

Public Report
Improving Lives Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 22 April 2025

Report Title

Domestic Abuse Strategy - Progress Report 2024/25

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

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Andrew Bramidge - Regeneration and Environment Strategic Director

Report Author(s)

Kayley Charlton - Community Safety Officer

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Ward(s) Affected.

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report provides an update on progress towards the Rotherham Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-27. This follows the previous update report, presented to the Commission on the 5th December 2023.

Updates are provided on the priority aims, actions and the next steps. In addition, the report provides information regarding the domestic abuse pathway review which will help inform a refresh of the Domestic Abuse Strategy in 2025.

Recommendations:

That the Improving Lives Select Commission consider the progress towards the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022 – 2027.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment - Part A

(A full Equalities Analysis - Part B was carried out at the very start of the Domestic Abuse strategy and the equality implications have not changed since the start of the strategy. For reference, Part B is also attached within Appendix 1)

Background Papers

Domestic Abuse strategy 2022 – 2027 [safer-rotherham-partnership-domestic-abuse-strategy-2022-27 \(saferrotherham.org.uk\)](https://safer-rotherham-partnership-domestic-abuse-strategy-2022-27(saferrotherham.org.uk))

ILSC report completed in 2023 [Agenda for Improving Lives Select Commission on Tuesday 5 December 2023, 10.00 a.m. - Rotherham Council](#)

National Domestic Abuse commissioners a Patchwork of Provision report [DAC Mapping-Abuse-Survivors Long-Policy-Report Nov2022 FA.pdf](#)

National Domestic Abuse commissioners Safety Before Status report [Safety-Before-Status-Report-2021.pdf](#)

National Domestic Abuse commissioners The Family Court and Domestic Abuse report [DAC Family-court-report Exec-Summary 2023 Digital.pdf](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Not applicable

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Domestic Abuse Strategy - Progress Report 2024/25

1. Background

- 1.1 The domestic abuse strategy was developed in partnership with the multi-agency Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group, on behalf of the Safer Rotherham Partnership in 2022, and approved by Cabinet on 24th January 2022. In the preparation of the strategy, the Council consulted with various stakeholders, from a wide range of disciplines. This included domestic abuse service providers, and service users. Using the information collected, priority areas within the strategy were identified and actions are driven by a multi-agency action plan.
- 1.2 One key aim of the strategy was the transformation of Rotherham's domestic abuse support services, to ensure a more seamless pathway through the service. From 1st October 2022 Rotherham Rise (now called Hopian) was awarded the contract to provide Domestic Abuse Outreach support with a single point of access for all domestic abuse victims at all risk levels.
- 1.3 During 2023 / 24 in Rotherham there were 7,274 domestic abuse crime and non-crime reports made to the police and 3,157 referrals to support services with an average service engagement rate of 80%.
- 1.4 Hopian provide a triage service, ensuring the victim / survivor has the most appropriate support available. This includes options such as one to one support, group work, counselling, and peer support. The service operates a helpline, website, and a webchat. Referrals to Hopian can be sent via all partners / professionals or from a victim / survivor as a self-referral. Strategic Commissioning, Adult Care, Housing and Public Health (ACH&PH), in partnership with Community Safety, continue to contract manage the contract
- 1.5 If a victim / survivor's needs are highly complex and meet the criteria of the Council's in-house Domestic Abuse Assertive Outreach Service (DAAOS), Hopian triage those victims / survivors to DAAOS. This service provides support to individuals with additional and multiple complex needs which could otherwise provide a barrier to receiving domestic abuse support. Additional complexities may include mental health, drug, and alcohol misuse, homelessness and / or children going through the care system. This is where a more intensive collaboration, guidance and face to face support is required. On average DAAOS work intensively with 70 victims at any one time.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Progress towards the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2027:

- 2.1.1 The strategy actions are grouped under the priority aim headings of: Drive Change Together, Prevention and Early Intervention, Minimising Harm Through the Provision of Early Help Support, Responding to Changing Need and Demand and Justice and Ongoing Protection.
- 2.1.2 In December 2023 Community Safety reported to the board that 44% of actions within the plan were complete. Now Community Safety can report that 81% of those actions are complete. Some key progress has been made, but also some gaps and challenges have been identified as follows.

