

Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021 – 2024

Revised Final (Draft)



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Date completed: October 2021

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1 Position Statement

1.1 For many years the Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has been working hard to tackle issues related to domestic abuse. The CSP believes domestic abuse, in all forms, is completely unacceptable and not to be tolerated. It is committed to tackling it by preventing abuse from happening, supporting victims, and prosecuting offenders.

- **Prevention** – we want to stop domestic abuse from happening altogether. To do that we will focus on actions and initiatives that are preventative so that fewer people become victims.
- **Victims** – victims of domestic abuse, whoever they are, will have access to services that keep them safe and prevent further harm.
- **Offenders** – offenders will be held to account for their actions.

2. Introduction

2.1 In April 2021, the government released the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The measures in the Act aim to:

- **promote awareness** - to put abuse at the top of everyone's agenda, including by introducing a statutory definition of domestic abuse
- **protect and support victims**, including by introducing a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Order
- **transform the justice response**, including by helping victims to give their best evidence in the criminal courts through the use of video evidence, screens and other special measures, and ensuring that victims of abuse do not suffer further trauma in family court proceedings by being cross-examined by their abuser
- **improve performance** – the new Domestic Abuse Commissioner will help drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas and agencies.

2.2 Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a duty on Tier One local authorities (For example; Dorset Council) to assess the need for support and prepare strategies to provide support for victims and their children [who need to reside] in relevant accommodation.

2.3 The Act places a duty on each Tier One local authority in England to:

- I. Appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (LPB) which it must consult as it performs certain specified functions (below). **In Dorset, the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has adopted the role and functions of the LPB.**
- II. Assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for domestic abuse support in their area for all victims (and their children) who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those who come from outside of their area.
- III. Prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their area having regard to the need's assessment.
- IV. Give effect to the strategy (through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions).
- V. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.
- VI. Report back annually to central government.

- 2.4 Its important to stress that the passing of the Domestic Abuse Act is an evolving picture, therefore this strategy has been undertaken in the spirit of the new Act and worked as closely as possible to guidance currently available whilst also assessing the wider issues and needs relating to domestic abuse locally.

3. Informing the Strategy (Recommendations)

- 3.1 This strategy has been created following a thorough needs assessment, which primary focus (as set out in legislation) was to assess the level of need relating to support to victims of domestic abuse, including children, in domestic abuse safe accommodation (further details at appendix 1).
- 3.2 However, accommodation-based support is just one part of a much wider response to domestic abuse, so it has been necessary to go further and assess and look at the wider needs and issues. Given that, the needs assessment also looked at the community-based response to domestic abuse, aligning to partners local whole systems approach. This strategy does the same.
- 3.3 The recommendations from the need's assessment include:
1. Local Partnership Board (LPB) should explore strengthening the sanctuary / target hardening offer, including coordination.
 2. LPB should explore giving security to the provision to support children and young people in accommodation-based settings.
 3. LPB should explore national innovation and good practice to help inform local housing offer, including prevention, male provision, and housing options for perpetrators.
 4. Any future needs assessment should consider demand, needs and provision across other counties in the UK.
 5. Commissioners should work together to design services / system and seek joint commissioning opportunities.
 6. LPB should consider the impact of COVID.
 7. LPB should work to balance the system between prevention, perpetrator offer and reactive services.
 8. LPB should create an approach that enables people experiencing / who have experienced domestic abuse, their families, and the community to shape provision and the local response.

4. Activity (Responding to the Recommendations)

- 4.1 This strategy provides a foundation to shaping future commissioning activity in Dorset relating to domestic abuse. This includes working alongside partners existing ambitions, for example, taking a whole systems approach to commissioning, as set out in the commissioning outcomes at appendix 2.
- 4.2 In response to the recommendations coming from the need's assessment, activity will be channelled through the following key themes.
- 4.2.1 Prevention - Prevention activities focus on the development of perpetrator programmes; ensuring behaviour changing programmes are effective; making sure practitioners are skilled in understand domestic abuse issues; early education and intervention; preventing ongoing abuse and/or providing people with the skills to recognise abuse; and working with communities to challenge tolerance of domestic abuse.
- 4.2.2 Victims - The main focus is on reviewing and developing the current service offer through the Whole Systems Project, ensuring people experiencing/ who have experienced domestic abuse, their families, and the community help inform the design and commissioning of services.
- 4.2.3 Offenders - Dorset Police already takes a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse. This will be supported through public communications campaigns including highlighting key prosecutions.
- 4.3 Detailed actions and activity, setting out partners work will be captured in a delivery plan. In direct response to the recommendations set out at 3.3 this strategy will ensure partners:
1. Work together to strengthen the local housing offer, bringing coordination to ensure people remain in their own home safely, through sanctuary support.
 2. Bolstering housing related support for those in safe accommodation.
 3. Work together to provide greater security to the provision of support for children and young people in accommodation-based settings.
 4. Seek to learn from latest research, innovation, and best practice, to ensure the local offer is at the cutting edge and relevant to local need i.e. *Whole Housing Approach*¹.
 5. Undertake research to better understand the needs of our diverse communities including those with protective characteristics, and how we can ensure those needs are best met.
 6. Commissioners will work together to design services / system and seek joint commissioning opportunities, providing greater security and sustainability.
 7. Partners will use evidence and learning from the COVID 19 pandemic to influence future service design.
 8. Partners will always consider the whole system when designing services, ensure early intervention, prevention and reactive services are well balanced across the system and take account of the whole family.
 9. Partners will work alongside our communities to create a strong and resilient community response, ensuring those who use the services shape future provision.
 10. Continually raise awareness of domestic abuse, setting out the local offer, and how to respond in a way that is accessible to all.

