



Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse  
Strategic Board

# Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy

2025 - 2028



# How to access immediate support

If you need immediate support, this can be accessed by calling the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service (ODAS) on 0800 731 0055 or visiting <https://a2dominion.co.uk/services/domestic-abuse-support-services>

Alternatively, you can contact the freephone 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247.

**If you are in immediate danger, please do not be afraid to call 999.**

Alternatively, you can contact Thames Valley Police on the non-emergency telephone number 101 or visit your local police station to speak with an officer in confidence.

# Foreword

## Introduction

We are pleased to present the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy, refreshed for 2025-2028. Developed by the Safe Accommodation Working Group, a subgroup of the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board, this strategy is a collaborative effort. It incorporates insights and contributions from partners across the County, including those who have shared their lived experiences.

## The Impact of Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse can affect anyone, leaving a devastating impact on victims-survivors, their families, and friends. It has long-term, multi-generational consequences, and children who witness domestic abuse are victims in their own right, facing lifelong challenges.

## Access to Safe Accommodation

Providing safe accommodation for victims-survivors and their families is a crucial first step in helping them escape their abusers and begin living a life free from fear.

## Collaboration

In Oxfordshire, multi-agency stakeholders work together to ensure the provision of appropriate emergency and safe accommodation with dedicated support for victims-survivors and their children.

## Building on Previous Successes

This new and refreshed strategy builds on our work over the last three years to improve the experience and outcomes for victims-survivors of domestic abuse. Ambitions set out in this refreshed strategy mirror those in the Overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy setting out Oxfordshire's approach to tackling Domestic Abuse under four pillars: Prevention, Provision, Pursuing, and Partnership.

## Achievements and Future Plans

Since 2021 Oxfordshire has commissioned organisations to provide essential accommodation, including safe supported accommodation in refuge spaces and places of safety for those unable to access shared accommodation. Oxfordshire partners have:

- created a smoother and more efficient housing pathway for victims-survivors moving on from safe accommodation by building effective partnerships within the Oxfordshire system, including people with lived experience.
- identified and addressed areas of need for accommodation through mapping the provision of available accommodation across Oxfordshire.

## Action Plan and Commitment

This new refreshed strategy will be translated into an action plan, driven by the multiagency safe accommodation working group. Together, we will work to support victims-survivors of domestic abuse and prevent abuse in the future.

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Cabinet Member for Public  
Health, Inequalities and  
Community Safety

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Chair, Oxfordshire Domestic  
Abuse Strategic Board

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# Executive Summary

The Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy Refresh 2025-2028 reaffirms Oxfordshire's commitment to meeting the statutory duties of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Building on the achievements of the Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-2024 strategy, this refreshed strategy reflects on progress made and sets out priorities to ensure that victims-survivors, including children, have access to safe accommodation.

Aligned with the Oxfordshire Overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy, this strategy focuses on the following four pillars to ensure continuity while adapting to evolving needs and legislative requirements:



**PREVENTION:** Preventing domestic abuse from happening and intervening early.



**PROVISION:** Providing high-quality, joined-up support for victims-survivors.



**PURSUING:** Holding perpetrators accountable and providing opportunities for change.



**PARTNERSHIP:** Working in partnership to obtain the best outcome for victims-survivors.

This strategy has been shaped by stakeholder engagement, including input from victims-survivors through the Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) and professionals working in local services.

Key gaps and challenges:

- **Access barriers:** Limited housing stock and insufficient tailored provision for specific groups, such as those with no recourse to public funds, male victims-survivors, and 'move-on' options.
- **Holistic support:** Inconsistent levels of support to meet specific needs, including insufficient child-focused services in refuges and support for people with complex need.
- **Data and accountability:** Limited data and feedback from service users on service outcomes and gaps in monitoring performance effectively.
- **Engagement:** Embedding true co-production in strategic work, actively striving to move up the ladder of co-production and enhance collaborative efforts with those who have lived experience.

Key priorities for the next three years include expanding access to diverse safe accommodation options, addressing gaps in provision, and embedding lived experience into decision-making.

The delivery plan for the strategy will be developed by the Safe Accommodation Working Group and approved by the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board.

By focusing on these priorities, Oxfordshire aims to deliver a coordinated, inclusive, and impactful approach to domestic abuse safe accommodation, empowering victims-survivors and their families to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity.

# 1.

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

# What is domestic abuse?

**The Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board have adopted the statutory definition of domestic abuse established by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, outlined in Appendix A:**

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 of domestic abuse.

Abusive behaviour may consist of:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Psychological and emotional abuse
- Economic or other forms of abuse

This includes harmful traditional practices, including 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-survivors of domestic abuse:**

- Are those who see or hear or experience 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

Throughout this strategy, the terms victim and victims-survivors has been used to denote a victim, survivor, or 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.

# Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which received Royal Assent in April 2021, introduced a statutory definition of domestic abuse (Appendix A) and protective legislation to support and protect victims and survivors of domestic abuse and their families.

The Act aims to:

- Raise awareness of the impact of domestic abuse on victims and survivors and their families.
- Strengthen support, particularly by statutory agencies, and ensure more comprehensive and coordinated responses to domestic abuse.
- Improve the justice system, ensuring better protection for victims and greater accountability for perpetrators.

## The Safe Accommodation Duty

Part 4 of the Act introduced a statutory duty on all local authorities to provide safe accommodation support services. Oxfordshire County Council is required to:

- Appoint a multi-agency local domestic abuse partnership board
- Assess the need for accommodation-based support for all victims and their children, including those from outside of their area
- Develop and publish a Safe Accommodation Strategy considering the needs assessment
- Implement the strategy through commissioning and de-commissioning decisions
- Monitor and evaluate local delivery and effectiveness of the strategy
- Report back to central government annually

“ Safe accommodation is more than bricks and mortar or a physical space - it’s about the journey to get into safe accommodation and what it offers rather than what it is.”

Victim-survivor of domestic abuse

## What is Safe Accommodation?

The Act defines safe accommodation as “solely dedicated to providing a safe place to stay for victims of domestic abuse including expert support.” It includes various types of accommodation, such as:

- Refuge accommodation
- Specialist safe accommodation
- Dispersed accommodation
- Domestic abuse safe accommodation
- Sanctuary schemes
- Second stage accommodation (‘move-on’)
- Other emergency accommodation

Privately-owned and managed temporary accommodation, like bed-and-breakfasts with shared facilities, are specifically excluded from the definition of safe accommodation. Full descriptions for different types of safe accommodation are included in the glossary.

Support provided under the Duty must meet the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Quality Standards, as well as standards from organisations such as [Women’s Aid National Quality, Imkaan Accredited Quality Standards](#), the [Male Domestic Abuse Network Service Standards](#) and / or the [Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance 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 LGBTQIA+ victims

- Designed specifically for victims with additional and/or complex needs e.g. mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support
- **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 specialist outreach worker
- **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, 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

Accommodation-based support does not include other types of support which may be provided to victims of domestic abuse in community-based locations.

Members of the Oxfordshire’s Lived Experience Advisory Group were invited to share their insights on what effective safe accommodation support should be. Their responses are summarised below:



**HOLISTIC**  
Considers wider living environment and all needs of self and family.



**PERSONALISED**  
Personalised to consider individual needs and experience.



**SAFE**  
Provides physical and emotional safety and security.



**QUALITY**  
Well-maintained accommodation that meets the needs of individuals.

## What is Safe Accommodation?



**CONNECTED**  
Belonging to a community and the ability to connect with family and services.



**SUPPORTIVE**  
Trained, trauma-informed compassionate services and staff that care.



**STABLE**  
Secure, stable and familiar accommodation that offers continuity.



**ACCESSIBLE**  
One-stop shop with clear and accessible pathways in areas of need.

## Who should be supported by safe accommodation?

Victims aged 16 or over, and their children, with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds or who identify as LGBTQIA+, must have access to safe accommodation and relevant support. See Appendix B for information on supporting all victims.

## What is the scope of the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy?

The Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2025-2028 is dedicated to ensuring that victims-survivors of domestic abuse can access safe accommodation and the necessary support to rebuild their lives. This refreshed strategy outlines our commitment to fulfilling the statutory duties set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and builds on the achievements of the 2021-2025 strategy.

Table 1: MHCLG grant funding allocation

LOCAL AUTHORITY	FUNDING ALLOCATION 2023/24	FUNDING ALLOCATION 2024/25	FUNDING ALLOCATION 2025/26
Oxfordshire County Council (Tier 1 Authority)	£1,167,200	£1,189,222	£1,482,077
Cherwell District Council	£36,284	£36,967	£37,465
Oxford City Council	£38,820	£39,551	£40,084
South Oxfordshire District Council	£35,392	£36,059	£36,545
Vale of the White Horse District Council	£37,109	£37,808	£38,318
West Oxfordshire District Council	£35,268	£35,932	£36,416
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,350,073</b>	<b>£1,375,539</b>	<b>£1,670,905</b>

It focuses on strengthening existing services, developing more inclusive approaches, and working harder to ensure all victims-survivors, including children, can access a secure, supportive environment tailored to their individual needs.

This strategy is part of Oxfordshire's broader response to domestic abuse, outlined in the overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy, which addresses prevention, early intervention, and high-quality support for survivors and their families. The overarching strategy also includes measures to address perpetrator behaviour and will be refreshed in 2026.

Both the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy and the overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy action plans will be reviewed quarterly. This will ensure that they remain responsive to the evolving needs of survivors and incorporate new evidence and best practices.

## How is the Domestic Abuse Grant used?

The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government grant funding allocations for 2023/24-2025/26 are detailed in Table 1. The funding is awarded to individual Tier 1 and 2 local authorities. At the time of writing this strategy, future MHCLG funding is anticipated to continue.

The grant supports safe accommodation provision and objectives outlined in the overarching domestic strategy.

# 2.

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

# What is the wider strategic context?

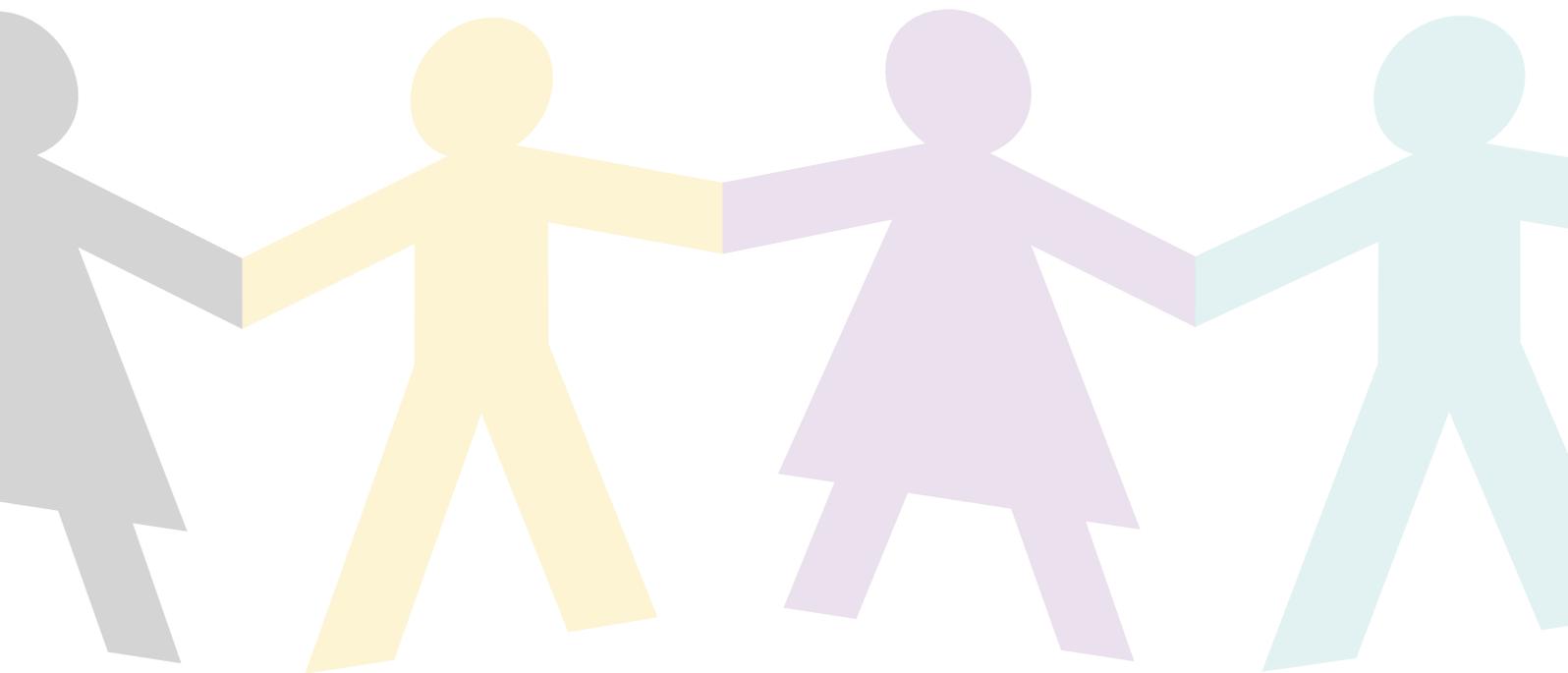
## Role of the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board (ODASB)

The Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board (ODASB) provides leadership to address domestic abuse across the county. Its key aims are to:

- focus on preventing and reducing domestic abuse
- deliver high-quality support services for victims-survivors and their children.
- coordinate efforts to hold perpetrators accountable and encourage behaviour change.

- Meet local needs by allocating resources effectively to improve support for victims-survivors, especially within safe accommodation.
- remove barriers to accessing support and promote collaboration among all relevant services.
- ensure Oxfordshire's response to domestic abuse is effective and aligns with legal duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- communicate strategically and support local District authorities in fulfilling their responsibilities.

The ODASB reports to the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership and provides updates to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to meet statutory requirements.



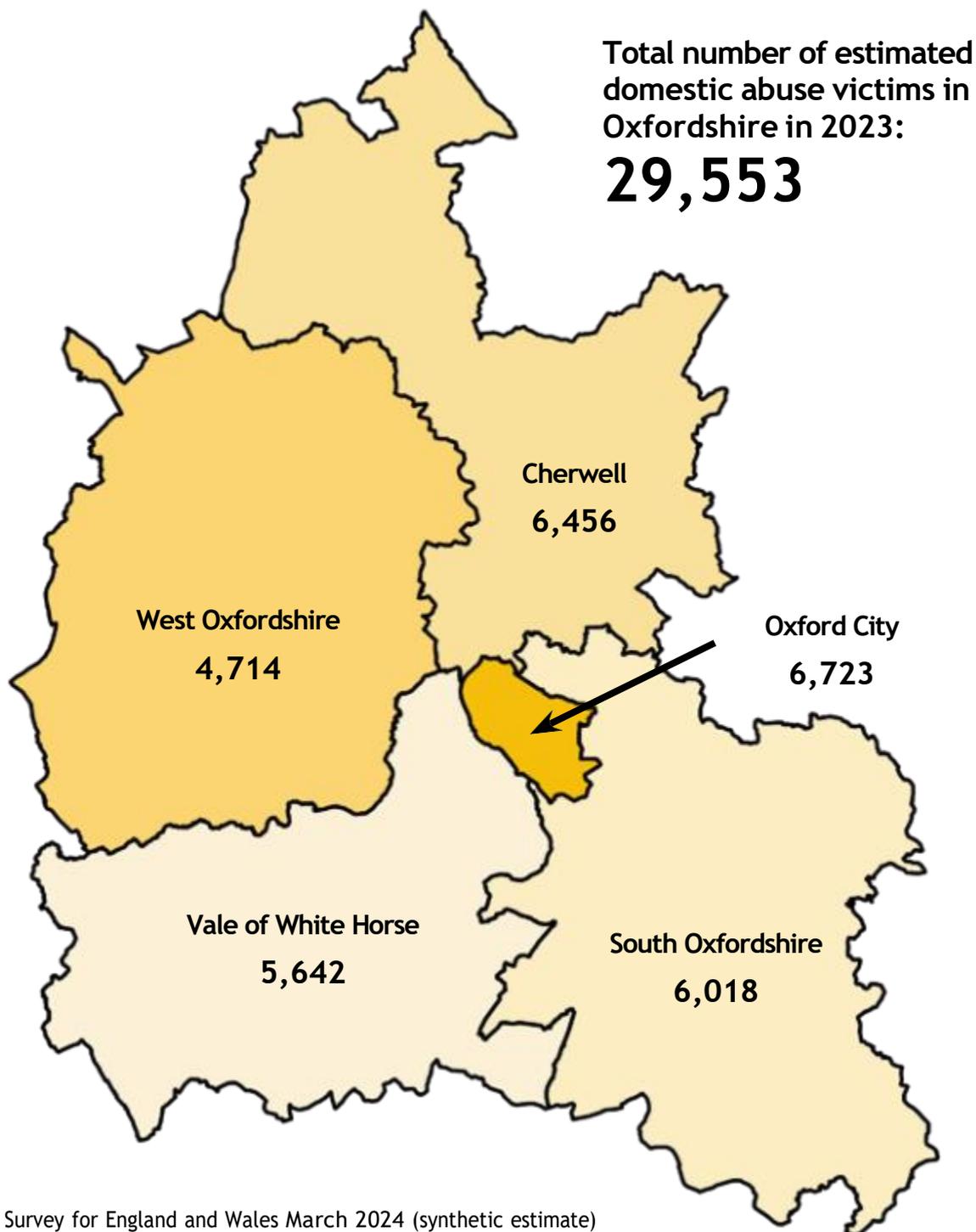
## What is the local context?

