

Equality Impact Assessment: Report and EIA Action Plan

Purpose

The Council is legally required by the Equality Act 2010 to evidence how it has considered its equality duties in its decision-making process.

The Council must have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to -

- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

A link to the full text of [s149 of the Equality Act 2010](#) which must be considered when making decisions.

What is being reviewed?	The decommissioning of a women's refuge as part of a wider recommissioning programme for women fleeing domestic abuse.
Service Lead and Service Unit:	Tracey Kybert, Housing and Communities
People involved in EIA process:	Ben Tomlin – Head of Strategic Housing & Partnerships, Strategic Housing & Partnerships Kristine Hyzcka – Contracts Manager, Strategic Finance Siobain Hann - Interim Head of Strategic Commissioning for Disabilities Lisa Dowry – Domestic Abuse Commissioning Manager, Commissioning & Improvement BCHA – Commissioned Provider
Date/s EIA started and reviewed:	04/04/2024

Background

Ahead of the launch of a wider recommissioning programme one of two refuges in the BCP area will be decommissioned. The current families and individual's resident at the service will be supported to move on and a range of self-contained accommodation with support will be commissioned across the BCP area within the next 12 months.

The families and individuals affected by the closure will be supported by a Housing Officer and Support & Inclusion Officer from BCP Council working alongside the support staff at the service to review everyone's needs and work with them to plan a move to alternative supported or independent accommodation dependent upon their needs and wishes. The plan is to move everyone on by the end of July 2024.

Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (BCHA) is currently commissioned by BCP Council to deliver the Bournemouth and Poole Women's Refuges. The service temporarily (6 to 12 months) accommodates families who require settled housing inside and outside the BCP area.

BCP Council and BCHA agreed to decommission the Bournemouth Refuge and continue the Poole Refuge which provides 18 self-contained units of refuge accommodation to victims of domestic abuse who are in receipt of a statutory duty from BCP Council.

The Bournemouth Refuge is shared accommodation and supports 18 families/individuals. The building is old and configured in a way that means families have to share accommodation. This means in some cases families cannot be accommodated owing to their needs and risks or they may refuse the accommodation resulting in voids.

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Part 4 requirements, BCP Council commissioned a comprehensive needs assessment of our accommodation-based services for victims of domestic abuse. The purpose of this needs assessment was to establish the support and accommodation needs of local victims and families who wish to stay in the area and remain safe, as well as those fleeing from other areas.

The needs assessment identified the following recommendations;

- Improvement of service user involvement in the co-production of our commissioned services
- Review of data collection mechanisms to improve our ongoing needs assessment
- Ensure the accommodation offer includes a single female refuge option as well as dispersed accommodation options to better meet the local need.
- Improve the offer to support children within families
- Reshape the local domestic abuse "whole system" offer to ensure the revised pathway is responding to the whole family

These recommendations form part of our local delivery plan which supports the ambitious vision set out in the Preventing Domestic Abuse Strategy.

Please see the [Form 3 EIA Report and Action Plan \(002\)](#) carried out in September 2023 which covers the wider remit of the Safe Accommodation Review. This assessment found data showed that men, older people, people with a disability, LGBTQ people and younger people are currently underrepresented in services and that a range of self-contained independent accommodation with support across the BCP area would better meet a wide range of needs.

The refuges support female victims of domestic abuse. Local housing data shows only a proportion of victims fleeing domestic abuse are accommodated in refuge accommodation, with only 2.9% being placed in refuge and 82% being placed in alternative temporary accommodation such as hostels and B&Bs. Males are currently accommodated in temporary accommodation with only 1 unit of refuge provision allocated to males.

At any one time BCP Council will have victims of domestic abuse receiving services who will be accommodated in their own homes with additional security measures in place, refuge accommodation, other housing related supported accommodation or temporary accommodation. Ahead of our recommissioning programme victims will continue to access all these options.

A procurement exercise will take place later in 2024 to commission new domestic abuse accommodation and support services based on the national good practice model, the local needs assessment and feedback from stakeholders and service users.

