# women's aid

until women & children are safe

# Price of Safety webinar

09 October 2024

# Housekeeping



The webinar is being recorded



BSL interpreters and closed captions are available



Use the Q&A function to submit questions



Use the chat function for support

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09 October 2024

## Agenda

How much it costs a survivor of abuse to flee

The extra costs and barriers faced by marginalised survivors

Supporting survivors under the current system

The changes needed to help more survivors access safety

Q&A

#### How much it costs a survivor of abuse to flee

Harriette Drew Senior Policy Officer Women's Aid

# Why did we do this research?

#### Aim

- Quantify the financial challenges faced by survivors.
- Show which policy changes could have the most impact.

#### **Research questions**

- Over a year, how much could it financially cost a survivor to leave a perpetrator?
- To what extent are these costs currently covered by benefits, legal aid and other forms of financial support?

women's aid

#### The Price of Safety:

The cost of leaving an abuser and rebuilding a safe, independent life



## Methods



**An illustrative case study** based on research, data, a focus group and consultation with experts.



**Estimates of 'direct costs** only, excluding everyday costs like groceries, bills and clothes.



Assuming full entitlement to state support.

## Findings



Deficit	£10,000
Total support	£39,000
Total costs	£49,000

Deficit for those with no recourse to public funds: **£20,000** 

## Immediate costs



Table 1: Immediate costs	
Category	Amount
Travel to flee	£100
Replacing essential possessions	£500
New ID	£120
New technology	£250
	Total: £970

Table 2: Support for immediate costs		
Category	Amount	
Replacing essential possessions: Flexible Fund	£500	

#### Had to travel some distance to be safe

Fled quickly and secretly – couldn't carry heavy bags

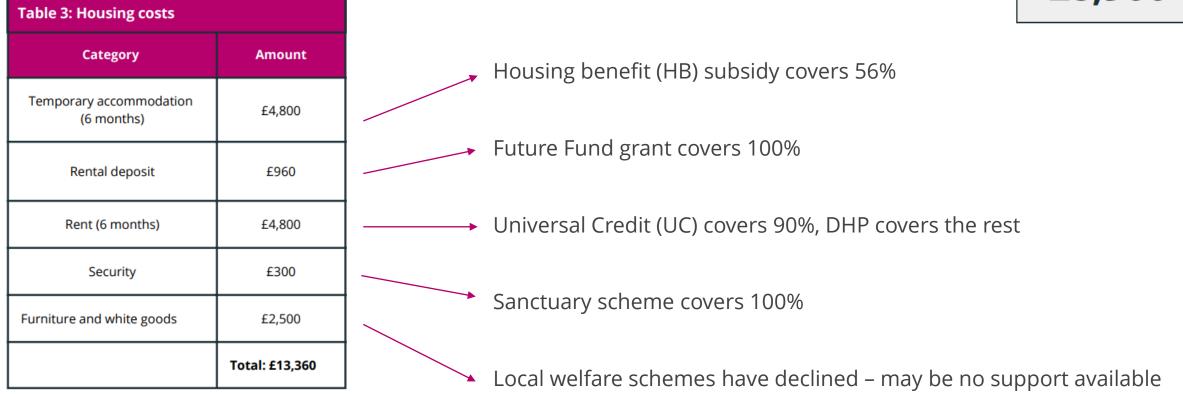
Perpetrator withheld ID which she needed to apply for benefits

Phone/laptop may be compromised or broken

Not just about amount – but also timing and accessibility

# Housing





#### Survivors with NRPF would not be eligible for UC or HB

## Worst case scenario

- Flexible FundNot guaranteed past 2025
- **DHP** Relies on council's discretion
- Legal aid Relies on proof of domestic abuse
- **CMS** Perpetrator may not pay

Without this support, the deficit would be over £36,000

## Variation

#### Higher costs

- Survivors in areas with high housing prices.
- Survivors with more children.
- Survivors with complex family law cases.
- Those who need a car or taxis to get around.

#### Lower support

- Survivors with no recourse to public funds.
- Survivors subject to the benefit cap or two-child limit.
- Survivors who struggle to navigate the benefits system.

