

**Report to:**

**EXECUTIVE**

**Relevant Officer:**

John Blackledge, Director for Community and Environmental Services

**Relevant Cabinet Member:**

Councillor Jo Farrell, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

**Date of Meeting:**

24 January 2022

## **DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY 2022- 26**

### **1.0 Purpose of the report:**

- 1.1 To endorse the proposed draft partnership Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022- 2026 for Blackpool and agree that this be adopted.

### **2.0 Recommendation(s):**

- 2.1 To recommend Executive to adopt the Domestic Abuse Strategy attached at Appendix 3a with effect until 31 December 2026 and in particular, to sign up to the values and commitments developed through co-production with the partnership. The aim is to have each organisation signed up to the strategy, which will be supported by a comprehensive needs assessment and an action plan which will be refreshed annually.
- 2.2 To request the Director for Community and Environmental Services to write an action plan and comprehensive needs assessment to support the strategy.
- 2.3 To ask other member organisations of the Domestic Abuse partnership to participate in the development of the comprehensive needs assessment and action plan.

### **3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):**

- 3.1 The current Domestic Abuse Strategy and Needs Assessments are now out of date and the new bill has passed in to law, new statutory responsibilities now sit with the Council and other partners which are reflected in the new draft.
- 3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes.

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

None that would meet the requirements of the the Domestic Abuse Act.

**5.0 Council Priority:**

5.1 The relevant Council Priority is: "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience".

**6.0 Background Information**

6.1 In April 2021 the Domestic Abuse Act (the Act) received royal assent and was signed into law. The act brought in a wide-ranging legal definition of domestic abuse, incorporating a range of abuse beyond physical violence, including emotional, coercive, or controlling behavior and economic abuse.

6.2 Domestic Abuse is a cruel and complex crime that can affect anyone, leaving physical and emotional scars that can last a lifetime. The new Domestic Abuse Act aims to transform the response to this terrible crime, with the prevention of abuse and the protection of victims at its heart.

6.3 Part 4 of the Act places a new duty on Blackpool Council to provide safe accommodation and support for victims of Domestic Abuse and their children. Statutory guidance sets out the functions and operational aspects required to meet the duty.

6.4 Blackpool Council has had a Domestic Abuse Board with partners from a range of statutory agencies for some years. This was paused during the initial Pandemic response in early 2020. The new requirements of the act helped to shape a reformation of the board in November 2020 with a wider group of participants including the third sector, a renewed terms of reference and monthly scheduled meetings.

6.5 A self-assessment was undertaken over the Summer of 2021 where the board considered the delivery of individual organisations and the partnership as a whole against the outcomes outlined in the guidance associated with the bill. This has highlighted some gaps and areas for development which will form part of the year one action plan. This action plan will be partnership wide and monitored by the board.

- 6.6 In response to an identified need in the self-assessment, a new Domestic Abuse strategy has been developed. This has been done with full partnership engagement and there was strong support from the board for a co-production approach. It was agreed that the elements of the strategy that should be coproduced would be the **Values** and **Priorities** (given the statutory responsibilities and asks of partners is not up for debate and is mandated by the Act.)
- 6.7 In December, engagement sessions with the board members or nominated representatives were co led by a person with lived experience to gather the initial foundations of the draft values and priorities.
- 6.8 The co-production sessions saw engagement from
- Lived Experience
  - Health
  - Public Health
  - Third Sector
  - Housing
  - Adult Social Care
  - Children's Services
  - Support Providers
  - Community Safety
  - The Police and Crime Commissioners Office
- 6.9 The draft values and priorities were presented to a Joint Scrutiny Review (Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee and Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee) meeting on the 16 December 2021. The values and priorities were endorsed by the members in attendance.
- 6.10 The draft strategy has been shared with attendees of the engagement workshops, and has been amended and updated to reflect their input. The latest draft was presented and endorsed by Domestic Abuse Board on the 10 January 2022.
- 6.11 There was a strong feeling from the engagement groups and from the joint scrutiny review that the strategy should span 4 years but there should be an annual plan and needs assessment that is refreshed each year. This is designed to ensure that deliverables and impact are monitored through the board and drive the longer term incremental achievement of the priorities. This annual report and refresh will support the requirement to provide regular, meaningful reports to the nationally appointed Domestic Abuse Commissioner. This approach was endorsed by the Domestic Abuse Board in December 2021.

## 6.12 Values and Principles

- Victims of domestic abuse will be heard, believed and supported. They will not be judged. Practitioners working with people affected by domestic abuse will do so using a Trauma Informed approach.
- Although the new housing duties support victims of Domestic Abuse to access safe accommodation when they need it away from their home, victims should not be forced to move to safeguard themselves if other measures can be used to help them stay in their home. We will work with victims to understand what support and safety mechanisms need to be in place to make their home safe and work together to deliver them wherever possible.
- We support the principle of the “Three Me’s”. This approach advocates understanding and responding in a person centred way to everyone who is impacted by abuse. The Adult Victim, any children who are victims by virtue of witnessing abuse (parental abuse of children is child abuse) and the perpetrator. Our services will be person-centred and family oriented, working alongside individuals and families to help them plan the future they want, providing the right level of support for as long as needed, and recognising that the end of a relationship should not be the end of support.
- Our support for anybody who has experienced domestic abuse will not be generic. We recognise that each individual using our services are more than a victim, survivor or perpetrator and services will be flexible to respond to all family members in a holistic person-centred way to support long term change. Victims will not be labelled as “non-compliant” if they are not able, at that time, to work with services and feel safe.
- Professionals will work together to support people exposed to domestic abuse with kindness and respect. They will work using a “lead professional” approach to ensure that people are not signposted from service to service around a system without clear and purposeful navigation.
- Everyone working in our frontline services will be sensitive, professionally curious and alert to the early signs of abuse. People will be given every opportunity to disclose or report abuse including people who are themselves perpetrating the abuse.
- When we develop or review interventions, services and training across the Partnership focussed on Domestic Abuse, we will coproduce this with people who have lived experience in a respectful way which minimises the risk of further trauma.
- We will use all the tools available to us as a partnership to ensure that people who use coercive, controlling, harmful, unhealthy behaviours are held to account through the justice system and supported to change wherever possible. We will offer rehabilitation to those who use abusive behaviour using proven interventions that demonstrate lasting change.
- We recognise that though never justifiable, trauma can have an impact on an individual’s behaviour and to successfully change behaviour previous trauma

