

## **Responses to Scrutiny Review Recommendations**

### **Report to Overview Committee**

Title of the review: Domestic Abuse and accommodation working group

Date review completed: 13 July 2021

Date Presented to Cabinet: 5 August 2021

Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Ellis

Chair of the review group: Councillor Roxanne Ellis

Officer supporting the review: Helen Lee/Alec Dubberley

Response due to the Overview Committee (28 days): 2 September 2021

#### **Guidance**

The final report and recommendations from the above review have been considered by Cabinet and a written response to the recommendations from the responsible Cabinet Member to the Overview Committee is required within twenty eight days of the date the review was presented to Cabinet.

If you need any further assistance in completing this response please contact the Officer that supported the review

#### **Recommendation 1**

The Executive recognises the financial savings achieved and the benefits to clients of the Sanctuary Scheme and ensures that the service continues to receive funding at a level that fully meets the needs of families to enable them to live safely.

(Please tick) Recommendation   Accepted ✓   Partly accepted ☐   Do not accept ☐

The Panel's recognition of the value of the Sanctuary scheme is welcome. Despite budgetary pressures Gedling BC has maintained its commitment to the scheme. This has proved particularly useful over the last year in responding to the pressures caused by the Covid pandemic

The implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 gives the County Council the

statutory responsibility to commission support services, in conjunction with a Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board. MCHLG funding has been provided for 2021/2 to support the implementation of this duty.

The Commissioning Plan offers funding of up to £20k providing it is matched by the Borough Council. Using the current budget plus additional funding from the Housing and Homelessness service will enable us to make maximum use of this offer. So for 2021/22 the resources available should be four times the previous level. Further discussions will be necessary within the Partnership Board for future years which the Council will need to consider as part of its budget setting process.

## **Recommendation 2**

Work is undertaken to Increase awareness for both the public and staff members of domestic abuse and the services available to address this issue using the website, Contacts magazine and council owned buildings, leisure centres, community centres, Intranet etc.

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted ☒ Partly Accepted ☐ Do not accept ☐

Awareness work has previously been undertaken by the Public Protection Service in conjunction with the Communications Team. This has often tied in with IWD and White Ribbon events.

Limited physical access to the Civic Centre and other buildings during lockdown has reduced the effectiveness of posters etc.

Materials are readily available and it would be appropriate for these to be refreshed in the Council's buildings as well as key community buildings.

Campaigns need to be co-ordinated with the Police and other partners and will be included in the Public Protection Service supported by the Communications Team.

## **Recommendation 3**

The Council pro-actively works with organisations such as JUNO so that they can be given access to council owned buildings to provide outreach/drop-in session.

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted ☒ Partly Accepted ☐ Do not accept ☐

The Council would be happy to support sessions by support agencies in its premises where this would be suitable. However, it may be that community facilities are more suitable for drop-in sessions. The Public Protection Service will support agencies in this.

The Civic Centre had been made available for JUNO to hold individual sessions in the Civic Centre in 2020 but the closure of public buildings due to Covid prevented this.

#### **Recommendation 4**

Compulsory training on identifying and interacting with victims of domestic abuse is given to front line officers and elected members and that this is delivered at future member inductions.

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted ☒ Partly Accepted ☐ Do not accept ☐

Compulsory training is already required for many front line officers. A review of those trained over the last three years is underway and will identify needs for refresher training or gaps.

Good quality training is available online which officers can do when it is convenient.

Domestic Abuse was part of the general safeguarding briefing in the members induction in 2017. The Induction Programme will be reviewed in advance of the next election with the suggestion that it is a standalone element.

#### **Recommendation 5**

A section on safeguarding considerations including domestic abuse is included as a specific section in committee and decision reports.

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted ☐ Partly Accepted ☒ Do not accept ☐

Although it is recognised that decision-makers should take account of safeguarding concerns, and that report writers should draw them to their attention it is considered that most reports would state "no safeguarding implications" which would reduce the effectiveness of a specific section. However, it is proposed that the guidance on the equalities section could be expanded to include safeguarding concerns.

## Recommendation 6

The Portfolio Holders with responsibility for Public Protection and Housing continue to monitor the need for refuge provision with a view to providing an adequate level of funding for delivering dispersed refuge and “move on” accessible accommodation in the Borough.

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted ☒ Partly Accepted ☐ Do not accept ☐

Responsibility for the adequacy of refuge provision (of various types) rests with Tier 1 authorities working with the Local Domestic Abuse Partnership. Gedling BC is represented on the Partnership with the relevant portfolio holders receiving feedback from our officer representative. We are committed to working with the partnership to improve the response to Domestic Abuse

The initial countywide needs assessment recognises that there is a need for further refuge places in Nottinghamshire. We welcome this.

## Recommendation 7

Partnership working across the country for the provision of refuge spaces continues offering accommodation on a reciprocal basis. This should be based on need rather than geographical residence in Gedling.

(Please tick) Recommendation Accepted ☐ Partly Accepted ☒ Do not accept ☐

There are a range of refuge providers – some are commissioned by local authorities while others are independent charities. They operate according to need – so, for instance, a survivor may wish to be located away from their local area for safety. There are established mechanisms for finding safe locations but these are not formalised as reciprocal arrangements.

The Panel may have been thinking of the need for temporary accommodation. Its report notes that all those in need of temporary accommodation are assessed on their circumstances and that some weight is given to residence in Gedling. While this does disadvantage survivors without any connection wanting to relocate to Gedling it is difficult to see how a reciprocal arrangement could be established with their home authority.