

# Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy

**2021 – 2024**



# Foreword

We are proud to introduce Oxfordshire's 2021 Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy on behalf of all of the partners across the County who have worked together to create it.

Domestic abuse is a crime that can affect anyone, having a devastating impact on the lives of victims-survivors and their families. People who have been affected by domestic abuse often experience poor health and wellbeing, and in extreme cases, death. Women and girls are more likely to be affected and die from the impact of domestic abuse. The consequences extend to the family, as children witnessing domestic abuse experience the adverse effects on their mental and physical health and other factors such as educational attainment. Additionally, harmful effects can last over a lifetime and into future generations, including impacts on attitudes to relationships, mental health and self-esteem.

Access to safe accommodation allows victims-survivors and their families to escape their abuser and can provide them with the first step towards a life without fear. The introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 demonstrates commitment to transforming the response to this crime and includes duties for local partnerships to provide safe accommodation and support, to ensure victim-survivors are able to remain safe in their own home if they wish, or access alternative safe accommodation and support.

The Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board is a partnership working together to provide the best outcomes for victims-survivors of domestic abuse and is responsible for delivering duties under the Domestic Abuse Act. They have worked together to develop this safe accommodation strategy, which defines the priorities for delivering against the statutory duties. They are also working on an overarching domestic abuse needs assessment and strategy, which will be published in 2022.

**Councillor Mark Lygo**

Cabinet Member for Public Health and Equalities

**Kate Holburn**

Chair, Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board

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# Executive Summary

The Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021 – 2024 outlines how Oxfordshire will implement the statutory duties associated with the provision of safe accommodation, as required by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

It is being developed and delivered alongside the overarching Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2019-2024, which is currently in the process of being updated.

The Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy describes how the delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse, including children, in safe accommodation services will be provided over the next three years. The strategy has been aligned with Oxfordshire’s domestic abuse strategic objectives:



## 1. PREVENTION

Preventing domestic abuse from happening by challenging the attitudes and behaviour which foster it and intervening early where possible to prevent it.



## 2. PROVISION

Providing high quality, joined-up support for victims where domestic abuse does occur.



## 4. PARTNERSHIP

Working in partnership to obtain the best outcome for victims, children and their families.

**Objective 3. Pursuing – this relates to perpetrators and is therefore not included in this strategy.**

The delivery plan for the strategy will developed by the Safe Accommodation Working Group’ (SAWG) and approved by the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board (ODASB) in 2021/22. This will include developing and agreeing baseline measures and targets to monitor the impact of the strategy.

# 1.

## **Why is the safe accommodation strategy required?**



# What is domestic abuse?

**The Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Coordinators' Network have developed the following definition, which reflects the statutory definition:**

Domestic abuse is any single incident, course of conduct or pattern of abusive behaviour between individuals aged 16 or over who are personally connected to each other as a result of being, or having been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to either of the parties are also considered victims<sup>1</sup> of domestic abuse.

Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following: physical or sexual abuse; violent or threatening behaviour; controlling or coercive behaviour; economic abuse; or psychological, emotional or other abuse. This includes incidences where the abusive party directs their behaviour at another person (e.g. a child). Economic abuse means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on someone's ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods or services.

This incorporates harmful traditional practices for example but not limited to 'honour' killings, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

**Personally connected means two people who:**

- Are, or have been, married to each other
- Are, or have been, civil partners of each other
- Have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been ended)
- Have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been ended)
- Are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- Have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- Are relatives

**Children as victims of domestic abuse:**

- Sees or hears, or experiences the effect of, the abuse and is related to either person
- The person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child
- The child and person are related
- Child means person under the age of 18 years

The statutory definition for domestic abuse as defined by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021<sup>2</sup> is outlined in Appendix A.

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1. Throughout this strategy the term victim has been used to denote a victim/survivor/individual with lived experience of domestic violence and abuse. The terms can be used interchangeably recognising that every person who has been subject to abuse will have their own preferred language

2. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Statutory guidance: Delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation services. Published 1 October 2021. Available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation/delivery-of-support-to-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation/delivery-of-support-to-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services)

# What is the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and local authority statutory duty?

On 29 April 2021, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal Assent. It brings wide reaching changes in protective legislation and provides a new definition of domestic abuse as outlined previously.

Part 4 of the Act introduces a statutory duty on all local authorities to provide safe accommodation support services. It places duties on Oxfordshire County Council to:

- Appoint a multi-agency domestic abuse local partnership board which it must consult as it performs certain specified functions
- Assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for domestic abuse support in their area for all victims and their children who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those who come from outside of their area
- Develop and publish a Safe Accommodation Strategy having regard to the needs assessment.
- Implement the strategy through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions
- Monitor and evaluate local delivery and effectiveness of the strategy
- Report back to central government annually

On 14 April 2021, Oxfordshire County Council appointed the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board (ODASB) as its domestic abuse local partnership board. This is multi-agency and is made up of both county and local district councils.

As set out in the Act, members of the Board must include representatives from the following (as a minimum):

- Tier 1 authority<sup>3</sup>
- Tier 2 authorities<sup>4</sup>
- Person representing the interests of victims of domestic abuse
- Person representing the interests of children of domestic abuse victims
- Charities and other voluntary organisations
- Health care services
- Policing or criminal justice

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3. Tier 1 authority is a county council e.g. Oxfordshire County Council

4. Tier 2 authorities are district, borough or city councils e.g. Oxford City Council, Cherwell District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council

Table 1: Definitions for different types of safe accommodation<sup>5</sup>

TYPE OF SAFE ACCOMMODATION	DEFINITION
<b>Refuge accommodation</b>	Offers single gender or single sex accommodation and domestic abuse support which is tied to that accommodation. Victims, including their children, have access to a planned programme of therapeutic and practical support from staff. Accommodation may be in shared or self-contained housing, but in both cases the service enables peer support from other refuge residents. The address is not publicly available.
<b>Specialist safe accommodation</b>	Offers single gender or single sex accommodation, alongside dedicated domestic abuse support which is tailored to also support those who share particular protected characteristic(s) and / or who share one or more vulnerabilities requiring additional support. Accommodation may be in shared or self-contained housing. The address is not publicly available.
<b>Dispersed accommodation</b>	<p>i. Safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse), self-contained accommodation with a similar level of specialist domestic abuse support as provided within a refuge but which may be more suitable for victims who are unable to stay in a refuge with communal spaces, and/or where peer support from other residents may not be appropriate, due to complex support needs, or where older teenage sons cannot be accommodated in a women only refuge, for example.</p> <p>ii. Safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse), self-contained ‘semi-independent’ accommodation which is not within a refuge but with support for victims who may not require the intensive support offered through refuge, but are still at risk of abuse from their perpetrator/s.</p> <p>In both types, where two or more units share any part of the accommodation, including shared hallways or access routes, provision should be single gender or single sex.</p>
<b>Second stage accommodation</b> (sometimes known as ‘move-on’)	Accommodation temporarily provided to victims, including their children, who are moving on from other forms of relevant accommodation and/or who no longer need the intensive level of support provided in a refuge, but would still benefit from a lower level of domestic abuse specific support for a period before they move to fully independent and settled accommodation. Where second stage accommodation is in shared housing it should be single gender or single sex.
<b>Other forms of domestic abuse emergency accommodation</b>	A safe place (single gendered or single sex, secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse) with domestic abuse support tied to the accommodation to enable victims to make informed decisions when leaving a perpetrator and seeking safe accommodation. For example, short term (e.g. 2-3 weeks) accommodation providing victims with the space and safety to consider and make informed decisions about the options available to them.

5. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Statutory guidance: Delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation services. Published 1 October 2021. Available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation/delivery-of-support-to-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation/delivery-of-support-to-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services)



Privately-owned and managed temporary accommodation, which is not separate or self-contained and with shared toilet, bathroom, or kitchen facilities (such as Bed and Breakfast accommodation) is **not** considered relevant safe accommodation, and is specifically excluded in the regulations.

All support provided under the duties must be provided to victims of domestic abuse, including children, who reside in relevant safe accommodation as set out above and such support should meet the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Quality Standards: [Women's Aid National Quality Standards](#), [Imkaan Accredited Quality Standards](#), [Male Domestic Abuse Network Service Standards](#) and / or [DAHA Accreditation Framework for Housing Providers](#).

## What type of domestic abuse support should be provided in safe accommodation?

The Domestic Abuse Act statutory guidance describes domestic abuse support within safe accommodation as:

- **Overall management of services within relevant safe accommodation** – including capacity building, support and supervision of staff, payroll, financial and day to day management of services and maintaining relationships with the local authority. Such functions will often be undertaken by a service manager
- **Support with the day-to-day running of the service** – including scheduling times for counselling sessions, group activities. Such functions may often be undertaken by administrative or office staff
- **Advocacy support** – development of personal safety plans, liaison with other services e.g. GPs and social workers, welfare benefit providers

- **Domestic abuse prevention advice** – support to assist victims to recognise the signs of abusive relationships, to help them remain safe (including online) and to prevent re-victimisation
- **Specialist support for victims**
  - Designed specifically for victims with relevant protected characteristics such as faith services, translators and interpreters, immigration advice, interpreters for victims identifying as deaf and / or hard of hearing, and dedicated support for LGBTQ+ victims
  - Designed specifically for victims with additional and / or complex needs e.g. mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support, including sign posting accordingly
- **Children's support** – including play therapy, child advocacy or a specialist children's worker e.g. a young people's violence advisor, Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) or outreach worker specialised in working with children
- **Housing-related support** – providing housing-related advice and support e.g. securing a permanent home, rights to existing accommodation and advice on how to live safely and independently
- **Advice service** – including financial and legal support, including accessing benefits, support into work and establishing independent financial arrangements
- **Counselling and therapy** – including group support for both adults and children as well as emotional support

Support is limited to accommodation-based support and does not include other support which may be provided to victims of domestic abuse in community-based locations.

## Who should be supported by safe accommodation?

Victims aged 16 or over, and their children, with relevant protected characteristics as per the Equality Act 2010 must be able to access the support that they need within relevant safe accommodation, such as, but not limited to, those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who identify as LGBTQ+. See Appendix B for information on supporting all victims.

## The scope of the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy

The Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021 – 2024 outlines how Oxfordshire will implement the statutory duties that relate to safe accommodation, included within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. It describes how victims of domestic abuse are supported through the provision of safe accommodation.

An overarching Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021 – 2024 is being developed alongside the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy. The overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy incorporates Oxfordshire’s partnership response across the whole care pathway - from preventing

domestic abuse from happening through to provision of high-quality support for victims, including children, and perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Both the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy and the overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy will be reviewed annually. This will ensure that they are responsive to changes in needs of the population and an evolving evidence base.

## What is the safe accommodation duty funding?

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), recently renamed the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), has committed to providing a three-year settlement for the delivery of the safe accommodation duty.

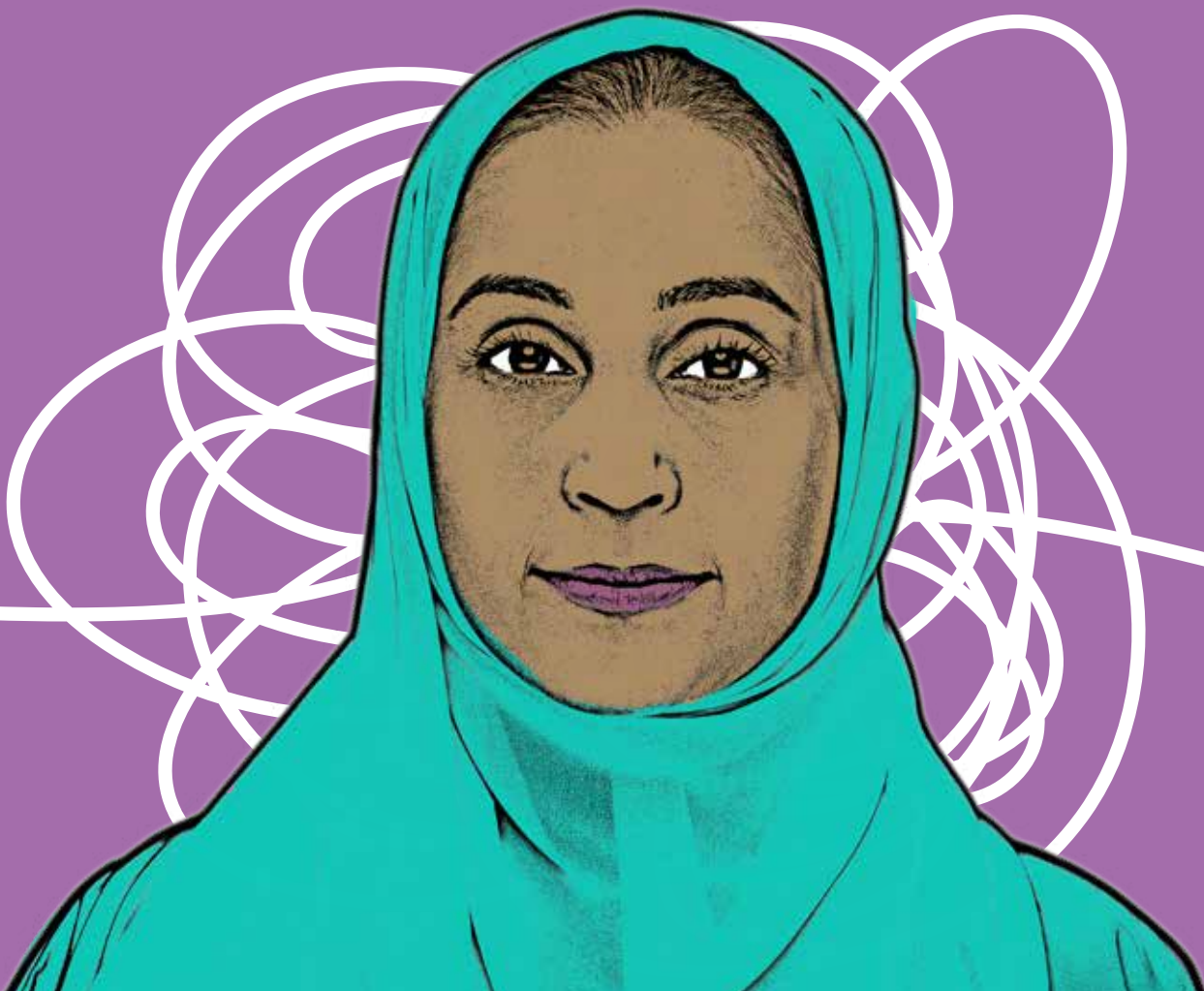
Table 2 provides a summary of the MHCLG/DLUHC funding allocation for 2021/22. Central government has not confirmed whether the same financial allocation awarded in 2021/22 will be continued for years 2 and 3, although it is anticipated the statutory duty implementation will continue to be funded. The budget for 2021-22 has been awarded to individual Tier 1 and 2 local authorities and signed by their chief executives, who are accountable for reporting their budget spend to DLUHC.