¹ <https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/what-we-do/whole-housing-approach/>

- 4.4 Ultimately this strategy is an opportunity to ensure partners are putting in place a system that not only prevents abuse from happening in the first place, but also ensures that anyone affected by domestic abuse, has access to support, regardless of where they are on their journey.

5. Governance

- 5.1 This Strategy has been created and will be overseen by the Dorset Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The CSP reports directly to Dorset Council through the People and Health Scrutiny Committee (Designated Crime and Disorder Committee).
- 5.2 The membership of the CSP consists of core members who represent the responsible authorities under legislation and have voting rights and invited members who do not have voting rights.

Core (with voting rights)

- Dorset Council (1 representative - Portfolio Holder for Community Safety)
- Dorset Police (1 representative)
- Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (1 representative)
- Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Authority (1 representative)
- Probation Service - Dorset (1 representative)

Invited (without voting rights)

- Police & Crime Commissioner (or their office) (1 representative)
- Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service (1 representative)
- Dorset Domestic Abuse Forum (1 representative – Chair of the Forum)

Representatives will hold a senior position within their organisation.

The membership is supported by relevant officers. Other partners and colleagues will be invited to attend meetings according to items of business.

The quorum of the CSP is two core members.

- 5.3 The CSP meets at least quarterly and is supported by strategic subgroups that meet at least quarterly or sooner where work dictates. A joint commissioning group will be established to take forward future commissioning work relating to domestic abuse.
- 5.4 By adopting the role and functions of the Local Partnership Board, The Dorset CSP's Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-2024 is well placed to align and link to other local strategies, including housing, community safety and safeguarding.
- 5.5 For more information, or to raise a concern regarding this Domestic Abuse Strategy, [please contact the clerk of the Dorset CSP.](#)
- 5.6 A full review of the strategy will take place every three years, with an annual refresh.

Appendix 1

Responding to Statutory Guidance - Delivery of Support to Victims of Domestic Abuse, including Children, in Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Services

As already described throughout this strategy, the local ambition is to provide a plan in tackling the wider response to domestic abuse in Dorset.

However, the Dorset Council (in consultation with the Dorset CSP) has specific duties it must fulfil under section B3 of the [Draft statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk).

This appendix therefore sets out the response to statutory duties on local authorities, by providing a summary of the current offer, needs identified and how these will be addressed.

It is important to recognise that statutory guidance and regulations are still in draft format, out for consultation, and therefore subject to change.

Scale

'There are some 2.3 million victims of domestic abuse a year aged 16 to 74 (two-thirds of whom are women, one-third of whom are men) and more than one in ten of all offences recorded by the police are domestic abuse related²'

In 2020/2021, the total number of domestic abuse recorded crimes and incidents by Dorset Police totalled 6153. This is an increase from 2019/2020 when 5372 were recorded, and 2018/2019 when 4140 were recorded.

According to the ONS (Police recorded domestic abuse related incidents and crimes, Domestic Abuse in England and Wales Data Tool³) 2019/2020 data indicates Dorset is relatively comparable with other local areas of a similar nature, and to that of the South West and England and Wales, falling somewhere in the middle.

Voice of the person

Critical to any local response, is understanding the needs of the community and the people who access and use the services. In the needs assessment and through this strategy, the voice of the person and our communities has been consolidated using local and national feedback that cuts across the whole system. It is recognised that more can and should be done to engage with the community so this strategy is a starting point to a longer term approach that will aim to engage with communities, particularly those that are isolated and hard to reach, so they can help shape the future local response. The Dorset CSP is *'committed to consult with survivors, including those who face intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination, and to co-produce future versions of the strategy⁴'*.