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



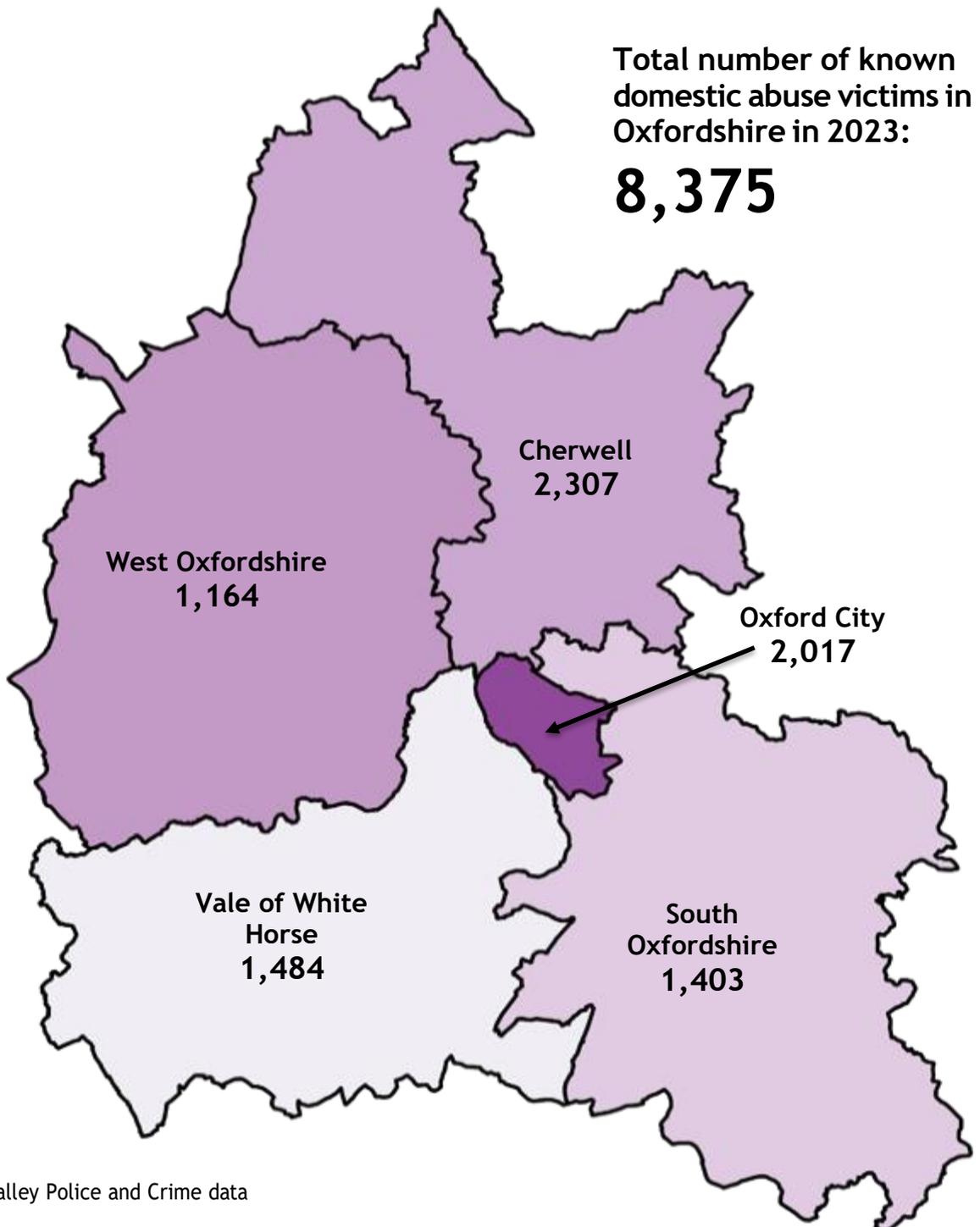
Source: The Crime Survey for England and Wales March 2024 (synthetic estimate)

# 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

<b>~68% female</b>		<b>57% aged 25-49</b>	
<b>~29% experience domestic abuse multiple times</b>		<b>218 new referrals to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference - a meeting for highest risk cases</b>	



Source: Thames Valley Police and Crime data

# How many victims have accessed help in Oxfordshire?

## Access to refuge and dispersed accommodation



**33 adults** and **20 children** accessed refuge or dispersed accommodation in Oxfordshire between April 2023 and March 2024.

Source: Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service (ODAS)

## Access to Sanctuary Schemes



Between April 2023 and March 2024, **126 victims** accessed sanctuary schemes:

- **33** in Oxford City
- **64** in South and Vale
- **29** in Cherwell and West Oxfordshire

Source: Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District, Councils, Cherwell and West Oxfordshire District

## Out of area referrals



Most common referrals are from:

**Aylesbury, Slough, Reading, South Buckinghamshire, West Berkshire, and Windsor and Maidenhead.**

Source: ODAS data from 2021-2024

## Demographic data



Between April 2023 and March 2024, **26 victims** with **protected characteristics** and **18 victims** from **black or minority ethnic backgrounds** accessed refuge and dispersed accommodation. Sanctuary Scheme providers do **not routinely collate demographic data.**

Source: ODAS data from OCC MHCLG annual data return

## Other support accessed by victims



General support in accommodation: **53**  
Specialist support: **53**  
Children's support: **20**  
Counselling and therapy: **32**

Source: Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service (ODAS)

## Victim views



Victims often struggle to understand the language used around domestic abuse, making it hard for them to recognise their own experiences as domestic abuse or be aware of the support services available in Oxfordshire.

Source: Victims of domestic abuse

# Partnership Working in Oxfordshire

Effective partnership working is essential in addressing the complex needs of domestic abuse victims-survivors.

The following case studies highlight how multi-agency collaboration across Oxfordshire is creating safety, stability, and tailored support, enabling survivors to rebuild their lives.