Table 2: MHCLG/DLUHC funding allocation for 2021/22

LOCAL AUTHORITY	FUNDING ALLOCATION
Oxfordshire County Council (Tier 1 Authority)	£1,141,151
Cherwell District Council	£34,385
Oxford City Council	£36,788
South Oxfordshire District Council	£33,540
Vale of the White Horse District Council	£35,167
West Oxfordshire District Council	£33,422
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,314,453</b>

# 2.

## **What is the strategic and local context within Oxfordshire?**



# What is the wider strategic context?

## Role of the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board (ODASB)

The ODASB is a partnership group responsible for providing strategic leadership for domestic abuse in Oxfordshire. Its purpose is:

- To ensure world-class provision of services for domestic abuse victims-survivors, both adults and children, including services to embed prevention and reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse
- To work in a co-ordinated way to hold perpetrators to account and to change their harmful behaviours
- To identify local priorities in relation to domestic abuse and outline objectives to meet these priorities, committing the necessary resources
- To improve outcomes for adult and child victims-survivors of domestic abuse through a strategic approach to identifying and addressing gaps in support, including those within safe accommodation services
- To work in partnership to identify and remove barriers to reducing domestic abuse and foster close co-operation between all stakeholders to ensure victims-survivors of domestic abuse have access to adequate and appropriate support, including those within safe accommodation services
- To ensure the effectiveness of Oxfordshire's Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Abuse
- To support local authorities in Oxfordshire in meeting their duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- To lead on strategic communications

The ODASB reports into the Oxfordshire Health Improvement Partnership Board. It will also report back to DLUHC on delivering the duty in line with statutory guidance.

**The Safe Accommodation Strategy has also been informed by, and will support the delivery of:**

- Oxfordshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Thames Valley's Police and Crime Plan
- Director of Public Health Annual Report
- Safeguarding Board Plans
- County and District Community Safety Plans
- Housing and Homelessness Strategies
- Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit Strategies

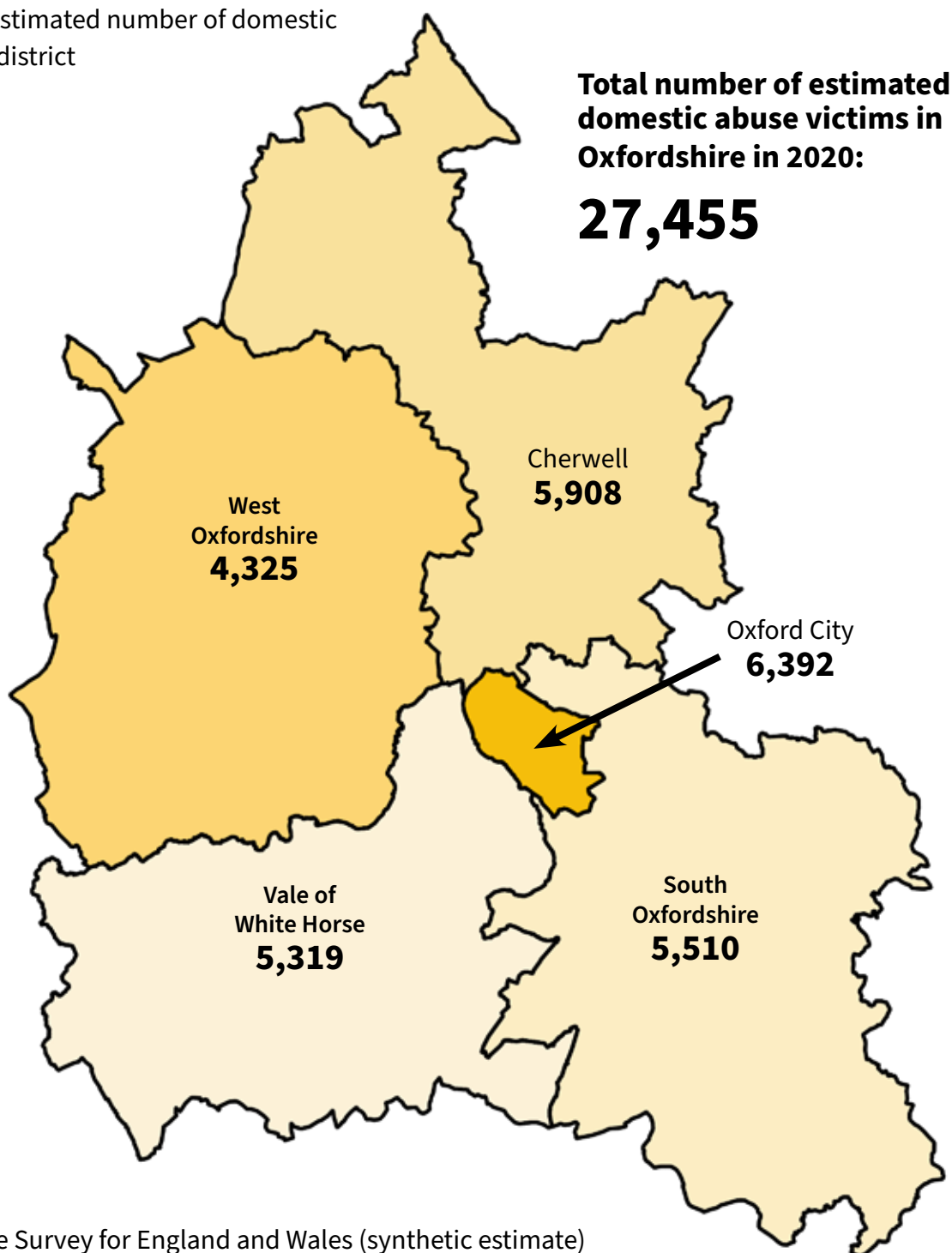
## What is the local context?

Oxfordshire County Council conducted a needs assessment looking at the number of victims of domestic abuse in Oxfordshire and the current provision of safe accommodation to support victims, and their children, in Oxfordshire.

The number of victims of domestic abuse in Oxfordshire is calculated using either national data which is modelled to produce a synthetic estimate for Oxfordshire or local data from police and crime datasets to produce a known number for Oxfordshire.

