

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee - 21 June 2022

Subject: Domestic Abuse

Report of: Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods)

Summary

This report requested by the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny details a summary of recent and current work to address Domestic Violence and Abuse, including implementation of the Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Recommendations

The Committee are invited to consider and comment on the information contained in this report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The report describes some of the initiatives designed to support victims into recovery and move on from their experience, to include opportunities for employment and training
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	The Domestic Abuse Strategy aims to improve the lives of those in our city that are affected by domestic violence and abuse through better co-ordinated services that safeguard and support victims and any children impacted by living with abuse.

A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	The report references wider work of the Council on the VAWG agenda, which is intended to contribute to the city being a place where women feel safe in their neighbourhood, the city centre or anywhere else they may visit
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy 2021-2024 (attached)

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – draft statutory guidance

GM Gender-based Violence and Abuse Strategy

Flowchart of New Burdens Funding arrangements

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report seeks to provide Committee members with an update on progress during the latter half of 2021 and 2022 to date on the various aspects of the domestic violence and abuse agenda.
- 1.2 In particular, the report updates Committee members on early progress with implementation of the Domestic Abuse Strategy for the city and describes work to date on local adoption and implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- 1.3 Domestic abuse, in all its forms, remains a significant issue for the Council and partners. In the quarter to 31st March 2022, GMP recorded over 3700 domestic incidents, of which over 1000 were incidents where children were present.
- 1.4 The Independent Choices GM DVA Helpline dealt with 828 calls for help and support during the same period, of which 290 were specifically from Manchester citizens. Their EndtheFear website saw over 7200 visits from people looking for advice, support or information
- 1.5 The city's three MARACs, which discuss and agree support and service interventions for high risk victims, dealt with 598 new cases, of which 302 (50.5%) were repeat cases.
- 1.6 The IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) service dealt with 684 new referrals during the same quarter
- 1.7 The inward traffic figures for MARAC and IDVA, whilst still very high, were slightly lower than those for the same quarter in 2021, reflecting some signs of impact of collective work of Council colleagues, GMP and other partners to explore ways in which to ease some of the pressure on those parts of the response that deal with the highest risk victims.

2. Background

2.1 Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy

- 2.1.1 Manchester's updated Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy' was launched on the 26th November 2021.
- 2.1.2 The strategy is the product of partnership, between Council colleagues and those from our partner agencies, but also with service providers, community and voluntary organisations, elected members and, most importantly of all, people with lived experience of domestic abuse
- 2.1.3 The strategy is rooted in the 'Our Manchester' priorities, values and behaviours, and aligns with the Greater Manchester Gender-based Abuse Strategy.

2.1.4 It also recognises the diverse range of people who are, or may become, victims of domestic abuse, that they need to be able to see themselves in the support and services we offer, and that those services need to be accessible and meet the needs of our citizens.

2.1.5 The new strategy has three ambitions, which are to:

- Prevent abuse and promote healthy relationships
- Identify abuse and intervene as early as possible
- Support victims with their recovery

2.1.6 The Domestic Abuse Forum is leading on work to formulate and implement an action plan that will ensure delivery of those ambitions over the lifetime of the new strategy. An initial workshop for this purpose was held in May, with a further, full-day event planned for August.

2.1.7 Progress is already being made on several actions under each of the ambitions, and some of that progress is highlighted in the following sections.

2.2 Prevent abuse and promote healthy relationships

Raising awareness and encouraging reporting across all communities

2.2.1 Independent Choices receives a grant to carry out awareness raising and training work on the issues of HBV and FM in the city. The focus of that work this year has been to extend the reach and coverage of the work to other communities yet to be reached. Work to date in 2021-22 has included:

- Developing the Healthy Relationship workshops to include communities that have not previously been reached by IC to date.
- A two- hour workshop has been produced and delivered to a multi-cultural group in the Welcome Centre in Cheetham Hill.
- Seeking opportunities to speak on local community radio shows and doing so in two sessions with Africana Radio and Asian Sound Radio
- Speaking to the Chinese community and discussing the barriers faced within those communities. Based on this IC have changed the training and have delivered to the Chinese Wai Yin Centre
- Developing publicity poster concepts aimed at the Chinese, Traveller and Black African communities, these will shortly be out in communities across the city

2.3 Identify abuse and intervene as early as possible

Training and development

2.3.1 Whilst some difficulties were encountered in maintaining the programme of training in domestic abuse during the pandemic, time was taken to review and update the training content and materials. The product of that is a refreshed training product that takes account of all the latest policy and legislative

developments. Courses are now being advertised again on the Manchester Safeguarding Partnership website and take up is expected to be high.

