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DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY 2020/2025 - PROGRESS REPORT

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Purpose of Report:

The Partnership is asked to note the progress made on the delivery of the priorities in the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2020/2025.

FOR INFORMATION

1. Background

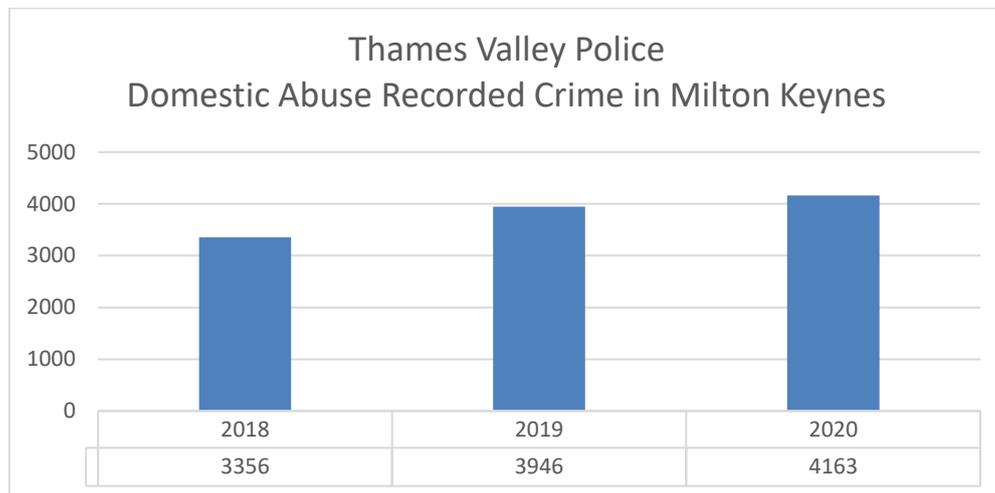
- 1.1 Domestic abuse continues to have a damaging and lasting impact on the lives of adults and children across Milton Keynes. The physical and mental impact can last a lifetime as well as reducing someone's financial resources and ability to rebuild their lives, contributing towards poverty and homelessness. Children are greatly impacted as experiencing, or witnessing, domestic abuse is known to have long term impacts on health, wellbeing and development.
- 1.2 We want there to be zero tolerance towards domestic abuse in Milton Keynes and are working to confront and challenge all forms of abuse, support victims and hold people who commit domestic abuse to account.
- 1.3 Funding of £535k has been provided to the council by the government during 2021/22 to support the implementation of the new duties under the Domestic Abuse Act (attached as an **Annex** to the report). This funding has enabled the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board to either bring forward or expand actions on a number of the priorities included in the Domestic Abuse Strategy.

2. Definition of Domestic Abuse

- 2.1 Domestic abuse is not limited to physical violence but includes different forms of abuse such sexual, psychological and economic abuse. Domestic abuse can be committed by a current or former partner or family member and is committed against someone to exert power and control over them. It is crime which disproportionately affects women; however, it can happen to anyone irrespective of sexuality, religion, gender, ethnicity, income or age.

3. Prevalence of Domestic Abuse

3.1 On average, two women per week are killed in England and Wales (ONS 2019). 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. The *Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment 2018-20* estimated that approximately 12,000 adults in Milton Keynes will experience domestic abuse each year while the number of recorded domestic abuse crimes has risen each year since 2018.



3.2 In addition to data gathering, survivors and professionals were consulted as part of the needs assessment. Survivors of domestic abuse told us that we should prioritise the following:

- increase awareness and information on sources of support for people affected by domestic abuse and ensure clarity in Milton Keynes of how to report;
- train professionals in how to recognise domestic abuse, support victims and work to improve trust and understanding between survivors and services;
- provide education on healthy relationships for young people; and
- widen the options for housing for victims of domestic abuse.

3.3 Professionals told us that we needed to:

- develop simplified pathways for victims of domestic abuse and for professionals;
- embed domestic abuse training and awareness across partnerships with priority given to coercion and control, risk assessment processes for tackling domestic abuse in minority communities and equalities;
- raise awareness across communities as to the different features of domestic abuse and the circumstances in which it can occur; and

- implement clear governance and strategic direction in respect of domestic abuse to include close partnership co-ordination.

4. Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board

- 4.1 In response to the needs assessment findings a strategic partnership board was established to lead on and co-ordinate the response to domestic abuse in Milton Keynes. The Board is currently chaired by Thames Valley Police and includes senior representation from across Milton Keynes Council, Milton Keynes University Hospital, MK ACT and others.

5. Domestic Abuse Strategic Partner - MK ACT

- 5.1 Local domestic abuse charity MK ACT has been commissioned to provide domestic abuse services in Milton Keynes since 2008 and, as Milton Keynes Women's Aid, has been providing support to domestic abuse victims in the area since the 1970s. In February 2019, following competitive tender, a Framework Contract was awarded to MK Act for the following services:

- (a) **Crisis Intervention Service** - provides advice, information, risk and safety planning with signposting or onward referral to MK ACT's own services or other agencies depending on level of risk and needs. The crisis intervention service is available to all victims of domestic abuse.
- (b) **Refuge** for women and children which provides 28 self-contained flats for women, with or without children, at high risk from domestic abuse. Practical and emotional support is available to the women with additional child-focussed support work. Women are also able to access evidence-based programmes such as the Freedom programme; peer support groups and at the end of their stay are supported to make a safe and positive move on.
- (c) **FreshStart** - an evidence perpetrator programme made up of integrated individual sessions designed to change the behaviour of perpetrators of domestic abuse, while providing support to the partners and ex partners of the participants on the programme.

- 5.2 The framework enables further services to be developed jointly in line with the priorities for the DA Strategic Partnership Board without the need for further tender for example the Dispersed Housing Pilot project funded by MHCLG.

6. Milton Keynes Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2020-2025

- 6.1 The Milton Keynes Domestic Abuse Strategy 2020-25 was published in 2020 and outlined its priorities under four headings:

- (a) Raising Expectations

Ensuring that children and young people are educated on healthy relationships and do not tolerate unhealthy behaviour.

(b) Inclusive Access

Ensuring that all victims of domestic abuse, adults and children, can easily access the appropriate services to break cycles of domestic abuse and overcome the impact it has on their lives.

(c) Empowering Victims

Empowering victims means ensuring a range of support networks are available for victims and children to access as part of their journey to move forward and recover from domestic abuse. This includes making it possible for victims to stay in their homes safely.

(d) Perpetrator Accountability

Effective accountability is vital to hold perpetrators to account, to ensure recognition for victims and to deter future crimes. This includes opportunities that enable perpetrators to take responsibility for their actions and change their attitudes and behaviours.

6.2 Reporting to the Board is a multi-agency Operations Group which drives the delivery of actions arising from the strategy. Highlights of the progress made are as follows:

(a) Raising Expectations

- (i) 15 new people to be trained in delivering the 'Escape the Trap' programme in schools. Discussions are taking place with new schools to come on board.
- (ii) Drop-in sessions for Healthy Relationships course are being provided.
- (iii) A theatre production is being planned with the young people at the forefront of the project.
- (iv) Further training for the *Let's Talk* programme, whereby additional people will be trained to support the programme moving forwards, this can be deemed as train the trainer.
- (v) Gym membership to help support survivors of DA.

(b) Inclusive Access

- (i) 84 people have attended Domestic Abuse Awareness Training Sessions delivered by MK ACT.
- (ii) Workplace Support Resources are available on the MKC Workplace Health webpages dedicated to Domestic Abuse

Support. This includes a domestic abuse policy template and will soon include workplace prompt cards.

- (iii) MK ACT has produced two 15-minute webinars, one for employers and one for employees, that raise awareness of domestic abuse and support for workplaces/employers and employees.
 - (iv) NHS Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group (BLMK CCG) has commissioned Domestic Abuse Champion Training for GP practices and extended places for other health providers. Training has been on hold during the pandemic further dates are now being arranged for 2021/22.
 - (v) Training sessions delivered to 75 students of Hairdressing and Barbers from MK College as part of a pilot to see if can include domestic abuse module into national qualification. A well-received and innovative programme within schools and colleges - two presentation modules have been designed and cascaded to head teachers and school staff, to continue the roll out of the programme. A similar campaign is planned within tattoo studios, which provide safe spaces for survivors who visit these premises and trust their artist. A diverse range of awareness raising methods is crucial to reaching out to all of our local community.
 - (vi) MKC recently launched a new media campaign with an initial emphasis on raising awareness of unhealthy relationships and signposting to local domestic abuse services via social media. By the end of July 2021 there had been 1.2 million opportunities to see the advert online and 5,550 Interactions clicks or swipes on the ad on a mobile device. A detailed media campaign is planned for the next twelve months, which will build on the initial online awareness raising with poster campaigns, interviews, newsletters and other events, to continue to support the survivors of abuse within Milton Keynes
 - (vii) Encouraging local pharmacies to take part in the national Ask for ANI scheme to provide safe spaces for victims to access support. Scheme is already in place at Boots, Superdrug and TSB, scope to widen with smaller businesses.
- (c) Empower Victims
- (i) Dispersed Housing Scheme piloted following successful bid to MHCLG provides support to people in temporary accommodation due to domestic abuse. The service offers the flexibility to meet the needs of those clients who may not want

or be able to access a domestic abuse refuge - for example women with a history of substance misuse, women with older male children, members of the LGBTQ+ community and men.