2.2 Drive Change Together:

- 2.2.1 A cohesive approach to tackling, challenging and changing societal attitudes that allow domestic abuse to occur is taking place. The Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group is increasing awareness of how to better prevent and respond to domestic abuse across all agencies, services and within our local communities.
- 2.2.2 An example of this, is the partnership work with South Yorkshire countywide colleagues to reform and update the current DASH (Domestic, Abuse, Stalking, Harassment) risk assessment tool. This tool has been revamped and is now up to date with current guidance, more user friendly and has more direction when assessing the risk of a potential victim. To complement the updated DASH, Community Safety jointly commissioned the 8 steps to homicide training. This nationally recognised training, delivered by Professor Jane Monkton Smith, drives change through the use of the 8 steps to homicide timeline tool. This creates a standard practice for risk assessments, ensuring victims are risk assessed appropriately by all agencies.
- 2.2.3 RMBC Community Safety Team ensures all relevant community groups are invited to the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group, thus ensuring they also bring comparable, accurate and consistent data to reflect on areas such as commissioning, provision and gap analysis. This data collection has strengthened our understanding around under-reporting and ensures we are learning lessons and drawing out the right narratives from the evidence provided.
- 2.2.4 Using this data, current trends / gaps have been identified, such as domestic abuse peaking in the summer months when it has formally been winter months, and the lack of older people over the age of 60 reporting abuse. Considering this, consultations with specific groups such as 'the Rotherham Older Peoples forum' have taken place and targeted campaigns and workshops have been developed. A domestic abuse 'Summer Campaign' and a domestic abuse 'Older Peoples Campaign' have been launched. The aim of the older people's campaign is to challenge unconscious biases towards abuse and societal attitudes. This campaign was developed alongside the Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board (RSAB) and all RSAB partners have details of the campaign to share with staff, people who use their services and networks.
- 2.2.5 Both campaigns have increased awareness of how to better prevent and respond to domestic abuse not just across all agencies and services but within our local communities and the public. Data is monitored by the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group to evaluate the impact of the campaigns and to inform further actions required.
- 2.2.6 Community Safety have commissioned training on specialist subjects which are highlighted within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, such as Non-fatal Strangulation and Domestic Homicide Reviews.
- 2.2.7 Engagement and targeted work with primary health care professionals continues across Rotherham via their protected learning day reaching out to over 500 professionals across the Borough. This opportunity is used each year to promote the reporting of domestic abuse via GPs and other health practitioners ensuring all health professionals are aware of the pathway and the domestic abuse support

available. This year the Community Safety team is working with health colleagues to develop a Rotherham specific non-fatal strangulation pathway, so that any victim of this specific new crime, who visits their GP, will be directed to the most appropriate health service and for domestic abuse support.

2.3 Prevention and Early Intervention:

- 2.3.1 Prevention and early intervention work continues with some key campaigns and events that have taken place throughout this year. The countywide 'Do More' campaign which follows on from the previous 'No More' campaign now targets male bystanders with a call to action for males to 'do more' to stop other males perpetrating abusive and misogynistic behaviours towards women, preventing abuse and violence against women and girls.
- 2.3.2 The countywide domestic abuse partnership has also developed and launched the Walk Safe App. This South Yorkshire wide mobile app aims to create better feelings of safety for anyone, but mostly women in the community. It has a tracking feature so that trusted friends / family /colleagues can ensure the app user gets to their destination safely. It also plots registered safe places such as shops, restaurants, and bars, meaning app users can plan the routes they think are the safest and if they do not feel safe they can go to that nearest safe place and ask for help.
- 2.3.3 Working alongside Sheffield Hallam University within National Safeguarding Week has been a particular highlight of 2024. With early intervention in mind, workshops on unpicking cultural narratives surrounding domestic abuse have been delivered to professionals. This is to ensure trauma informed approaches are taken when dealing with potential victims. Trauma informed means professionals are able to recognise the impact of trauma on a person, and therefore take steps to tackle what is beyond an individual's presenting behaviour. It ensures professionals are aware of the needs and wants of the victim and that they are dealt with by being sensitive, clear, creating safe spaces and are creating victim empowerment, but ensuring they are not over promising and managing expectations. This approach aims to avoid any re - traumatising, including re traumatising thoughts.
- 2.3.4 The workshop looked at changing the narrative around the word 'vulnerable', making sure professionals recognise vulnerability can also be a strength not just a weakness. Emphasising and recognising risk and looking at vulnerability as a sign of courage and resilience rather than stereotyping vulnerable as weak or helpless. Professionals should be able to use this learning to empower victims.
- 2.3.5 An RMBC training plan has now been developed to meet the needs of professionals when tackling domestic abuse. A 4-tiered training approach ensures domestic abuse awareness training is delivered to the right person at the right level. Whether that be in house training, delivered by Community Safety Officers, external training delivered by Hopian or as previously mentioned, specific topic training that is commissioned out wider to charities and specialist organisations. Courses include, Asking the Question, Risk Assessments, Multi Agency Risk Assessment (MARAC) meetings, and Domestic Homicide Review outcomes workshops.

2.4 Minimising harm through the provision of early help support for children and families:

- 2.4.1 Through the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children and young people are now recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right. Community Safety Officers have been working with commissioning and children's services to establish and identify any potential gaps in support that is directly given to those children affected.
- 2.4.2 Currently there is a wide offer of 'indirect' support given to children. Indirect meaning that the adult victim is being fully supported, with that support subsequently transferring to the affected child. This support could be provided by a range of services, such as commissioned services which are currently Hopian, Cranstoun and YWCA. Statutory services such as Adults and Children's Social Care / Early Help Services and the in-house Domestic Abuse Assertive Outreach Service and Domestic Abuse housing officers. Or support is also provided by voluntary and community services that are not commissioned such as ROTHACS, Apna Haq, Pause and GROW.
- 2.4.3 The offer of 'direct' support to children is primarily delivered by Childrens Services / Early Help services and Hopian. Hopian have 2 children's case workers who give direct therapeutic support to children and young people experiencing abuse. These are commissioned by the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority.
- 2.4.4 Children's Social Care / Early Help Services and potentially other partners working directly with children such as Health practitioners provide direct support on a case-by-case basis when referrals are made to them due to domestic abuse.
- 2.4.5 An Early Help Assessment and plan will consider what support and intervention is needed and who is best placed to deliver this. This may include direct work with children by a trusted adult from within the 'Team Around the Family' (TAF) or a referral to specialist services such as Hopian, as well as robust safety planning. It will vary based on the identified needs of the child, young person, and their family, but is assessed and co-ordinated throughout the family plan.
- 2.4.6 Childrens Social Care identifies that 2730 children come through their Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) front door in 2024 because of domestic abuse. The table below shows how the support is given.

