

Domestic Abuse Strategic Delivery for Oxfordshire

1. Purpose

This paper is intended to update the Health Improvement Partnership Board on key strands of strategic delivery in response to domestic abuse in Oxfordshire and request that the Board agrees to the proposed change in governance detailed in section 4 below.

This report will cover

- Covid-19 response and learning
- A proposal on revision of domestic abuse governance
- Delivery of Oxfordshire's Domestic Abuse Strategy 2019-2024 under our four strategic aims:
 - PREVENTION
 - PROVISION
 - PURSUING
 - PARTNERSHIP

2. Domestic abuse in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic

Increased risks for victims from restrictive measures put in place to avoid the spread of coronavirus announced on 23 March led to us setting up a multi-agency "cell", a group with members of our Domestic Abuse Boards including experts by experience, all key statutory, independent and voluntary and community sector agencies to meet on a weekly basis using a virtual platform. This approach aligned with the "co-ordinated-community response" (CCR) approach described in our 2019 – 2024 Domestic Abuse Strategy for Oxfordshire so that all key agencies work together to develop policy and practice with a view to ensure that the victim and their children are at the centre of all activity.

Our highly valued core members of the Domestic Abuse and Covid-19 Response Cell **experts by experience** have played a key role in ensuring that information going out to victims, professionals and communities is fit for purpose and correctly targeted.

Oxfordshire's "Covid-19 Domestic Abuse Response Cell"

The focus of the multi-agency meetings has been

- **Multi-agency sharing of practice and expertise:** based on our "CCR" (Community Co-ordinated Response) model partners worked in a proactive engaged and dynamic way meeting weekly then fortnightly during and after lockdown
- **Monitoring:** tracking changes to service delivery, changes in level of referrals/incidents/disclosures, changes in nature of abuse
- **Communication:** targeted information developed and delivered for victims and families, members of the public professionals and community workers

including posters and leaflets, information shared on social media, television and radio

- **Innovation:** adapting to new ways of working, online support, current and newly developed training moved to online delivery and also pharmacy “safe spaces” and a new Domestic Abuse App - initiatives developed to help victims safely disclose abuse.

Referrals to services during the Covid-19 Pandemic

During the first few weeks of lockdown all services saw a reduction in referrals / police call outs. This soon returned to usual levels and then we saw an increase in referrals. This can be seen in the table below setting out the comparative data for Q1 and Q2 for the current and previous years for our specialist domestic abuse services.

Comparative Q1+Q2 data potentially showing some impacts of Covid-19			
Quarter	2019-20	2020-21	Percentage change
Reducing the Risk - Oxfordshire IDVA referrals data			
Q1	45 new + 13 repeats	68 new + 14 repeats	44% increase (8% increase in repeats)
Q2	41 new + 9 repeats	66 new + 20 repeats	38% increase (55% increase in repeats)
ADAS – Oxfordshire’s Domestic Abuse Helpline new referral data*			
Q1	373 new	467 new	25.2% increase
Q2	397 new	494 new	24.4% increase

**Please note – repeat cases are not included here*

We are looking to ensure capacity is enough to meet current demand and so keeping a close eye on the trajectory of this increased need for support. In response to this increased need we have increased funding for our local domestic abuse helpline. Anecdotally an increase in complexity and levels of risk has also been noted.

Thames Valley Police have also recorded an increase in domestic abuse incidents over the same time frames. This increase is set out in the report submitted by DCI Jonathan Capps.

Reasons for this increase in referrals may be manifold including an increase in actual abuse which may be linked to the circumstances of lockdown, an increase in understanding of domestic abuse and information about how to seek help either for oneself or on account of others, more proactive work from professionals to protect those feared to be vulnerable to abuse and also, in the case of police incidents

changes to the way in which recording of incidents is made which is a factor that has been impacting on statistic over a period of time before the impacts of Covid lockdown.

