

North Yorkshire County Council

Executive

7 December 2021

Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy

Report of the Chief Executive Officer

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To agree the approach that is planned for a strategy on safe accommodation for domestic abuse victims, survivors and their families across North Yorkshire (and York). This report outlines the work undertaken so far to ensure North Yorkshire County Council comply with the new statutory obligations set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Under his delegated decision making powers in the Officers' Delegation Scheme in the Council's Constitution, the Chief Executive Officer has power, in cases of emergency, to take any decision which could be taken by the Council, the Executive or a committee. Following on from the expiry of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, which allowed for committee meetings to be held remotely, the County Council resolved at its meeting on 5 May 2021 that, for the present time, in light of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic circumstances, remote live-broadcast committee meetings should continue (as informal meetings of the Committee Members), with any formal decisions required being taken by the Chief Executive Officer under his emergency decision making powers and after consultation with other Officers and Members as appropriate and after taking into account any views of the relevant Committee Members. This approach will be reviewed in February 2022.
- 2.2 On 29th April 2021, the Domestic Abuse Act received Royal Assent to "support all victims of domestic abuse". The Act aims to "ensure that victims have the confidence to come forward and report their experiences, safe in the knowledge that the state will do everything it can, both to support them and their children and pursue the abuser."
- 2.3 Upper tier local authorities were required to undertake a local needs assessment, to assess the need for domestic abuse support for all victims (and their children) who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those who come from outside the area. This needs assessment helped to determine the met and unmet needs of the area, providing evidence for service delivery. The requirement thereafter was for the Local Authority to formulate a strategy, to meet the ongoing requirements for supporting victims, survivors and their families in safe accommodation. The draft strategy ('Principles' - Appendix 1) was published on the 31st October 2021. The full strategy must be published by 5th January 2022.
- 2.4 The current partnership arrangement for domestic abuse sits across North Yorkshire and York. This supports a number of our partners, but specifically North Yorkshire Police. The current strategic partnership is the Domestic Abuse Joint Coordination Group, which in turn reports to North Yorkshire Community Safety Partnership and Safer York Partnership. These arrangements include the joint commissioning of domestic abuse services, by North Yorkshire County Council, City of York Council and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime

Commissioner. The strategic partnership already has wide representation from North Yorkshire County Council, City of York Council, district councils, health care services, policing, criminal justice services, safeguarding partnerships/ boards and local providers of domestic abuse services. The partnership includes links with the County Homelessness Group, the Chief Housing Officers Group and Safeguarding Partnerships (Children and Adults). Further development of the membership will take place to recognise local issues from the needs assessment e.g. effective links with the military.

- 2.5 IDAS is currently commissioned to deliver 'safe accommodation' across North Yorkshire and York. North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council jointly fund and commission the service. A number of the elements described in the definition and support, within the Act, are covered in current arrangements. North Yorkshire County Council leads on the contract management of this service and currently contributes £533, 074 annually. Safe accommodation provision exists across the county via communal refuge, dispersed accommodation provision, safe haven project and Sanctuary schemes, enabling people to remain safe within their own properties.

3.0 Issues

- 3.1 There are a number of issues that have arisen from the undertaking of the needs assessment, these have shaped the principles that underpin the strategy.
- Meeting the wider needs of victims, giving parity for all victims and families when seeking support, regardless of additional support needs
 - Ensuring all accommodation needs are met to provide safe provision, ensuring our multi-agency workforce are well informed and skilled to support
 - Gaining a better understanding of the reasons why some victims and families choose to leave North Yorkshire and York for support
 - Meeting the accommodation needs for victims in both rural and urban areas
 - Greater depth of data and a defined set of metrics across the areas, to effectively capture needs and inform future service needs
 - Driving the single hub approach to safe accommodation access, so that there is a fair and proportionate approach for all.

4.0 Policy Implications (Domestic Abuse Safer Accommodation Strategy)

- 4.1 The full strategy must be published by the 5th January 2022. It is currently in draft format and is being consulted on by a range of partners. The strategy provides further detail around the seven principles (agreed October 2021) that will be the focus for our joint delivery.
- 4.2 **Authentic voice of victims/ survivors and their children to inform our partnership approaches** Our whole family approach will reach out to victims and their families. Their voices will shape how we commission services, through to how we scrutinise delivery to governance and shaping support.
- 4.3 **Effective pathways- supporting those with 'additional needs'** Barriers can exist for those with 'additional needs' (e.g. substance misuse, mental health needs and no recourse to public funds) in accessing relevant safe accommodation and support. Partnership arrangements and structures will be expanded and where needed, created to ensure no one is 'lost' within our systems.
- 4.4 **It's not 'safe accommodation' if support is not in place** Our joint approach to safe accommodation across North Yorkshire and City of York is not just about bricks and mortar.

Relevant, effective support must be provided whilst in safe accommodation. This will ensure victims, survivors and their families will gain the skills and support to recover and thrive.

- 4.5 **Clear, consistent approaches must be in place across York and North Yorkshire** Our objective is to ensure we have an informed and knowledgeable workforce across all key agencies including housing and third sector that understands and adopts best practice in relation to safe accommodation. A single front door to access safe accommodation will enable the **right advice and support** being offered at the **right time** to those in crisis. We will support those wishing to remain in their own homes throughout Sanctuary scheme, providing continual help and support, not just equipment.
- 4.6 **Meeting the needs of individuals, families and communities** Within our action plan we will be clear on how we support a range of communities. Including male victims, victims fleeing illegal cultural harms, BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) victims and victims from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
- 4.7 **Understanding our need and demand for safe accommodation** Our understanding of need and demand needs to come from a range of local partners, including housing. From the findings of the needs assessment and our work with the Whole Family Approach, we will create robust systems to capture key data to ensure we have accurate recording and reporting in order to shape our service delivery. This information will mapped across with the case studies and personal experiences of victims and their families.
- 4.8 **Ensuring we have effective partnership arrangements (Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board)** Enhancing our current arrangements, including chairing, membership and effective linkages with other partnerships, in order to drive real change, that is responsive and well informed to local needs, national change and best practice.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 To support the delivery of the statutory duty, the MHCLG allocated significant funding, below shows what has been allocated locally. Further reporting on spend and progress to central government **must** be undertaken by Tier One authorities. The funding will be used to deliver the strategy, enhance current arrangements and ensure there is a range of options and specialist support. To enable to capacity to deliver this work, some of the funding delegated has been used to fund a part time business support post and a Community Safety Officer (Domestic Abuse).

Tier One Authorities	
North Yorkshire	£1,041,79
York	£334, 504
Tier Two Authorities	
Craven	£32, 614
Hambleton	£32, 685
Harrogate	£32, 987
Richmondshire	£33, 697
Ryedale	£32, 298
Scarborough	£32, 026
Selby	£32, 831

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 This report details the work undertaken so far and proposed areas for focus to meet the statutory duties outlined in Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

7.0 Consultation Undertaken

7.1 The following organisations have been engaged in the needs assessment process and development of the strategy.

- **Tier One**
North Yorkshire County Council (domestic abuse/ community safety/ specialist housing development representatives)
City of York Council (domestic abuse/ community safety/ public health/ housing representatives)
- **Tier Two**
Craven District Council (housing/ community safety representatives)
Hambleton District Council (housing/ community safety representatives)
Harrogate Borough Council (housing/ community safety representatives)
Richmondshire District Council (housing/ community safety representatives)
Ryedale District Council (housing/ community safety representatives)
Scarborough Borough Council (housing/ community safety representatives)
Selby District Council (housing/ community safety representatives)
- **Service Provider (Refuge and Safe Accommodation)**
IDAS
Broadacres (sub-contractor Northallerton Refuge)
- **Others**
Beyond Housing
Members of the strategic domestic abuse partnership meeting via workshops
Horton Housing (direct delivery to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities in North Yorkshire).

8.0 Equalities Implications

8.1 The agreed approaches within the strategy aim to address the barriers identified to ensure all victims are able to access the support they need, when they need it. Support services will be provided in locations and ways that are accessible to victims and their children. The needs assessment has taken into account different adaptations into account e.g. translation and interpreter services and wheelchair access. As the services and strategy are delivered, when gaps in service are identified, commissioning leads will explore the use of training for services already commissioned to ensure needs are being adequately met. For example, by offering training to support staff within the area to build confidence in supporting victims with particular needs.

8.2 An equality impact assessment is being undertaken alongside development of the strategy.

9.0 Community Safety Implications

9.1 Domestic abuse is a priority area for delivery within the overall strategy for North Yorkshire Community Safety Partnership. The Domestic Abuse Joint Coordination Group reports to North Yorkshire Community Safety Partnership (and due to the joint arrangements Safer York Partnership).

10.0 Recommendation(s)

Executive Members are asked to note the contents of this report, and to recommend to the Chief Executive Officer that using his emergency delegated powers, he:

- i. Approve the proposed partnership arrangements and approaches to deliver the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy
- ii. Delegate to the Leader (as portfolio holder for safer communities) the authority to agree the Domestic Abuse Safer Accommodation Strategy

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Background Documents: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Draft City of York and North Yorkshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy