

Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 03/11/2020 concerning the Domestic Abuse Review Group report

Response provided by Cabinet Member for a Safer, Healthy Oxford, Councillor Louise Upton

3

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That the Council formally adopts the definition of ‘domestic abuse’ included within the Domestic Abuse Bill, and reviews its usage of the phrase ‘domestic violence’ in its policies and literature to ensure correct usage.	Agree	
2) That the Council requests from the County Council early monitoring data from the Family Solutions Plus domestic abuse perpetrator monitoring programme and includes that information within its six month review of progress made on agreed recommendations from this report.	Agree	
3) That the Council engages with Thames Valley Police and provides appropriate support for the development of a universal domestic abuse perpetrator programme.	In part	Thames Valley Police have received funding from the OPCC to run the Cara Programme across the force. Perpetrators of domestic abuse will receive a conditional caution to attend two workshops. The results from the Hampshire evaluation have been very good. The Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Group have commissioned a Needs Assessment to inform a local strategy. This includes perpetrator programmes.
4) That the Council works with partners for the development of additional group work programmes for victims and survivors of domestic abuse, and that these programmes be embedded within the broader multi-agency framework for managing	Agree	Completed Group work for victims is already part of the response to domestic abuse in Oxfordshire. The programmes available are: Freedom Programme – to raise awareness of abusive

<p>domestic abuse.</p>		<p>behaviours Recovery Toolkit – to empower women and assist them to move on from an abusive relationship The TAP and MEG programmes – for women with complex needs who are vulnerable Our Voice – for women from minority communities Power to Change – empowerment programme DAY Programme – for young people experiencing domestic abuse</p>
<p>5) That the Council reviews the recommendations and outcomes of the Barking and Dagenham Domestic Abuse Commission, and as part of the Review Group’s six-month progress update reports on the steps it has taken to adopt and implement learning and actions from the Commission into the Council’s own activity.</p>	<p>Disagree</p>	<p>Oxfordshire DA Strategic Board is currently undertaking an extensive Needs Assessment to inform the local strategy and action plan. The Needs Assessment is being carried out by Public Health and the Council will base its activities on our local situation and needs, which may be different from other councils.</p>
<p>6) That the Council works with strategic partners to review and, if necessary, strengthen the connection between existing lived-experience groups and the Council’s services.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	
<p>7) That the Council trains the staff at its hubs to recognise domestic abuse and know how to respond, to know who to speak to in the event of a disclosure, and to be able to signpost appropriately to support services.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	
<p>8) That the Council makes available training and resources to Councillors to enable them to recognise domestic abuse and know how to respond, to know who to speak to in the event of a</p>	<p>Agree</p>	

disclosure, and to be able to signpost appropriately to support services.		
9) That the Council continues to work with ODAS and the County Council to explore the suitability of its own current or future housing stock being recommissioned as a 'place of safety'.	Agree	
10) That the Council contacts the County Council with its concerns over the safety of vulnerable women from predatory behaviour by men at the Bullingdon Road Young Mothers project.	Agree	Completed - A2Dominion who are managing the property have been contacted. There was an incident some time ago relating to a specific female. Social Care were involved and A2Dominion employed a security service for 24hrs to protect the female. The female was moved to another area and there have been no other issues. With regards to keeping the females safe A2Dominion have a number of measures: CCTV 24 hour on call service Alarm system Young Person's Independent Domestic Violence Advisor who engages with the females
11) That the Council seeks that steps are taken to ensure that houses designated as 'places of safety' do not become well-known as such and a target for predatory behaviour.	In part	There are two types of places of safety. 1. Internal provision. The place of safety is not a set property, but DA victims will be given a property in an area which reduces the risk of harm. The allocation of the place of safety varies with each person so there is no risk of it becoming 'well-known or a target' 2. External. There are 4 designated places of safety properties which are managed by Oxfordshire Domestic

		Abuse Service. Each property is alarmed, has CCTV, is flagged by the police and has a 24hr service. All residents in the property have to agree not to share the address with others. They are situated in housing estates to make them less visible as a place of safety.
12) That the Council refreshes its allocations scheme to change references from 'domestic violence' to 'domestic abuse', and that when it is adopted as law, the definition of domestic abuse as included within the Domestic Abuse Bill be included as an 'exceptional circumstance' in relation to housing prioritisation.	In part	The Allocations policy cannot be changed without public consultation. However it has been agreed that when it is next reviewed all necessary changes will be made.
13) That the Council increases the priority for move-on accommodation of women who have been facing domestic abuse for as long as the availability of refuge provision remains historically further beyond supply.	Disagree	Women who have suffered domestic abuse are a priority need and all options are considered to ensure they are kept safe and based on their individual needs. Refuge is a last resort.
14) That in the absence of other mitigating factors, the Council will pursue a policy of seeking to remove a perpetrator from the home in situations where a perpetrator is adjudged to be a high risk to the victim.	Disagree	<p>Section 2A of the Housing Act 1985 give grounds for possession on the proviso that the victim has no intention of returning. The possession will be on discretionary grounds and the Court will have to be satisfied the victim will not return. The victim can be offered alternative accommodation and keep their secure tenancy. We already have a policy on this.</p> <p>If the perpetrator has left we can apply the O'Grady principal where 1 tenant can stop the joint tenancy and have a new secure tenancy.</p> <p>In a situation where the victim does not support enforcement against the perpetrator the Council, in theory, can seek possession on breach of tenancy but it</p>

o

		applies to the whole family, thereby evicting the victim who will then be deemed as intentionally homeless
15) That the Council reviews the strength of the clause(s) regarding anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse in Council tenancies and provides a model paragraph for inclusion in tenancies let via housing associations/private landlords with the aim to make it easier to evict tenants who perpetrate domestic abuse.	Disagree	Registered Housing Providers operate under a different piece of legislation to Local Authorities. It is therefore inappropriate for the Council to give advice on this as they have their own, different, legal rules to follow. The same applies to private landlords who operate under another piece of legislation.
16) That the Council seeks DAHA accreditation for its housing services	Agree	This process has begun
17) That the Council, once the work of its Domestic Abuse Specialist in mapping pathways and experiences of victims who engage with the Council's work is complete, engages closely with specialist domestic abuse support providers to improve the outcomes and experience of victims in their interaction with the Council.	Agree	
18) That the Council develops a clear domestic abuse pathway for managing housing of domestic abuse victims	Agree	

<p>19)That the Council takes proactive steps to ensure appropriate cultural support is available to individuals moving out of Oxford.</p>	<p>Disagree</p>	<p>The Council currently provide a support package for people moving out of area. Generally the Council will not be aware of which area the person is moving to. If a person flees to Oxford they will ensure they are able to access appropriate support</p>
<p>20)That the Council includes within its budget provision for the cost of the Sanctuary Scheme for the duration of the next Medium Term Financial Plan, rather than reconfirming its funding year on year.</p>	<p>In part</p>	<p>The Sanctuary Scheme is a priority service, however it is funded through an annual government grant so although it will remain a priority the Council cannot predict the level of funding for subsequent years.</p>
<p>21)That the Council runs a mapping and awareness-raising exercise of the opportunities in Oxford for ESOL classes, aimed particularly at its community centres users and grant recipients.</p>	<p>In part</p>	<p>In line with its remit, Oxfordshire County Council offers access to ESOL classes and Oxford City Council staff and website provides information and refers people to these services. Guidance on ESOL is also provided through the community based Locality Hubs to all those in need.</p>
<p>22)That the Council raises with the BAED Worlds Group, including the County Council representative, the existence of 14 previously trained community interpreters, with a view to investigating whether and how their services may be used to improve access for non-native English speakers to domestic-abuse related support.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	
<p>23)That the Leader writes to the minister at MCHLG to highlight the impact that the huge cuts to English languages classes have on domestic abuse victims.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	
<p>24)That the Council makes a public statement confirming that it will not share immigration status information with the Home Office when individuals come forward for support with domestic abuse, and</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>This has already happened and can be stated again when there is relevant communications sent out.</p>

<p>that it takes steps to publicise this amongst relevant community groups locally.</p>		
<p>25) That the Council, in the development of networks to support homeless people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), ensures that the remit is extended to ensure the specific needs of those made homeless from fleeing domestic abuse are incorporated.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Completed - There is already a DA NRPF Pathway in Oxford for people which includes tailored support and legal advice, assistance to apply for leave to remain and further accommodation.</p> <p>The Oxfordshire Homeless Pathway for rough sleepers who have no recourse does not provide the additional support required for victims of domestic abuse.</p>
<p>26) That the Council contacts Manchester City Council to understand the overall cost of providing support for those with no recourse to public funds who are in destitution.</p>	<p>Disagree</p>	<p>There is already a NRPF Pathway for victims fleeing due to Domestic Abuse within Oxford</p>
<p>27) That the Council investigates how Slough Borough Council offer support to those with no recourse to public funds.</p>	<p>Disagree</p>	<p>There is already a NRPF Pathway for victims fleeing due to Domestic Abuse within Oxford</p>
<p>28) That the Council works with relevant local and national organisations to lobby government for an exemption to allow those experiencing domestic abuse with no recourse to public funds to access public support.</p>	<p>Disagree</p>	<p>Activists are currently lobbying the Government on this issue and the Council does not have officer capacity to duplicate this.</p>
<p>29) That the Council investigates the legalities and cost of implementing a Flexible Funding scheme, with a view to one being established if practicable and legal.</p>	<p>In part</p>	<p>Provision of a Flexible Funding scheme is part of the Needs Assessment being conducted for the Oxfordshire DA Strategic Group. Sourcing the money for this scheme post March 2022 may be problematic.</p>

