



# **The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy**

**2021-2024**

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# Foreword

## Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy

There is never an excuse or reason for domestic abuse. It is wrong, rightly criminal and RBWM will always take a zero tolerant approach. We stand right behind any victim of domestic abuse and will always do what we can with our partner organisations to ensure victims can escape domestic abuse and be fully supported.

Domestic abuse is an insidious menace in our society, but it is sadly a reality and one we need to keep educating on, improving awareness about, and critically ensuring victims or anyone who could be susceptible to becoming a victim know there is support and services on hand. Indeed, in 2020, the Crime Survey of England and Wales reported an estimated 1.6 million women and 757,000 men aged 16-74 years of age experienced domestic abuse in the previous year.

Domestic abuse can manifest in many forms, including - but not limited to - coercive control, psychological and/or emotional abuse, physical or sexual abuse, financial or economic abuse, harassment and stalking and online or digital abuse. It is the responsibility of every single one of us to educate ourselves on domestic abuse to help spot the signs and ensure no victim is ever on their own – we must ensure that victims across RBWM hear “you are not alone”.

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, faith, or class. Leaving a violent or abusive partner is a process and not a single act. RBWM has a long-standing commitment to eradicating domestic abuse and enjoys a strong relationship with our commissioned domestic abuse service the Dash (Domestic Abuse Stops Here) Charity and other key partner organisations. We work closely with our partner organisations, including Thames Valley Police, to ensure the perpetrators of domestic abuse are appropriately pursued and worked with to change behaviours.

Sadly, the pandemic world with all its challenges of lockdowns and restrictions has seen an increase in domestic abuse. Between March 2019 and March 2020, 1.6 million women and 757,000 men experienced domestic abuse with a 7% growth in police recorded domestic abuse crimes. Although there is limited official data so far on the impact of lockdown on domestic abuse, the Office for National Statistics report that in mid-May 2020, there was a 12% increase in the number of domestic abuse victim cases referred to victim support. Between April and June 2020, there was a 65% increase in calls to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, compared with the first three months that year. The need to take a deeper, holistic approach is therefore paramount and, crucially, this includes safe accommodation. The need to take a deeper holistic approach is therefore paramount and that crucially includes safe accommodation.

It is critical that victims of domestic abuse are aware of the options available to them. Making the decision to leave an abusive partner is a journey rather than a single act. It

takes, on average, seven attempts before a victim is able to leave for good. We want to ensure that victims across RBWM know that they are not alone and that there is a compassionate, thorough, and clear process for securing safe accommodation and support.

Access to safe accommodation enables victims and their families to escape or protect themselves from their abuser, which is so often a vital first step toward. It is critical that victims of domestic abuse are aware of the options for access good quality accommodation, how their home can be made safe, and reassured they are protected from their perpetrator. Making the decision to act is a huge moment for any victim and having a compassionate, thorough, and clear process for securing safe accommodation can ensure that when support is needed it is there.

We know that safe accommodation alone is not enough to break the cycle of abuse. Each situation is unique, and each victim will have their own path – our support should be holistic and tailored to the individual needs of the victim and their family. Safe accommodation is a vital first step upon which other support services can be delivered and a strong foundation to build from. We are acutely aware that we need more genuinely affordable homes, particularly social housing, in RBWM to support victims that need them - this is something we will continue to work on both locally and with national partners.

We hope this strategy and actions within demonstrate our commitment to this critical issue and clearly says to all victims in RBWM – you are not alone.



