

# Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) housing policy response

Minister for Housing  
November 2024

## Ministerial Foreword

Everyone in Jersey has the right to a safe, secure and affordable home.

The Violence Against Women and Girls Taskforce's report calls attention, however, to the significant challenges that victim-survivors of domestic abuse face in accessing a suitable home.

We know that being at risk of, experiencing or escaping domestic abuse is a leading reason for homelessness amongst women in Jersey; and that the fear of losing a home and the difficulties of finding an alternative place to live create barriers for women in leaving abusive relationships, and in seeking the help they need to rebuild their lives.

We are fortunate in Jersey that there are many excellent housing and support services available for victim-survivors. Free From Domestic Abuse (FREEDA) provides safe accommodation for women and their children fleeing domestic abuse, and emotional and practical support to help them move on to stable, long-term homes. The Shelter Trust, too, at Venetia House, provides a safe living environment for vulnerable women, as well as facilitating access to health and social care services, counselling and support.

The Housing Advice Service and Andium Homes also provide housing and housing-related support to victim-survivors who are threatened with homelessness, working with a range of agencies to ensure that women can access both emergency and longer-term housing to guarantee their safety.

This is a strong foundation upon which we can be build, and it reflects the set of wider actions we are delivering as part of the commitment made in the Jersey Homelessness Strategy (2020) to support Islanders who are homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

The Taskforce's report provides us with the opportunity to think carefully about how we can enhance housing provision for victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

I recognise that there are policy changes that we can make to ensure that cases relating to domestic abuse are responded to and prioritised appropriately by the Housing Advice Service. I also want to establish robust referral processes and joint-working arrangements between agencies to ensure that wraparound support is provided for victim-survivors to access and sustain a safe and secure home.

The Taskforce recommended, specifically, that a review should be undertaken of follow-on accommodation for victim-survivors. This review has shown that there is a need for follow-on accommodation to support victim-survivors to move towards independent living. Therefore, I am recommending that further work is undertaken collaboratively to explore how a follow-on accommodation service for victim-survivors could be delivered in the Island.

I am committed to doing everything I can to tackle violence against women and girls in all its forms. Housing has an important role to play in our response, and, through the proposals set out in this policy response, I am confident that we will strengthen the delivery of housing and housing support services for victim-survivors.



**Deputy Sam Mézec**  
**Minister for Housing**

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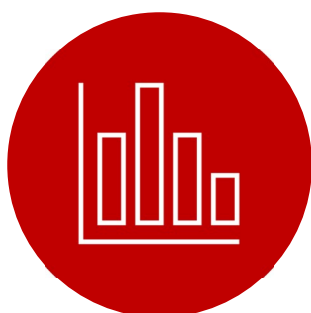
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## 1. Introduction

This report responds to the recommendation of the Taskforce on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) report<sup>1</sup> regarding the provision of follow-on accommodation for victim-survivors of domestic abuse when moving from temporary refuge accommodation into independent living. The paper sets out a range of proposed actions to strengthen housing and housing support services for victim-survivors, recognising the range of housing needs that exist amongst victim-survivors.

The Minister for Housing is committed to ensuring that victim-survivors of domestic abuse, and, in many cases, their children, have access to safe, secure and affordable homes.

**The Minister is proposing three areas of focus to achieve this commitment.**



### **Evidence**

**Improve evidence of the level and types of housing needs amongst victim-survivors to inform policy and service delivery**



### **Support**

**Strengthen housing advice and support for victim-survivors to access and maintain a suitable home**



### **Provide**

**Provide a range of opportunities for victim-survivors to access a home that is suitable for their needs**

Under each of these areas of focus sit a number of **connected actions to strengthen the housing and housing support available for victim-survivors**. These actions are set out in more detail in the Minister's policy response. In summary, the actions are:

- **Publishing regular data on homelessness**, which includes evidence on Islanders who are at risk of, have experience of, or are escaping domestic abuse.
- **Enhancing housing support arrangements** available through the Housing Advice Service for victim-survivors, including working with FREEDA to provide drop-in

<sup>1</sup> [Violence Against Women and Girls Taskforce Report](#) (November 2023)

sessions for victim-survivors to access information and advice about their housing options and plan follow-on accommodation.