- 2.3.2 In the meantime, the New Burdens Funding enabled us to commission Safe Lives (nationally accredited provider) to deliver training to over 100 colleagues from Housing providers across the city during October and November 2021. This input was well received and a further set of courses was commissioned for May to October 2022, at which we expect around 300 more colleagues from across the Council's Neighbourhoods, Adults, Children's and Early Help functions to be trained.

Work with perpetrators

- 2.3.3 Our commissioned provider Talk Listen Change is delivering a range of programmes and initiatives aimed at challenging perpetrators to acknowledge and change their behaviours. Those services include integrated support for victims of those engaged on programmes, tailored programmes for women who use violence, perpetrators for whom English is a second language and (a pilot programme) for gay men who use violence.
- 2.3.4 During 2021-22 to date, delivery of the nationally accredited Respect Young People's Programme has also begun, with two programmes being completed to date. This programme works with children and young people who are violent and/or abusive to their parents, simultaneously providing them and their parents with support and strategies to move forward positively together in their relationship
- 2.3.5 Talk Listen Change are also delivering the nationally accredited DRIVE behaviour change programme for us in the South of the city, funded through a Home Office grant administered by GMCA. To date, since the programme commenced in April 2021, 116 perpetrators have been referred into the scheme, with 57 being accepted onto the programme and 31 currently open to Case Managers.

2.4 Support victims with their recovery

Work to support children and young people

- 2.4.1 ASSIST is a pilot service commissioned from the New Burdens Funding allocation (see section 3 below), and is delivered by The Children's Society, in conjunction with MWA's Reach service. It aims to improve the emotional wellbeing of children and young people who are affected by domestic abuse and who are in safe accommodation or have been dispersed to temporary accommodation.
- 2.4.2 During its first quarter of provision, from October to December 2021, the service supported 43 children and young people within 23 families that were referred.

2.4.3 Over 200 structured sessions were delivered with children and young people during this time, contributing to some positive outcomes:

- 100% of those children and young people indicating their wellbeing had improved
- 94% felt they had gained knowledge and skills that would help them in future
- 94% felt that they were listened to by their worker

2.4.4 Sample feedback from young people included:

'Being creative in sessions and really feeling I was being listened to'

'Always able to do things we asked for'

'The fact that someone cared and was there to talk to'

'Sat there and listened to me blabber on, helped me to deal with my emotions'

2.4.5 Sample feedback from parents included:

'Fantastic service, contact was made with me as soon as I agreed to the referral'

'Has really helped my child control his anger and use different ways to cope'

'My children have gained in confidence and openly speak more to me. They have a bounce in their step again'

Sanctuary Scheme

2.4.6 The Sanctuary scheme is a service for victims/survivors of domestic violence and abuse, who either own their own home or live in a private rented property (regardless of risk level). The scheme is designed to make them safer, by adding additional security to their homes. The scheme also aims to prevent homelessness and presentations to refuge, which are an unsettling experience for the families, costly to the local authority and have significant health, social and economic impact for victims and their children.

2.4.7 All those referred into the service have access to a dedicated IDVA, paid for from the New Burdens funding (see section 3 below). Currently there are 35 victims (31 women and 4 men) and 21 children that are benefitting from this aspect of the scheme.

2.4.8 For 2021-22, as well as the full installation package, services users have been able to be referred for a '**devices package**', which is very cost effective when compared with a full installation. This has proved to be very popular and during **2021-22** there have been **576** varied security items issued, at a cost of £4490.

