

## **Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence work in Bristol in 2020-2022**

### **Service provision during Covid**

Domestic abuse services remained open to referrals throughout the pandemic and also increased their online provision. Next Link our main provider of domestic abuse services in Bristol reported an increase of 35% in contact with their services. All providers reported an increase in the complexity of referrals, with mental health and drug & alcohol issues prevalent. Bristol City Council's emergency fund paid for a specialist BAME worker, and a temporary Safe House (during the first wave of the pandemic) Domestic Abuse Services also received additional funding from the Ministry of Justice which has been distributed via the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

### **Awareness raising work**

The Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership developed the 'Are you ok?' campaign in response to the pandemic. As part of this social media posts were developed with details about domestic abuse services in Bristol and posters/ leaflets were sent to pharmacies, food banks and housing blocks. Digital posters were shared with vaccination centres. In the wake of the Sarah Everard case, work was done to adapt the campaign and share information about where victims of sexual violence could access support.

### **The Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse**

The Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse was first formed in 2020, by Councillor Helen Godwin and Councillor Asher Craig, as a response to the impact of lockdown on those affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Twenty-eight local and national organisations took part in five themed workshops. These workshops produced the following series of principles which are listed in the report:

- We will start with you and what's right for you.
- There are a range of support services available and ways in which we can build safety with you. There will always be a person available to talk to you and help.
- If you have children, we will work with you to support you, to help you care for your children and keep them safe.
- It's your home and we want you to be able to stay in your home, which means if you want the person who is hurting, scaring or controlling you to be told to leave and not return, we will take action so that you can be safe.
- If staying in your home isn't right for you, or you need a safe home to go to, we will do everything we can to help you to make that happen. Your physical and psychological safety are important to us.
- In every corner of our city, we will work to eliminate sexual violence and abuse, and we will support survivors to feel safe, to recover, and to thrive.

- Domestic abuse and sexual violence are everybody's business – we all have a role to play in making sure Bristol is a zero-tolerance city where domestic abuse and sexual violence are not tolerated, and victims and survivors are supported.

There are 35 recommendations in the report and work on developing and implementing actions in response to them is ongoing.

The full report can be found here

[:https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/5134107/The+Mayoral+Commission+on+Domestic+Abuse+report.pdf/9f85d232-fbb0-b91a-4d19-e093ca9546b6?t=1615542794441](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/5134107/The+Mayoral+Commission+on+Domestic+Abuse+report.pdf/9f85d232-fbb0-b91a-4d19-e093ca9546b6?t=1615542794441)

## **The Domestic Abuse Act 2021**

The Domestic Abuse Bill went through parliament and received Royal Assent on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021. The passing of the DA Act brings new statutory duties to Local Authorities which are supported by some 'new burden funding' – Bristol's allocation for 2021/22 was £1,079,426. In response to the requirements of the Act we have formed a Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence multiagency partnership board which sits under the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership and has responsibility for assessing need, developing a strategy and advising on the commissioning of services. The additional funding has enabled the development of new and existing services including work with children in Safe Houses, 24hr staff cover in the Complex Needs Safe House, a specialist worker to support those affected by domestic abuse from the LGBTQ+ communities and a specialist co-located worker who will be based in our housing teams.

## **Respite Rooms**

Bristol City Council was successful in bidding for some funding from the Department of Levelling Up Communities and Housing (DLUCH) for an emergency accommodation and support service for women who have slept rough and who are- or have been- at risk of abuse and violence. The Bristol Respite Rooms opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 it is run on behalf of Bristol City Council by St Mungo's and Next Link. It is a 24hr service with 10 bed spaces. Specialised, trauma and gender informed support and accommodation is provided for up to six weeks with a focus on strengths-based recovery and appropriate, safe move-on.

## **Commissioning of domestic abuse and sexual violence services October 2022- March 2027**

Work on recommissioning these important services from October 2022 is underway and the consultation on this which closed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January received 189 responses and over 46% of respondents identified as being someone affected by domestic abuse or sexual violence. We are currently reviewing all the information received with a view to going out to tender in early March. More information is available in the [draft commissioning strategy](#).