

Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation

– progress report since March 2022

Background

Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a statutory duty on local authorities to provide specialist support to domestic abuse victims / survivors in safe accommodation. A government grant of £1,329,538 has been awarded to assist the Council meeting its new statutory duty.

This funding relates to the statutory duty which is included in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 that had cross party support and received Royal Assent on the 29 April 2021. Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced a statutory duty for Local Authorities to ensure all victims of domestic abuse have access to the right support within safe accommodation when they need it.

Tier one Local Authorities (such as Sheffield) have a duty to assess the need for support and prepare strategies to provide specialist support for victims who need to reside in the relevant safe accommodation.

The Council 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 is defined in the statutory guidance¹ as: refuges, specialist accommodation (e.g., our young women's provision), dispersed accommodation (with specialist support and safety elements), and homes with Sanctuary Scheme measures (target hardening due to domestic abuse).

In March 2022 a paper outlining spending plans for 2022/23 was approved by Cooperative Executive agreed the following recommendations:

1. Note the Council being awarded a grant of £1,329,538 for 2022/2023 from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to meet its new statutory duties under Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as outlined in this report.
2. Approve such spending plans as outlined in this report, in respect of the grant funding being awarded to the Council. Variations to be entered into once the funding has been received.
3. To the extent not covered by existing delegations, delegates authority to the Director of Integrated Commissioning in consultation with the Director of Finance and Commercial Services, the Director of Health and Social Care and the Executive Member for Health and Social Care to carry out such procurements regarding any funds as yet unallocated and award such contracts following a successful procurement process in order to provide specialist support services to domestic abuse victims / survivors in safe accommodation, in line with this report.
4. Where no such authority exists under the Leaders Scheme of Delegation, delegates authority to the Director of Integrated Commissioning in consultation with the Director of Finance and Commercial Services, the Director of Health and Social Care and the Director of Legal and Governance to take such other steps as may be necessary to meet the outcomes and objectives of this report.

¹ [Delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/102424/domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services.pdf)

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Update February 2023

1. Safe Accommodation Contract – refuges and dispersed.

This contract was recommissioned in 2022 with a new contract starting in October 2022.

Prior to this the two Sheffield Women's Aid refuges and the IDAS dispersed Safe Accommodation scheme Safe Zones were commissioned separately. The new contract provides both these service elements and IDAS were the successful bidder in partnership with Sheffield Women's Aid. Together these provide 62 units of safe accommodation (ranging from one bed flats to family units with four bedrooms) which will rise to 70 during the first year of the contract. In year two a supported lodgings scheme will also be launched. The accommodation had 100% occupancy in quarter 3 and 97% of needs logged in support plans were met.

2. Community based safe accommodation.

IDAS are commissioned to provide support to victims/survivors in SCC dispersed temporary accommodation – the initial estimate for this demand was 29 tenancies but this is currently at 49 tenancies. They are also commissioned to provide additional support to victims/survivors requiring Sanctuary Scheme (target hardening) interventions to prevent harassment and abuse from former partners or abusive family members. 330 individuals / families at the end of Q3. Planned exits from the service overall are at 69%. 85% of exits see their risk rating reduce or stay the same (NB if the risk is standard risk at service start then this will not reduce regardless of the intervention).

3. Safe accommodation for young women

The Young Women's Housing Project is funded to provide additional units of safe accommodation for victims / survivors aged 16-25 and their children if they have them. There are 20 units in total and all are occupied at present. Planned exits from the service are at 100%. Proportion of needs met are all above 70% for clients exiting the service.

4. Domestic Abuse Substance Misuse Link Worker:

The funding has enabled START (substance misuse service) to provide an outreach worker to work alongside IDAS (community based support) and Sheffield refuges to support staff and service users where there are issues with substance misuse and the victim / survivor is living in safe accommodation. The post provides a link between the services, ensuring effective communication and promoting collaborative working for the safety of the service user. They undertake assessments for vulnerable service users in their accommodation and link them into the mainstream START service. The postholder is also able to contribute to wider safety plans and support delivery of training.

This post is being mainstreamed into the new contract for Substance Misuse treatment and recovery support to be awarded early in 2023.

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5. Survivor Liaison Worker

This post began at the end of March 2022 with South Yorkshire Housing Association as part of their co-production service. The postholder has focussed on maintaining the Domestic Abuse Service User Reference Group and conducted consultations with service users in safe accommodation resulting in useful learning on journey's into support and barriers to accessing support that has assisted with the action plan for the DA Safe Accommodation Strategy and will inform the new domestic and sexual abuse strategy to be developed next year.