The following accommodation and community services will continue to support our residents in 24/25 ahead of the recommissioning programme:

- **Poole Refuge** – 18 units of self-contained refuge accommodation with on site support
- **Respite Rooms** – 8 units of accommodation for victims of domestic abuse with multiple needs including substance misuse, mental ill health and a range of risks including sex working.
- **Temporary**

- **Target Hardening** – in-house delivery of practical safety measures to ensure a household are safe and secure in their accommodation.
- **Dorset Police Maple Team** - Domestic Abuse Advisors (DAAs) respond to all victims/survivors in Dorset assessed at high risk and aged 16 and over. 15 DAAs, with two supervisors, cover the county.
- **Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)**
- **BCHA Outreach Service** - The BCHA Outreach Service provides a telephone and visiting service to victims who may still be experiencing Domestic Abuse or have fled their homes and be residing in temporary accommodation.
- **BCHA Family Intervention Project** – Work is delivered in schools with children and young people both one to one and in groups using the Recovery Toolkit and Escape the Trap
- **Paragon (formerly You Trust) Health Advocates** - work with all victims/survivors aged 16 years and over providing short to medium term support while someone is attending or staying in hospital
- **Victim Support** - all victims/survivors aged 16 and over are offered support
- **Waterlily Project** - Christian charity supporting vulnerable women in any state of need
- **Up2U Programme** - providing one-to-one behavioural change support for adult men and women using abusive behaviours against a partner

Our independent safe accommodation needs assessment carried out by Standing Together identified that the Bournemouth Women's Refuge was not fit for purpose and the Council needed to provide more bespoke and flexible accommodation to meet the needs of families and individuals with a range of needs. Support will be provided as part of the accommodation provision and result in a marked improvement in access to the local offer for those families and individuals who are displaced as a result of domestic abuse.

Standing Together as part of the consultation exercise held meetings with stakeholders from across BCP services to gather feedback on good practice, gaps and areas of development relating to safe accommodation provision as well as the wider partnership response and pathways. Case studies, and interviews with service users, from BCHA refuges and outreach service, the Maple Team, Paragon Health Advocates, Safe and Sound Dorset were also analysed.

The consultation and data led to recommendations being put forward within the accommodation needs assessment including the decommissioning of the Bournemouth Refuge and the commissioning of an equal number of self-contained dispersed units which would ensure larger families, males, people with disabilities or mobility issues and higher needs around mental health and substance misuse would not continue to be excluded.

Stakeholder sessions with Adults & Childrens Commissioning, Communities and Children's Social Care colleagues have been carried out to discuss the changes put forward by the service provider and the subsequent negotiated changes agreed with the service provider.

Findings

- ***Different ages (young and old) – Positive***

The Domestic Abuse Strategy sets out the domestic abuse issues for the area and how partners will go about tackling them. Although anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, data shows that young women are more likely to have experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months than older women [Women most at risk of experiencing partner abuse in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/people-in-the-uk/living-conditions/domestic-abuse/articles/women-most-at-risk-of-experiencing-partner-abuse-in-england-and-wales-2021)

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for the year ending March 2023 showed that a significantly higher proportion of people aged 16 to 19 years were victims of any domestic abuse (8.0%) compared with those aged 45 to 54 years (4.2%), and those aged 60 years and over (3.2% for 60 to 74 years). For those aged 75 years and over, the percentage of victims was significantly lower than all other age groups (1.4%).

The percentage of women who experienced domestic abuse in the last year was significantly higher than men for the majority of age groups (25 to 34 years, 35 to 44 years, 55 to 59 years, 60 to 74 years and 75 years and over). In these age groups, the percentage of people who had experienced domestic abuse in the last year was around twice as high for women compared with men

Younger people are also more likely to be subject to interpersonal violence [About domestic abuse | Safelives](#) and 64% of high and medium risk victims of abuse have children, on average 2 each.

Any woman accessing the refuge will have to be 18+ with no upper age limit. Parents can access refuge along with their children, however in the current provision consideration would need to be given to the ages of the children and the potential impacts on the dynamics of the refuge because of the shared arrangements. Where family units include a male sibling 18 years or over the current refuge provision cannot accommodate within the existing shared accommodation.

The commissioning of different types of self-contained accommodation with support will ensure access for families with a range of ages and dynamics who previously would have been excluded or refused shared refuge accommodation.

- ***Those with physical disabilities – Positive***

Although anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, women who had a long-term illness or disability were more than twice as likely to have experienced some form of partner abuse (12.4%) in the last 12 months than women who did not (5.1%) (ONS).

The commissioning of self-contained accommodation with support will provide the opportunity to procure a proportion of accessible and easily adaptable accommodation to enable the service to cater for families/individuals with physical needs. The current refuge provision is in an old building and cannot be adapted.

- ***Those with mental disabilities – Positive***

Although anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, women who had a long-term illness or disability were more than twice as likely to have experienced some form of partner abuse (12.4%) in the last 12 months than women who did not (5.1%) (ONS).

Whilst the refuge provision does not currently exclude people with mental ill health the arrangements of the building and the need to share does not necessarily support someone's wellbeing as well as presenting a challenge for the provider in matching individuals safely. The commissioning of self-contained independent accommodation across the BCP area will provide flexibility for the service in providing for people with different needs and risks who present as unwell at the time.

