requests made from inner London boroughs. This could be explained by the fact that there is proportionally more social housing in those boroughs. Another contributing

factor could be that PLHR staff engaged with VAWG support agencies in these boroughs, such as the Gaia Centre in Lambeth or Southwark Solace Women’s Aid, to promote the scheme.

Property request forms outline which London boroughs applicants would be safe and willing to move to. The map below shows that all London boroughs have been requested at least 30 times.

Locations which have been requested (including to Local Authorities and Registered providers, based on 214 requests):

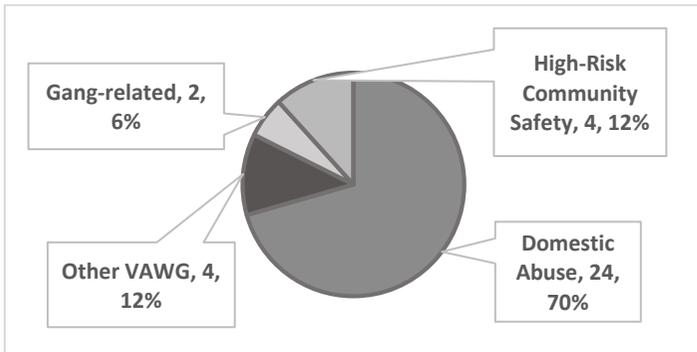


*“Due to the reciprocal I was able to support the client to address her safety which was her priority. It was important that the client felt in control of where she wanted to relocate to which was in the area she was placed as she felt that her family, friends and network in the area would help her to move forward, free of further abuses.” Feedback from a Housing professional*

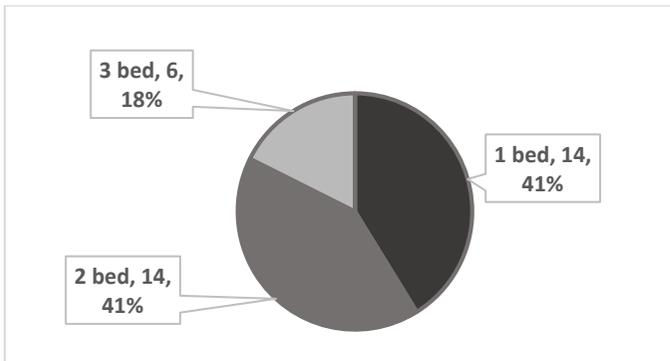
## Overview of Successful Moves

In the first year of operation 34 households have accepted a property through the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal (almost 3 per month). This amounts to **82 people who have moved through the scheme into safe housing: 39 adults and 43 children**. The majority of moves have supported individuals and families fleeing domestic abuse including child to parent violence. Four of the successful referrals were fleeing multiple forms of violence, for example gang related exploitation and (multiple forms of) violence against women and girls.

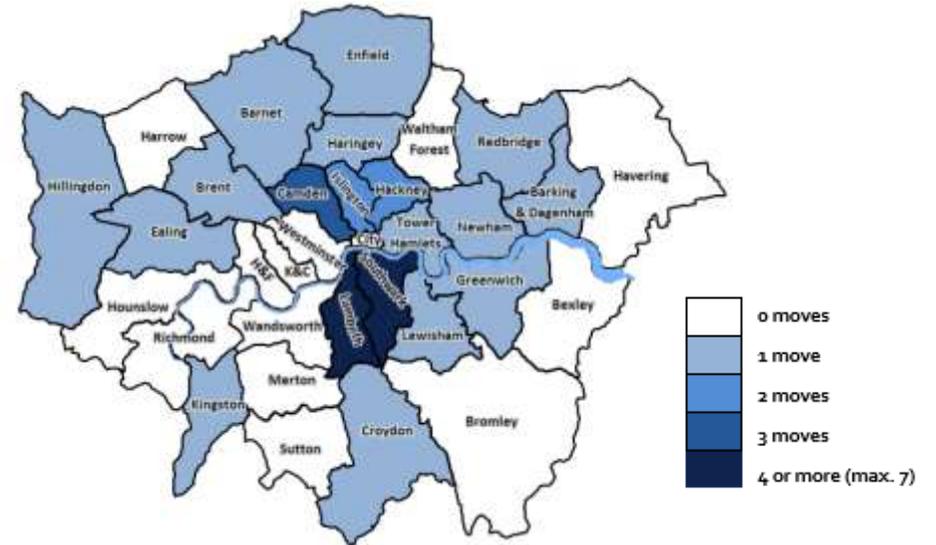
Graph: reason for reciprocal request (successful moves)



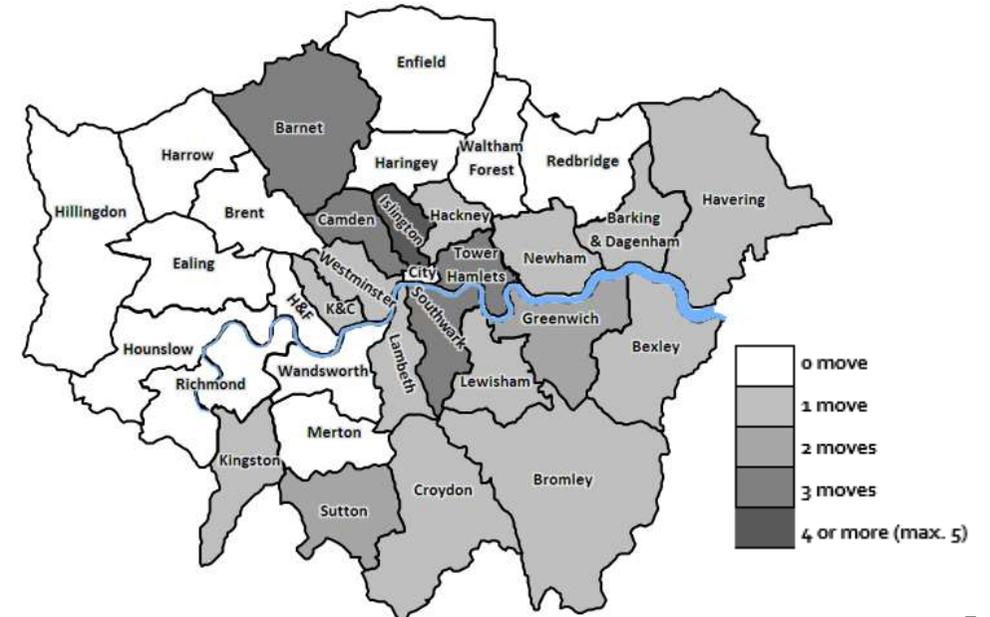
Graph: size of property offered (successful moves)