² [Domestic Abuse Act 2021: overarching factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-act-2021-overarching-factsheet)

³

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesdatatool>

⁴ <https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/media/11072/part-4-wha-strategy-template-guidance.pdf>

Community (people who access use the services) feedback from providers

The following headlines are based on feedback from local surveys with those who have accessed and used the services. The results have been grouped into headings to anonymise results:

- Communication between people (who access and use the services) and professionals / agencies is key.
- Well trained professionals are more likely to get a positive response from those who access and use the services.
- Challenges remain for those people with complex needs.
- More general awareness of the support services available is needed.
- More information and awareness of what domestic abuse is and the different forms it takes is needed.
- People want to be listened too, supported to make decisions, not judged.
- People in receipt of specialist support report feeling safer.
- Provision needs to be led by those who need them.

NRCN (National Rural Crime Network)

In 2019, Dorset took part in the NRCN research on Captive and Controlled Domestic Abuse in Rural Areas. The research undertook a wide-ranging review into the problems faced by those who experience domestic abuse, who live in a rural location, interviewing a range of stakeholders, and undertaking a survey which received over 800 responses from members of the public. The report included consultation with 7 rural areas across the UK. The findings and recommendations from the 7 areas are published [online](#) and have been used to help shape the local response.

Links to other national feedback used to help shape the local response includes:

- [Mayor of London – Survivors Consultation](#)
 - Challenges accessing support
 - More counselling and therapeutic support that is flexible and accessible.
- [SafeLives Survivor stories](#)
- [Safelives safe at home survey](#) (taken during COVID)
 - 52% of respondents reported feeling worried about finances
 - 75% of respondents reported feeling worried about mental health
 - 51% of respondents reported feeling worried about children
 - 39% of respondents reported feeling worried about housing
- Womens Aid '[Survivors say domestic abuse is escalating under lockdown](#)'
 - 67 per cent of survivors who are currently experiencing abuse said it has got worse since Covid-19 and 72 per cent said their abuser had more control over their life.
 - Over three-quarters (78 per cent) of survivors reported to the Women's Aid Survivor Survey that Covid-19 has made it harder for them to leave their abuser.
 - Of the survivors with child contact arrangements, 40 per cent told the Women's Aid Survivor Survey that child contact arrangements have been used to further abuse and 35 per cent said they were concerned about the safety of child contact during this time
- [Mankind Survivor Stories](#)
 - Challenges accessing support i.e. 61% of the men who call the ManKind Initiative helpline have never spoken to anyone before about the abuse they are suffering and 64% would not have called if the helpline was not anonymous.
 - Half of male victims (49%) fail to tell anyone they are a victim of domestic abuse and are two and a half times less likely to tell anyone than female victims (19%).
 - 11% of male victims (7.2% women) have considered taking their life due to partner abuse. The charity has seen an increase in calls regarding suicide ideation over the pandemic period.

Current offer

Dorset has a wide and varied offer when it comes to accommodation-based support for people experiencing domestic abuse. Dorset Council commissions an Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (IDAS) that includes refuge and move on accommodation through dispersed accommodation. Target Hardening (sanctuary schemes) also exists across Dorset and there is specialist provision for people with complex needs.

Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (IDAS). The accommodation-based element of the service is based within shared refuge and dispersed units, where practical, financial, and emotional advice and support is offered to people experiencing domestic abuse to enable them to build resilience and gain independence. The support is identified by comprehensive needs and risk assessment and management plans involving the individuals in receipt of support. The offer includes 24-hour access to support, from physical to telephone and on call support. This offer is intended to be short-term emergency accommodation to women and their children at a time of crisis, with people having access to this support for up to 6 months (this has been longer during COVID), with a focus on maximising independence. The offer is fully inclusive and includes specialist provision for more complex cases (i.e. women with older children). IDAS work with a wide range of partners to understand and meet the person's needs, this can include health requirements, police etc. The IDAS also provides support to enable people to remain safe at home which includes outreach support, housing related support as well as target hardening measures to make properties more secure, which has been secured through MHCLG grant funding (Led by Harts District Council).

Community Accommodation-Based Support Offer. In 2018/19, and following a successful bid to central government, Dorset Council worked with Harts District Council and the YOU Trust (You First delivering IDAS) to create the 'Making Safer Scheme'. Within this has been the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion worker, Children and Young Person's worker and Health Advocates, alongside additional target hardening provision to support people feel safer and remain living at home.

