

Policy Committee Decision Report

Title of Report:	Sheffield Strategy Tackling Domestic and Sexual Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls.
Date of Decision:	20 th November 2024
Report To:	Strategy and Resources Committee
Report Of:	Greg Fell (Director of Public Health) and Joe Horobin (Director of Integrated Commissioning)
Report Author:	Sam Martin (Head of Commissioning)

Executive Summary: Domestic and Sexual Abuse affects thousands of people (woman and men, children and adults) across Sheffield, as well as nationally, every year. Sheffield is home to a huge number of organisations, community groups and survivor led coalitions working together to make a difference. The Council has an important leadership role to play in this wide partnership.

Sheffield has had a strategy tackling domestic and sexual abuse since 2014. The current version of this strategy ends in 2024. This report presents to the Strategy and Resources Committee an update on activity in the form of an Annual Report of the Sheffield Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategic Board, and invites the Committee to approve the Council's role in the delivery of a new and continued Strategy called 'From Surviving to Safety' which sets out objectives over the next 6 years to improve education and awareness, support victims, change perpetrators behaviour and protect more people from violence and abuse.



Council Plan outcomes:

[A place where all children belong and all young people can build a successful future](#)

[Great neighbourhoods that people are happy to call home](#)

[People live in caring, engaged communities that value diversity and support wellbeing](#)

Policy Committee remit:

This report is to be considered by the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee as its remit includes responsibility for any issue identified as being of significant strategic importance or financial risk to the Council (which is considered to be by its nature cross-cutting): [Part 3C - 3.3 Matters Delegated to Committees May 2024.pdf \(sheffield.gov.uk\)](#)”

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? No

Recommendations:

The Strategy and Resources Committee is recommended to

1. Accept and note the contents of the Annual Report of the work of the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategic Board.
2. Agree the contents of the new strategy, *From Surviving To Safety: Sheffield's Strategy to end Domestic and Sexual Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls 2024-30*.
3. Commits the Council to continue to play a leading role, working with a wide range of external stakeholders, in delivering the aims and objectives of the new strategy in the coming years

Financial Implications: Yes Approved by: Kayleigh Inman

Legal Implications: Yes Approved by: Kieran McGaughey

Equality and Inclusion Implications: Yes Approved by: Ed Sexton

Full Equalities Impact Assessment completed with EIA number 2853

Climate Change Implications: No Approved by: Sam Martin

Background Papers: None

Appendices: 1. Annual report of the Sheffield Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategic Board 2024

2. From Surviving To Safety: Sheffield's Strategy to end Domestic and Sexual Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls 2024-30.

1. Background to the issue

- 1.1 Domestic and Sexual Abuse affects thousands of people (woman and men, children and adults) across Sheffield, as well as nationally, every year. Violence against women and girls is recognised by the World Health Organisation as a global public health issue, as well as an issue of human rights, with significant impact on victims and survivors mental and physical health.
- 1.2 Sheffield has a proud history of organising and campaigning to challenge offensive, dangerous and outdated social ideas which make violence against women and girls, and domestic and sexual abuse, acceptable. Our city stands by victims and survivors and over decades has supported thousands of people to escape from abuse, survive and ultimately thrive.
- 1.3 The struggle is far from over. Increased recognition of the impact and extent of the issue has led to important developments such as the Government appointment of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner, and the Domestic Abuse Act of 2021. Reporting of domestic and sexual abuse is increasing and there is wider social awareness and calling out of abusive behaviour. However, far too many people continue to suffer every day the impact of violence, abuse and misogynistic attitudes.
- 1.4 Tackling domestic and sexual abuse and violence against women and girls falls to everyone in our city and in our society. Sheffield is home to a huge number of organisations, community groups and survivor led coalitions working together to make a difference. The Council has an important role to play too. From housing, through children's services, education and youth services, community safety, public health and safeguarding services, and by commissioning direct support services for victims and survivors the Council contributes significantly to the City's response to this significant social issue.
- 1.5 Sheffield has had a strategy tackling domestic and sexual abuse since 2014. The last version of this strategy ends in 2024. This report presents to the Strategy and Resources Committee an update on activity in the form of an Annual Report of the Sheffield Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategic Board, and invites the Committee to approve the Council's role in the delivery of a new and continued Strategy called 'From Surviving to Safety' which sets out objectives over the next 6 years to improve education and awareness, support victims, change perpetrators behaviour and protect more people from violence and abuse.

2. Proposal

Annual Impact Report

- 2.1 This covering report is accompanied by two documents and the Committee is recommended to note and approve both.

2.2 The first document is the *Annual Impact Report* on work that has taken place across the partnership, coordinated by officers in the Domestic Abuse Commissioning Team through 2023 and 2024. This report has been considered and approved with a range of partners through the Sheffield Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategic Board and the Safer Sheffield Partnership. A similar Annual Impact Report was considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee last year at the meeting on 20th November 2023.

2.3 The report sets out key data on the prevalence of domestic and sexual abuse in the city and nationally, outlines the range of services and support available in the city, showcases good practice, and identifies where further developments are needed in future.

2.4 Some key messages from the report are:

- Over 85,000 people in Sheffield are estimated to have been a victim of domestic abuse, and 69,000 people have been a victim of sexual abuse since the age of 16
- the Council undertook a recommissioning process and continued to invest in and support a comprehensive community support service for domestic abuse survivors.
- over 300 people received specialist counselling as survivors of sexual violence
- over 800 children and young people received specialist counselling and support as victims of domestic abuse
- 1,200 high risk cases of domestic abuse have been managed through the multi agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) system.
- the Council signed up to the White Ribbon Campaign to support the campaign to end violence against women and girls. Over 60 people working across schools and education in Sheffield attended a conference in the city alongside the CEO of the White Ribbon Campaign.
- Services across the city continue to directly involve and coproduce strategies and provision with survivors of domestic abuse.
- As society is becoming more aware of the issue of violence against women and girls demand for services and support continues to increase as people come forward for help. This is a major challenge for services both in the Council, the NHS, Criminal Justice agencies and the voluntary sector as resources are more difficult to secure.

2.5 The Committee is recommended to note the wide range of activity taking place across the city and commend the work of all stakeholders involved in tackling violence against women and girls, and domestic and sexual abuse.

From Surviving to Safety: Sheffield's Strategy to End Domestic and Sexual Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls.

2.6 The second document the Committee is asked to consider is a new strategy for Sheffield to tackle domestic and sexual abuse and violence against women and girls. The strategy is called *From Surviving to Safety*. It has been written over a number of months, drawing together data from a range of services, emerging evidence from local and national research, and, crucially, personal testimonies from victims and survivors themselves.

2.7 The strategy is a comprehensive plan which will guide work across the city and the Council's activity over the coming years. It will contribute to the Council meeting its Statutory Duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The actions are focused around a number of key areas:

- Early Intervention and Prevention: changing cultures, raising awareness and education
- Safety and Support of survivors: maintaining and improving services, including non-specialist services that victims need help from like housing, NHS and the criminal justice system
- Safe Accommodation: ensuring there are options and support available for people who are fleeing abuse and violence.
- Holding perpetrators to account: previous strategies have quite rightly focused on support for victims, but tackling the behaviour of perpetrators is as important and has a specific theme in our new strategy.
- Together we get things done: working in partnership across the range of organisations and departments, and with survivors themselves, to change things for the better.

2.8 The Council will provide a significant leadership role in the coordination and delivery of the strategy, through direct commissioning of services and wider work across and with partners who also have a role to play.

2.9 The Strategy and Resources Committee is recommended to approve the objectives and aims of the strategy and commit the Council to playing its part in the coordination and delivery of the work in the coming years.

3. How does this decision contribute to the Council Plan?

3.1 A place where all children belong and all young people can build a successful future

3.1.1 Domestic and sexual abuse has a significant impact on the lives of children and young people. Children have been recognised as victims in their own right (DA Act 2021) when they see, hear or experience domestic abuse in their family, and are affected by having to move home where their mum or dad is fleeing an abusive relationship. They

may also experience abuse as young people in intimate relationships. They may experience sexual abuse from someone they know whether from adults or peers. Such abuse affects their mental health, friendships and family life, education and aspirations for life. Our new strategy aims to improve support for children and young people by preventing abuse in the first place, and by providing better support for children when they are victims.

3.2 People live in caring, engaged communities that value diversity and support wellbeing

3.2.1 Our new strategy will provide support for some of the most vulnerable people in the city who are victims of violence and abuse. Many of the services are run by voluntary and community organisations which draw from and amplify the voices of people with direct lived experience. Our strategy includes specific objectives to continue to develop support for groups that historically have been more excluded and whose voices have not been heard.