Boroughs where successful applicants have moved from (including from local authorities and registered providers, based on 34 moves):



Boroughs where successful applicants have moved to (including to local authorities and registered providers, based on 34 moves):



Overall applicants who have moved through the Reciprocal have moved across 25 boroughs. **We can see from maps that a borough someone is fleeing from can offer a safe environment to another individual or family.**

*"I feel more secure and safer, I feel I can start making decisions that don't involve thinking about him or looking over my shoulder." Feedback from applicant*

*"I feel like a human in this house." Feedback from applicant*

*'[The tenant] is over joyed and is able to get her life back together again without fear to her life.' Feedback from a professional supporting the applicant*

*'A big thank you on behalf of the family, as they have really expressed their appreciation for the fresh start.' Feedback from a professional supporting the applicant*

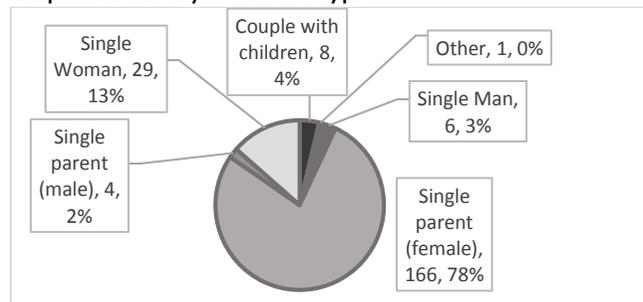
## Overview of households referred

A total of **214 property requests** were circulated by the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal from February 2017-January 2018. This equated to 270 adults and 388 children. The PLHR team also circulated the full list of pending requests to PLHR Named Leads<sup>6</sup> on a fortnightly basis.

### Household type/gender, age and ethnicity

The majority of referrals made were for single women with children, and this was the case for all primary reasons for referrals with the exception of hate crime, where both referrals were for single people with no children.

**Graph: referrals by household type**



<sup>6</sup> Named Leads are professionals from each partner landlord who act as the main point of contact for their organisation. They approve PLHR referrals from their organisation and received property offers sent by Safer London, from other housing partners.

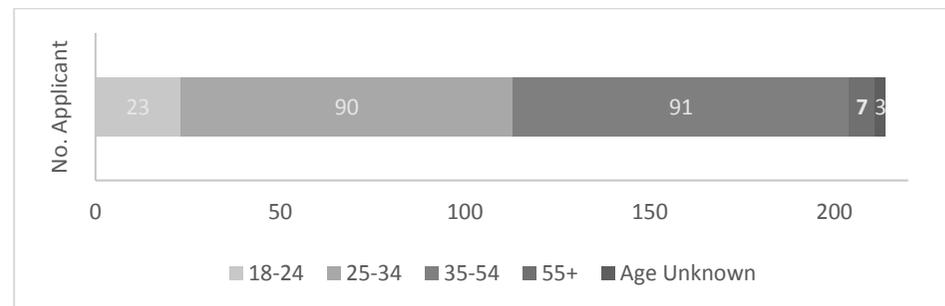
97% of referrals made due to the applicant fleeing domestic abuse were made for women, 81% (110) were fleeing with children and 16% were single women (22). The majority of single women referred to the scheme were fleeing domestic abuse (76%, 22).

Women with children also accounted for a high proportion of referrals made for families fleeing gang-related violence; 80% of gang related referrals (33) were made for single parent household where the lead tenant was female. Only one referral was made to support a single woman fleeing gang related violence

Nineteen referrals were made for other household types. Ten referrals were made where the lead applicant was male (either single man or single man with children). Half of these were made to support individuals fleeing gang-related violence (3 single men with children and 2 single men, both aged 18-24). Two referrals were made to support single men fleeing domestic abuse, one supporting an individual fleeing child to parent violence and one to support an individual fleeing abuse from his male partner.

The majority of applicants fell into 25-34 or 35-54 age categories. Only 11% (23) of referrals were for individuals aged under 25. Of these the majority (19, 83%) were made for individuals fleeing domestic abuse.