- ***Different sexes – Positive***

Women are much more likely than men to be the victims of high risk or severe domestic abuse.

For the year ending March 2023, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated that 1.4 million women and 751,000 men aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the last year. This is a prevalence rate of approximately 6 in 100 women and 3 in 100 men.

Whilst there is one male unit currently delivered in the Poole Refuge, this was highlighted as not good practice in the safe accommodation needs assessment and a recommendation made to make the refuge female only.

The Bournemouth Refuge does not deliver any male units.

The commissioning of a range of self-contained accommodation with support across the BCP area will mean that any of the accommodation can be used flexibly for males or females as and when needed and they can be offered a safe and separate accommodation option.

Gender reassignment - Positive

A study into Transgender Victims' and Survivors' Experiences of Domestic Abuse, conducted by SafeLives concluded the following key findings:

- Transgender victims/survivors experience specific types of abuse that can be linked to their trans identities.
- Trans victims/survivors experience large numbers of additional needs, particularly in relation to mental health.
- Trans people who access domestic abuse services report that this experience has positive outcomes on their lives.

However, only a small proportion of trans victims/survivors with additional mental health needs are supported with these by domestic abuse services. Given the large numbers of trans victims/survivors who have mental health needs, it is vital that this issue be addressed.

BCP and partners will continue to ensure that our wider work to tackle domestic violence and abuse is inclusive of the needs of LGBT communities, by including LGBT-specific issues as part of our publicity campaigns and are considered as a part of all training on domestic violence and abuse.

The commissioning of self-contained independent accommodation with support will mean that when needed they can be offered a safe and independent accommodation option.

- ***Those who are pregnant/on maternity – Positive***

Pregnancy can be a risk factor for domestic violence. It is estimated that four to nine in every 100 pregnant women are abused during their pregnancy or soon after the birth and there is a link between abuse during pregnancy and a woman's chance of being killed by her perpetrator. Pregnancy can sometimes be a trigger for the start of domestic abuse or an increase in severity.

All the accommodation options currently available in BCP to women who are pregnant as well as those who are mothers will support women during their pregnancy. The services are linked into local Health Workers, Children's Services, GP services and schools to provide tailored support. All new services in place following the recommissioning programme will be delivered in the same way. Therefore, there is a positive impact in terms of access for victims who are pregnant or have just had a baby.

- ***Those who are married/in a civil partnership - Positive***

For the year ending March 2023, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) showed that adults aged 16 to 74 years who were separated or divorced were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse than those who were married or civil partnered, cohabiting, single or widowed.

Both men and women who were married or civil partnered were less likely to be victims of domestic abuse in the last year than those who were single, cohabiting, separated or divorced.

All the accommodation options currently available in BCP will continue to support vulnerable women and their children who may require a place of safety due to domestic abuse, regardless of their marital or civil partnership status. All new services in place following the recommissioning programme will be delivered in the same way.

- ***People from different ethnic groups – Positive***

According to the crime survey; in the year ending March 2020, 5.5% of 16 to 74 year olds in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse in the 12 months before being surveyed. White people (5.7%) were more likely to experience domestic abuse than Black (3.7%) or Asian people (3.6%).

This service is for women and children of all ethnicity groups. We will ensure that service providers have adequate training relating to ethnicity and how best to respond to domestic abuse victims of different groups. It is recognised that the experience of domestic abuse can be significantly different for victims from ethnic minority backgrounds; it can include issues relating to so-called honour-based violence, forced marriage, language barriers, immigration status, and community and cultural practice. All of these elements can increase risk, and therefore it is vital to ensure that agencies are culturally aware, including of cultural context in order to manage such risks.

As part of BCP's wider work to tackle violence against women and girls, we will continue to work with the voluntary and community sector to support women in isolated communities to understand domestic abuse is a crime and improve their access to women's refuges. Where English is not their first language, this support will include promoting access to English language courses.

Whilst the refuge provision will have at any time families and individuals from different ethnic groups within the service the arrangements of the building and the need to share does not necessarily support differing cultural needs and may lead victims to refuse the accommodation. The commissioning of self-contained independent accommodation with support will mean that they can be offered a safe and separate accommodation option.

- ***People with different religions or beliefs - Positive***

All the accommodation options currently available in BCP are for women and children of all religions and beliefs. We ensure that the service provider has adequate training relating to religion and how best to respond to domestic abuse victims of different beliefs.

We will also work with the services to ensure that we can make practical adjustments to accommodate service user's religious practices, for example prayer rooms or separate food preparation areas in communal kitchen facilities. However with the current make-up of the refuge provision this is not always possible. The commissioning of self-contained independent accommodation with support will mean families/individuals can be offered a safe and separate accommodation option.