## What is the **estimated** number of domestic abuse victims in Oxfordshire?

Figure 1: Map of estimated number of domestic abuse victims by district







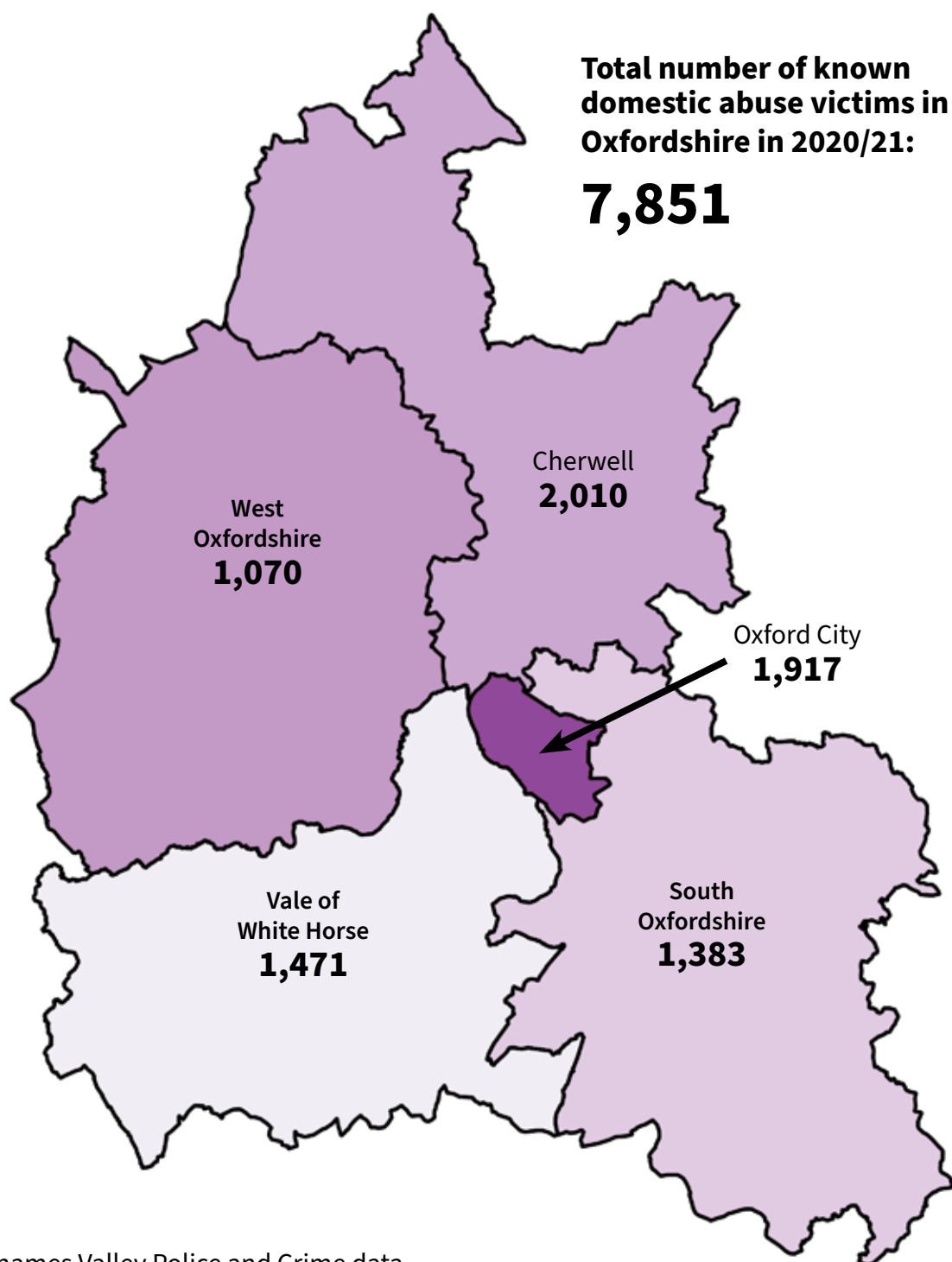
Source: The Crime Survey for England and Wales (synthetic estimate)

## What is the **known** number of domestic abuse victims in Oxfordshire?

The synthetic estimate is significantly higher than the known number as only a proportion of victims report domestic abuse to the police. This highlights that the local dataset represents only a proportion of victims and therefore there is a large unknown number of victims of domestic abuse in Oxfordshire.

Figure 2: Map of known number of domestic abuse victims by district

~70% female		56% aged 25-49	
~30% experience domestic abuse multiple times		325 were part of Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)	



Source: Thames Valley Police and Crime data

# How many victims have accessed help in Oxfordshire?

## Access to refuge and dispersed accommodation



**59 female victims** accessed refuge or dispersed accommodation in Oxfordshire in 2020/21

**59%** were from outside of Oxfordshire

Source: Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service (ODAS)

## Access to sanctuary schemes



**111 victims accessed** the Oxford City sanctuary scheme in 2020/21

**95%** were female

**72%** were from a single adult and child(ren) household

Source: Oxford City Council

## Access to sanctuary schemes



**60 victims accessed** the South and Vale sanctuary scheme in 2020/21

**100%** were female

**83%** previously resided in social housing

Source: South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

## Access to sanctuary schemes



No data was available for the Cherwell and West Oxfordshire sanctuary schemes

## Out of area referrals



Most common out of area referrals are from: **West Berkshire, Slough, Reading, Bracknell Forest, Aylesbury Vale**

Source: ODAS. The data was for all calls to the helpline. A proportion of these calls were accessing refuge and dispersed accommodation

## Demographic and socio-economic characteristics



Data is **not routinely collected** by safe accommodation providers on the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of victims

## Victims' views



Victims report positive experiences of refuge and dispersed accommodation and differing experiences of sanctuary schemes across Oxfordshire

Source: Victims of domestic abuse

## Victims' views



Victims report limited awareness of the types and signs of domestic abuse and the domestic abuse services available in Oxfordshire that can support them

Source: Victims of domestic abuse

# What are the gaps in Oxfordshire's safe accommodation provision?

## 1. Insufficient availability of data

- **Number of victims of domestic abuse:** police, crime and MARAC data is available for total numbers of victims of domestic abuse. The availability of local data on victims of domestic abuse across health, social care, homelessness and housing is limited. Further analysis by demographic classifications and socio-economic characteristics is limited or not available
- **Referrals and use of safe accommodation:** no consistent data collection across safe accommodation providers and insufficient data on access to and use of safe accommodation services including by demographic classifications, socio-economic characteristics and family size (e.g. pregnant and/or number and age(s) of children)

## 2. Gaps in provision of safe accommodation

- **Refuge:** Oxfordshire has county-wide refuge provision, but this is only available for women aged over 18 and their children. Although there is no provision for men, it is recognised that men are less likely to request access to refuge and instead require support to access other safe accommodation
- **Dispersed safe accommodation:** Oxfordshire has county-wide provision of dispersed safe accommodation available for people of all genders and for those who are not suitable for refuge, but not for those with multiple complex needs
- **Specialist safe accommodation:** there is no specialist safe accommodation for victims with relevant protected characteristics, additional and/or multiple complex needs in Oxfordshire