**Graph: referrals by age of lead applicant**



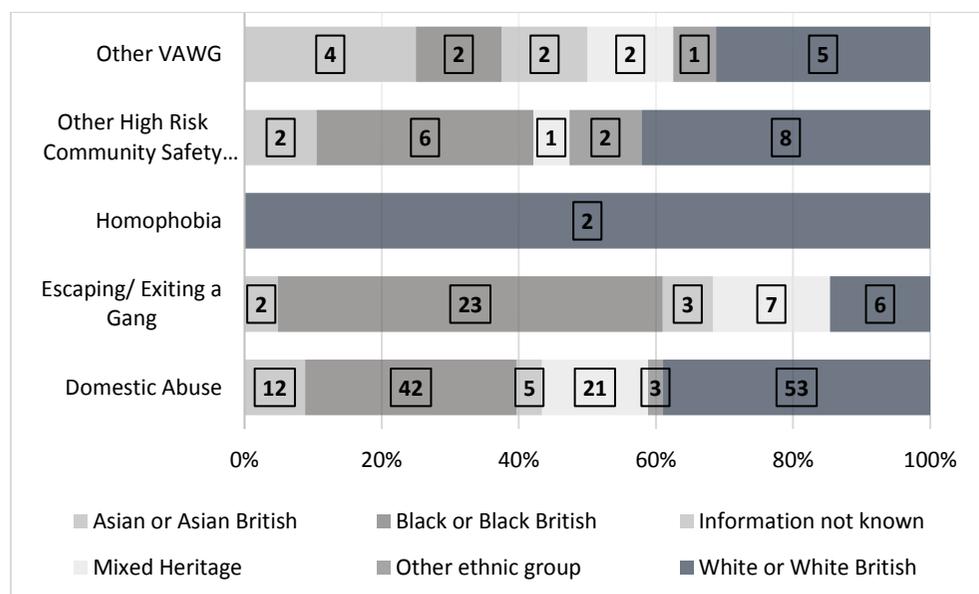
More than half of the single women with children referred to the scheme due to domestic abuse (56%, 60) were aged 25-34, and 32% (35) were aged 35-54. For those fleeing gang violence these demographics changed slightly with the majority of single women with children (81%, 26) referred due to gangs falling into the age category 35-54, and only 19% of these women aged between 25-34 (6).

60% of referrals were for people from BME or mixed heritage backgrounds. The full breakdown can be seen below.

**Table: breakdown of PLHR referrals by ethnicity**

Ethnicity	Percentage of PLHR Referrals
White or White British	35%
Black or Black British	34%
Mixed Heritage	14%
Asian or Asian British	9%
Other	3%
Information not known	5%

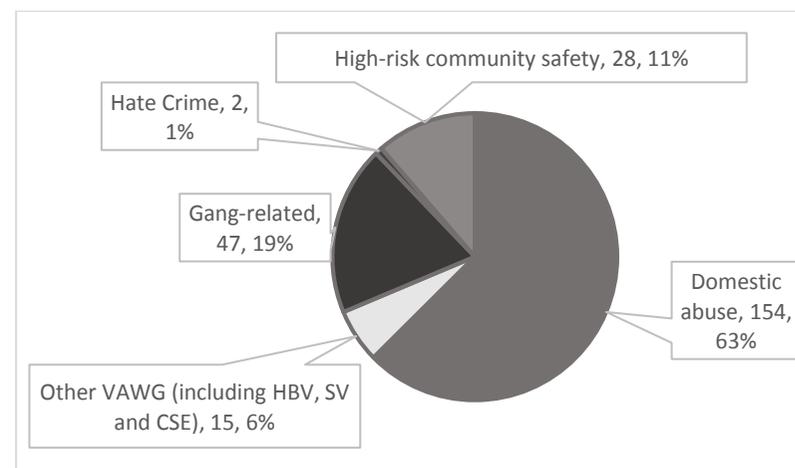
**Graph: count of requests by ethnicity for each 'Reason for referral'**



## Risk from violence/abuse and support needs identified

Over two thirds (69%) of referrals were made to support individuals and families whose primary reason for referral was due to fleeing domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls. Just under one in five were made to support people fleeing gang-related violence and around one in ten to support individuals with a high risk community safeguarding need, for example being witness to a crime. Other forms of VAWG included sexual violence, so-called honour-based violence, child sexual exploitation and prostitution.

**Graph: reason for referral (property requests)**



## Multiple disadvantage

One of the most noticeable aspects we observed was that referrals were often made to support individuals who were experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage. Multiple disadvantage refers to people who face multiple and intersecting inequalities including domestic and sexual violence and other VAWG strands, substance use and mental ill health, homelessness, contact with the criminal justice system and removal of children. We know from our needs assessment<sup>7</sup> and other research<sup>8</sup> that services for women experiencing multiple disadvantages are limited, often leading to their situations deteriorating further.

<sup>7</sup> <https://saferlondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/PLDV-Needs-Assessment-Final-low-res.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://weareagenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Mapping-the-Maze-final-report-for-publication.pdf>

As discussed property request forms were completed with varying levels of detail. It is likely that the number of applicants experiencing multiple disadvantage is higher than reported below for a number of reasons including disparity in the level of detail property request forms were completed and applicants not disclosing any additional needs to the professional completing the form.

### Multiple risk

In total 28% of applicants referred to the PLHR had a recorded secondary reason for request (were fleeing multiple forms of violence) (n=60).

**Table: percentage of referrals with secondary reason by primary reason category.**

Primary Reason for Referral	Percentage referrals with a secondary need
Domestic Abuse	29%
Escaping/ Exiting a Gang	17%
Homophobia	0%
Other High Risk Community Safety or Safeguarding Need	26%
Other VAWG	56%

### Domestic Abuse and additional reasons for referral

Of those referred to the scheme due to domestic abuse, 29% (39) were fleeing another form of violence. Of the 136 requests where domestic abuse was the primary for referral, 18% had another form of VAWG recorded a secondary reason for referral, predominantly sexual violence (15% or all domestic abuse referrals).

Ten applicants were also at risk of gang-related violence due to the perpetrators of the domestic abuse being gang-involved. These applications highlighted how the women were at risk from multiple perpetrators, often when their primary abuser was in prison. For these women the perpetrators of abuse often had access to firearms and other weapons.

### VAWG and additional reasons for referral

Half (56%) of applicants fleeing other forms of VAWG (not domestic abuse) as their primary reason, were fleeing an additional forms of violence. Note however that the overall number of applicants fleeing another form of VAWG (not domestic abuse) was small (nine).

