
Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-24

New strategy to comply with Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse (DA) Act 2021

On the 29th of April 2021, the Domestic Abuse Act was enacted, and new duties were placed on local authorities Sheffield City Council now required to

- *'Assess or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for, accommodation-based support in its area,*
 - *Prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support in its area, and*
 - *Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy'*
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (England). Section 57

The strategy is an addendum to the Sheffield Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2018-2022 and is linked to Sheffield City Council's Homeless Prevention Strategy 2017-2022. In 2023 both domestic abuse strategies will be refreshed and aligned.

Our response to the duty placed on Local Authorities to provide support in DA Safe Accommodation

This strategy, published at the end of October 2021 considers the prevalence of domestic abuse in Sheffield, the people affected and the current service offer, pathways, and processes. It has been informed by the lived experience of survivors of domestic abuse in Sheffield and by consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. It also is complimentary to the city's Homelessness Prevention Strategy. An action plan will be developed and monitored by the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategic Board which acts as the city's statutory Local Partnership Board.

Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation provision in Sheffield

Domestic Abuse affects approximately 20,000 adults and up to 28,000 children in Sheffield per year

Domestic abuse is a gendered crime and is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality. Women more likely to be highly victimised and suffer fatal domestic abuse compared with male victims. However, there are thousands of male victims in Sheffield and there are likely to be more than we know about. Further work will be undertaken to allow us to make a more accurate estimate about the prevalence of male victims in Sheffield.

Disabled people are twice as likely to experience domestic abuse than people who aren't disabled so a key priority will be to improve our data collection and analysis to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our disabled population. Prevalence of domestic abuse over the past year was highest in the younger age group, e.g. 14% of females aged 16-19. However, there are barriers for those aged over 60 for reporting domestic abuse and accessing safe accommodation and there is a risk that older adults may be hidden from services and their needs overlooked.

There is a high prevalence of BAMER victims and survivors accessing safe accommodation and we will work with BAMER communities and groups to understand this and address the harm caused by domestic abuse. There are issues such as so called 'Honour' Based Abuse and Forced Marriage that disproportionately affect certain communities and faith groups in the city. Our understanding of prevalence needs to improve, it is reassuring that a large proportion of those accessing domestic abuse safe accommodation and support felt that the support offered was respectful of their religion and met their cultural needs.

Sheffield's Call it Out Project has helped us understand more about the barriers facing LGBT+ survivors of abuse and we want to build on the awareness raising that this project has enabled to increase trust in local services in this community.

For every victim in Sheffield there is at least one perpetrator, and we need to develop a process to manage the housing needs of perpetrators in order to keep victims and their children safe.

During the pandemic in 2020/21 there were 692 homeless presentations because of domestic abuse, and we estimate that this number could increase to somewhere between 618 and 1,350 by 2030.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SAFE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY 2021-2024 SHEFFIELD DOMESTIC ABUSE CO-ORDINATION TEAM (DACT)

We want to build on and improve the support offered in our 'safe' (as defined by the DAA Part 4 Statutory Guidance) accommodation provision in Sheffield

Sheffield currently has 37 units of women's refuge accommodation, 17 units for young women and their children. There are 25 dispersed units through the Safe Zones safe accommodation scheme and a number of properties are used as safe accommodation from the council housing stock, these forms of dispersed accommodation can be utilised by male victims and GBT+ as can the Sanctuary Scheme which enabled 600 households last year to remain safe in their own homes through target hardening measures.

Some service users told us they would have benefitted from more mental health and substance misuse support, support with money, debt and housing advice and they also wanted more help for their children to recover.

People with no recourse to public funds are likely to have more support needs and we will ensure that additional support options are targeted at this group.

Spending Plans for 2021/22

We have £1.32million in new burdens funding from the DLUHC (MHCLG) until end March 22

Refuges/Young Women/Dispersed - £471600
Mental health/Substances/Advice - £194744
Support for Children - £157190
Counselling/Therapeutic and Group Support - £160000
Other initiatives - £257000
Total - £1169650

Housing, commissioning, and providers will work together to ensure that pathways and processes work effectively

We will work to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current pathways and processes for victims of domestic abuse during the course of this strategy.

We will consider implementing a reciprocal agreement with other key housing authorities to facilitate out of area moves for victims of domestic abuse and we will work to understand more about the pressures which lead to victims being placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation (in relation to domestic abuse).

We will work with staff to ensure that victims are offered support to resolve issues such as arrears, ASB and debt and where they are related to domestic abuse, they do not prevent them from moving on to more settled accommodation and sustaining a new tenancy.

Current Constraints and Next Steps

The level of funding for future years is unknown until central government spending review

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC. Formerly the MHCLG) has allocated £1,325,868 to Sheffield for 2021/22 to deliver the new duty to provide support in Safe Accommodation. At this time, it is not clear whether this financial allocation will be at the same level in future years as this will be contingent on the Central Government Spending Review. This impacts on our ability to commission long term at present.

Short timescales and the restrictive nature of the duty

The figures above indicate the allocation of the funding as agreed thus far (NB in many cases this funding is *additional* to existing grants or contracts) - time constraints may mean it is not possible to spend the entire allocation this year – this does not reflect a lack of need. Some of these initiatives are not finalised and are still in development.