- **Sanctuary schemes:** these are available in Oxford City, South and Vale, West Oxfordshire and Cherwell, but the level of support varies across the five districts. The type of sanctuary support depends on whether the victim is a social housing tenant or owner occupied or private rented tenant
- **Moving on from safe accommodation:** there is limited availability of council housing stock in Oxfordshire, a complex social housing registration process, and high cost of private rented accommodation. There is lack of support for victims when they leave safe accommodation and are trying to establish safe independent living

## 3. Inadequate awareness of safe accommodation

- **Service provision:** insufficient awareness of safe accommodation services available in Oxfordshire to support victims of domestic abuse

**Overall, there is insufficient information to identify whether the demand is exceeding supply for safe accommodation, and the level of unmet need particularly for those with protected characteristics. It is predicted that there is a large 'unknown' need and demand for safe accommodation.**



# 3.

**What are the key priorities in the safe accommodation strategy?**



Oxfordshire's Domestic Abuse Strategy (2019-2024) outlined the following strategic objectives:



### 1. PREVENTION

Preventing domestic abuse from happening by challenging the attitudes and behaviour which foster it and intervening early where possible to prevent it.



### 2. PROVISION

Providing high quality, joined-up support for victims where domestic abuse does occur.

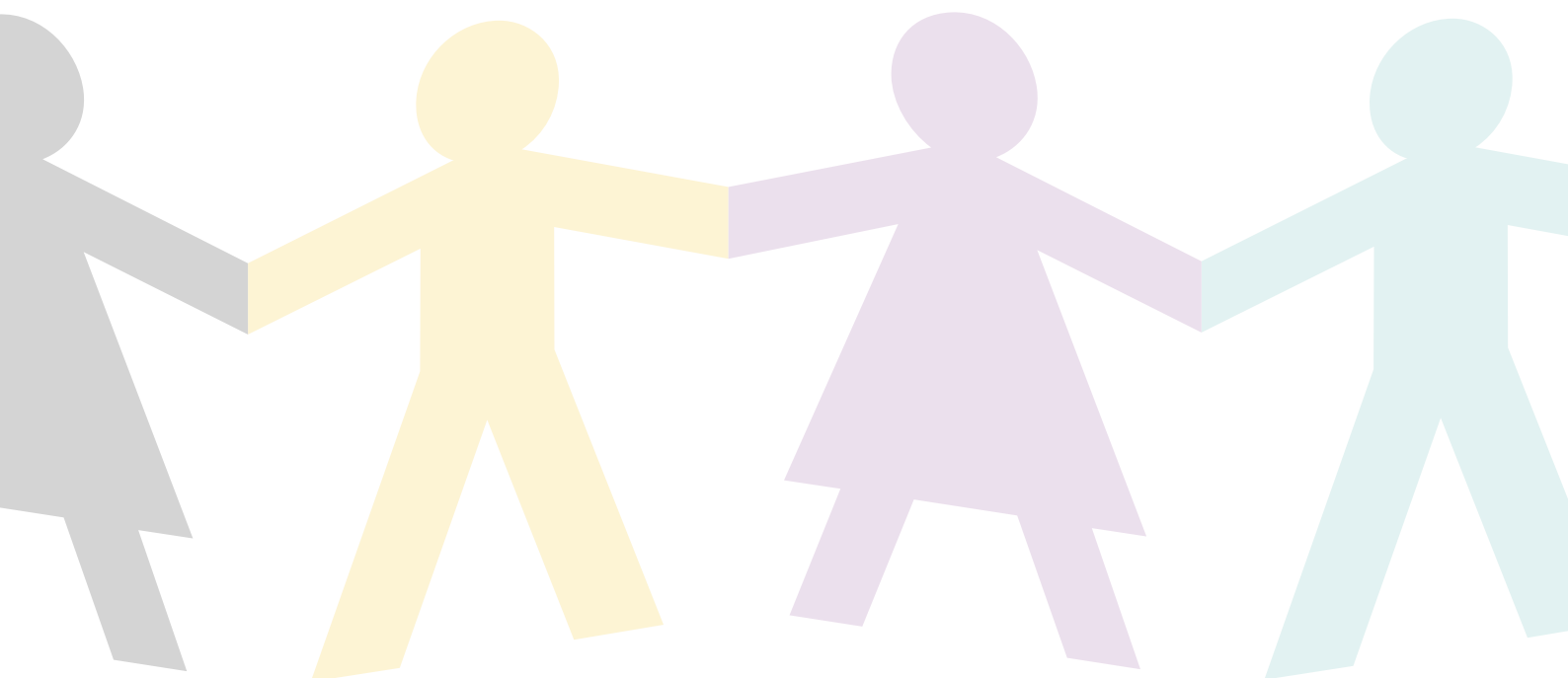


### 4. PARTNERSHIP

Working in partnership to obtain the best outcome for victims, children and their families.

The strategic aims for Oxfordshire's Safe Accommodation Strategy are aligned with the overarching Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy, in particular, '1. Prevention', '2. Provision' and '4. Partnership'.

**Objective 3. Pursuing – this relates to perpetrators and is therefore not included in this strategy.**



# Strategic Objective 1: Prevention



Preventing domestic abuse from happening by challenging the attitudes and behaviour which foster it and intervening early where possible to prevent it.

## What is Oxfordshire already doing to raise awareness and improve access to safe accommodation?

- **Awareness:** centrally coordinated communications and community engagement activities to ensure a consistent message and enable domestic abuse issues to be more effectively addressed including marginalised communities
- **Access:** Oxfordshire County Council is lead commissioner of the co-commissioned ODAS, which provides a local domestic abuse helpline (not 24/7) and the national domestic abuse helplines also exist. Victims of domestic abuse can access refuge and dispersed accommodation via these helplines
- **Training:** undertook a training needs analysis; developed and delivering a multi-agency domestic abuse training programme for professionals within all services and Oxfordshire residents to improve and increase domestic abuse awareness, identification and response.
- **Champions network:** enabling Domestic Abuse Champions in key teams to provide advice across their organisations

## How will Oxfordshire improve services in the future?

- **Increase promotion and raise awareness** to the public and professionals of safe accommodation provision and how to access it in Oxfordshire
- Review and continue to develop the **multi-agency domestic abuse training** programme

“ There needs to be better advertising...Once I made the call, support was available. There are women staying as they think they can't leave and don't think help is available.”

Victim of domestic abuse

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# Strategic Objective 2: Provision



Providing high quality, joined-up support for victims where domestic abuse does occur.

## What is Oxfordshire already doing around safe accommodation?

- **Provision of refuge and dispersed accommodation:** Oxfordshire County Council commissions ODAS to provide refuges and dispersed accommodation for up to 46 spaces over a 12-month period taking into consideration the licence agreement is provided for up to six months. The refuges are for those aged 18 and over and open to women and children. The dispersed accommodation is for people of all genders and their children. They are open to Oxfordshire and non-Oxfordshire residents as per the Domestic Abuse Act. The provision includes domestic abuse support workers for the victims and their children
- **Provision of sanctuary schemes:** provided by each of the five district councils. Offers home security measures to support victims of domestic abuse to feel safe in their homes. Available to anyone who lives in Oxfordshire. The Oxfordshire No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) pathway gives victims access to safe accommodation with Sanctuary Hosting until they receive the discretionary grant which allows them to go to refuge and apply for leave to remain

“ They [sanctuary scheme] have been fabulous and I do feel a lot safer in my house.”

