

APPENDIX 3

Coventry Domestic Abuse Strategy 2018-2023: Addendum and Extension to 2025 (DRAFT)

Coventry Domestic Abuse Strategy

The Coventry Domestic Abuse Strategy was published in 2018 using the 4P framework of Prepare, Prevent, Protect and Pursue to support a systematic multi-agency approach to tackling Domestic Abuse:

Priority Area 1 PREPARE: The development of a strong governance and service commissioning structure to provide high quality, equitable services that are shaped around the needs of victims at all levels of risk and ensure that their voices are heard and responded to.	Priority Area 2 PREVENT: A long term approach to improve awareness, understanding and early identification of abuse at all levels of society. Victims will be empowered to report and staff will be given the skills and confidence to support them. Interventions tailored to victims with a range of needs will help to break the intergenerational cycle of abuse and minimise repeat victimisation.
Priority Area 3 PROTECT: There will be effective information sharing and referral pathways between key agencies, breaking down organisational and cultural barriers to ensure victims of abuse are identified and protected. The safety of victims, and that of their children (where applicable), will be paramount. Victims will be supported to access safe and appropriate accommodation; and safeguarding procedures will be robustly implemented to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected, and that the voice of the child is always heard.	Priority Area 4 PURSUE: An approach centred on achieving justice and positive outcomes for victims, including reductions in offending. There will be better understanding of perpetrator risk to support the use of court and out of court disposals so that they are held accountable for their actions and appropriately supported to understand and change their offending behaviour.

The strategy initially ran to 2023 and was accompanied by a multiagency action plan which was overseen by the Harm and Abuse Reduction Partnership reporting to the Police and Crime Board.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

In April 2021 the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal Assent. The Act provides, for the first time, a statutory definition of domestic abuse. It delivers a number of significant changes to strengthen the support for victims of abuse by statutory agencies and improve the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims and bringing perpetrators to justice.

The measures detailed in the Act fit within the framework of the current Coventry Domestic Abuse Strategy:

Priority Area 1 PREPARE:

- create a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, controlling or coercive, and economic abuse
- establish in law the office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner and set out the Commissioner’s functions and powers
- place the guidance supporting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (“Clare’s law”) on a statutory footing.
- provide for a statutory code of practice relating to the processing of domestic abuse data for immigration purposes
- extend the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the criminal courts in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to further violent and sexual offences

Priority Area 2 PREVENT:

- place a duty on local authorities in England to provide accommodation based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation (also PROTECT)
- Provide that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have ‘priority need’ for homelessness assistance (also PROTECT)
- ensure that where a local authority, for reasons connected with domestic abuse, grants a new secure tenancy to a social tenant who had or has a secure lifetime or assured tenancy (other than an assured shorthold tenancy) this must be a secure lifetime tenancy (also PROTECT)
- prohibit GPs and other health professionals in general practice from charging a victim of domestic abuse for a letter to support an application for legal aid (also PROTECT)

Priority Area 3 PROTECT:

- prohibit perpetrators of abuse from cross-examining their victims in person in the civil and family courts in England and Wales
- create a statutory presumption that victims of domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal, civil and family courts
- clarify the circumstances in which a court may make a barring order under section 91(14) of the Children Act 1989 to prevent family proceedings that can further traumatise victims

Priority Area 4 PURSUE:

- provide for a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order
- provide for a statutory domestic abuse perpetrator strategy
- enable domestic abuse offenders to be subject to polygraph testing as a condition of their licence following their release from custody
- extend the controlling or coercive behaviour offence to cover post-separation abuse.
- extend the offence of disclosing private sexual photographs and films with intent to cause distress (known as the “revenge porn” offence) to cover threats to disclose such material
- create a new offence of non-fatal strangulation or suffocation of another person.
- clarify by restating in statute law the general proposition that a person may not consent to the infliction of serious harm and, by extension, is unable to consent to their own death

Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board

The Act places a number of duties on Local Authorities including:

- The appointment of a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (DA LPD)
- Assessment of the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support in their area for all victims or their children, including those who come from outside the area.
- Developing and publishing a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their locality, having regard to the needs assessment.

The Coventry DA LPD has been established and is chaired by Cllr P Akhtar, Deputy Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities. The Act sets out statutory membership which includes people representing local authorities, victims and their children, domestic abuse charities or voluntary organisations, health care providers and the police or other criminal justice agencies.

The Coventry Domestic Abuse Strategy and action plan are now overseen by the DA LPD.

Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment 2021

Coventry City Council commissioned a comprehensive needs assessment to meet the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and to refresh the current Domestic Abuse Strategy. This included extensive consultation with stakeholder, service providers and survivors of domestic abuse. The full needs assessment can be found at:

https://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/download/5118/domestic_abuse_strategy_2018-2023

Domestic Abuse Strategy extension to 2025

Appendix 1 contains the key findings and recommendations document. This has been reviewed in the context of the current strategy and the 4Ps framework. Appendix 2 contains initial plans to deliver against the recommendations from the needs assessment. These have been mapped to the 4Ps framework to refresh and extend the Coventry Domestic Abuse Strategy to 2025.

Commissioning plans under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Local Authorities are required to develop and publish a strategy for the provision of accommodation-based domestic abuse support in their area for all victims or their children, having regard to the needs assessment. This support will include:

- 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 with relevant protected characteristics and / or complex needs, for example, interpreters, faith services, mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support, and immigration advice;
- Children’s support – including play therapy and child advocacy;

- Housing-related support – providing housing-related advice and support, for example, securing a permanent home and advice on how to live safely and independently; and
- Counselling and therapy for both adults and children.

Plans for 2021/22 are outlined in the Cabinet paper (*insert link*). These services will be reviewed against identified need, access, service user experience and outcomes. A longer-term investment plan will be developed to ensure the duties of the Act are met once future funding is clarified from the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review,

Delivery of the Coventry Domestic Abuse Strategy

Delivery of this strategy will be overseen by the DA LPD. In addition there will be reporting to the Police and crime Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure wide awareness of and engagement with the strategy and delivery of actions..