

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 7
28 SEPTEMBER 2021	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Rob Hill – Assistant Director Community Safety	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Steve Allen – Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Communities	
Contact Officer(s):	Rob Hill – Assistant Director Community Safety / Vickie Crompton DASV Partnership Manager	07815 558081

DOMESTIC ABUSE SAFE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Rob Hill – Assistant Director Community Safety	Deadline date: MHCLG expect all Local Authority Safe Accommodation Strategies to be published by 31st October 2021
<p>It is recommended that the Communities Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrutinise and endorse the Peterborough Safe Accommodation Strategy for approval by Cabinet 2. Note the performance of and forward plans for the domestic abuse and sexual violence service, and comment on the strategies in place to manage increased demand. 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have mandated that all Tier 1 authorities complete a Safe Accommodation strategy as a requirement of the new Domestic Abuse Act 2021. In addition, an update on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence levels and challenges has been requested by this Committee and is included in this report.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to scrutinise and endorse the Safe Accommodation proposed strategy which is required by Statute as part of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

2.2 This report is also intended to update Communities Scrutiny Committee on the progress of work over the last 12 months.

This report is for the Communities Scrutiny Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference Part 3, Section 4 - Overview and Scrutiny Functions, paragraph No. 2.1 Functions determined by Council:

2. Neighbourhood and Community Support (including homelessness, housing options and selective licensing)
3. Equalities

And Functions determined by Statute:

To review and scrutinise crime and disorder matters, including acting as the Council's crime and disorder committee in accordance with Sections 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006;.

2.4 This report links to the following key priorities for Peterborough City Council:

Safeguarding vulnerable children and adults

Keeping all our communities safe, cohesive and healthy

Achieving the best health and wellbeing for the city

2.5 *How does this report link to the Children in care Pledge?*

Domestic Abuse directly affects children. The Safe Accommodation Strategy aim to prove a safe and sustainable home for all persons affected by Domestic Abuse, and the wider work of the DASV service reported here supports the safety and wellbeing of all children affect by Domestic Abuse.

3. **TIMESCALES**

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	YES	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	15.11.21
Date for relevant Council meeting if applicable		Date for submission to Government Dept. (<i>Please specify which Government Dept.</i>)	MHCLG 31.10.21

4. **BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

4.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 sets in statute that Tier One authorities must prepare and publish a local strategy based on a robust needs assessment, the first of which should be published by 31st October 2021 as set out in regulations. Thereafter, Strategies must be reviewed every three years.

Peterborough City Council have been allocated £477,374 for 2021/22 only at this stage to deliver the strategy. Both MHCLG and the Local Government Association have indicated there is likely to be funding for future years, however, the level of funding will not be confirmed until the Autumn Statement 2021.

4.2 To inform the development of the strategy, a full needs assessment was conducted, the key challenges from which are as follows:

- A spectrum of response is required to meet varied needs of clients, dependent on their risk, household structure, occupation, and tenure of property.
- Provision of easily accessible accommodation to those at risk of abuse and their children who are safe to stay within the area (Peterborough & Cambridgeshire) if provided with additional support.
- Provision of therapeutic support to victims and their children who have experienced domestic abuse.
- Ensuring greater support is provided to the housing sector to improve awareness and support to those experiencing domestic abuse.

- Ensuring a consistency of support across both urban and very rural areas, as this rurality provides challenges for this work.

A copy of the Needs Assessment is available at [Welcome to Cambridgeshire DASV Partnership \(cambsdasv.org.uk\)](http://Welcome to Cambridgeshire DASV Partnership (cambsdasv.org.uk))

4.3 As a result of the needs assessment, and in response to the key challenges summarised above, the three key aims of this strategy are:

- Earlier identification and intervention for domestic abuse through access to domestic abuse support, local authority housing advice and social and private landlords
- A reduction in the number of victims of abuse who are made homeless as a result of domestic abuse
- Increased housing sustainment options so that people experiencing domestic abuse can remain safely in their home when it is their choice to do so, or do not lose their tenancy status if they relocate.

4.4 The Strategy will follow the Whole Housing Approach to Domestic Abuse. Alongside Cambridgeshire, Peterborough were one of the key delivery partners in developing and adopting the Whole Housing Approach, with funding from MHCLG from 2018 – 2021. This approach is endorsed by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Nicole Jacobs, as well as highlighted as good practice within the Domestic Abuse Act Guidance. This approach has enabled victims of domestic abuse to access safe accommodation regardless of the tenure of property and enables specialist domestic abuse staff to offer a range of flexible options with regards to increasing the safety of those suffering domestic abuse and their children. A whole system approach is needed to effectively address the key issues and barriers experienced by survivors and to ensure they have access to a safe place to call home. The WHA model offers a framework for the domestic abuse and housing sectors to work together to address the immediate and longer-term housing needs of survivors. The model incorporates the experiences of survivors, the expertise of system leaders and established, evidence-based practice

In adopting this approach, we can ensure access to a range of tailored housing options and initiatives to give people experiencing domestic abuse the choice to either relocate or remain in their existing accommodation. The full suite of housing options enables agencies and organisations to work together more collaboratively. Effective coordination efforts consider the long-term safety of the victim/survivor and their children, as well as managing crisis situations.

The elements within this approach are set out within the strategy document. The extent to which these can be delivered, will depend to some extent to the funding made available for 2022-2024.

4.5 Domestic Abuses and Sexual Violence Service Update

In 2021, there was a significant increase in referrals to the service from Peterborough with 862 Cases referred to the Independent Domestic Abuse Advisers (IDVAs) (33.4% increase compared to the previous year). This compares to a 3.45% increase in police incidents with a domestic abuse marker (5,505 incidents).

