

Health Improvement Board

9th September 2021

Strategic update for Domestic Abuse

Purpose / Recommendation

1. **HIB members are asked to**

- Note the update on the Domestic Abuse Act
- Note the progress with the needs assessment and renewed strategy

Executive Summary

2. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was introduced in April this year and requires a needs assessment and strategic review to be conducted by each tier one local authority area. This should be overseen and evaluated by a strategic board consisting of a range of partners. MHCLG have provided a grant to support the delivery of the strategy. This paper summarises the actions being taken in Oxfordshire to meet the requirements of the Act.

Background

3. An update on the Oxfordshire strategic response to domestic abuse has been requested for the Health Improvement Board.
4. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was introduced in April this year. It requires each tier one local authority to lead a strategic board consisting of membership from a range of organisations from the system, including tier two local authorities. The local authority and strategic board are required to organise a local needs assessment with the following scope: “comprehensive assessment of need for support in safe accommodation in your area”. This will inform an updated strategy on domestic abuse, required under the Act, by August 2021. A grant of £1.1million has been awarded by MHCLG to OCC for delivery of the duties under this Act. Further grants have been awarded to tier two local authorities. There should also be an evaluation plan for the delivery of the strategic plan.
5. The most recent needs assessment for domestic abuse in Oxfordshire was completed in 2016^[1]. This informed the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2019 - 2024 with annual delivery plans ^[2]. Existing services are in place to deliver the recommendations of this strategy. The Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board has been in place for several years, and is responsible for the overall strategy, governance of multi-agency arrangements and includes membership from most organisations required under the new Act.

^[1] [Strategic Review of Domestic Abuse Oxfordshire 2016](#)

^[2] [Microsoft Word - Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2019-24 FINAL](#)

6. Most of the current services in Oxfordshire for Domestic Abuse are co-commissioned between OCC, city and district councils, and the Police and Crime Commissioner, and the current contract is held by A2Dominion. Other services are funded by various grants.
7. The services provided for Domestic Abuse in Oxfordshire include :
 - **Access Service** (including Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Helpline and support for professionals seeking advice)
 - **Community Based Support Service**
 - Outreach for medium risk victim/survivors
 - IDVA (independent domestic violence advisors) for high risk victim/survivors
 - The Anchor Programme (TAP) and Managing Emotions Group (MEG) – supporting victims and their families with complex needs.
 - Resettlement support
 - **Accommodation Based Support Service**
 - Refuge (Oxford City and Banbury – total of 16 beds)
 - Places of Safety (dispersed accommodation – 2 properties currently, 1 in the process of being sorted. Intention is to be built up to 5 units.)
 - **Sanctuary Schemes**
 - **Provision to combat Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)**, through *Oxford Against Cutting* and *Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Service*
 - **Prevention services** including training, children’s pay workers and support officers in various settings.
 - **Other prevention and support roles** including: Independent Domestic Violence Advisors to work with standard to medium risk clients

Key Issues

8. Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board

The Terms of Reference of the board were reviewed in line with the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act. This resulted in additional members being added to the membership, including providers and the voice of lived experience. The frequency of the board has been increased to monthly whilst we plan actions to meet the requirements of the Act and allocate related funding.

9. Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment and Strategy review

MHCLG have provided a grant to support the delivery of a local needs assessment and update strategy. A requirement of this grant is to provide a predefined report on the assessment of “need for support in safe accommodation”, which will be submitted in August. This report states numbers of victims of Domestic Abuse accessing the services of different sectors, such as housing and health, with a breakdown into subgroups to identify potential inequalities. A proportion of this data was not available to the granularity requested, and we understand this has been a challenge in other areas too. Any gaps in available data will inform future data collection strategies for services across the system.

10. The Board agreed to undertake a needs assessment and strategy review with a wider remit than the stated requirement around Safe Accommodation. This work is currently being undertaken by an external Public Health agency, PHAST, and is

supported by a local expert, to ensure the strategy reflects a good understanding the Oxfordshire system. An interim report of this work will be provided to the Domestic Abuse Strategic Board in September, and the final report will be provided in November 2021. Any identified project and actions from this can be supported by the MHCLG grant, though currently there is no indication of recurrent funding.

Resource

11. Public Health have allocated resource from within the existing team to support the domestic abuse agenda and additional temporary resource is being recruited to ensure priorities are delivered.

Rapid review and gap analysis

12. Whilst the needs assessment is in progress, the Public Health team have undertaken a rapid review and gap analysis of the current strategy and delivery plans to identify any immediate interventions that can be commenced/scaled up with the funding. The priority actions from this have been agreed by the strategic board and will be supported by MHCLG funding.

Budgetary implications

13. MHCLG have provided a significant grant (c£1.1m) to support the needs assessment and strategy review, and the projects that emerge from this. Additional funding has been provided to tier 2 councils to support their delivery of the Act requirements. This funding is non - recurrent for the 2021/2022 financial year, and ongoing funding is not clear. This presents a risk for the resilience of services which may be identified as necessary through the needs assessment and strategy.

Equalities implications *[considering the impact of the policy on our customers]*

14. The strategic review and immediate priorities seek to address inequalities and incorporate recommendations from the BAMER (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and Refugee) project report published in October 2020¹.
15. The MHCLG data housing return is requesting data on protected characteristics, to inform the future planning of services.

Sustainability implications

16. No sustainability implications arise from this paper.

Risk Management

Risk	Action
Resource: This programme of work is new to Public Health, and there is limited resource dedicated to this.	Diverted resource in the short term within Public Health.

¹ [Thames Valley BAMER report, 2020](#)

	<p>Interim resource being sourced to support delivery of the programmes and new strategy.</p> <p>Needs assessment being delivered by external Public Health agency, supported by Domestic Abuse expert panel.</p>
<p>Delivery: The MHCLG grant for £1.1m is non recurrent, for financial year 2021/22, to support delivery of an updated strategy. There is a very short timeframe to conduct the needs assessment, identify strategic aims, and deliver actions.</p>	<p>Rapid strategic review identified projects that could be started quickly.</p> <p>Short timeframe flagged with MHCLG, and clarity requested on future funding plans.</p>

Communications

17. In the development of the needs assessment, a number of interviews have been conducted to understand views from different stakeholders. This has included conducting interviews with people with lived experience and reporting their experience as case studies. Interviews were also conducted with perpetrators.
18. Additionally, information has been gathered, via interview and survey, from other stakeholders including providers, voluntary services, housing officers, and health services.
19. The outcomes of these will be reported in the needs assessment and strategy.

Key Dates

August 2021 – Oxfordshire County Council submit MHCLG needs assessment template, reporting need for safe housing for those experiencing domestic abuse.

15th September 2021 – Domestic Abuse Strategic Board meeting. PHAST present interim report on needs assessment and development of strategy

November 2021 – completion of new Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy

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