

# DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY 2021-2024

**COMMUNITY  
SAFETY  
PARTNERSHIP**

**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH  
COUNCIL**



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# NOTES ON LANGUAGE

## Victim - survivor

These terms are used interchangeably throughout this report to refer to people who have or are currently experiencing domestic abuse.

## Perpetrator

This term is used throughout to refer to the person using abuse.

## Lived experience

This term refers to individuals who share their expertise and knowledge based on their first-hand experiencing of domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological or emotional and/or physical and sexual abuse.

## Specialist domestic abuse service

This term refers to organisations/services independent from the state (i.e. third sector), whose core business is to support victim-survivors and/or perpetrators and/or children and young people impacted by domestic abuse, sexual violence, forced marriage, so called 'honour-based' violence and female genital mutilation (FGM).

## 'By and for'

Dedicated specialist support for victims with relevant protected characteristics and / or complex needs – where personnel running and / or working in service have the same demographics and / or experiences as victim types they are specialising in.

# FOREWORD

## Foreword

Rachel Oakley, Chair DA Networking group and Simon Price, Chair, Wokingham DA Partnership Board – message awaited.



# INTRODUCTION

This Strategy outlines Wokingham's approach to **tackling domestic abuse which we see as an unacceptable, preventable issue which blights the lives of thousands of Wokingham residents. Our priority is the safety of victims of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age, disability or financial means.**

Domestic abuse is defined as any single incident, course of conduct or pattern of abusive behaviour between individuals aged 16 or over who are "personally connected" to each other as a result of being, or having been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to either of the parties are also considered victims of domestic abuse.

**The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the 'Act')**, which was signed into law on 29th April 2021 provides additional support for people who experience domestic abuse; strengthening measures to tackle perpetrators; providing a legal definition of domestic abuse which incorporates a range of abuses beyond physical violence, including emotional, coercive or controlling behaviour and economic abuse and recognising children as victims in their own right.

Within this Strategy, Wokingham Borough Council responds to the new duties on Local Authorities following the Act **to provide support for victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation.** We recognise that support in safe accommodation is only one aspect of addressing domestic abuse and this document also covers our wider response to this issue, including tackling root causes and help to enable people to start re-building their lives.

To inform this strategy, Wokingham Borough Council and partner agencies across the Borough conducted a needs assessment consisting of a robust, comprehensive and holistic assessment of data, in-depth interviews and a public consultation. The outcomes will also be used to monitor progress of our aims, to ensure that local residents are able to see real, long-lasting changes.

This needs assessment has considered relevant legislation, guidance and best practice as well as research findings. Support for children and young people who are affected by domestic abuse is an essential aspect of our work as is the need to address gaps identified in support and options.

We recognise that every individual will have unique needs and experiences and that many people will face additional barriers and concerns in seeking and accessing help and support, including those who have no recourse to public funds. Our analysis of data has identified where victim-survivors are not currently 'visible' to domestic abuse services, and we have set out below how we will work to reduce and remove barriers to help seeking so that ALL those affected by domestic abuse feel able to access help and support regardless of **gender, sexuality, age, disability, ethnicity, religion and faith and where they have multiple complex needs.**

Additionally, we recognise the wider impact of domestic abuse on family members, friends, neighbours, colleagues, and wider society and our approach of creating a 'stronger system' will help every person and every organisation to understand the role they play in tackling this issue.

Effective prevention needs to include **early intervention** to attempt to influence values in childhood and adolescence, as well as shifting social norms to become less accepting of violence and abuse. Awareness raising campaigns are seen as vital to address stigma to encourage victims and survivors to seek support, to offer counter narratives to normalisation of these crimes and to encourage more open discussion of them within society.

**The Strategy sets out how we will raise awareness and accessibility of information, effectively communicating across and within services at all levels and how we will produce clear pathways to support and interventions.**

**Our ambition is to address stigma; encourage victims, survivors and children to seek support and offer counter narratives to normalisation of these crimes, breaking the cycle of re-offending and re-victimisation and taking the responsibility for dealing with the impact of domestic abuse away from victim-survivors and putting the onus firmly on perpetrators of abuse to change their behaviour.**

# PURPOSE AND APPROACH OF STRATEGY

Our aim is for Wokingham residents and those who flee to our area as a result of domestic abuse to feel safe, acknowledged and 'heard' and to be able to navigate systems and services to get to the help they need based on their own unique needs and issues.

Within this strategy we have set out how we have collectively as agencies arrived at the priorities detailed below, identifying actions for the short, medium, and longer term, aligning our local response to national direction.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced new duties for Local Authorities linked to support within safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and their children and this strategy includes our statutory duty to:



Appoint a Local Partnership Board consisting of key partners with an interest in tackling domestic abuse and supporting victims, including their children.



Assess the scale and nature of the needs for support within relevant, safe accommodation.



Prepare and publish a whole-area domestic abuse strategy setting out the steps needed to meet the needs of diverse victims and their children.



Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy.



Give effect to the strategy by making commissioning and decommissioning decisions for support within relevant accommodation at local level.

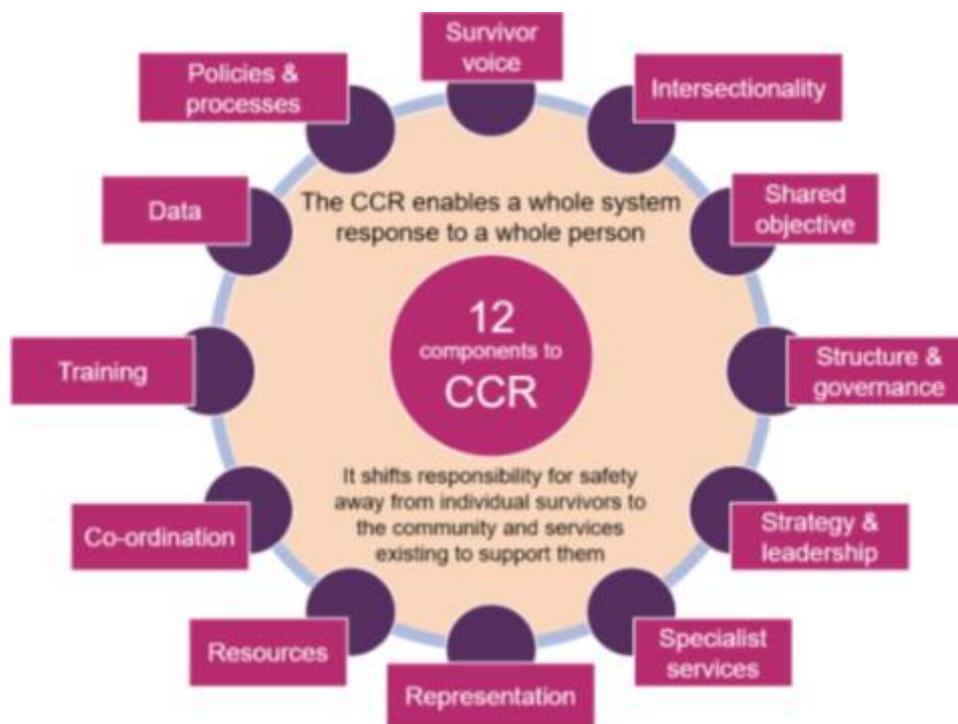


Report on progress and how allocated funding and how it has been used to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), formerly the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

# OUR APPROACH

We recognise that domestic abuse is a complex social problem that impacts people, communities, and services across society. To tackle and ultimately prevent domestic abuse, a Coordinated Community Response (CCR) has been created. A CCR is an approach which brings together services, including health, housing, social care, education, criminal justice and communities. The aim is to ensure local systems keep survivors safe, hold abusers to account and prevent domestic abuse.

