

Background

The Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy defines the priorities for delivering duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to ensure victim-survivors and their families have access to safe and supportive housing. Oxfordshire County Council is working with NHS Solutions for Public Health (SPH) to refresh the strategy, with completion planned by January 2025, in line with national requirements.

Key activities of the refresh include evaluating the current strategy against best practice, updating data analysis, and engaging stakeholders through workshops, surveys, and the Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) to centre survivor voices.

The project builds on Oxfordshire's strong collaborative foundation, guided by the Safe Accommodation Working Group (SAWG) who report to the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board.

Methodology

1. Scoping conversations: To help inform the focus areas for both the workshop and survey, SPH consulted with key stakeholders, including the service provider, a service-user lead, and a commissioner with historical knowledge of the service's commissioning.
2. Workshop highlights (16th October 2024): A hybrid workshop brought together key stakeholders to review the current SAWG action plan, assess progress, refine priorities, and identify new areas for improvement. Key themes included amplifying survivor voices, adopting SMART actions, and scaling best practices.
3. Surveys: Post-workshop surveys, open until 29th November 2024, are gathering feedback from professionals (<https://forms.office.com/e/V8iRsdvxXr>) and service users (<https://forms.office.com/e/vKZzHsZksb>) to broaden input.
4. LEAG Meeting (19th November 2024): SPH attended a LEAG meeting where the group were given a verbal update on the strategy refresh including an overview of the methodology, timelines, and progress made. Discussions highlighted the importance of developing effective feedback mechanisms, co-production, and the value of embedding lived experience into the strategy.

Preliminary findings

Service Strengths:

- Strong Partnerships: The SAWG has been instrumental in delivering key actions and fostering collaboration across agencies.

- Proactive Service Improvements: Expanding refuge capacity and embedding trauma-informed care have enhanced the safety and support for victim-survivors.
- Data-Led Decisions: Robust data-sharing arrangements have provided valuable insights into service demand and gaps.

Identified Gaps:

- Limited specialist provisions for diverse groups (e.g., LGBTQ+ individuals, families with complex needs).
- Insufficient capacity in transitional and dispersed housing.
- Barriers to access, including stigma, cultural challenges, and inconsistent communication.

Emerging Recommendations

1. Co-Production and Survivor Voice: Ensure survivors are meaningfully engaged in decision-making, with their lived experiences shaping strategic priorities and service improvements.
2. SMART Actions: Set clear, measurable objectives to ensure accountability.
3. Improved Data Use: Agree on key indicators to monitor outcomes and inform service development.
4. Capture and share good practice: Recognise and replicate successful models of care and support across the system.
5. Accessibility and Local Provision: Expand capacity for specialist accommodations and strengthen pathways for marginalised groups.
6. Awareness and Training: Increase the visibility of services through public campaigns and professional training.
7. Sustain Partnerships: Continue building on the SAWG's collaborative approach to deliver coordinated and impactful services.

Next Steps

SPH will review relevant policy and update data using information from the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment. Findings will be incorporated into the refreshed strategy.

For further information or to provide input, please contact: Angela McRury Senior Policy Officer Public Health angela.mcrury@oxfordshire.gov.uk