

To: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 5th April 2022
Report of: Ian Wright, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety
Title of Report: Domestic Abuse Review Recommendations Update

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	An update report on the progress made against recommendations arising from the Domestic Abuse Review Group
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for a Safer, Healthy Oxford
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation(s):	
1. Members note and comment on the update	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Recommendations Update

Introduction and background

1. Cabinet agreed the majority of the recommendations that were endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 02 March 2021. Scrutiny has requested an update on the progress made against these recommendations.

Domestic Abuse

2. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides a statutory definition of domestic abuse which will be incorporated as relevant policies are reviewed and agreed by Cabinet. The Act also states a duty for local authorities to provide Safe Accommodation for victims of domestic abuse, which includes refuge provision, places of safety and sanctuary scheme. The main duty lies with the County Council with support from Oxford City Council and the other district councils. The Oxfordshire Safe Accommodation Strategy has been signed off and the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy is currently under consultation. The strategies and action plans will be informed by a Lived Experience Group who will act as critical friends. Oxford City

Council has an excellent Sanctuary Scheme which supports all victims regardless of tenure and level of risk. The Domestic Abuse Lead represents the City Council on the DA Strategic Board and the co-commissioning of domestic abuse services.

3. Oxford City Council has signed up to the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation. In order to achieve accreditation the Council will need to demonstrate a whole council approach to domestic abuse, in 8 priority areas:
 1. Policies & Procedures
 2. Staff Development
 3. Partnerships
 4. Safety Led Case Management
 5. Victim-Survivor Led Support
 6. Intersectionality & Anti-racist Practice
 7. Perpetrator Accountability
 8. Publicity and Awareness Raising

The accreditation is at the early stages as there is significant planning and commitment needed to complete the process. To assist, the Council have contracted a 0.4 Domestic Abuse Consultant. The accreditation and the Consultant have been funded via the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). The County Council has also awarded the City Council funding for 2 one year posts to assist with achieving the accreditation. The Domestic Abuse Housing Link Workers came into post on 30 March 2022. They will each have a case load supporting the more complex domestic abuse cases through the housing pathway using a trauma informed and client led approach. The accreditation can take up to two years to achieve.

4. There have been a series of domestic abuse training sessions which were attended by 56 members of staff, although 90 were nominated by their managers. The feedback was very positive. Further training sessions are being arranged. There is also relevant domestic abuse training offered by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board which is free and open to all staff. The Domestic Abuse Housing Link Workers will also be available over the next year to deliver training sessions which are team specific to improve response and working practice.
5. Supporting victims/survivors of domestic abuse is paramount however more needs to be done to prevent domestic abuse from occurring. In addition to the 3 programmes currently in place for perpetrators of domestic abuse in Oxford the DA Strategic Board is exploring the possibility of a community based programme which will be available to perpetrators who are not open to Children's Social Care or who have been reported to the police. In addition the DA Lead, working with Elmore Community Services, is producing a series of podcasts called Flipping the Narrative aimed at males to enable them to start conversations which challenge misogynistic attitudes and behaviours.

Financial implications

6. The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation does come with costs. These costs are currently being met through the DLUHC funding given to the City Council up to end of March 2023. It is unknown if this funding stream will continue after this date. Once the City Council have achieved accreditation there is an annual cost of around £2k which will need to be found.

Legal issues

7. No legal issues.

Conclusion

8. There is a considerable amount of work being carried out within Oxford City Council on domestic abuse. The DAHA Accreditation will make a significant difference to the way the Council responds to domestic abuse towards residents of Oxford and members of staff.

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Background Papers: None

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