

Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation & Community Services Commissioning Plan

1. Introduction

This document outlines the strategic commissioning approach for domestic abuse services, covering both safe accommodation and community-based support. It should be considered alongside wider initiatives aimed at tackling domestic abuse, including the Preventing Domestic Abuse Strategy 2026–2031, the Safe Accommodation Strategy 2026–2031, the Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Strategy 2026–2031 and their respective delivery plans.

The commissioning plan directly delivers the priorities set out in the Safe Accommodation Strategy by combining them into a single, integrated service model that delivers accommodation-based and community support.

It supports **Prevention and Early Identification** through investment in community outreach, sanctuary-style support, and early intervention services such as hospital advocacy, enabling more survivors to remain safely at home.

It addresses **Access to Appropriate Housing and Support** by expanding the range of accommodation options, including refuge, dispersed and block provision, designed to meet the needs of groups currently underserved, alongside a requirement for all services to provide specialist, trauma-informed domestic abuse support.

The plan enables **Return Home and Move-On** through clear pathways across community, temporary, and safe accommodation, with built-in resettlement and throughput expectations.

It strengthens **Partnership Working** by bringing services together under a coordinated commissioning approach aligned to the Community Safety Partnership and overseen by the Domestic Abuse Strategic Group.

Finally, it supports **Data and Survivor-Led Services** through defined performance measures, regular contract monitoring, and the involvement of Experts by Experience in service design and procurement, ensuring that services are informed by lived experience and responsive to emerging need.

Extensive consultation has been undertaken with the public, stakeholders, and experts by experience to ensure that the strategies and priorities guiding the commissioning plan reflect the needs of communities across the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) area, including households that are resettling locally.

2. Legislation

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 represents a landmark step in strengthening the national response to domestic abuse. Key provisions relevant to this commissioning plan include:

- **Support for Victims:** Local authorities are legally required to provide accommodation-based support for victims of domestic abuse and their children.
- **Homelessness Assistance:** Victims are now recognised as having a priority need for homelessness support, ensuring quicker access to safe housing.
- **Protection Measures:** The Act introduces Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders, offering immediate and longer-term safeguards for victims.

The [Victim Service Commissioning Guidance](#) 2024, jointly developed by the Ministry of Justice and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), provides a comprehensive framework to support local commissioners in delivering effective, tailored victim support services. This document sets out the approach taken by BCP Council in commissioning Domestic Abuse service in line with this best practice guidance.

3. Governance

The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Domestic Abuse Strategic Group (DASG) brings together statutory and voluntary sector partners to work collaboratively to deliver a coordinated strategic response to domestic abuse across the BCP area. It oversees the allocation of the Safe Accommodation Grant and the commissioning of domestic abuse services. The group ensures alignment with local strategies and promotes collaborative working across agencies.

The DASG reports directly to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Executive Board, which provides strategic oversight and governance on the implementation of the Preventing Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation Strategies, and monitors progress against associated delivery plans.

The CSP Executive Board is a statutory body tasked with reducing crime and disorder comprised of representatives from specified authorities under the Crime & Disorder Act, namely Local authority, Dorset Police, Dorset NHS, Probation Service and the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue service. The CSP submits an annual report to the BCP Overview and Scrutiny Committee, ensuring transparency, scrutiny and accountability.

4. Commissioning Arrangements

The existing services provide support for individuals affected by domestic abuse, into accommodation and community settings. Safe Accommodation services focus on providing secure housing alongside specialist support to enable recovery and independence. Community-based services deliver a broader range of support, including outreach, advocacy, and prevention activity to reduce harm and build resilience among individuals and families.

Under the new Prevention of Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation Strategies, the commissioning of services will be brought together under a single, co-ordinated approach. This will ensure that services are planned and delivered in line with the identified needs and priorities set out within the strategies, supported by one overarching commissioning plan. This approach will involve all partners within the CSP, strengthening collaboration and enabling a more cohesive and effective system of support.