#### The extra costs and barriers faced by marginalised survivors

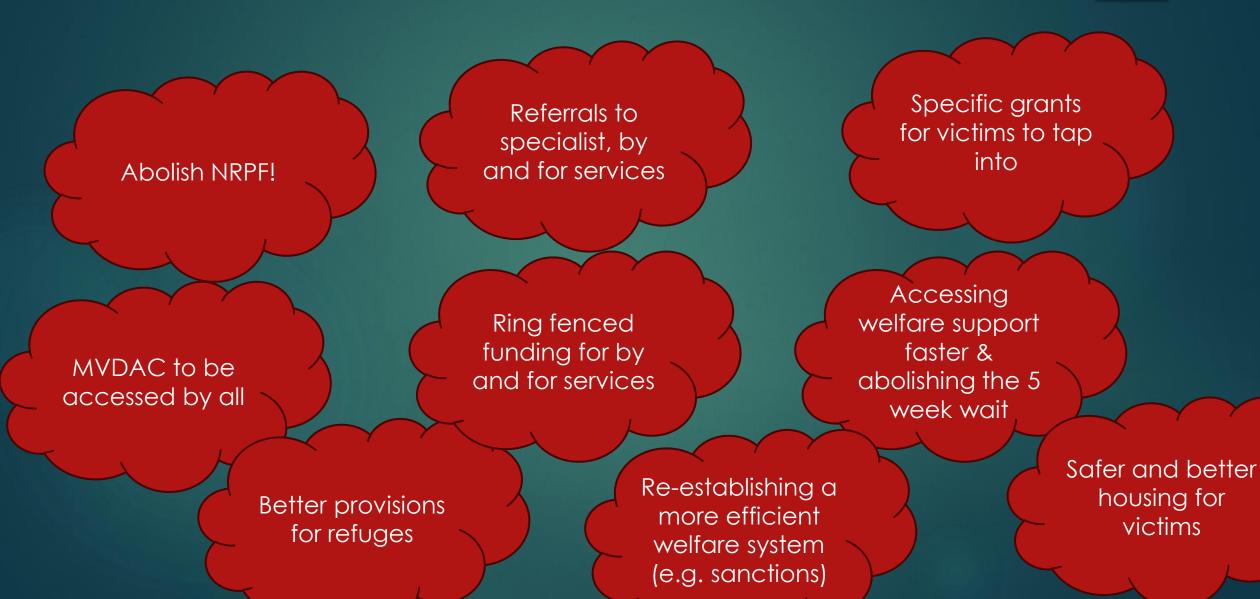
Zainab Al-Shariff

Senior Independent Domestic Violence Advocate Al-Hasaniya

## Barriers facing marginalised survivors



## The changes we deserve to see



Accessing faster and free immigration advice (legal aid), inc for asylum seekers

Accessing legal aid regardless of income / financial status

> Better therapeutic support that considers the victim's cultural & linguistic needs

More support from utility companies, banks when victims experience economic abuse

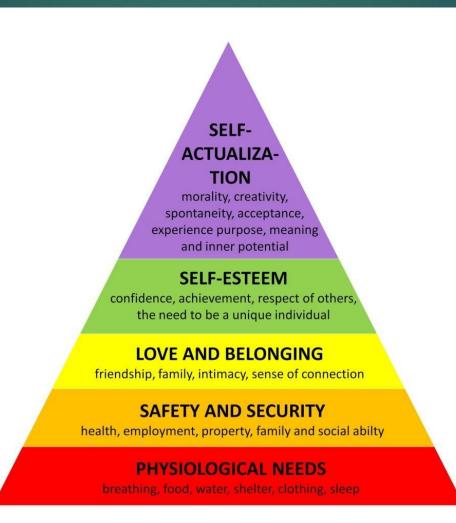
> Services to work in a trauma informed manner

Re-model the Child Maintenance Service

> Childcare provisions for victims and their children

Transport discounts

## Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



## Thank you!

"Each one of us has lived through some devastation, some loneliness, some weather superstorm or spiritual superstorm, when we look at each other we must say, I understand.

