

**To:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 16 January 2024  
**Report of:** Executive Director (Communities and People)  
**Title of Report:** DAHA Accreditation and Domestic Abuse Review Group Update

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	An update report on the Council's progress towards the DAHA Accreditation and progress made against recommendations arising from the Domestic Abuse Review Group
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Mark Lygo, Cabinet Member for Safer and Inclusive Communities
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Support Thriving Communities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24
<b>Recommendation(s): That the Committee resolves to:</b>	
1. <b>Note and comment</b> on the report and <b>agree any recommendations</b> in relation to the DAHA Accreditation element of the report.	

<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	Domestic Abuse Review Group Recommendations Update

## Introduction and background

1. Cabinet agreed the majority of the 48 Domestic Abuse Review Group recommendations which were endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 02 March 2021. Scrutiny has requested an update on the progress made against these recommendations since the previous update on 05 April 2022, which is attached at Appendix 1. The Committee also requested an update on progress towards the DAHA Accreditation.

## Domestic Abuse

2. Oxford City Council has signed up to the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation. The workflow is led by Domestic Abuse Lead and in June 2023 the DAHA Project Manager was recruited to assist with the process; funded through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). The DAHA Steering Group, chaired by the Executive Director

(Communities and People) has oversight. It is anticipated accreditation will be achieved by 31 March 2025. Currently the focus of the work is on the Health Check phase. Audits are being carried out on the Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Service, Landlord Services and Rents and Benefits. This is assisting in identifying gaps in processes and policy as well as in staff's knowledge and skills. The DAHA work is being aligned with the transformation of Housing Services, Service Integration Project, Social Housing White Paper and EDI Strategy to ensure a whole Council approach. Focus groups with specialist partner agencies have been held to improve referral pathways both in and out of the Council. Oxford City Council has 23 Domestic Abuse Champions who received refresher training this year. Staff training on domestic abuse and risk assessment has been planned for 2024. The DAHA Project Manager has been working with internal departments to strengthen policies and procedures by focusing on victims/survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse where relevant. The Domestic Abuse Lead has very little capacity, so the process has taken longer than anticipated. The DAHA Project Manager is now up to speed and is able to push the agenda forward. The Embedding Phase will start in 2024 and an action plan for this work is currently being developed.

3. The County Council funded two posts for a one-year pilot within the Housing Service. The Domestic Abuse Housing Link Worker (DAHLs) role provided additional support to meet the needs of domestic abuse victims/survivors who had more complex housing concerns. Through this they would identify gaps in service provision within the Council by receiving feedback from their clients which fed into the DAHA accreditation work. A weekly online drop-in service was also provided for staff to discuss a domestic abuse case they had, or a confidential space to discuss their own experience of domestic abuse. Additional funding was found through the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership to extend the role for a short period. A total of 32 victims/survivors and their children were supported and settled into safe accommodation over the last year. The learning from this work has been fed through and informing the DAHA work. Unfortunately the funding has now come to an end. The DAHL role cannot be replaced by current staff as they will not have the capacity to give the level of support provided by that role.
4. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a duty on local authorities to provide Safe Accommodation for victims of domestic abuse, which includes refuge provision, places of safety and a sanctuary scheme. The main duty lies with the County Council with support from Oxford City Council and the other district councils. The main duty for Oxford City Council is in the provision of the Sanctuary Scheme which provides support irrespective of tenure and gender. Between 2022-23 the Scheme has supported 76 victims/survivors and 128 children to feel safe in their home. The Domestic Abuse Lead represents the City Council on the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy Group and the Oxfordshire Safe Accommodation Working Group. The Domestic Abuse Strategies are informed by a Lived Experience Group who act as critical friends. In 2023 the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service was re-commissioned and for the first time the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) Service was also commissioned. The Domestic Abuse Lead for the City Council represented all Districts through this process and sits on the contract management meetings.

5. Whilst it is important for victims/survivors to feel safe to report their experiences of domestic abuse and receive the right support for their needs it does not end the cycle of abuse, as the ex-partners will engage in another relationship so the abuse/violence continues. The statutory guidance to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recommends working with perpetrators of domestic abuse. Elmore Community Services provide a rolling Perpetrator Programme within Family Solutions Plus (FSP). The Domestic Abuse Lead continues to work closely with Elmore. The County Council commission this provision, however this financial year the funding has been cut. Elmore has had to make a reduction from three programmes to two. The FSP pilots for domestic abuse and mental health work are being recommissioned in 2024; it is not known at this time how much funding is available. The Ministry of Justice released funding at the end of last year for perpetrator programmes. Bids for this funding were led by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and 4 bids were put in for the Thames Valley area, however only 1 was successful: the Drive Programme. This programme is for perpetrators who are high risk and cause high harm. It is a case management programme with voluntary 1:1 work. The OPCC has set up a working group to consider what other programmes can be put in place to support perpetrators to change their behaviour; the Domestic Abuse Lead is linked into this group and will be a part of the Drive Panel. There is also a programme, 2 workshops, for first time offenders who are reported to the police: Cautioning and Relationship Abuse (CARA). SAFE! has been running a programme called Building Respectful Families for nine years. This programme works with families where there is child on parent abuse.

### **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 2025. It is unknown if this funding stream will continue after this date. Once the City Council has achieved accreditation there is an annual cost of around £2k which will need to be found.

### **Legal issues**

7. There are no legal issues that have been identified.

### **Conclusion**

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