Cllr Ross McWilliams  
Cabinet Member for Housing,  
Sport & Leisure, and  
Community Engagement



Cllr Stuart Carroll  
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care,  
Children's Services,  
Health and Mental Health

## Introduction

In 2018, the Government carried out a public consultation to look at the response to domestic abuse. This led to the Government publishing a draft Domestic Abuse Bill in January 2019. The bill covered legislative and non-legislative aspects to: “promote awareness of domestic abuse; protect and support victims and their families; transform the justice process to prioritise victim safety and provide an effective response to perpetrators; and to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas, agencies and sectors”.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Part 4 of the Act requires local authorities to carry out a needs assessment of the need for accommodation-based support for victims of domestic abuse or their children, prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of this support, and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

Following completion of a needs assessment, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (the Royal Borough) has developed the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-2024 (the Strategy). This provides a strategic framework in which to prioritise resources to enable us to ensure that all domestic abuse victims and their children are able to access good quality, affordable and safe accommodation in which they can begin to rebuild their lives, with the provision of appropriate support. The strategy and associated action plan will remain live for three years, after which point a review of its effectiveness will take place and the strategy will be amended/refreshed for the following years.

The draft strategy went out for public consultation on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January for two weeks and was promoted in Member and resident newsletters and on social media, including the Royal Borough website to ensure maximum participation. The consultation page was viewed 71 times, with 41 responses being received. The feedback has been reviewed and has influenced and shaped the develop of the action plan below. A meeting then took place with DASH, our domestic abuse support provider, to review, agree and add to the action plan to ensure that the action plan supports our ambitions as a domestic abuse partnership.

## Executive Summary

The RBWM Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021 – 2024 sets out how the Borough will implement the statutory duties associated with the provision of safe accommodation, as required by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. It describes how safe accommodation and support for domestic abuse victims and their children will be provided over the next three years and outlines six priorities that will be the focus of delivery:

- 1. Access to safe accommodation** – to ensure that victims of domestic abuse, and their children, have access to safe, good quality accommodation that meets their needs.
- 2. Support to remain safely at home** – access to a target hardening (sanctuary scheme) to secure the property, alongside the provision of tailored support.
- 3. Perpetrator management** – the provision of accommodation, where possible, for perpetrators of domestic abuse to reduce the risk to victims and their families, alongside referrals to relevant support services.
- 4. Coordinated support** – an initial assessment will determine the support services required by victims and their families and a tailored support package will be offered.
- 5. Victim representation** – to ensure that local victims are given the opportunity to have input into the services that are provided for them, the borough will be looking for opportunities to secure victim representation, where this is appropriate.
- 6. Improved data collection across services** – to streamline the data collection from services who work with victims of domestic abuse to ensure a consistent approach and to enable meaningful data collection to inform future service delivery.

This strategy will complement the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017-2021, Housing Strategy 2021-2026, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2023 and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2025. This strategy has been produced by the Royal Borough with support from the RBWM Domestic Abuse Executive Group (DAEG), the RBWM Domestic Abuse Forum and the Community Safety Partnership.

The implementation of the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy will be led by the Housing Service and will be monitored by the RBWM Domestic Abuse Executive Group and will report back into the Children and Adult Safeguarding Partnership each year. As part of the Domestic Abuse Act there is a requirement for the Local Authority to appoint a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board. As an already established group, the Domestic Abuse Executive Group has taken on this role.

The strategy will be reviewed annually, and regular updates will be provided to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

## **Definition of Domestic Abuse**

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides a statutory definition of domestic abuse, which is where behaviour of a person towards another where both are aged 16 or over, have a personal connection and that the behaviour is abusive.

### **Personal connection**

For the purposes of the statutory definition, two people have a 'personal connection' if:<sup>1</sup>

- they are, or have been, married to each other.
- they are, or have been, civil partners of each other.
- they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated).
- they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated).
- they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other.
- they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child.
- they are relatives.

### **What constitutes abuse?**

There are a range of abusive actions defined under the Domestic Abuse Act, which include:

- Physical abuse or sexual abuse.
- Violent or threatening behaviour.
- Controlling or coercive behaviour.
- Economic abuse – affecting the victim's ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods or services.

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<sup>1</sup> Domestic Abuse Act 2021 - [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

- Psychological, emotional or other abuse.

Furthermore, it does not matter whether any of the above abuse happens as a single incident or a sustained campaign of abuse, it is still defined as domestic abuse.