- **Strengthening housing and housing support** arrangements for victim-survivors by clarifying the referral mechanisms for cases relating to domestic abuse, and improving information and engagement with other government agencies, social housing providers, and voluntary and community organisations about referral mechanisms to the Housing Advice Service.
- **Establishing the level of demand for follow-on accommodation** amongst victim-survivors, with a view to developing a potential service delivery model for follow-on accommodation, and to securing the resources required for delivery.
- **Ensuring the Affordable Housing Gateway gives appropriate priority** to applications for social rented housing where the applicant is a victim-survivor of domestic abuse.
- Working with Andium Homes and the housing trusts to ensure that they have in place **robust policies and procedures to support social housing tenants** who are victim-survivors of domestic abuse.
- **Extending the Supporting Successful Tenancies programme** for victim-survivors to secure homes in the private rented sector.
- Working collaboratively with other government policy areas to **address the challenges that victim-survivors with ‘Registered’ residential and employment status** experience in accessing safe, secure and affordable homes.

The Minister is committed to tackling violence against women and girls in all its forms, recognising the integral role that housing has to play in responding to incidences of domestic abuse. The Minister will work together with partner organisations, including Andium Homes, FREEDA, the Housing Advice Service, and the Shelter Trust, as well as members of the Homelessness Cluster, to deliver these actions and monitor progress.

## 2. Background to the response

The Violence Against Women and Girls Taskforce’s report calls attention to the challenges that victim-survivors of domestic abuse in Jersey experience in accessing safe, secure and affordable homes. The Taskforce’s recommendation in respect of housing and the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs’ response<sup>2</sup> are as follows:

### Taskforce’s recommendation 59

The Government of Jersey undertakes a review of the follow-on accommodation available to victim-survivors who are moving on from temporary refuge accommodation. If it is found that there is

### Minister for Home Affairs’ response

It is not surprising to hear that there are difficulties in finding follow-on accommodation for victims, given the significant pressures on the housing market in Jersey more widely. I recognise

<sup>2</sup> [Response to the taskforce report from the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs](#) (March 2024)

<p>insufficient accommodation available to this group, additional investment into the establishment of such accommodation should be considered.</p>	<p>that government is required to balance housing priorities between a number of vulnerable groups, but I have met with the Minister for Housing and Communities who has accepted this recommendation in principle and been extremely supportive of the Taskforce’s work more widely. We will work together to find a way to ensure that the needs of victim-survivors can be met from the resources available.</p>
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The Government of Jersey’s response to recommendation 59 is being taken forward by the Minister for Housing.

In recognition of the range of organisations involved in the provision of housing and housing support for victim-survivors, representatives from the following organisations came together to review the recommendation and develop a policy response for consideration by the Minister:

- Andium Homes
- Free From Domestic Abuse (FREEDA)
- Housing Advice Service (HAS)
- Strategic Housing and Regeneration, Cabinet Office

The Homelessness Cluster, which brings together public agencies, social housing providers, and voluntary and community organisations involved in the provision of homelessness accommodation and services, has also been consulted in developing the response to the Taskforce’s recommendation.

The Taskforce’s recommendation aligns with the ‘**Jersey Homelessness Strategy**’ (2020).<sup>3</sup> The strategy includes a priority to **“provide a housing safety net for all,”** which is consistent with the Taskforce’s recommendation to review follow-on accommodation for victim-survivors who are moving on from temporary to settled housing.

Whilst the Taskforce’s recommendation relates to follow-on accommodation for victim-survivors, the Jersey Homelessness Strategy highlights the importance of adopting a holistic approach to meeting the housing needs of Islanders who are homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness, and the range of housing and support required to prevent and alleviate homelessness. The Minister’s response extends, therefore, to the pathways available for victim-survivors to access a range of housing options and the wider provision of housing support services.

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<sup>3</sup> [Jersey Homelessness Strategy](#) (November 2020)

### 3. Review of current provision for victim-survivors

Many victim-survivors of VAWG are forced to flee their homes, which has a devastating and long-lasting impact on them and, in many cases, their children. This includes losing stable housing, which can leave victim-survivors vulnerable to homelessness.

The Minister for Housing’s ‘Homelessness in Jersey Report’<sup>4</sup> for the second quarter of 2024 shows that the **main reason for homelessness amongst women in Jersey is due to being at risk of, experiencing or escaping from domestic abuse in 39% of recorded cases of homelessness.**

Generally, in Jersey, accommodation for victim-survivors and their children focuses on emergency refuge provision, which is provided by FREEDA through its safe house. Refuge accommodation provides a safe place alongside dedicated support for victim-survivors to make informed decisions when leaving a perpetrator and seeking safety, and to consider their longer-term housing options. In the case of FREEDA, victim-survivors may stay in the safe house for six-months, although this policy is decided on a case-by-case basis if the individual is not yet ready to move on to permanent housing.<sup>5</sup>

The Shelter Trust also provides alternative emergency accommodation at Venetia House for women who are not able to access FREEDA due to other more complex health and social care needs. In addition, the Trust provides an onward referral option for women to access further support once they have left the FREEDA safe house.

