



Title of Paper:	Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Bristol
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Date of Board meeting:	12th January 2023
Purpose:	Information and discussion

1. Executive Summary

Bristol aspires to be a city free from domestic abuse and sexual violence, and new services have been commissioned which have led to exciting collaborations between voluntary sector partners. A newly formed survivor forum has ensured the voice of lived experience is being heard. Plans for future work on these agendas will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

2. Purpose of the Paper

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) confers responsibilities to raise awareness and improve the response to victims. The One City Plan has a clear goal that by 2050 “Bristol will be a city free from domestic abuse and gender inequality”. This paper updates the Board on the current position in relation to domestic abuse and sexual violence in Bristol, sets out recent developments in relation to both national legislation, and the local provision of domestic abuse and sexual violence services. It seeks a commitment from partners to continue to work together to prevent violence and abuse, and by so doing to begin to tackle adverse childhood experiences.

3. Background, evidence base, and what needs to happen

Based on local police data (2022), 11,093 domestic offences with victims over the age of 16 and domestic abuse incidents (across all ages) were recorded in Bristol in 2021/22, an increase from 10,514 in 2020/21. The rate of sexual violence recorded crime figures for Bristol is significantly higher than the national rate. The 2020/21 figure for Bristol was 2.6 per 1000 population.

Legislative Context

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) has three purposes - namely to:

- Raise awareness and understanding about the devastating impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families
- Further improve the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice
- Strengthen the support for victims of abuse by statutory agencies.

One of the requirements of the act was the formation of a partnership board. In Bristol the Multiagency Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Delivery Group, was

established in 2021 to provide oversight, and sits under the governance of the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership.

Recent developments in service provision

The “New Burdens Funding” associated with the Domestic Abuse Act enabled additional accommodation based services to be included in the recommissioning of domestic services for Bristol last year. A collaborative approach was encouraged and Next Link and Partners were successful in securing the contract. In October 2022 the Next Link Plus Service was launched and now offers an innovative new service model which includes direct support for male survivors, extended support for child survivors and therapeutic support including counselling.

Therapeutic sexual violence services have recently been jointly commissioned with a new contract due to start on 1st April 2023. This replaces services previously separately commissioned by Bristol City Council, NHS England, BNSSG Integrated Care Board (formerly CCG) and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (Avon and Somerset OPCC). A full open tender procurement process was undertaken between August – October 2022 with involvement of those with lived experience, and the successful bidders were the Sexual Violence Alliance (led by SARSAS). The new service has expanded to include new pathways for adults, young people and children as well as psychological wellbeing courses.

In the past year, two new services for victims of domestic abuse have been piloted in Bristol:

- The **Respite Rooms** provide short-term intensive specialist support and accommodation for women with a history of rough sleeping who have been victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. This reaches a cohort of women who experience multiple overlapping risk factors or disadvantage, and for whom traditional services are no longer enough.
- **Iris Advise** supports sexual health staff to identify and respond to the signs of both domestic abuse and sexual violence, and enables them to directly refer individuals to a specialist service for support. This new service is jointly commissioned by Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council and is being delivered locally at Unity Sexual Health clinics in collaboration with Next Link, the local specialist domestic abuse support service.

4. Community/stakeholder engagement

A Survivor Forum was established in October 2021 in response to the requirements of Domestic Abuse Act, to ensure the voice of victims and survivors was embedded in the conversations and the work undertaken by the Multiagency Delivery group. Facilitated by the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership, it aims to influence strategic change using the lived experience of its regular members. It has helped to develop questions for use in evaluating service tenders, influenced training packages for professionals and has hosted a multi-agency event to raise awareness and start

conversations. The Survivor Forum recently received national recognition as a beacon of good practice.

5. Recommendations

This paper requests:

- That partners note the range of new domestic abuse and sexual violence service provision in Bristol
- That prevention of abuse and violence and support for those affected, including recovery is included within plans for the work of family hubs and in the work plans of localities
- The support of the Health and Wellbeing Board the development of the upcoming citywide domestic abuse and sexual violence strategy.

6. City Benefits

The health impacts of domestic abuse are wide ranging and extensive, having long-term impacts on both the physical and mental health of those affected and disproportionately affecting those in the most disadvantaged areas of our city. Providing support for victims helps to tackle these inequalities. If children and young people are safer from domestic abuse and sexual violence, adverse childhood experiences will be reduced or where they have been affected support will mean the impact is lessened. The 2021 Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse included 35 recommendations that the City is taking forward, moving us towards becoming a safer, kinder place where victims and survivors of domestic violence and abuse feel supported and empowered to move forward and build new lives.

7. Financial and Legal Implications

There are no financial or legal implications resulting from this paper.

8. References

Links to relevant documents are listed below for reference:

1. Bristol Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment 2022:
<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/files/documents/5362-domestic-abuse-needs-assessment>
2. BCC Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Annual Summary
[Bristol City Council \(2022\) JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile – Annual Summary 2021/22](#)
3. Bristol Mayoral Commission (2021)
<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/files/1682-the-mayoral-commission-on-domestic-abuse-report>
4. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021
[Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
5. Bristol Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy:
[The Bristol Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2022 to 2025 \(pdf, 506 KB\).](#)