

**BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

**PUBLIC**

**Report to:** CABINET

**Report of:** Corporate Director Place

**Date of Decision:** 13 February 2018

**SUBJECT:** BIRMINGHAM DOMESTIC ABUSE PREVENTION STRATEGY

**Key Decision:** Yes      **Relevant Forward Plan Ref:** 003259/2017

**If not in the Forward Plan:** Chief Executive approved   
(please "X" box)      O&S Chair approved

**Relevant Cabinet Member(s) or Relevant Executive Member:** Cllr Paulette Hamilton – Cabinet Member Health and Social Care

**Relevant O&S Chair:** Cllr John Cotton – Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Cllr Victoria Quinn – Housing and Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Wards affected:** All

**1. Purpose of report:**

- 1.1 To seek approval for the Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2018 – 2023 as set out at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 To seek approval to develop and implement the strategy through the Domestic Abuse Joint Action Plan as detailed in the strategy.

**2. Decision(s) recommended:**

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approves the Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2018-2023.
- 2.2 Recommends adoption of the Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2018 – 2023 by City Council.
- 2.3 Notes that the Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2018-2023 replaces the Birmingham Violence Against Women Strategy 2013-2015.
- 2.4 Approves priority work to be undertaken in relation to the implementation of the strategy through the development and implementation of the Domestic Abuse Joint Action Plan

centred upon the primary, secondary and tertiary prevention themes set out in the strategy.

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### **3. Consultation:**

#### **3.1 Internal**

3.1.1 The Cabinet Members for Housing and Homes; Community Safety and Equalities, and Children, Families & Schools have been consulted on the contents of this report and support the recommendations.

3.1.2 The Legal and Governance Department and relevant Heads of City Finance (Place and Adult Social Care and Health) have been involved in the preparation of this report.

3.1.3 A number of internal stakeholder meetings and briefings were also carried out during the development of the strategy.

#### **3.2 External**

3.2.1 The first public consultation relating to this strategy was held between 31 October 2016 and 6 January 2017 and the views received helped form, scope and agree the key strategic themes for the strategy.

3.2.2 A further round of consultation on the draft strategy and joint action plan took place between 24 October 2017 and 30 November 2017.

3.2.3 In total 286 individual responses were received, together with extensive views from statutory, voluntary and service user partner organisations that attended and participated in discussions. Organisations represented include:

- Early Help Safeguarding Partnership
- Birmingham Community Safety Partnership
- Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Board
- West Midlands Police
- Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid

- Birmingham Freedom Project
- Local domestic abuse advice & support agents
- Shelter
- Social housing providers
- Birmingham Women's Hospital
- Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

3.2.4 The findings of the consultation are set out within Appendix 2 of this report.

3.4.5 Particular points raised during the consultation include:

- That a very different approach is required if we are to truly going to start to eradicate domestic abuse in the City. This approach requires strong, corporate leadership both internal and external to the Council, to drive significant system change.
- Success will be dependent upon the strength of our partnerships across the City; no organisation or agency can affect the change required alone.
- There is strong support from both the public and across professionals working in domestic abuse service areas that the three strategic priority areas (Changing Attitudes; Early Identification and Early Help, and Safety and Support) form a robust focus for the new Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2018 – 2023.
- That proposed approaches to enable the city to intervene earlier and prevent harm for people who experience abuse and their families must become common place city wide, including in the work place.
- That proposed approaches to ensuring people who experience abuse (and their children) are safe and protected from harm, and are able to recover as quickly and effectively as possible, can be achieved with effective multi-agency working.

3.4.6 In addition, the Violence Against Women and Children Steering Group has received regular updates on the development of the strategy to date and support the recommendation set out in this report.

#### **4. Compliance Issues:**

4.1 Are the recommended decisions consistent with the Council's policies, plans and strategies?

4.1.1 This Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2018 – 2023 supports the priority themes as agreed by Cabinet on 16 May 2017 across all four priority areas:

- Children – a great place to grow up in: Make the best of our diversity and create a safe and secure city for our children and young people to learn and grow. The strategy delivers a clear focus to support children touched by all forms of domestic abuse, and compliments the **Birmingham Early Help Strategy 2015 - 2017**,

recognising reducing the number of children and young people affected by domestic abuse as a key contributing factor to achieving the best outcomes in childhood.

- Housing – a great place to live in: Provide housing in a range of types and tenures to meet the housing needs of all the current and future citizens of Birmingham. The strategy is timely to support the new **Birmingham Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017+** which recognises families who experience domestic abuse as being the second highest presenting reason for households in priority need.
- Jobs and Skills – a great place to succeed in: Build on our assets, talents, and capacity for enterprise and innovation to shape the market and harness opportunity. The strategy will enable the development of the first Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention workplace standard, in line with the Combined Authority work on the Public Health England Workplace Wellbeing Charter and this will encourage Birmingham wide adoption of workplace policies on domestic abuse through Birmingham Chamber of Commerce.
- Health – a great place to grow old in: Help people become healthier and more independent with measurable improvement in physical activity and mental wellbeing. The strategy aligns to the **Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013 and 2017**, which recognises tackling domestic abuse and its links to individuals and family homelessness as key to improving the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable adults and children.