Three of the four households fleeing child sexual exploitation were also fleeing gang-related violence. A key theme across all requests made to support individuals fleeing VAWG and domestic abuse, who were also fleeing gang-related violence was how the

risk extended to other members of the household. This included parents, children and siblings.

### Multiple disadvantage

An applicant was referred to the PLHR scheme due to the risk they faced from Honour Based Violence. The applicant had been a victim of a Forced Marriage years previously, which had taken a decade to escape. The applicant was experiencing on-going abuse from her family following the dissolution of the forced marriage. As well as experiencing multiple forms of VAWG throughout her life, the applicant had numerous mental health diagnoses including post-traumatic stress linked to the abuse she had experienced.

### Gang-related referrals & high risk community safety

We received 41 referrals supporting applicants fleeing gang violence/abuse and 19 supporting individuals with a high-risk community safety need. When looking at secondary reasons for referral we found that these two forms of violence often overlapped; particularly around youth violence, peer-on peer abuse and victimisation from gang members. As figures were lower for these types or referrals it is difficult to pick out clear patterns in relation to multiple disadvantage; this is something we will continue to monitor and explore in the future.

### Multiple family members experiencing abuse

While not categorised specifically in our forms, one of the things we observed was that often multiple members of the family had experienced or were experiencing some form of violence and abuse. This abuse was most frequently across generations; referrals were made for children and parents both experiencing abuse at the point of referral (see case study below), or where children were experiencing abuse and parents had experienced historical abuse. Sometimes multiple children in the household were being targeted by either the same or different perpetrators.

### Inter-generational experiences of violence and abuse

We received a request to support a single mother fleeing domestic abuse while one of her daughters was also at risk of CSE from individuals involved in gangs in the area, who had been threatening the whole family of violence. Due to specific health-related property requirements the family decided to request any London boroughs to increase their chances of receiving assistance.

Those from BME backgrounds were more likely to have more than one recorded reason for referral.

**Table: Percentage of applicants fleeing multiple risk by ethnicity and age**

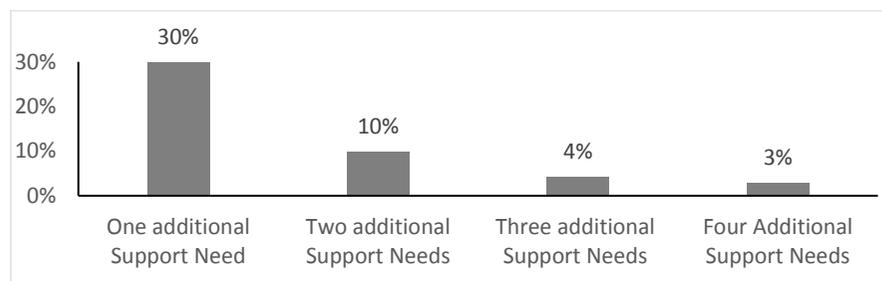
Ethnicity	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Information not known	Mixed Heritage	Other ethnic group	White or White British
More than one reason for request recorded	55% (11)	32% (23)	30% (3)	29% (9)	0	19% (14)

Age	18-24	25-34	35-54	55+
More than one reason for request recorded	35% (8)	28% (25)	39% (26)	14% (1)

### Additional vulnerability or support need

For 47% of applications an additional vulnerability or support need for someone in the household was recorded. These included mental health needs, physical or learning disabilities, risk of self-harm, substance use, a language need and young people leaving care.

**Graph: percentage of applicants with additional support need/vulnerability**



In 29% of referrals we received, someone within the household was reported as having a mental health need. This was often linked to the abuse and violence they were fleeing. 14% of referrals were made for households where an individual had a physical disability. This often has an impact on floor requirement which is explored in the next section.

### Impacts on mental health

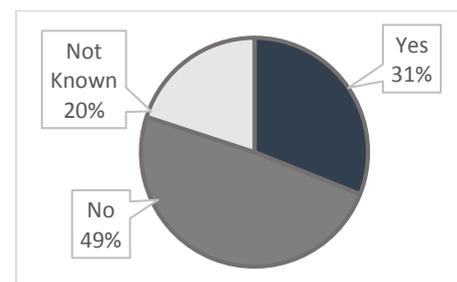
A referral was received to support a family where one of the family members was experiencing domestic abuse. The perpetrator was also an active gang-member, who was known to breach non-molestation orders. The mental health of the entire family was affected. One family member increased their use of drugs to cope with the abuse they were experiencing. Another family member lost their job and was unable to secure a new one due to the deterioration of her mental health. This led to a build-up of rent arrears.

## Additional housing barriers facing households fleeing violence

### Arrears

Rent arrears can act as a significant barrier for social tenants trying to move. A number of mobility or transfer housing pathways require a tenant to have cleared their arrears before moving. The Pan-London Housing Reciprocal does not implement any criteria around arrears. Where an applicant has arrears we advise the referrer to explain any plan in place to address this, to encourage partners to still consider offering assistance. We recognise the links between domestic and financial abuse and the build-up of rent arrears and promote this understanding to housing partners.

**Graph: Percentage of applicants who had arrears at the time of referral**



Around one third of applicants had rent arrears at the point their application form was submitted. This is unsurprising considering recent research by Refuge and Cooperative bank on financial abuse<sup>9</sup> and the lack of alternative housing pathways available to people fleeing violence/abuse.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.refuge.org.uk/money-life-refuge-co-operative-bank-launch-campaign-raise-awareness-financial-abuse/>

Many of our referrals highlighted the links between the rent arrears and the abuse they experience. This included financial abuse, or being unable to maintain or secure employment due to the abuse they were experiencing but also the build-up of arrears due to accessing emergency accommodation and issues around claiming housing benefit.