The following model is now widely accepted as best practice and is one we are seeking to adopt across Wokingham:



## Progress To Date

To prepare for the new duties under the **Domestic Abuse Act 2021**, a Wokingham Domestic Abuse Partnership Board was appointed in March 2021, consisting of key statutory, voluntary organisations and those who could represent the 'voice' of diverse victims and children experiencing domestic abuse.

Alongside the Partnership Board, a networking group was established in April 2021 of over 40 local organisations who are invested in supporting those affected by domestic abuse be they victim-survivors, children and young people or those who are perpetrating abuse.

In order to understand the needs of those affected by domestic abuse in Wokingham as well as those seeking to flee to our area as a result of domestic abuse, a robust needs assessment was undertaken. This consisted of analysis of data; in depth

interviews with victim – survivors, children and young people; analysis of available safe accommodation options within the Borough and wider national and emerging research and best practice.

The results of our analysis were published by way of a domestic abuse strategy consultation. The outcomes of the analysis and feedback from the consultation process have led to this strategy; the identification of key priorities to make real and sustainable progress; and the development of a three-year plan, alongside annual detailed action plans.

## Consultation Process

Throughout the consultation process, we have sought to better understand the experiences of those in our area in accessing information and services.

Following in depth interviews with individuals who had been directly affected by domestic abuse as well as practitioners and local organisations, a draft strategy was put out for public consultation in July 2021 for a period of four weeks.

**118**

Responses

118 responses were received, providing a rich source of data and detailed feedback on their experiences of domestic abuse and our suggested priorities and approach. Respondents were representative of our area, from a wide range of age, genders, sexualities, ethnicities and disabilities and we have heard first-hand about serious trauma, physical harm, and long-term mental health impacts of experiencing domestic abuse.

We were encouraged to see that most of the respondents had a good understanding of the different forms domestic abuse can take. Just over 50% of respondents have experienced domestic abuse in their adult relationships; 19% have grown up with domestic abuse; 3% are concerned about their own behaviour; and many more were aware of family members, friends, neighbours and colleagues who had been affected by this issue. The quotes used within this document are from the consultation responses and are real people's experiences.

**50%**

Over 50% of respondent having experienced DA in their adult relationships

**19%**

Of respondents grew up with domestic abuse

**3%**

3% of respondents were concerned about their own behaviour

# DATA ANALYSIS

Domestic abuse is often a 'hidden' issue which presents challenges to understanding the full extent of this issue within Wokingham Borough. To inform the needs assessment, data was gathered from the following organisations:

<p>Thames Valley Police</p> 	<p>Berkshire Women's Aid (domestic abuse commissioned service during this data period)</p> 	<p>Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) Homelessness Team</p> 	<p>WBC Home Refuge (Sanctuary) Scheme</p> 
<p>WBC Children's Services</p> 	<p>WBC Adult Services</p> 	<p>Health – Clinical Commissioning Group and Berkshire Health Trust</p> 	<p>Voluntary Organisations</p> 

## Prevalence

In the period 1/4/2020 – 31/3/2021, Thames Valley Police responded to **2047** incidents of domestic abuse (**1479 women and 568 men**) in Wokingham. However, we are aware that many people don't feel able to report incidents to the police for a wide variety of reasons, and the true number of Wokingham residents who will have experienced domestic in the past year is likely to be **2700** women and **1500** men, based on Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) research findings.

In the year to March 2021, **136** Wokingham victims of domestic abuse were identified as being at high risk of serious harm or homicide, with **165** children living in these households. The commissioned domestic abuse service supported **292** victims alongside delivering support for children and interventions to address perpetrator behaviours.



# REPRESENTATION OF SPECIFIC GROUPS IN RECEIVING SERVICES

We recognise that every single person is a unique individual with their own needs and that many people face intersectionality of multiple needs, issues and barriers to accessing support.

The data collected from the agencies detailed above indicated that within services, people who share the following characteristics are currently under-represented in services or have expressed additional needs linked to victim interviews requiring targeted interventions and support linked to this Strategy:



**Male victims**



**Those who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans-gender+**



**Older people**



**Younger people (16-18 year-olds)**



**People with health needs or disabilities**



**Those who need to flee to another area because of domestic abuse**



**People with complex needs (for example those with an offending history; substance misuse needs; those facing multiple forms of abuse within the family, including so called 'honour' based abuse and forced marriage)**



**Those for whom there are limited safe accommodation options as a result of family size, gender, sexuality, having adolescent boys, health or mobility needs**



**Those experiencing cultural, religion and / or faith, language barriers and / or insecure immigration status**

# EMERGING NEEDS

Alongside data collected about individuals accessing services, an analysis was undertaken to understand more about our Wokingham residents, looking at age, ethnicity, affluence and other issues. This information enabled us to identify issues which are likely to be specific to our area and could impact on individual's choices and responses to experiencing domestic abuse.

This analysis identified the following issues to consider when developing this Strategy:

## Minorities

A need for 'by and for' specialist services that meet the needs of survivors from minoritised backgrounds.

## Economic Abuse and Housing

A need to focus on economic abuse and housing, where research has highlighted specific issues relating to mortgages and other debts secured to privately owned property.

## Demographics

To better understand the needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender (LGBT)+ domestic abuse; older people; people with a disability; male victims; those from ethnic diverse communities.

# SURVIVORS 'VOICES'

In depth interviews were held with those who had been directly affected by domestic abuse in order to understand their experiences and inform this strategy.

## Victims and survivors identified that they want:



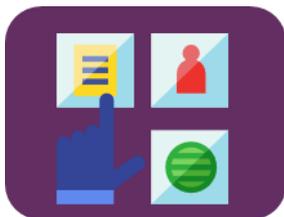
### To Be Safe

in all its forms...Home, environment, schools, financially, services etc



### To Feel Acknowledged And 'Heard'

regardless of gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity or whether they have disabilities, mental well-being or other issues



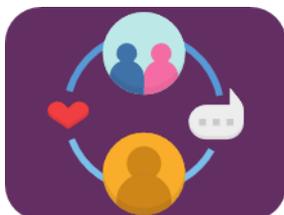
### For Organisations To Be More Trauma-informed

when talking to victims / survivors. Understand the impact of economic, emotional, psychological, sexual, physical as well as coercive, narcissistic, controlling behaviour, 'honour' based abuse, forced marriage, and Female Genital Mutilation



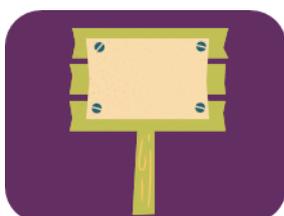
### For Front-line Officers to understand options

relating to safe and suitable accommodation options



### For Support or Therapy To Be Tailored

to their unique circumstances



### Effective Signposting and a Co-ordinated Response

across the borough in partnership with voluntary services as well as commissioned and council-based services.

