

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2023

Report Title	Domestic Abuse Strategy Statement			
Purpose of Report	This report responds to the motion passed by Full Council on 19 April 2023 and outlines the countywide work being undertaken to provide a co-ordinated and comprehensive community response to Domestic Abuse in Gloucestershire.			
Decision	The Committee RESOLVES to note the report.			
Consultation and Feedback	Cllr Katrina Davis, who proposed the original motion, has been consulted on the content of this report in response to the motion.			
Report Author	Pippa Stroud, Head of Housing Solutions Email: pippa.stroud@stroud.gov.uk Laura Stephen, Senior Housing Strategy Officer Email: Laura.Stephen@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	None.			
Background Papers	Council Motion 19 April 2023 Countywide Domestic Abuse Strategy			
Appendices	Appendix A – Domestic Abuse Strategy Map			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	Yes	No	No

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At Full Council on 19 April 2023 Councillor Katrina Davis proposed a Motion relating to the Council’s response to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. In accepting that motion, Council asked officers to prepare a report for consideration by Strategy and Resources Committee to set out this council’s role in addressing Domestic Abuse within the context of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the County Council’s Domestic Abuse Strategy.
- 1.2 This report has been prepared in response to that motion.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 created a statutory definition of domestic abuse together with commitments both legislative and non-legislative designed to:
- Promote awareness of domestic abuse;
 - Protect and support victims and their families;
 - Transform the justice process and to prioritise victim safety and provide an effective response to perpetrators;

- And to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas, agencies and sectors.
- 2.2 Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act sets out particular duties for local authorities with the proviso that Tier 1 local authorities (the County Council) will lead on the necessary requirements, but that Tier 2 (district authorities) will co-operate and work with the County Council in this regard.
 - 2.3 In line with statutory duty the County Council has developed and published a Domestic Abuse Strategy for Gloucestershire. The duty requires the strategy to consider the support needs of victims of domestic abuse and their children in relevant safe accommodation.
 - 2.4 In Gloucestershire the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board has chosen to widen the scope of its strategy to ensure a holistic approach to domestic abuse experienced by all victims and their children, not limited to those receiving support in safe accommodation.
 - 2.5 The main domestic abuse service provision for the county is provided by Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) via GreenSquareAccord. The service provides a range of community-based support for victims of domestic abuse aged 16+. The service is designed to meet the needs of all victims in Gloucestershire, regardless of risk. This service is commissioned by Gloucestershire County Council.

3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1 The Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy (2021-2024) features wide ranging priorities with a comprehensive action plan including a range of actions on housing, workplace development and increasing support; for example, trauma focused counselling and dedicated children's support provision.
- 3.2 The Gloucestershire Strategy relies on district partnerships playing a central role with the wider partnership approach to support a coordinated and consistent community response to domestic abuse.
- 3.3 Gloucestershire Housing Partnership Team includes a Domestic Abuse and Housing Programme Manager (with a Coordinator currently being recruited) who represent the districts at the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and lead the delivery of housing actions from the countywide Strategic Action Plan. This post is funded by the 6 districts through DLUHC funding to cover the administrative burdens in supporting the County Council in their legislative duties.
- 3.4 District Community Safety Partnerships lead on assessing local need and options for addressing domestic abuse and sexual violence at a local level through the development of a place-based plan.
- 3.5 The Council's Head of Community Services chairs the Stroud District Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The CSP has developed the Stroud Community Safety Plan with a priority focusing on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. Two subgroups have been developed which will focus on domestic abuse and sexual violence respectively.
- 3.6 The Council is also working in partnership with Cotswold, Tewkesbury and Forest of Dean District Councils to fund a Rural Champion Coordinator. The Coordinator will lead on the development of a rural champions network to create a zero-tolerance community approach to domestic abuse in rural areas.

- 3.7 This new 2-year post will be based within Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) and will identify and train professionals and members of the public to act as champions in rural communities, raising awareness of domestic abuse and increasing referrals and access to specialist support services. The CSP is also actively targeting businesses to sign up as safe spaces across the district.
- 3.8 In terms of support to individuals experiencing domestic abuse, the Council also works closely with both Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) and the Stroud Beresford group in linking clients into specialist support. The Housing Advice team operates an automatic referral service for clients to GDASS.
- 3.9 In 2021, MHCLG awarded partnership funding to the districts in Gloucestershire to pilot a countywide Domestic Abuse Intervention Officer role to support survivors of domestic abuse experiencing multiple disadvantages to navigate housing and homelessness pathways. In 2022, Gloucestershire County Council agreed to continue this funding and expanded the provision to two officers covering the whole county. The officers work closely with housing advice teams to achieve survivor-led housing outcomes in a timely manner.
- 3.10 The Council provides funding to Stroud Beresford Group, which owns and manages the only refuge provision in the county, providing accommodation for 9 families and wider support in the community through outreach services. The Housing Advice Team has a move-on agreement with the Stroud Beresford Group and once a client is ready to move on, Community Based Support supports the client in setting up home to ensure that the tenancy is successful.
- 3.11 The Countywide Places of Safety model also provides safe interim accommodation for those fleeing violence. It has recently been re-tendered to increase provision from 2 to 24 units countywide. The service provider for this contract will be working with housing providers in each district to increase provision accordingly. The Council currently leases 2 units to this scheme.
- 3.12 The Council leads on commissioning of the Countywide Target Hardening and Sanctuary Scheme which ensures the provision of security measures within the victim's own home, and in higher risk cases the provision of a sanctuary room (reinforced doors and an alarm). This is a jointly commissioned and funded partnership between the 6 district councils, the County Council (Fire and Rescue Service) and the OPCC. Over the last 5 years 115 (awaiting q4 figures so will increase accordingly) households have had target hardening measures installed to enable them to remain safely at home.
- 3.13 Referrals to GDASS for the Target Hardening and Sanctuary Scheme are over 6 times higher than those for refuge requests. This is to be expected for a community-based model and demonstrates the importance of a scheme that enables victims of domestic abuse to remain safely within their own home. Victims offered this scheme are also provided with ongoing GDASS support within their own accommodation.
- 3.14 More locally, the Council has developed an HR policy for staff who may be experiencing Domestic Abuse themselves or being affected by Domestic Abuse in other ways.
- 3.15 Tenant Services is currently developing a Domestic Abuse policy with the support of the Countywide Domestic Abuse and Housing Coordinator. This will be presented at a future Housing Committee and Members will be invited to comment at draft stage.
- 3.16 Gloucestershire Housing Partnership Team are starting to draw up proposals for funding to resource Project Leads to implement Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation work across the county. DAHA accreditation is recognised by the

Government as the benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse. The accreditation standards apply to housing management and housing options, and as one of only two stock holding Authorities in Gloucestershire, the Partnership Team would be looking to prioritise resourcing for Stroud.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Council's response to Domestic Abuse sits within the comprehensive Countywide Strategy which aims to minimise the harm caused by Domestic Abuse, protecting victims and their families, preventing recurrence, and supporting the victim either to remain safely in place or move on in a planned and supported way.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications as a result of this decision. The report sets out work currently undertaken within existing budgets.

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5.2 Legal Implications

The legal implications are as follows:

The Council has a statutory duty to comply with the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the Council is complying with that duty by engaging with the appropriate parties to implement the requirements.

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5.3 Equality Implications

There are not any specific changes to service delivery proposed within this decision.

5.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.