#### Arrears and primary reason for request

29% of applicants whose primary reason for referral was domestic abuse had rent arrears. For those at risk of gang-related violence this was higher with 37% applicants having rent arrears.

#### Arrears and household type

31% of single-parent female applicants (the most common household type) had arrears. For single women (second most common household type) this was higher; 38% applicants had arrears.

#### Financial abuse

We received a PLHR request supporting a woman who has experienced multiple forms of abuse. This included domestic and sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and financial abuse. The perpetrator would control the applicant through sexual exploitation and financial abuse, acting as her pimp and controlling all money made. The perpetrator would regularly take the applicant's card away the day benefits were due in her bank account.

### Overcrowding

Overcrowding is a challenge in the social housing sector in London. In 2014/15, 14% of socially renting households in London were overcrowded.<sup>10</sup> We observed that overcrowding impacted a large proportion of PLHR applicants.

Using the Citizen's Advice Bedroom Calculator<sup>11</sup> we found that of the 179 referrals for non-single applicants who had the potential to be overcrowded almost half (45%, 80 referrals) were living in overcrowded conditions.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/overcrowding/>

**Table: Percentage of overcrowded applicants by primary reason for request**

Primary reason for reciprocal referral	Overcrowded applicants
Domestic Abuse	48%
Escaping/ Exiting a Gang	34%
Other Form of VAWG	50%
Other High Risk Community Safety or Safeguarding Need	40%

A number of partners implement a policy that applicants can only be nominated for the same number of bedrooms as they currently hold; 61% of overcrowded households were put forward for a property of equal size. This has disadvantaged some families as PLHR partners often reported they did not want to make an offer of accommodation that would place a family in overcrowded conditions.

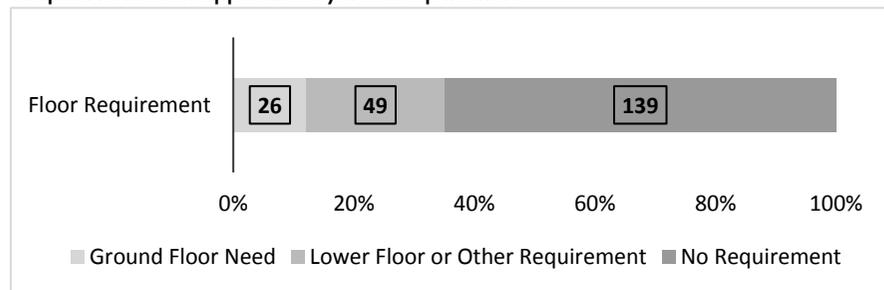
Some partners, when referring families that were living in overcrowded accommodation, would nominate the family for a property with more bedrooms that would suit their need. They would need to agree to reciprocate a property of equal size back to the scheme. This was the case for 31 referrals; 39% of overcrowded referrals.

### Floor requirements

Each property request included information on the property type/floor requirement. Over one third of applicants (35%, 75) had a specific floor requirement in their property request. 12% specified that they needed a ground floor and 23% needed a lower floor or another requirement (e.g. a lift).

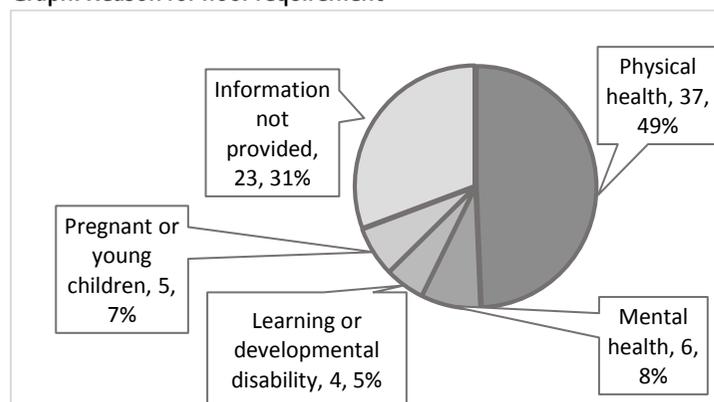
<sup>11</sup> <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/help-if-on-a-low-income/housing-benefit/housing-benefit-restrictions-for-social-housing-tenants1/housing-benefit-bedroom-calculator-for-social-housing-tenants/>

**Graph: Number of applicants by floor requirement**



About half of the applicants who had a floor requirement identified that this was due to a physical health need or disability for one of the household members. Other reasons included a household member having a mental health need, learning or development disability, or having young children. A number of ground floor property requests did not mention any particular reason but often requested a house to match the property type the applicant previously resided in.

**Graph: Reason for floor requirement**



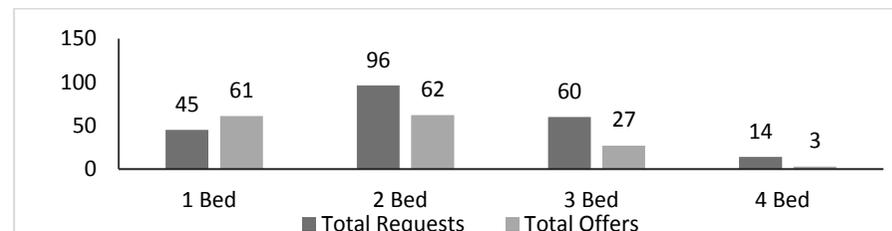
Of those who mentioned a physical disability, a mental health need or a learning or developmental disability that impacted their housing requirement, 46% (16) said the need was related to the lead applicant, 17% (6) said the need was related to another household member (most often a child) and 6% (2) said it related to more than one member of the household. This information is unknown for the remaining 31% (11).

## Learning on the PLHR process

### Probability of receiving an offer

In the first year of operation we received 155 property offers from partners. Some applicants received multiple offers. If a property offer was refused the PLHR team attempted to match it to other requests. As the graph below shows, there were more offers for smaller properties.