Alongside this, Registered Social Landlords support people with target hardening measures to people living in their properties. Equally, the Dorset Council Housing department will assess those cases where the person is living in a privately rented or owned property. To support these requests, the Safe Partnership and You First support with target hardening works which includes strengthened doors, locks, window frames and fire resistance measures. Dorset Fire and Rescue have recently made an approach to support target hardening by offering safe and well visits; and Dorset Police are considering additional security fitting support through their Bobby Van.

Other housing options in Dorset include:

- Access to the rent deposit scheme
- If the victim is unable to remain in their home because they are at risk of domestic abuse, they can contact the Council for homelessness support

The current offer is described on the Dorset Council's website (www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dvahelp). Access to safe accommodation is advertised on the national Roots to Support data base. Partners across Dorset promote awareness of the support available through public campaigns and local initiatives.

Needs identified and how to address them

Dorset Council Housing - The reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a duty due to domestic abuse has remained consistent over the past three years.

Accommodation at time of application recorded as a refuge for the year 2019/2020 at the time of the application was 2%. This is in line with the national trend for the same year which was 2.1%.

Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (IDAS) – Understanding the scale of people requiring accommodation-based support is challenging. Noticeably because accommodation-based support is varied, based on availability and advertising, and given the majority of people living in a Dorset refuge (or similar) have come from outside of the area. **For example, in 2018/19, 72% of the referrals came from out of area, and 63% in 2019/20.** Since 2018 the number of people looking for some form of refuge support has been decreasing. This is against a backdrop of increased advertising and awareness raising, and during a time where more people have come forward to report domestic abuse and the COVID 19 pandemic. Its important to stress that caution should be treated with this narrative, given over the past 18 months, the country and communities have been living with COVID 19, which has included national lockdown's and local restrictions. More work should be undertaken in future needs assessment to understand this better.

Sanctuary Scheme / Target Hardening – Since 2018, the Safe Partnership has delivered target hardening to 86 properties in Dorset albeit feedback from the provider suggests referrals are lowering. Since the inception of the Making Safer Scheme in 2018/19, it has responded to 410 requests. Data from the Making Safer Scheme also showed that most requests come from those living in a housing association property, followed by private rented. It is likely that the number of people who have received some form of target hardening measure is higher than our recorded figures as some may have taken measures to fit security measures within their own home or had things installed by a landlord.

Diversity

This strategy will align with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010 to ensure survivors with protected characteristics as well as those who face multiple disadvantages have access to the safe accommodation support services they need.

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Equality Act recognises that, in certain circumstances, substantive equality will only be achieved if people with different protected characteristics can be treated differently, for example, to reflect their needs. This law enables commissioners of services to actively consider commissioning specialist and single sex services to meet particular need⁵.

⁵ <https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/media/11072/part-4-wha-strategy-template-guidance.pdf>

The current offer is available to people with protective characteristics. However, engaging with communities and people from diverse backgrounds remains a challenge. The numbers setting out referrals from those people with protective characteristics for accommodation-based support are low and for that reason unable to be included in this strategy. Dorset benefits from the successful 'Dragonfly Project' which essentially aims to work with the community to enable people from isolated communities (those who traditionally find it challenging to access support) to access specialist support. More work should be considered in future needs assessments that enables partners to better understand if the collective offer is right for everyone. A full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been undertaken alongside the creation of this strategy. Details of the EQIA can be found [here](#).

As part of the local offer, specialist provision for complex cases is available for women experiencing domestic abuse who would not normally access traditional refuge. This includes mothers with older male children.

Over the past few years, and more recently during COVID-19, the local offer has included refuge accommodation for men, however, despite extensive advertising locally and national, it has received little interest. When there have been referrals, feedback suggests the through-put is much quicker, with men wishing to gain independence much sooner. At the time of writing this needs assessment, Mankind released their report titled 'making invisible men visible'. The report sets out the challenges for men who are affected by domestic abuse and require access to appropriate housing support. The report also describes that men approaching housing as homeless is becoming an increasing problem. Partners should work together to understand the barriers, identifying appropriate provision that is accessible for men.

Support for children in accommodation-based settings

Children exposed to domestic abuse are more likely to become either victims or perpetrators later in life. Although partners in Dorset recognise the need to have services for victims, they also want to stop domestic abuse from happening in the first place. By bolstering our work with children in safe accommodation we can help prevent that from happening.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises for the first time, children as victims of domestic abuse. Equally, the new duties placed on local authorities to provide support in accommodation-based settings extends to support for children. Each of these measures are an important milestone in the response to children and young people affected by domestic abuse.