All existing contracts have been extended on an annual basis, with current extensions in place until August 2027, ensuring continuity of provision while the new commissioning arrangements are developed and implemented in line with the proposed timetable outlined in Section 11.

5. Current Service Provision

Current provision includes a mix of commissioned and in-house services, spanning both accommodation and community support.

These include:

- Refuge and respite accommodation
- Sanctuary Scheme and temporary accommodation support
- Community outreach and advocacy across all housing tenure
- Specialist services (e.g. children, hospital advocacy, therapeutic programmes)
- In-house functions (e.g. MARAC, training, perpetrator programme)

6. Future Service Provision

From August 2027, the commissioning of domestic abuse services will adopt a fully integrated model, combining both community and building-based safe accommodation services, including block accommodation provision. This approach aims to deliver a seamless and responsive service that meets the diverse needs of individuals and families affected by domestic abuse.

The new service delivery model will improve coordination, accountability, and outcomes across the system and reflect the council's commitment to delivering high-quality, person-centred support through more efficient and joined-up commissioning.

The specialist Community Outreach support offer will adopt a flexible approach, responding to where demand arises. It is expected that, due to the preventative support provided by Housing Options and increased capacity in safe accommodation, the need for support within temporary accommodation will decrease over time, while support for survivors in their own homes will increase.

Community Services

These services will support individuals or families who remain in their own homes or are accommodated in temporary or dispersed settings, as well as those transitioning from supported accommodation.

Key elements include:

- Community outreach: support people to remain in their own homes (all housing tenure), with (Sanctuary Scheme) or without security measures, and those in dispersed and temporary accommodation or moving on from supported accommodation.
- Hospital Support Service: delivering specialist domestic abuse services within hospital settings.
- Children's Services: delivering tailored support for younger victims and those affected by domestic abuse within the family context.
- Therapeutic Groupwork: Structured programmes aimed at recovery, resilience, and empowerment delivered by the community outreach staff.

Building Based Safe Accommodation

This provision will offer secure housing options for people unable to remain safely in their current living arrangements:

- 2 x Block accommodation (between 25 and 30 units): Self-contained units designed to support households that will benefit from group work and peer support within a communal setting.
- Dispersed accommodation (15 units): A number of properties across the BCP area ranging in size and facilities to meet the specific needs of households that require flexible accommodation solutions.

Funding

Table 1 below sets out the Council base budget and grant funding alongside the proposed costs for all services.

Table 1: Domestic Abuse Income and Expenditure

	Year 1 26/27 (£)	Year 2 27/28 (£)	Year 3 28/29 (£)	Year 4 29/30 (£)	Year 5 30/31 (£)
Income					
Safe Accommodation Grant	974,401	983,628	1,001,184	1,001,184*	1,001,184*
Communities base budget**	231,300	231,300	231,300	231,300	231,300
Housing budget** and funding allocation	208,856	228,842	239,750	270,059	301,200
Total Funding	1,414,557	1,443,770	1,472,234	1,502,543	1,533,684
Expenditure / Service					
Safe Accommodation and Community Commissioned Services	963,055	982,312	1,001,959	1,022,002	1,042,442
Non-commissioned Services including DA training, MARAC Chair, DA Projects	304,380	310,008	314,675	320,507	326,457
Inhouse costs including Target Hardening Senior DA Housing Officer and Housing Advocates	147,122	151,450	155,600	160,034	164,785
Total Expenditure	1,414,557	1,443,770	1,472,234	1,502,543	1,533,684

* The Domestic Abuse Grant is confirmed for Years 1 to 3. Assumed funding for Years 4 and 5 is based on continuation at the Year 3 level, pending future government confirmation.

** Budgets are subject to the Council's approved MTFP and future funding decisions.

7. Accommodation Provision

In the forthcoming commissioning model, support services will be commissioned separately from the accommodation provision. This separation allows for greater flexibility in the tendering process, enhances security of accommodation assets for the Local Authority regardless of the support provider, and may help broaden the market by attracting bids from specialist domestic abuse providers who are not landlords.