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S 'VOICES'

Children and young people, as well as non-abusive parents identified they need:



## To Be Safe

in all its forms... at home, their environment, in school and with their contact with social and other services



## To Feel Acknowledged and 'Heard'

they need adults to understand and listen to the things they are saying – but also to be aware of the things they are 'not saying' verbally, but perhaps through body language. To be empathetic and to be the 'person they can trust to help them'



## For Organisations To Be More Trauma-informed

understanding the trauma(s) that the child has gone through/is going through. The confusion of how to process things; the dilemma they have of protecting their parent survivor/victim against their relationship with the perpetrator



## For Front-line Officers to understand options

relating to suitable safe accommodation needs, such as near schools so that they are near their friends



## For Support or Therapy To Be Tailored

to their unique circumstances (such as Post Traumatic Stress Therapy including Eye Movement De-sensitisation and Reprocessing, Colour Art Therapy, play therapy)



## Effective Signposting and a Co-ordinated Response

across the borough in partnership with voluntary services as well as commissioned and council-based services



## Peer Support

children need to feel that they are not the only ones going through the situation so that they do not feel 'isolated' and can talk to other children who have/are going through the same thing as them

# QUOTES FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON DRAFT STRATEGY

*"You don't just have one type of abuse. It's all interlinked. The abuser wouldn't get physical unless they had worked on your mind first. My ex tried to murder via strangulation yet it's the psychological scars that are hardest"*

*"I didn't recognise all the forms of abuse while I was in the relationship, and only after leaving and educating myself on abuse did I realise just how much abuse there was"*

*"A friend of my partner's was physically attacked by his wife, I never discussed it with him so don't know if there was any other abuse and he had just left her by the time I met him, but the physical scars were still visible".*

*"Family friend sexually assaulted me 2 guys off a gay dating app (Grindr) drugged and assaulted me. Psychological / emotional abuse from parent due to being gay as a child".*

*"Support for victims, friends and family as they can feel helpless at the time and then guilty when their intuition proves to be correct and yet they felt powerless to help or know where to go for help".*

# PRIORITIES AND AIMS

Based on analysis of the data collected; outcomes of the interviews; public consultation feedback; best practice and research findings, the following priorities and aims have been agreed:

## Awareness and Early Intervention



- Ensure information is available in a range of formats and languages
- Deliver awareness raising campaigns
- Make information available in community settings
- Support educational settings to raise awareness of Domestic Abuse
- Deliver training to enable Domestic Abuse to be identified and responded to

## Support for Victims, Survivors and Children



- Ensure support is available at the earliest opportunities for victims, survivors and children
- Ensure a wide range of holistic support options are available
- Tailored support to meet the individual's needs, empowering individuals to make safe choices
- Increase the number of people who are currently 'under represented' in services
- Create clear pathways to support

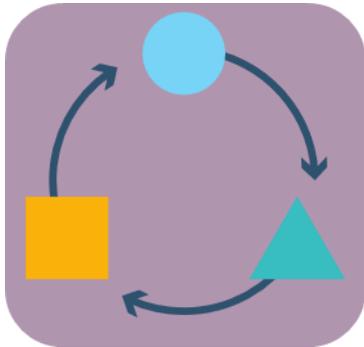
## Minimising Harm



- Encourage those who are causing harm as a result of their abuse to access support to change
- Hold those who perpetrate domestic abuse to account
- Tackle the root cause of domestic abuse and break the cycle of abuse

# PRIORITIES AND AIMS

## Justice, Recovery and On-going Protection



- Work with the Criminal Justice Services to support victims and survivors give their best evidence in court
- Improve the experiences of those going through the Civil and Family Court systems
- Support individuals in achieving long term wellbeing, both physically and emotionally so they can feel safe and move forward with their lives

## Driving Change Together



- Support partner organisations to work together to provide holistic and coordinated support
- Reduce the number of times that someone has to 'tell their story'
- Promote 'whole family and whole systems' approaches
- Ensure the 'voices' of victims, survivors, children and perpetrators are 'heard'
- Provide and coordinate multi-agency training events, workshops and conferences

## Delivering the Domestic Abuse (DA) Act 2021 Duty



- Understand the needs of those who need to access safe accommodation as a result of domestic abuse
- Ensure a wide range of safe accommodation options is available
- Provide support for domestic abuse victims, survivors and their children in safe accommodation

## Overview

Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed new duties on Local Authorities to provide support for domestic abuse victims and their children residing in safe accommodation. Statutory guidance on how this duty should be delivered has been produced by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), previously the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and guides this local Strategy in respect of the new duties.

In line with recommendations, we seek through this Strategy to detail how we will fulfil our responsibilities to Part 4 of the Act as part of a coordinated response in a way that follows a victim-survivor's housing journey.

## The Wokingham Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board

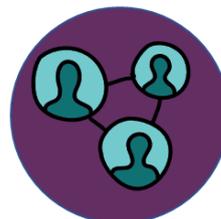
A Wokingham Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (the 'Board') was formed in March 2021. The Board includes the responsible bodies and agencies as required by law to be represented. Members are responsible for ensuring they report back and feed into the Board on behalf of their represented group / body.



Representatives of diverse victims 'voices' including LGBT+, male, minority ethnic, older and disabled victims



Wokingham Borough Council representative(s)



Representative/s of children of domestic abuse victims



Representatives for charities and other voluntary organisations that work with victims of domestic abuse in the area



Representative/s for health care services in the area



Representative/s for policing and criminal justice in the area



Representative/s for housing services

# SUPPORT FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE VICTIMS AND THEIR CHILDREN IN SAFE ACCOMMODATION

**The Board provides advice and data to support Wokingham Borough Council by:**

- Undertaking robust local needs assessments to identify and respond to the needs of domestic abuse victims within our borough as well as those who present from out of area
- Helping to identify victims and referring them for help and support
- Providing expert advice and data to support the development of this local strategy
- Effectively engage with domestic abuse victims and expert services in understanding the range and complexity of needs and other relevant functions.

*The Board was consulted prior to publication of this document.*

## **Support for domestic abuse victims and their children in safe accommodation**

The new duty created under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, relates specifically to support within safe accommodation as other legislation covers the provision of accommodation. Support in community settings is also excluded from this new duty although this is addressed in the first section of this strategy and forms part of the wider national and local domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls responses.

‘Safe accommodation’, also defined as ‘relevant accommodation’ is specified by the Secretary of State in regulations as:



**Refuge  
Accommodation**



**Specialist, safe  
Accommodation**



**Dispersed  
Accommodation**



**Sanctuary Schemes  
(Wokingham: Home Refuge  
Scheme)**



**Move-on And Or  
Second Stage  
Accommodation**



**Other Forms of Domestic  
Abuse Emergency  
Accommodation**

The guidance states that accommodation such as bed and breakfast accommodation is not considered relevant safe accommodation and is specifically excluded under the Regulations.

Duties under other Acts, such as temporary accommodation provided under Part 7 of the **Housing Act 1996**, continue to be met by Wokingham Borough Council and regard is given to victims presenting as homelessness who are considered priority need in terms of access to accommodation, safe move-on accommodation from refuges and the ability to maintain secure tenancies where applicable.

**For the purposes of the new duty, support within relevant accommodation includes:**

- Overall management of services within relevant accommodation
- Support with the day-to-day running of the service



**Advocacy support** – development of personal safety plans, liaison with other services (for example, GPs and social workers, welfare benefit providers)



**Domestic abuse-prevention advice** – support to assist victims to recognise the signs of abusive relationships, to help them remain safe (including online) and to prevent re-victimisation



**Housing-related support** – providing housing-related advice and support, for example, securing a permanent home and advice on how to live safely and independently



**Specialist support** for victims with relevant protected characteristics and / or complex needs, for example, interpreters, faith services, mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support, and immigration advice



**Counselling and therapy** - for both adults and children.



**Children's support** – including play therapy and child advocacy

# NEEDS ASSESSMENT APPROACH AND OUTCOMES

The following actions were undertaken to gain insight of the diverse needs of those accessing support within safe accommodation and opportunities for earlier intervention:



Collection of data to understand the number and demographics of people accessing services and interventions, including those who must flee to or from Wokingham to access safe accommodation



Review of Wokingham population data to understand population in terms of age, disability, ethnicity, income, home ownership and faith in order to compare this with the number of individuals 'visible' to services



Review of safe accommodation options currently available and demographics



In depth interviews with individuals with lived experience of domestic abuse, including young people and non-abusive parents



Analysis of gaps in provision, including understanding if those who own their own homes are seeking help



Review of research, best practice, national and local strategies and guidance documents



In depth interviews with local practitioners and national specialist services supporting those who share relevant protected characteristics

# SAFE ACCOMMODATION DATA FINDINGS

There were 37 homelessness presentations made to Wokingham Borough Council as a result of domestic abuse during the period 1/4/2020 – 31/3/2021 and an additional 44 people were supported to remain in their own homes with the provision of security measures through the Wokingham Home Refuge (Sanctuary) scheme.