3.3 Great neighbourhoods that people are happy to call home

3.3.1 Violence against women and girls affects communities as well as individuals, creating an environment which can be threatening and excluding. Our strategy supports communities in working together to help each other and to step up to challenge harmful attitudes and behaviour where necessary, so that Sheffield is a safe and welcoming place to live for everyone.

3.2 People – Prosperity - Planet

3.2.1 This report and the new strategy are primarily focused on People, supporting everyone in Sheffield to achieve their potential and live full and healthy lives.

4. What community or partner engagement has been undertaken and how has it informed the proposal?

4.1 The new strategy put before the Committee in this report has been developed through extensive consultation and coproduction sessions with a range of stakeholders, including:

- Statutory organisations such as the NHS, South Yorkshire Police, Probation

- Internal Council departments such as Housing, Childrens and Adults Social Care.
- External organisations and charities
- Survivors of abuse and people with lived experience.

Needs assessment findings and strategy drafts were shared at 11 partnership meetings between June and October and specific events were held as follows:

Audience	Who / Where / What	Participants	Date
Victims & Survivors	Open event with targeted recruitment	30	26 th April
Victims & Survivors	Women's Aid refuges	8	12 th & 13 th June
Victims & Survivors	Together Women Project	3	2 nd July
Victims & Survivors	Sheffield Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre	2	23 rd July
Victims & Survivors - Children	Children & Young People supported by a range of services – interviews	5	July
Residents	Domestic, Sexual abuse, VAWG experiences in the City - Have Your Say Survey	214	June and July
Residents	Sexual harassment in Sheffield - Have Your Say Survey	155	June and July
Staff	SCC Women Employees Hub - Staff across Sheffield City Council	14	10 th June 2024
Providers	Providers / key agencies that support victims & survivors	41	8 th May
Perpetrators	Consultation session at Cranstoun with those on Inspire to Change perpetrator programme	5	18 th June
Providers working with Perpetrators	Provider Services / key agencies that work with perpetrators	19	14 th June 2024

5. What alternative options did we consider?

5.1 Alternative Option 1:

One alternative would be to allow the current Strategy to tackle domestic and sexual abuse to lapse without developing a new strategy. This option was rejected because the Council is required legally to have in place an agreed Strategy for Safe Accommodation (see legal implications section). Tackling domestic and sexual abuse is also a significant concern across the city and affects a number of Council departments, so having an agreed and carefully developed strategy enables the Council and wider partners to better coordinate activity they would be involved in anyway, to provide a clear and supportive offer to victims, their families and the wider community of Sheffield.

6. How has equality, diversity and inclusion been actively considered?

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and this found that approval of the strategy will have a positive impact on those impacted by domestic abuse and sexual violence in the city, both adults and children, and all of those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

6.2 The strategy takes an intersectional view on equalities issues and recognises that victim/survivors may be at greater risk of harm, face additional barriers to disclosure and may find accessing services more difficult if they are disabled, older, from racialised communities, LGBT+ or financially excluded.

6.3 Domestic and sexual abuse and violence are gendered issues. Women are disproportionately more affected than men, the strategy directly address this and is intended to ensure that the city's response is gender informed (including the commissioning of single sex safe accommodation provision) and sensitive to needs of people of all genders. However the strategy also commits us to ensuring the promotion of services to male victims and increasing the uptake of support by men.

7. Financial and Commercial Implications

7.1 Adopting the new strategy as set out in this report commits the Council to investing officer time and funding to support a range of activity in the future to deliver the outcomes we have agreed. However, it does not at this point commit any specific amount of funding and is not in itself a spending plan. Decisions about future funding for services and activities will be decided annually in line with the Council's usual budget setting processes and medium term financial strategy.

7.2 The Council spends a range of resources across many departments in ways which support our strategic objectives in relation to domestic abuse. The majority of people impacted by domestic abuse are supported by non-specialist services such as schools, housing and health services.

7.3 More specialist services, including the Sheffield Domestic Abuse Helpline, Independent Domestic Violence Advocates, and Safe Accommodation and Refuges, are commissioned through a dedicated budget and commissioning process.

7.4 In 2024-25 the budget for specialist Domestic and Sexual abuse commissioning was £3,031,616 (including partner contributions and government grants). This was allocated in the following way:

Domestic Abuse community based support (IDAS)	£1,402,636
Sexual Violence counselling (Sheffield Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre)	£58,500

Perpetrator programme (Cranstoun)	£58,000
Support for children affected by domestic abuse (Haven)	£198,634
Young women's supported accommodation (Young Women's Housing Project)	£217,420
Debt and benefits advice (Citizen's Advice)	£73,789
Counselling for adults affected by domestic abuse (Sheffield Mind)	£62,357
Counselling for young people affected by domestic abuse (Door 43 -Sheffield Futures)	£72,749
Housing advice (Shelter)	£28,858
Counselling and Therapy for women in refuges / safe accommodation (Paradigm)	£6,250
Refuges and dispersed safe accommodation (IDAS and Sheffield Women's Aid)	£740,029
Level Up (support programme for under 16s causing harm)	£25,000
Publicity / Awareness raising materials	£3,300
Commissioning	£78,180

7.5 £1,104,300 of the budget used to commission specialist services is from the council cash limit funding. £1,661,585 comes from a specific grant allocated by the Government. The remainder is funding received from local partners to contribute to the joint commissioning of some services. At the time of writing this report, the Government grant allocation part of the funding is due to end on 31st March 2025, and no further announcement has been made by Government about funding in 2025-26. We are awaiting clarification following the Government Budget Announcement scheduled for 30th October 2024. Should further funding not be made available this will significantly reduce the amount of funding we have available to support the objectives in the new strategy. The Director of Integrated Commissioning will work closely with the Director of Finance once further announcements have been made by Government to assess the future levels of available funding and any changes to service provision will be made in line with the usual budget setting and change processes.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 The implementation of this strategy will contribute to meeting the statutory duties for the Council under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to:

- ensure the needs of victims of domestic abuse in safe accommodation are met in a consistent way. A local authority is required to meet the needs of all domestic abuse victims including those who present from outside of the locality and to provide such support as therapy, advocacy and counselling in safe accommodation, including refuges, to victims of domestic abuse and their children. Safe Accommodation includes properties with Sanctuary Scheme adaptations and dispersed safe accommodation with specialist support. Local councils are required to agree a local strategy for safe accommodation. The new strategy set out in this report serves this requirement for the Council.

- appoint a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board to support local needs assessments and local strategies. The Sheffield Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategic Board acts meets this requirement.
- Under section 9 (3) of the 2004 Domestic Violence Crime and Victim's Act the Safer Sheffield Partnership (the community safety partnership for Sheffield) is required to convene a *Domestic Homicide Review* process when the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom s/he was related or with whom s/he was or had been in an intimate personal relationship. The Council's Domestic Abuse Commissioning Team coordinates this process on behalf of the partnership and oversees the dissemination of learning – this again will contribute to the implementation of the new strategy.

8.3 Statutory and non-statutory guidance regarding the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 supports the work of local partnerships regarding activity to tackle domestic and sexual abuse. This guidance has implications for a range of council departments and other citywide partners. In general the responsibilities for meeting the guidance fall to local Community Safety Partnerships to oversee and shape. In Sheffield the relevant partnership is the *Safer Sheffield Partnership*. Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, and Domestic and Sexual Abuse, is a key theme in the current Safer Sheffield Plan. Other partnerships, such as the *Sheffield Safeguarding Board* (both Children and Adults) also have relevant duties related to protecting victims. Officers involved in the work of these Boards work closely together and collaborate through the *Sheffield Domestic and Sexual Abuse Board*. This Board specifically oversees the work to deliver the strategy and reports through a number of routes to relevant strategic partnerships and Boards.

8.4 There are no other legal implications arising directly from this report. As the strategy described in the report is actioned it may require further decision making, for example in relation to grants or commissioning, in accordance with the Council's Constitution. The legal implications of each decision will be considered fully at the relevant time by the relevant decision makers.

9. Climate and Environmental Implications

9.1 Adopting the new strategy has no immediate significant climate and environmental implications. Any services that are developed or commissioned to deliver the strategic objectives will, as part of the service design or procurement strategy, include a climate impact assessment in line with the council plan and existing policies.

10. Other implications

10.1 None

11. Reasons for decision

11.1 Domestic and sexual abuse, and violence against women and girls, has a huge impact on the lives of individual victims, families and wider society. Sheffield has a proud history of tackling the problem, challenging perpetrators and supporting victims.

11.2 By adopting the aims and principles set out in the new Strategy the Council will be playing a significant leadership role in the city. Working across the Council and with a range of city stakeholders, together we can continue to tackle violence and abuse and help make lives better for victims and their families.