I understand how you feel because I have been there myself. We must support each other and empathize with each other because each of us is more alike than we are unalike"

Maya Angelou

Al Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Centre

www.al-hasaniya.org.uk

<u>https://x.com/Al\_Hasaniya</u>

https://www.facebook.com/alhasaniyaUK





# Supporting survivors under the current system

Emma Gordon

Business Development Lead My Sister's Place

## Who are My Sister's Place (MSP)?

MSP my sister's place Safety. Hope. Change

- Specialist Domestic Abuse Service
- Based in Middlesbrough in the North-East of England
- Employ 38 people and have a team of volunteers

## Aim, Vision, Mission and Values



- Our Aim to encourage, enable and empower. We believe, given the
- right resources everyone has the capability to thrive
- **Our Vision** To create safer communities where everyone can live free from domestic abuse
- **Our Mission** To provide high-quality, innovative, end-to-end services which enable individuals and families to move from surviving to thriving

## Aim, Vision, Mission and Values



**Our Values** – My Sister's Place stands for a place of safety, hope and change:

- A place of **SAFETY** for those seeking to escape from domestic abuse
- The right level of practical help and emotional support to aid recovery and build HOPE
- The possibility of a life **CHANGE** towards a better future

## **Our Services**

MSP my sister's place Safety, Hope, Change

- Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA)
- MI Project IDVA support for clients aged 13 24
- IRIS Project early intervention IDVA support through GP practices
- Economic Abuse Service
- Trauma-informed therapy and EMDR for adults
- ME TIME trauma therapy for children
- Community outreach Ask Me Project, Freedom Programme & Stepping Stones
- Route 2 perpetrator support (currently not commissioned)
- Provide training

## **Our clients circumstances**

- Left all belongings and fled the property
- No current entitlement to benefits MVDAC to be completed
- Not claiming benefits they are entitled to
- Rent arrears barrier to being re-housed
- Substantial debts, threats of enforcement action
- Complex needs substance issues
- Language barriers
- Working with children's services and have a social worker

## **Economic Abuse Service**

- MSP my sister's place Sofety. Hope. Change
- Referrals are received from the IDVA service once a full assessment and safety plan has been completed.
- Provide practical and emotional support and look at removing the barriers currently being experienced to help people start rebuilding their lives.
- Benefit checks, income maximisation, benefit claims and appeals, attend assessments, apply for grants, school places, school meals, volunteering opportunities and training
- Immediate access to grants due to being a Smallwood Trust partner.
- 3 years of funding received from Lottery to expand the team due to the need

## Outcomes 2023/2024

- £89,344 ongoing yearly entitlements
- £21,523 backdate of benefits
- £4,680 reduction in water rates
- £13,984 grants awarded via Buttle, Greggs, VRF
- 26,700 Smallwood grants awarded
- £15,592 Open Philanthropy Tackling Hardship Fund







- Turn2Us benefit check website
- Use your dedicated Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Coaches
- Flexible Fund of Local Authority (for those with NRPF can help with Refuge costs)
- Children's Services they have funds (but they don't shout about it)
- Build relationships with Citizens Advice, Payplan, banks, LA, local support services, partnership working is key
- Utilise Surviving Economic Abuse website tools <u>Grants, benefits and</u> <u>financial help - Surviving Economic Abuse</u>

# \*\*Contact me if you would like to discuss providing practical training to your team\*\*

Emma.gordon@mysistersplace.co.uk



## What needs to change

**Harriette Drew** Senior Policy Officer Women's Aid

## A safety net that works

#### Accessible

#### Sufficient

Domestic abuse informed

#### See the <u>report</u> for full recommendations and costings

## Recommendations

Accessible	Sufficient	Domestic abuse informed
Exempt survivors from the no recourse to public funds condition	Link benefit levels to the cost of living	Guarantee future funding for the Flexible Fund
Exempt survivors from the legal aid means test	Uprate LHA rates each year	Assess all new social security policies for their impact on survivors
Build more social homes to meet demand	Scrap the two-child limit and benefit cap	Adequately fund specialist domestic abuse services



# Thank you

#### For more information:

Research Bulletin <u>sign-up</u>

On Track: <a href="https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/ontrack/">https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/ontrack/</a>

National Quality Standards: <u>https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-</u> we-do/national-quality-standards/

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