## Local Authority Duties

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 sets out a range of requirements for local authorities, including to:

- Assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support within the Borough.
- Prepare and publish a Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy, giving due regard to the needs assessment.
- Commission/de-commission services in regard to the strategy.
- Create a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and consult with the board whilst carrying out functions relating to the Domestic Abuse Act.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy.
- Provide annual data to the Government in relation to the exercising of the required functions.

## What do we mean by Safe Accommodation?

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines Safe Accommodation as:

*“...solely dedicated to providing a safe place to stay for victims of domestic abuse, including expert support...”<sup>5</sup>*

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires local authorities to provide safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and their children. The different types of safe accommodation provision are outlined below.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities - [Delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation services](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/delivery-of-support-to-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services) - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))



<b>Accommodation and schemes</b>	<b>Description</b>
Refuge accommodation	Offers single gender or single sex accommodation and domestic abuse support which is tied to that accommodation. The address will not be publicly available. Victims, including their children, will have access to a planned programme of therapeutic and practical support from staff. Accommodation may be in shared or self-contained housing, but in both cases the service will enable peer support from other refuge residents.
Specialist safe accommodation	Offering single gender or single sex accommodation, alongside dedicated domestic abuse support which is tailored to also support those who share protected characteristic(s) and/or who share one or more vulnerabilities requiring additional support. Accommodation may be in shared or self-contained housing, and the address will not be publicly available.
Dispersed accommodation	Safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse), self-contained accommodation with a similar level of specialist domestic abuse support as provided within a refuge but which may be more suitable for victims who are unable to stay in a refuge with communal spaces, and/or where peer support from other residents may not be appropriate, due to complex support needs, or where older teenage sons cannot be accommodated in a woman only refuge, for example. Where two or more units share any part of the accommodation, including shared hallways or access routes, provision should be single gender or single sex.
Dispersed accommodation	Safe (secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse), self-contained 'semi-independent' accommodation which is not within a refuge but with support for victims who may not require the intensive support offered through refuge, but are still at risk of abuse from their perpetrator/s. Where two or more units share any part of the accommodation, including shared hallways or access routes, provision should be single gender or single sex.

Sanctuary Schemes	Sanctuary Schemes properties with local authority or private registered providers of social housing installed Sanctuary Schemes which provide enhanced physical security measures to a home or the perimeter of the home. A Sanctuary Scheme is a survivor centred initiative which aims to make it possible for victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes, where it is safe for them to do so, where it is their choice, and where the perpetrator does not live in the accommodation.
Move on and / or Second Stage	Second stage accommodation (move-on) - temporarily provided to victims, including their children, who are moving on from other forms of relevant accommodation and/or who no longer need the intensive level of support provided in a refuge, but would still benefit from a lower level of domestic abuse specific support for a period before they move to fully independent and settled accommodation. Where second stage accommodation is in shared housing it should be single gender or single sex.
Other accommodation designated by the local housing authority, registered social landlord or registered charity as domestic abuse emergency accommodation– i.e., a safe place with support	Other forms of domestic abuse emergency accommodation – a safe place (single gendered or single sex, secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse) with domestic abuse support tied to the accommodation to enable victims to make informed decisions when leaving a perpetrator and seeking safe accommodation. For example, short term (e.g., 2-3 weeks) accommodation providing victims with the space and safety to consider and make informed decisions about the options available to them.

## What do we mean by Support?

The Domestic Abuse Act statutory guidance describes Domestic Abuse Support within Safe/ relevant Accommodation as:

- Overall management of services within relevant accommodation – including, the management of staff, payroll, financial and day to day management of services and maintaining relationships with the local authority (such functions will often be undertaken by a Service Manager)
- Support with the day-to-day running of the service, for example scheduling times for counselling sessions, group activities (such functions may often be undertaken by administrative or office staff)

