

**Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form: Initial impact assessment**

If an officer is undertaking a project, policy change or service change, then an initial impact assessment must be completed and attached alongside the Project initiation document.

**EqIA Titular information:**

Date:	3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2021
Service:	Communities, Insight and Change
Project, policy or service EQIA relates to:	DA Policy including Support for victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation – Part 4 Duty, Domestic Abuse Act 2021
Completed by:	Karen Evans
Has the EQIA been discussed at services team meeting:	Discussed with WBC project group – Simon, Narinder,
Signed off by:	CLT
Sign off date:	

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**1. Policy, Project or service information:**

This section should be used to identify the main purpose of the project, policy or service change, the method of delivery, including who key stakeholders are, main beneficiaries and any associated aims.

**What is the purpose of the project, policy change or service change, its expected outcomes and how does it relate to your services corporate plan:**

Describe the main proposed outcome of your project, who was responsible for the creation of the project and key steps in the process that have led to the EQIA. How does your project link into your services corporate plan and priorities?

Purpose:

- To create a strategy to respond to Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which requires unitary authorities to support victims of domestic abuse and their children residing in safe accommodation.
- To update the current Wokingham Domestic Abuse Strategy to cover the period 2021-2024.

Expected outcomes:

- A clear strategy detailing the outcomes of Domestic Abuse needs assessment and how to address the gaps in support identified.
- Action plan to address identified gaps in support for victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation.
- A clear strategy detailing collaborative aims and priorities from partner agencies across Wokingham Borough will address domestic abuse for the period 2021-2024
- Yearly action plan to set out the single and multi-agency response to addressing domestic abuse across the Borough.

Services corporate plan:

This strategy aligns with our Community Vision and the Corporate Delivery Plan in several ways, supporting strategic values, principles, and plans:

- Safe, Strong Communities
- Changing the way we work for you

In addition, the service aligns with our Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy particularly ‘reducing inequalities’ as well as supporting the new ASC strategy and priorities of the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board Priority; “to work collaboratively with Safeguarding Children’s Partnership, Community Safety Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Boards to provide the workforce with the frameworks and tools to work with Vulnerable Adults who are at risk of Domestic Abuse”

The service will also contribute to the following priorities within the developing Children & Young People’s Plan:

Priority 1 – Early Intervention and Prevention

Priority 2 – Emotional Wellbeing

Priority 3 – Contextual Safeguarding

**Outline how you are delivering your project, policy change or service change. What governance arrangements are in place, which internal stakeholders (Service managers, Assistant Directors, Members etc) have/will be consulted and informed about the project or changes:**

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Explain here the project management framework around your project, including who your internal stakeholders are.

How is the project delivered:

- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has produced draft statutory guidance which outlines the steps which have to be taken to develop the strategy and monitor impact.
- A multi agency Domestic Abuse Partnership Board has been created in line with MHCLG guidance. Members have been sought to ensure that the needs of all protected characteristic groups are represented within meetings, the strategy and ongoing monitoring of impact.
- Independent needs assessment reports have been commissioned to focus on housing options and best practice, which includes safe housing options for all victim and children demographics and separate report exploring customer pathways and experiences of services.
- Collaboration with Housing and Homelessness teams; customer experience team; Community Safety and other relevant teams and relevant HR managers on addressing gaps in specialist roles to improve customer access and experiences.
- Wider domestic abuse strategy – networking group

Governance:

- The multi-agency Domestic Abuse Partnership Board will be responsible for the creation, content and linked action plan relating to the LA’s new duty under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- The Domestic Abuse Networking Group will report to the Community Safety Partnership, who in turn report to the Community Safety oversee main strategy and actions.
- The Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and Domestic Abuse Networking Group will report to the Community Safety Partnership, who in turn report to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Stakeholders:

- Multi Agency Domestic Abuse Partnership Board members
- Multi Agency Domestic Abuse Networking group members
- Homelessness and Housing team
- Tenancy engagement officer and members

**Outline who are the main beneficiaries of the Project, policy change or service change?**

*“Outline who are the main beneficiaries of the project, policy change or service change?”* Thinking about the project or policy, who are the intended beneficiaries of it? i.e WBC staff, the borough’s population. If it is the population at large, then please state this, but think about groups that may have greater significance.