100% of those presenting as homeless were female; 11% had a disability; 67% were White; 14% Asian or Asian British; 18% Black or Black British and 3% of mixed ethnicity. Despite the demographic make up of our area, there were no Gypsy, Roma or Travellers presenting. 62% of those presenting were adults with children and 38% had no accompanying children.

A three-bedroom refuge supports those who need to flee from other areas to access safe accommodation and additional refuge provision is currently being secured. Of the 20 people who were known to have come to our area as a result of fleeing domestic abuse, eight were from the Reading area, four from other neighbouring areas and eight from further afield.

## Safe accommodation options currently available

In order to provide a holistic and inclusive response to the safe accommodation needs of victims and children in Wokingham Borough, we are seeking to adopt the Whole Housing Approach. The Whole Housing Approach (WHA) is a framework for addressing the housing and safety needs of victim-survivors of domestic abuse in a local area.

A review has been undertaken to identify which component parts are available in Wokingham and which are currently gaps in our provision. The outcomes of the review can be found in the table below.



# CURRENT SAFE ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

Part 4 Requirement	Current Status	Gaps/Needs	Initial Recommendations
Refuge	Berkshire Women's Aid provide safe house for up to 38 women and children in 7 refuges in Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell.	<p><b>The following could not be accommodated:</b></p> <p>22: No recourse to public funds survivors            37: complex needs unable to access            108: No space or suitable room size            10: Complex mental health needs unable to access            7: Complex Substance misuse under able to offer s            2: Complex disability needs unable to offer            33: Not safe in area unable to offer space</p> <p><b>In addition:</b></p> <p>Traveler and Roma Gypsy community: no caravan or mobile homes            Male Victims / LGBT+: no provision            Disability: no rooms adapted to meet physical dis            BWA Refuge is not a 'by and for' refuge            Insufficient size rooms to meet larger families need</p>	<p>Council of Europe recommendation: 1 refuge space per 10,000 population</p> <p>Review the main reasons for why survivors can't access BWA refuge (main reasons based on No Woman Turned Away: disability, teenage son, BME, 4+ children)</p> <p>To commission specialist support to meet the specific needs of victims from marginalised groups.</p>
Sanctuary Scheme	The Home Refuge scheme is delivered by WBC. Scheme is fitted by Age UK.	<p>No self-referrals received Jan-Apr 2021: People in need may not be engage with services.</p> <p>No referrals since lockdown from WBC housing team. Historically they make the most referrals.</p> <p>Demographic breakdown not available.</p>	<p>Sanctuary scheme offered as part of a package of support with access to DA services for safety planning.</p> <p>Sanctuary scheme promoted to encourage self-referrals.</p> <p>Review process, looking at length of wait, costings, any issues with private rented sector, demographic data etc.</p>

Move On /Dispersed	<p>BWA staff support survivors to make homelessness applications as part of outreach provision.</p> <p>Monthly Housing Panel meetings to discuss complex and urgent cases.</p> <p>Silvia Homes have reciprocals agreement with WBC and Vivid have nominations rights managed by WBC.</p>	<p>No immediate relief (so not placed in accommodation before doing the homelessness appointment)</p> <p>Not enough temporary accommodation in the Borough</p> <p>Lack of culturally specific services attached to accommodation and not being able to keep pets</p>	<p>Access Move On Fund via Homes England, which has funding ring fenced for DA accommodation.</p> <p>Ensure designated DA safe accommodation through new affordable housing provision.</p>
Social Housing/ DAHA	Wokingham Borough Council and 3 Local Housing committed to seeking DAHA Accreditation .	<p>Staff not aware of dynamics of DA and needs of the survivor</p> <p>Need for perpetrator management.</p>	<p>Refuge providers, leads for other forms of housing, commissioners to be involved in work.</p> <p>Housing partners to attend national DAHA workshops.</p>
Co-located Advocacy/ Mobile Advocacy	No co-located advocacy service in place.	<p>There is some uncertainty of housing options available to support survivors</p> <p>Feedback included that staff not aware of dynamics of DA and needs of the survivor</p>	Commission co-located housing advocate

# CURRENT SAFE ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

Part 4 Requirement	Current Status	Gaps/ Needs	Initial Recommendations
Flexible Funding	<p>Not currently available.</p> <p>Some support available through Cowshed.</p> <p>Designated funding pot that survivors can access easily and quickly to retain or secure safe and stable housing. There is not set list of what will be funded. It exists to fund whatever will help survivors access the best housing outcome possible for them in the short and long term.</p>	<p>Where parents require financial help in order to travel to schools that are located far away from their home address, they often have to pay for the cost upfront before being able to claim it back.</p> <p>Accommodation does not always have furnishings.</p>	<p>Establish pot, ideally dispersed via the specialist domestic abuse services – Whole Housing pilot included £100k fore three pilot sites over 2 years.</p>
Managed Reciprocal Scheme	<p>Local Housing Provider Forum meet quarterly.</p> <p>Silvia Homes have reciprocals agreement with WBC and Vivid have nominations rights managed by WBC.</p>	<p>Not enough temporary accommodation available.</p> <p>Survivors highlight the location for housing was not always suitable.</p>	<p>Consider introducing a reciprocal scheme with surrounding LA's and main providers to help survivors maintain social tenancies.</p>

# Victim -survivors needs relating to their lived experiences

Our interviews with victims of domestic abuse to discuss safe accommodation and support within safe accommodation identified the following as their key needs:



To Be Safe



To FEEL ACKNOWLEDGED AND 'HEARD' regardless of gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity, disability or any other characteristic



Front line officers to be aware of NUANCES OF DOMESTIC ABUSE and the impact of economic, emotional, psychological, sexual as well as physical abuse, to understand coercive and controlling behaviour, 'honour' based abuse and forced marriage



Front line officers to UNDERSTAND INTERSECTIONALITIES, including mental health, culture and faith