**Graph: total number of property requests and offers by room size**



We looked at the percentage of applicants who received at least one offer depending on the following criteria:

- the number of rooms requested
- the reason for request
- whether there was a mobility need/floor requirement
- number of boroughs requested

While these percentages give an idea on average, it is important to remember that offers depend on availability of suitable properties. There is no guarantee if or when an applicant will receive an offer.

The biggest factor affecting the probability of receiving an offer was the number of bedrooms requested; smaller properties were offered more often. We found that on average gang-related referrals received less offers than other types of referrals and that property requests requiring a ground floor or lower floor received less offers than those with no floor requirement. Applicants were also more likely to receive an offer if they included a greater number of boroughs. We found this was exacerbated for one bed requests who sometimes received multiple offers when first circulated if they included a large number of boroughs.

**Table: percentage of property requests which received at least one offer**

	Number of property requests	% of requests with at least one offer
Total number of requests which received at least one offer	107	50%
<b>Number of bedrooms requested</b>		
1 bed	42	79%
2 bed	97	51%
3 bed	61	39%
4 bed	14	7%
<b>Reason for request</b>		
Domestic Abuse	139	53%
Other VAWG	13	54%
Hate crime	2	100%
Gang-related violence	38	37%
Other high-risk community safety need	22	45%
<b>Mobility need/floor requirement</b>		
Ground floor requirement	26	31%
Lower floor or other requirement	49	39%
No requirement	139	58%
<b>Number of boroughs requested</b>		
Up to 5	137	45%
Between 5 and 10	41	51%
Over 10	36	67%

## Waiting times

Waiting time to access social housing in London are very high. The average waiting time is sometimes published on councils' websites. For instance, Westminster Council informs that the average waiting time for people on their register is four years for a 1 bed, ten years for a 2 bed, twelve and a half years for a 3 bed, and twenty-five years for a 4 bed (no priority specified).<sup>12</sup> For Redbridge, the average waiting time in 2016/2017 was six years for a 1 bed, eight years for a 2 bed and eleven years for a 3 bed.<sup>13</sup> Lambeth's response to a Freedom Of Information request informed that people who were in their priority band A

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/apply-for-housing>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-options/waiting-times-for-housing/>

(Other Emergencies and Strategic Priorities) have had an average waiting time of 3.7 years.<sup>14</sup>

## Successful moves

The waiting time, on average, for those successfully moved through the scheme was a little over 2 months, but longer for requests with more bedrooms. Please note this is only for the 34 households who have been offered a property and have accepted it.

**Table: Average time in days between request being circulated and new property accepted for the 34 applicants who have successfully moved is captured below.**

Number of bedrooms requested	Number of applicants who have accepted a property	Average waiting time in days between circulation date and date new property was accepted
1 bedroom	14	63 days
2 bedrooms	14	74 days
3 bedrooms	6	87 days
<b>All</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>72 days</b>

*'The Housing reciprocal increased the options and pace of finding safe accommodation for this client by allowing us to seek Housing from multiple boroughs concurrently.' Feedback from a Voluntary Sector Support Worker*

## Offers

The numbers below analyse the waiting time for PLHR applicants who have moved or have received at least one offer (107 applicants). There are, however, still a high number of applicants who have not received any offer since their property request was circulated to the partners.

The average waiting times for those who received an offer of accommodation in the first year are shown below. In general those requesting 1 and 2 bed properties received an offer quicker than those requesting 3 bedroom properties.

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/324886/response/801656/attach/2/Response%20all%20informati%20to%20be%20supplied.pdf?cookie\\_passthrough=1](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/324886/response/801656/attach/2/Response%20all%20informati%20to%20be%20supplied.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1)

**Table: Average time in days between requests being circulated and receiving a property offer for the 107 applicants who have received at least 1 offer**

Number of bedrooms requested	Number of requests with at least one offer	Average waiting time between circulation date and 1st offer date
1 bedroom	33	25 days
2 bedrooms	49	30 days
3 bedrooms	24	40 days
4 bedrooms	1	0 days
<b>All</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>30 days</b>

Note that there has been only one 4 bed request which received an offer and this was on the day of circulation. Note also that there were another two 4 bed offers made which were subsequently withdrawn and therefore were not included in this report.

*"Without this scheme I would have been unable to move this client as quickly, this client would also have had to move back into Croydon which was a very unsafe area for her and her children. I would have had to approach each council directly which is very timely and from past experience the response rate is not good." Feedback from a VAWG professional*

### Reasons for refusal

While we have had almost three successful property offers per month over the past year (34 successful offers), many properties were refused by applicants. Sometimes this was outside the control of applicant; either they were offered more than one property at a time and accepted one of the offers or property offers were subsequently withdrawn. Below are the most common reasons for refusal.

**Location of the property:** one in three refusals were due to the location of the property (34%). One of the common themes that the team have found is that applicants, and the professionals supporting them, do not visualise London by borough. This has resulted in many people wishing to be moved to specific areas of a borough, or not having full

knowledge of the areas that they have included in their request. For 14% of refusals the location was deemed unsuitable due to risk subsequently being identified.

**Property Type:** 57% of offers were refused due to the property type. Reasons included: the rent was too high, the type of tenure changed (4%), the property wasn't large enough (e.g. a single bedroom rather than a double bedroom), or it emerged that the property didn't accommodate someone's mobility requirements (e.g. no lift, higher floor) or the properties were on a large estate or in a high-rise. Properties on an estate or in a high-rise were usually refused by applicants who had previously resided in a house or street based property.