## Case Study: Sanctuary Hosting Scheme

### Background:

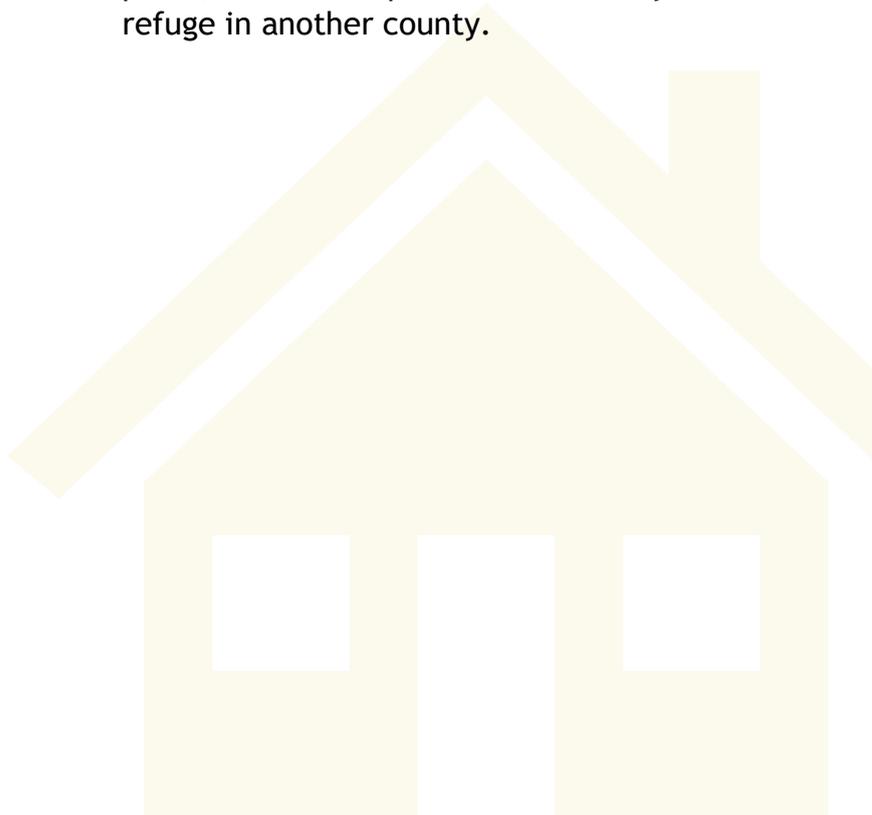
A foreign national came to the UK on a spousal visa after marrying a British citizen. Upon arrival, she experienced emotional, physical and economic abuse. Isolated and fearful due to misinformation and threats of deportation from her abuser, she sought temporary accommodation with a member of her community and self-referred for advice and support. As she was on a spousal visa, she had no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

### Interventions:

- **Multi-agency collaboration:** A referral was submitted to Asylum Welcome Sanctuary Hosting Scheme with additional support provided by Thames Valley Immigration Advice Service.
- **Culturally sensitive support:** A Sunrise Multicultural Domestic Abuse worker provided advice, emotional support and helped her navigate cultural barriers, ensuring she felt validated and informed about her rights.
- **Safety planning and legal support:** Detailed safety planning addressed immediate risks. She was advised about housing and refuge options, and supported in applying for recourse to public funds through the Vulnerable Migrants Domestic Abuse Concession.

### Outcome:

The Sanctuary Hosting Scheme enabled the woman to remain with the host for a month where she was supported by regular check-in calls from the Helpline and Access Team. The Vulnerable Migrants Domestic Abuse concession had been granted and the woman was able to access public funds. With these elements in place, she was helped to arrive safely at a refuge in another county.



# Case Study: Outreach team

## Background:

A woman and her child self-referred to Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service (ODAS) and were moved to a Place of Safety. The Outreach Team supported the woman there, and it was revealed that she had experienced physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse with controlling harassment and threatening and intimidating behaviours. The perpetrator's financial control exacerbated her isolation, leaving her with no means to support herself or her child. The child started to display trauma-related symptoms, and the woman experienced severe levels of depression, suicidal ideation and attempted suicide.

## Interventions:

- **Legal and protective measures:** The ODAS Outreach Team collaborated with police and legal services to support the woman obtain a Non-Molestation Order, move back to the family home and put an injunction in place to keep the perpetrator away from the address.

- **Integrated emotional support:** Referrals were made to Bounce Back 4 Kids for the child, and for both mother and child received Trauma Counselling. The Power to Change support group provided the woman with emotional support, psychoeducation on power, control and coercive behaviours empowering her to regain autonomy.
- **Ongoing support:** The Outreach team maintained emotional support and monitoring to address mental health.

## Outcome:

The woman and her child were able to safely remain in the family home while legal and financial matters were resolved. Both engaged with counselling and support groups. Key protection and legal support were in place, and Children's Social Care and police remained in contact with the family. This case underscores how coordinated efforts across agencies—ODAS, police, legal services, and mental health providers—created a robust support network to address the complexities of domestic abuse and its impact on families.

# 3.

**What do our  
stakeholders say?**

# What do our stakeholders say?

As part of the strategy refresh, Oxfordshire has engaged with victims-survivors of domestic abuse through the Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) and professionals working with local services. Perspectives from key stakeholders were gathered through in-depth

discussions, a collaborative workshop, surveys, and input from the LEAG. Recommendations were developed in partnership with the Safe Accommodation Working Group (SAWG) and informed by feedback from the LEAG. See what our stakeholders have to say about safe accommodation provision in Oxfordshire.

# What are the strengths?



## Rapid response to meet needs

*“The council has the ability to rapidly secure accommodation for survivors and victims fleeing domestic abuse and link the household to the appropriate range of support services”*



## Person-centred approach

*“We use a person-centred approach working with clients at all points of working with our service. Our refuges allow for us to support larger families and our places of safety allowing us to house victims of all genders and older children. We are [able to] provide counselling to both the adult and child within our provision”*



## Working together to ensure safety

*“The main strengths are the collaborative approach to making victims of domestic abuse safe and empowering people with support and knowledge. A multi-agency approach such as the MARAC to ensure high risk clients are carefully assessed and made safe through all services working together”*



## Overarching domestic abuse strategy

*“There is an Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy supported by a board that brings partners together to work collectively to tackle domestic abuse”*

# What are the challenges?

Integral to the strategy refresh has been hearing directly from victims-survivors and professional stakeholders on some of the challenges related to safe accommodation provision within Oxfordshire.

## Stigma and judgement

*“Don’t make them [victims] justify or undermine what they have been through...support to rebuild their lives and confidence”*  
**Victim-survivor**

## Lack of awareness of support available for men

*“I’m unclear what options for males are”*  
**Professional Stakeholder**

*“I know men aren’t aware they can access them too”*  
**Victim-survivor**

## Accessibility

*“Support should be easily accessible, and it wasn’t when I asked for help despite arriving with three young children”*  
**Victim-survivor**

## Supply and demand imbalance

*“Demand for safe accommodation exceeds supply and, in an emergency, sub-optimal temporary accommodation may need to be provided”*  
**Professional stakeholder**

*“The availability of safe accommodation across the District and City will continue to cause challenge”*  
**Professional stakeholder**

## Long-term support

*“Move-on is a difficulty for our clients, whilst we facilitate a planned move, in some cases, clients have to present as homeless at the end of the license which adds to the trauma of move-on”*  
**Professional stakeholder**

## Joint working

A professional described having the capacity to continue developing partnership working and keeping relations moving forward as a challenge.

## Disjointed client risk and needs assessment

Services have different approaches to assessing risk.

*“The assessment process of risk and need can be different or separate [according] to which service has made the assessment”*  
**Professional stakeholder**

# What are the gaps?



There is insufficient local information about the **gap between need, demand and supply** of domestic abuse safe accommodation services, particularly for those with protected characteristics.

It is suspected that there is a large **undocumented unmet need** and those currently accessing services are only the tip of the iceberg.

There is a lack of **housing specific training** in available domestic abuse training for staff.

“Victims are most likely to flee at night or at the weekend”.

**Lack of out-of-hours provision or support.**



There is a high number of victims-survivors presenting to services with **mental health needs, particularly children.**

“Access to safe accommodation may be restricted for households with **no recourse to public funds**”.



*“There is a gap for victims with **complex needs, such as serious mental health, addictions and those who require 24-hour support**”.*

Victims experience **barriers in being able to ‘move-on’** from refuge or temporary accommodation due to owning assets, availability of suitable housing as well as debt and rent arrears.

There is greater scope for **embedding lived experience in decision making** and co-production of solutions.

**No housing pathways** or options for **perpetrators.**

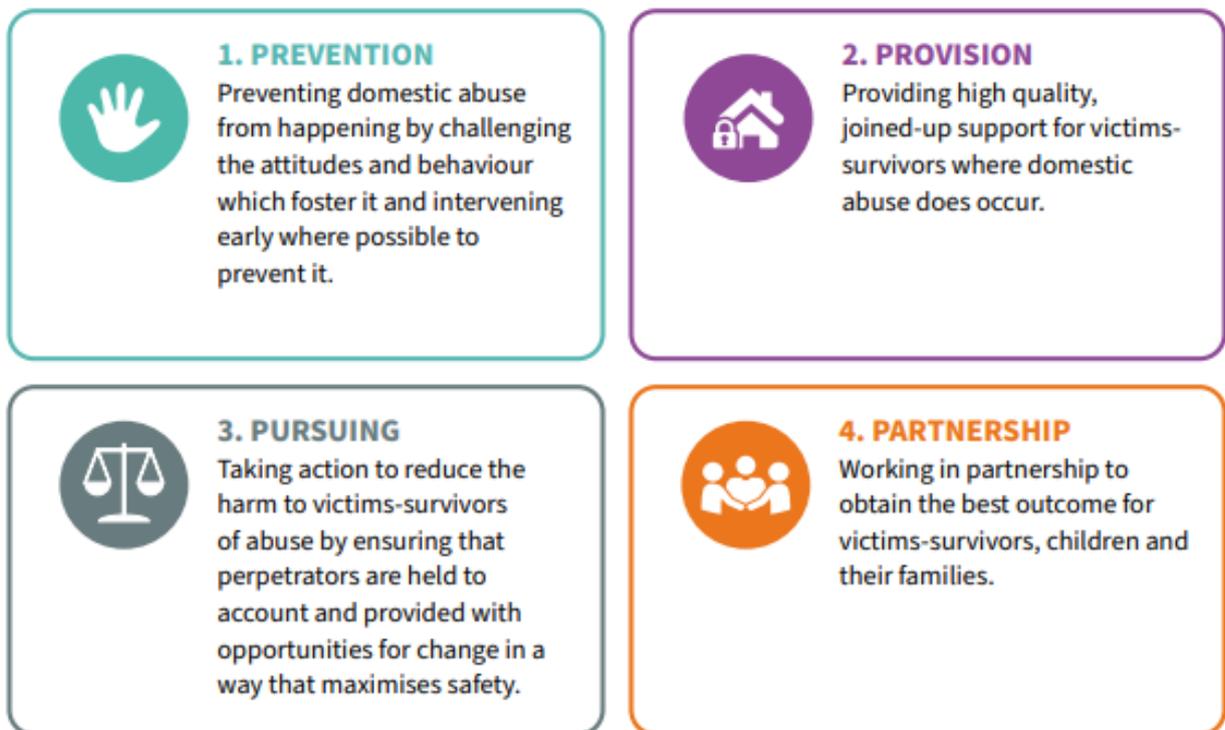
# 4.

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

# What are our key priorities?

This refreshed strategy outlines Oxfordshire's commitment to fulfilling statutory duties set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, building on the achievements of the 2021-2025 strategy. It aims to strengthen existing services, enhance inclusivity, and works towards ensuring all victims-survivors, including children, have access to safe, supportive accommodation tailored to their needs.