SUITABLE SAFE ACCOMMODATION options



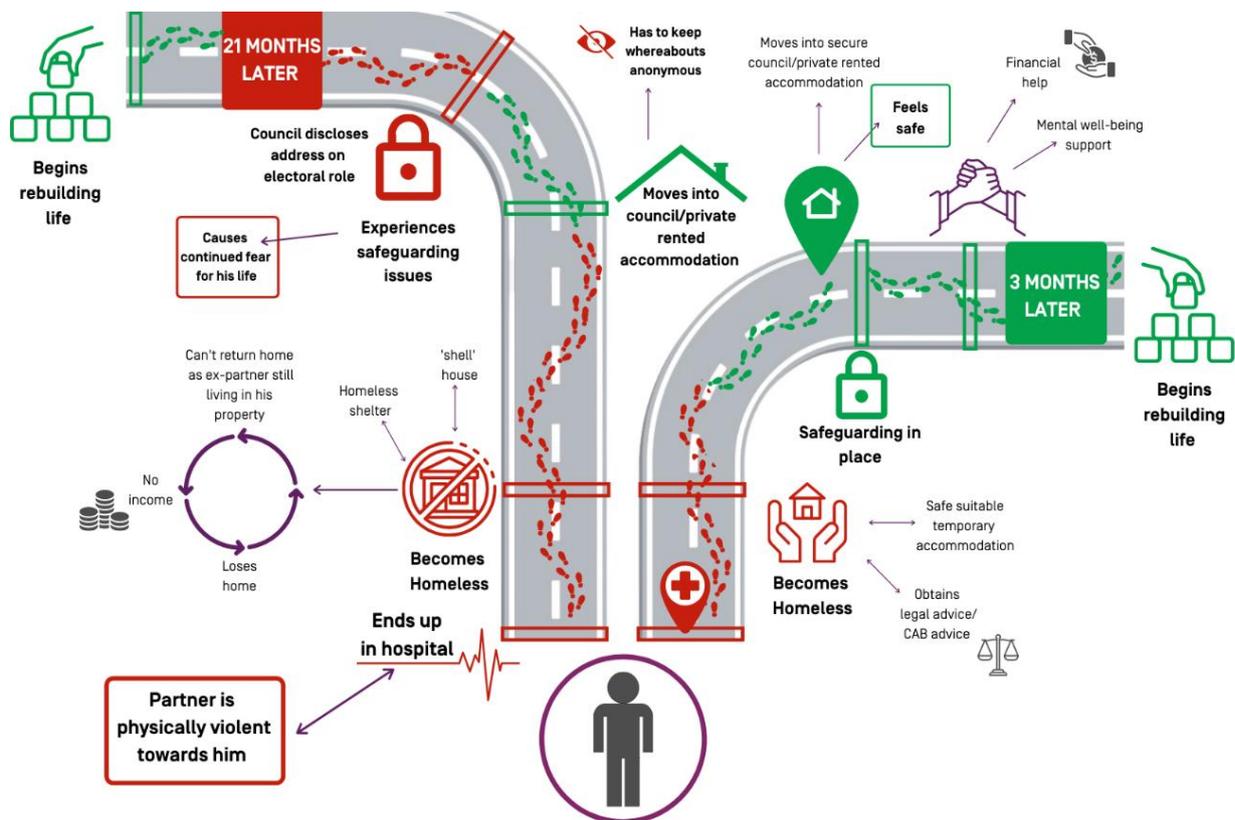
SUPPORT TAILORED to their unique circumstances



EFFECTIVE SIGNPOSTING AND A CO-ORDINATED RESPONSE across the borough in partnership with voluntary services as well as commissioned and council-based services

# ONE VICTIM'S EXPERIENCE

The need to ensure that victims are fully supported, with tailored support and responses through their journey to safe accommodation was highlighted in the journey of one male victim, who shared his story with an independent consultant that undertook interviews on our behalf. It was identified that potentially his journey to safe accommodation could have been shortened from 21 to 3 months.



## Quotes from public consultation linked to support in safe accommodation

*"...a safe place to go that doesn't involve having to prove what's happening to you and without having to leave your home, job, school, friends, life"*

*"There is a huge need for support for children under 11 years"*

*"To make sure there is easily accessible support for marginalised communities which understand their experiences of domestic abuse vary"*

*"...and that other mental health issues and trauma may also need to be addressed as part of recovery".*

*"Financial help must be made available under the barrier of support, as economic abuse is a constant and long terms threat which often traps mums for longer and still has a strong hold after separation too".*

*"Having been a victim of domestic abuse leaving if you own a home and have teenage boys is impossible".*

*"Sometimes school is the only place where a child feels safe and removing them from that school because they are forced to move out of their home basically rips away their only safe place"*

*"Accommodation for disabled people or people with disabled children is difficult at the best of times, this leads to disabled people being forced into unsuitable housing or temporary accommodation".*

*"Older people who have had their own homes being forced into bed and breakfast situations with considerably young people is really hard"*

*"...people need to have people of their own age group around them who understand their life experiences".*

# SUPPORT IN SAFE ACCOMMODATION

In forming and detailing the below priority areas for action we have tried to ensure that the diverse needs of victim – survivors and children are reflected. This includes ensuring that services are provided in locations and ways that are accessible.

Consultation and discussions are informing our approach to meeting the needs of those with sensory needs, in need of translation services, in need of support linked to physical mobility issues or using wheelchairs, for those who are blind or have sight issues, those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or have learning or other needs.

**Feedback from those with lived experience of domestic abuse identified the following support holistic needs:**



**Assertiveness workshops**



**Drawing and relaxation courses**



**Information on civil legal protection orders**



**Counselling and long-term support**



**Life skills to include money management and budgeting; financial planning; maintaining a tenancy; basic DIY skills**

**Identified support needed for children and young people includes:**



**Colour art and play therapy**



**Confidence building**



**Fun activities**



**Trauma-based interventions**

**Research findings have identified that having multiple complex needs or protected characteristics can make it more difficult for victim-survivors to access help and support.**

The following details some of our plans on making available support services that meet the needs, and address barriers faced by victims with relevant protected characteristics.

A calendar of training events for local practitioners has been developed, which will increase skills and knowledge around barriers faced by those with a protected characteristic or complex needs. Information gained from training, professional's feedback and research findings will enable the table below to be expanded upon, and gaps in support identified and responded to.

	Potential barriers and needs identified	Proposed action to address needs
<b>Age: Young (aged 16-19)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increased prevalence of abuse compared to other age groups</li> <li>-Casual nature of relationships</li> <li>-Reliance on technology</li> <li>-Not recognising the term 'domestic abuse'</li> <li>-Poorly equipped to deal with practical problems to escape the abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Literature and information written using terminology used by young victims</li> <li>-Interventions in education settings</li> <li>-Practical and emotional support</li> <li>-Use of young people's risk assessment tools</li> </ul>
<b>Age: Older (65+)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Isolation</li> <li>-Years of prolonged abuse</li> <li>-Health impacts or disabilities</li> <li>-Reliance on abuser for care or money</li> <li>-Abuse by family members</li> <li>-Refuge accommodation may not be seen as practical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Training for practitioners</li> <li>-Increase safe accommodation option to think more holistically than refuge accommodation</li> <li>-Support to respond to practical needs</li> <li>-Information available in community-based settings in hard copy</li> </ul>
<b>Disability (including but not limited to deaf or hard of hearing, visually impaired,</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Accessible accommodation and transport</li> <li>-Need for assistance with personal care, medication, sign language interpreters, equipment</li> <li>-Fear of losing their children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Tailor support needs to the individual</li> <li>-Identify a range of safe accommodation options including those which are: Wheelchair accessible</li> </ul>

# Meeting the needs of all victims based on protected characteristics

<b>autistic, wheelchair users and those with learning difficulties)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Specialised practical and emotional support needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have been assessed to meet any sensory needs</li> <li>-Fire service specialist equipment</li> </ul>
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Cultural expectations to remain in the relationship</li> <li>-Joint assets and lack of access to financial means</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Raise awareness of services who can provide advice on financial options</li> </ul>
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increased vulnerability</li> <li>-Trigger for domestic abuse</li> <li>-Escalation in abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Work with health settings to ensure signposting information available and practitioners aware of support services</li> </ul>
<b>Race, religion, or belief</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Cultural and or spiritual expectations</li> <li>-Normalisation of abuse</li> <li>-Risk of so called 'honour' based abuse and forced marriage</li> <li>-Distrust of police and other statutory agencies</li> <li>-Fear of rejection by wider community</li> <li>-Concerns relating to immigration status</li> <li>-Language barriers</li> <li>-Intersectionality impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Develop ethnically sensitive preventative work and awareness raising.</li> <li>-Specialist, ethnically sensitive training for practitioners</li> <li>-Workshops for community groups</li> <li>-Commissioning of 'by and for' services</li> <li>Interpretation services</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual orientation and gender identification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-'Public picture' of domestic abuse</li> <li>-Abuse from family members</li> <li>-Fear of being 'outed'</li> <li>-Fear of responses to help seeking</li> <li>-Medication needs</li> <li>-Lack of acceptable refuge accommodation provision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Campaigns to raise awareness of LGBT+ domestic abuse</li> <li>-Promote LGBT+ Domestic Abuse specialist service</li> <li>-Seek safe accommodation options</li> <li>-Training for professionals to use preferred name and pronouns</li> </ul>

