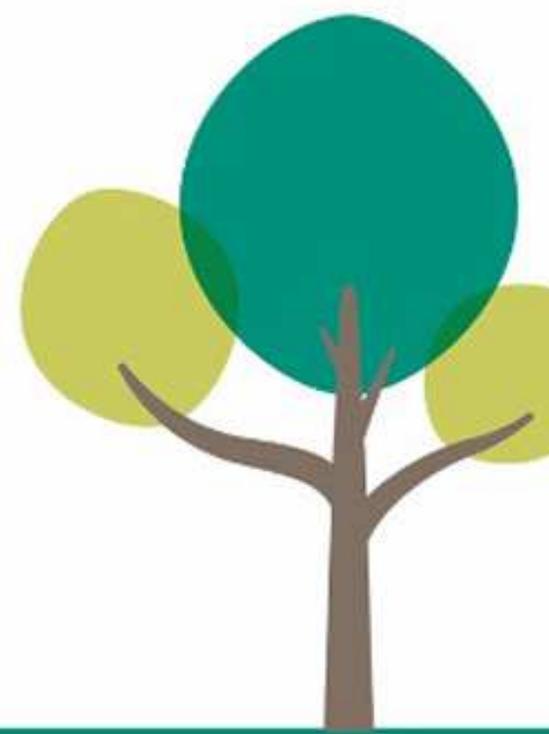


SNAC Scrutiny Board 25 November 2021

Domestic abuse safe accommodation strategy 2021-24

Maryrose Lappin
Domestic Abuse Team Manager



Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – LA statutory duty

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 - new statutory duty for local authorities to provide specialist support for victims of domestic abuse in safe accommodation:

assess the need for victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation services in their areas;

produce a strategy to detail how they will respond to the duty;

commission support to victims and children in safe accommodation

appoint a domestic abuse local partnership board for the purposes of providing advice to the authority about the exercise of the authority's functions;

report back annually to central government that they have met these obligations





Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – LA statutory duty

Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP) is Sandwell's statutory board

DASP Task & Finish group established

Draft safe accommodation needs assessment completed

Strategy was widely consulted on across SMBC and DASP partners and published on 25 October 2021 to comply with the statutory requirement

Final safe accommodation strategy is required for publication by 5 January 2022

Implementation plan being developed which will be regularly monitored by DASP

New Burdens Funding allocated to the council to support the delivery of the new safe accommodation duty and proposals being developed



Definition of safe accommodation

Safe accommodation is defined in the statutory guidance as:

domestic abuse refuge accommodation;

specialist safe accommodation (i.e. dedicated specialist support to victims with relevant protected characteristics and/or complex needs);

dispersed accommodation (safe self-contained and semi-independent accommodation);

sanctuary schemes providing target hardening of properties along with specialist support and move-on and / or second stage accommodation.



Definition of specialist DA support

Specialist support for victims is also defined in the statutory guidance to include:

Advocacy support

Domestic abuse prevention advice

Specialist support for victims designed specifically for victims with relevant protected characteristics or with additional and / or complex needs

Children's support

Housing-related support

Advice service

Counselling and therapy

This list of support is not an exhaustive list and other relevant support services can be put in place (based on victims' needs).





Sandwell DA safe accommodation needs assessment

Needs assessment undertaken by Linxs Consultancy Limited, included:
data collection and analysis and analysis of current services
a wide-ranging consultation programme, including survivor testimonies and
stakeholder feedback

We thank all those survivors who took part in this exercise acknowledging their
courage and openness in providing their experiences

Existing safe accommodation system highly effective

Range of accommodation types and levels of support provided by Black Country
Women's Aid (BCWA) mean that survivors are routinely accepted regardless of
the level of risk or complexity of presenting needs. Good outcome tracking for
those who are declined a space in accommodation



Sandwell DA safe accommodation strategy themes

However, the needs assessment also identifies a number of issues and gaps which the safe accommodation strategy aims to address, and the following strategy themes are identified:

- Improving the survivors' recovery journey;
- Enhancing the ability for survivors to stay in their own home;
- Developing a more responsive and cohesive system

The strategy outlines commitments to address these.



(1) Improving the survivor's recovery journey

Address the gap in relation to children's support in safe accommodation;

Develop an offer of a therapeutic resource or more psychologically informed services for victims and children in safe accommodation

Commission dedicated domestic abuse specialist resettlement support to domestic abuse survivors leaving refuge

Develop a domestic abuse specialist service to provide wraparound support for any domestic abuse survivors in short-term temporary accommodation, bringing continuity of care through to refuge and resettlement





(2) Enhancing the ability for survivors to stay in their own home

Explore further the service offer and its marketing for male victims

Support survivors to stay in their own homes by providing a full Sanctuary scheme

Undertake a review, where necessary, of policies, practice and procedures relating to the rehousing of perpetrators. This will have the aim of establishing a more robust case management system to make rehousing a more viable option.





(3) Developing a more responsive and cohesive system

Use the Housing Options redesign and training regime to enhance work with survivors to remove ambiguity from the system and promote transparency concerning processes and housing outcomes

Introduce additional Housing staff to maximise communications with survivors and further enhance system efficiency.

Continue to develop ownership by all agencies with a role in recovery, ensuring that agencies continue to support victim-survivors and their children whilst in safe accommodation.



(3) Developing a more responsive and cohesive system

Work with wider supported accommodation providers and mandate training to increase staff knowledge of referral pathways and enable them to support domestic abuse disclosures more proactively.

Co-ordinate communication work with partners to ensure there is awareness of the DA safe accommodation available and the nature of support offered, addressing the decline in the overall number of referrals for Sandwell residents

Produce a clear position statement for all relevant agencies in Sandwell detailing how working/homeowner survivors can access safe accommodation provision.