Accommodation units will be sourced through a combination of Council-owned property and stock held by Registered Social Landlords. The existing purpose-built refuge provision, which provides 18 units of self-contained accommodation with communal facilities for group work and peer support, has been retained with agreement from the landlord. The site also includes a newly refurbished children's play area, enhancing the therapeutic environment for children.

The accommodation will comprise of the following:

- 1 block of 18 self-contained units with communal areas provided through a registered social landlord
- 1 block of 10 self-contained units provided through Council or Registered Provider stock
- 15 self-contained properties provided through Council and Registered Provider stock
 - 3 x 3 beds
 - 8 x 2 beds
 - 4 x 1 beds

8. Client Support Numbers

The service will aim to support a defined number of individuals and households, based on historic demand trends, enhanced performance targets, and a strategic shift towards prevention-focused interventions. These projections reflect the ambitions of the Safe Accommodation Strategy, which seeks to reduce the number of households needing to relocate owing to domestic abuse.

The client support numbers will be used to:

- Inform service capacity planning.
- Set performance expectations for the commissioned provider.
- Monitor progress against strategic outcomes.

Detailed figures will be included in the service specification and form part of the quarterly contract monitoring framework.

Community Outreach Service

The commissioned provider will be expected to deliver services to the following number of people annually, based on historical demand, enhanced performance targets, and a strategic emphasis on prevention:

- Outreach Support:
 - 185 individuals supported through community outreach services across all housing tenure.
- Groupwork Programmes:
 - 6 accredited survivor programmes
 - 4 Pattern Changing Programmes
- Accommodation-Based Support:
 - 30 households supported in dispersed accommodation (based on a maximum 6-month stay).
 - 50 individuals supported in their own homes in receipt of security measures (Sanctuary Scheme) or in temporary accommodation.
- Children:
 - 200 children supported by dedicated workers.
- Health Advocacy Service:
 - 200 individuals supported.

- 20 health staff supported directly.
- 100 health professionals trained annually.

Building Based Safe Accommodation

The commissioned provider will be expected to deliver support to the following number of individuals annually, based on unit capacity and average length of stay:

- **High Support Accommodation**
 - 15 individuals supported per year
 - Based on 10 self-contained units with an average maximum stay of 9 months
- **Medium/Low Support Accommodation**
 - 36 individuals supported per year
 - Based on 18 accommodation units with an average maximum stay of 6 months

These figures will inform service planning, staffing levels, and performance monitoring, and will be reviewed annually in line with demand and strategic priorities.

The services outlined in **Table 1** are based on the following key assumptions, which inform the scope and delivery model of the future commissioned domestic abuse services:

- All services will deliver **both specialist domestic abuse support** (accredited to recognised standards) and **housing-related support**, ensuring a holistic response to individual needs.
- **Households will have choice** regarding their accommodation placement and the level of support they receive, promoting autonomy and person-centred care.
- Individuals receiving **security measures** will also be offered a **support service** concurrently, ensuring emotional and practical support alongside physical safety.
- The **dispersed accommodation units** will be designed to meet the needs of:
 - **Male survivors**
 - Households with **adult male children**
 - **Larger families**
 - Survivors with **protected characteristics** requiring tailored accommodation solutions
- The **Community Outreach service** will operate with **flexibility**, responding to demand across:
 - Households in **privately owned/rented and social housing properties**
 - Households receiving **security measures**
 - Households in **Temporary accommodation**

9. Type of Support

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, local authorities have a statutory duty to commission safe accommodation that incorporates specialist support services delivered by trained domestic abuse professionals. Historically, legacy contracts have primarily focused on housing-related support, often delivered by non-specialist organisations.

The upcoming-recommissioning process will ensure full compliance with the Act by embedding specialist domestic abuse support within all accommodation-based services. This means future services will not only provide safe and secure housing, but also deliver expert, trauma informed support, through specialist trained staff, ensuring a consistent and high-quality response to those affected by domestic abuse.