**In addition, the following have been identified as facing additional barriers to accessing help and support:**

	<b>-Potential barriers and needs identified</b>	<b>Proposed action to address needs</b>
<b>Male victims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Public picture' of domestic abuse</li> <li>-Fear of not being believed</li> <li>-Isolation</li> <li>-Lack of refuge provision, especially for men with children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ensure all information, leaflets, posters, campaigns are inclusive</li> <li>-Work to increase refuge provision for men</li> <li>-Commission services which support male victims</li> </ul>
<b>Those with complex needs (for example an offending history, mental health issues, substance misuse, intersectionalities)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Additional needs obscure the abuse</li> <li>-Increased risk of violence</li> <li>-Unable to access refuge and other accommodation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Joined up approach by agencies to address issues simultaneously</li> <li>-Seek safe accommodation options and reciprocal agreements</li> </ul>
<b>Victims with insecure immigration status</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reluctance to report abuse due to fear of deportation</li> <li>-Reliance on perpetrator for residency</li> <li>-Lack of recourse to public funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Raising awareness of fee waivers, changes of No Recourse to Public Funding conditions. Destitution Domestic Violence Concession</li> <li>-Promote pathways to support based on individual situations</li> </ul>
<b>Those with limited English proficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Communication barriers</li> <li>-Difficulties expressing abuse</li> <li>-Lack of accessible information</li> <li>-Isolation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Information in accessible formats</li> <li>-Interpreter support</li> </ul>
<b>Victims who have to move away from their local areas due to domestic abuse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of local knowledge on support and services</li> <li>-Likely to be isolated from previous support network</li> <li>-Need to register with local services and schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Work collaboratively with other local authorities to put in place support which allows victims easy movement from one area to another, whilst ensuring their safety. This will include funding for travel, 'warm' handovers to new area service providers</li> <li>-Information pack for those fleeing to Wokingham</li> </ul>

<b>Victims with adolescent male children</b>	-Refuges may not take adolescent boys	-Seek alternative safe options
<b>Victims with children, including large families and children who have a disability</b>	-Refuge accommodation may not be available or practical -Child needs to continue with current treatments; home adaptations; specialist school provision	-Identify different safe accommodation options -Consider home refuge scheme (if appropriate)
<b>Victims who have intersectionality issues</b>	-Domestic abuse may not be recognised -May be reluctant to seek help from professionals	-Cultural understanding training for professionals
<b>Children</b>	-Abuse perpetrated to a parent affecting neurodevelopment -Emotional regulation impact -Trauma impact -Post Traumatic Stress -Impact on physical and emotional wellbeing	-Trauma informed support -Training for professionals -Range of support options -Long term support options

Based on the above findings linked to the provision of safe accommodation options and support within these settings, the Wokingham Domestic Abuse Partnership Board is proposing the following priorities and aims under each priority for the new strategy. Feedback and comments are sought from residents and agencies in the Wokingham area as well as those who may seek to flee domestic abuse to our area.

## **Increase awareness of safe\* accommodation choices for all victims of domestic abuse**

- **Ensure information is available in a wide range of formats**
- **Enhance domestic abuse support within the WBC homelessness team**
- **Increase awareness of the WBC Home Refuge (Sanctuary) scheme, particularly to male victims and those who own their own homes**
- **Ensure practitioners are aware of safe accommodation options and pathways to this support**
- **Increase the number of victims and survivors who are not currently accessing advice and support linked to their housing options**

\*Relevant safe accommodation encompasses the broad based and wide diversity of accommodation that victims of domestic abuse and their children may live in, or chose to live in, including refuge, specialist safe accommodation, dispersed accommodation, sanctuary schemes, move- or second stage accommodation.

## **Provide an inclusive range of safe accommodation options to meet the needs of all individuals ((regardless of gender / sexuality/ ethnicity/ economic means / ownership of property / race / faith and culture)**

- **Ensure that a holistic, needs driven range of appropriate safe accommodation within Wokingham**
- **Increase the safe accommodation provision based on identified gaps and needs**
- **Ensure that victims and survivors of domestic abuse are aware of how to protect their new address**
- **Work with other areas to put in place reciprocal arrangements to facilitate where families need to move areas as a result of domestic abuse**
- **Work with health services to ensure access to equipment, community mental health and Rapid Response**
- **Ensure information about anonymous registration on the Electoral Role is provided to reduce a perpetrator finding their victim.**

## Provide support for victims/ survivors / children living in safe accommodation

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- Ensure a holistic range of support is available within Wokingham for as long as the individual needs this
- Support those who need to flee from the Wokingham areas as a result of domestic abuse through the process to accessing safe accommodation in another area
- Ensure coordinated support where a family may have adult services, children's services involvement as well as other agencies
- Create a 'welcome' pack for those moving to safe accommodation to include practical and holistic information
- Deliver and signpost to practical and emotional support (eg DIY skills, financial planning, drawing, music, sports activities etc)
- Work in partnership with neighbouring districts to maximise support options for individuals
- Provide training for support workers to ensure they are equipped to address the needs of those with complex, mental, physical and sensory needs and communication barriers

## Strengthen partnership work to drive and improve outcomes

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- Organisations across the Wokingham Borough working together to support the council to meet it's new duty
- Develop and deliver multi agency training to ensure practitioners can respond to those who may need to access safe accommodation
- Ensure that the 'voices' of victims, survivors and children are at the heart of our partnership working through ensuring representation on the Partnership Board of all victims and children affected by domestic abuse in our area, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, faith or culture, economic status and family size
- Develop and deliver an annual action plan to continually drive improvements to the options and support available for those who need to flee as a result of domestic abuse
- Develop a consistent dataset to be used across agencies to monitor impact

## Support Individuals to Begin Rebuilding their Lives

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- Provide safe, supported accommodation where individuals can have the space and time to decide how to move forward with the next stage of their lives
- Enable children and young people to access the support they will need to come to terms with what they have experienced and start to feel safe and more secure emotionally and physically
- Help facilitate access to the means to moving forward, be that through training, support with job seeking, confidence building, safety planning or whatever the individual identifies as being important to them
- Develop a system which reduces the number of times a victim, survivor or child must 'tell their story'
- Provide prompt access to practical support needed, including housing related support, Citizens advice opening a bank account and registering with a GP
- Working in partnership with agencies and community groups to develop additional opportunities to engage in activities and start building new friendships and support networks
- Ensure that no victim , survivor or child is disadvantaged from accessing appropriate support as a result of their gender, sexuality, economic means or protected characteristic. This may necessitate separate programmes being delivered where necessary.

The effective implementation of this Strategy relies on a cross-system approach of a co-ordinated and cohesive response. A three-year action plan is being developed in line with our outlined priorities to ensure effective implementation and delivery through a partnership approach, with designated lead agencies aligned to each action.

An annual action plan will enable realistic, sustainable, achievable but ambitious progress to be made and ensure a flexibility to respond to emerging research findings and best practice examples.

We will keep under review any effect of the Part 4 duty strategy on the provision of other domestic abuse support in the area.