- Advocacy support – development of personal safety plans, liaison with other services (for example, GPs and Social Workers, welfare benefit providers).
- Domestic abuse prevention advice – support to assist victims to recognise the signs of abusive relationships, to help them remain safe (including online), and to prevent re-victimisation.
- Specialist support for victims. Designed specifically for victims with relevant protected characteristics (also known as by and for) such as faith services, translators and interpreters within BAME led refuges. Immigration advice, interpreters for victims identifying as deaf and or hard of hearing and dedicated support for LGBTQ+ victims.
- Designed specifically for victims with unique and or complex needs such as, mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support, including sign posting accordingly.
- Children’s support – including play therapy and child advocacy.
- Housing-related support – providing housing-related advice and support, for example, securing a permanent home, rights to existing accommodation and advice on how to live safely and independently.
- Advice service – financial and legal support, including accessing benefits, support into work and establishing independent financial arrangements; and,
- Counselling and therapy (including group support) for both adults and children, including emotional support.

## National Picture

Domestic abuse remains a hidden crime, with many incidents going unreported, however, it is estimated that 2.3 million adults (age range of 16-74) experienced domestic abuse in the previous year, with approximately 67% of incidents relating to women and 33% to men<sup>3</sup> as victims.

According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales, a total of 846,235 domestic abuse events were recorded in the year ending June 2021<sup>4</sup>, a 6% increase in the number of recorded domestic abuse offence on the previous year.

## Local Picture

### Housing

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead had a population of 145,000 people at the time of the 2011 Census and the population is set to increase to 158,100 by 2039. The Borough is an affluent area and house prices mean that home ownership

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<sup>3</sup> Office for National Statistics - [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Office for National Statistics - Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

is unachievable for many households. The Borough does not own social housing stock, with Abri having been transferred the Windsor housing stock and Housing Solutions the Maidenhead housing stock in 1995. There is sustained demand for social housing within the Borough, with c.1000 households on the housing register who are in housing need and requiring an allocation. This means that general accommodation options are limited, and it is necessary to ensure there is specific safe accommodation provision for victims of domestic abuse and their children.

In Thames Valley, 30,612 domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes were recorded in the year ending March 2020. This is equivalent to 13 incidents and crimes for every 1,000 people in the population.

The Windsor and Maidenhead Local Police Authority recorded a total of 2,943 domestic abuse victims in the three-year period to March 2021. 70% of the recorded victims were female, 29% male and 1% other, not recorded or unknown.

The table below shows the number households who have approached The Housing Service at The Royal Borough, over the last three years, in need of advice and assistance due to being at risk of, or who have experienced, sexual abuse, exploitation or other forms of domestic abuse.

Year	At risk of/has experienced sexual abuse/exploitation	At risk of/has experienced domestic abuse
2020 – 2021	11	39
2019 – 2020	3	34
2018 – 2019	9	18

Each case was assessed on an individual basis and appropriate support offered with each household being offered a Personal Housing Plan. Options included referrals to domestic abuse support agencies, support to stay in their home, support to move into a refuge or suitable temporary accommodation.

## Domestic abuse needs assessment

As part of the Domestic Abuse Act requirement, a domestic abuse needs assessment was completed in 2021, with data collected from a range of partners, including:

- RBWM Housing Service
- The Dash (Domestic Abuse Stops Here) Charity
- Thames Valley Police
- Resilience Drug and Alcohol Service
- MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference)
- Optalis (Adult Social Care)
- Achieving for Children (Children’s Services)
- FLAG DV Free Legal Advice Group for Domestic Violence
- Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

A variety of methodologies were used to collect the data and ensure inclusivity:

- Data collection from stakeholders including professionals and victims
- Focus groups
- Over phone interview
- Email feedback

The needs assessment required RBWM & its partners to collect and consider a wide spectrum of data regarding victims & their children.

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Marital Status
- Sexual Identity
- Disability
- Socio-Economic status
- Employment status
- Occupation

Survivors/victims of domestic abuse were included either through a focus group or direct contact. The RBWM's Domestic Abuse Strategy Officer worked jointly with DASH to collect and collate data.

