

## 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.

<p><b>Name or Brief Description of Proposal</b></p>	<p>Adoption of the Southampton Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2023-2028</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 council also provides the Independent Domestic Violence Advisory service (“IDVA”), which includes a male engagement worker (“MEW”) to work with fathers who are using abusive behaviours.</p> <p>In 2021, the council met new duties placed on local authorities by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 by commissioning a specialist needs assessment to inform a new strategy for the provision of support in safe accommodation in Southampton (“the Part 4 Strategy”). The strategy was adopted in December 2021 and is being carried into effect using New Burdens funding. The council has convened a new multi-agency board to advise on meeting its duties under the 2021 Act.</p> <p>The council currently hosts a ‘Violence Reduction Unit’ (“VRU”) within its community cohesion team. The unit is one ‘spoke’ of a violence reduction hub operated by Hampshire’s Police and Crime Commissioner. The VRU works closely with local police and other partners to reduce violence crime through a range of projects. The VRU carries out interventions to tackle violence against women and girls (“VAWG”) in Southampton, including collaborating with ‘Cyber Ambassadors’ to tackle sexual</p>	

harassment and abuse online and work with local universities and services in the night-time economy to improve student safety.

The Part 4 Strategy requires the council to “undertake a refresh of the partnership shared vision” and to “develop the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board [and operational groups] ... to ensure they provide appropriate strategic / operational leadership for the partnership”. The council has acted by leading the development of a multi-agency strategy setting out how key partner agencies in Southampton (council, police, health and probation) will act to make the city safer for women and girls between 2023 and 2028.

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

The strategy aims to outline the below overall goals and outcomes:

- Awareness of the nature and impacts of violence against women and girls.
- Awareness of available support and how to access it (including community behaviour-change programmes outside of the criminal justice system).
- Interventions by primary healthcare providers to address conditions which may result in harmful behaviours.
- Improvements to local environment (e.g. streetlighting, CCTV).
- Identification of victims/survivors and appropriate intervention by professionals.

It also aims to highlight the following issues:

- Low number of Black and Minoritised women, LGBT+ people, migrant women, disabled victims/survivors, women who sell sex and women experiencing multiple disadvantage (substance-use, mental health, poverty) accessing domestic abuse/VAWG services in Southampton. Needs assessments show there is a lack of information about the barriers preventing access to services by these groups.
- Changes required to existing system architecture to provide for children as victims/survivors of domestic abuse in their own right (as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021).
- Low conviction rates for sexual offences, domestic abuse and stalking.
- Non-specialist service providers lack confidence/expertise to identify and challenge harmful behaviours.
- Manipulation of systems by abusers (e.g. by making malicious reports about

victims/survivors).

- No systematic approach to survivor engagement in Southampton.
- Variations in data systems and data collection across partner agencies impedes analysis and system design.
- Data sharing along service pathways involving multiple providers is compromised by systems which do not 'speak to each other'.

### **Potential Positive Impacts**

The multi-agency strategy will be carried into effect by two operational groups, focusing distinctly on VAWG and domestic abuse. Membership of the groups will comprise of operational leads from each partner organisation. Actions will, wherever possible, enhance existing service provision across the partnership. Operational chairs will report quarterly (or as often as required) to the strategic partnership board.

The board will monitor progress towards strategic outcomes using a set of key performance indicators developed by the council's Data and Intelligence Team. Properly carried into effect, the strategy will eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people in the following ways:

- Access to services by people with protected characteristics will be reviewed and services changed to improve equality of access.
- Children who see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse will be treated by agencies and service providers in Southampton as victims of domestic abuse in their own right, and data will be recorded to inform the development of appropriate support and intervention.
- Wider services in Southampton, for example Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Mental Health and drug and alcohol services, will reliably identify risk arising from domestic abuse and VAWG and take appropriate steps to enable access to the right support.
- The voices of victims/survivors will be heard and will inform the design, development and implementation of local services.
- A 'Whole Housing Approach' to domestic abuse will be implemented across Southampton (to ensure equality of access to domestic abuse support services, regardless of housing tenure type).
- Data will be shared appropriately between agencies/services in our system to protect victims/survivors.

Responsible Service Manager	Caroline Bate – Domestic Abuse Coordinator
Date	16/09/2022
Approved by Senior Manager	Jason Murphy – Stronger Communities Manager
Date	16/09/2022

### Potential Negative Impacts

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions
<b>Age</b>	No negative impact.	
<b>Disability</b>	No negative impact.	
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	No negative impact.	
<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b>	No negative impact.	
<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b>	No negative impact.	
<b>Race</b>	No negative impact.	
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	No negative impact.	
<b>Sex</b>	No negative impact.	
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	No negative impact.	
<b>Community Safety</b>	No negative impact.	
<b>Poverty</b>	No negative impact.	
<b>Other Significant Impacts</b>	No negative impact.	