2.4.9 Looking at **full installations**, a total of 31 were completed during 2021-22, at a total cost of £9412.00, representing good value for money at £303 per installation, when compared with the costs of finding safe accommodation for a victim and their children.

3. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021- Safe Accommodation Duty and New Burdens Funding

3.1 The DA Act came into effect on 29th April 2021 and has three main aims:

- To raise awareness and understanding about the devastating impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families
- To further improve the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice
- To strengthen the support for victims of abuse by statutory agencies

3.2 The Act brought with it a new, updated definition of domestic abuse that included economic abuse for the first time, and defined children as victims in their own right, rather than them being described as 'having witnessed' or 'been exposed to' domestic abuse.

3.3 The Act also established the office of the independent Domestic Abuse Commissioner and, under Part 4, required Local Authorities to meet new duties to put in place support for victims and children in safe accommodation

3.4 Compliance with the duties has been ensured in Manchester through work undertaken over the past 12 months to:

- Establish a new multi-agency Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (to replace the former DVA Strategy Group)
- Complete a Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment
- Publish a strategy, informed by the Needs Assessment, that sets out how the Safe Accommodation Duty will be met (this is contained within our overall updated DVA Strategy)
- Ensure that all eligible homeless victims of DA automatically have 'priority need' for homelessness assistance, and do not lose a secure lifetime or assured tenancy
- Ensure that the same accommodation response to minority groups, including older people and disabled people is improved and developed
- Reporting back to Government (DLUHC) as requested on progress with implementing the Duty (our first such report is in the process of being submitted this month)
- Fed into the National Oversight Board chaired by DA Commissioner

3.5 The Safe Accommodation Duty was accompanied by an allocation of New Burdens funding from DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) and colleagues from Community Safety and the Integrated Commissioning Team have been working together to put arrangements in place to ensure that funding is spent appropriately and in line with the findings of the Needs Assessment.

3.6 To date, funding has been directed principally towards putting in place a range of internal and external support services for victims. Principal of these has been the **Integrated Specialist Front Door Team**, based in Housing Solutions and specifically for DA (Domestic Abuse) victims. Here, six highly

trained and experienced staff conduct risk assessments with people and signpost them on to the most suitable accommodation.

- 3.7 The team has, since inception in September 2021, dealt with presentations from 540 victims, 439 of whom were women and 68 who were men. The majority of victims were White British (231), the next largest group being Asian/Asian British: Pakistani (72). 275 victims were from households with dependent children, the total of children concerned being 544. 265 victims were from households with no dependent children.
- 3.8 Once victims have presented at Housing Solutions accommodation is found for them. Unfortunately, at this stage we are still placing some families in B&B, while some will go into Temporary Accommodation and others will find a place in one of the refuges or have their homes made safer with the Sanctuary scheme. When people are ready to 'move on' the specialists in the **DA Private Rented Sector** team will help them find permanent housing and will be there to offer support when needed.
- 3.9 Extra support has also been provided to the six refuges, with additional staff to support the more complex cases that are presenting, as well as children and housing workers. In a recent meeting with providers all commented on the steep rise in the number of cases they are seeing that are highly complex, with drug and alcohol misuse and/or severe mental health issues.
- 3.10 Over the past year there have been 156 referrals for a space in one of the PTMWA (Pankhurst Trust Manchester Women's Aid) refuges, 43 of these between January and April this year. Of these 43, 20 have been accepted. Most of the women not accepted are because their needs would be better met elsewhere, so they have been referred on to a partner agency, or the women have a housing need rather than Domestic Abuse.
- 3.11 Since January 2022, 15% of refuge clients have come from Manchester, the rest from around the UK, and 2 women from outside the EU. In this time, they have moved 23 women on, some to outside Manchester, the following table giving a breakdown of locations to which those staying in Manchester have moved.

