

Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy

To: Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee

Meeting Date: 2 September 2021

From: Assistant Director: Community Safety, Rob Hill

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: That the County Council is able to submit its Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy as required by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as part of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

Approve the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy for submission to MHCLG.

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1. Background

- 1.1 The Domestic Abuse Act places a duty on each tier 1 authority to develop and publish a strategy for the provision of local support to cover their locality, having regards to a needs assessment, the first of which should be published by 31st October 2021. Thereafter, Strategies must be reviewed every three years.
- 1.2 Cambridgeshire County Council have been allocated £1,140,318 for 2021/22 to implement key actions from the strategy, and the investment plans for this funding were agreed by Committee in July.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The Domestic Abuse Partnership, of which the County Council is a member, completed a Needs Assessment in June 2021 which identified a range of key challenges:
 - A range of responses are required to meet the varied needs of clients, dependent on their risk, household structure, occupation, and tenure of property.
 - Provision of easily accessible accommodation is needed for those at risk of abuse and their children who are safe to stay within the county if provided with additional support.
 - Provision of therapeutic support for victims and their children who have experienced domestic abuse is needed.
 - We need to ensure there is greater support provided to the housing sector to improve awareness and support to those experiencing domestic abuse.
 - We need to ensure a consistency of support across all areas, from urban to very rural areas.
- 2.2 Attached at Appendix 1 is the draft strategy that has been produced as a result of the Needs Assessment work. The three key aims of this strategy are to achieve:
 - Earlier identification of, 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.
- 2.3 The Strategy will follow the 'Whole Housing Approach' to Domestic Abuse. Cambridgeshire County Council was 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. The 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 Whole Housing Approach 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.

- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 The elements within this approach are set out within the draft strategy document. The extent to which these can be delivered will depend to some extent on the funding made available for 2022-2024.

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Communities at the heart of everything we do

Domestic abuse affects all communities within Cambridgeshire, this strategy will enable victims of domestic to remain safe in their own communities where safe to do so, and to support victims and children move to alternative safe accommodation, providing the support to settle elsewhere when necessary.

3.2 Good quality of life for everyone

The Safe Accommodation Strategy will ensure that there are increased accommodation options and support for those suffering domestic abuse, which impacts on their quality of life.

3.3 Helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full

Children suffering domestic abuse in their home are likely to be impacted by trauma, elevating levels of stress, resulting in difficulties in learning and memory. The Safe Accommodation will ensure children are supported and therefore more able to learn and live a life without fear and distress.

3.4 Cambridgeshire: a well-connected, safe, clean, green environment

The most dangerous place for women in Cambridgeshire is their own home. In 2020/21 there were almost 1,500 referrals to the Independent Domestic Abuse Adviser service – these were for victims of domestic abuse at risk of significant harm or homicide. In the same year, there was 9,299 police incidents in relation to domestic abuse. This strategy will support those where the abuse is at a level where the victim and their children are unable to remain in the home with the abuser. It will also ensure that housing services and housing associations are able to respond to domestic abuse more effectively.

3.5 Protecting and caring for those who need us

Victims of domestic abuse often have complex needs including adults at risk with care and support needs and other vulnerable adults. Children in homes where there is domestic abuse face additional risks and challenges.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications in section 1.1 and in the paper brought to Committee on 8 July 2021, "Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Update".

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

Procurement and contract procedure rules will need to be followed when commissioning the new services described in the strategy. The dispersed accommodation scheme will be managed through the local authority and staff employed through Cambridgeshire County Council.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications in section 1.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence are highly gendered crimes, therefore there will be greater impact on female residents in Cambridgeshire. Any public awareness activity should make it clear that the issue includes violence against men and boys, as well as women and girls

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

Future activity will require support from the community engagement and communications teams, both of which are represented on the White Ribbon Working Group.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

Solutions need to be provided at a local level, and members to be confident and knowledgeable when faced with those suffering from abuse

4.7 Public Health Implications

Violence is a public health issue at individual and population levels. The DASV Partnership and White Ribbon campaign will help increase awareness and understanding of this particular violence issue and awareness raising is an important element for the delivery of the wider Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse Strategy.

4.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas

4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Neutral

4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Neutral

4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.
Neutral

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.
Neutral

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:
Neutral

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.
Neutral

4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure, and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.
Neutral

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes
Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Council's Head of Procurement? Yes
Name of Officer: Henry Swan

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer? Yes
Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?
Yes
Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?
Yes or No
Name of Officer:

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes
Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?
Yes or No
Name of Officer: Val Thomas

If a Key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?
Yes
Name of Officer: Kate Bolton

5. Source documents guidance

5.1 Source documents

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

DA Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment – vickie.crompton@cambridgeshire.gov.uk