## Funding

Each Tier One authority was allocated funding of £50,000 to help prepare for the new duty detailed above. This funding enabled us to commission specialist input to inform our needs assessment in respect of analysis of safe accommodation available as well as for in-depth interviews with those with lived experience and local practitioners, alongside training for practitioners, flexible funding to support victim-survivors and other relevant costs.

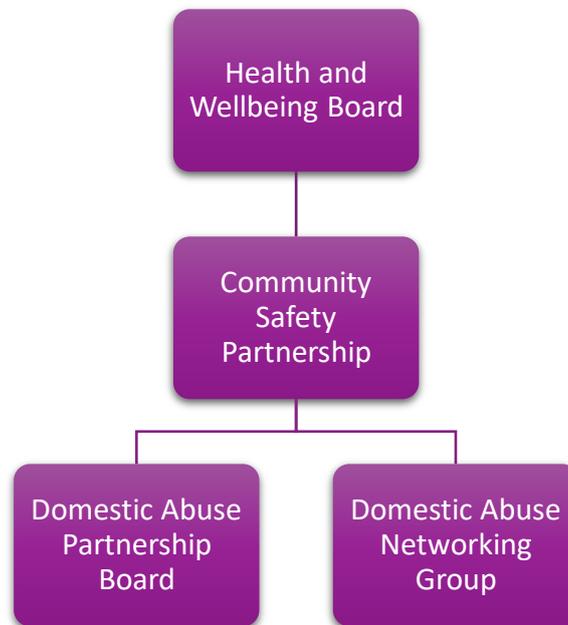
Funding was allocated to each Tier One authority to meet new duty costs relating to support in safe accommodation for the year 2021 / 22, with Wokingham Borough Council being allocated **£247,326**. An announcement under the Spending Review will set out future year's funding for this duty.

Alongside allocated funding linked to the new duty, Wokingham Borough Council has committed to investing funding for the next seven years to commission specialist community based domestic abuse support. Partner agencies additionally invest in domestic abuse support and significantly contribute to the overall response to domestic abuse across the borough.

**The Partnership Board will monitor the impact on community based support as a result of the new duty.**

# GOVERNANCE

Both the Networking Group and Partnership Board report into the Community Safety Partnership, who in turn report into the Health and Wellbeing Board.



## Monitoring Progress and Measuring Success

This strategy set out a framework for delivery of the Domestic Abuse Act duty under Part 4, alongside our wider commitment to improving the lives of those affected by domestic abuse.

Local delivery of the action plans which underpin this strategy will be overseen and driven by the Partnership Board in respect of the Part 4 new duty; with the Networking Group overseeing the wider domestic abuse action plan.

We will use a range of quantitative data and qualitative input through listening the voices of those with lived experiences to capture whether victims are able to access the support they need and the reduction in barriers faced. This will help us to understand how local decisions and actions impact the needs assessments and victim journeys within our area.

An annual evaluation through ongoing needs assessments will be undertaken.

# LINKS TO OTHER STRATEGIES

This strategy has been informed at national level by the MHCLG Statutory Guidance for local authorities: Delivery of Support to Victims of Domestic Abuse, including Children in Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Services; Domestic Abuse: Draft Statutory Guidance Framework and the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. It additionally links to relevant national and local strategies and guidance on Modern Slavery, Community Safety, Housing and Homelessness Reduction, Supporting Families, Mental Health, Suicide Prevention, Statutory guidance for schools and colleges, working together to safeguard children.

Statutory requirements include (but not limited to) those set out in the Equalities Act 2010; Human Rights Act 1998; Children's Act 2004; Housing Act 1996; Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

## **Equality Impact Assessment**

In order to ensure that the Public Sector Equalities Duty under the Equality Act 2010, has been met, an Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the Domestic Abuse Strategy has due regard to:

- **The Elimination of unlawful discrimination**
- **The advancement of equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those don't**
- **Foster or encourage good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.**

Protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

## **Process for Organisations and Individuals to Raise Concerns Linked to this Strategy**

Any organisation or individual who have concerns regarding this strategy can contact the Wokingham Domestic Abuse Coordinator, or Community Safety Team. In addition, concerns can be raised using Wokingham Borough Council's complaints procedure which can be found at <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/contact-us/tell-us-about-a-problem/>

## Review Period

The strategy is designed to be flexible in order to adapt to changing needs and national guidance, with annual action plans developed to monitor progress and direct funding commitments.

Any revisions to this strategy will only be as a result of consultation with the Partnership Board and Networking Group members, following circulation of the up to date version of the strategy and allowing for adequate time for organisations to review and feedback. Unless there are circumstances which require a quick response, a period of at least one month will be provided for agency representatives to consult and agree changes.

**The strategy will be reviewed in full every three years, with an annual refresh. The first annual review will take place in October 2022, with the full review due in October 2024.**

## Strategy Format

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact [karen.evans@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:karen.evans@wokingham.gov.uk)

## Appendices

### **Appendix 1: Domestic Abuse Act 2021 - Part 1 Definition of ‘domestic abuse’**

(1) This section defines ‘domestic abuse’ for the purposes of this Act.

(2) Behaviour of a person (‘A’) towards another person (‘B’) is “domestic abuse” if—

- (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
- (b) the behaviour is abusive.

(3) Behaviour is ‘abusive’ if it consists of any of the following:

- (a) physical or sexual abuse
- (b) violent or threatening behaviour
- (c) controlling or coercive behaviour
- (d) economic abuse (see subsection (4))
- (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

(4) ‘Economic abuse’ means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to:

- (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
- (b) obtain goods or services

(5) For the purposes of this Act A’s behaviour may be behaviour ‘towards’ B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).

(6) References in this Act to being abusive towards another person are to be read in accordance with this section.

(7) For the meaning of ‘personally connected’, see section 2.

### **Section 2: Definition of ‘personally connected’**

(1) Two people are ‘personally connected’ to each other if any of the following applies:

- (a) they are, or have been, married to each other
- (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other
- (c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- (d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)

- (e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- (f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2))
- (g) they are relatives.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1)(f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if:

- (a) the person is a parent of the child, or
- (b) the person has parental responsibility for the child.

(3) In this section:

- 'child' means a person under the age of 18 years;
- 'civil partnership agreement' has the meaning given by section 73 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004;
- 'parental responsibility' has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989;
- 'relative' has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

### **Section 3: Children as victims of domestic abuse**

(1) This section applies where behaviour of a person ('A') towards another person ('B') is domestic abuse.

(2) Any reference in this Act to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who:

- (a) sees or hears, or experiences the effect of, the abuse, and
- (b) is related to A or B.

(3) A child is related to a person for the purposes of subsection (2) if:

- (a) the person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child, or
- (b) the child and the person are relatives.

(4) In this section:

- 'child' means person under the age of 18 years;
- 'parental responsibility' has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act);
- 'relative' has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

## Appendix 2: Safe Accommodation – Draft Statutory Guidance

While we acknowledge the critical role of refuge in providing safety and support, particularly to those victims at high risk of serious harm, government recognises that victims and their children may need to live in a variety of different forms of safe accommodation.

**A3.X** Accommodation such as Bed and Breakfast accommodation are not considered relevant safe accommodation, and are specifically excluded in the Regulations, so local authorities should not commission support within these types under this duty.