2.4.7	2024	Total
	Number of children receiving early help support	460
	Number of children receiving social care support	553
	Number of children who have received therapeutic support by Hopian	288

- 2.4.8 Of those who are not progressed to Early Help, Childrens Social Care or referred to Hopian, a robust triage takes place and often advice and support options are given Which includes referrals to other services such as counselling and mental health services.
- 2.4.9 100% of schools and 53 out of 55 Rotherham nurseries are signed up to Operation Encompass. This positive achievement means Rotherham is the only area in South Yorkshire to have 100% of schools signed up and are still working to progress the

last 2 nurseries to sign up. Schools can overtly and covertly monitor the child knowing an incident has occurred but are currently not able to offer any direct support. South Yorkshire police have advised a national review is being completed to look at how the process can be enhanced.

2.5 Responding to Changing Need and Demand:

- 2.5.1 The Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group continues to provide support where help is needed most, by responding to changing need and demand.
- 2.5.2 The 13 specialist local authority properties that are fully furnished and equipped with target hardening essentials are in full use. 35 adults and 39 children (including those in residence at the end of 2024) have been accommodated and these properties will hopefully accommodate many more in the future.
- 2.5.3 The Council also commissions a Refuge service with 10 units and an additional 8 safer options houses have also been commissioned, meaning that so far 53 adults and 88 children have received domestic abuse related housing support in 24/25.
- 2.5.4 The Homeless Prevention Fund also continues to be utilised, alongside weekly partnership safer homes monitoring meetings. This year (2024/25) the fund has provided essential support to 153 families so far, including purchasing essential household items, for example, white goods and beds, paying for storage costs, and moving / removal costs, as well as paying towards rent arrears to prevent victims from being at risk of being made homeless again. The fund has also provided essential target hardening equipment for 142 properties to ensure victims/survivors can remain safely in their own home.
- 2.5.5 The Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) has undertaken a review. This was due to the increase of high-risk cases and the changing / increasing demand of cases having to be added to a waiting list to be discussed. The waiting list was growing, and victims were waiting around 9 weeks to be discussed. The outcome of the review meant an additional MARAC meeting was put in place, taking it from two meetings per month to three. This has had a positive impact. Not only are staff feeling less meeting fatigue and bringing more problem-solving actions to the forefront, which has helped reduce repeat victims, there is now a reduced waiting list of around 2 - 4 weeks. Rotherham is now in a much better position moving forward compared to our regional neighbours, who all still have waiting lists exceeding 9 weeks or 4 weekly MARACs a month. As high-risk incidents peak and trough, this process is constantly under review by the multi-agency MARAC steering group and MARAC chairs group.
- 2.5.6 Hopian, through the outreach contract, offer a range of support package options, however the 1:1 support package is the most frequently requested. In turn, this demand created a waiting list for 1:1 support for those who are medium and standard risk (as identified by a DASH assessment).
- 2.5.7 The waiting list has now significantly reduced from 180 victims to 35 victims with a less than 6 month wait time. This continues to be closely managed, however in response to the waiting list, Hopian introduced a self-assessment tool which gives victim / survivors an opportunity to complete questions, which in turn help Hopian to create a more tailored person-centred response. Once Hopian have assessed the completed form, they offer a specific support plan that directly targets the victim's

needs, which may be 1:1 support, or it may be that therapeutic support / group work or onward referrals for financial advice, drugs and alcohol or mental health support is all that a victim / survivor is wanting.

2.5.8 By using this tool, the waiting list has and continue to reduce. It's important to note all high-risk cases are allocated 1:1 support within 48 hours of receiving the referral, and people on the waiting list for 1:1 (medium and standard risk) can access group support, drop ins, webchats and ad-hoc support where needed.

2.6 **Justice and ongoing protection: Cranstoun - Inspire to change & Level up:**

2.6.1 A vital part of the strategy is gaining justice for victims and ensuring ongoing protection. Domestic abuse perpetrators in prison would have usually completed a probation led programme called 'Building Better Relationships' which is a cognitive-behavioural programme for adult men convicted of intimate partner violence.

2.6.2 However, From April this year, this programme will be decommissioned, and Probation are to introduce the new national accredited programme called 'Building Choices.' Building Choices harnesses the latest and best evidence of what works to reduce reoffending and is an important part of our strategy ambition to deliver the right intervention, to the right person, at the right time.

2.6.3 The Cranstoun, Inspire to Change programme is also commissioned county-wide and delivers domestic abuse interventions with male and female perpetrators aged 16 and above in the community, including those with complex needs, to encourage, empower and support perpetrators to change their behaviour. It is a voluntary service which plugs the gap for those who have not been convicted, but recognise they cause harm. Inspire to Change tackles and challenges perpetrator behaviour and gives participants:

- An understanding of how to recognise the signs of domestic abuse.
- A better understanding of why they use violence or aggression in their relationships.
- An awareness of how attitudes and beliefs can affect behaviour.
- The practical tools to develop and maintain change.
- An improved and better life for themselves, their children and others affected by their behaviour.