It is aimed that external funding opportunities will fund this work next year (via national charity SafeLives) so the current contract will end at the end of March

6. Housing Advice

Shelter offer awareness raising sessions to domestic abuse support staff re. managing issues with housing, case consultations and direct case work. They are attending Case Management Meetings at each Refuge to discuss any housing related issues for each resident. Support has included housing advice re. complex cases (some of which have been passed to their legal team). Shelter attend at IDAS on a weekly basis including a remote option so that all staff at IDAS can seek housing support for clients on a weekly basis. This service

7. Therapeutic support for women

Paradigm offer therapeutic support (talking therapies) to women living in Sheffield Women's Aid refuges and Safe Zones including in community languages to enable them to recover from the impact of domestic abuse. 30 clients were supported up to the end of quarter 3. This service is proposed to continue via a contract variation in 23/24 and 24/25 but the amount will be reduced due to budget constraints.

8. Therapeutic support for all adult victims / survivors

Further therapeutic support for people in safe accommodation is commissioned from Mind. This service, Safe Space, was recommissioned in the autumn until end of March 2025, and provides art and drama therapy for victims/survivors aged 18 or over. 33 clients have been supported by the end of quarter 3. The service can be offered face to face or via zoom and client feedback and satisfaction is very good.

9. Therapeutic support for adults affected by sexual abuse / violence

Sheffield Rape And Sexual Abuse Centre were provided with a grant variation in order to provide therapeutic support to victims/ survivors who needed support with recovery due to having experienced sexual abuse or violence in a domestic abuse situation. 25 victims/ survivors had support during the year. 91% of clients in the service overall had a planned / positive exit from the service. 97% of those exiting said the service had helped them 'a lot' or 'in some ways'.

10. Therapeutic support for children and young people – all ages

Haven held the contract for one to one and group support to children and young people needing to recover from the impact of domestic abuse and were recommissioned during the year with a new contract starting in October. This includes funding to support children and young people living in safe accommodation. 69 children and young people in safe accommodation have been supported so far this this year. By the time of case

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closure 100% report feeling safer, and 100% report improved relationship with their family. 64% report an improvement in school attendance in Q3.

11. Therapeutic support for children and young people 11-18s

Sheffield Future's Door 43 service is commissioned via a contract variation (with the Integrated Commissioning Board) to provide counselling to children and young people who need support to recover from domestic abuse and who live in safe accommodation. 29 young people have received counselling. Feedback after planned exits from counselling has been very good e.g. "there has been a lot of changes, good changes. I feel good" and "words cant describe how much you have helped me".

12. Financial and welfare advice

Citizen's Advice Bureau are commissioned via a grant to provide financial, debt and welfare benefits advice to victims / survivors in safe accommodation. This has proven invaluable as the cost of living crisis has intensified. 84 clients have been supported year to date with benefit maximisation, PIP claims, issues with utility and communications companies (phones) and other debt issues. Some debts have been written off for clients. Training on early intervention on benefits and debts has also been provided to the domestic abuse services.

13. Healthy relationships training

This has been commissioned for the second year from Awareness Matters and training on their group work programme Escape the Trap which supports young people in understanding what are healthy relationships and what the warning signs of abusive relationships are. The training is offered to SCC youth work staff, youth justice, social care and also voluntary sector providers and health.

These commissions are enabling us to meet our statutory duties and implement our [Safe Accommodation and Domestic Abuse Strategy](#).

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Paper to Cooperative Exec. Spending plans at March 2022:

Service	Organisation	Proposed route/next steps	Dates	2022/2023 Amount
Contract Variations				
Support for victims / survivors with complex needs. Drug and alcohol worker	Start Service – Sheffield Health and Social Care Trust	Contract variation already in place	March 2022 – end March 2023	£33,000
Survivor liaison and engagement worker	South Yorkshire Housing Association	Contract for co-production with Changing Futures programme awarded February 2022. Variation to be put in place – agreed by Commercial Services in December. Less than 10% of contract value.	February 2022 – end March 2023	£22,000
Prevention, advice and casework - Housing advice and resettlement	Shelter	Contract variation needed	April 2022 – end March 2023	£64,000
Counselling for refuge clients	Paradigm	Contract variation needed	April 2022 – end March 2023	£12,500
Domestic Abuse community contract - support in dispersed temporary accommodation (Council properties) and for Sanctuary Scheme clients	Independent Domestic Abuse Service	Contract variation needed to in order to provide support to people in properties with Sanctuary Scheme measures	April 2022 – end March 2023	£215,498
Support for young women in safe accommodation -additional units	Young Women's Housing Project	Contract award includes additional units – funding to be reviewed annually	April 2022 – March 2027	£60,186

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Contracts				
Adult counselling	Mind	Remaining 8 months of existing contract This was tendered via the sourcing desk in the autumn 2021	November 2021 – end October 2022	£35,000
Children and Young Person counselling in safe accommodation	Sheffield Futures	Remaining 8 months of existing contract variation – the main contract is the CCG's	November 2021 – end October 2022	£46,667
Grant Variations				
Counselling for sexual violence in Domestic Abuse context	Sheffield Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre	Grant variation needed		£15,000
			April 2022 – end March 2023	
Benefits and debt advice	Citizens Advice Bureau	Grant variation needed	April 2022 – end March 2023	£71,000