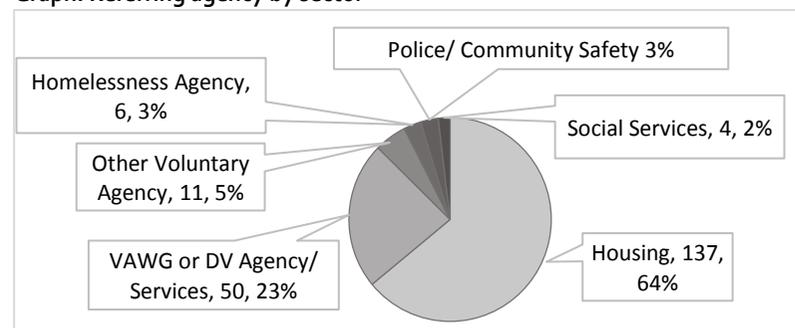
**Request withdrawn:** in 17% of cases where an applicant was offered a property their application was subsequently withdrawn due to applicants wishing to pursue alternative accommodation pathways, remain in their current property/borough or they wished to withdraw their application.

### Referring and supporting agencies

Referrals to the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal have been made in large majority by the housing sector – usually the landlord directly. In order to enable voluntary sector and non-housing sector organisations to make referrals, applications can have more than one nominating officer.

The below graph shows the category of agencies who referred applicants to the scheme. Where there was more than one agency involved, we recorded the one which was not the landlord.

**Graph: Referring agency by sector<sup>25</sup>**



<sup>25</sup> The below graph shows the category of agencies who referred applicants to the scheme. Where there was more than one agency involved, we recorded the one which was not the landlord.

In total over a third of referrals (36%) were referred by a non-housing sector agency.

Of these the largest referring group was VAWG/DV agencies or services (23%, see details below). Other voluntary agencies referred 8% of referrals and included youth agencies (London Gang Exit and Empower programmes at Safer London, St Giles Trust), an LGBT specialist agency (Galop) and a homelessness agency (Shelter). Other statutory agencies referred 5% of referrals and included Police, Community Safety and Social Services.

### VAWG/DV referring agencies or services

Out of referrals made by VAWG/DV agencies or services, about two thirds (62%) were made by voluntary organisations including the Gaia Centre, Solace Women’s Aid, Hestia, Victim Support, nia, Advance, Refuge and Bromley and Croydon Women’s Aid. The other referrals were made by statutory services including Croydon’s Family Justice Centre, Camden Safety Net, Haringey’s Hearthstone and Hackney DIAS.

### Supporting Agencies

Almost all (97%) property request forms stated that the applicant was in contact with either a statutory or a voluntary sector organisation (and all were being supported by housing). 91% of referrals mentioned a contact with a statutory service and 73% mentioned a contact with a voluntary service. For the 34 applicants who have been able to move through the scheme, this is slightly higher with 87% who said they were being supported by voluntary sector organisations.

*‘The collaborative approach was very effective in both securing a move and facilitating as smooth as possible transition.’ Feedback from a Voluntary Sector Support Worker*

The statutory services most cited were the police (mentioned for 43% of referrals), children social services (mentioned for 33% of referrals) and adult social services (mentioned for 13% of referrals).

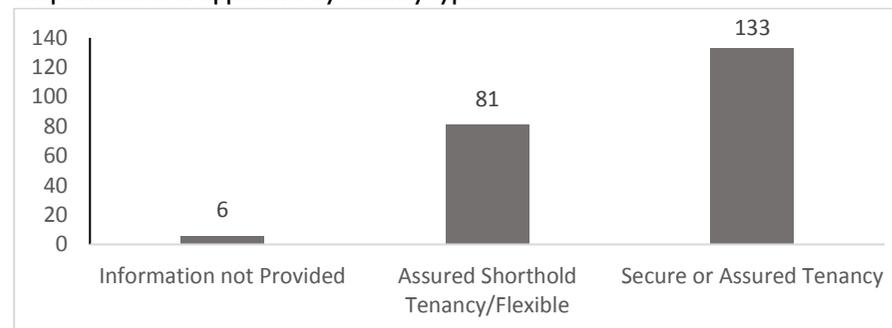
The voluntary services most cited were VAWG support (mentioned for 48% of all referrals and 72% of all VAWG/DV referrals), youth organisations and housing/homelessness services (both mentioned for 8% of referrals). Other support services included substance misuse services, LGBT services, health and mental health services and culturally specific services.

Although 97% had additional support agencies involved we have seen a real variation in levels and length of support that applicants have had in place. For instance, women and families fleeing VAWG may have an IDVA working with them up until the point of a move, and then this support drops off. One applicant who has moved fed back to us that the main way to improve the process would be *‘to keep my support worker longer than the 6 – 9 months programmes’*.

### Tenancy types

The majority of applicants (62%) referred to the scheme held Secure or Assured tenancies with their current landlord. The tenancy type for successful referrals followed the same patterns with slightly more applicants with Secure/Assured tenancies receiving properties (68%).

Graph: number of applicants by tenancy type



We ask for further feedback following final tenancy sign up, however in the first year we have not consistently received this. Moving forward we plan to improve systems so we can more accurately gather the length/type of tenancy that is finally signed. For those we have full records for, we know that in general those with secure tenancies have received secure (Local Authority) or assured (Registered Provider) tenancies, and those with assured short hold tenancies have received equivalent. There can be some difference in tenancy type between Local Authorities and Registered Providers, for instance around right to buy, and some applicants have asked that their property requests are only sent to Local Authorities which we facilitate.

We have some applicants that have received a greater security of tenure than they held previously, for instance a woman at high risk in a hostel in one borough who was put

forward on the agreement that they would owe a social tenancy to an applicant from another borough in return.

We have had a couple of applicants so far who have chosen to accept a less secure tenancy (e.g. a 5 year or starter tenancy that would be renewed if no issues arise). For example, in one case this was based on the type of property over other potential offers, the family had a dog and were offered a 2 bed garden flat in an area they wanted to be by a registered provider, and for them this outweighed the tenancy type.