The data obtained from the domestic abuse needs assessment has contributed to the formulation of the Strategy and will be used to improve the service offer locally to domestic abuse victims and their children. Some of the recommendations identified through the domestic abuse needs assessment are:

1. Consistency needs to be established across partners and services regarding the collection of domestic abuse related data. This links to Priority 6 of the strategy - **Improved data collection across services**
2. Develop a method to listen to victims. This links to Priority 5 of the strategy - **Victim Representation**
3. To commission specific safe accommodation within the borough. This links to Priority 1 of the strategy - **Access to safe accommodation**
4. Broaden the collaborative working mechanisms with partners in and out of the borough to ensure best outcomes for victims. All 6 priorities relate to this.
5. Develop a 'Steps to Safety Guide' that can be used for staff and residents. All 6 Priorities relate to this

## **Victim support**

The DASH Charity which provides local support services for victims of domestic abuse have seen a substantial increase in referrals since the Coronavirus pandemic began in March 2020, with 1,072 approaches in 2020-21 representing a 35% increase on the number of approaches in 2019-20.<sup>5</sup> A total of 495 people have approached for support in the first half of 2021-22.

### **Domestic Abuse Support Services available in the Borough**

- The Domestic Abuse Stops Here Charity (DASH)
- Achieving for Children
- Optalis
- Early Help
- DWP Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA)
- Flag Domestic Violence (FLAG DV)
- Police
- Hospitals
- Substance Misuse
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

### **Identified Gaps in Service**

There is currently no refuge provision within The Royal Borough, however placements out of Borough can be sourced for those who would benefit from the support of a refuge.

There is currently no group specific accommodation or tailored support (Male, BAME, LGBTQ +)

There is lack of consistency in the data collected by stakeholders. The needs assessment demonstrated that each organisation collects data to suit their needs, but this presented a barrier to getting a comprehensive picture.

There is limited information on the socio-economic status of victims. There was limited information provided for the needs assessment in some areas and no information available in other areas.

There is limited data on disabled households. More data is required to map the outcomes for disabled households.

There is limited information on households fleeing domestic abuse and being placed in the borough by other local authorities.

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<sup>5</sup> RBWM Domestic Abuse Annual Report 2020-21

## Whole Housing Approach

The Whole Housing Approach<sup>6</sup> is a framework developed by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) which aims to ensure that housing options for victims of domestic abuse are considered in conjunction with their other support needs, to provide a holistic approach.

The key aims of the Whole Housing Approach are to:

1. Create earlier identification and intervention for domestic abuse through mobilising social and private landlords and key institutions involved in private ownership.
2. Reduce the number of people who are made homeless as a result of domestic abuse.
3. Increase tenancy sustainment options so that people experiencing domestic abuse can remain safely in their home when it is their choice to do so or do not lose their tenancy status if they relocate. This includes social housing landlords taking action to remove perpetrators from properties through enforcement and positive engagement activities.
4. To bring together the housing and domestic abuse sectors through a Coordinated Community Response (CCR) to keep victim/survivors safe and hold abusers to account.

The Whole Housing Approach consists of a mixture of tenure types and support provision, as shown in the diagram below.

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<sup>6</sup> Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance - [Whole Housing Approach - daha - Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance \(dahalliance.org.uk\)](https://dahalliance.org.uk)



The Royal Borough will be using the Whole Housing Approach as a framework to develop our support offer to victims of domestic abuse, by ensuring a joint assessment is undertaken where appropriate, or referrals are made to ensure the wider services are included in the tailored support plan for the household.

## Monitoring

The RBWM Domestic Abuse Executive Group (incorporating the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board) will monitor, refresh and review the action plan on a quarterly basis, with progress being reported to the Children and Adult Safeguarding Executive Steering Groups annually. The Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy and associated action plan will also be reported and shared through a variety of routes to ensure that it remains current and fit-for-purpose throughout the strategy period. These include:



- The Housing Strategy Group
- The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Forum
- The Community Safety Partnership.

## **Priorities**

### **1. Access to safe accommodation**

The overarching purpose of this strategy is to ensure that victims of domestic abuse, and their families/children, have access to safe, good quality accommodation that meets their needs. Where temporary accommodation is provided it will be dispersed and will come as a package along with tailored support to ensure that the needs of the victim and their family are fully considered and met.