4.1.2 The strategy also supports delivery of a number of current work streams being led by the Council and its partners:

- The **Birmingham Financial Inclusion Strategy 2017**: recognises families who experience domestic abuse to be amongst those most vulnerable to financial hardship, exclusion and poverty.
- The agreed purpose for **Improved Mental Health in Birmingham 2016** recognises that tackling all types of domestic abuse is vital to the success of improving the population's mental health across whole families and for generations to come.

#### 4.2 Financial Implications

(How will decisions be carried out within existing finances and Resources?)

4.2.1 The Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2018 – 2023 will allow the Council and all its service providers and public / private partners to work together to ensure that the available public resources are spent in the most effective and efficient manner to benefit service users.

4.2.2 The strategy will inform the development of the Domestic Abuse Joint Action Plan and any accompanying commissioning for future services.

4.2.3 The strategy was developed within the existing approved budgets of the Council for 2017/18. The intention is to hold discussions with other commissioners to explore the opportunity to align pan-city commissioning plans going forward.

4.2.4 Detailed financial implications will be set out in any future reports relating to any commissioning and implementation plans.

#### 4.3 Legal Implications

4.3.1 The Children Act 1989 together with associated regulations and statutory guidance contains a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need.

4.3.2 The Care Act 2014 together with associated regulations and statutory guidance contains a general duty to promote an individual's wellbeing.

4.3.3 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a statutory duty on local authorities to act in partnership with a range of public, private, community and voluntary groups and the community itself, to reduce crime and disorder in their area. The council is committed to the reduction of crime and disorder within the City and the need to combat domestic violence forms an integral part of this in order to protect the community and develop safe, healthy and sustainable communities and promote gender equality.

4.3.4 The Homelessness Act 2002 s1 (1), (3) and (4) places a duty on the Local Authority to carry out a homelessness review and to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy every 5 years. The new Birmingham Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017 together with the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy will help reduce local domestic abuse incidents leading to homelessness.

4.3.5 Further, the strategy aligns with the principles set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which comes into force April 2018 and introduces a new legal duty to prevent homelessness.

#### 4.4 Public Sector Equality Duty

4.4.1 An initial impact assessment was undertaken in August 2016 at the time of the first public consultation. The second set of consultation findings have been used to update the Equality Assessment, in the form of a full impact assessment and are attached as Appendix 3.

### **5. Relevant background / chronology of key events:**

5.1 The Birmingham Violence Against Women Strategy 2013 – 2015 is out of date. The Domestic Violence and Abuse Review 2016 highlighted the continued need to provide, or enable, a comprehensive and sustainable approach to keeping people experiencing domestic abuse, and their children, safe.

5.2 The Directorate for Adult Social Care & Health, the Place Directorate and the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership have worked jointly to scope into the strategy key contributions from partner agencies across Health, Criminal Justice and the Voluntary Sector to achieve a collaborative and co-ordinated multi-agency and city-wide approach to the prevention and early identification of domestic abuse.

5.3 Domestic abuse affects every area of Birmingham life and every ambition for the City whether this is citizen's health, education, safety and opportunity for the city's economy

and community cohesion to develop. Tackling domestic abuse is therefore a shared priority for each of the city's strategic partnerships. At the same time, our public services are shrinking and we need to find new ways of keeping our population safe and healthy and enabling communities to thrive.

5.4 It is estimated that 41,000 people are affected by domestic abuse in Birmingham; the vast majority of whom are women. Domestic abuse is predominantly perpetrated by men against women however it can also occur:

- Within same sex relationships;
- By women against men in heterosexual relationships;
- By other family members such as adult children against their parents;
- By extended family as in cases of honour based abuse or forced marriage.

As such, it is recognised that domestic abuse can happen to anyone, from any background, in any relationship; regardless of whether they identify as a minority or majority expression of a particular Protected Characteristic group.

5.5 Between 2013 and 2016, there was a 57% increase in reports of domestic abuse to West Midlands Police. At the same time, there was a 19% increase in convictions of abusers through the criminal justice system. Without effective support and protection, domestic abuse will escalate. On average, four women per year die in Birmingham because of domestic abuse.

5.6 As a Local Authority, we have shown commitment to tackling domestic abuse. The Council values and recognises the importance of domestic abuse services, including refuge provision, in keeping women and their children safe from harm. This is reflected in the continued investment that Birmingham has made in refuge provision across the city despite financial pressures.

5.7 The proposed Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy sets out Birmingham's commitment to preventing domestic abuse in all of its forms and seeks to address the barriers that all citizens face in gaining support and protection and achieving the equality that is needed to end domestic abuse.

5.8 In line with national guidelines, the strategy and the Domestic Abuse Joint Action Plan focus on:

- Adults, children and young people who are experiencing (or have experienced) domestic abuse;
- Those who are perpetrating domestic abuse;
- Children who are exposed to domestic abuse and, the general population (for the purposes of prevention more broadly).

- 5.9 Our strategic vision is informed by the latest national policy direction<sup>1</sup>. To reduce domestic abuse, the key aims for the Government include:
- Challenging the deep-rooted social norms, attitudes and behaviours, and by educating, informing and challenging young people about healthy relationships, abuse and consent;
  - Making early intervention and prevention a priority, identifying individuals in need before a crisis occurs, and intervening to make sure they get the help they need for themselves and for their children;
  - Services in local areas will work across boundaries in strong partnerships to assess and meet local need, and ensure that services can spot the signs of abuse in all family members and intervene early;
  - Individuals will be able to disclose experiences of violence and abuse across all public services.
- 5.10 To achieve this, and taking note of the views expressed during the extensive consultation with the public and cross sector stakeholders, we have identified the following themes that form Birmingham's Domestic Abuse Joint Action Plan:
- a) Changing Attitudes – successfully Changing Attitudes means preventing domestic abuse by challenging the attitudes and behaviours that foster it.
  - b) Early Identification and Early Help – successful Early Identification and Early Help means intervening early to prevent harm and reduce the impact of domestic abuse on victims and families.
  - c) Safety and Support – successful Safety and Support means ensuring that those individuals experiencing domestic abuse are protected from harm and are supported to recover.
- 5.11 Strategic oversight will be owned by the Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Board and Birmingham Community Safety Partnership who have joint responsibility for and are committed to ensuring Birmingham's vision for domestic abuse becomes reality.
- 5.12 The Birmingham Safeguarding Adults Board and the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board will seek assurance together, and through their respective governance structures, on the effectiveness of partnership working in the development and implementation of the Joint Action Plan. The Violence Against Women and Children Steering Group will oversee the implementation of the Strategy.
- 5.13 A Strategy Monitoring Team will report progress against the Joint Action Plan to the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership. These lead partners will also undertake a joint review of progress against the Joint Action Plan on an annual basis up to and including 2023.

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<sup>1</sup> Home Office (2016) *Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016 – 2020*  
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020>)

**6. Evaluation of alternative option(s):**

6.1 There are broadly two options:

6.1.1 Option 1: Do nothing. This has been discounted as the most recent Birmingham Violence Against Women Strategy 2013-15 is now out of date. Further, there is a genuine, collective appetite across the city’s strategic partnerships to consolidate resources and to coproduce and jointly deliver timely actions that prevent and challenge all forms of domestic abuse in Birmingham.

6.2 Option 2: Approve the Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2018 – 2023 and onward implementation of the vision through the Domestic Abuse Joint Action Plan. This will ensure that the Local Authority; key partners and commissioned delivery agents focus on delivering transparent actions that serve towards meeting the strategic vision as formed by the latest national policy direction, and see refreshed domestic abuse prevention actions embedded strategically to help meet multiple aims and objectives set out in the Council’s policies, plans and strategies, outlined in section 4 of this report.

6.3 The preferred option is Option 2.

**7. Reasons for Decision(s):**

7.1 In accepting the recommendations made in this report the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2018 – 2023 would ensure that the Council has an up to date strategy in place for dealing with all forms of domestic abuse.

7.2 Approval of the strategy to replace the out of date Birmingham Violence Against Women Strategy 2013 – 2015, will establish and set direction both strategically and operationally required to fulfil any future commissioning of actions or services relating to reducing the number of incidents of domestic abuse.

7.3 To help take forward the recommendations of the Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Board and Birmingham Community Safety Partnership to implement and deliver actions on all forms of domestic abuse based on the approach set out in the strategy.

**Signatures**

**Date**

Cllr Paulette Hamilton  
Cabinet Member Health  
& Social Care

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Jacqui Kennedy  
Corporate Director  
Place:

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**List of Background Documents used to compile this Report:**

- Domestic Violence and Abuse Needs Assessment 2013 (updated 2016)
- Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016 – 2020 (Home Office 2016)
- NHS Mandate 2016/17 (Department of Health 2016)
- QS116 Domestic Violence and Abuse (NICE 2016)

**List of Appendices accompanying this Report (if any):**

- Appendix 1 – Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2018 – 2023
- Appendix 2 – Consultation findings report
- Appendix 3 – Equality Analysis

**Report Version:**

**Dated: 02/02/2018**