We want to make sure we are aware and monitor any cases such as this and that no applicant feels under pressure to take a shorter or less secure tenancy. If there is a variation in the tenancy offered we want this to be a choice for the applicant who may refuse on this basis. As central coordinators Safer London will not take anyone off the list for refusing properties they deem unsuitable.

*'I have supported numerous women into accommodation via the Pan London reciprocal who are very happy with the service from start to finish.' Feedback from a Housing professional*

*'I think it is a good project and it actually works...She was very happy with the service and information given to her throughout the process.' Feedback from a Housing professional*

*"The client had a significant history of domestic abuse perpetrated by her father and husband. The client was unable to break the cycle of violence and remained in borough. The reciprocal was invaluable in assisting the client with relocating with the right tailored practical and emotional support in order to start a new life. The client also has young children, this process has also provided with the children with a new home that provides a secure and safe place, also ensuring that they were no longer witness to violence." Feedback from a Community Safety professional*

## Conclusion and next steps

Our year one review evidences a housing pathway that has been increasingly utilised over the year and is now able to successfully re-house households at high risk of harm in London. Rather than giving up their tenancy and becoming homeless, spending years in temporary accommodation or on the housing waiting list in another area, 82 individuals were moved on average within 2 months to a settled home, by housing providers simply agreeing to cooperate and share their stock.

Key to our approach is having a small team at Safer London funded by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime to coordinate referrals, monitor and maintain a cap of 3 moves so no provider can make more than 3 successful referrals without reciprocating a property. This centralised approach avoids more informal 'direct swaps' which put households at risk if perpetrators approach the new tenants. It also means if perpetrators are still in the property then the survivor can still access the PLHR, as it does not have to be the vacated property that is reciprocated.

Moving forward 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 and the London Housing and VAWG Operations and Strategic Group we co-run with Solace Women's Aid.

By raising awareness of the scheme and sharing information on how it works, we hope to secure even more housing partners, increase property offers and reduce property refusals moving forward.

There are challenges that need more focus highlighted in the report, for instance the difficulties in securing properties for households needing larger, ground floor or accessible properties. There is also a need to closely monitor the tenancy types which are offered to ensure no household feels compelled to take a less secure tenancy.

When designing the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal we wanted to keep the system as flexible as possible so housing providers could integrate with their local processes such as management transfer panels. This does mean however that named housing leads in different areas will at times be using different criteria to approve referrals. This is a key issue that our VAWG and Housing Group will continue to monitor to promote equality of access, for instance recognising that not all survivors of VAWG will report this to police so there may not be police evidence. We are collating details on local processes to monitor, share and promote transparency.

The report also highlights learning for the broader sector and all those working to re-house households fleeing abuse or violence. The high proportion of households at high

risk of harm who also have rent arrears or who are overcrowded are facing additional barriers in accessing many housing pathways in London.

Housing, specialist VAWG and other support providers working together is crucial to the scheme and we found that involvement from voluntary sector support agencies was higher for those who successfully moved in the first year. Women's refuges and other short term accommodation can play a key role if crisis accommodation is needed, with some applicants claiming dual housing benefit while using their tenancy to request settled accommodation through the PLHR.

Our statistics indicate that households are often experiencing multiple forms of violence, abuse and disadvantage and therefore multi-agency work is key, including mental health support.

We need to look at future sustainability and ensure that this pathway remains an option to prevent homelessness in London. This is all the more pressing with the Homeless Reduction Act coming into force in April 2018. There is potential for the scheme to be developed to benefit more groups at risk, for instance for women who lose their secure tenancy whilst in prison, or care leavers who are at risk from VAWG or other violence in the borough where they have been in the care system.

We will be exploring how this scheme can align with other housing pathways in London such as Housing Moves and supported housing focused work at the GLA. We also believe there is potential for other areas of the UK to replicate this model and will be looking to share our learning outside of London.

## Appendix A: List of Reciprocal Partners<sup>16</sup>

### Local authorities

Barking & Dagenham  
Barnet  
Bexley  
Brent  
Bromley  
Camden  
City of London  
Croydon  
Ealing  
Enfield  
Greenwich  
Hackney  
Hammersmith & Fulham  
Haringey  
Harrow  
Havering  
Hillingdon  
Hounslow  
Islington  
Kensington & Chelsea  
Kingston  
Lambeth  
Lewisham  
Newham  
Redbridge  
Richmond  
Southwark  
Sutton  
Tower Hamlets  
Waltham Forest  
Wandsworth  
Westminster

### Registered housing providers

A2Dominion  
Advance  
Bangla Housing Association  
Catalyst  
City YMCA  
Clarion Housing Group (formerly Circle Housing Group and Affinity Sutton)  
East Thames  
EastendHomes  
Ekaya Housing Association  
Family Mosaic  
Genesis Housing Association  
Guinness Partnership  
Hendon Christian Housing Association  
Hexagon Housing  
Housing 4 Women  
Hyde Housing  
IDS  
Islington & Shoreditch Housing Association  
L&Q  
Metropolitan  
Moat  
Network Homes  
Newlon  
Notting Hill Housing  
Octavia Housing  
One Housing  
Optivo (formerly Amicus Horizon and Viridian)  
Peabody  
Phoenix Community Housing  
Places for People  
Poplar Harca  
Sanctuary Housing

Shian Housing Association  
Soho Housing  
Southern Housing Group  
Swan Housing  
SW9 Community Housing  
Tower Hamlets Community Housing  
Women's Pioneer Housing

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<sup>16</sup> List of partners who have signed up to the PLHR agreement as of January 31<sup>st</sup> 2018.