

## Equality and Safety Impact Assessment

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people carrying out their activities.

The Equality Duty supports good decision making – it encourages public bodies to be more efficient and effective by understanding how different people will be affected by their activities, so that their policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people’s needs. The Council’s Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) includes an assessment of the community safety impact assessment to comply with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act and will enable the Council to better understand the potential impact of the budget proposals and consider mitigating action.

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| <p><b>Name or Brief Description of Proposal</b></p>   | <p>Adoption of the Strategy for the Provision of Support in Safe Accommodation.</p> |
| <p><b>Brief Service Profile</b></p>   |   |
| <p>As a unitary authority, the Council is responsible for commissioning domestic and sexual abuse services within its administrative area. Through its Integrated Commissioning Unit (“ICU”) the Council provides ‘early prevention and intervention’ and refuge services (“the DVSA service”). The DVSA service is currently provided through two contracts with specialist providers. The current annual spend is £524,000, comprising £127,000 on refuge provision and £397,000 on prevention and early intervention. In addition to the Council, funding is provided by Public Health, The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Southampton City Clinical Commissioning Group. In 2020/21, the DVSA service received 1739 referrals for early prevention and intervention and 556 referrals (individuals and families) for refuge. The Council is due to recommission the DVSA service to ensure the Council continues to meet its statutory obligations in relation to domestic abuse, including new duties in relation to the provision of support in safe accommodation in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (“the Act”). To inform the recommissioning of the DVSA service, a service review was carried out by the ICU between October 2020 and June 2021 (“the service review”). In addition to the service review, between March 2021 and August 2021 the Council carried out an assessment of the need for the provision of support in safe accommodation in Southampton, pursuant to Part 4 of the Act (“the needs assessment”). Need identified by the needs assessment will be addressed by the DVSA Service and by further actions taken by the Council (and its</p> |   |

partners), set out in the Council's Strategy for the Provision of Support in Safe Accommodation ("the Strategy"). In carrying the Strategy into effect, the Council is advised by the Local Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board, which reports to the Safe City Board. In relation to the duties under Part 4 of the Act, the Council has been provided with New Burdens funding of £587,012 for 2021/22.

### **Summary of Impact and Issues**

By approving and giving effect to the Strategy, the Council is seeking to address the need for the provision of support in safe accommodation in Southampton. There are two refuges in Southampton (one provided through the DVSA service and another independently). This provision does not meet demand, resulting in the decline of over 66% of referrals. The Strategy provides for consideration of whether provision can be expanded through the DVSA service. Two Sanctuary Schemes (which seek to enable survivors of domestic abuse to stay safe in their homes) operate in Southampton. The Strategy seeks to address barriers to accessing these schemes for survivors, in particular, those who are not tenants of the Council. In relation to access to services (eg advocacy and therapeutic support) in the community, the Strategy responds to evidence in the needs assessment that disproportionately low numbers of survivors with protected characteristics have accessed services by committing to improving access to diversity and inclusion training for frontline staff and to delivering targeted awareness raising. The Act provides specifically for children and young people to be supported by the Council in relation to domestic abuse. A specialist community domestic abuse service operates in Southampton for children and young people, and refuge provision includes dedicated support for this group. The Strategy provides for a range of action to improve provision for children and young people, including the commissioning of a review of the Council's High-Risk Domestic Abuse Arrangements for this group. In general, the Strategy responds to the finding of the needs assessment that limitations in the sharing of data and intelligence between the Council and relevant agencies (ie, those responsible for service delivery) is reducing the effectiveness of DVSA service and wider provision of domestic abuse support. To improve inter-agency action, the Strategy commits to the implementation of a 'Coordinated Community Response' model.

### **Potential Positive Impacts**

The Council's actions in giving effect to the Strategy will clearly acknowledge that children of domestic abuse survivors or victims who have seen, heard, or experienced the effect of that abuse are victims in their own right. In carrying out its duties under part 4 of the Act, the Council will ensure that support is provided to any

child staying with a survivor in safe accommodation. The Council will carry out work to make domestic abuse services more accessible to people with protected characteristics and/or complex needs by:

- improving information gathering and analysis of service use;
- developing new pathways into safe accommodation;
- providing support services in safe accommodation specifically designed for survivors with protected characteristics, including but not limited to: faith services, translators and interpreters, immigration advice, interpreters for victims identifying as deaf and / or hard of hearing, and dedicated support for LGBTQ+ victims.
- improving access to relevant training for staff;
- running targeted awareness raising campaigns;
- improving coordination with relevant regional and national initiatives/approaches;
- including access to services by people with protected characteristics as a key indicator of service performance; and,
- ensuring that survivor/victim representative(s) appointed to the Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board are appropriate in ensuring the voices of survivors/victims with a range of protected characteristics and needs are heard.

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| Responsible Service Manager | Jason Murphy<br>Stronger Communities Manager |
| Date                        | November 2021                                |
| Approved by Senior Manager  |  |
| Date                        |  |

### Potential Negative Impacts

| Impact Assessment | Details of Impact | Possible Solutions |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Age               | No impact.        |                    |
| Disability        | No impact.        |                    |

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|---------------------------------------|------------|--|
| <b>Gender Reassignment</b>            | No impact. |  |
| <b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b> | No impact. |  |
| <b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b>        | No impact. |  |
| <b>Race</b>                           | No impact. |  |
| <b>Religion or Belief</b>             | No impact. |  |
| <b>Sex</b>                            | No impact. |  |
| <b>Sexual Orientation</b>             | No impact. |  |
| <b>Community Safety</b>               | No impact. |  |
| <b>Poverty</b>                        | No impact. |  |
| <b>Other Significant Impacts</b>      | No impact. |  |