

**COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP
21 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL CONSULTATION - STRATEGY FOR DOMESTIC
ABUSE SUPPORT IN SAFE ACCOMMODATION**

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Dennis Knowles
Responsible Officer: Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health,
Regulation and Housing (Chair East & Mid Devon CSP)

Reason for Report and Recommendation: Devon County Council (DCC) have a legal duty to finalise and publish this strategy by the end of October 2021. Prior to publication they need to formally consult with Tier 2 local authorities in Devon. This duty is set out fully within Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Recommendation: That the PDG notes the draft DCC Strategy for Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation attached in Annex 1 and provides any consultation responses it sees fit through the DCC consultation exercise.

Financial Implications: There are no direct financial implications arising as a result of this report as this is a strategy for DCC resourcing and implementation. The legal framework for the strategy and how relevant legislation may partially impact upon the work of our Housing Options team in particular is set out within legal obligations below. How DCC will resource the strategy is set out in Section 2 of the report.

Budget and Policy Framework: This strategy has been developed by DCC via the Devon Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board. This board have Tier 1 and 2 local authority representatives alongside other stakeholders, partner organisations and those providing a voice for persons who are victims of domestic abuse. Mid Devon District Council are formally represented on the Board at senior officer level by the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing who has responsibility for our Community Safety work and is current Chair of the East and Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

As a result, the local CSP and its board members alongside the Local Partnership Board representatives have a separate opportunity to comment on the proposed strategy. Nonetheless, this is an opportunity for members of the PDG and more widely across the Council to provide their own comments as part of the DCC consultation exercise.

Members should note that the deadline for consultation responses is Friday 24 September at 5pm. More information is provided on how to respond via an online form is set out in Section 3 of the report.

Legal Implications: The new Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a duty on upper Tier 1 local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation. DCC have been provided

with significant additional new burdens funding from Government to support the delivery of these new duties including its costs in commissioning and delivering new services.

Safe accommodation has a specific definition within this legislation, as summarised in Section 5 of the draft Strategy.

The new Act also formally categorises those presenting as homeless due to domestic abuse as having a priority need under updated relevant homelessness legislation. This has implications for service demand for our Housing Options and Homelessness team within Public Health, though how much is difficult to gauge and domestic abuse is already a relevant trauma and well-being consideration under our current allocations policy and approach.

More information on these duties and how this statutory strategy has been developed is also set out within the report.

Risk Assessment: There are no specific risks to the Council through the specific objectives of the proposed DCC strategy. Nonetheless, this is an opportunity for members to comment upon and therefore shape this key County-wide approach to supporting victims and therefore help to tackle this high-profile and high impact area.

Equality Impact Assessment: DCC will produce an EIA as part of its formal adoption of the strategy in due course. This EIA may (in part) be informed by consultation responses.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: No direct links. Nonetheless, tackling domestic abuse is a priority of the CSP and the activities undertaken as part of its action plan compliment the ambitions of the Corporate Plan and the DCC strategy. In particular, this activity contributes to the priority of Community.

Impact on Climate Change: None directly arising from the report.

1.0 Introduction/Background

1.1 Devon County Council has a new statutory duty under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to assess the need and create a strategy for domestic abuse support in our area for all victims (and their children) who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those who come from outside of the area.

1.2 References to victims (and their children) in the strategy document refer to all victims of domestic abuse, including people without children; people who have had their children removed; people from marginalised communities and / or with protected characteristics (e.g. our LGBT+ communities, our BAME communities and our disabled communities).

- 1.3 The strategy has also been written recognising the importance of intersectionality when considering needs and responses. For more information about protected characteristics and intersectionality please see Appendix 1 of the strategy document attached in Annex 1.
- 1.4 This Needs Assessment and Strategy Framework has been informed by quantitative data from Police, District Councils and current domestic abuse providers alongside qualitative insights gained from service focus groups and the aforementioned multi-agency Devon Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board.
- 1.5 A strategic framework has been developed based on insights from the assessment of needs and this will guide the development of a DCC delivery plan. This is however an iterative process and will be updated over time with the support of the Partnership Board.
- 1.6 The strategic framework is set out in Section 2 of the strategy document.

2.0 **Strategy Resourcing**

- 2.1 The UK government has allocated £1.4 million to DCC in 2021-22 to deliver their duty to provide domestic abuse support in safe accommodation. Funding for future years will be allocated within the government spending review due in autumn 2021. This strategy will inform the allocation of resources to address the outcome areas and priority action. At this stage in the development of the delivery plan the DCC does not judge it be appropriate to assign specific levels of funding to the outcomes set out in the strategy framework. These will be agreed at a later stage with the Partnership Board.
- 2.2 Also for 2021-22, a small level of ring-fenced capacity funding (<£40k) has been provided to MDDC to support our engagement with the Partnership Board and our local support offer. Considerations on utilising this one-off funding in-year will be informed by the final, adopted strategy though early consideration is being given to local activity under Objective 2 of the strategy and how we can support Mid Devon victims of domestic abuse to stay in their own home. As with the DCC funding, any additional years of funding will be determined by the pending government spending review.

3.0 **Consultation: how to respond and restrictions**

- 3.1 The DCC consultation on the proposed strategy opened on 28 August 2021 and closes at **5pm on Friday 24 September 2021**.
- 3.2 An online form to facilitate responses is available at the following link:

https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=gzehjWjLP0S7S5I_d_1b1_So_wY1fFDjiFk7a8ToyVUQIRWQzRNNVZQM0hNVU1J0Ew0U0tPOFIHRiQIQCN0PWcu

3.3 It must be noted the scope of this DCC consultation is defined and necessarily limited by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the draft statutory deadline of having an adopted strategy in place by 31 October 2021 (as set out in draft regulations). Therefore, this is not a public consultation exercise and the consultation link provided in 3.2 is only for use by members of the Devon Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and the local authorities within the Devon County Council area.

3.4 It is suggested that if members of the PDG (or more widely) are in agreement and have comments they wish to make then these are collated into a single response provided by a nominated member via the consultation link on or before the stated deadline.

4.0 Recommendation

4.1 That the PDG notes the draft DCC Strategy for Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation attached in Annex 1 and provides any consultation responses it sees fit through the DCC consultation exercise.

Contact for more Information: Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk.

Circulation of the Report:

Cabinet Member for Community Well Being (Cllr Dennis Knowles)
Members of the Community Policy Development Group
All Leadership Team
All Corporate Management Team
All Operations Managers

List of Background Papers and weblinks:

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – the Act is available in full at:
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents/enacted>

A Home Office Domestic Abuse Act 2021 factsheet is available at:
<https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/04/29/domesticabuseactfactsheet/#:~:text=The%20Domestic%20Abuse%20Bill%20passed%20both%20Houses%20of,as%20well%20as%20strengthen%20measures%20to%20tackle%20perpetrators.>

Annex 1

Draft Devon County Council Strategy for Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation in Devon 2021

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