There is currently no refuge provision in The Royal Borough, however once funding allocations for 2022/23 have been published in relation to the new burdens funding for the Domestic Abuse Act, we will consider whether to create a refuge would be the best use of funds and the best way to meet the needs of victims and their families. Currently, victims who approach as fleeing domestic abuse are supported in finding a refuge placement out of area, where this is the most appropriate solution for them.

Consideration will be given to the location of any Borough-funded refuge provision as it is likely that any refuge provision within the Borough would be used by women from other areas who would be referred in and women from the Borough would still be likely to be referred to a refuge out of the area for their safety.

We will continue to provide housing options advice and assistance to victims of domestic abuse and their children and will support with access to a range of housing options, including social rented, privately rented, home ownership, refuge and other supported accommodation options as appropriate.

### **2. Support to remain safely at home**

For some victims of domestic abuse, their preference may be to remain in their own home instead of moving to alternative safe accommodation. Where this is the case and the perpetrator has left the home, we can offer a target hardening (Sanctuary Scheme) service to ensure that their accommodation is secure and will reduce ease of access should the perpetrator try to access the home. Prior to any referral being made to the target hardening scheme, the housing options will be discussed with the victim so that an informed choice can be made about whether this is the right option for them.

Where a victim chooses to remain in their own home, tailored support will be provided to ensure that they are able to and that their needs and the needs of their family can be met.

### **3. Perpetrators**

The Royal Borough takes a zero tolerance approach to domestic abuse. Wherever possible, victims of domestic abuse will be supported by local services to engage with the criminal justice systems in place to protect and support them, with support to access legal advice and assistance where this is required.

However, whilst working with victims of domestic abuse and their families is a priority, it is recognised that without tackling the needs of perpetrators, they may be unlikely to change their behaviour which puts the victim and future partners at risk of abuse.

When a perpetrator of domestic abuse approaches the Housing Service we endeavour to provide them with suitable accommodation which reduces access to the victim and which enables them to access the support they need to change their behaviour. The Housing Service also engages with colleagues in the Police, Prison Service and Probation to ensure that the risk to victims is minimised and that perpetrators of domestic abuse are appropriately managed.

Achieving for Children runs a perpetrator programme for perpetrators of domestic abuse where there are children who have been affected by domestic abuse in their home environment.

### **4. Coordinated support**

A wide range of support can be provided to victims of domestic abuse and their families, and an initial assessment will determine what support is required for each household so that support can be tailored to meet their specific needs. Support on offer includes:

- Housing options advice and assistance in securing accommodation – both short- and long-term options.
- Access to specialist domestic abuse support.
- Referrals to mental health services.
- Referrals to Resilience, drug and alcohol abuse support provider.
- Access to support for children who have witnessed domestic abuse or for whom a parent has been a victim of domestic abuse.
- Support with applying for benefits to maximise income.

## **5. Victim representation**

To ensure that local victims are given the opportunity to have input into the services that are provided for them, The Royal Borough will be looking for opportunities to secure victim representation, where this is appropriate.

The RBWM Domestic Abuse Executive Group is made up of partner agencies (statutory and voluntary) and meets quarterly to discuss the strategic approach to tackling domestic abuse with the Borough. The Domestic Abuse Executive Group also acts as the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board for the purposes of the Domestic Abuse Act duty. Case studies will be sought from The Dash Charity, our domestic abuse support provider, for discussion at each of the Domestic Abuse Executive Group meetings. It has been agreed that DASH and Achieving for Children will advocate for and represent the voice of the victim; adult and children. Furthermore, where victims would be happy to talk to professionals about their experiences, they may be invited to the meeting as guest speakers or special events will be arranged if there are several victims willing to share their experiences.

## **6. Improved data collection across services**

The Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment 2021 highlighted the need for improved and coordinated data collection from services who offer support to victims of domestic abuse, to enable robust analysis of the data and to ensure that service delivery across the sector can meet the needs of victims and their families.