3. Learning points from the lockdown experience

A number of key learning points have been identified from our Covid-19 response work:

- Many activities both to support victims directly and to increase learning and skills amongst professionals and community members can be delivered successfully online
- We can work as a partnership to quickly develop and deliver key information and messaging to both those affected by domestic abuse and those who may be in contact with them.
- Having Experts by Experience co-producing our key areas of work is essential to success.
- There is more work to do to support Black Asian and Ethnically Diverse (BAED) communities to get help and support
- Anecdotal evidence suggests there is an increase in the complexity of cases being seen by professionals following lockdown easing
- Feedback from survivors and professionals has highlighted an even greater need for Recovery Programmes for adult and children affected by domestic abuse
- A multi-agency virtual meeting held more frequently helps us to be more proactive and dynamic in responding to need.

4. Change in governance

Covid-19 DA Cell – a multi-agency response to the pandemic as a weekly then fortnightly online meeting and a mix of operational and strategic membership. The Strategic Board for Domestic Abuse is now proposing to continue this as the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership (OXDAP) and the following new governance model will be put to the Health Improvement Partnership Board for sign off.

- **Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership** monthly, reporting to
- **Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board** quarterly, reporting to
- **Health Improvement Partnership Board** (with a DA report twice a year)

This model fits with the new statutory duty that will be imposed on tier 1 Local Authorities to have a statutory local partnership board that will fulfil certain statutory functions being proposed by the Domestic Abuse Bill currently making its way through Parliament.

5. Domestic Abuse Strategic Delivery

Over the first 2 quarters of 2020-21 delivery of the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2019-24 set out under our four strategic aims of Prevention, Provision, Pursuing and Partnership has included:

PREVENTION

- Information campaign during lockdown, targeted information for certain groups including older people, educator's toolkit, DA partner update
- OKOK – a new domestic and sexual abuse prevention booklet and game for children in primary schools
- Training – all except Champions training moved to online delivery, since the start of lockdown: Over 600 training places were taken up on courses such as Domestic Abuse Basic Awareness, Coercive Control, Domestic Abuse Champion Refresher, new training for schools to respond to children's trauma post-Covid-19, and anti-FGM training

PROVISION

- All specialist DA and sexual violence services adapted to continue to support victims and families throughout lockdown
- A new court IDVA – supporting all risk client going through court process
- New Black Asian and Ethnically Diverse (BAED) worker co-located A2D/OAC
- Domestic Abuse Recovery Pilots commissioned for adults, children and whole family (see annex 1 for more details) - evaluation of outcomes will inform future commissioning.

PURSUING

- Courts were able to grant interim non-molestation and restraining orders during lockdown by conference call
- A new domestic abuse specific court is being set up for Oxfordshire
- A new Court Support worker is offering pre-trial support, and support in Criminal, Civil and Family courts and extra support whilst orders are in place to restrict perpetrators.
- Domestic abuse crime (as opposed to non-crime incidents) has been increasing and this is being monitored with further analysis due.

PARTNERSHIP

- New Domestic A governance "OXDAP" – see above
- High risk and complex cases have increased following lockdown – this is being reviewed
- Domestic Abuse Pathway for Young People (DAPYP) Peer Audit and consultation is in progress.
- Black Asian Ethnically Diverse (BAED) Worlds Group – a new group developing best practice guidance for professionals and supporting implementation of Thames Valley domestic abuse work for these groups
- Operation Encompass – Domestic abuse notification process: understanding impact and developing best practice guidance with schools
- New focus on domestic abuse in a rural context
- Family Safeguarding Plus - the domestic abuse team are currently supporting implementation.

6. Conclusion

The Updates set out above are currently being built on to scale back up to the current conditions of lockdown. The communications focus will be maintained to ensure that all victims are aware of how and where to seek help. There is also a real focus on the barriers faced by members of Black Asian and Ethnically Diverse communities within Oxfordshire and the newly published Thames Valley BAMER Report (see Annex 1).

Finally, members of the Health Improvement Partnership Board are respectfully asked to approve this change in governance so that we may respond as flexibly and proactively as a partnership to the needs of victims and their children as we possibly can.

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9 November 2020

If you have any query relating to any of the above or any other domestic abuse issue please do not hesitate to contact me at

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