First half of postcode (Manchester)	Number
M11	2
M12	2
M14	1
M18	2
M20	1
M22	1
M23	5
M24	1
M40	1
M45	1
M9	1
Total	18

- 3.12 Manchester continues to support the **Saheli** refuge for Black Asian and Minority Ethnic women (mainly from South Asia), and since January 2022 they have had all 10 beds occupied – 6 in refuge and 4 in a dispersed property. They have had 15 referrals, but have had to turn 15 down, either due to lack of space in the case of 11 women or the service not being appropriate for 4 of them. Saheli continue to do significant community work and have supported 71 women with group work, training and volunteering since January.
- 3.13 One of the most exciting initiatives is the establishment of the **Reach** service, run by PTMWA (Pankhurst Trust Manchester Women’s Aid). This is a new floating support system, designed to support DA victims in temporary accommodation. When someone presents as homeless because of DA they are contacted by this team, as a core part of what the Council can offer. This team will give practical advice around staying safe, benefits claims and occasionally food parcels, as well as the emotional support needed when leaving an abusive relationship.
- 3.14 Since October 2021 **Reach** has had 198 individual adults referred to the service, and they have accepted 129 of these. 94 of these victims had 205 children between them. 12 of the victims were men, and the service includes a dedicated male worker.
- 3.15 At our Oak Lodge facility for domestic abuse victims with complex needs, their children benefit from a dedicated Children’s Worker, who has, since commencing just prior to Christmas, worked with 12 children aged 0-13 years and 6 adults. Children over 5 are offered therapeutic 1-1 play sessions and their mums given help with building family support networks. Group work is planned shortly, as is extension of the scheme to work with clients in Willowbank and Apex House.
- 3.16 We have worked closely with the **LGBT Foundation** supporting LGBTQ+ victims of DA with accommodation needs throughout Greater Manchester. The New Burdens funding has enabled them to continue to deliver their accommodation programme which consists of 6 flats – 3 in Salford and 3 in Hulme, to house same sex and trans victims. These flats have Refuge status, so clients have the same Priority Move On status as other women who stay in refuge. In the past month they have successfully moved on a trans woman who had particularly complex problems into a city centre apartment owned by a housing association and continue to give her support. Their clients also attend a 12-week programme of group work and have access to counselling and other advice services.
- 3.17 Since October 2021 LGBT Foundation have recruited a manager, a coordinator and 2 DA p/t sessional workers. All referrals are risk assessed within 48 hours. Since October they have received 46 new referrals, mainly from Manchester but throughout other GM (Greater Manchester) areas too. Of these 20 were men, 22 were women and 4 were non-binary.
- 3.18 Whilst the DA Act 2021 does require local authorities to give support to victims with **No Recourse to Public Funds**, in Manchester we recognise that this is a

significant challenge. We awarded a grant to Independent Choices to lead a programme run by Safety4Sisters for these victims and will continue to fund this work going forwards. The money has paid for short term stays in refuge or hotels whilst the team apply for the Destitution Domestic Violence concession and leave to remain, if appropriate.

3.19 Further priorities to be progressed utilising the dedicated funding include:

- Employing a Victims Co-Ordinator to ensure that the voice of victims is at the centre of future planning
- Supporting extra staff in our Respite Rooms project, for women who have been rough sleeping and have a history of DA.
- Funding for refuges to ensure that women have the right equipment and furniture to move on to their permanent accommodation
- Instigating a grants programme that will be specifically targeted at smaller organisations that do not qualify for any of the larger funding streams, with a particular emphasis on initiatives aimed at victim groups identified as under-served need in the Needs Assessment.
- Reflecting the Our Year celebrations for children by making available funds to help children and their families who have witnessed domestic abuse to enjoy experiences they wouldn't normally have access to

4. Domestic abuse and the wider Violence Against Women and Girls agenda (VAWG)

4.1 Links to the GM Gender Based Violence Strategy

4.1.1 Work to tackle the issue of domestic abuse is closely linked to that on the broader issue of violence against women and girls.

4.1.2 At Greater Manchester level, the Metro Mayor launched last Autumn his GM Gender Based Violence Strategy, [Gender Based Violence Strategy \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk) which has since been followed by a comprehensive Action Plan.

