

Support in Safe Accommodation Strategy for Norfolk 2021-2024

Summary:	<p>The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 includes new duties on tier 1 local authorities in England relating to the provision of support for victims and their children residing within <i>relevant safe accommodation</i> to assess the need for <i>safe accommodation and support</i> and develop a strategy to meet these needs.</p> <p>Tier 2 local authorities have a duty to co-operate as a key stakeholder and partner in undertaking the needs assessment and developing and implementing the strategy.</p>
Options considered:	No other options have been considered.
Conclusions:	This draft strategy is being presented to Cabinet to seek endorsement for this partnership strategy and to acknowledge our role in its continued development and implementation to reflect the importance the Council has placed on the need to support survivors of domestic abuse.
Recommendations:	To endorse the Support in Safe Accommodation Strategy for Norfolk 2021-2024.
Reasons for Recommendations:	Endorsing the strategy demonstrates acknowledgement of our role in developing and implementing the strategy and reflect the importance of the need to support survivors of domestic abuse.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AS REQUIRED BY LAW

(Papers relied on to write the report, which do not contain exempt information and which are not published elsewhere)

none

Cabinet Member(s) Cllr W Fredericks	Ward(s) affected – all
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 29 April 2021, the Domestic Abuse Bill 2021 received Royal Assent. The Act includes new duties on tier 1 local authorities in England relating to the provision of support for victims and their children residing within *relevant safe accommodation*. Under these provisions tier 1 local authorities must;
 - Assess the need for accommodation-based Domestic Abuse support for survivors and their children in their area, including the need of those coming from outside the area
 - Based on the needs assessment develop and implement a strategy.
- 1.2 Tier 2 local authorities have a duty to co-operate as a key stakeholder and partner in undertaking the needs assessment and developing and implementing the strategy.
- 1.3 The draft strategy which includes a link to the needs assessment is attached (appendix 1).
- 1.4 Norfolk County Council has consulted with key stakeholders on the draft strategy and the draft strategy was considered by their Cabinet on 6 December 2021. It is likely that there will be some changes to this draft as a result. In addition a delivery plan will be developed.
- 1.5 The final version of the strategy has to be submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by 6 January 2022.
- 1.6 This draft strategy is being presented to Cabinet to seek endorsement for this partnership strategy and to acknowledge our role in its continued development and implementation to reflect the importance the Council has placed on the need to support survivors of domestic abuse.

2. Background

- 2.1 It is important to note that the remit of this strategy relates only to the provision of *support* for survivors of domestic abuse and their children and only to the support provided in *safe accommodation*. *Support* and *safe accommodation* are both defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and these are detailed in the strategy.
- 2.2 Norfolk County Council has been allocated new burdens funding of £1.8m for 2021/22. The tier 2 authorities have been awarded new burdens funding of £220k of which North Norfolk District Council has received £32,138. This funding is being utilised to fund the additional capacity as outlined in the People Services Restructure and will cover the cost of officers contributing to the development of the needs assessment and strategy development and implementation in addition to considering how we can improve the support to survivors of domestic abuse more generally.
- 2.3 The needs assessment has highlighted the need to improve data collection across partner organisations and to develop a framework for consultation with key groups with lived experience and in particular those with protected

characteristics which by nature mean that they can be harder to engage. Partners are also keen to develop a framework to enable the co-production of services with those with lived experience.

- 2.4 The needs assessment highlighted a lack of safe accommodation which needs to be addressed through the strategy. It also highlighted that much of the current provision is not able to accommodate some key groups and that these tend to be groups with protected characteristics who as a result suffer greater disadvantage. The strategy needs to develop a more flexible offer of safe accommodation in order to meet the needs of groups with protected characteristics.
- 2.5 The needs assessment identified that although there is refuge provision in all 7 districts in Norfolk and 2 safe houses, one of which is in North Norfolk, that there is a need for a further 26-36 units of accommodation.
- 2.6 The needs assessment will be refreshed annually and the strategy refreshed every 3 years.
- 2.7 The draft strategy includes 5 objectives;
 - Increase the amount and flexibility of safe accommodation
 - Improve engagement with victim survivors of domestic abuse
 - Improve the quality of support and of safe accommodation
 - Support children in safe accommodation through the provision of play based therapy
 - Improved intelligence.

3. Corporate Plan Objectives

- 3.1 Local Homes for local need – this strategy seeks to increase the availability of safe accommodation for victim survivors of domestic abuse and to improve the quality of such accommodation and the support provided within such accommodation. This strategy sits alongside the No Homelessness in Norfolk Strategy 2022-2025, the North Norfolk District Council Housing Strategy 2021-2024 and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2024.
- 3.2 Customer Focus – the Council has a legal responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that people are treated fairly when using services. It will be important therefore to ensure a robust consideration of the needs of customers with protected characteristics in the design and delivery of services.
- 3.3 Quality of Life – equality, diversity and inclusion and community safety are key factors in health and wellbeing and quality of life.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 includes new duties on tier 1 local authorities in England relating to the provision of support for victims and their children residing within *relevant safe accommodation* to assess the need for safe accommodation and support and develop a strategy to meet these needs.

4.2 Tier 2 local authorities have a duty to co-operate as a key stakeholder and partner in undertaking the needs assessment and developing and implementing the strategy.

4.3 This draft strategy is being presented to Cabinet to seek endorsement for this partnership strategy and to acknowledge our role in its continued development and implementation to reflect the importance the Council has placed on the need to support survivors of domestic abuse.

5. Medium Term Financial Strategy

5.1 The Council received new burdens funding in 2021/22 to reflect the duty to co-operate.

6. Financial and Resource Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 The Council has a legal duty to co-operate as outlined above.

8. Risks

8.1 Reputational risk and implications of not fulfilling statutory duties.

9. Sustainability

9.1 Supporting the more vulnerable members of our communities has a positive impact on sustainability.

10. Equality and Diversity

10.1 This strategy seeks to address gaps in provision of safe accommodation and support for victim survivors of domestic abuse and their children. The strategy seeks to engage with victim survivors to co-produce services. The needs assessment has highlighted the need to engage with the more marginalized groups which tend to have protected characteristics.

11. Section 17 Crime and Disorder considerations

11.1 Domestic Abuse is a crime and the need for support and safe accommodation is a direct consequence of the need of victim survivors to flee from the perpetrators of violence. The strategy acknowledges the need for partners to work with the Police and other agencies to tackle the wider issues and seek to prevent domestic abuse through education, advice and support and support programmes for perpetrators focused on changing behaviour.