The Government does not directly provide emergency accommodation for victim-survivors. It does, nevertheless, make grant funding available to both FREEDA and the Shelter Trust to assist with the provision of accommodation and support. The current accommodation and housing support services for victim-survivors of domestic abuse are as follows:

<b>FREEDA</b>	Temporary accommodation for women and children fleeing abuse. Nine bedrooms and a self-contained flat. FREEDA can accommodate up to 22 women, their children (up to the age of 18) and pets. In addition to accommodation, FREEDA provides support to victim-survivors such as advocacy, accompaniment, counselling and outreach.
<b>The Shelter Trust</b>	Women-only emergency accommodation provision at Venetia House, with a 21-bedroom premises and a range of other services are available to victim-survivors, including health and social care, trauma-informed support, and assistance with education, training and employment. Venetia House also provides an emergency alternative for women who are not able to access FREEDA due to other complex health and social care needs, and it provides an onward referral option for women once they have left the FREEDA accommodation.

<sup>4</sup> [Homelessness in Jersey Report: Second Quarter 2024](#) (October 2024)

<sup>5</sup> [VAWG Taskforce Report](#), p.202

Victim-survivors may be offered fixed-term supported accommodation through the Shelter Trust Resettlement project, if they are continuing to experience homelessness. This includes 17 fully-furnished flats and bedsits.

Once a victim-survivor is ready to move on from the FREEDA safe house, the housing options available to them will usually be through private or social rented housing. Access to social rented housing is managed through the Affordable Housing Gateway, whilst victim-survivors who require ongoing agency support may be referred through the Partnership Pathway, which is managed by Andium Homes.

Whilst placing a victim-survivor in refuge accommodation is normally a short-term housing option, some victim-survivors may require a longer period of support to enable them to prepare for living independently. As there is currently no specialised follow-on accommodation in Jersey for victim-survivors, some women will not feel sufficiently supported towards independent living when they are ready to do so. The proposed package of measures in this policy response will seek to improve the support available to victim-survivors in their transition to a new permanent home.

## 4. Areas of policy focus

The Minister for Housing’s policy response to the Taskforce’s report is separated into three areas of focus. Each area has its own corresponding set of actions to strengthen the housing and housing support available for victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

Area of focus	Action	Actions
<b>Evidence</b> <i>Improve evidence of the level and types of housing needs amongst victim-survivors to inform policy and service delivery</i>	<b>A1</b>	<p>Collect and publish data on homelessness amongst victim-survivors, working with the Housing Advice Service and homelessness accommodation and service providers.</p> <p>The collection of data will provide evidence of the scale and nature of housing need amongst victim-survivors, which will help to inform policy development, service delivery and funding decisions.</p> <p>The first ‘Homelessness in Jersey Report’ was published on 9 October 2024.</p>
<b>Support</b> <i>Strengthen housing advice and support for victim-survivors to access and maintain a suitable home</i>	<b>B1</b>	Offer through the Housing Advice Service regular drop-in sessions at the FREEDA safe house for victim-survivors to access information and advice about their housing options, and to plan moves to alternative accommodation.
	<b>B2</b>	Review and update the information available online through the gov.je website, to improve access to information about the housing and housing support available for victim-survivors.
	<b>B3</b>	Enhance the visibility and accessibility of mechanisms for individuals and agencies to request the support of the Housing Advice Service.



	<b>B4</b>	Appoint a Specialist Officer within the Housing Advice Service to act as a single point of contact for referrals relating to domestic abuse.
	<b>B5</b>	Introduce structured procedures for submitting referrals to the Housing Advice Service and managing housing cases, including personalised housing plans for victim-survivors and standard operating procedures for the Housing Advice Service when managing domestic abuse cases.
	<b>B6</b>	Develop a memorandum of understanding between the Housing Advice Service, relevant government agencies, social housing providers, and voluntary and community organisations to facilitate referral mechanisms; and to formalise effective joint-working arrangements between agencies that meet the housing and support needs of victim-survivors.
	<b>B7</b>	Develop a programme of training and engagement to raise awareness about homelessness in Jersey, and to improve communication with other government agencies, social housing providers, and voluntary and community organisations about the housing support services provided by the Housing Advice Service.
<b>Provide</b> <i>Provide a range of opportunities for victim-survivors to access a home that is suitable for their needs</i>	<b>C1</b>	Establish the level of demand for victim-survivors' follow-on accommodation, with a view to developing a potential service delivery model and securing the resources required for delivery.
	<b>C2</b>	Ensure that the Affordable Housing Gateway has appropriate levels of delegation in place to assess and prioritise applications for social rented housing from victim-survivors of domestic abuse, including discretion to accept applications from victim-survivors who fall outside of the eligibility criteria, under policy guidance from the Minister for Housing.
	<b>C3</b>	Work with social housing providers, Andium Homes and the housing trusts, to put in place appropriate policies and procedures to support tenants who are victim-survivors of domestic abuse.
	<b>C4</b>	Extend the 'Supporting Successful Tenancies' programme to victim-survivors of domestic abuse, including the Tenancy Star programme.
	<b>C5</b>	Identify the challenges facing victim-survivors with 'Registered' residential status in accessing suitable housing and examine options to secure further housing options for victim-survivors in these situations.

