

EXECUTIVE 13th January 2022

Report Title	Domestic Abuse Strategy
Report Author	David Watts, Executive Director of Adults, Communities & Wellbeing
Executive Member	Cllr Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Adults, Health & Wellbeing

Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1974	

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2025

Appendix B – Equality Screening Questionnaire

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek approval of the Domestic Abuse Strategy for North Northamptonshire Council 2021 to 2025.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Domestic Abuse Act was given Royal Assent on 29th April 2021 and for the first time places a statutory duty on Tier 1 Authorities to provide support. The Act aims to transform the response to domestic abuse to better protect and support victims and their children, as well as pursuing abusers.

- 2.2 The Act places a duty on each Tier 1 local authority in England to appoint a Multi-agency Partnership Board to:

1. Assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support for all victim-survivors (and their children) in their area, including those who require cross-border support
2. Develop and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their locality, having regard to the Needs Assessment
3. Give effect to the strategy (through commissioning/ de-commissioning decisions)
4. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy
5. Report back to central government
6. Require local authorities to have regard to statutory guidance in exercising their duties

2.3 The multi-agency Partnership Board for North Northamptonshire Council is established and has been instrumental in the development of this strategy, along with the Council's key partners and service providers. The strategy (**Appendix A**) has been compiled to improve support to vulnerable people to ensure that we work together to prevent, tackle and reduce abusive behaviour and the impact it has on the children, adults and families in our county.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Executive:

- a) Approve the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2025 for adoption and implementation by the Community Safety Partnership.

3.2 Reasons for Recommendation:-

The Council will be able to:

- a) Comply with the new statutory duty as the report and draft strategy will be in the public domain.
- b) Support a co-ordinated response to Domestic Abuse improving services and outcomes for all those affected.

4. Report Background

4.1 The current county-wide strategy covering both Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence 2019-2022, was not due to expire until next year, at the end of March 2022. However, the legislative changes have introduced a requirement to review and revise the strategy.

4.2 In addition, there have been societal and national events that need to be considered for the refresh of the strategy.

4.3 The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown restrictions put in place to reduce the spread of infection, which commenced 23rd March 2020, have had a huge impact on those affected by domestic abuse. While demand for some domestic abuse services reduced initially, because of access issues, it has since returned to pre-lockdown levels and has continued to rise.

- 4.4 The murder of Sarah Everard resulted in Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) producing a response to violence against women and girls. The report describes statistics on domestic abuse and violence against women and girls as evidencing 'an epidemic of violent and abusive offending against women and girls in England and Wales'. The report recommends a radical change of approach across the whole system, involving the police, criminal justice system, local authorities, health and education.
- 4.5 A separate Sexual Violence Strategy will follow and will reflect any changes in legislation.
- 4.6 Northamptonshire County Council (pre-unitary) received £100,000 funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) from the Domestic Abuse Capacity Building Fund. The funding has been allocated nationally for the purpose of preparing for the domestic abuse statutory duties arising from the new DA Act.
- 4.7 Northamptonshire utilised this funding to commission Red Quadrant to undertake research and deliver a report ('Northamptonshire domestic abuse accommodation and support pathway review') to establish our baseline data and qualitative information.
- 4.8 The Red Quadrant report has been utilised, alongside of a refreshed Needs Assessment and further consultation with service providers and key stakeholders, a new strategy has been developed for Northamptonshire.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1 The new strategy is a single document for the whole county, to reflect that many of the key stakeholders and service providers operating in this field, do so across the whole county. Individual action plans for the West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire will be developed to reflect any locally specific issues and opportunities.
- 5.2 The strategy for 2022-2025 has 5 priorities.
1. Driving Change Together.
 2. Early Intervention and Prevention.
 3. Provision of Services.
 4. Minimising Harm.
 5. Justice, Recovery and ongoing protection.
- 5.3 The Domestic Abuse strategy has also been informed by, and will support the delivery of:
- North Northamptonshire Draft Corporate Plan 2021-25 and West Northamptonshire Council Corporate Plan 2021-25
 - North Northamptonshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024

- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies for Daventry District Council, South Northants Council and Northampton Borough Council and the emerging Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for West Northants Council
 - Northamptonshire Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2016-20
 - Local Community Safety Partnership Priorities
- 5.4 Between March 2020 and April 2021, which included the periods of lockdown there was an average of 49 incidents every day. Without a co-ordinated response to address this the numbers are likely to increase, putting more adults and children at risk of serious harm or death.
- 5.5 There is a requirement for Tier One local authorities to provide support for victims of domestic abuse.
- 5.6 There is no alternative to developing this new strategy as it is a requirement of the new Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

- 6.1.1 Financial implications relate to the commissioning that will be required to deliver the strategy. Currently there is government funding allocated annually to deliver a response to domestic abuse and this will fund the actions set out in the strategy and subsequent action plans.
- 6.1.2 For 2021-22 The Council received an allocation of £664,295 against the following criteria:
- Revenue expenditure relating to the functions set out in the new statutory duty on Tier 1 Local Authorities relating to the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children residing within safe accommodation
 - To ensure continuity in provision, where existing domestic abuse safe accommodation support services (which are meeting a need in that area) are already commissioned, to maintain equivalent commissioned services until the needs assessments have been completed and the new strategies are in place on which future commissioning decisions can be based
- 6.1.3 The Council has to date committed £260,324 of this funding to ensure continuity of currently commissioned provision through our refuge and wraparound support providers EVE and Northamptonshire Domestic Abuse Services.
- 6.1.4 The remaining funds will be allocated to support the delivery of this Strategy.
- 6.1.5 The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership Board is responsible for developing and implementing the Domestic Abuse Strategy and the action plan.

The Board will report to Department. for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC):

- That a local Partnership Board has been established.
- Evidence a needs assessment has been conducted
- Evidence that strategies are in place and working effectively
- Evidence that commissioning is informed by the Needs Assessment and strategy
- Provide a breakdown of allocated funding

6.2 Legal

6.2.1 Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a legal duty to have a strategy in place.

6.2.2 The strategy meets our Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 as it supports addressing inequality by identifying and removing barriers faced by victims with relevant protected characteristics and / or multiple complex needs.

6.3 Risk

6.3.1 There are significant risks if the strategy is not approved as this will impact on co-ordination and delivery of services and possible deaths. Those most at risk and in need of accessing services will be impacted greatly.

6.3.2 If the Council does not have a strategy in place, then they are liable to incur reputational damage and financial penalties.

6.4 Consultation

6.4.1 Part 4, section 57.4 of the Act states Tier One authorities must consult with the Board, Tier Two authorities within the area and such other persons as they consider appropriate, before publishing their strategy.

6.4.2 The organisations which sit on the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership Board and the Community Safety Partnership Board have been extensively consulted, and changes have been incorporated into this strategy.

6.4.3 Such organisations include:

- Northamptonshire Police
- Northamptonshire Children's Trust
- Voluntary sector organisations supporting victims
- Clinical Commissioning Group (NHS)

6.5 Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

6.5.1 The Strategy and report will be presented to the Executive Advisory Panel.

6.6 Consideration by Scrutiny

6.6.1 This has not been reviewed by the Scrutiny Commission; but are eligible for call-in in accordance with the Access to Information Procedure Rules and the Scrutiny Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution (Parts 5 and 7 respectively).

6.7 Equality Implications

6.7.1 An Equality Screening Questionnaire has been completed and approved by a North Northamptonshire Council Equalities Officer. This document is included as **Appendix B**.

6.7.2 The strategy will have a positive impact towards eliminating discrimination, especially for those with protected characteristics as delivery will focus on working towards removing barriers and fostering good relations.

6.7.3 The strategy supports the Council's obligations within The Equality Act (2010).

6.8 Climate Impact

6.8.1 There are no specific climate and environmental impact that may arise from implementing the strategy. However, the provision of local refuges allows victims escaping domestic abuse to remain and receive support in their local areas, thus reducing journey times. This of course is dependent on their personal safety by staying in local refuges.

6.9 Community Impact

6.9.1 The new strategy will have a positive impact on those within the community as it considers the needs and specific barriers of victims that may fall into more than one protected characteristic and who have complex needs.

6.9.2 We will be required to provide specialist safe accommodation which provide dedicated specialist support to victims with protected characteristics and/or complex needs, such as specialist refuges for BAME, LGBT, and disabled victims and their children.

7 Background Papers

7.1 Home Office draft statutory guidance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1007814/draft-da-statutory-guidance-2021-final.pdf