of the perpetrator must be addressed.

- Work with perpetrators should always increase the safety of victims and children; any support should not exacerbate or create additional risk or harm.
- In families where young people are perpetrating abuse towards their parents this abuse is likely to be minimised or denied by parents, as they can feel ashamed or humiliated and blame themselves for the situation. When it's difficult for parents to accept the behaviour as abusive they are less likely to seek support and the abuse can escalate; practitioners must be mindful of this and be creative in the support they provide.
- Professionals understand both the presenting and underlying needs of families struggling with unhealthy or abusive relationships, recognise that domestic abuse is everybody's business and understand what they need to do to help each member of the family effected.
- People who use coercive, controlling, harmful, unhealthy behaviours are held to account through the justice system and supported to change wherever possible.

### 6.13 **Priorities**

#### **Lead and drive positive and impactful change**

We will work together as a partnership to lead work that will support community wide awareness of the lifelong negative impact of domestic abuse. Strengthening our governance arrangements, leadership, accountability, improving our knowledge and data collection, whilst collectively and rigorously challenging progress and impact are all key to achieving this priority.

#### **Prevent abuse and offer support at the earliest point**

We will promote respectful relationships through the curriculum and work with schools and young people to challenge gender inequality and stereotypes. A clear focus on early recognition of the signs of abuse will help to prevent escalation and minimise harm caused. A skilled, confident and collaborative workforce are key to achieving this priority, through promotion of healthy relationships, sharing of professional skills and knowledge.

#### **Provide support for those who experience abuse that is accessible, responsive and persistent**

Complex and multiple funding arrangements have historically funded domestic abuse provision. The new duty on partnerships to deliver and monitor support services for victims and their children offers the opportunity to review and align our service delivery model. We will establish clear pathways into and between support services, including voluntary community-based provision through to safeguarding and statutory protection services.

### **Changing the risk posed by perpetrators of Domestic Abuse**

The Domestic Abuse Act provides additional protection measures enshrined in law for victims and new legislative measures to tackle perpetrators of abuse. We will use a combination of interventions to pursue and rehabilitate perpetrators, be that through the criminal justice system, civil outcomes, rehabilitation and behaviour change programmes, or working with families who wish to stay together. In 2021, a pan-Lancashire review of perpetrator interventions was undertaken which makes a number of recommendations.

### **Work as a whole partnership to fulfil the new Housing Duties introduced by the Act in the way that benefits Blackpool residents**

Although the statutory duty for meeting the Housing Duty sits with the local authority we know that we will only make a genuine and lasting impact on the safety and wellbeing of victims if we work together as a whole partnership.

6.14 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

#### **7.0 List of Appendices:**

Appendix 3a- Domestic Abuse Partnership Strategy 2022-26

#### **8.0 Financial considerations:**

8.1 The needs assessment may identify gaps in provision, it is proposed that these gaps (unless in statutory responsibilities of any single agency) be reviewed and a partnership approach taken to addressing these.

#### **9.0 Legal considerations:**

9.1 Compliance with statutory requirements through the provision of support and report.

#### **10.0 Risk Management considerations:**

10.1 A risk would be if the partnership does not sign up in full to commitments/ values – in which case the strategy would can become solely a Council Policy. Steps are being taken to ensure broader sign up and to therefore mitigate that risk to ensure a partnership approach.

#### **11.0 Equalities considerations:**

11.1 An Equalities Need Assessment will be conducted on services and access as part of Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

**12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:**

12.1 None directly from the report.

**13.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:**

13.1 Co-production of the strategy with DA Partnership board member organisations.

13.2 Engagement with Scrutiny as part of drafting process.

**14.0 Background papers:**

14.1 Domestic Abuse Strategy 2016-20 [Appendix 8a Domestic Violence Strategy 2020.pdf \(blackpool.gov.uk\)](https://blackpool.gov.uk/appendix-8a-domestic-violence-strategy-2020.pdf)

14.2 Domestic Abuse Bill summary [Domestic Abuse Act 2021: overarching factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97421/domestic-abuse-act-2021-overarching-factsheet.pdf)

**15.0 Key decision information:**

15.1 Is this a key decision? Yes

15.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number: 23/2021

15.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? No

15.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

**16.0 Call-in information:**

16.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

16.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE**

**17.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):**

Date informed: 15 January 2022 Date approved:

**18.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):**

18.1

**19.0 Summary of Discussion:**

19.1

**20.0 Executive decision:**

20.1

**21.0 Date of Decision:**

21.1

**22.0 Reason(s) for decision:**

22.1

**23.0 Date Decision published:**

23.1

**24.0 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

24.1

**25.0 Executive Members in attendance:**

25.1



**26.0 Call-in:**

26.1

**27.0 Notes:**

27.1