- The ‘Part 4’ support for victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation element of the domestic abuse strategy responds to new duties placed on WBC under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This requires a robust needs assessment to be undertaken to include exploring the pathways to safe accommodation taken by a diverse range of people with different protected characteristics, as well as the needs for support within safe accommodation which they have identified.
- The Part 4 strategy will ensure that appropriate support will be provided to all victims of domestic abuse and their children residing in safe accommodation who are Wokingham residents, including those who seek to flee to Wokingham as a result of domestic abuse.
- Currently the only refuge provision within Wokingham for victims of domestic abuse and their children is only available to female victims and is not an accessible property. The strategy will seek to address gaps in provision for men, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities; those where race or culture impacts may mean that the current refuge provision is not suitable and older people who have support needs or would find it difficult to live in refuge accommodation.
- Approximately 10% of the Wokingham population will have experienced domestic abuse in the past year, many of whom may need to escape to safe accommodation. The strategy and linked actions will help to deliver additional refuge capacity and widen the options for safe accommodation available.
- The findings from the needs assessment in terms of experiences from victims and survivors with protected characteristics, including suggestions for how experiences could be improved and gaps in services are being incorporated into the wider domestic abuse strategy and linked action plan which addresses all aspects of domestic abuse, including awareness and early intervention; support for victims and children; minimising harm through working with perpetrators; justice, recovery and ongoing protection and; driving change together.

**Outline any associated aims attached to the project, policy change or service change:**

*“Outline any associated aims attached to the project, policy change or service change.”* An impact in one area of the organisation may see impacts in other areas; this section is about identifying those, either positive or negative.

- Increase the number of victims of domestic abuse with protected characteristics who seek help seeking as realistic and access domestic abuse safe accommodation.

- Nationally concerns have been raised that creating a new duty for unitary authorities linked to support in safe accommodation will result in funding being withdrawn from wider community-based services. WBC have recently commissioned the domestic abuse service to deliver support for victims of domestic abuse, their children and abusers who are willing to address their behaviour and there will be no negative impact locally linked to the new duty and strategy.
- Bringing together the ‘voices’ of a diverse range of domestic abuse victims and their children will help organisations to better understand how to ensure smooth pathways and experiences of support.
- Improved experience for WBC colleagues and managers through a clear strategy and linked action plan to improve and develop support

## 2. Protected characteristics:

There are 9 protected characteristics as defined by the legislation:

- Race
- Gender
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Age
- Religious belief
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy/Maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership:

*To find out more about the protected groups, please consult the EQIA guidance.*

## 3. Initial Impact review:

In the table below, please indicate whether your project, Policy change or service change will have a positive or negative impact on one of the protected characteristics. To assess the level of impact, please assign each group a Positive, No, Low or High impact score:

*For information on how to define No, low or high impact, please consult the EQIA guidance document.*

If your project is to have a positive impact on one of the protected groups, please outline this in the table below.

*For details on what constitutes a positive impact, please consult the EQIA guidance.*

Protected characteristics	Impact score	Please detail what impact will be felt by the protected group:
Race:	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased understanding and focus on cultural and language barriers to accessing safe accommodation will lead to more sensitive and innovative support options.</li> </ul>
Gender:	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is currently no refuge provision in Thames Valley for male victims of domestic abuse and this will be addressed through the strategy and linked action plan. Male victims are also very under-represented in domestic abuse services locally as well as through homelessness presentations and requests for home refuge scheme support.</li> </ul>
Disabilities:	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical impairment and / or support needs impacts on the ability of a domestic abuse victim to escape an abusive relationship. By increasing understanding of victims experiences of pathways to support and a focused action plan to address gaps will help to reduce barriers. Issues include overcoming communication barriers; the provision of safety equipment which meets a individual's needs (eg vibrating alarms); materials and literature produced in easy read and pictorial based formats and accessible accommodation options.</li> </ul>
Age:	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased understanding of the needs of older people includes exploring accommodation options which include</li> </ul>

		<p>supported accommodation; residential accommodation and additional age appropriate support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Younger victims of domestic abuse support needs to include life skills; healthy relationships and supported accommodation.</li> </ul>
Sexual orientation:	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater understanding of the needs of the LGB community will enable a wider range of safe accommodation options to be available based on the individual's preferences.</li> </ul>
Religion/belief:	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased understanding to address barriers to accessing safe accommodation. Issues identified include difficulties in sharing cooking environments.</li> <li>• Understanding the cultural differences people experience will enable us to ensure that appropriate support options are identified and explored.</li> </ul>
Gender re-assignment:	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater understanding of the needs of those who have transitioned or are transitioning within safe accommodation. Includes need of medication; may not feel comfortable within either a male or female refuge.</li> </ul>
Pregnancy and Maternity:	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30% of domestic abuse starts when someone is pregnant or has recently had a baby. Increased safe accommodation options will positively increase options available.</li> </ul>

Marriage and civil partnership:	No change	
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Based on your findings from your initial impact assessment, you must complete a full impact assessment for any groups you have identified as having a low or high negative impact. If No impact, or a positive impact has been identified, you do not need to complete a full assessment. However, you must report on this initial assessment and it must receive formal approval from the Assistant Director responsible for the project, policy or service change.

Initial impact assessment approved by....

Date:....