Approximately 80% of IDVA referrals came from the police, indicating that those suffering domestic abuse appeared to wait until the situation was more severe before asking for police assistance. This is possibly associated with the covid situation, although the same rise in cases was not experienced across Cambridgeshire.

Other referrals came from health providers (10%), followed by a range of different organisations.

Covid impacted on the ability of the service to engage face to face, however, support was maintained through other forms of engagement and we increased promotion of support services to ensure our help offer was made available. As a result the service saw a large increase in referrals. Indications for this year are that there continue to be increasing numbers of those seeking help, but not such a significant increase as last year.

In the last 12 months, we have bid for a number of funding streams, some in partnership with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. This has enabled an increase in staff to support those suffering domestic abuse, including:

- Increased resource for Peterborough Women's Aid for outreach provision, and support for those in the refuge
- Within Social Care in Peterborough there are two dedicated domestic abuse posts working as part of Family Safeguarding, 190 families have been referred to the service and supported since the posts were introduced in January 2020.
- An IDVA working with Eastern European communities, the postholder speaks Lithuanian so will be able to engage more effectively
- A Young People's IDVA working with young people where there is abuse in their own relationships
- Increased awareness for staff in Peterborough Hospital, with a dedicated post recently recruited to be based at the hospital
- Awareness sessions held with members of the Community First charity, to increase awareness amongst a range of communities and organisations
- Working with Peterborough Council for Voluntary Service and the Domestic Abuse Forum
- Increase in provision to support young people who have experienced domestic abuse in their home
- Funding to Cambridgeshire Deaf Association, who support deaf victims of domestic abuse with a dedicated IDVA post

Alongside this, Peterborough City Council has been accredited by the charity White Ribbon, and there are a number of male ambassadors registered within the council. The working group is being led by Cllr John Howard, and we aim to make this more visible over the coming months, especially with a focus in November with White Ribbon Day on the 25th November alongside the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls.

The service is also working closely with CPFT (Mental Health Trust) to roll out their domestic abuse strategy to enable more effective support to patients suffering from domestic abuse.

Finally, the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Champions Network is open to all professionals across Peterborough, and information sessions are held quarterly and accessible online. These have featured a range of topics from a number of organisations, including sessions on suicide, sexual violence, older people, strangulation, economic abuse, male victims, and stalking.

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4.6 Looking ahead, there are a number of new streams of work which will be starting shortly, which include:

- Specific intervention work with those perpetrating abuse – including specific interventions in relation to children using abusive behaviours against their parents, with dedicated support for those parents, interventions to improve the response to stalking, and increased healthy relationship provision for those who come to police attention for using abuse in their relationships
- Additional specialist IDVA roles – for male victims and for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities
- Developing work with libraries to make them “safe spaces” for victims of domestic abuse to be able to report abuse or seek help in a safe environment (as has been happening in local pharmacies with “Ask Ani” campaigns
- Working with the city ‘Joint Mosque Group’ to improve understanding and support for domestic abuse within the community
- “Survivors Against Domestic Abuse” have been commissioned to gather independent feedback from both adults and children with regards to their experiences with a range of agencies when they have asked for help and support in relation to domestic abuse
- In relation to the Safe Accommodation funding, there will be a specialist IDVA to work with housing advice teams. This post will support those in temporary accommodation due to domestic abuse and those who are seeking support for their housing where there is Domestic Abuse
- A network of dispersed accommodation will be developed for those suffering domestic abuse

4.7 Full information about the work of the service is available in the Annual Report, attached at appendix 1.

5. CONSULTATION

5.1 A consultation event was held on 10th August 2021 as part of the development of the Safer Accommodation Strategy, attended by local authorities, housing providers, specialist domestic abuse services, police, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and representatives from health. It was also circulated to the DASV Partnership Board and Operations Groups. Consultation was also undertaken with the Sub Regional Housing Board, and the Safer Peterborough Partnership. It was endorsed by the Domestic Abuse Strategic Board on 8th September 2021.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 6.1 This strategy and the associated funding will result in:
- Earlier identification and intervention for domestic abuse through access to domestic abuse support, local authority housing advice and social and private landlords
 - A reduction in the number of victims of abuse who are made homeless as a result of domestic abuse
 - Increased housing sustainment options so that people experiencing domestic abuse can remain safely in their home when it is their choice to do so, or do not lose their tenancy status if they relocate
 - An increase in the number of individuals and their children suffering from domestic abuse able to be advised, supported and able to cope with and recover from the abuse they have suffered

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

7.1 Having a Safe Accommodation Strategy is a Statutory requirement of the Domestic Abuse Act.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

8.1 This is a Statutory Requirement, there are no alternative options.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

9.1 In 2021/22, Peterborough City Council were awarded £477,374 as part of a Section 31 Grant Agreement. The strategy is reliant on funding being available in future years and any services commissioned must go through all legal procurement procedures.

Legal Implications

9.2 This strategy is a Statutory requirement under Section 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act.

Equalities Implications

9.3 This strategy will ensure the needs of all victims with relevant protected characteristics are considered and met, including gender, race, language, religion, sexual orientation, age health and disabilities. The action plan will set out how the barriers faced by victims with relevant protected characteristics and / or multiple complex needs, will be addressed.

Rural Implications

9.4 Those living in rural areas may have increased difficulties in accessible suitable support. This strategy recognises the need to ensure all support services with the strategy are accessible to those who may live in rural areas.

Carbon Impact Assessment

9.5 Publication of this strategy will not impact on carbon emissions in Peterborough

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

10.1 *Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment*
https://www.cambsdasv.org.uk/storage/secure_download/SFdsdTVkSk1BNII5MXI3VDFmUkhPQT09
Domestic Abuse Act 2021 [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1: Draft Safe Accommodation Strategy – Peterborough City Council
Appendix 2: Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership Annual Report