Discussions will take place with relevant services to determine the level of information that should be collected and how this can be shared and collated, whilst protecting the personal data of victims, their families and perpetrators.

## Action Plan

Priority area/actions	Due date	Proposed Lead	Working Group
<p><b>1. Access to safe accommodation</b></p> <p>Review accommodation options for victims of domestic abuse (including for minority groups such as male victims, disabled victims and LGBT victims) and consider specialist accommodation provision.</p> <p>Consider a specialist role within Housing to support victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>Work with other Berkshire authorities to consider a reciprocal approach to victims of domestic abuse wishing to move out of area.</p>	<p>30 June 2022</p> <p>30 April 2022</p> <p>30 November 2022</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Housing Services in all six Berkshire authorities.</p>	<p>DASH, Commissioning, AfC, Optalis</p>
<p><b>2. Support to remain safely at home</b></p> <p>Review referral mechanisms into Safer Spaces to ensure a streamlined service.</p> <p>Consider a specialist role within Housing to support victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>Develop an information pack for victims of domestic abuse and promote this on social media, our website and through partner services.</p>	<p>30 June 2022</p> <p>30 April 2022</p> <p>31 December 2022</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Housing</p>	<p>DASH, Safe Partnership</p> <p>DASH, AfC, Optalis</p>
<p><b>3. Perpetrators</b></p> <p>Incorporate procedures for provision of accommodation for</p>	<p>31 August 2022</p>	<p>Housing</p>	

perpetrators of domestic abuse into our service offer.			
Strengthen links between services to ensure perpetrators are effectively managed and supported to prevent reoffending.	30 September 2022	Housing	Probation, TVP, AfC, DASH, Optalis
Develop a referral mechanism from wider agencies to Housing where a perpetrator is being asked to leave the victims home.	31 July 2022	Housing	DASH, TVP, Probation, AfC, Resilience, Optalis
<b>4. Coordinated support</b>			
Develop a pathway approach for victims of domestic abuse.	31 July 2022	Housing,	AfC, DASH, TVP, Optalis
Consider a specialist role within Housing to support victims of domestic abuse.	30 April 2022	Housing	
Establish referral pathways between relevant services to streamline access.	31 July 2022	DA Coordinator	Housing, DASH, AfC, Resilience, Probation, TVP, NHS, Optalis
Develop a shared training offer for services providing support to domestic abuse victims.	30 November 2022	DA Coordinator	Housing, DASH, AfC, Resilience, Probation, TVP, NHS, Optalis
Develop an information pack for victims of domestic abuse and promote this on social media, our website and through partner services.	31 December 2022	Housing	Housing
Consider an application for funding to house a DASH IVDA within Housing	31 December 2022	DASH	
<b>5. Victim representation</b>			
Look at an Ambassadors programme for survivors of	31 August 2022	Housing	

<p>domestic abuse to share their experience with services.</p> <p>Review how victims' voices can be heard and how this can be shared with relevant services to inform service provision</p> <p>Review how victims voices are heard within other areas, looking for best practice.</p> <p>Consider hosting an annual event where survivors can share their experience with professionals.</p>	<p>31 July 2022</p> <p>31 August 2022</p> <p>31 December 2022</p>	<p>DASH</p> <p>DA Coordinator</p> <p>DASH</p>	<p>Housing, Commissioning, AfC, Optalis</p> <p>Housing, DASH, AfC, Optalis</p> <p>Housing</p>
<p><b>6. Improved data collection across services</b></p> <p>Consider how anonymised data could hold markers to avoid case duplication across services and to enable customer journeys to be tracked across services to inform service provision.</p> <p>Review available data and consider Comms campaigns to raise awareness and raise confidence in reporting.</p>	<p>30 June 2022</p> <p>31 October 2022</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>Housing</p>	<p>DPO, TVP, DASH, AfC, Optalis, NHS, Resilience</p> <p>TVP, DASH, AfC, Optalis, NHS, Resilience</p>