Victim of domestic abuse

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## How will Oxfordshire improve services in the future?

- **Undertake a thorough mapping of the current provision of safe accommodation,** in particular the different sanctuary schemes and move-on accommodation, delivered and available across the county
- **Consider taking a Whole Housing Approach (WHA)** across all housing tenure types (social, private rented, privately owned and supported accommodation) to increase victim accommodation sustainment and reduce homelessness. A WHA provides a framework for domestic abuse and housing sectors to work together to address the immediate and longer-term housing needs of victims
- **Refuge and dispersed accommodation to remain available** for victims, and their children, including Oxfordshire and non-Oxfordshire residents
- Explore options for providing refuge, dispersed and / or specialist accommodation, and support services within these types of accommodation, for **male victims of domestic abuse, those from BAME backgrounds or who identify as LGBTQ+**, where necessary and based on identified need. See Appendix B for information on supporting all victims
- Identify how to improve safe accommodation service provision for **victims and family members with complex needs** e.g. substance misuse and/or mental health

- **Consider the specific support needs of children in safe accommodation** including:
  - Child advocacy or a specialist children’s worker
  - Play, art, music therapy, sports and physical activity
  - Children and young people’s mental health practitioners, therapy and counselling services (individual and family)
  - Access to education, training, employment and healthcare close to the safe accommodation. The aim is to maintain a degree of ‘normality’ for children and young people
- **Establish a clearer and more coordinated county wide move-on pathway** to help victims leave safe accommodation and establish independent living
- **Review the existing domestic abuse pathway to determine which people cannot access safe accommodation due to financial constraints** (e.g. those with no recourse to public funds, those who jointly own/rent their property with the perpetrator) and develop a range of options to support them
- **Explore the potential use of ‘respite rooms’** (overnight temporary accommodation) for victims affected by domestic abuse
- **Develop a model of safe accommodation across the county** to address current gaps and inequalities in service provision, which takes into account the MHCLG/DLUHC funding allocation(s)
- All changes in service provision to be supported by **future commissioning of safe accommodation**

“ There should be better advertising about the sanctuary scheme as I did not know about it and had tried to install cameras myself with little money.”

Victim of domestic abuse

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# Strategic Objective 4: Partnership



Working in partnership to obtain the best outcome for victims, children and their families.

## What partnerships relevant to domestic abuse does Oxfordshire have in place?

The following partnership structures are already in place:

- Strategic Board for Domestic Abuse
- Operational Board for Domestic Abuse (OxDAP)
- Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs)
- Multi agency tasking and co-ordination (MATAC) groups
- [Health and Wellbeing Board](#)
- [Health Improvement Partnership Board](#)
- [Safer Oxfordshire Partnership](#)
- District level Community Safety Partnerships:
  - [Cherwell](#)
  - [Oxford City](#)
  - [South Oxfordshire](#)
  - [Vale of White Horse](#)
  - [West Oxfordshire](#)
- [Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board](#)
- [Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board](#)
- [The Children's Trust](#)
- Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Steering Group
- Thames Valley Domestic Abuse Coordinators Network
- Homeless Directors' Group

## How will Oxfordshire improve services in the future?

- **Establish a 'Safe Accommodation Working Group' (SAWG) as a sub-group of ODASB**

The multi-agency sub-group will include representatives from a broad range of commissioners and providers from Tier 1 and Tier 2 local authorities. The main aims of the sub-group will be to:

  - Assess the need and demand for accommodation-based support for all victims and their children, including those who require cross-border support
  - Identify changes to the current provision of safe accommodation and associated support to enable Oxfordshire to meet the needs of all victims and their children across all protected characteristics
  - Inform the commissioning of future safe accommodation services
  - Support joint working required between Tier 1 and Tier 2 local authorities
  - Produce an annual safe accommodation assessment of need
  - Lead on completing the annual return to the DLUHC

“Once I made the call and was on the pathway, the support has been good and they have done everything. You've just got to make the call.”

Victim of domestic abuse

- **Develop an Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Dashboard** including information on need, demand and supply of safe accommodation. A more coordinated and comprehensive data collection across police and crime, health, social care, housing, homelessness, and safe accommodation providers is needed to build an accurate picture of met and unmet needs of domestic abuse victims in Oxfordshire. This will develop an improved understanding of the local unmet need, especially for those with protected characteristics and/or complex needs, and allow comparison and benchmarking with other local areas. The main aims of the dashboard will be to:
  - Draw on data from a range of local partner agencies and services who support victims of domestic abuse (e.g. health, homelessness, housing, IDVA, MARAC, police and crime, social care, safe accommodation providers, etc.)
  - Agree on a template for quarterly data returns to the ODASB and SAWG. Template to include data on number of victims, number of referrals to safe accommodation services (including inside Oxfordshire and out of area), number accepted or denied access to safe accommodation, and length of time supported in safe accommodation. Data to include demographic and socioeconomic characteristics
  - Compare with reference national data sets on the estimated prevalence of domestic abuse
  - Inform the commissioning of future safe accommodation services, which are based on a robust local dataset
- **Establish a Domestic Abuse MHCLG/DLUHC Funding Task and Finish Group.** The group will discuss and finalise the budget allocation to address the identified unmet needs of victims of domestic abuse, including children, in domestic abuse safe accommodation services
- **Continue to progress the development of a dedicated Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG).** This is specifically for hearing the lived experiences, voices and views of victims. The forum must ensure the voices of victims are heard from a range of relevant protected characteristics. This will allow input to and inform future needs assessments, strategies, commissioning decisions, the co-production of services and awareness raising activities
- **Work with key housing stakeholders and link into existing housing workstreams** to ensure provision is made for victims-survivors of domestic abuse using a range of housing options including public private partnerships

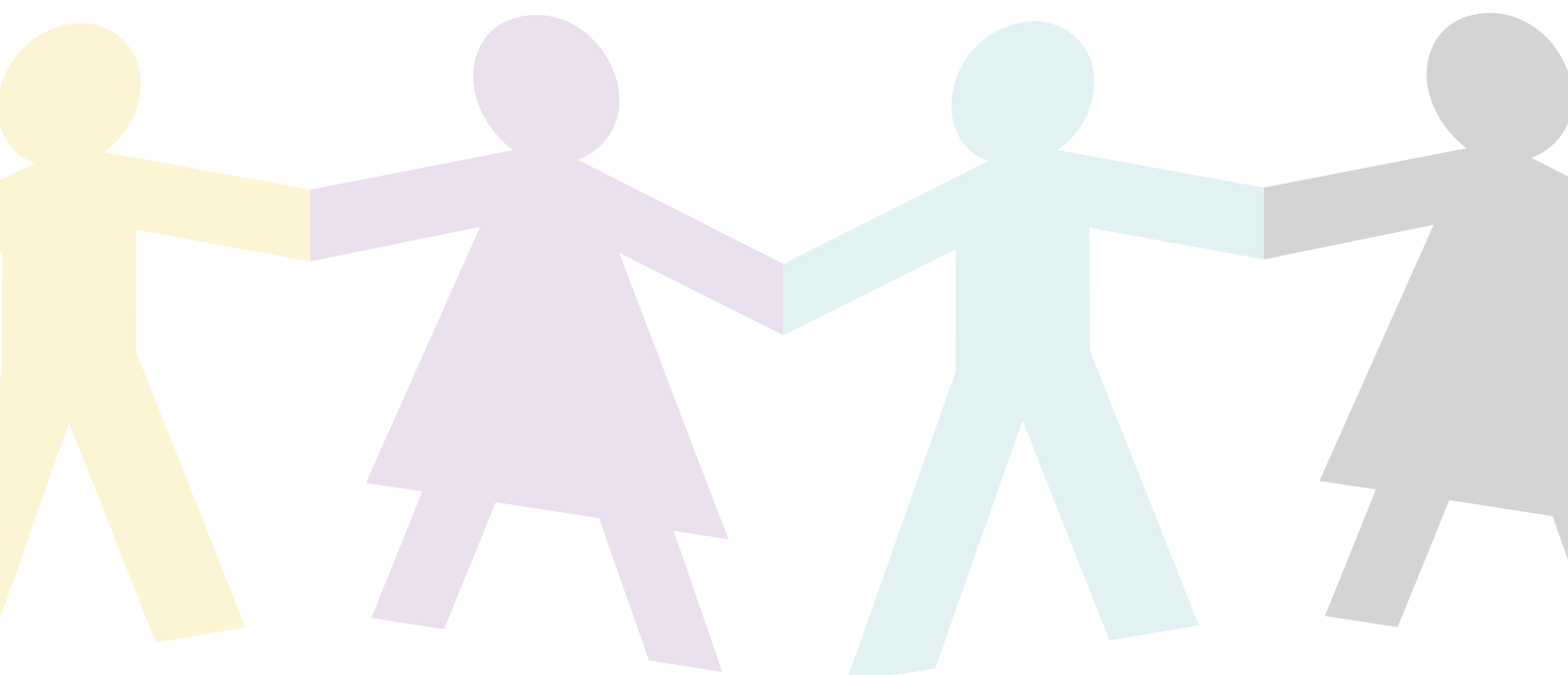
# 4.

**How will the safe accommodation strategy be delivered?**





- The delivery plan for the Safe Accommodation Strategy will be developed by the SAWG and approved by the ODASB in 2021/22
- The delivery plan will include key actions for each deliverable, timescales (i.e. short-term or longer-term), stakeholders involved, and monitoring and evaluation measures to monitor the impact of the strategy. See Appendix C for action plan template, and Section 5 for possible monitoring and evaluation measures
- The overarching Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy is currently in the process of being developed. The delivery plan for the Safe Accommodation Strategy will be aligned with the overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Alongside the safe accommodation delivery plan, a financial plan will be developed by the MHCLG/DLUHC Funding Task and Finish Group to discuss and finalise the budget allocation. This will cover the specific funding provided to meet the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act to support the relevant safe accommodation duties. The provision of community-based domestic abuse support provision will be covered by the overarching domestic abuse strategy



# 5.

**How will we know we are making a difference?**



Oxfordshire's SAWG will develop and agree baseline measures and targets to monitor the impact of the Safe Accommodation Strategy.

Examples of measures to consider including in the quarterly and annual monitoring and evaluation of the strategy are:

## Strategic Objective 1: Prevention



- Awareness of domestic abuse services: victims and professionals (e.g. number of victims and professionals who can name three or more domestic abuse services in Oxfordshire)
- Number and percentage of victims being referred to each type of safe accommodation (by referral source)
- Number and percentage of victims being referred to each type of safe accommodation (by level of risk: high, medium, standard)
- Number and percentage of victims with protected characteristics (i.e. those underrepresented) being referred to each type of safe accommodation
- Numbers attending specific domestic abuse training (by resident or type of professional and organisation)
- Percentage of staff who report increased confidence in areas of their practice, improved communication and increased awareness as a result of training using longitudinal analysis (e.g. end of training and six month post training evaluations)
- Number attending domestic abuse champions training (by type of professional and organisation)
- Number of Domestic Abuse Champions in Oxfordshire (by type of professional and organisation)
- Average waiting time to access training programmes and Domestic Abuse Champions training

## Strategic Objective 2: Provision



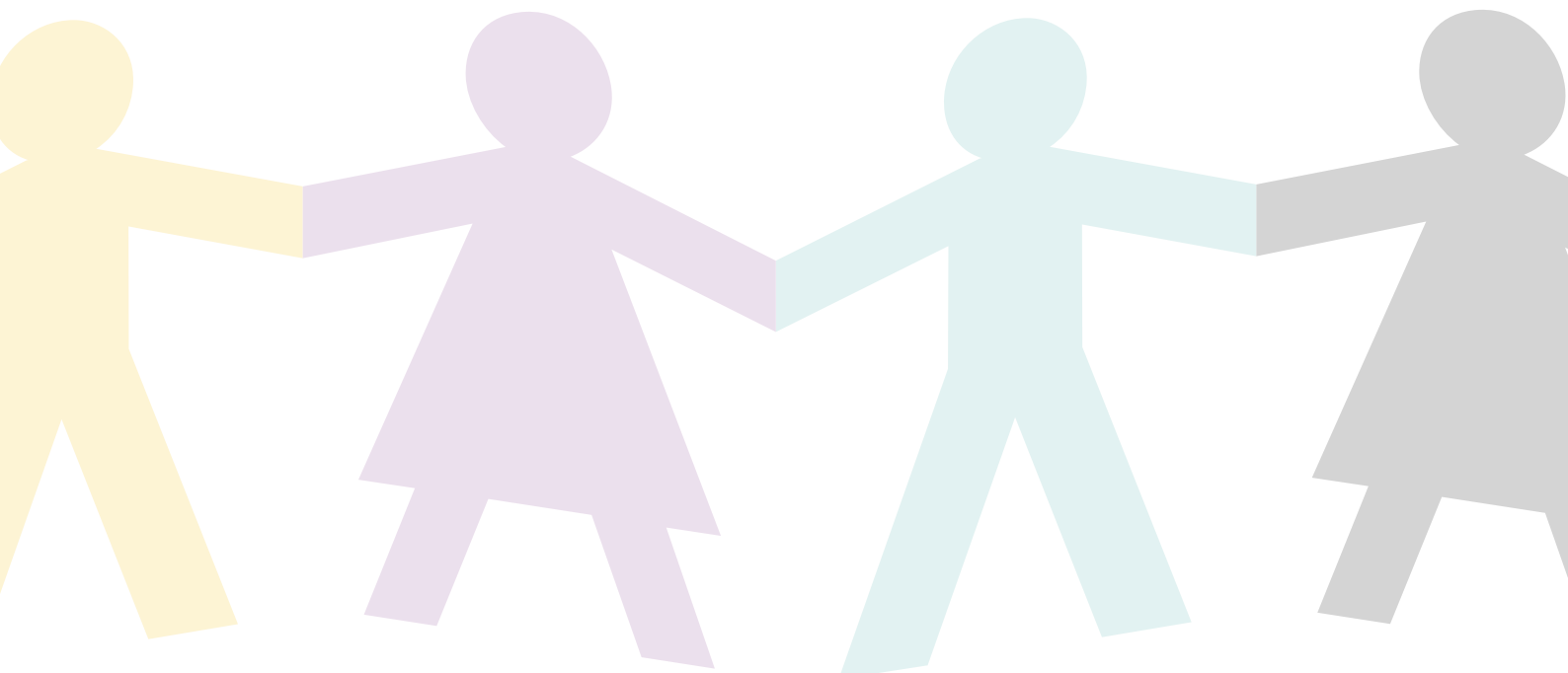
- Number and percentage of victims accessing each type of safe accommodation
- Number and percentage of victims with relevant protected characteristics, additional and/or multiple complex needs (i.e. record age, gender reassignment, sex, ethnicity, disability, language, family/number of children or pregnant, type of housing victim previously resided in, etc.) accessing each type of safe accommodation
- Number and percentage of victims from inside of Oxfordshire and outside of Oxfordshire accessing each type of safe accommodation (record area for those outside of Oxfordshire)
- Number and percentage of victims, and their children, who have a successful or unsuccessful referral to each type of safe accommodation (record reason for unsuccessful referral i.e., reason declined access)
- Average number of referral attempts for victims to gain access to each type of safe accommodation
- Average length of time (days) from victims making contact to accessing each type of safe accommodation (i.e. waiting times)
- Average length of stay (days) victims stay in each type of safe accommodation
- Number and percentage of victims, and their children, who demonstrate improved quality of life and outcomes in economic, health and social situation in each type of safe of accommodation
- Number and percentage of housing providers which are DAHA accredited
- Number and percentage of victims moving on to each type of housing (e.g. private/owner occupied, private rented, social housing, temporary accommodation/supported housing, other supported housing)

## Strategic Objective 4: Partnership



- Completeness of quarterly and/or annual data returns by partners contributing to the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Dashboard (e.g. not met, partially met, fully met)
- Number (including range of relevant protected characteristics) actively contributing to LEAP
- Satisfaction of victims and survivors engaged in the development of strategies, commissioning decisions and the co-production of services

Once baseline data has been collected in 2021/22, targets can be set for the subsequent years.



# Acknowledgements

This strategy has been led by the Oxfordshire County Council Public Health Team and produced by Public Health Action Support Team (PHAST) with input from the following collaborators:

Victim-survivors who shared their experiences

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## **Members of the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board:**

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Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Local Medical Committee

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Cherwell District Council

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National Probation Service

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Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley

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Oxford City Council

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Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust

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Oxford University Hospitals

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Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group

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Oxfordshire County Council

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South Oxfordshire District Council

---

Specialist providers from the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership (OxDAP)

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Thames Valley Local Criminal Justice Board

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Thames Valley Police

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Vale of the White Horse District Council

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West Oxfordshire District Council

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# Appendix A: Definition of domestic abuse from the Domestic Abuse Act, 2021<sup>6</sup>

## Section 1: Definition of “domestic abuse”

(1) This section defines “domestic abuse” for the purposes of this Act.

(2) Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if—

(a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and

(b) the behaviour is abusive.

(3) Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—

(a) physical or sexual abuse;

(b) violent or threatening behaviour;

(c) controlling or coercive behaviour;

(d) economic abuse (see subsection (4));

(e) psychological, emotional or other abuse;

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

(4) “Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to —

(a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or

(b) obtain goods or services.

(5) For the purposes of this Act A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).

(6) References in this Act to being abusive towards another person are to be read in accordance with this section.

(7) For the meaning of “personally connected”, see section 2.

## Section 2: Definition of “personally connected”

(1) Two people are “personally connected” to each other if any of the following applies —

(a) they are, or have been, married to each other;

(b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;

(c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

(d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

(e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;

(f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2));

(g) they are relatives.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1)(f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if —

(a) the person is a parent of the child, or

6. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Statutory guidance: Delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation services. Published 1 October 2021. Available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation/delivery-of-support-to-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation/delivery-of-support-to-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services)

(b) the person has parental responsibility for the child.

(3) In this section –

“child” means a person under the age of 18 years;

“civil partnership agreement” has the meaning given by section 73 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004;

“parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989;

“relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

### **Section 3: Children as victims of domestic abuse**

(1) This section applies where behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is domestic abuse.

(2) Any reference in this Act to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who –

(a) sees or hears, or experiences the effect of, the abuse, and

(b) is related to A or B.

(3) A child is related to a person for the purposes of subsection (2) if –

(a) the person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child, or

(b) the child and the person are relatives.

(4) In this section –

“child” means person under the age of 18 years;

“parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act);

“relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

# Appendix B: Supporting all victims<sup>7</sup>

The Act states that victims with each relevant protected characteristics as per the Equality Act 2010 must be able to access the support that they need. Under this duty, they expect authorities to ensure sufficient appropriate support is available within relevant safe accommodation to meet the needs of all victims including those with relevant protected characteristics, additional and / or multiple complex needs, or whose support needs cannot be properly met within non-specialist domestic abuse safe accommodation, such as:




- Black Asian and Minority Ethnic victims (Including Gypsy Roma and Traveller)
- Male victims
- Female victims
- Transgender and Non-Binary victims
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual victims, and others who may face barriers as a result of their sexuality
- Disabled victims – includes but is not limited to victims who are deaf or hard of hearing, visually impaired, autistic, wheelchair users, those with learning difficulties, as well as those with age-related disabilities
- Young (aged 16-18 – including care leavers) and older victims (over 65)
- Victims with an offending history
- Victims presenting with complex needs including those with mental health and/or drug and alcohol use support needs
- Victims with histories of sleeping rough
- Victims with histories of offending
- Victims facing multiple forms of abuse within the family such as honour-based violence and forced marriage
- Victims from a particular religion and/or with a spiritual belief, particularly if facing barriers to support as a result
- Migrant victims, including victims having insecure immigration status
- Victims from isolated and/or marginalised communities, including where there is limited English proficiency.
- Victims who have no choice but to move away from their local areas, communities, and friends to escape their perpetrator to stay safe and receive the support they need.
- Children of victims (including adolescent male children) who need to move with their parent into relevant safe accommodation.
- Victims accompanied by children, including large families and those with older adolescence boys (12+)
- Pregnant victims

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7. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Statutory guidance: Delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation services. Published 1 October 2021. Available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation/delivery-of-support-to-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation/delivery-of-support-to-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services)



# Appendix C: Action plan template

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE NUMBER	ACTION	LOCAL LEAD (L) & STAKEHOLDERS	ACTION TAKEN (DELIVERABLES OR WORK PLAN)	IMPACT MEASUREMENT	ACTION MET? (FULLY MET, PARTIALLY MET, NOT MET)	ACTION REQUIRED	DEADLINE FOR ACTION REQUIRED
<b>Prevention</b> 							
<b>Provision</b> 							
<b>Partnership</b> 							



Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse  
Strategic Board



## **Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021 – 2024**

Oxfordshire County Council Public Health Team

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

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