***PUBLIC CONSULTATION QUESTIONS***

**Are you responding as a:**\*

* Current Domestic abuse services client

* Former Domestic abuse service client

* Domestic abuse practitioners, e.g. IDVAs, support workers

* Bristol City Council employee

* Partner organisation

* Member of the public

* Other (please specify):

The aims of the policy are:

* To significantly reduce the length of time it takes to rehouse high risk victims of domestic abuse and by doing this

* To increase the availability of refuge/safe house places so more households can benefit from this safe and supportive environment

**1. Do you agree with these aims?**

* Agree

* Partly agree

* Disagree

* Don’t know

If you do not agree and/or you think other aims should be included, please write here

**BWV PROPOSED ANSWER: AGREE**

**2. Do you feel the policy will achieve these aims?**

* Yes

* No

* Don't know

**BWV PROPOSED ANSWER: NO**

BWV Comments:

1. **Only using MARAC will not ensure the move-on times are quicker for all those in refuge**
2. **The policy does not address move-on from safe house/refuge provision**

*A MARAC (multi agency risk assessment conference) is a meeting where information is shared and decisions are made on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), probation and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. The DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence) risk assessment is completed by individual agencies, which then determines which cases get considered by MARAC.*

*The proposal is that only women who are engaged with a MARAC are moved into housing Band 1.*

**3. Do you agree that MARAC is the right forum for Band 1 recommendations to be made?**

* Yes

* No

* Don't know

**BWV PROPOSED ANSWER: NO**

**4. Do you agree that areas of risk should be considered by MARAC to exclude areas where a person can bid on?**

* Yes

* No

* Don't know

**BWV PROPOSED ANSWER: YES**

*When women are in a refuge they can bid on Council housing that becomes available. This should exclude areas of Bristol where they might be at risk and they should not be penalised for not bidding on houses in areas where they might be at risk.*

**5. Should MARAC be making any other recommendations regarding housing?**

* Yes

* No

* Don't know

**BWV PROPOSED ANSWER: NO**

**Do you have any further comments about the role of MARAC?**

1. **MARAC is too limiting for identifying priority in housing**
2. **Survivors are the key expert in their risk assessment and safety needs**
3. **MARAC should not form the basis of who gets referred for priority housing banding – the policy should address ALL women in safe houses**

Please refer to section 4.4 – 4.7 of the Home Choice Allocation scheme for information on the banding scheme, [click here](https://bristol.citizenspace.com/%2B%2Bpreview%2B%2B/neighbourhoods/prioritising-victims-of-domestic-abuse-home-choice/supporting_documents/Home%20Choice%20Bristol%20Allocation%20Scheme.pdf#page=13)

As part of the MARAC process measures are taken to keep the victim safe for example additional security (target hardening) and injunctions. This is what we are referring to when we talk about mitigations. Please refer to section 6 for more information on the proposal, [click here](https://bristol.citizenspace.com/%2B%2Bpreview%2B%2B/neighbourhoods/prioritising-victims-of-domestic-abuse-home-choice/supporting_documents/Home%20Choice%20Bristol%20Allocation%20Scheme.pdf#page=23).

**6. Do you agree that Band 1 should be awarded to high risk victims of domestic abuse when all other avenues have been explored and risks cannot be reduced through mitigation?**

* Yes

* No

* Don't know

**BWV PROPOSED ANSWER: YES**

Comments:

1. **This is still limited**
2. **All women in safe houses should be considered Band 1**

**7. Should there be any conditions attached to awarding Band 1?
For example – engaging with support, agreement to bid regularly, anything else?**

* Yes

* No

**BWV PROPOSED ANSWER: YES (As this is already a standard in place)**

The proposal is that Band 1 will be agreed for 3 months. Households are expected to bid on properties on a city wide basis, excluding those areas where they would be at risk, as agreed by MARAC. Our modelling shows that 3 months is enough time in Band 1 for households to make a successful bid.

**8. Do you agree that high risk victims of domestic abuse should be awarded Band 1 for only 3 months?**

* Yes

* No

* Don't know

**BWV PROPOSED ANSWER: Yes, with exceptions below**

**9. In addition to the reasons stated in the draft policy, are there any other exceptions when the 3 month period should be extended?**

* Yes

* No

**BWV PROPOSED ANSWER: YES**

**Please write exceptions or further comments on limiting time in Band 1 here:**

1. **Limitations on areas survivors can bid on to ensure safety could result in it taking longer than 3 months to be successful**
2. **Accessibility through language barriers/technology barriers etc for many survivors could delay or inhibit their ability to use the online system**
3. **All women should stay in Band 1 untill successfully finding a safe new home**

There is a limited provision of safe house/refuge accommodation in Bristol. On average households stay for 8 months before they move on.

**10. Should households that move into a refuge/safe house keep their Band 1 award?**

* Yes

* No

* Don't know

**BWV PROPOSED ANSWER: YES**

**11. Are there situations where people would benefit from staying longer in the supportive environment of a refuge/safe house rather than moving on too quickly?**

* Yes

* No

**BWV PROPOSED ANSWER: YES**

**If you have any further comments about moving on from refuge/safe house, please write here:**

1. **Refuge/safe house spaces are limited so all women should be Band 1**
2. **It is classed as temporary/emergency accommodation – however many live there for over a year**
3. **2/3 women and children are turned away daily as there is no room**
4. **Women’s Aid research shows staying longer than necessary can have serious detrimental effects for survivor’s mental health and future**
5. **Lack of social housing in Bristol is causing ‘bed blocking’ in safe houses as women who are ready to move on cannot do so**
6. **Note - It takes up to 9 weeks for Home Choice to process new applications, so that is good couple of months in the supportive environment of safe house before bidding even begins.**

### Do you have any further comments or suggestions you wish to make about any of the proposals?

### Again emphasizing – ALL THOSE IN REFUGE PROVISION SHOULD BE BAND 1

### Using the MARAC only does not achieve the policy objectives as stated

### Majority of MARAC referrals are made through criminal justice services or police services. It is highly evidenced that survivors of domestic violence and abuse (especially those in black and minority ethnic communities, disabled survivors) do not report this way

### This policy would not ensure safe house services in Bristol could be more effective in helping those needing to flee abuse