2.6.4 The program is 6 months long; the latest data is as follows:

Number of Referrals onto the Inspire to Change and Course Completion (Rotherham)				
	Referrals	Referrals engaging	Started Course	Completed Course
Q1 2023-24	28	11	11	9
Q2 2023-24	31	13	13	7
Q3 2023-24	21	13	13	8
Q4 2023-24	21	8	8	7
Q1 2024-25	23	8	8	5
Q2 2024-25	24	8	8	4
Total	148	61	61	40

- 2.6.5 To encourage participation in the programme Cranstoun have delivered a range of training to professionals in particular with the Police and Children's Social Care / Early Help teams on how they can encourage engagement and express the benefits of long-term participation. The outcomes of the Inspire to Change programme have been reviewed by the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) on a South Yorkshire basis:
- 2.6.6 SYMCA and South Yorkshire Police managed to track and review 87 perpetrators that completed the course across South Yorkshire. Out of that 87, Domestic Abuse (DA) reoffending had been reduced by 73%. 54 had police DA incidents recorded in the 6 months prior to starting the course. 33 had no recorded of police DA incidents recorded prior to starting the course. 24 perpetrators (28%) continued their DA offending whilst on the programme. 23 perpetrators (27%) have continued their DA offending after completion of the programme. Of the perpetrators that have continued DA offending, there is a reasonable split across the four districts. The breakdown is:
- 2.6.7 Sheffield - 7 (30%) **Rotherham - 3 (13%)** Barnsley - 5 (22%) Doncaster - 8 (35%)
This data shows over two thirds do not continue to reoffend after completing the course.
- 2.2.8 The recommissioning of this programme is currently being reviewed on a South Yorkshire wide basis, with representation from each Local Authority and SYMCA. Ongoing scrutiny and commissioning meetings are taking place to discuss the options and funding available.
- 2.2.9 The Cranstoun Level Up programme is an intervention for children and young people (11-15 years old) who exhibit abusive behaviours. The programme consists of 12 week in-person sessions with a facilitator, usually held at the student's school. There are 2 facilitators that cover all South Yorkshire who hold a maximum case load of 12 each and any one time.

Rotherham Level Up Data			
	Referrals	Referrals engaging	Completed Course
Q1 2023-24	8	4	6
Q2 2023-24	10	6	2
Q3 2023-24	12	5	4
Q4 2023-24	8	4	3
Total	38	19	15

- 2.6.9 Rotherham currently has the second highest number of referrals into the programme, since the programme began in 2022. 84 Rotherham based children have been referred. Barnsley 86, Sheffield 57, and Doncaster 30

2.6.10 Outcomes for the children who have completed the course are positive. The most common reasons for referrals are aggression towards a parent or carer. Feedback from the young people / services users is that they find they can manage emotions better and understand their feelings more, stating they feel they can trust someone.

2.6.11 The recommissioning of this programme is also currently being reviewed on a South Yorkshire wide basis and ongoing scrutiny and commissioning meetings are taking place with the 4 South Yorkshire Local Authorities and SYMCA

2.7 Domestic Abuse Accommodation Strategic Needs Assessment and Commissioning Review of the Domestic Abuse pathway

2.7.1 The Council is undertaking a review of the Domestic Abuse pathway alongside the strategic needs assessment from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) around part 4 of the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act focusing on accommodation

2.7.2 The purpose of the review is to ensure the victim is always at the forefront of the service, thus meaning they are not being retraumatised by having to repeat their experiences multiple times and ensuring they have a seamless whole family approach to support throughout their recovery. Also, if complexities such as mental health, drug and alcohol misuse are identified, they are directed to and receiving the appropriate support as soon as possible.

2.7.3 The pathway review process focuses on the current pathway and services, including any other entries into receiving domestic abuse support, such as from a homelessness enquiry, to ensure support is always directed to the front door outreach offer. Service user voice and voices of those who work across the different services have been captured, through workshops and surveys. Service user voice has been valuable to understand a survivor's priorities and to highlight good practice.

2.7.4 The needs analysis and pathway review will contribute to forming recommendations for domestic abuse services across Rotherham. Overall, it will review how a victim flows through the services, from initial contact, to receiving a tailored safety and support plan, and then how any referrals are made to other services to address any complexities. It will look at the different points of triage throughout the service user's journey to understand if there are any blockages or difficulties to referring a person for complex support

2.8 Domestic Abuse Strategy consultation and refresh

2.8.1 The Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022 – 2027 has been in working practice for 3 years and the accompanying action plan is almost complete. Therefore, the partnership will look to refresh the strategy in 2025.

2.8.2 Consideration of local actions completed already, National Government policy changes, economic challenges, commissioning, and pathway reviews will all be incorporated. As well as the National Domestic Abuse Commissioner's latest research findings, linked above within the background documents section:

- A patchwork of provision report
- Safety before status report
- The Family Court and Domestic Abuse report

2.8.3 A strategy refresh consultation has taken place within the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group (DSAPG) whereby a wide range of professionals have scrutinised the current strategic priorities, looking at whether certain aspects of the strategy and action plan need to be kept / amended / or altogether changed. With the outcome being that a lot of priorities appear to cross over or duplicate, therefore it will need to become more streamlined and action specific.

2.8.4 Consultation has also been completed with domestic abuse services users and survivors. This has captured voices and has given insight into the current needs and priorities, which will enable a robust family focussed strategy moving forward.

2.9 **Next steps**

- Continue to implement and monitor performance against the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2027 action plan.
- Continue to interrogate data to inform us of any gaps in knowledge or provision, ensuring protected characteristics are reviewed and continue to drive change when required.
- Continue to monitor training and ensure a wide range of Domestic Abuse training is available to all partners, including all member seminars.
- Complete the Domestic Abuse pathway review, then use the findings to support and complete the refreshed Domestic Abuse strategy in 2025.

3. **Options considered and recommended proposal.**

3.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress towards the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-27 and invites comments on progress from Commission members.

4. **Consultation on proposal**

4.1 Not applicable.

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

5.1 Not applicable

6. **Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

6.1 As an update report there are no direct procurement implications. All procurement activity referred to in this report has been procured in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.

6.2 The Council has received a grant allocation of £644,001 in 2024/25 from MHCLG, in respect of the New Burdens Funding for Statutory Domestic Abuse Duty. In 2025/26 funding for domestic abuse services has been consolidated into the overall local government finance settlement. The Council's grant allocation has increased to £802,591.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 Under section 58 (part 4) of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Local Authority is required to provide support for victims of domestic abuse. They must.
- (a) assess, or plan for the assessment of, the need for accommodation-based support in its area.
 - (b) prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support in its area, and
 - (c) monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.
- 7.2 This report sets out how the Council is complying with that duty.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 Protecting vulnerable children and protecting vulnerable adults are adopted as continuing priorities by the Safer Rotherham Partnership from 2022-2025. The Domestic Abuse strategy and Domestic Abuse Action Plan reflect continuous work in both these areas.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 Please refer to Appendix 1 for the Equalities Screening Assessment for the DA Strategy update for 2024/25.
- 10.2 A full Equalities Analysis was carried out at the very start of the Domestic Abuse strategy and the equality implications have not changed since the start of the strategy – the original Equalities Analysis Part B is attached within Appendix 1 for reference

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 There are no direct CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change implications associated with this report.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 There are no direct implications for partners associated with this report.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The production of this report for scrutiny ensures that the minimum legal requirements are met.

Accountable Officer(s)

Emma Ellis, Head of Service, Community Safety and Regulatory Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	Click here to enter a date.
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Philip Horsfield	Click here to enter a date.
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)	Lee Mann	Click here to enter a date.
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	Click here to enter a date.
Head of Procurement	Rob Mahon	Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment	Andrew Bramidge	Click here to enter a date.
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor Alam	Click here to enter a date.

Report Author: Kayley Charlton - Community Safety

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

PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being / has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an Equality Analysis (Part B).

Further information is available in the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance – see page 9.

1. Title	
Title: Domestic Abuse strategy update 2024/25	
Directorate: Regeneration and Environment	Service area: Community Safety
Lead person: Kayley Charlton	Contact number / email: Kayley.charlton@rotherham.gov.uk
Is this a: <div><input type="checkbox"/> Strategy / Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Service / Function <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other</div> If other, please specify	
The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress towards the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-27 and invites comments on progress from Commission members.	

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

The current Domestic Abuse Strategy aims to support the individualised needs of every victim of domestic abuse, to create a more seamless pathway through the council's domestic abuse services by developing an integrated service which allows systemic working and ensuring the delivery of the six key priorities:

- Driving Change Together
- Prevention and Early Intervention
- Justice, Recovery, and Ongoing Protection
- Responding to Changing Need and Demand
- Minimising Harm, Early Help Support & Children
- Homeless Victims are Provided with Safe Accommodation

The strategy aims to raise awareness of the impact of domestic abuse, encourage victims to access support, and seeks to harness the energy of the Safer Rotherham Partnership, focusing development towards common goals. As such, it will enable a rigorous and proactive approach to improving the quality of relationships across Rotherham and reducing harm caused by Domestic Abuse.

This report provides an update on progress of the current strategy which follows the previous update report, presented to the Commission on the 5th of December 2023.

Updates are provided on the priority aims and actions that have been progressed and outlines the next steps which are to be taken for full completion. In addition, it provides information regarding the development of a domestic abuse pathway review which will help inform a refresh of the Domestic Abuse Strategy in 2025.

3. Relevance to equality and diversity

All the Council's strategies / policies / services / functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc.

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community? <i>(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)</i>		X
Could the proposal affect service users? <i>(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)</i>		X
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics? <i>(Consider potential discrimination, harassment or victimisation of individuals with protected characteristics)</i>		X
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal? <i>(It is important that the Council is transparent and consultation is carried out with members of the public to help mitigate future challenge)</i>		X
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from commissioning or procurement)</i>		X
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from your HR business partner)</i>		X

If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason

As this is a strategy update, there is no impact on equalities and a full equalities analysis was carried out at the start of the strategy in 2021 that recognised the impact this strategy could have on equalities which is attached.

If you have answered **no** to all the questions above, please complete **sections 5 and 6**.

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above, please complete **section 4**.

4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals before decisions are made.

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).

- **How have you considered equality and diversity?**

(think about the scope of the proposal, who is likely to be affected, equality related information, gaps in information and plans to address, consultation and engagement activities (taken place or planned) with those likely to be affected)

- **Key findings**

(think about any potential positive and negative impact on different equality characteristics, potential to promote strong and positive relationships between groups, potential to bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other, perception that the proposal could benefit one group at the expense of another)

- **Actions**

(think about how you will promote positive impact and remove/reduce negative impact)

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	

5. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:

Name	Job title	Date
Carol Adamson	Service Manager	04.03.2025

6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

Date screening completed	04.05.2025
Report title and date	Domestic Abuse Strategy progress report 2024/25
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	N/A
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	04.05.2025

PART B – Equality Analysis Form

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

This form:

- Can be used to prompt discussions, ensure that due regard has been given and remove or minimise disadvantage for an individual or group with a protected characteristic
- Involves looking at what steps can be taken to advance and maximise equality as well as eliminate discrimination and negative consequences
- Should be completed before decisions are made, this will remove the need for remedial actions.

Note – An Initial Equality Screening Assessment (Part A) should be completed prior to this form.

When completing this form consider the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc. – see page 11 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

1. Title	
Equality Analysis title: Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022 - 2027	
Date of Equality Analysis (EA): 09/09/2021	
Directorate: Regeneration and Environment	Service area: Community Safety and Street Scene - Domestic and Sexual Abuse
Lead Manager: Sam Barstow	Contact number: 07748143370
Is this a: <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> Strategy / Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Service / Function <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
If other, please specify	

2. Names of those involved in the Equality Analysis (Should include minimum of three people) - see page 7 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance

Name	Organisation	Role (eg service user, managers, service specialist)
Amanda Raven	RMBC – Community Safety and Street Scene	Service Specialist – Domestic Abuse Coordinator
Helen Caulfield-Brown	RMBC – Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	Commissioning Manager
Megan Dyson	RMBC – Community Safety and Street Scene	National Management Trainee

3. What is already known? - see page 10 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance

Aim/Scope (who the Policy/Service affects and intended outcomes if known)

This may include a group/s identified by a protected characteristic, others groups or stakeholder/s e.g. service users, employees, partners, members, suppliers etc.)

The strategy will affect every victim of domestic abuse in Rotherham.

The intended outcome of this Strategy is to support the individualised needs of every victim of domestic abuse, to create a more seamless pathway through the council's domestic abuse services by developing an integrated service which allows systemic working.

and ensuring the delivery of the six key priorities:

- Driving Change Together
- Prevention and Early Intervention
- Justice, Recovery, and Ongoing Protection
- Responding to Changing Need and Demand
- Minimising Harm, Early Help Support & Children
- Homeless Victims are Provided with Safe Accommodation

The strategy aims to raise awareness of the impact of domestic abuse, encourage victims to access support, and seeks to harness the energy of the Safer Rotherham Partnership, focusing development towards common goals. As such, it will enable a rigorous and proactive approach to improving the quality of relationships across Rotherham and reducing harm caused by Domestic Abuse.

Rotherham Domestic Abuse Services

There are two domestic abuse support services provided by with Rotherham Rise - one of which is a BAME (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic groups) specific commissioned service. The services from Rotherham Rise provide support to victims of domestic abuse who are assessed at standard to medium level of risk. The short to medium support service helps to

keep victims and their dependents safe, develop confidence, and provides emotional and practical support.

The refuge, also provided by Rotherham Rise, provides refuge supported accommodation in the instance where staying at home becomes the least safe option in the options available. The refuge currently provides 6 self-contained flats and 2 communal flats in the core building and 2 dispersed properties for women and their children.

The refuge assists the Council to fulfil its statutory duties towards people who are homeless and require emergency, safe accommodation as a result of Domestic Abuse.

The Councils Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVAs) are specialist advocacy service who focus on working predominantly with high-risk victims those most at risk of homicide or serious harm. Their main goal is to ensure safety and offer intensive short to medium term support.

The Safer Rotherham Partnership invited City of Bradford Council and partners to conduct a thorough peer review of Domestic Abuse Services in Rotherham, to both provide a health check and inform future delivery. The Safer Rotherham Partnership asked commissioners of both Adult and Children's services to undertake a full review of Domestic Abuse services in Rotherham. The findings of the review indicated that the domestic abuse pathway was fragmented and there was need for a more integrated approach, with easier access to services. The findings also recognised that there should be a more defined specialised area on how support to LGBTQ+ survivors of domestic abuse and issues relating to victims of domestic abuse who have other added factors such as disabilities or caring responsibilities.

There was a significant gap evident in refuge provisions for male victims of domestic abuse and for women who have older male children.

It was concluded that it should be proposed that the Refuge provision is remodelled to provide a diverse offer to meet the needs of a range of all victims. To co-design a new model of domestic abuse support, building on the previous co-production, followed by the commissioning of the new delivery model for domestic support services and refuge in one combined contract. Aligning the councils IDVAs service provision with the commissioned support services to enable victims and their children to remain safe and to live independently in their own home.

The service supports the Council to meet its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 as it provides accessible support, including outreach community support, assists in overcoming societal barriers to inclusion and positively supports and promotes issues experienced by people affected by domestic abuse.