Aligned with the forthcoming Oxfordshire Overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy refresh, this Safe Accommodation Strategy focuses on the following key pillars, ensuring continuity in service provision while adapting to evolving needs and legislative requirements:

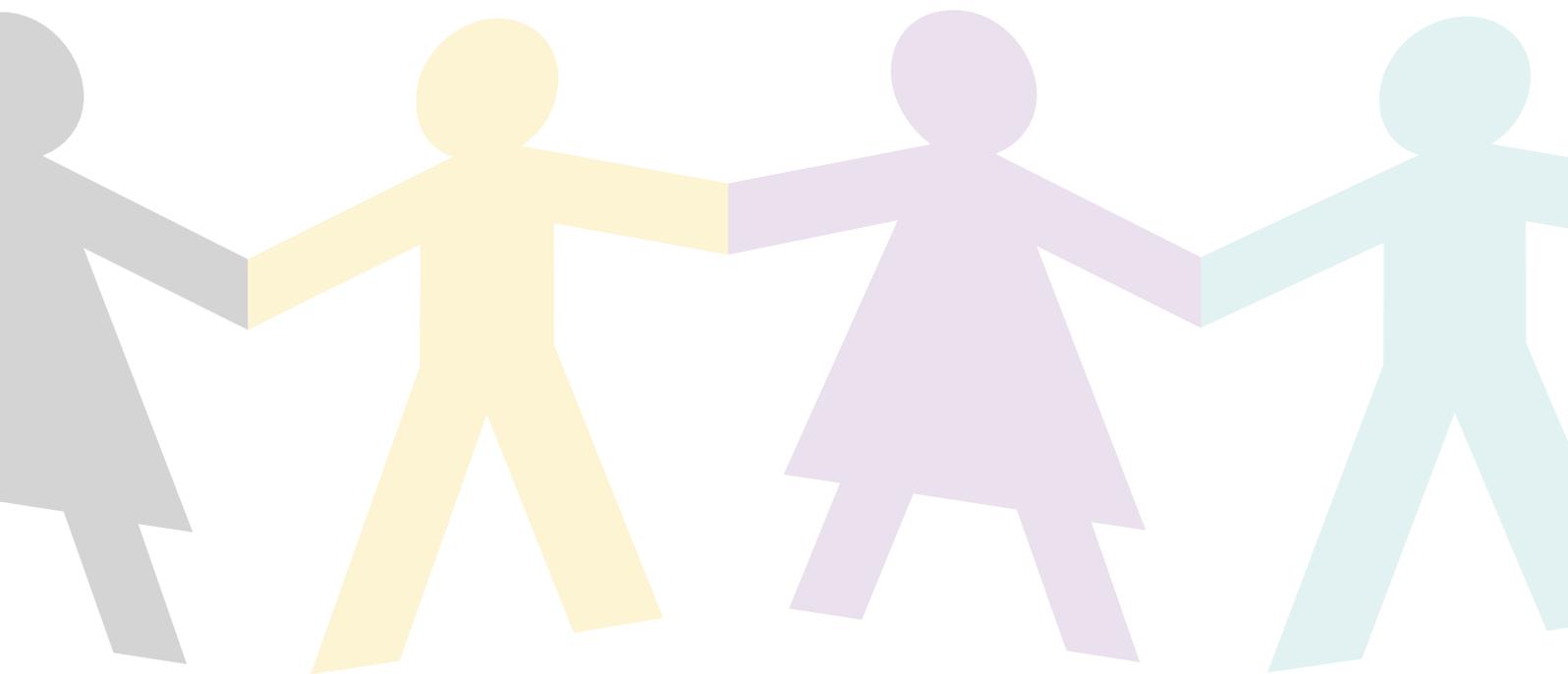


PILLAR	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES TO INFORM THE ACTION DELIVERY PLAN
PREVENTION	<p><b>Increase Awareness of Support:</b> Explore innovative ways to raise awareness about domestic abuse safe accommodation support available in Oxfordshire, especially for underrepresented groups including male victims-survivors.</p>
	<p><b>Establish Objective Metrics and Data Collection:</b> Define and agree on metrics to measure and monitor accessibility of safe accommodation, including increased referrals, faster access, and equitable services for victims-survivors. Identify additional data sources, especially from voluntary and charity sectors, to improve early identification of victims-survivors.</p>
	<p><b>Enhance Early Identification and Reporting:</b> Explore use of housing applications to identify those citing domestic abuse to identify opportunities for support.</p>
	<p><b>Embed safe accommodation into training programs:</b> Understand how domestic abuse training in Oxfordshire promotes and raises awareness of safe accommodation. Consider ways to include this across all training offers to improve promotion.</p>
PROVISION	<p><b>Improve Data Collection and Monitoring re Sanctuary schemes:</b> Promote and ensure consistent data collection district on Sanctuary Schemes. Explore options to standardise referral processes and ensure complete and consistent data returns across districts.</p>
	<p><b>Enhanced specialist support:</b> Explore expanding and tailoring safe accommodation support options, including options to meet needs of children, those with complex needs and men.</p>
	<p><b>Develop Coordinated Pathways and Overcome Barriers:</b> Explore opportunities to establish a coordinated county-wide move-on pathway for victims-survivors. Identify and address barriers to independent living for victims-survivors.</p>
	<p><b>Emergency &amp; respite accommodation:</b> Develop an understanding using data around numbers of individuals in emergency and temporary accommodation in Oxfordshire related to Domestic Abuse, to identify additional support/provision needs.</p>
PURSUING	<p><b>Perpetrator housing/ support programmes:</b> Explore models of accommodation options for low-medium risk perpetrators to reduce risk to survivors alongside community-based support.</p>
	<p><b>Consider use of community safety powers:</b> Explore how district councils can enact tenancy injunctions around perpetrators to reduce risk.</p>
PARTNERSHIP	<p>Centre the voices of adults, children, and young people with <b>lived experience of domestic abuse</b> and ensure it informs all decision making.</p>
	<p>Enhance <b>multi-agency collaboration</b> to strengthen and streamline service delivery.</p>

# 5.

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

- The refreshed delivery plan supporting the new safe accommodation strategy will be developed, owned, and delivered by the Safe Accommodation Working Group (SAWG) and governed by the ODASB. The new delivery plan will be approved by the ODASB.
- 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 section 6 for possible monitoring and evaluation measures.
- The refreshed delivery plan for the Safe Accommodation Strategy will be aligned with the overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy.



# 6.

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

Oxfordshire's Safe Accommodation Working Group have developed and agreed baseline measures and targets to monitor the impact of the Safe Accommodation Strategy.

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
Total number of instances of adults supported in safe accommodation (refuge and place of safety) per quarter and each year.	If an individual stayed in a safe accommodation service multiple different times (for any period of time), each unique stay is recorded	Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service
Total number of instances of children supported in safe accommodation (refuge and place of safety) per quarter.	Children here are defined as those under the age of 18 who have come to a service with a parent or guardian. If a victim is under-18 but, came on their own, then they are recorded as an adult	Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service
Cumulative (works completed) number of Sanctuary Schemes established within a financial year per district.	Figure to capture Sanctuary Scheme activity	District Councils
Average length of stay in Refuge		Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service
Average length of stay in Place of Safety		Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service

# Acknowledgements

This strategy was led by Oxfordshire County Council's Public Health Team and developed in partnership with [NHS Solutions for Public Health \(SPH\)](#). The strategy has been shaped by the voices of victims-survivors of domestic abuse through the Lived Experience Advisory Group and key collaborators across Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire County Council extends heartfelt thanks members of the Lived Experience Advisory Group. Their dedication and willingness to share their expertise have been invaluable in identifying gaps and guiding improvements in safe accommodation services to better meet the diverse needs of all victims-survivors.

We also acknowledge the vital contributions of the Safe Accommodation Working Group (SAWG) and the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board. Their input ensures we can better support victims-survivors. We are grateful all our partners for their ongoing commitment to delivering critical support to victims-survivors across the county. Their collaboration is central to ensuring safe supportive accommodation is accessible to those who need it most.

## Oxfordshire partners:



# Glossary

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>Commissioning</b>	The on-going process or cycle of planning, agreeing, and monitoring services. It involves lots of different activities, like researching need, designing services, buying services (procurement), checking how well things are working and making changes to improve them. This process is undertaken with partners.
<b>Co-production</b>	Where professional decision makers and people who use services work together to make decisions and plan, design and deliver services. This approach sees people who use services as best placed to help design them.
<b>DASH Risk Assessment</b>	A tool that professionals use to find out how much risk a victim-survivor is at from a perpetrator/s of domestic abuse.
<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>Domestic abuse safe accommodation</b>	Specific types of housing and support structures designed to address the needs of victims facing domestic abuse. Accommodation such as Bed and Breakfasts are not considered relevant safe accommodation and are excluded in the regulations. Therefore, local authorities should refrain from commissioning support within these types of accommodation under the duty.
<b>Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA)</b>	Individuals who usually support victims-survivors who are high risk of serious harm or death due to domestic abuse. They have usually completed a special training course and have a recognised qualification.
<b>Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG)</b>	A group for residents of Oxfordshire who are 18+ and have experienced domestic abuse. They work with people and organisations to make important decisions about partnership systems and responses to domestic abuse in the county. It is led by an independent person who does not work for Oxfordshire County Council.

<b>LGBTQIA+</b>	Stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual. The + means we are including other groups, like people who are ‘non-binary’ (they do not identify as male or female).
<b>Marginalised communities</b>	Groups of people who face discrimination / inequality in society and may be excluded from mainstream social, economic, educational, and/or cultural life. Not everyone who is from a marginalised community has protection from the Equality Act 2010.
<b>Ministry for Homes, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)<sup>1</sup></b>	A central government department that provides grant funding for domestic abuse services linked to safe accommodation and published national guidance to inform service delivery. Oxfordshire County Council submits regular reports to demonstrate value for money and outcomes against national criteria about certain activities. MHCLG used to be called Department for Levelling Up, Homes, and Communities (DLUHC).
<b>Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)</b>	A local process where information about victims-survivors who are high risk of serious harm / death is shared and safety plans are created.
<b>Needs Assessment</b>	A needs assessment is conducted to determine the level of support required within safe accommodation in the local area and seeks to identify the barriers that prevent victims-survivors with diverse needs from accessing support within safe accommodation, including those who share relevant protected characteristics or socio-economic factors such as household composition, education level and the varying levels of support needs and risk.
<b>Offender</b>	A person who has committed a recorded crime.
<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.
<b>Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service (ODAS)</b>	A specialist domestic abuse service in Oxfordshire that is funded jointly by Oxfordshire County Council and city and district councils, and the Police and Crime Commissioner. They provide a helpline, 1:1 case management, support groups, outreach work, refuge and other safe accommodation.
<b>Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board (ODASB)</b>	A strategic, multi-agency, professionals’ meeting where important decisions for the county are made to ensure improved outcomes for adults, children and young people affected by domestic abuse.

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). 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>Perpetrator</b>	A person who is or has used abusive behaviour in their relationship/s.
<b>Protected Characteristics</b>	The nine groups legally protected from discrimination by the Equality Act 2010. They are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
<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>Sanctuary Schemes</b>	Enabling victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes, where it is safe for them to do so, where it is their choice, and where the perpetrator does not live in the accommodation, by providing additional security measures.
<b>Sanctuary Hosting Scheme</b>	A hosting scheme providing temporary accommodation for victims of domestic abuse at risk of homelessness. Victims are matched with volunteer hosts living in the local community who offer spare rooms rent free.
<b>Second stage accommodation (sometimes known as 'move-on')</b>	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>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>Victims / Survivors</b>	A child or adult who is or has experienced domestic abuse.

# Appendix A: Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – Domestic Abuse definition

## Definition of “domestic abuse<sup>2</sup>”

(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

<sup>3</sup>Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). 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.

(c) 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

The Act<sup>3</sup> states that victims with each relevant protected characteristic 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 need
- 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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<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). 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)



Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse  
Strategic Board



## Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2025 - 2028

Oxfordshire County Council Public Health Team

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

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