

DECISION TITLE: Peterborough Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2024-2027
ENTER NAME OF CABINET MEMBER EXERCISING DELEGATED POWERS Cllr Alison Jones, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities
ENTER MONTH IN WHICH DECISION IS BEING TAKEN September 2024
Deadline date: September 2024

Cabinet portfolio holder: Responsible Director:	Cllr Alison Jones Rob Hill
Is this a Key Decision?	YES If yes has it been included on the Forward Plan: YES Unique Key decision Reference from Forward Plan: KEY/20MAY2024/02
Is this decision eligible for call-in?	Yes
Does this Public report have any annex that contains exempt information?	NO

RECOMMENDATIONS
The Cabinet Member is recommended to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the Safe Accommodation Strategy for Peterborough covering the period 2024-2027. (Appendix 1)

1. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1.1 This report is for Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to approve the publication and adoption of the Peterborough City Council Safe Accommodation Strategy 2024-27.

2. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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3. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 This report outlines the proposed Safe Accommodation Strategy for Peterborough for March 2024 to April 2027.
- 3.2 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 set in statute that tier one authorities must prepare and publish a local strategy based on a robust needs assessment that sets out the ways in which provision for accommodation-based domestic abuse support will be developed, commissioned, and delivered. These strategies should be reviewed every three years.
- 3.3 Two strategies were produced for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough respectively for March 2021 to April 2024 and these sit parallel and broadly cover the same range of provisions, services, and goals. This can be found on the DASV website [Cambridgeshire County Council DASV Partnership \(cambsdasv.org.uk\)](http://Cambridgeshire County Council DASV Partnership (cambsdasv.org.uk))
- 3.4 Accommodation-based domestic abuse support includes provision of support to victims and their children in a range of settings, including:
- Refuge accommodation
 - Specialist safe accommodation
 - Dispersed accommodation
 - Sanctuary schemes
 - Move-on or second stage accommodation.
- 3.5 Alongside provision of safe accommodation, the following types of domestic abuse support have been provided:
- Advocacy support – development of personal safety plans, liaison with other services (for example, GPs and social workers, welfare benefit providers)
 - Domestic abuse prevention advice – support to assist victims to recognise the signs of abusive relationships, to help them remain safe (including online) and to prevent re-victimisation.
 - Specialist support for victims with relevant protected characteristics and / or complex needs (for example, interpreters, faith services, mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support, and immigration advice)
 - Children’s support – including play therapy and child advocacy.
 - Housing-related support – providing housing-related advice and support (for example, securing a permanent home and advice on how to live safely and independently)
 - Counselling and therapy for both adults and children

3.6 Desired Outcomes from the Safe Accommodation Strategy 2024-2027 include:

- To continue provision of domestic abuse mobile advocacy across Peterborough.
- To continue provision of dispersed safe accommodation across Peterborough.
- To continue the provision of domestic abuse support as laid out in the Safe Accommodation Strategy.
- To continue the provision of refuge spaces in Peterborough.
- To increase support to those with learning difficulties experiencing domestic support across Peterborough.
- To ensure that survivors of domestic abuse across Peterborough can receive domestic abuse support in their first language.

3.7 The Safe Accommodation Strategy is based on a Whole Housing Approach model. Peterborough City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and partners were one of the key delivery systems in developing and adopting the Whole Housing Approach (WHA), with funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) from 2018 to 2021, (now DLUHC).

3.8 A whole system approach is required 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.

3.9 This approach to providing accommodation-based support 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.

3.10 The following describe the services and interventions that have been commissioned to meet the objectives of this strategy:

- **Refuge Support:** We will provide the support costs for a refuge in Peterborough, equating to space for 8 women and up to 18 children at any given time. These will be available to those fleeing from out of area, and within area if there is a significant distance and this is deemed to be safe.
Within the package, there will be funding for children's support workers and a flexible fund to enable those who need it to access talking therapies.
The refuge will be expected to be as accessible as possible to those with additional support needs, in line with "Refuge for All" principles.
- **Dispersed Safe Accommodation:** We will continue to provide three units of dispersed safe accommodation in Peterborough primarily for residents in this area experiencing domestic abuse. Dispersed safe accommodation provides access to safe accommodation to those who are not able to live in a "traditional" refuge or other temporary accommodation, such as: large families; those with disabilities; people with pets; male victims; families with teenage boys', people from the LGBT

community; and EM survivors. The risk and needs of the victim will be paramount when considering this accommodation option.