In Dorset some support for children in accommodation-based settings is available. This includes Children and Young Person (CYP) workers who work across all safe accommodation settings. The CYP workers work with children and young people to help them come to terms with their experiences of DVA, help them in their journey in the accommodation-based setting, with schools, and changes to friendship groups. The CYP workers link in with the Children Service's and other agencies to ensure a holistic approach.

The current offer has been secured through grant funding from central government, however, greater security to this offer will need to be made available via the New Burden's Funding. This should include further development to the current offer which links well to taking a more preventative approach to domestic abuse.

Location hot spots

Referrals for refuge most commonly come from outside of the area; with 72% in 2018/19 and 63% in 2019/2020. Considering Dorset, in 2018/19, West Dorset made the most referrals from within the County and in 2019/20 it was West Dorset and North Dorset. Work is currently underway with other local authorities in the South West region to understand the demand and provision available in their areas and will be included in future needs assessment and strategy work.

What the providers and stakeholders told us?

A survey was completed with local providers / stakeholders to help our understanding around; what is working well; what isn't working so well; gaps going in to the future and potential solutions. Here is what they said...

What is working well?

- Dorset is innovative and creative in its approach, particularly how it engages hard to reach communities to improve access to support.
- Emergency accommodation is well catered and managed COVID pressures well.
- A wide-ranging target hardening offer.
- Specialist offer allowing women with older children and complex cases to access refuge accommodation / safe house.

What is not working so well?

- More could be done to coordinate and provider sustainable funding for the target hardening offer.
- More communication on what support is available across the housing spectrum.
- Unaffordability of the housing market creates barriers to access housing.
- Poverty and debt is a barrier for a victim wanting to remove themselves.
- The fear of having to give up a housing association tenancy.

What are the gaps?

- Support for men who require emergency housing support – they do not appear to want refuge type provision.
- Longer term and sustainable approach to supporting children in accommodation-based settings.
- Housing offer for perpetrators, including older people.

Suggested solutions

- Widen the housing options for people experiencing domestic abuse.
- Create safe spaces in each town where people can access support / advice.
- Create a clear housing pathway for people affected by domestic abuse.
- Floating emergency beds for young / older people.
- Maximise duty to refer to help victims to get referred for housing assistance at the earliest opportunity.
- Establish emergency transport links for victims.
- Easy read literature on accommodation options.
- Local Housing Allowance freeze.
- Choice of housing officer offered i.e. female / male worker.
- Sustainability for young people specialise support.
- Emergency accommodation for perpetrators.

Learning from the COVID-19 pandemic

During COVID-19 the IDAS provider reported that people were becoming less likely to request refuge type support, with alternative options being sought i.e. outreach, help and advice, counselling, and therapeutic support. This trend needs to be monitored closely as lockdown measures are eased.

Funding

Dorset Council commissions an Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (IDAS) that provides a wide range of services including information and advice, helpline, outreach, and support in safe accommodation. The total cost of the contract is approx. £337,500 a year. The service is commissioned by the Commissioning Team in the Adult & Housing Directorate. The funding comes from base budget.

The Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government (MHCLG) has recently provided Dorset Council with £650,000 'New Burdens Funding' to help deliver their new statutory duties. The Council is only able to use the funding to provide support to those in relevant safe accommodation. The expectation is that the funding will be spent within the current financial year. Funding for future years is dependent on Government spending reviews. The funding cannot be used for capital expenditure. A proposal is currently being drafted on how to spend the New Burden's funding.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is evident through the evidence gathered that Dorset has good coverage of accommodation-based support, particularly that of refuge and sanctuary / target hardening support. The county also benefits from an innovative provider who has brought additional provision to the area including specialist support for complex cases.

Looking forward more could be achieved through strengthening the coordination of the housing offer, particularly the sanctuary / target hardening offer and explore learning from innovation elsewhere in the country (i.e. Whole Housing Approach) looking at options that enable people to remain at home, prevent ongoing abuse, support for men and housing options for perpetrators of domestic abuse.

It is recommended that research is undertaken to better understand the needs of our diverse communities including those with protective characteristics, and how we can ensure those needs are best met. This should include understanding the needs and barriers of other counties across the UK, given a significant proportion of the local offer is serving those who live outside of the county.

Section 3.3 of this Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-2024 sets out the recommendations from the full need's assessment (inclusive of appendix 1), and section 4.3 sets out in broad terms out the recommendations will be met. Detailed actions and activity, setting out partners work will be captured in a delivery plan.

Appendix 2

Logic Model – Domestic Abuse - Whole Systems Approach

Objective: Working together to provide support and prevent domestic abuse in our communities

