

Birmingham City Council

Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1/11/2023



Subject: Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024+ consultation

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an overview and approach to the Birmingham's Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024+
- 1.2 To give Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft strategy, as part of the consultation on the strategy

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To provide comments on the draft strategy
- 2.2 To determine whether Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the draft again prior to Cabinet
- 2.3 To agree to review implementation of the strategy on an annual basis.

3 Background

- 3.1 Domestic abuse (DA) is an insidious crime which impacts every part of a victim's life, from their finances and their ability to work, to their basic right to live their lives without fear.
- 3.2 Whilst the majority of domestic abuse is experienced by women, it can happen to anyone, from any background, in any relationship, and this strategy aims to meet the intersecting needs of all survivors of domestic abuse. It also takes account of our public sector duty under s149 of the Equalities Act 2010 by responding to the needs of those with protected characteristics who face additional barriers as a result of DA. Our current commissioning reflects this approach with specialist

provision for both women and men: dispersed accommodation and lead worker services are commissioned for male victims (with services for male victims having been commissioned since 2011). There are also a number of grant funded specialist grassroots providers including support for LGBT+ survivors, support for Black, Asian and marginalised women, and support for survivors with learning disabilities.

- 3.3 Overall the strategy continues to have a gendered approach to tackling domestic abuse. This recognises that the vast majority of survivors are women, as a result of structural gender inequality.
- 3.3.1 The government's 'Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls' strategy (2021) recognises domestic abuse as a crime that 'disproportionately affect[s] women and girls'
- 3.3.2 In the year ending March 2022, 2.4 million adults were affected by domestic abuse related crimes and 74.1% of those were women. (CSEW, published November 2022)
- 3.3.3 Between the year ending March 2019 and the year ending March 2021, 72.1% of victims of domestic homicide were female compared with 12.3% of victims of non-domestic homicide (CSEW, published November 2022)
- 3.3.4 Women experience higher rates of repeated victimisation and are much more likely to be seriously hurt or killed than male victims of domestic abuse. Women are also more likely to experience higher levels of fear, and are more likely to be subjected to coercive and controlling behaviours (various research, including: Walby & Towers, Walby & Allen, Dobash & Dobash, Hester, and Myhill)
- 3.3.5 More than 90% of cases heard at MARAC high risk conferences in England and Wales, are women (SafeLives)
- 3.3.6 On average, 2 women a week are killed by a current or former partner in England and Wales.
- 3.4 The scale and prevalence of domestic abuse in Birmingham has continued to increase in the last few years:
- 3.4.1 In 2022/2023 domestic abuse was the third highest cause of the accepted presentations for homelessness.
- 3.4.2 It was the highest reason of referrals to Birmingham Children's Trust in 2022 with 10,009 contacts out of 58,436 total.
- 3.4.3 DA crimes reported to the police in Birmingham more than doubled from 13,664 in 2018/19 to 28,346 in 2021/22.
- 3.4.4 High risk cases referred to MARAC have increased from 2,230 in 2019/20 to 4,098 in 2021/22 – an increase of over 80%.

3.4.5 Calls to the commissioned DA Hub helpline continue to increase; in 2019/20 8,986 calls were made, compared to 29,137 in 2021/22 - an increase of over 200%.

3.5 The city's current Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy was launched in June 2018 with a vision of making "Birmingham a place where domestic abuse is not tolerated". The strategy focuses on 3 key priorities: Changing attitudes, Early Identification and Early Help and Safety and Support. Whilst development of the strategy was led by Adult Social Care, a strong partnership approach was adopted, with partners both internally across the council and externally across the city, including partners like Housing, Birmingham Children's Trust, specialist DA providers like Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid and West Midlands Police.

3.6 To underpin the Strategy a joint action plan was developed setting out the strategic direction for the next five years, with actions split into whole system and priority actions. The delivery and performance of the Strategy was owned by the Domestic Abuse Local Strategic Partnership Board (DALSP).

3.7 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed a new statutory duty on local authorities to carry out a needs assessment and publish a Domestic Abuse Strategy outlining amongst other issues, the provision of support for victims and children who reside in safe accommodation. A comprehensive Needs Assessment was undertaken by Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC) and the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy was refreshed as a result of the findings. The full Needs Assessment can be seen in appendix 2, and the current refreshed strategy can be found in appendix 1.

4 Strategy review

4.1 Whilst the DA strategy was refreshed last year, the Partnership Board recognised that with the change in landscape and the current strategy ending in 2023, a new strategy was needed to reflect this. An approach was agreed that ensured strong partnership involvement, embedding the Council's corporate priority of prevention and early intervention and aligned with the new Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy currently being drafted.

4.2 A cross agency strategic working group was set up with responsibility for developing the new strategy and reporting progress to the DALSP board. To date the working group, chaired by Graham Tilby, Assistant Director, Safeguarding (Partnerships) at Birmingham Children's Trust, has :

4.2.1 Established values and principles, vision, and key priorities for the strategy.

4.2.2 Started reviewing the current strategy and drafting a report of progress delivered against this.

- 4.2.3 Engaged with survivors through commissioned domestic abuse providers and a wider Be Heard survey.
 - 4.2.4 Consulted with partners while drafting the strategy to ensure strong city-wide input from the start
 - 4.2.5 Drafted an engagement plan for the consultation period (see appendix 3) to ensure all key partners across the system are consulted on the draft strategy.
- 4.3 Cross party involvement in drafting the new strategy began last year, led by Cllr Yip and a roundtable Chaired by Coordinating Oversight and Scrutiny Committee was held in December, attended by over 30 multi-agency partners. This was followed up by a single-issue meeting in February 2023.
- 4.4 A number of issues were raised at both of the above meetings. These included:
- 4.4.1 Criminal justice including: concern around the number of cases being No Further Actioned; options including injunctions for victims to remain safe in their properties
 - 4.4.2 Housing including: poor quality of housing options for victims; families being in temporary accommodation for long periods of time
 - 4.4.3 MARAC including: how MARAC can be effective for victims; review of the MARAC process being included in the strategy refresh
 - 4.4.4 Children including: children now recognised as victims of DA and need to be fully considered as such in the strategy
 - 4.4.5 Training including: training opportunities for Councillors by specialists (this was delivered by Birmingham and Solihull Women’s Aid in June and July 2023); need for training across the system to better understand DA

Following the roundtable, a Motion was passed at Council on 6th December 2022. The Motion was to “acknowledge the work that the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee have commenced to support work to renew the Strategy and ask that they continue to facilitate engagement with other scrutiny committees.”

5 Birmingham’s Draft Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024+

- 5.1 Following a series of strategic working sessions, a draft strategy titled “Birmingham’s Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy” has been produced. The title reflects that this strategy is a city-wide partnership strategy, recognising that no single agency can tackle domestic abuse alone.
- 5.2 The vision of Birmingham’s Domestic Abuse Prevention strategy is: “Birmingham is a place where domestic abuse is not tolerated; where everyone can expect equality and respect in their relationships, and live free from domestic abuse.”

- 5.3 It builds on the previous strategy and its proactive prevention model by embedding this approach throughout, to not only prevent DA from occurring in the first place through raising awareness and understanding of it , but to also intervene earlier to prevent escalation of risk.
- 5.4 There are key values underpinning the strategy, including being survivor-centred, having a strengths-based approach, being survivor led, and perpetrator accountability.
- 5.5 In addition to the approach in the previous Strategy, two additional priorities have been highlighted: Children & Young people and Perpetrators to ensure appropriate focus is given.
- 5.6 The draft strategy now highlights 6 draft key priorities:
- 5.6.1 Priority 1-Leadership & Partnership - Strengthening our collective partnership efforts across Birmingham (whole system approach) to DA.
 - 5.6.2 Priority 2- Changing attitudes & Prevention-Prevent domestic abuse from occurring in the first place so relationships centre on equality and respect.
 - 5.6.3 Priority 3- Early Help and Support- Intervene early to reduce harm and prevent escalation of risk.
 - 5.6.4 Priority 4- Children and Young People - Raising awareness of healthy relationships, intervening early to support and protecting them from harms of DA.
 - 5.6.5 Priority 5- Safety, Support and Recovery - Single coordinated pathway of quality assured support for survivors across Birmingham
 - 5.6.6 Priority 6- Holding perpetrators to account- Developing a pathway of interventions that holds perpetrators fully accountable for their actions.
- 5.7 The above vision, values, and priorities were approved at the Domestic Abuse Local Strategic Partnership Board away day, held on 4th October 2023.
- 5.8 More details of the priorities, and the consultation questions to be asked and addressed in the meeting can be found in the slides in appendix 4.

6 Next steps

- 6.1 The Strategy is currently undergoing its wider 6-week public consultation. Following wider consultation, feedback will be reviewed to produce a final draft of the strategy. This will then be presented to the Domestic Abuse Local Strategic Partnership Board before being presented to Cabinet for approval. Once the Strategy receives cabinet approval by April 2024, the Domestic Abuse Local Strategic Partnership Board will continue to oversee progress in its implementation.
- 6.2 The current Strategy's action plan is being reviewed by the strategic working group. During the consultation period the action plan will be finalised and assigned to strategic leads across the city.

- 6.3 Progress against the new strategy will be reported to the Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

7 Any Finance Implications

- 7.1 The Domestic Abuse Prevention strategy 2024+ is being developed within existing budgets of the Council. There is no additional funding to implement this strategy.
- 7.2 As with the previous strategy, the Council, its service providers and public /private partners, will work together to ensure that available public resources are used in the most effective and efficient way to ensure the implementation of the Strategy.
- 7.3 The actions within the Strategy that fulfil the statutory duty to commission support within safe accommodation, under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 are grant funded by Central government (DLUHC) and funding for next 2 years (to 24/25) has been confirmed. Actions not related to this duty are not grant funded by DLUHC, and will be funded within existing budgets.

8 Any Legal Implications

- 8.1 Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a statutory duty on local authorities to commission support within safe accommodation. As part of this Duty, local authorities must publish a strategy outlining their approach to commissioning support within safe accommodation. This is included in our wider Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy.

9 Any Equalities Implications

- 9.1 A full Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed prior to seeking approval of the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy from Cabinet.

10 Appendices

Appendix 1: Current refreshed strategy

Appendix 2: Needs Assessment

Appendix 3: Consultation engagement plan

Appendix 4: Draft strategy slides and consultation questions