The properties are fully furnished to a high standard, are let on a licence agreement, and seen as 'temporary accommodation'. Occupiers claim housing benefit towards the housing costs.

There are two units of Dispersed safe Accommodation in Peterborough provided in conjunction with current mobile advocacy provider (DASS/IMPAKT). A further unit offers safe accommodation to survivors/victims with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) being provided in conjunction with PWA (Peterborough Women's Aid) & the Home Office.

- **Housing IDVAs:** Across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, a team of Housing IDVAs can offer a direct referral service for housing services and local social housing landlords who wish to refer victims/survivors for IDVA support. There is a dedicated Housing IDVA taking referrals from PCC housing teams and housing providers in Peterborough. There have been positive outcomes for survivors in housing crisis with this joint working approach. The post will be co-located in Peterborough CC housing offices, the IDVA will also co-locate in the offices/drop-ins of Cross Keys Housing Association to facilitate meetings with their tenants and the IDVA in their offices.
Housing IDVAs can offer housing teams case management support such as audits, share information around domestic abuse and deliver awareness raising training to staff based in housing settings. The Housing IDVA located in Peterborough supported 62 survivors directly referred to them by housing teams in 2022/23.
- **Target Hardening/Sanctuary Scheme:** Target hardening/Sanctuary schemes enable people who have been subjected to domestic abuse to remain in their own homes and reduce repeat victimisation through the provision of enhanced security measures. This is provided by a commissioned specialist service, in conjunction with domestic abuse support. Often legal orders/injunctions are sought alongside the 'target hardening' if appropriate, to increase the safety of victim/survivors. 525 properties of survivor/victims across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough received with target hardening in 2022/23. (In 2024/25 these figures will be separated into Cambridgeshire & Peterborough).
- **Mobile advocacy outreach support:** This is a service which survivors can directly access/self-refer across Peterborough, enabling survivors to access domestic abuse led outreach support. This service is open access for advice, information and housing support in a way which is needs led, trauma informed and supports the wishes of the person. The mobile advocacy support can refer to the IDVA service and access all elements of the strategy. 187 Survivor/Victims in Peterborough were supported by mobile advocacy workers in 2022/23.
- **Flexible Funding:** Flexible funding supports victim/survivors to achieve or maintain safe and secure housing. It is low-barrier and does not require victim/survivors to be means tested. Unlike most other funding sources, there is no set list of what will be funded, and victims/survivors are encouraged to ask for whatever will make the most difference to their housing situation and their lives, in order that the victim/survivor and their children can stay safe. This is only available

as part of an individual's ongoing domestic abuse support. 108 survivor/victims received flexible funding support across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough in 2022-23. (In 2024/25 these figures will be separated into Cambridgeshire & Peterborough).

- **Managed Reciprocals:** The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Housing Reciprocal agreement is a voluntary collaboration between local authorities and registered providers which allows tenants with a social tenancy at risk of harm from domestic/sexual violence, to move to another local authority area and maintain their social tenancy.
- **Raising awareness of domestic abuse in the private rented sector:** By continuing to provide webinars (scheduled in and outside the working day for greater access) , face to face training, meetings and information sharing with local private landlords and PCC Housing standards teams to increase the awareness of domestic abuse in the private rented sector and how private landlords can assist where their tenants are experiencing domestic abuse. Peterborough saw the East of England's joint third-largest percentage-point rise (alongside Cambridge and Norwich) in the proportion of privately rented homes 24.4% in 2021 (Census Data 2021). Private rented accommodation is used to discharge PCCs statutory homeless duties and therefore local landlords will be housing families who have experienced domestic abuse.
- **Sheltered Accommodation/Supported Accommodation/Hostels:** For all commissioned providers to have a domestic abuse policy for residents and staff.
- **Victims with No Recourse to Public Funds:** IDVAs and Mobile Advocacy Support Workers will work with clients with NRPF (No recourse to Public Funds). They will sign post/refer them to appropriate immigration advice in regards their immigration status and entitlement to benefits/housing. IDVAs and mobile advocacy support workers will provide institutional advocacy for these clients, ensure interpreting services if needed are made available and recognising the multiple vulnerabilities these survivors and their children can face. Clients with NRPF or unable to qualify for benefits/housing due to pre-settled status would still be eligible for all the options outlined within the strategy, except for refuge support and dispersed accommodation* where additional funding would be needed.

3.11 Key Changes:

The following changes have been made from the Safe Accommodation Strategy of 2021-2024. Firstly, the below have been introduced:

- **Shared Lives project survivors with learning disabilities:** Provision of a joint pilot scheme between Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership and Cambridgeshire County Council's Shared Lives

team to offer support to survivors of domestic abuse with learning disabilities. The pilot, led by a Shared Lives Co-ordinator utilises the Shared Lives approach of carers welcoming people with support needs into their own homes.

- **Eastern European IDVA:** Continued commitment to funding an A8 IDVA in Peterborough, to recognise the need for support from specialist IDVAs who can communicate in a survivor's first language. The A8 IDVA can understand the lived experience of Eastern European migrants and by having cultural awareness, as well relevant language skills can help survivors with low levels of English to understand and access services and overcome cultural barriers to accessing services. The need for specialist Lithuanian speaking IDVA support in Peterborough has been evidenced by DHRs (Domestic Homicide Reviews) and reflected in the demographics within Peterborough, 3.6% of Peterborough's population were born in Lithuania (Census data 2021).

3.12 The following are being removed from the existing Safe Accommodation Strategy:

- **Housing First IDVA:** The role of the Housing First IDVA has been removed from the Safe Accommodation Strategy going forward due to financial viability. Supporting survivors experiencing domestic abuse who are sleeping rough or the hidden homeless (women are often missing from rough sleeping counts because they tend to be less visible than male rough sleepers due to the risk of violence on the street) will be a continuing part of the Safe Accommodation Strategy
- **DAHA:** The strategy no longer focuses on DAHA as this work is well underway with Peterborough City Council and its Housing Teams with an intention for PCC to receive DAHA accreditation in 2024.

4. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

4.1

The Safe Accommodation Strategy 2024-27 links in with the council's Corporate Priorities:

1.The Economy and Inclusive Growth: By offering support to residents of Peterborough experiencing domestic abuse, to reduce the impact of domestic abuse on their ability to work and finances. To reduce the need for alternative accommodation by assisting residents experiencing domestic to safely stay in their own homes.

2.Our Places and Communities: By striving to offer Peterborough residents experiencing domestic abuse, support, and housing options to reduce the impact of domestic abuse on their health and increase their feelings of safety. The strategy also develops community engagement and partnership working within Peterborough. It works to reduce the need for residents to leave supportive communities due to domestic abuse.

3.Prevention, Independence & Resilience: Working positively with residents and local partners in offering early intervention, accessible support and providing information to all residents experiencing domestic abuse, to reduce the risk of individuals and families experiencing domestic abuse becoming crisis support.

Further information on the Council's Priorities can be found here - [Link to Corporate Strategy and Priorities Webpage](#)

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Safe Accommodation Strategy has been taken to the Housing Board for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough for consultation. It is informed by the Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) Needs Assessment 2023.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 6.1
- To continue the provision of domestic support as laid out in the Safe Accommodation Strategy.
 - To continue provision of domestic abuse mobile advocacy across Peterborough.
 - To continue provision of dispersed safe accommodation across Peterborough.
 - To continue the provision of refuge spaces in Peterborough.
 - To increase support to those with learning difficulties experiencing domestic abuse in Peterborough.
 - To ensure that survivors of domestic abuse in Peterborough can receive domestic abuse support in their first language.

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires the Council to have a Safe Accommodation Strategy for the period between April 2024 and March 2027.

The strategy is the statutory responsibility of Peterborough City Council.

The refreshed strategy has been carefully considered, incorporating findings from the VAWG needs assessment and partnership consultation.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 set in statute that Tier One authorities must prepare and publish a local strategy based on a robust needs assessment that sets out the ways in which provision for accommodation-based domestic abuse support will be developed, commissioned, and delivered.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 9.1 This strategy in Peterborough is supported by Local Authority Domestic Abuse Duty grant funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, of which £497k is allocated to Peterborough City Council for 2024/25.

Legal Implications

- 9.2 The Council is required, by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, to have a Safe Accommodation Strategy in place and updated every three years.

Equalities Implications

9.3 Peterborough City Council recognises that survivors' experiences of domestic abuse may in part be defined by their background and this intersectionality is recognised. Certain individuals may face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and be more likely to experience domestic abuse. The groups at greater risk include women, low-income households, and those who are pregnant or recently given birth.

10. DECLARATIONS / CONFLICTS OF INTEREST & DISPENSATIONS GRANTED

10.1 *None.*

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985) and The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

11.1 *None.*

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1
- Draft Safe Accommodation Strategy 2024-2027
 - Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-2024
 - VAWG needs Assessment 2023.