- (ii) Two Independent Domestic Violence Advocates appointed July 2021 to work alongside MKC Housing Solutions team to target people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to domestic abuse.
- (iii) Pilot sanctuary scheme with national charity Safe Partnership working in partnership with MKC, MK ACT and other agencies to enable victims of domestic abuse to remain safely and securely in their own homes. The service providing additional free and immediate measures to increase home security. In the first six months of operation the scheme received 49 referrals with 37 jobs, mostly new locks and bolts, completed (remainder either cancelled by client or awaiting landlord permission).
- (iv) A working group has been established to provide police officers attending domestic abuse incidents with the relevant information to signpost survivors to the right agency. This innovative idea will be in the form of impactive posters, in and around the police stations, so that officers have readily available information.
- (v) MKC and MK ACT successfully obtained funding of £66K, from the Women in Work fund, to help support women back into work, who have gone through traumatic situations and are on the road to rebuilding their lives. This will assist women seeking employment with a worker to guide and support women with writing CVs, provide interview advice, etc as well as any other areas of support for example travel expense.

(d) Perpetrator Accountability

The effectiveness of perpetrator programmes has been undergoing reviews across the country and we need to review our programmes and utilise the latest research on effectiveness to help determine what interventions have the greatest impact and address abusive behaviour. An independent evaluation is currently in the process of being commissioned.

List of Background Papers

[Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment Milton Keynes 2018- 2021](#)

[Milton Keynes Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2020-25](#)

DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT

The Domestic Abuse Act came into force at the end of April and places new requirements on local authorities including:

- a duty on local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation; and
- all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have 'priority need' for homelessness assistance.

Local authorities are required to have a multi-agency Local Partnership Board in place which is responsible for assessing the need, producing a strategy, monitoring and evaluating the strategy and reporting back to central government.

Additional funding linked to new Domestic Abuse duties

Funding of £535k has been made available during 2021/22 to support the implementation of the new duties under the Act.

This has enabled the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board to either bring forward or expand actions on a number of the priorities included in the Domestic Abuse Strategy. Projects to be funded are:

(a) **MKC**

(i) Domestic Abuse Coordinator

Essential role to co-ordinate the delivery of the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board's priorities given the breadth of interventions and number of partners involved.

(ii) Schools Healthy Relationships Programme

Increase capacity to engage with schools and deliver programmes to children and young people aimed at future prevention of domestic abuse.

(iii) Update communications across a range of media

Enable a more wide-reaching and ambitious campaign as well as improving on-line presence.

(b) **Safer Partnerships**

Sanctuary Scheme

Sanctuary scheme pilot began during the January 2021 Covid lockdown therefore will enable the extension of the pilot scheme to better establish the

need for home security measures to enable victims of domestic abuse, to remain safely and securely in their own homes.

(c) **Standing Together**

DAHA Accreditation

Standing Together is a national charity bringing communities together to end domestic abuse and will be working with MKC to achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation. The scheme provides the benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse in the UK and is recognised in the government's *Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy: 2016 to 2020*.

(d) **Thames Valley Partnership**

Domestic Abuse Training Programme

The programme will provide 130 Continual Professional Development (CPD) accredited training places, to be prioritised for MKC staff, that equip non-specialist staff to identify, respond to and appropriately support domestic abuse survivors. This will include ongoing mentoring and supervisory support till October 2022.

(e) **MK ACT**

(i) Dispersed Housing

Support to victims of domestic abuse in self-contained temporary accommodation where clients may not want or be able to access the refuge for example women with a history of substance misuse, women with older male children, members of the LGBTQ+ community and men. Service started during the Covid pandemic therefore an extension to the pilot will better establish the need for and effectiveness of the service.

(ii) LGBTQ+ Development Worker

The LGBTQ+ Development Worker will work across MK-ACT to review and develop services that are provided to LGBTQ+ victims of domestic abuse to ensure that barriers are reduced, and access increased. The LGBTQ+ Development Worker will provide outreach and actively engage with the LGBTQ+ community in Milton Keynes as well as training professionals from other organisation in how they should respond to LGBTQ+ victims of domestic abuse.

(iii) Hospital IDVA

To provide targeted independent domestic abuse advocacy and support for people (patients and staff) who disclose domestic abuse

incidents while in hospital as well as training new and existing staff in domestic abuse awareness and how to deal with disclosures.

A new Hospital Navigator scheme, funded by Thames Valley Police and offering support, signposting and advice, for those hospitalised through assaults, including domestic abuse. There are 11 volunteers, working shifts at Milton Keynes University Hospital through the busy weekend periods.

(iv) “Last Resort” Fund

To provide immediate support to victims of domestic abuse who have No Recourse to Public Funds (234 people in three years) through a last resort fund.