

Divisions Affected – All

CABINET 19 May 2026

Domestic Abuse – Safe Accommodation Provision Report of the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to —
 - a) Note the recommendations contained in the body of this report and to consider and determine its response to the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and
 - b) Agree that, once Cabinet has responded, relevant officers will continue to provide each meeting of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a brief written update on progress made against actions committed to in response to the recommendations for 12 months, or until they are completed (if earlier).

REQUIREMENT TO RESPOND

2. In accordance with section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, People Overview & Scrutiny Committee requires that, within two months of the consideration of this report, the Cabinet publish a response to this report and any recommendations.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

3. The People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on Domestic Abuse – Safe Accommodation Provision in Oxfordshire at its meeting on 19 March 2026. The report set out the Council’s statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the operation of the Safe Accommodation Strategy, and the performance and pressures within the commissioned service.
4. The Committee would like to thank Cllr Kate Gregory, Cabinet Member for Public Health & Inequalities, Ansaf Azhar, Director of Public Health & Inequalities, and Seren Abel, Interim Head of Public Health Programmes & Public Health Principal (Domestic Abuse), for attending the Committee.

5. The Committee examined issues including capacity, referral pathways, move-on arrangements, partnership working, and outcomes for victim-survivors. Particular attention was given to how learning from post-accommodation experiences could be strengthened to inform future commissioning and service improvement.

SUMMARY

6. The People Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed the report on Domestic Abuse – Safe Accommodation Provision in Oxfordshire and recognised the Council’s statutory responsibilities under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to assess need, commission safe accommodation, and maintain an effective local strategy. Members acknowledged the distinction between the overarching Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy and the more focused Safe Accommodation Strategy, which addresses accommodation-based support and associated recovery pathways.
7. The Committee welcomed the public-health-led approach adopted in Oxfordshire, noting the benefits of positioning domestic abuse work within a preventative framework linked to mental health, substance misuse, safeguarding and protective behaviours. Members recognised the breadth of the commissioned service, including refuge provision, places of safety, outreach, specialist advocacy roles and recovery support, and noted the complexity of need increasingly presented by victim-survivors accessing safe accommodation.
8. Discussion focused on system pressures within safe accommodation provision, including capacity constraints, length of stay, and delays in ‘move-on’ caused primarily by wider housing availability. Members explored how referrals were managed, including cases redirected to alternative or out-of-area provision where local accommodation was not appropriate or safe, and sought assurance that individuals were supported into suitable pathways rather than being left without support.
9. A key theme arising from the discussion was the limited visibility of longer-term outcomes for victim-survivors once they leave safe accommodation, particularly for those whose cases are redirected to other providers or areas. Members expressed concern that, while immediate safety and stabilisation are prioritised, there is less systematic understanding of ongoing wellbeing, unmet needs, and longer-term recovery after exit.
10. The Committee considered that improved learning from post-accommodation experiences would strengthen assurance, inform future commissioning decisions, and support the continued development of a sustainable and responsive domestic abuse system. It therefore makes one recommendation to that effect.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. During its consideration of the item, the Committee examined a range of systemic issues affecting the effectiveness and sustainability of safe accommodation provision, including service capacity, referral pathways, move-on arrangements, and partnership working across housing, health, policing and the voluntary and community sector. Members recognised the complexity of commissioning within the current housing and funding context and acknowledged that the commissioned provider delivers a comprehensive service within the scope of the existing contract.
12. In particular, the Committee explored the issue of outcomes for victim-survivors once they exit safe accommodation. Members noted that, while data and assurance mechanisms are strong in relation to access, throughput and immediate safety, longer-term outcomes after move-on are less consistently captured. This was seen as especially relevant for individuals whose cases are redirected to alternative or out-of-area provision, where routine follow-up and outcome monitoring are limited once responsibility transfers to another provider or system.
13. The Committee was keen that any additional activity in this area was proportionate, realistic, and developed collaboratively with the contractor, A2Dominion, taking account of provider capacity, contractual scope and existing operational pressures. Members did not seek to prescribe a specific model but agreed that exploring feasible options for improved long-term learning and feedback would support more informed future commissioning and service improvement, without undermining delivery of core statutory functions.

Recommendation 1: That the Council will work with the commissioned domestic abuse service provider, A2Dominion, to explore options for systematic long-term follow-up with victim-survivors after they leave safe accommodation to understand ongoing wellbeing, identify unmet needs, and inform future commissioning and service improvements. This will be developed in consultation with the service provider and mindful of their capacity and contractual scope.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION

14. The Committee recognises domestic abuse as a significant and ongoing issue and records its continuing interest in this area. The Committee indicated that it would expect to consider safe accommodation provision and wider domestic abuse activity again in the future, including following completion of the needs assessment and through scrutiny of other elements of the Domestic Abuse Strategy.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

15. Under Part 6.2 (13) (a) of the Constitution Scrutiny has the following power: 'Once a Scrutiny Committee has completed its deliberations on any matter a formal report may be prepared on behalf of the Committee and when agreed

by them the Proper Officer will normally refer it to the Cabinet for consideration.

16. Under Part 4.2 of the Constitution, the Cabinet Procedure Rules, s 2.3 (v) the Cabinet will consider any reports from Scrutiny Committees.

Anita Bradley

Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annex: Pro-forma Response Template

Background papers: None

Other Documents: None

Contact Officer: Ben Piper
Senior Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer
ben.piper@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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