**Table two: areas of policy focus**

## 5. Developing an evidence-base

This area of focus reflects the Minister for Housing’s commitment to improve evidence on the level and types of housing need amongst victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

The Minister’s commitment is consistent with the wider priorities of the Jersey Homelessness Strategy:

### Jersey Homelessness Strategy priorities

- **Priority 1:** “understand and define homelessness by providing a statutory definition and clear messages to promote a shared understanding of the issue.”
- **Priority 2:** “evidence the scale and nature of the issue [homelessness] so that we can plan how to prevent and address it.”

The Minister has responded to the Jersey’s Homelessness Strategy’s priorities by developing the ‘**Ministerial Definition of Homelessness**’ (2022).<sup>6</sup>

This formal definition of homelessness in Jersey was developed in collaboration with the Homelessness Cluster, and it is based on the internationally-recognised ‘European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion’ (**ETHOS**).<sup>7</sup> The framework provides a common “language” for homelessness and is intended to be used for purposes such as awareness-raising about homelessness, data collection, and for policy and monitoring purposes.

The Ministerial definition seeks to cover all living situations that amount to homelessness in Jersey. The presence or threat of domestic abuse places victim-survivors in the category of ‘insecure housing’ and at risk of ‘houselessness’ under the Minister’s definition.

The Minister has also published the ‘**Homelessness in Jersey Report.**’ The report captures aggregated data from the Housing Advice Service and homelessness accommodation and service providers about individuals who are homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness, their reasons for homelessness, and their engagement with government, and voluntary and community services.

The first report for the second quarter of 2024 was published by the Minister on 9 October 2024, and subsequent reports will be published on a quarterly basis.

The provision of accurate and consistent data will help to generate awareness about homelessness in Jersey, its causes, and the level and types of needs within the community. This includes specific data on homelessness amongst victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

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<sup>6</sup> Minister for Housing [‘definition of homelessness’](#) (October 2022)

<sup>7</sup> [ETHOS Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion](#)

The data will also provide a robust evidence-base to inform policy development, service delivery and funding and commissioning decisions relating to housing and housing support for victim-survivors.

#### **A1 Introduce quarterly reporting of homelessness data to support the response to VAWG**

- The Minister for Housing will work with the Housing Advice Service and homelessness accommodation and service providers to collect and publish data on homelessness amongst victim-survivors.
- The collection of data will provide evidence of the scale and nature of housing need amongst victim-survivors, which will help to inform policy development, service delivery and funding decisions.
- The first ‘Homelessness in Jersey Report’ was published on 9 October 2024, and subsequent reports will be published on a quarterly basis.

## **6. Strengthening housing support for victim-survivors**

This area of focus reflects the Minister for Housing’s commitment to strengthen the housing support available for victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

The Jersey Homelessness Strategy identifies two priorities in connection with the provision of housing support for victim-survivors:

#### **Jersey Homelessness Strategy priorities**

**Priority 3:** “create a housing advice hub where people can get help with their housing.”

**Priority 4:** “establish a complex needs team to take responsibility for resolving the housing issues of the most vulnerable households in Jersey.”

The Housing Advice Service has already been established as a government service to provide assistance to Islanders who are homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness, including victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

As the HAS expands and embeds its services in the community, it is important to make sure that housing support is provided in a timely and accessible manner for victim-survivors. The HAS will, therefore, lead on a programme of work to enhance the services that it provides to victim-survivors. This includes the provision of advice and information, referral pathways to housing and housing support services, and formalised partnership arrangements with other government agencies, social housing providers, and voluntary and community organisations.