Priority area/actions	Due date	Proposed Lead	Working Group
<p><b>7. Access to safe accommodation</b></p> <p>Review accommodation options for victims of domestic abuse (including for minority groups such as male victims, disabled victims and LGBT victims) and consider specialist accommodation provision.</p> <p>Consider a specialist role within Housing to support victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>Work with other Berkshire authorities to consider a reciprocal approach to victims of domestic abuse wishing to move out of area.</p>	<p>30 June 2022</p> <p>30 April 2022</p> <p>30 November 2022</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Housing Services in all six Berkshire authorities.</p>	<p>DASH, Commissioning, AfC, Optalis</p>
<p><b>8. Support to remain safely at home</b></p> <p>Review referral mechanisms into Safer Spaces to ensure a streamlined service.</p> <p>Consider a specialist role within Housing to support victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>Develop an information pack for victims of domestic abuse and promote this on social media, our website and through partner services.</p>	<p>30 June 2022</p> <p>30 April 2022</p> <p>31 December 2022</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Housing</p>	<p>DASH, Safe Partnership</p> <p>DASH, AfC, Optalis</p>

<p><b>9. Perpetrators</b></p> <p>Incorporate procedures for provision of accommodation for perpetrators of domestic abuse into our service offer.</p> <p>Strengthen links between services to ensure perpetrators are effectively managed and supported to prevent reoffending.</p> <p>Develop a referral mechanism from wider agencies to Housing where a perpetrator is being asked to leave the victims home.</p>	<p>31 August 2022</p> <p>30 September 2022</p> <p>31 July 2022</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Housing</p>	<p></p> <p>Probation, TVP, AfC, DASH, Optalis</p> <p>DASH, TVP, Probation, AfC, Resilience, Optalis</p>
<p><b>10. Coordinated support</b></p> <p>Develop a pathway approach for victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>Consider a specialist role within Housing to support victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>Establish referral pathways between relevant services to streamline access.</p> <p>Develop a shared training offer for services providing support to domestic abuse victims.</p> <p>Develop an information pack for victims of domestic abuse and promote this on social media, our website and through partner services.</p> <p>Consider an application for funding to house a DASH IVDA within Housing.</p>	<p>31 July 2022</p> <p>30 April 2022</p> <p>31 July 2022</p> <p>30 November 2022</p> <p>31 December 2022</p> <p>31 December 2022</p>	<p>Housing, Optalis</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>DA Coordinator</p> <p>DA Coordinator</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>DASH</p>	<p>AfC, DASH, TVP, Optalis</p> <p></p> <p>Housing, DASH, AfC, Resilience, Probation, TVP, NHS, Optalis</p> <p>Housing, DASH, AfC, Resilience, Probation, TVP, NHS, Optalis</p> <p>Housing</p> <p></p>



<p><b>11. Victim representation</b></p> <p>Look at an Ambassadors programme for survivors of domestic abuse to share their experience with services.</p> <p>Review how victims' voices can be heard and how this can be shared with relevant services to inform service provision</p> <p>Review how victims voices are heard within other areas, looking for best practice.</p> <p>Consider hosting an annual event where survivors can share their experience with professionals.</p>	<p>31 August 2022</p> <p>31 July 2022</p> <p>31 August 2022</p> <p>31 December 2022</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>DASH</p> <p>DA Coordinator</p> <p>DASH</p>	<p></p> <p>Housing, Commissioning, AfC, Optalis</p> <p>Housing, DASH, AfC, Optalis</p> <p>Housing</p>
<p><b>12. Improved data collection across services</b></p> <p>Consider how anonymised data could hold markers to avoid case duplication across services and to enable customer journeys to be tracked across services to inform service provision.</p> <p>Review available data and consider Comms campaigns to raise awareness and raise confidence in reporting.</p>	<p>30 June 2022</p> <p>31 October 2022</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>Housing</p>	<p>DPO, TVP, DASH, AfC, Optalis, NHS, Resilience</p> <p>TVP, DASH, AfC, Optalis, NHS, Resilience</p>