

Cabinet

8 November 2021

Domestic Abuse Strategy

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr G Carr-Jones, Housing and Community Safety

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: V Broadhurst, Executive Director of People - Adults

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

That the Cabinet:

1. Endorse the continued publication of the consultation draft of the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24; and,
2. Grant the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety delegated authority to approve a final Strategy for publication, taking into account responses made to the consultation.

Reason for Recommendation:

To ensure the Council meets its statutory duty under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 relating to preparing and publishing a domestic abuse strategy.

1. Executive Summary

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 became law on 29 April 2021.

The Act places new responsibilities on Councils, including to establish a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (LPB), produce a needs assessment and prepare, publish and deliver a strategy relating to support for victims and children in domestic abuse safe accommodation.

Domestic Abuse Strategy

Although the requirement to prepare and publish a domestic abuse strategy is on Dorset Council, it must be done in consultation with the LPB. The Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has taken on the statutory functions of the LPB for the Dorset Council area and has overseen work relating to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

At their meeting on 6 October 2021, the CSP agreed a draft Domestic Abuse Strategy for 2021-24. The draft strategy was informed by a needs assessment in line with legislative requirements.

The legal requirement is for the strategy to cover support to victims and children in domestic abuse safe accommodation. However, that forms just one part of a much wider picture of need and service provision, so the scope of the strategy has been widened to cover all aspects of domestic abuse.

The draft strategy ([a copy of the draft strategy can be found here](#)) includes a position statement, an introduction to the requirements in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, recommendations from the needs assessment, a broad outline of activity in response to the recommendations and details on governance arrangements. Further detail on activity to respond to recommendations is included in a separate delivery plan (Appendix 1).

The original expectation from Central Government was that Councils should publish their domestic abuse strategies by August 2021. Draft regulations then stated the deadline would be 31 October 2021.

Final regulations and statutory guidance were published on 1 October 2021. These state that Councils must publish their draft strategies by 26 October 2021. Consultation must then be carried out before publication of a final version by 5 January 2022. Public consultation is planned to commence on 15th November 2021.

It is usual for the Council to undertake public consultation on key strategies and officers had developed a process for doing this following approval of the domestic abuse strategy by Cabinet. However, the late introduction of a requirement for a ten week consultation to take place before 5 January 2022 made it impossible for the consultation draft strategy to be approved by Cabinet on 8 November and still meet the Government's consultation and approval deadlines. Accordingly, with the agreement of the Portfolio Holder and supported by the Monitoring Officer a consultation draft strategy has been published in advance of the Cabinet meeting and the Cabinet is asked to endorse the consultation draft.

In addition, it is not possible to return to Cabinet within the timescales set by Government so members are being asked to agree the strategy subject to any changes resulting from public consultation. It is suggested responsibility for overseeing and approving any changes following public consultation is delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety.

Although the requirement is for strategies to be for three years, the aim locally is to review the strategy annually to ensure it remains up to date and in line with addressing local need.

Funding

Central Government has given upper tier local authorities a total of £125m new burdens funding in 2021/22 to help them deliver their new duties to provide support to victims and their children in domestic abuse safe accommodation.

Dorset Council has been given £650,000. The funding must be used on the duty. The expectation is that the money is spent in the current financial year. Funding for future years is dependent on Government spending reviews.

The mechanics of the new burdens funding presents challenges. The expectation to spend the money in the current financial year and the lack of certainty about future funding makes commissioning and procurement difficult. However, officers have developed plans for spending the funding and these have been supported by the CSP.

The plans include funding current accommodation based support, continuing and enhancing support for children in safe accommodation, providing more housing support, developing target hardening work so people can remain in their own homes safely (target hardening involves improving the security of a property to reduce the risk of crime and improve safety) and undertaking research and analysis to understand needs, what works and good practice in relation to domestic abuse (including implementing the findings).

2. Financial Implications

As above.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

Domestic abuse has a significant impact on people's physical and mental health.

The Council's work to tackle domestic abuse, including responding to requirements in the Domestic Abuse Act, helps strengthen the local response, providing people and their families with the right support.

4. Climate implications

None

5. Other Implications

The Council's response to meeting its new duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 forms part of its wider work to tackle crime and ensure Dorset's communities are safe.

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk:	Low
Residual Risk:	Low

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

An EQIA (Equality Impact Assessment) was undertaken as part of the development of the strategy and can be found on the Council's website.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Domestic Abuse Strategy Delivery Plan

9. Background Papers

The Domestic Abuse Bill – Report to People & Health Overview Committee, 4 March 2021 - [People Health Overview Committee - The Domestic Abuse Bill v3.pdf \(dorsetcouncil.gov.uk\)](#)

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Factsheet – [Domestic Abuse Act 2021: overarching factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Regulations - [The Domestic Abuse Support \(Local Authority Strategies and Annual Reports\) Regulations 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

Statutory Guidance - [Delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Dorset Community Safety Partnership \(CSP\) Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-2024 Revised Final \(Draft\)](#)

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.