What equality information is available? (Include any engagement undertaken)

There have been a number of engagement events undertaken which contributed towards this strategy. They are listed below:

- Market Engagement (2021)
- IDVA Engagement (2020)
- Rotherham Rise Engagement (2020)

- Victim Engagement (Refuge) (2020) (Victims have protected characteristics)
- Victim Engagement (Rotherham Rise) (2020) and the BMER service
- Key Stakeholders and Voluntary Groups Engagement – Housing, Commissioning, Voluntary Sector, SYP, NHS (2021)

There has also been a rigorous Needs Assessment undertaken, which was provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government, and serves as a useful tool to aid data capture to review the impact of domestic abuse on RMBC's services and helped RMBC understand the needs of homeless domestic abuse victims in Rotherham. This Needs Assessment therefore ensured that RMBC was prepared for the new statutory duties of the National Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Are there any gaps in the information that you are aware of?

No - the Domestic Abuse Services review was undertaken in 2018, concluded January 2019. The Council's intention was to pilot new ways of working, taking any learning before exercising a competitive procurement process. Unfortunately, due to the impact of Covid -19 pandemic this hindered the progress.

The new service model specification will be co-designed building on the previous consultation and engagement work undertaken.

What monitoring arrangements have you made to monitor the impact of the policy or service on communities/groups according to their protected characteristics?

Strengthened contract management will routinely review accessibility of RMBC's domestic abuse services. In addition, the accommodation offer will include accessible properties.

There are also a number of panels set in place that routinely monitor the impact of domestic abuse on all communities and groups in Rotherham. These include the Domestic Abuse Manager's Forum, the MARAC Steering Group, and the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group. Here, individualised needs are discussed, and any issues or concerns are raised and responded to in a prompt manner.

Additionally, RMBC receives weekly statistics from voluntary sector groups and South Yorkshire Police (SYP). Domestic abuse services provide weekly statistics on victim engagement with the services, and SYP provide statistics on both crime and non-crime domestic abuse related incidents. There are also bi-monthly reports from all commissioned and non-commissioned services, plus reports from the Homeless Team. Reports from Remedi, Safer Options, and Sayit.

Engagement undertaken with customers. (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)

Engagement event with victims inside the refuge and medium-risk victims supported by the commissioned service:

Key findings: There is a disjointed pathway through the domestic abuse service, because victims found that as their risk level fluctuated, they were assigned a new

	<p>support worker via a different service. Many victims asserted that it was difficult to re-tell their experience to many different support workers.</p> <p>Cultural barriers, such as lack of understanding of how to access services, resources, and public funds, were identified by victims as an issue for some Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities. Language barriers were also identified as a barrier to accessing support.</p> <p>Victims also described how shared accommodation can also be a barrier, if there are males (for example, teenage sons) in the accommodation with vulnerable women.</p> <p>Summary of engagement to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim Engagement (Refuge) (2020) (Victims have protected characteristics) • Victim Engagement (Rotherham Rise) (2020) and the BMER service <p>There has also been a rigorous Needs Assessment undertaken, which was provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government, and serves as a useful tool to aid data capture to review the impact of domestic abuse on RMBC's services and helped RMBC understand the needs of homeless domestic abuse victims in Rotherham. This Needs Assessment therefore ensured that RMBC was prepared for the new statutory duties of the National Domestic Abuse Act 2021.</p>
<p>Engagement undertaken with staff (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)</p>	<p>Engagement Event with IDVA Team: 03/03/2021 and Rotherham Rise: 26/02/2021</p> <p>Key findings: Service staff corroborated the victim's concerns about the disjointed pathway within the service. Staff claimed that it is difficult to build a rapport with the victim if they are having to move between services as their risk level changes rapidly. Moreover, some victims with protected characteristics do not want to move support services due to lack of trust with local authority staff. It is asserted that some of these victims find it difficult to disclose their experiences to staff, therefore making them more reluctant to move between services as their risk level fluctuates. Staff claim that this risks them disengaging from the service altogether.</p>

	<p>There is also an issue with getting some victims of certain cultures to recognise that they are in situation or relationship which is causing them to experience domestic abuse.</p> <p>However, the service staff did not find that 'protected characteristics' was in itself a barrier for the services to support victims – especially due to RMBC's specialist BMER service and refuge.</p> <p>Domestic abuse and Homelessness Pathway Internal Review and Consultation: February 2021</p> <p>Key findings: It was also found that a victim could be left without specialist domestic abuse support over a weekend; for example if a victim presented as homeless due to domestic abuse to RMBC after 5pm on Friday, will have to wait until the following Monday to be referred to any specialist domestic abuse support.</p> <p>In one case, a service user who was in Rotherham on a Leave-to-Remain Visa was not eligible for support due to immigrant status. A 'priority status' must be applied to all service users under the Domestic Abuse Bill 2020.</p> <p>The majority of service users had dependent children in their care; often, more than one child per service user. Where victims are fleeing with little to no personal possessions, the new service will aim to provide safe accommodation properties with comfort packages equipped with essential items.</p> <p>Summary of engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Engagement (2021) • IDVA Engagement (2020) • Rotherham Rise Engagement (2020) • Key Stakeholders and Voluntary Groups Engagement – Housing, Commissioning, Voluntary Sector, SYP, NHS (2021) <p>There has also been a rigorous Needs Assessment undertaken, which was provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government, and serves as a useful tool to aid data capture to review the impact of domestic abuse on RMBC's services and helped RMBC understand the needs of homeless domestic abuse victims in Rotherham. This Needs Assessment therefore ensured that RMBC was</p>
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	prepared for the new statutory duties of the National Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
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4. The Analysis - of the actual or likely effect of the Policy or Service (Identify by protected characteristics)

How does the Policy/Service meet the needs of different communities and groups? (Protected characteristics of Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity) – see glossary on page 14 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance)

The commissioned service as set out in this strategy will enable people to achieve their optimum level by delivering services that are inclusive for all victims of domestic abuse. Understanding cultural differences and supporting victims, taking into account their protected characteristics, will also enhance the wider service offer. Empowering victims to have a voice and take control of their lives, whilst breaking the cycle of abuse. Providing both emotional and practical support and accessible supported refuge accommodation.