- ***People with different sexual orientations – Positive***

According to a study conducted by the ONS, bisexual women were nearly twice as likely to have experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months than heterosexual women (10.9% compared with 6.0%). The Domestic Abuse Strategy describes how partners will tackle domestic abuse issues.

BCP and partners will continue to ensure that our wider work to tackle domestic violence and abuse is inclusive of the needs of LGBT communities, by including LGBT-specific issues as part of our publicity campaigns and are considered as a part of all training on domestic violence and abuse.

All the accommodation options currently available in BCP will continue to support vulnerable women and their children who may require a place of safety due to domestic abuse, regardless of their sexual orientation. All new services in place following the recommissioning programme will be delivered in the same way.

- ***People in different socio-economic groups***

According to a study undertaken by the ONS, women living in households with an income of less than £10,000 were more than four times as likely to have experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months than women living in households with an income of £50,000 or more.

The service is available for any victim from any socio-economic group who requires support as a result of domestic abuse. Anyone accessing our services are supported with accessing Benefits and budgeting as needed.

- ***People's human rights***

All the accommodation options currently available in BCP will continue to support vulnerable women, men and their children who may require a place of safety owing to fleeing domestic abuse. All new services in place following the recommissioning programme will be delivered in the same way.

There will be an immediate disruption for the families and individuals that will need to move on as part of the decommissioning plan.

The families and individuals affected by the closure will be supported by a Housing Officer and Support & Inclusion Officer from BCP Council working alongside BCHA support staff at the service to review everyone's needs and work with them to plan a move to alternative supported or independent accommodation dependent upon their needs and wishes.

Conclusion

Summary of Equality Implications

Under the responsibilities of the new Domestic Abuse Act BCP Council commissioned a safe accommodation needs assessment in 2021. This assessment identified a number of areas of improvement around the delivery of safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse including the replacement of the Bournemouth refuge with a range of self-contained accommodation with support across the BCP area.

A further Equalities Impact Assessment carried out in September 2023 found data showed that men, older people, people with a disability, LGBTQ people, and younger people are currently underrepresented in services.

Whilst the closure of the refuge will impact the current service users the longer term outcome will be that more individuals and families with a range of needs will benefit from the proposed services included in the new commissioning programme to be carried out later in 2024.

Equality Impact Assessment: Report and EIA Action Plan

[This action plan provides a summary of any negative impacts and relevant mitigating actions]

Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Please complete this Action Plan for any negative or unknown impacts identified above. Use the table from the Capturing Evidence form to assist.

Issue identified	Action required to reduce impact	Timescale	Responsible officer
<p>The immediate disruption for the families and individuals that will need to move on as part of the decommissioning plan.</p>	<p>Service users will be supported by BCHA and BCP Council staff to identify their move on plans and ensure everyone is moved on in a planned way to longer term sustainable accommodation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every family or individual has an allocated Housing Officer to work with them to move on to suitable alternative accommodation. • Weekly meetings with Housing and BCHA to ensure move on plans, staff consultation and redeployment is on track. • Families and individuals will have access to assistance including rent deposits to move into private rented accommodation, social housing, priority for alternative supported accommodation as needed. 	<p>July 2024</p>	<p>Tracey Kybert</p>
<p>There is a risk that a move on option may not be identified for everyone moving on from the</p>	<p>Weekly meetings with Housing and BCHA to ensure move on plans, staff</p>	<p>July 2024</p>	<p>Kerry Payne</p>

decommissioned service in time for the closure.	<p>consultation and redeployment is on track.</p> <p>Service users accommodated in temporary accommodation receive additional support through the Outreach Service and an additional dedicated domestic abuse worker will be in place shortly.</p>		
Where are victims who do need a refuge type provision referred to?	<p>Anyone requiring the communal delivery of a refuge service can continue to access the Poole refuge.</p> <p>Work is being carried out in partnership with BCHA to ensure that move on is progressed effectively for people in the Poole Refuge to ensure use of this provision is maximised.</p>	Ongoing	Kerry Payne
BCHA as the commissioned provider will have 5 staff on redundancy consultation as part of this process.	<p>Redundancy consultation in place. Staff will be supported to be redeployed wherever possible.</p> <p>BCHA have 5 vacancies in similar roles across other domestic abuse services and are confident that all staff can be successfully redeployed.</p>		BCHA
Current provision does not meet the needs of groups identified in the Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment.	<p>Recommissioning Plans due to be agreed at the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group in June 2024.</p> <p>Funding for recommissioning plans to be agreed.</p> <p>Procurement Timetable to be agreed.</p>	September 2024	Lisa Dowry

Form Version 1.2

Prepared by:

Date: