

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – Update One Year On

To: Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee

Meeting Date: 21 July 2022

From: Assistant Director for Community Safety, Rob Hill

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: To provide the Committee with an update on the statutory duties that were placed on the Council by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to:

Note the Council's progress towards fulfilling its statutory duty in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

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1. Background

1.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a statutory duty on tier one local authorities. Section 4 of the Act sets out the following requirements:

Support provided by local authorities to victims of domestic abuse

(1) Each relevant local authority in England must –

- (a) assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for accommodation-based support in its area,
- (b) prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support in its area, and
- (c) monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1) –

“Accommodation-based support” means support, in relation to domestic abuse, provided to victims of domestic abuse, or their children, who reside in relevant accommodation; “relevant accommodation” means accommodation of a description specified by the Secretary of State in regulations.

(3) A relevant local authority that publishes a strategy under this section must, in carrying out its functions, give effect to the strategy.

(4) Before publishing a strategy under this section, a relevant local authority must consult –

- (a) the domestic abuse local partnership board appointed by the relevant local authority under section 58,
- (b) any local authority for an area within the relevant local authority’s area, and
- (c) such other persons as the relevant local authority considers appropriate.

1.2 In relation to the above, the Council is fully compliant with the legislation, and the following have been completed:

(i) A Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment was published in June 2022.

(ii) The Safe Accommodation Strategy was agreed by the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, and published in September 2022.

(iii) The Domestic Abuse Partnership Board was amended to become compliant with the legislation in June 2022. This involved ensuring representation on the Board from housing, with the Chair of the Sub Regional Housing Group becoming a member. Additionally, the ‘Survivors Against Domestic Abuse’ group joined the Board to provide the viewpoint of victims of abuse and their children.

1.3 Demand for domestic abuse services continues to rise, with 2,520 referrals to the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service in 2021/22, an increase of 8% from 2020/21. The number of domestic abuse incidents in Cambridgeshire reported to Cambridgeshire Constabulary fell by 2.5% to 9,057 in the same year.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The statutory requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act led to a grant of £1,140,318 for the Council for the provision of specialist support with regards to safe accommodation.
- 2.2 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has confirmed further funding of £1,143,474 in 2022/23 and 2023/24. In future years, this will be incorporated into the overall grant from the Government to the local authority, and is not statutorily ringfenced.
- 2.3 Prior to 2021, support in refuge accommodation was funded by the Council's core budget. The additional DLUHC funding has enabled the establishment of a Health IDVA Team, who work in hospitals, GP surgeries, across mental health services, substance misuse services and other community health settings. It is well documented that many people who have been subjected to domestic abuse do not seek support from the criminal justice system but do access healthcare. Domestic Homicide Reviews have evidenced the importance of those working in health settings being able to identify individuals who have been subjected to domestic abuse. Therefore this is a vital collaboration, which should ensure we are able to support people earlier in their journey, reducing harm to the individual and their children, as well as saving costs to the public sector overall.

Use of Safe Accommodation Funding

- 2.4 Safe Accommodation funding has been used to deliver the priorities set out in the Safe Accommodation Strategy, including:
- Refuge accommodation;
 - Additional security and safety measures in victims' homes;
 - Outreach support for victims;
 - Housing IDVAs;
 - Support to children;
 - Support for those with no recourse to public funds; and
 - Therapeutic interventions.
- 2.5 Across Cambridgeshire, almost 1,500 individuals received support via this funding stream. This has included:
- 71 women in refuges
 - 884 supported through outreach and the housing IDVAs
 - 55 men and women in receipt of counselling
 - 350 homes better secured by the Bobby Scheme
 - 157 children received therapeutic interventions
- Of the above, only refuge accommodation is women only, all other options are available to all.
- 2.6 The contract for the provision of dispersed accommodation was subject to competitive tender in May 2022. However, no suitable providers were identified. Individual Registered Social Housing Providers will therefore be approached to provide dedicated units of accommodation for this purpose.

- 2.7 There is now a team of four Housing IDVAs working closely with district council housing departments and housing associations, accepting referrals at any level of risk, supporting those at risk of homelessness due to domestic abuse, and providing interventions for those in temporary accommodation to ensure they are safe.
- 2.8 Support for those who are subjected to domestic abuse and still living in their own homes will continue to be funded with the Safe Accommodation Funding. A Mobile Advocacy Service is currently being procured through competitive tender, with a closing date of 4th July 2022. The new service will ensure parity of provision across the County, with a single service to be provided to all those who require it. This service will be open access for advice, information and support in a way that is needs-led, and which supports the wishes of the person requiring support. This service will begin on 1st October 2022.

Additional Funding Awarded in Cambridgeshire

- 2.9 The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV) Partnership team continues to work closely with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire (OPCC), and has been successful in bids to both the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice. This includes additional interventions working with perpetrators and young people who use abusive behaviours against their parents, which has been extended to March 2023. The additional funding that has been secured has also enabled the extension of 5.4 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) IDVA posts until March 2025, a senior IDVA, 2.4 FTE IDVAs for young people under 21, a specific male victims IDVA and a specialist IDVA for those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.
- 2.10 The Home Office awarded funding to the OPCC for Domestic Abuse Perpetrator interventions until March 2023. These interventions are all delivered in conjunction with support to the victim. These include a Healthy Relationship course for those who have been charged with a domestic abuse related crime, if they have admitted the offence and are risk assessed as suitable. There is a specific stalking intervention, overseen by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, consisting of a Stalking Intervention Team that includes a specialist IDVA, police officer and forensic psychologist. There is also an intervention with YMCA and Respect to provide one-to-one work with families where a child is using violent and abusive behaviours against their parents.
- 2.11 In 2018, the DASV Partnership was awarded funding by the Home Office for children affected by domestic abuse, which was extended until August 2022. All elements will continue to be funded via other funding streams. This included therapeutic support from Embrace Child Victims of Crime, security in homes to increase the safety for the children and protective parent, Young Peoples IDVAs, a Children's Independent Sexual Violence Adviser, ChISVA and specialist children's staff in each of the refuges. The Home Office intends to put out a new fund for authorities to bid for, and the DASV Partnership is working on a collaborative bid with partners for this.

IDVA Service Taking Referrals from Police for Medium Risk of Harm Victims

- 2.12 The IDVA service accepts referrals from any professional where clients are at a high level of risk of serious harm, and at any level of risk for those who meet the criteria for the specialist client based IDVAs. From 1st June 2022, the IDVA service is now responding to all victims of a domestic abuse related crime who are at medium risk, where consent is

given. This is to ensure a timely consistent approach across the County. This will involve calls to consider safety planning and signposting to services or support they may require going forward. Any “standard” victims of domestic related crime are offered support from the Victim and Witness Hub.

Child to Parent Abuse

- 2.13 In 2020, the DASV Partnership commissioned a needs assessment regarding Child to Parent Abuse (CPA). This led to the delivery of awareness sessions, including 150 domestic abuse champions attending sessions. Over 120 staff across children’s services received one day training from Parental Education Growth Support (PEGS), a specialist CPA organisation. Within the IDVA service, there are now two CPA Adviser posts, who will provide information, safety planning and advocacy for those suffering abuse from their child aged under 18. In addition to this and the intervention set out in Paragraph 2.10, a policy is being developed for the Council’s Children’s services regarding Child to Parent Abuse.

Domestic Homicide Reviews

- 2.14 In 2021/22, the DASV Partnership Team took responsibility for the coordination of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) across Cambridgeshire. In 2021/22, there were five DHRs undertaken – three in Fenland and two in South Cambridgeshire (one from 2010 following a conviction for a subsequent murder in Hertfordshire). This included two familial homicides, and two suicides. The DASV Partnership continues to work closely with the Suicide Prevention Partnership.

Preventative Work

- 2.15 There is a lack of evidence-based (and therefore cost-effective) interventions to prevent domestic abuse. In recognition of this, the Home Office has begun with funding a number of services and independent evaluators to consider various approaches to prevention.
- 2.16 Many of the issues that the Council seeks to address (such as the harmful use of alcohol, alleviating the consequences of poverty, etc.) can be associated with domestic abuse, and therefore work in these areas may be considered primary prevention work for domestic abuse.
- 2.17 More specifically, to prevent the culture of sexual harm in schools, the Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE) service has also produced a toolkit called “Safer Corridors” to support the delivery of sex and relationship education in schools. The PHSE service also undertakes joint work with the Council’s Domestic Abuse team. As part of the Safer Streets Campaign, there will be a campaign targeting potential sexually harmful offenders, and this is being coordinated by the police.
- 2.18 Where abuse may already have occurred, early intervention is vital to prevent escalation and increasing harm. Awareness of available support is promoted by communications campaigns for services which people can contact if they are concerned, they are being abused or if they at risk of abuse. Furthermore, the DVA service is increasingly taking referrals at lower levels of harm, particularly from health and housing professionals. The Council also employs three Young Peoples IDVAs who will work with young people, from the age of 13, that may be abused in their own relationships. They also work with schools

and other organisations to promote their work and issues relating to young people who may be in abusive relationships.

Summary

- 2.15 The DASV Partnership has worked to ensure compliance with the statutory duty set out in Section 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and will further develop this work in 2022/23. This has included the development of specific perpetrator programmes, increased provision in the IDVA service, and the continuation of other support for victims.

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Environment and Sustainability

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.2 Health and Care

There are no significant implications within this category.

3.3 Places and Communities

Domestic abuse affects all of Cambridgeshire communities, so it is essential there are adequate services to enable access for all, regardless of location.

3.4 Children and Young People

Children and young people are victims of domestic abuse in their own right, and the DASV Partnership works closely with children's services to ensure specific needs of children can be addressed.

3.5 Transport

There are no significant implications within this category.

5. Source Documents

- 5.1 [Cambridgeshire County Council DASV Partnership \(cambsdasv.org.uk\)](https://www.cambsdasv.org.uk) Link to Needs Assessment & Safe Accommodation strategy

- 5.2 [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)