The strategy seeks to enhance the accommodation offer and ensure an increase in individualised housing, certifying it is accessible for all victims of domestic abuse – pertaining to all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs, and disabilities. Specialist domestic abuse support will also be provided to every homeless victim inside all forms of safe accommodation.

The strategy also seeks to create a one whole commissioned service, enabling a seamless pathway for service users. It also sets out to acknowledge and understand the individualised support needs of each victim and enables their specific needs to be met.

The service set out in this strategy will be inclusive to all of those effected by domestic abuse. Although the service is an adult service of 16+ years, it will make referrals to safeguard children at risk of harm and provide a 'Whole Family Approach' which will benefit children, young people, and families.

The strategy also seeks to deliver training and awareness-raising campaigns in different languages and will spotlight particular issues such as Forced Marriages, 'Honour Based' Abuse, and FGM. It will also provide training sessions for staff dealing with issues LGBTQ+ victims face where domestic abuse is occurring in same-sex relationships.

It also will deliver wider campaigns to raise awareness of the impact of domestic abuse on everybody in the community, under the ethos that "domestic abuse is everyone's business".

Services will be monitored via statistics, groups, and panels - any gaps will therefore be identified promptly and processes and pathways to support will be reviewed accordingly.

Ultimately, the focus of this strategy is to achieve optimum outcomes which make a real difference to the quality of life and wellbeing of people who have experienced domestic abuse. The domestic abuse services will provide a service for **all** people, including those with protected characteristics.

Does your Policy/Service present any problems or barriers to communities or Groups?

The strategy does not present any problem or barrier to the community. If the strategy is implemented, further awareness raising and training will be employed, and we will continue to work with the voluntary sector and user groups to help address any concerns within the community to ensure every victim's needs are met, no matter what background they are from. As such, this strategy will endeavor to remove any barriers to inclusion, and to provide an accessible service for all.

Does the Service/Policy provide any positive impact/s including improvements or remove barriers?

Yes – the strategy seeks to ensure that all victims of domestic abuse in Rotherham receive support to maximise the best outcomes inclusive of all protected characteristics. The service outlined in this strategy will ensure that a victim will have a continuity of support no matter what level of risk, individual support needs, or protected characteristics the victim may have.

Additionally, the strategy seeks to strengthen overall resources that safeguard victims of domestic abuse and their families in Rotherham, alongside diversifying the type of properties available for individuals feeling their home due to domestic abuse.

The strategy will also ensure that homeless victims of domestic abuse are provided with both safe accommodation and a specialist domestic abuse support worker, meaning that their individualised needs are catered for and they are guaranteed a safe journey of recovery.

What affect will the Policy/Service have on community relations? (may also need to consider activity which may be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another)

Further investing in domestic abuse services, which support the most vulnerable residents of Rotherham, is likely to have a positive impact on community relations.

The service model outlined in this strategy will have a positive impact on communities and contribute towards providing a local community support to victims and their families. This will enable people to reach their true potential and contribute towards providing safer neighborhoods and communities within Rotherham.

Please list any **actions and targets** that need to be taken as a consequence of this assessment on the action plan below and ensure that they are added into your service plan for monitoring purposes – see page 12 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

1. [Summary of findings and Equality Analysis Action Plan](#)

If the analysis is done at the right time, i.e. early before decisions are made, changes should be built in before the policy or change is signed off. This will remove the need for remedial actions. Where this is achieved, the only action required will be to monitor the impact of the policy/service/change on communities or groups according to their protected characteristic - See page 11 of the Equality Screening and Analysis guidance

Title of analysis: Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022 - 2027
Directorate and service area: Regeneration and Environment – Community Safety and Street Scene
Lead Manager: Sam Barstow
Summary of findings:
The pathway throughout shows a need for individualised support to every victim's specific needs can be met. It also needs to become more seamless to prevent disengagement from the service.

Action/Target	State Protected Characteristics as listed below	Target date (MM/YY)
N/A		

*A = Age, D= Disability, S = Sex, GR Gender Reassignment, RE= Race/ Ethnicity, RoB= Religion or Belief, SO= Sexual Orientation, PM= Pregnancy/Maternity, CPM = Civil Partnership or Marriage. C= Carers, O= other groups

6. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state those that have approved the Equality Analysis. Approval should be obtained by the Director and approval sought from DLT and the relevant Cabinet Member.

Name	Job title	Date
Sam Barstow	Head of Service, Community Safety and Regulatory Services	05/11/21

7. Publishing

The Equality Analysis will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this Equality Analysis relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy should also be sent to equality@rotherham.gov.uk For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

Date Equality Analysis completed	17/09/2021
Report title and date	Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022 - 2027
Date report sent for publication	
Date Equality Analysis sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement equality@rotherham.gov.uk	