4.1.3 In Manchester, our approach will be to recognise and acknowledge the content, aims and priorities of those GM documents, whilst developing our own plans to address those aspects of the VAWG agenda that are particular to our city, its residents and visitors.

4.1.4 Early work to scope out and develop our plans for the city is ongoing, and a VAWG Policy Officer (Candi Wallis) has been appointed to lead on this work, based in the Community Safety Unit under the direction of the Head of Service and working closely with our Domestic Abuse Leads (Delia Edwards and Ian Halliday)

4.2 White Ribbon Accreditation and Action Plan

- 4.2.1 As Members will no doubt be aware, the Council received notice of its accreditation as a White Ribbon authority in December last year, and formal confirmation at the Council meeting on 30th March this year.
- 4.2.2 Work is now underway to fully populate a wide-ranging implementation plan of over 30 actions, organised under four themes and to be completed within the next three years. The focus of the Violence Against Women and Girls plan is much broader than DV but will be closely aligned, to avoid unnecessary duplication.
- 4.2.3 Members will continue to receive news and updates on our local progress, and are most welcome to find out more about the wider White Ribbon initiative at: www.whiteribbon.org.uk

5. Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews

- 5.1 The requirement to conduct Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) has placed a significant capacity burden on the Community Safety Partnership over the past 12-15 months and will continue to do so going forward.
- 5.2 DHRs are a statutory process and must be undertaken if the circumstances of a death meet Home Office criteria. There are currently four DHRs at various stages of progress, with one currently pending awaiting toxicology reports.
- 5.3 Three DHRs have been completed during 2021-22, and the processes are now under way to ensure that actions arising for agencies and services are promptly discharged, and that learning for professionals and providers is disseminated, through face-to-face group learning events, learning reports and '7 Minute Briefings' on particular themes or topics.
- 5.4 As part of the new Domestic Abuse Commissioner's range of functions, we are now obliged to share completed review reports with her office, in order that they contribute to development of a national repository of learning and have the potential to shape change in policy and practice at a nationwide level.
- 5.5 The pool of individuals available to perform the role of DHR Chair / Author remains smaller than ideal, though measures taken to cast our net wider across the country have had some success, with our latest two reviews being conducted by chairs / authors with whom we are building new and hopefully productive relationships.

6. Future funding and sustainability

- 6.1 Our first Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment helped us to better understand the domestic abuse landscape in the city but also highlighted some aspects we need to know more about. The first refresh of that Needs Assessment, due later this year, will aim to enrich the picture further, so we know all there is to

know about the nature and impact of domestic abuse in Manchester and can direct our funding and other resources as effectively as possible.

- 6.2 The first Needs Assessment highlighted some gaps and shortfalls in provision, particularly in relation to older victims, those with disabilities and male victims. Some of the New Burdens funding will be used during the remainder of 2021-22 to allocate grants to service providers and community organisations to test out approaches to providing these victim groups with better support and services. In relation to male victims, we are contributing to a GM-wide piece of work in its early stages to understand the need and consider how best to develop service models at an appropriate scale across the city region.
- 6.3 While the initial allocation of New Burdens funding was suitably generous for us to be able to put in place many of the services described in section 3 above, as is ever the case with national funding streams, there are limits to guaranteed longevity and we will only know year to year whether the amount allocated to the city will increase with inflation, remain the same or even decrease.
- 6.4 Work on the broader VAWG agenda and action plan (see 4.2 above) is being supported by funding agreed by Members, and, given the intertwined nature of this and the domestic abuse agenda it is likely that there will be some residual benefit in terms of awareness raising / prevention work and support to victims.
- 6.5 Many of the programmes and service set out in section 2 of this report have been made possible through the significant allocation of Council funding agreed by Members back in 2020. These programmes and service have enabled more victims to be supported, more children to receive counselling and therapy, and our work to challenge the behaviour of perpetrators to markedly develop. Whilst the continuing difficult national and local funding landscape for the Council is recognised and acknowledged, continuation of this valuable investment beyond 2021-22 will enable us to maintain and potentially further develop these services, and through increasing their longevity, be able to accurately measure their impact.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The Committee are invited to consider and comment on the information contained in this report.