

MOTION ON NOTICE

BEDROOM TAX AND SAFE ROOMS

One in four women have been the victim of domestic abuse, it accounts for 17% of all crime, two women a week are killed by a partner or former partner and the findings of a number of case reviews into deaths of children in Plymouth have identified domestic abuse as a significant factor.

Women facing some of the worst domestic abuse benefit from the installation of a number of sanctuary scheme measures; which may include the provision of a 'safe room'; where they and their children can go safely if threatened, which is directly linked to the police.

The government's bedroom tax however considers these vital safe rooms as a spare room, reducing the amount of housing benefit that can be claimed and putting women in jeopardy of eviction due to non-payment of rent. Evicting women and their children who have been victims of domestic abuse means that not only are they losing their home, they are being penalised for being a victim of domestic abuse, and risk becoming more vulnerable to repeat abuse.

Council notes that Women's Aid and other domestic abuse charities are calling on councils to take action to overcome this issue.

Council resolves to:-

1. Lobby the government to exempt safe rooms from inclusion as bedrooms for the purposes of the bedroom tax.
2. Make Discretionary Housing Payments available in Plymouth to cover reductions in housing benefit applied under the bedroom tax for safe rooms, subject to periodic review.

Proposed by Councillor Nicky Williams

Seconded by Councillor Chris Penberthy