

Report subject	<b>Domestic Abuse Strategy</b>
Meeting date	16 December 2020
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	This strategy sets out the key priorities for the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Community Safety Partnership (CSP) in tackling domestic abuse and outlines the key areas for action over the next three years. The strategy aims to ensure that service users are at the centre of our work, that we respond to local need and that we work collaboratively to deliver our ambitious vision that “no resident living within or visiting Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole should live in fear of, or experience domestic abuse.”
Recommendations	<p><b>It is RECOMMENDED that:</b></p> <p><b>Cabinet approve the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Domestic Abuse Strategy</b></p>
Reason for recommendations	In order to meet the duties placed on local authorities by the Domestic Abuse Bill 2020 and to provide a framework to improve the response from statutory partners to domestic abuse.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor May Haines, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety
Corporate Director	Kate Ryan, Corporate Director Environment & Community
Report Authors	<p>Kelly Ansell, Director of Communities</p> <p>Andrew Williams, Head of Safer Communities</p>
Wards	All Wards
Classification	For Decision

## **Background**

1. The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Community Safety Partnership was formed as a partnership in April 2019 following local government re-organisation. This is therefore our first Domestic Abuse Strategy which brings together the foundations of the work within the previous legacy local authorities and Pan-Dorset partners. We have taken the opportunity to rescale our ambition and reshape our response to domestic abuse in this new strategy for the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole geography.
2. Victims, survivors, their children and loved ones deserve help at the time of crisis and to be kept safe. They deserve help to cope and recover from the trauma, support from the criminal justice system to bring those responsible to justice, and action to drive this horrific, lifechanging crime from our society.
3. In developing this strategy, partners have worked together to consider how we can secure the best outcomes, learning from experience, considering evidence of need and looking at national best practice to frame our plans.
4. One of the statutory functions of the Community Safety Partnership is to undertake Domestic Homicide Reviews, when there is a local death that relates to domestic abuse. These are multi-agency reviews that look into the circumstances of the death, whether agencies were involved with the perpetrator or victim and whether there are lessons that can be learnt to improve our response to domestic abuse.

## **Development of the Domestic Abuse Strategy**

5. In May 2020 initial steps were started to develop a BCP CSP Domestic Abuse Strategy. The first phase focused on reviewing academic research including national and local publications; reviewing achievements to date from the previous pan-Dorset Domestic Abuse strategy and reviewing outstanding actions and challenges to date.
6. Phase two of the development stage began in June and consisted of detailed SWOT analysis across agencies; a review of Domestic Homicide Review lessons learnt and local data collection.
7. Phase 3 of the development stage began in July and consisted of a comprehensive analysis of accessible data and data provided by partner agencies; identification of the vision and priorities; a multitude of cross agency focus groups and consultation of an initial draft strategy.

## **Summary of Contents**

8. Domestic abuse is something that can happen to anyone and it's prevalence is as significant as many other social issues, if not more so. It is estimated that if one in four women and one in six men experience domestic abuse then this would impact around 53,000 women and 31,000 men residing across BCP.
9. The ambitious vision set out in this strategy is that "no resident living within or visiting Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole should live in fear of, or experience domestic abuse."
10. The Community Safety Partnership aims to achieve this by:
  - Preventing violence and abuse through a commitment to working to develop a "whole family, whole picture" approach across all our services

- A commitment to co-commissioning services for victims, perpetrators and children impacted by domestic abuse to ensure we have services in place that are effective in assessing and responding to multiple needs
  - A commitment to working collaboratively to reduce the harm caused by domestic abuse
  - Responding to perpetrators by supporting criminal justice agencies in pursuing them through the criminal justice system and a commitment to challenging and changing the behaviour of perpetrators through the availability of domestic abuse perpetrator programmes
11. The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Community Safety Partnership is responsible for and committed to ensuring the successful delivery of the Domestic Abuse Strategy and its ambitious commitments to change. It is acknowledged that whilst the vision for the strategy references visitors to the BCP area, some Council services will only be accessible to residents.
  12. A comprehensive delivery plan will be developed, implemented and monitored by the BCP Domestic Abuse Strategic Group, which will report into the BCP Community Safety Partnership.
  13. The BCP Community Safety Partnership is interlinked with the work of the Safeguarding Adults Board and the Safeguarding Children's Partnership, where Domestic Abuse are also key priorities.

### **Summary of legal implications**

14. The Domestic Abuse Bill 2020 is currently working its way through Parliament. The Bill includes a new duty on Tier 1 local authorities to assess the need for and commission support to victims and their children in domestic abuse safe accommodation in England. Subject to the successful passage of the bill, the new duty will come into force in April 2021.
15. Alongside this duty for local authorities, the Domestic Abuse Bill seeks to:
  - Create a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, coercive or controlling, and economic abuse.
  - Provide that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have 'priority need' for homelessness assistance.
  - Provide for a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order.
  - 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.
  - Place the guidance supporting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme ("Clare's law") on a statutory footing.

### **Summary of financial implications**

16. BCP Council currently commission specialist domestic abuse services to a value to £425,000 per year, providing 2 refuges and an Outreach service supporting victims

of domestic abuse and their children. This puts us in a good place to fulfil the new statutory duty.

17. The Council also has a specifically earmarked reserves for domestic abuse projects which can be used to deliver this Domestic Abuse Strategy. In particular this will fund a Perpetrator programme for 2021/22, which was previously funded through a Home Office grant, as well as ensuring there is capacity within services for victims in order to meet any raised demand due to the Covid pandemic. During 2021/22 a sustainable funding strategy will be developed to maintain services, with opportunities for co-commissioned services with other statutory partners playing a central role in this.
18. The Government has recently announced a Domestic Abuse Capacity Building Fund which aims to help ensure local authorities can undertake early planning and preparation work ahead of implementation of the new duty. This fund will be allocated equally across Tier 1 local authorities in England, at £50,000 each. For BCP Council it is proposed that this funds an independent housing needs analysis for victims of domestic abuse, in order to ensure that the current provision meets current and future needs. Alongside this it will provide additional capacity within the Community Safety team to prepare for the implementation of new duty and this BCP Strategy

### **Summary of public health implications**

19. In terms of public health, domestic abuse has a range of serious physical and mental health consequences for victims which can be long lasting. As well as acute and chronic physical impacts there are strong links with suicide and self-harm.
20. Half of all people who report domestic abuse have children. Living with domestic abuse adversely affects children's health, development, relationships, behaviour and emotional wellbeing, which has consequences for their educational attainment and future life.
21. Tackling domestic abuse therefore has direct beneficial outcomes for the public health of our communities.

### **Summary of equality implications**

22. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, one in four women and one in six men will experience domestic abuse during their lifetime. However the risks of serious harm are not spread evenly. Women are at much more risk of serious violence, and those with long-term health conditions, disabilities or mental health conditions at highest risk. Similarly abuse of parents by children is more commonly experienced by mothers than fathers and is more common among single parents
23. Gay and bisexual men experience more domestic abuse compared to those in heterosexual relationships

### **Summary of risk assessment**

24. The risks of not implementing a strategy to tackle domestic abuse, include a risk around not fulfilling the new statutory duty place on local authorities, but they go much wider and deeper than this. Domestic abuse has a wide-ranging impact on public services across multiple agencies. If we do not improve our response to domestic abuse the risks include; more children needing to be taken into care, more

demand on emergency and social housing, increased demand on health services and mental health in particular.

### **Background papers**

#### **Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Domestic Abuse Strategy**