



# Northumberland

## County Council

### **FAMILY AND CHILDREN OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**2<sup>ND</sup> FEBRUARY 2023**

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#### **Domestic Abuse**

Report of Councillor Guy Renner Thompson, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People and Councillor Wendy Pattison, Portfolio Holder for Adults' Wellbeing

Interim Joint Directors of Children's Services, Graham Reiter and Andrey Kingham

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#### **Purpose of Report**

The purpose this is to provide Scrutiny with an update on the current domestic abuse multi-agency partnership arrangements and domestic abuse service provision to ensure Northumberland County Council meets the requirements of the statutory duties within section 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

#### **Recommendations**

The Committee is recommended:

1. Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

#### **Link to Corporate Plan**

A coordinated response to domestic abuse contributes to most of the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities but particularly to "living" and ensuring that residents feel safe in our community.

#### **Key Issues**

1. New statutory duties for Tier 1 Local Authorities introduced in section 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
2. Services to support victims, survivors, children, young people and those causing risk and harm.

#### **Background**

The new Domestic Abuse Act was passed into law in April 2021. With this new Act a range of new duties were placed on Local Authorities, including the need to provide support to survivors of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation services in their areas, this covers:

- Refuge accommodation
- Specialist safe accommodation
- Dispersed accommodation
- Sanctuary schemes
- Move on or second stage accommodation

Each Tier 1 Local Authority is also required to establish a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board that meets quarterly to support them in performing certain specified functions. To:

- Assess the need and demand for accommodation-based support for all victims and their children, including those who require cross-border support.
- Prepare and publish strategies for the provision of support to cover the locality and diverse groups of victims.
- Give effect to strategies by making commissioning / de-commissioning decisions
- Meet the support needs of victims and their children
- Monitor and evaluate local delivery
- Report back to central Government

### **Progress to date in Northumberland**

The domestic abuse multi-agency partnership arrangements were reviewed, and a new strategic Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board established. The Northumberland Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board had its first meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021, chaired by Graham Reiter, Service Director Children's Services and the Domestic Abuse Strategy was published on the Northumberland County Council website by 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022 as required.

In line with the County Council's commitment to ending violence against women and girls, and recognising its White Ribbon Accreditation, the Domestic Abuse Strategy sets out its vision:

*Northumberland is a county committed to having a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and sexual violence. Everyone matters and for that reason our vision is to make it everyone's business to help prevent and put a stop to domestic abuse and sexual violence in the county. We will listen and learn from victims, survivors and their children. We will be proactive, provide support and raise awareness in our communities. We will seek to change culture. Our vision is a vision for all and by working together we can make a difference.*

Domestic Abuse services were recommissioned from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022, moving to a new model of an Integrated Domestic Abuse Service with five contracts. The Integrated Domestic Abuse Service for Northumberland provides:

- services to address all levels of risk, and severity of domestic abuse and be accessible for all survivors of domestic abuse regardless of age.
- support for children and young people.
- fulfil the requirements of the new domestic abuse duties and meets the needs of victims, survivors and their families.
- targeted provision for the rural North and West of Northumberland
- and support for those causing harm who acknowledge the need to change their behaviour.
- Development of clear partnership communication strategies to ensure there is no 'wrong door' for service users

Northumberland Integrated Domestic Abuse Service:

1. Domestic Abuse Support Service Northumberland (DASSN) - provides an assessment hub, a refuge, dispersed properties, Independent Domestic Violence Advocates, a sanctuary scheme, outreach support, assertive outreach support groupwork and a service user forum. The service accepts agency and self-referrals for both male and female victims of domestic abuse over the age of 16.
2. Children's Counselling and Therapeutic and Outreach Support – provides outreach support to children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse, with an initial response, play therapy, counselling, outreach support and a children and young people's service user forum.
3. Changing Behaviour Service – works with both male and female (aged 18 and over) residents who agree to engage and take responsibility and wish to change their abusive behaviour. The service focuses on increasing the safety of partners, ex-partners, children and family members to reduce the incidents of domestic abuse within these relationships.
4. Adult Counselling Service – provides counselling for both male and female victim/survivors (aged 18 and over) to support them to cope and recover from their experiences.
5. Domestic Abuse in Rural Northumberland - provides support for males and females who reside in the North and West of the county to offer both face to face and virtual one to one sessions and support groups. Additionally, to work with other agencies to raise awareness in the communities of domestic abuse and sign-post service users to where additional support is available.

In addition to the commissioned services funding allocated by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to Tier 1 Local Authorities to deliver Part 4 Duties has been allocated internally to support the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board to implement the DA Strategy.

- A Domestic Abuse Analyst was appointed in March 2022 to support with the development of a multi-agency domestic abuse dashboard that will support the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board to identify themes and trends and monitor the effectiveness of the Domestic Abuse Strategy.
- A Domestic Abuse Trainer was appointed in December 2021 to support with the development and implementation of the domestic abuse training strategy to ensure multi agency staff have the skills and knowledge to identify and respond to domestic abuse.
- A Housing Safeguarding Officer was appointed in April 2022 to support the housing teams with their response to safeguarding including domestic abuse.
- A Child to Parent Violence & Abuse Officer appointed April 2022, as part of the Northumberland Adolescent Service, to increase capacity to offer support for parents, carers where child to parent violence and abuse has been identified as a concern.

### **Northumberland Domestic Abuse Summit**

The Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board facilitated a multi-agency domestic abuse summit on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2022 to review the progress of the Northumberland Domestic Abuse Strategy and consult on priorities for next year.

The summit was well attended by internal departments and partners agencies, who gave positive feedback on the multi-agency partnership arrangements, the domestic abuse training strategy and new service model. Challenges in ensuring the availability of resources, staffing levels, and managing waiting lists were identified for the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board to monitor.

Priorities for 2022- 2023 were discussed, with the support of national and local guest speakers, for consideration by the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board when it next meets in February 2023:

- A clear communication and awareness raising strategy, both staff and community focused.
- To continue to develop the multi-agency and single agency domestic abuse training offer, with a commitment across all agencies to prioritise staff accessing the training.
- To further develop and review the service offer and engagement in the rural areas.
- To provide evidence-based resources for schools and youth groups.
- To continue to strengthen the service user voice

## Implications

<b>Policy</b>	Ensure that NCC meets its new statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	The recommissioning of the domestic abuse services was developed to reflect both the statutory requirements and local needs analysis.  Value for money was achieved via an open market procurement exercise 2021/22
<b>Legal</b>	The Local Authority has a legal duty to provide domestic abuse services pursuant to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
<b>Procurement</b>	The Integrated Domestic Abuse Support Service was recommissioned 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2022
<b>Human Resources</b>	The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Lead was appointed November 2017.
<b>Property</b>	None
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached)  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	The Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment considered the equality agenda and ensured that minority groups are catered for within the service specification.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	None
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	The Integrated Domestic Abuse Support Service includes support for perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse.
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	The service providers are expected to hold regular service user forums to gain feedback from service users. This feedback is shared quarterly with the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board members to inform the monitoring and evaluation of the DA strategy and action plan.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	N/A
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Health and wellbeing are at the centre of service delivery. The aim of the domestic abuse services is to ensure victims and their children can find safe accommodation, access service provision to support with accessing additional services where appropriate.
<b>Wards</b>	All

## **Background Papers**

Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance July 2022:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/domestic-abuse-act-statutory-guidance>.

## **Report Sign Off**

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Lynsey Denyer obo Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Graham Reiter
Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllrs Guy Renner-Thompson & Wendy Pattison

## **Author and Contact Details**

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