10. Service Outcomes and Outputs

The commissioned provider will be required to contribute to the delivery of the strategic priorities outlined in the Preventing Domestic Abuse Strategy, Safe Accommodation Strategy and Perpetrator Strategy. Successful delivery of the contract will be evidenced through a set of clearly defined service outcomes and outputs, which will be detailed within the service specification. These will reflect both the strategic aims and the operational expectations of the domestic abuse services.

The provider will be expected to:

- Deliver measurable outcomes aligned with strategic priorities.
- Report on agreed outputs and performance indicators.
- Participate in quarterly contract monitoring processes, supported by robust data collection and reporting mechanisms.

The service performance framework will ensure transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement across all elements of service delivery.

11. Procurement

The timeline set out in Table 2 below outlines the key stages of the procurement and mobilisation process, ensuring transparency and effective planning across all stakeholders. Each milestone is designed to support a smooth transition from current arrangements to the new service model, with a strong focus on quality, continuity, and readiness.

This structured approach enables the Council to effectively implement a Framework Agreement divided into Lots, supporting the delivery of a fully integrated domestic abuse service model. The timeline reflects critical activities including market engagement, tendering, evaluation, and mobilisation, culminating in the launch of new services in August 2027.

This approach will ensure:

- Flexibility in contracting and service delivery.
- Market diversity, encouraging participation from a broad range of providers.
- Strategic alignment with the Domestic Abuse Act, ensuring statutory compliance and best practice.

The tendering process will:

- Separate accommodation provision from support delivery, allowing the Council to retain control over accommodation assets while enabling specialist providers to focus on delivering high-quality, trauma-informed support.

- Ensure safe and secure housing alongside tailored support services for individuals and families affected by domestic abuse.
- Encourage a diverse provider market, including organisations that specialise in domestic abuse support but do not own or manage property.
- Embed specialist support within all accommodation-based services, ensuring full compliance with the Domestic Abuse Act.
- Mandate accredited training and workforce development:
- Deliver accredited training and work with accredited training organisations to ensure staff maintain high standards of practice.
- Ensure a consistent and high-quality response across all domestic abuse services through ongoing professional development.

Procurement Summary Timeline

- Tender launch: November 2026
- Contract mobilisation: August 2027
- Contract term: 5 years (initial 3 years + optional up to 2-year extension)

Table 2: Procurement Timetable

Safe Accommodation Strategy Key Milestones	
Prevention of Domestic Abuse, Safe Accommodation and Perpetrator Strategies and commissioning plan - presented for sign off to Cabinet	22 nd July 2026
Budget agreement – Council Approval	22 nd July 2026
Expenditure Control Stage 1 & 2 – Approval to proceed	31 st July 2026
Workshops - key elements of service specification with Experts by Experience Board/stakeholders	August/September 2026
Service Specification Finalised	September 2026
Provider Market Engagement Event	September 2026
Expenditure Control – Stage 3 Sign off to Publish	October 2026
Safe Accommodation Tender Live	November 2026 to January 2027
Tender Evaluation Window	January to March 2027
Expenditure Control – Stage 4 Sign off to Award	April 2027
Standstill starts/ends	April 2027
Contract Award	April 2027
Implementation/Transition period	May – July 2027
Anticipated Contract Start Date	August 2027

12. Key Risks and Mitigations

The table below details the key risks and the controls in place to safeguard the successful delivery of the programme.

Table 3: Key risks and mitigations

Risk	Impact	Mitigation
Funding shortfall from Year 3	Reduced service capacity	Efficiency savings, future funding bids, flexible commissioning
Market failure / limited bids	Reduced competition	Early market engagement and lot-based procurement
Transition risks during mobilisation	Service disruption	Detailed mobilisation plan and phased transition
Demand exceeding projections	Pressure on services	Flexible delivery model and regular review
Workforce challenges	Reduced service quality	Requirement for accredited training and workforce development

13. Associated Papers

Prevention of Domestic Abuse Strategy 2026 – 2031

Safe Accommodation Strategy 2026 - 2031

Perpetrator Strategy 2026 – 2031