## 6.1 Advice and information for victim-survivors

The Housing Advice Service has begun to offer regular drop-in sessions at the FREEDA safe house to assist victim-survivors in securing long-term homes. An external session with Andium Homes and the HAS is also planned to ensure a range of settings are available for victim-survivors to access information and advice about their housing options.

Online content on the gov.je website is also being reviewed and updated to improve the information available about the housing and housing support services available for victim-survivors.

The HAS works closely with other government agencies, social housing providers, and voluntary and community organisations to secure appropriate housing and housing support for victim-survivors. Working with these organisations, the HAS will monitor the quality and responsiveness of its services to ensure that they are sensitive and tailored to the needs of victim-survivors.

It is imperative that victim-survivors are not asked to unnecessarily reshare their experiences when approaching government services. The organisations that came together to develop this policy response highlighted, in the course of meetings, anecdotal examples where victim-survivors had been asked to reshare their experiences in order to access services.

This can compound the trauma that victim-survivors have already experienced. The services provided by the HAS should, therefore, be coordinated with other agencies as far as possible to minimise the need for victim-survivors to retell their experiences, and to ensure that services are sensitive to the needs of victim-survivors.

### **B1 Strengthen advice and information for victim-survivors**

- The Housing Advice Service will offer regular drop-in sessions at the FREEDA safe house for victim-survivors to access information and advice about their housing options, and to plan follow-on accommodation.
- An external drop-in session between the HAS and Andium Homes is planned to ensure different venues are available for victim-survivors to access information and advice about their housing options. The format, frequency and location of these sessions will be kept under review to ensure they meet the needs of victim-survivors.

### **B2 Improve online housing information for victim-survivors**

- The online content on the gov.je website will be reviewed and updated to improve information about the housing and housing support available for victim-survivors.

## 6.2 Housing pathways for victim-survivors

Whilst the provision of advice and information at the earliest opportunity is essential so that victim-survivors are aware about their housing options, it should be part of a

package of support that considers the needs of the individual and, where necessary, their children.

Onward moves for victim-survivors must be planned well in advance to ensure there is a seamless pathway for them in transitioning from temporary to long-term housing. This includes identifying a suitable home, financial assistance, and the provision of support for victim-survivors to access and sustain a suitable home.

A number of actions are, therefore, being taken forward by the Housing Advice Service to ensure that robust and consistent arrangements are in place for victim-survivors to access housing and housing support. There are four key actions to strengthen the housing pathways available for victim-survivors, and more generally for Islanders who are homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness:

1. **Referral mechanisms:** enhance the visibility and accessibility of mechanisms for individuals and agencies to submit referrals to the HAS.
2. **Specialist officer support:** create a specialist officer role within the HAS to act as a single point of contact for referrals relating to domestic abuse.
3. **Management procedures through the Housing Advice Service:** roll-out structured procedures for submitting referrals and managing housing cases, including the introduction of personalised housing plans and standard operating procedures for the HAS.
4. **Multi-agency arrangements:** develop a memorandum of understanding between the HAS, relevant government agencies, social housing providers, and voluntary and community organisations to facilitate consent-led referral mechanisms; and to formalise effective joint-working arrangements between agencies that meet the housing and housing support needs of victim-survivors.

Alongside these actions, a programme of training and engagement will be developed by the HAS for government agencies, voluntary and community organisations and social housing providers. The programme is intended to raise awareness about homelessness in Jersey, and to improve communication about the housing support services provided by the HAS.

The HAS and Andium Homes participate in Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC),<sup>8</sup> where information is shared between representatives of different agencies on the highest risk domestic abuse cases. The proposed measures in relation to referral mechanisms, joint-working arrangements, and training and engagement will help to strengthen the provision of housing and support for victim-survivors through MARAC and other multi-agency forums.

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<sup>8</sup> A 'MARAC' is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of a number of agencies, including Justice and Home Affairs, Health and Community Services, Children, Young People, Education and Skills, Customer and Local Services, Andium Homes, and voluntary and community organisations such as FREEDA and Jersey Domestic Abuse Support (JDAS)

<b>B3</b>	<b>Improve referral mechanisms for victim-survivors to access housing support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Enhance the visibility and accessibility of mechanisms for individuals and agencies to request the support of the Housing Advice Service.</li></ul>
<b>B4</b>	<b>Make available Specialist Officer support for victim-survivors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Create a Specialist Officer role within the HAS to act as a single point of contact for referrals relating to domestic abuse.</li></ul>
<b>B5</b>	<b>Update management procedures through the Housing Advice Service</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Introduce structured procedures for submitting referrals to the HAS and managing housing cases, including personalised housing plans for victim-survivors and standard operating procedures for the HAS to manage domestic abuse cases.</li></ul>
<b>B6</b>	<b>Formalise multi-agency arrangements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Develop a memorandum of understanding between the Housing Advice Service, relevant government agencies, social housing providers, and voluntary and community organisations to facilitate referral mechanisms; and to formalise effective joint-working arrangements between agencies that meet the housing and support needs of victim-survivors.</li></ul>
<b>B7</b>	<b>Develop training and engagement relating to housing and domestic abuse</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Develop a programme of training and engagement to raise awareness about homelessness in Jersey, and to improve communication with other government agencies, social housing providers, and voluntary and community organisations about the housing support services provided by the HAS.</li></ul>

## 7. Providing homes to victim-survivors

This area of focus reflects the Minister for Housing’s commitment to support the provision of a range of opportunities for victim-survivors of domestic abuse to access a home that is suitable for their needs.

The Jersey Homelessness Strategy identifies three main priorities that are consistent with the provision of housing for victim-survivors:

### Jersey Homelessness Strategy priorities

- **Priority 5:** “provide a housing safety net for all, which is appropriate, flexible and able to meet the needs of everyone.”
- **Priority 7:** “strengthen the role and supply of social rented housing to ensure that it is better able to meet housing needs.”

- **Priority 8:** “support private sector tenants and landlords to promote positive relationships.”

There are a number of housing options for victim-survivors depending on their particular housing needs, which include emergency refuge accommodation through to private rented and social rented housing. These housing options must be considered in conjunction with the wider support needs of victim-survivors, as set out in section six.

The actions connected to this area of focus identify opportunities to strengthen the housing options available for victim-survivors. These actions relate to access and prioritisation for social rented housing; removing the barriers that victim-survivors experience in accessing a suitable home; and potential gaps in current housing provision for victim-survivors in Jersey, such as the provision of follow-on accommodation.

### **7.1 Follow-on accommodation for victim-survivors**

The Taskforce’s report identifies the importance of follow-on accommodation for victim-survivors, which has provided the foundation for this policy response. ‘Follow-on’ or ‘second stage’ accommodation is a stepping-stone between temporary refuge accommodation and independent living, where a victim-survivor still requires support at varying intensity and for varying lengths of time. Its purpose is twofold:

- (a) to help victim-survivors move towards independent living and securing a home in the private rented sector or social rented housing; and
- (b) to free-up valuable refuge and temporary accommodation so that it can be used to provide support to individuals with emergency needs.

The Minister for Housing believes that there is a gap in follow-on accommodation for victim-survivors, which would provide an appropriate housing option for individuals who required continued but less intensive support to establish themselves independently in a new home.

This could comprise, for example, a small number of studio flats or bedrooms in a shared house arrangement. There are already examples of the follow-on accommodation model in other areas of homelessness accommodation provision in Jersey, including Sanctuary Lodge (Sanctuary Trust) and Dun Na Ri (Shelter Trust).<sup>9</sup>

It is recommended that further work be undertaken to determine the potential level of need for follow-on accommodation and, if taken forward as a project, to develop an appropriate service delivery model and seek funding arrangements. This work will provide the basis to prepare a business case and secure suitable premises for follow-on accommodation.

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<sup>9</sup> Sanctuary Lodge is a follow-on facility for up to 14 men operated by the Sanctuary Trust; Dun Na Ri comprises five standalone apartments for Shelter Trust service users, providing short- to medium-term tenancies before individuals move on to long-term accommodation such as social rented housing.

## **C1 Investigate the need for follow-on accommodation for victim-survivors**

- Establish the level of demand amongst victim-survivors for follow-on accommodation, with a view to developing a potential service delivery model for follow-on accommodation, and securing the resources required for delivery.

## **7.2 Access to social rented housing**

Social rented housing is often an appropriate long-term housing option where a victim-survivor is not seeking to return to their family home. Access to social rented housing is administered by the Affordable Housing Gateway, which is part of the Housing Advice Service. The Minister for Housing's '**Eligibility Criteria for Renting Social Housing**' (2024)<sup>10</sup> sets out the policies against which applications for social rented housing are assessed and prioritised by the Affordable Housing Gateway.

### **Eligibility criteria for social rented housing**

A person is eligible for social rented housing where they:

- (a) are over 18-years old;
- (b) have 'Entitled' residential status;
- (c) have been resident in Jersey for more than six-months prior to the date of application;
- (d) do not own a property in Jersey or elsewhere in the world;
- (e) do not exceed the household income limits; and
- (f) do not have savings or capital assets of more than £70,000.

A person must also meet at least one of the following criteria:

- (a) require a specific type of accommodation on account of a long-term illness or disability, which they cannot afford in the private sector; or
- (b) have a family with children and be in receipt of a relatively low income; and
- (c) be over 25-years old and be in receipt of relatively low income.

The 'more than six-months' residency requirement does not apply to applicants who have returned to Jersey after fleeing domestic abuse. Victim-survivors are not eligible for social rented housing if they do not have 'Entitled' residential status, and if they exceed the household income limits.

The HAS and the Affordable Housing Gateway will, as far as practicable, be flexible in their approach to supporting victim-survivors of domestic abuse and their children. They will seek to maximise the opportunities for victim-survivors to make applications for social rented housing in the most appropriate way to guarantee their safety, and to avoid their having to re-live the experience unnecessarily.

Officials will use their judgement based on the facts of the case, an assessment of the safety and welfare of victim-survivors and their children, and engagement with other

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<sup>10</sup> Minister for Housing's '[eligibility criteria for renting social housing](#)' (September 2024)



relevant agencies and services. Officials may exercise a level of discretion where a victim-survivor does not meet the eligibility criteria, where it is determined to be in the individual's best interest to access social rented housing; for example, if they already own property, or if their income is above the normal threshold for social rented housing.

Under the Minister's eligibility criteria, victim-survivors who are eligible for social rented housing are categorised as high priority applications and placed in "band one" of the Affordable Housing Gateway as an urgent need. Whilst this represents the highest possible prioritisation for social rented housing, and it is important for other priority need categories to also receive fair access to social housing, it is vital that victim-survivors are given timely access to social rented housing given the risks to their safety and welfare, and to that of their children, if any.

It is proposed that the HAS and Affordable Housing Gateway should receive further specific policy guidance from the Minister about how to make an assessment of applications from victim-survivors, and to have broader discretion to determine and prioritise applications for social rented housing. Importantly, as part of the referral mechanisms to the HAS, the planning for a victim-survivor to gain access to social rented housing should begin as early as possible in order to provide a seamless and timely transfer from refuge accommodation to social rented housing.

It is also recognised that existing social housing tenants may be at risk of, experiencing, or escaping domestic abuse. In these circumstances, it is imperative that social housing providers do all they can to support their tenants and, where necessary, their children.

Andium Homes is the only social housing provider in Jersey that actively participates in multi-agency safeguarding activities, and the only social housing provider that is fully signed up to the Safeguarding Partnership Board's memorandum of understanding, which requires Andium Homes to adhere to a number of commitments and safeguarding standards. Andium Homes also has its own policy in place in relation '**Safeguarding Vulnerable People**',<sup>11</sup> and how it will respond to safeguarding commitments.

Social rented housing has a prominent role in meeting the housing needs of the community. The Minister believes that all Jersey's social housing providers, including the four housing trusts,<sup>12</sup> should have policies and procedures in place to support tenants who are victim-survivors of domestic abuse, and to provide responsive services that meet their needs. These policies should address matters such as:

- making available ways for victim-survivors to report an incident of domestic abuse;
- training staff at all levels of the organisation to understand and spot signs of domestic abuse, and to provide guidance and support to victim-survivors;
- treating reports confidentially and sensitively to the needs of victim-survivors; and
- working with other agencies to ensure that tenants are safe and receive timely and appropriate support.

The Minister, working in cooperation with social housing providers, will seek active assurance that they adopt appropriate policies in relation to domestic abuse, and that

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<sup>11</sup> Andium Homes '[safeguarding vulnerable people](#)' policy (July 2019)

<sup>12</sup> Information about social housing providers in Jersey, including Andium Homes and the housing trusts, is available on gov.je: <https://www.gov.je/home/rentingbuying/applicationallocation/pages/howtoapply.aspx>

they receive appropriate information and assistance to support tenants in domestic abuse situations.

<b>C2</b>	<b>Strengthen access to social rented housing for victim-survivors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ensure that the Affordable Housing Gateway has appropriate levels of delegation in place to assess and prioritise applications for social rented housing from victim-survivors of domestic abuse, including discretion to accept applications from victim-survivors who fall outside of the eligibility criteria, under policy guidance from the Minister.</li></ul>
<b>C3</b>	<b>Ensure policies and procedures are in place to support social housing tenants who are victim-survivors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Work with social housing providers, Andium Homes and the housing trusts, to put in place appropriate policies and procedures to support tenants who are victim-survivors of domestic abuse.</li></ul>

### 7.3 Access to private rented housing

The follow-on accommodation option available for many individuals is to secure housing in the private rented sector. In these circumstances, the private rented sector may be an individual's preferred tenure, or they may not be eligible for social rented housing as a result of their household income or residential and employment status.