**A3.X** Commissioning authorities will need to ensure that duties covered under other Acts, such as temporary accommodation provided under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, continue to be met alongside this duty. It is possible for support under this (Part 4) duty to be provided in accommodation associated with another duty such as a Housing Act 1996 Part 7 duty, provided, such accommodation adheres to the description of relevant accommodation. Description of ‘relevant accommodation’ [also referred to as ‘safe accommodation’ throughout this guidance] is specified by the Secretary of State in regulations as:

- **Refuge accommodation** – a refuge offers accommodation and intensive support which is tied to that accommodation. Victims, including their children, have to be refuge residents to access expert emotional and practical support.
- **Specialist safe accommodation** – safe accommodation specialist refuges for BAME, LGBTQ+, and disabled victims and their children [not limited to – see section B5] which may provide single gender accommodation with dedicated specialist support to victims who share a protected characteristic(s) – including services that are led by those that also share the protected characteristic (also known as ‘by and for’) - and/or have complex needs.
- **Dispersed accommodation:**
  - i. Safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse), self-contained accommodation with the same level of specialist domestic abuse support as provided within a refuge but which may be more suitable for victims who are unable to stay in a refuge with communal spaces due to complex support needs or for families with teenage sons for example.
  - ii. Safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse), self-contained ‘semi-independent’ accommodation which is not within a refuge but with support for victims who may not require the intensive support offered through refuge, but are still at risk of abuse from their perpetrator/s.
- **Sanctuary Schemes** – properties with local authority installed Sanctuary Schemes or other similar schemes which provide enhanced physical security measures within a home. A Sanctuary Scheme is a survivor centred initiative which aims to make it possible for victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes, where it is safe for them to do so, where it is their choice, and where the perpetrator does not live in the accommodation. This is done by providing additional security – ‘installing a sanctuary’ – to the victims’ property or perimeter.

A number of local authorities run Sanctuary Schemes, working in partnership with the police to implement the scheme and any organisation working with an individual they deem suitable for sanctuary measures can make a referral to the scheme.

- **Move-on and / or second stage accommodation** - interchangeable terms for projects temporarily accommodating victims, including families who no longer need the intensive level of support provided in a refuge, but would still benefit from a lower level of domestic abuse specific support for a period before they move to fully independent and permanent accommodation. There is no expectation that every victim will require this. Many victims are ready to move straight to a permanent new home from refuge. However, move-on and / or second stage accommodation may be helpful in some cases.

**Other forms of domestic abuse emergency accommodation** – i.e. a safe place with appropriate support. To give victims an opportunity to spend a temporary period of time to [consider and] make decisions in an environment which is self-contained and safe. This would include access to wrap around support and specialist support for victims with complex needs (including mental health needs and substance misuse). An example of ‘other’ forms of safe accommodation would be the ‘Whole Housing Approach<sup>2</sup>’.

<sup>2</sup> The Whole Housing Approach (WHA) endeavours to improve the housing options and outcomes for people experiencing domestic abuse so that they can achieve stable housing, live safely, and overcome the abuse and its harmful impacts.

**A3.X** Local Authorities must adhere to the Regulations and the above description of accommodation when fulfilling their duty. All support provided under their duty must be provided to victims of domestic abuse, or their children, who reside in relevant accommodation as set out above and should meet the MHCLG Quality Standards (See Annex B), Women’s Aid National Quality Standards and / or Imkaan Accredited Quality Standards.

### Appendix 3: Support – Draft Statutory Guidance

Domestic abuse support includes the expert help provided to all victims and their children by the specialist staff in domestic abuse support services. We recognise that some support is directly provided within refuges and safe accommodation services, and that outreach support will be provided to victims in other types of relevant accommodation, including their homes in the case of a sanctuary scheme. The support should be delivered by knowledgeable and/or experienced specialist providers, charities, and other voluntary organisations whose purpose is to provide support to victims of domestic abuse.

**A4.X** This guidance describes domestic abuse support within relevant accommodation as:

- **Overall management of services within relevant accommodation** – including, the management of staff, payroll, financial and day to day management of services and maintaining relationships with the local authority (such functions will often be undertaken by a service manager)
- **Support with the day-to-day running of the service**, for example scheduling times for counselling sessions, group activities (such functions may often be undertaken by administrative or office staff)
- **Advocacy support** – development of personal safety plans, liaison with other services (for example, GPs and social workers, welfare benefit providers).
- **Domestic abuse prevention advice** – support to assist victims to recognise the signs of abusive relationships, to help them remain safe (including online), and to prevent re-victimisation.
- **Specialist support for victims**
  - **Designed specifically for victims with relevant protected characteristics** (including ‘by and for’), such as faith services, translators and interpreters, immigration advice, interpreters for victims identifying as deaf and / or hard of hearing, and dedicated support for LGBTQ+ victims [not limited to].
  - **Designed specifically for victims with additional and / or complex needs** such as, mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support [not limited to], including sign posting accordingly.
- **Children’s support** – including play therapy and child advocacy.
- **Housing-related support** – providing housing-related advice and support, for example, securing a permanent home, rights to existing accommodation and advice on how to live safely and independently.

- **Advice service – including** financial and legal support, including accessing benefits, support into work and establishing independent financial arrangements; and, **Counselling and therapy** (including group support) for both adults and children, including emotional support.

**A4.X** Authorities must ensure that support commissioned under this duty is provided to victims of domestic abuse, including their children, who reside in relevant accommodation as described in section (section A3.1) of this guidance.

## Appendix 4: MHCLG Quality Standards

**1. Safety, Security and Dignity** • Victims can access crisis support at any time and receive a timely response.

- Victims are assessed and offered trauma informed services on the basis of their individual need for safety and support.
- Measures in place to ensure service users are safe from being found by their perpetrator.
- Physical buildings to be well maintained and meet the relevant building standards.
- Victims should not be forced to stay in danger but assisted to move geographical location if necessary, for their safety including supporting them through referral processes to do so.
- Consideration should be given to single gendered and LGBTQ+ provision.
- Victims' duration of support to be based on needs and not pre-set timescales.

**2. Rights and Access** • Service users are believed and listened to and service interventions are respectful of their rights to self-determination.

- Service users with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 can access dedicated specialist services addressing their needs.
- Resources are allocated to addressing barriers to access, including supporting service users with limited English proficiency, and having insecure immigration status.

**3. Health and Wellbeing – trauma informed** • Service users are supported to access services that meet their physical, mental, and sexual health needs.

- Service users can access individual counselling or group work to build their confidence and resources.
- The organisation should work in partnership with and have appropriate referral pathways to a range of other services including the sexual violence sector, drugs, alcohol/mental health services.
- The safety and wellbeing of staff teams is attended to ensuring safe working practices that protect the physical safety and mental wellbeing of staff.

**4. Stability, resilience, and autonomy** • Service users are supported to take charge of decision-making processes in their lives.

- Service users are encouraged to identify goals and access education, training, and employment to maximise their stability and independence.
- Service users have access to resettlement and follow-up services with exit strategies tailored to individual need. This should include access to ongoing specialist support in the community as part of resettlement, including through partnerships and appropriate referral pathways.

**5. Children and young people** • The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is addressed in risk assessment and support planning.

- Children are able to access support to understand their experiences and build their resilience and confidence.
- Support is provided to parents to develop their parenting resources and maintain their relationships with their children.
- Services are responsive to the needs and views of children and young people.

**6. Prevention** • Children and young people are better informed and educated around consent, healthy relationships, gender inequality and violence against women and girls.

- The organisation contributes to training and awareness-raising activities with other professionals and within local communities, tailoring training and awareness raising activities to different and diverse communities.
- The organisation contributes to local strategies for ending violence against women and girls.

## Appendix 5: Guidance Documents

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/domestic-abuse-act-statutory-guidance/domestic-abuse-draft-statutory-guidance-framework>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation-statutory-guidance-and-regulations-consultation/new-duties-on-local-authorities-to-provide-domestic-abuse-support-in-safe-accommodation-in-england-consultation>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy>