

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Cabinet – 24 January 2022

**Report Title**

The Safer Rotherham Partnership Domestic Abuse Strategy

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

Yes

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Paul Woodcock, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

**Report Author(s)**

Sam Barstow

Head of Community Safety and Regulatory Services

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

Following consultation in November 2021, the Safer Rotherham Partnership, of which the Council is a key statutory partner, has drafted and agreed a new Domestic Abuse Strategy for the period 2022 – 2027.

The Safer Rotherham Partnership Domestic Abuse Strategy came to an end in December 2020, having commenced in 2017. The Strategy has guided the partnership in delivering significant work to reduce Domestic Violence and improve support for victims. The partnership had committed to developing a further five-year strategy to continue to tackle Domestic Abuse, which has now been fully developed and consulted on by the Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, which reports to the Safer Rotherham Partnership.

In addition, as a result of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which received Royal Assent in April 2021, the Council itself now has a statutory duty to produce a Domestic Abuse Strategy which sets out how it will deliver the new duties contained within the Act. These new duties are detailed within the body of the report. Cabinet are therefore recommended to adopt the Domestic Abuse Strategy.

## **Recommendations**

1. That Cabinet approve and adopt the Domestic Abuse Strategy.
2. That Cabinet note that regular oversight of the Strategy will be undertaken by the Safer Rotherham Partnership Board.

## **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 Domestic Abuse Strategy  
Appendix 2 Equality Impact Assessment  
Appendix 3 Carbon Impact Assessment

## **Background Papers**

Previous Cabinet Report and Domestic Abuse Strategy:

[https://modern.gov.rotherham.gov.uk/documents/g13936/Public reports pack Monday 19-Feb-2018 10.00 Cabinet and Commissioners Decision Making Meeting d.pdf?T=10](https://modern.gov.rotherham.gov.uk/documents/g13936/Public%20reports%20pack%20Monday%2019-Feb-2018%2010.00%20Cabinet%20and%20Commissioners%20Decision%20Making%20Meeting%20d.pdf?T=10)

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

[Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/26/contents)

## **Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

Improving Lives Select Commission – Various

## **Council Approval Required**

No

## **Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022 – 2027**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The previous Domestic Abuse Strategy for Rotherham ran until December 2020. A draft strategy was prepared by the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and presented to the Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) in December 2020 however, due to the rapid progress of the Domestic Abuse Bill (now Act) which subsequently received Royal Assent in April 2021, completion of the Strategy had been deferred by the Board so the national requirements could be appropriately addressed. The Strategy has been subsequently reviewed by the partnership group who initially developed it, alongside the wider Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, in order to ensure that the new Domestic Abuse Act and its associated requirements were adequately captured. The SRP Board approved the final draft in October 2021 for publication and consultation and have subsequently approved the final version at the December 2021 meeting.
- 1.2 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the Act) received Royal Assent in the Spring of 2021. In summary, the Act seeks to do several things as follows:
- Places a new definition of Domestic Abuse on a statutory footing
  - Creates provisions for the Domestic Abuse Commissioner
  - Confers additional powers in responding to Domestic Abuse
  - Creates new requirements for Local Authorities
  - Updates the protection of victims in legal proceedings
  - Creates new offences relating to the disclosure of private images
- 1.3 In relation to the new duties for local authorities, these are covered within the Domestic Abuse Strategy attached as Appendix One. In particular these focus on the need for the production of a Domestic Abuse Strategy, the provision of support for victims and family members (including therapeutic support) and the extension of priority status within homelessness processes for victims of Domestic Abuse. All of these offers are currently in place within Rotherham and through the Strategy partners are seeking to continue to strengthen this work.

### **2. Key Issues**

- 2.1 The Strategy seeks to deliver a number of aspects including setting the national and local scene, reflecting on what has been delivered as a result of the previous Domestic Abuse Strategy and critically, identifying gaps and future areas of priority for delivery.
- 2.2 The national position in relation to the scale and impact of Domestic Abuse is outlined within the Strategy, as is the picture for Rotherham which, whilst unique as a place, has many parallels with the national picture. In terms of reported incidents and crimes relating to Domestic Abuse, in 2020 South Yorkshire Police received just under 7,000 calls. Domestic Abuse support services engaged with over 1,500 service users and 150 people presented as homeless as a result of Domestic Abuse. This small selection of figures gives an understanding of the scale and impact locally of reported domestic

abuse and critically, based on the Home Office reckoner, this is under-representative of the actual scale of the issues and this is reinforced by the stories of many victims and survivors who report having suffered a number of domestic abuse incidents before coming forward for support.

2.3 The Strategy identifies five areas of priority for the partnership and in addition, highlights priority activities within each. The Strategy will be supported by an annual delivery plan which will be agreed with the Domestic Abuse Partnership group on an annual basis. The priority areas are detailed below:

1. Drive Change Together

This priority focuses on providing seamless services for victims, strengthening our governance processes and improving the way that we work together.

2. Prevention and Early Intervention

This priority aims to increase the focus on early intervention and prevention, which is not only about stopping Domestic Abuse but also preventing the escalation of abuse.

3. Justice and Ongoing Protection

This priority focusses on the provision of effective, engaged, supportive, responsive, and timely protection and justice.

4. Responding to Changing Need and Demand

This priority focuses on working together to plan, deliver and commission appropriate services to meet needs. We are committed to co-production methods for reform and innovation.

5. Minimising Harm through the Provision of Early Help Support for Children and Families

This priority seeks to minimise harm, providing positive outcomes, and promoting equality of access for all survivors of Domestic Abuse. Recognising and reducing barriers to reporting.

6. Providing Safe Accommodation and Appropriate Support

This priority aims to ensure that every victim of Domestic Abuse that present at homeless to RMBC is provided with safe, supported secure accommodation.

**3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

3.1 The production of the Strategy is now a statutory requirement and as a result, no alternative options were considered. In relation to the focus and

priority areas, these have been developed as a result of extensive engagement and learning from both service users and professionals, and subject to public consultation.

- 3.2 The recommendation is that the Cabinet adopts the Strategy and notes the annual partnership delivery plan, which will be produced by the Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and monitored by the SRP.

#### **4. Consultation on proposal**

- 4.1 A full public consultation was delivered during November 2021. Though the volume of responses received was smaller than hoped for (21), the trends and patterns of what people believe to be priorities are, for the most part, clear to see. Whilst the feedback has not led to change in terms of the strategic objectives, it will inform the prioritisation of the annual delivery plan. A summary of the key points are set out below:

- Increasing the awareness of Domestic Abuse and of the support that is available was seen as a priority by the majority of respondents, and early intervention for both victims and perpetrators came through as a strong priority. All of these priorities scored highly among all survey respondents.
- ensuring staff are fully trained and providing priority access to accommodation for homeless victims was also important to survey respondents.
- The priority which scored lowest amongst respondents was about Information Sharing and Increased Data Gathering – this may well be because it is a priority more directly related to service providers than service users – 6 of the 7 respondents who identified this as a priority, work with victims of DA

- 4.2 In addition, during the production of the Strategy, a number of partners and service users were engaged in order to co-produce the priorities and areas of focus. Further detail of these activities are provided within Appendix 2 however, in summary the following key engagement activities have informed the production of this Strategy:

- Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment (Summer 2021)
- Key Stakeholders and Voluntary Group Engagement – Housing, Commissioning, Voluntary Sector, South Yorkshire Police, Health Providers (Summer 2021 and on-going)
- Market Engagement with Domestic Abuse support Service Providers (Spring 2021)
- In-House Domestic Abuse Staff Engagement (Autumn 2020)
- Rotherham Rise Provider Engagement (Autumn 2020 and on-going)
- Victim Engagement with those in the commissioned Refuge service (Autumn 2020 and on-going) (Victims have protected characteristics)
- Victim Engagement with service users from the Commissioned Outreach Service (Rotherham Rise) (2020) and the BMER service

## **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1 If agreed by Cabinet, the Strategy will be published within 10 days, following the 'call-in' period. Delivery will be monitored through a quarterly dashboard showing key performance indicators and an annually refreshed delivery plan. This will be overseen by the Safer Rotherham Partnership Board.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)**

- 6.1 The report discusses and makes recommendations around the endorsement of a Domestic Abuse Strategy. As such there are no direct financial implications. The production of the Strategy is funded from approved Council budgets.

- 6.2 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in the report. However, it is important to note that, where external delivery is commissioned which supports the themes of the Strategy, this must be done in accordance with the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended).

## **7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)**

- 7.1 Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act introduces a new statutory duty on local authorities, placing clearer accountability on local areas to ensure the needs of victims within refuges and other forms of domestic abuse safe accommodation are met in a consistent way across England. Under the new duty in the 2020 Act, tier one authorities in England will be required to appoint a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board to support them in undertaking local needs assessments including developing and monitoring local strategies. The Board will be made up of members representing organisations who have a stake in this vital work. The Local Partnership Boards will be central to ensuring that local authorities set out a robust strategy for tackling domestic abuse based on an assessment of the needs of all victims in their local area. The Local Partnership Boards will also be required to assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support for all victims in their area, including those who require cross-border support.
- 7.2 Tier one authorities will be required to deliver their Strategy, and report back annually to Government. The annual reporting requirement will help the Government and others to monitor how the new duties on local authorities are working, understand where there may be challenges and how the funding is being used, and help identify and disseminate good practice. The duty will also require tier two authorities to co-operate with the lead tier one authority. This duty is set out with the Domestic Abuse

Support (Local Authority Strategies and Annual Reports) Regulations 2021. These Regulations must be complied with to minimise the risks of challenge.

7.3 Under the 2020 Act there is a requirement for statutory guidance to be introduced. This has now been published and should be followed by the Local Authority in order to minimise risks of legal challenge.

7.4 There are also a number of sets of Regulations which are now in force following consultation and these must also be complied in order to avoid the risk of legal challenge, including the Domestic Abuse Support (Relevant Accommodation and Housing Benefit and Universal Credit Sanctuary Schemes) (Amendment) Regulations 2021.

## **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

8.1 There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

9.1 Victims of Domestic Abuse are often vulnerable due to the abuse and or violence they face. In many cases domestic abuse occurs within the family and children that are a part of the household are also therefore victims of the abuse. In some cases, children or other family members can commit domestic abuse against their parents or other family members. As can be noted the impacts of domestic abuse in relation to vulnerable adults and young people are far reaching.

9.2 The Strategy itself focusses on these issues in a number of areas through its focus on victims, children and the wider family. The Strategy seeks to ensure that services are robust across partner agencies in tackling domestic abuse and that all of those impacted are identified and supported. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also makes clear the need for support to be extended beyond the direct victim and to incorporate children within the offer.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

10.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken to support the development of the Strategy and can be found in Appendix 2. One of the areas of key learning again is around fragmented pathways and the need to bring services and pathways together, which is a key element within the draft Strategy.

## **11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change**

11.1 A Carbon Impact Assessment has been undertaken which can be found in Appendix 3. No specific impacts have been identified related to the Domestic Abuse Strategy.

## 12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1. There are wide-ranging implications for partners, who have been involved throughout the process of drafting the Strategy. Partners are also required to sit as part of the local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board which is now a statutory requirement. Partnership engagement, activity and outcomes will continue to be monitored through the Safer Rotherham Partnership.

## 13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 Risks primarily relate to capacity to deliver on strategic intentions as Government funding linked to the Domestic Abuse Act 21 is not confirmed in future years. This will be mitigated wherever possible through regular partnership meetings, tracking of actions and performance and where required, changes to delivery models.

## 14. Accountable Officers

Sam Barstow, Head of Community Safety and Regulatory Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	10/01/22
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	23/12/21
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phi Horsfield	23/12/21

Report Author: Sam Barstow – [Sam.Barstow@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:Sam.Barstow@rotherham.gov.uk)

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).