<p>30)That the Council, as part of its upcoming grant funding review, increases the funding available to domestic abuse services, particularly around BAME access to support.</p>	<p>In part</p>	<p>The Grant Funding review will include an Equalities assessment and the effect on groups with Protected characteristics will be reviewed in line with Equalities legislation. Grant funding provided to bodies tackling domestic and other forms of abuse will be part of the review and review recommendations will specifically refer to these issues.</p>
<p>31)That the Council is proactive in providing support to those organisations which provide domestic-abuse related activities but struggle to attract external funding to identify and successfully apply for external grant funding.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	
<p>32)That the Council continues to support grant funding to ‘by and for’ organisations, but that for domestic abuse-related applications it is mindful of the need to situate ‘by and for’ support within the wider overall framework for supporting domestic abuse victims.</p>	<p>In part</p>	<p>The Council promotes and supports a wide ranging community partnership effort across all categories of support, including grants and other funding for services within Oxford’s communities. It is mindful of the need to situate support within a wider framework that includes efforts on health, safety, housing, wider advice and justice, for example.</p>
<p>33)That the Council includes within its grant funding application forms a question along the lines of “Does this funding intend to support positive family relationships? If so, how?”</p>	<p>Agree</p>	
<p>34)That the Council identifies and requires levels of organisational awareness and capacity around domestic abuse prevention and support which is reasonable relative to the size of organisation, size of grant sought and the purpose of the grant.</p>	<p>In part</p>	<p>The Council Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults policy mandates training for all staff. The Council reviews all safeguarding policies of commissioned services to check they meet local and national standards. Voluntary organisations must comply with standards set by Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children’s Board and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board and this is stated</p>

		in our funding agreements. Safeguarding guidance is included throughout our grant process within all service areas and through our formal procurement portal process. When groups apply for grant funding from Oxford City Council, the organisation must provide its safeguarding policies.
35) That the Council includes in its guidance for grant applicants links to appropriate resources through which organisations may support positive family relationships.	Agree	
36) That the Council extends its definition of social value in procurement to include opportunities for companies to support positive family relationships.	In part	Procurement are currently discussing the development of their own social value framework based on the National one; OxTOMs. This is in the preliminary stages. To include 'support positive family relationships' requires extensive consideration for it to be an effective measurement. As the framework develops the Procurement Team will consult with the Domestic Abuse Lead to discuss the potential for inclusion.
37) That the Council uses the existing draft domestic abuse policy as its template, to be updated, for its to-be-developed Domestic Abuse in the Workplace Policy.	Agree	
38) That the Council gives its to-be-adopted policy on domestic abuse a clearer title, such as 'Domestic Abuse Workplace Policy'	Agree	
39) That the Council includes a section within its domestic abuse policy to provide guidance to staff if, in the course of their job, they suspect or know that someone is a victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse	Agree	

40)That the Council at its next review of its constitution gives consideration to the practicability of including an explicit expectation that Councillors will not perpetrate domestic abuse.	Agree	
41)That the Council as shareholder of its wholly-owned companies implements domestic abuse policies in those companies	In part	There will be discussions with ODS to determine what they need to ensure staff can identify and report DA as well as what staff can do if they are either a victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse.
42)That the Council, as part of its People Strategy, initiates a project to provide enhanced awareness, resources, and capability to recognise and support victims of domestic abuse, and engages with safeguarding and domestic abuse specialists to identify good practice and best resources.	Agree	Completed
43)That the Council improves the detail of the support it provides staff facing domestic abuse on the staff intranet.	Agree	Completed
44)That the Council reviews the adequacy of the internal training it provides for all staff, line managers and elected members on domestic abuse	In part	Training is being refreshed and when rolled out will be asking for feedback to assist in improving the training
45)That the Council makes domestic abuse awareness and management training mandatory for all those in the Council with line-management responsibility.	In part	Making training mandatory is problematic as there is no internal mechanism to effectively monitor it has been completed. However with the revised training available there will be a push internally for staff and line managers to attend training. Oxford City Council with the County Council have bid for funding to develop an e-learning package for line managers

<p>46)That the Council reviews its HR processes around sickness, lateness, time off and performance management to ensure they are capable of supporting staff involved in either side of domestic abuse.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	
<p>47)That the Council includes within domestic abuse awareness and management training for managers training on identifying the appropriate level of training required for the staff in their team regarding domestic abuse.</p>	<p>Disagree</p>	<p>There will be training package available for staff with different levels of awareness and response. In addition when a whole team is trained on domestic abuse it will be tailored to meet their needs. The DA training delivered through the OSCB will be available to staff who need more in depth training, including training to become a Domestic Abuse Champion. There is no internal facility to identify the level of DA training each member of staff needs to have. The Safeguarding training, which is mandated, does include DA</p>
<p>48)That Council training provided to staff and elected members on domestic abuse considers, at a level relevant to type of training, training which is sensitive to specific cultural contexts and working with a diverse range of communities, and culturally-specific issues which can increase vulnerability amongst specific minority community members.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	

This page is intentionally left blank