Whilst the onus is placed on the individual to secure a tenancy in the private rented sector, the use of the referral mechanism through the Housing Advice Service and personalised housing plans will help to ensure that victim-survivors receive timely support to consider their options in the private rented sector. The HAS will also proactively assist victim-survivors to access suitable housing, including coordinating potential financial assistance through Income Support.

Victim-survivors can experience difficulties in accessing a suitable home in the private rented sector, which can be due to the affordability of rents, deposit requirements, and the potential reluctance of landlords and letting agents to let properties to tenants in receipt of Income Support. The Homelessness Strategy also identifies the potential challenges of accessing housing in the private rented sector, and it includes the priority to support private rented sector landlords in providing homes to individuals who are homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

The HAS operates the 'Supporting Successful Tenancies' scheme, which seeks to encourage private rented sector landlords to provide homes to individuals who are homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness. Through the scheme, the HAS and partner agencies provide a range of assistance to landlords and tenants, including financial assistance to landlords – for example, direct Income Support payments and an upfront deposit payments to landlords – and working towards tenancy preparation for individuals through the Tenancy Star programme.<sup>13</sup> The HAS is engaging actively with members of the Jersey Landlord Association to introduce the scheme, which provides an

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<sup>13</sup> Further information on the [Tenancy Star](#) programme

opportunity to extend the options available for victim-survivors in the private rented sector.

#### **C4 Extend the Supporting Successful Tenancies programme to victim-survivors**

- The Housing Advice Service will extend the ‘Supporting Successful Tenancies’ programme to victim-survivors of domestic abuse, including the Tenancy Star programme.

#### **7.4 Follow-on accommodation for victim-survivors with ‘Registered’ residential status**

When a victim-survivor has ‘Registered’ residential and employment status, it can make separating from a perpetrator more difficult. This is because the individual’s access to qualified housing and/or eligibility for government support may have been dependent on the perpetrator’s residential and employment status, and/or they may not meet the qualifying criteria independently themselves.

A victim-survivor is not, in these circumstances, eligible for social rented housing until they have lived in Jersey for 10-years, and they can only lease ‘Registered’ housing in the private rented sector. Victim-survivors can access emergency accommodation through FREEDA or the Shelter Trust, but this is a short-term housing option, which can lead to delays in victim-survivors moving into affordable, longer-term homes.

The Housing Advice Service will assist victim-survivors with Registered residential and employment status to access suitable housing in the private rented sector. The 13-week Income Support concession<sup>14</sup> introduced in response to recommendation 49 of the Taskforce’s report also ensures that victim-survivors have short-term recourse to public funds in order to access a place of safety.

Emergency accommodation and support is available for victim-survivors who have Registered residential and employment status, but follow-on housing options remain a gap and potential barrier for victim-survivors with Registered status to leave abusive relationships.

Given the complexity of issues surrounding residential and employment statuses, policy officials are actively considering how options for suitable accommodation for victim-survivors with Registered status can be improved, including discussion about the interaction with the policy guidance on hardship grounds under the Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law 2012.<sup>15</sup> A working group has been established, which brings together officials with experience of housing, population and migration, and violence against women and girls to consider the interaction of these issues and what further measures are required to assist victim-survivors.

The Minister for Housing recognises the significant barriers experienced by victim-survivors who hold Registered residential and employment status in accessing safe,

<sup>14</sup> [Ministerial exemption policy for people at risk of experiencing domestic abuse](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Residential and Employment Status Guidance](#) (2023)

secure and affordable homes. The Minister is committed to pursuing ongoing dialogue between relevant Ministers on this issue and will advocate for the provision of Registered housing for victim-survivors.

**C5 Provision of housing for victim-survivors with Registered residential status**

- Identify the challenges facing victim-survivors with ‘Registered’ residential status in accessing suitable housing and examine options to secure further housing options for victim-survivors in these situations.

## **8 Resource implications**

Most of the actions set out in this report can be implemented immediately within the resources of the Housing Advice Service, where the focus is on enhancing the level and quality of provision for victim-survivors to access appropriate housing and housing support.

The provision of follow-on accommodation, if taken forward, will require capital investment in a suitable premises, and the identification of a funding stream to ensure ongoing support arrangements. This will need to be subject to a separate business case to determine financial and resource implications.

## **9 Timescales and monitoring**

The development and implementation of actions from this report will be focused over the course of 2025, with a progress report issued at the end of the year. Progress will be monitored and reported to the Homelessness Cluster on a quarterly basis.