

Report title	Domestic Abuse Bill Grant Allocation (2021-2022)	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Jasbir Jaspal Public Health and Wellbeing	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable Director	John Denley, Director of Public Health	
Originating service	Community Safety	
Accountable employee	Lynsey Kelly	Head of Communities
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Report to be/has been considered by	Public Health Leadership Team	6 April 2021
	Strategic Executive Board	8 April 2021

Recommendations for decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the establishment of supplementary revenue budgets totalling £650,902 fully funded by grant.
2. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership, to utilise the £650,902 Wolverhampton Domestic Abuse Bill Allocation from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for 2021-2022 and to approve the award of a grants for services when the evaluation process is complete.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To seek delegation of the MHCLG grant funding allocated to the City of Wolverhampton Council in order to fulfil the statutory functions outlined in Part Four of the Domestic Abuse Bill.
- 1.2 The funding will be utilised to build on existing support provision within Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In February 2017 the Prime Minister announced plans for work to transform the way the government thinks about and tackles domestic abuse, leading to the introduction of a new Domestic Abuse Bill. On 3 March 2020 the Domestic Abuse Bill was reintroduced and subject to the Bill receiving royal assent, it is expected to be implemented in April 2021.
- 2.2 The Domestic Abuse Bill seeks to transform the response to Domestic Abuse (DA) nationally. It has four main objectives relating to domestic abuse; to promote awareness, protect and support victims, transform the justice process and improve performance.

3.0 Local authority duties

- 3.1 Part Four of the Domestic Abuse Bill includes a new duty on tier one local authorities in England to provide support for victims and their children within domestic abuse safe accommodation.
- 3.2 The duty will also require the local authority to lead on establishing (or identifying) a local partnership which will be responsible for commissioning support to victims and their children in domestic abuse safe accommodation based on a robust needs assessment.
- 3.3 The identified Board will be required to publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their area having regard to the need's assessment, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy and report back annually to central government.
- 3.4 Under the new Duty 'Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation' can include:
 - Refuge accommodation – a refuge offers accommodation and intensive support which is tied to that accommodation. Victims, including their children, have to be refuge residents to access specialist emotional and practical support;
 - Dispersed accommodation - Safe, self-contained accommodation with the same level of specialist domestic abuse support as provided within a refuge but which may be more suitable for victims who are unable to stay in a refuge with communal spaces due to complex support needs or for families with teenage sons for example.
 - Sanctuary Schemes – properties within Sanctuary Schemes or other similar schemes which provide enhanced security measures.

3.5 Domestic abuse support will include:

- Advocacy support – development of personal safety plans, liaison with other services (for example, GPs and social workers, welfare benefit providers);
- Domestic abuse-prevention advice – support to assist victims to recognise the signs of abusive relationships, to help them remain safe (including online) and to prevent re-victimisation;
- Specialist support for victims with protected characteristics and / or complex needs, for example, interpreters, faith services, mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support, and immigration advice;
- Children’s support – including play therapy and child advocacy;
- Housing-related support – providing housing-related advice and support, for example, securing a permanent home and advice on how to live safely and independently;
- Counselling and therapy for both adults and children.

4.0 Purpose of the grant

- 4.1 The Secretary of State has determined that to ensure that local authorities are able to continue funding support to victims and their children until the commencement of the new statutory duty, and to enable preparation so that local authorities are as ready as they can be.
- 4.2 A Memorandum of Understanding has been issued stating that the grant funding for 2021-2022 is to be paid in April based on the understanding of the conditions outlined below.
- 4.3 The grant only covers revenue expenditure relating to the functions set out in the new statutory duty (within the Domestic Abuse Bill) on Tier 1 Local Authorities relating to the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children residing within safe accommodation locally.
- 4.4 The grant is distributed to Local Authorities for the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 for the purpose of and the expectation that they start to prepare and fulfil their relevant functions under the duty from that date as if the new duty were in force and continue to fulfil these functions in line with the duty once it is commenced (subject to Parliamentary approval).
- 4.5 The Bill will put in place a statutory framework for the delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children residing within safe accommodation. Tier 1 Local Authorities will be required to appoint a multi-agency Local Partnership Board (LPB) to support them in performing certain specified functions:
- **Assess the need** for accommodation-based support for all victims and their children, including those who require cross border support.

- **Prepare and publish strategies** for the provision of support to cover the locality and diverse groups of victims.
- **Give effect to strategies by making commissioning/de-commissioning decisions to meet the support needs of victims and their children.**
- **Monitor and evaluate local delivery of the strategy.**
- **Report back to Central Government.**

4.6 Subject to Royal Assent of the Domestic Abuse Bill, and consultation, MHCLG expects to set out in regulations that Tier 1 authorities should finalise and publish their first strategy, based on a robust needs assessment, by August 21.

5.0 Local Preparation and Delivery

- 5.1 Safer Wolverhampton Partnership (SWP) holds the governance for Wolverhampton's Interpersonal Violence Strategy which seeks to address domestic abuse locally. SWP Board has therefore been identified as the Local Partnership Board to oversee the new statutory duties associated with the Domestic Abuse Bill.
- 5.2 The city's newly established Interpersonal Violence Board (which is governed by SWP) is also playing a crucial role in the sharing of expertise and information in relation to the expected new duty.
- 5.3 A sub-group has been established to ensure that there is a planned approach to the statutory need's assessment and the statutory local domestic abuse strategy. The sub-group is formed of multi-agency partners including specialist domestic abuse services.
- 5.4 A mapping exercise has been undertaken which maps the current support offered to victims of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation. This will ensure a full shared understanding of the types of domestic abuse safe accommodation services delivered in the local area, both commissioned and non-commissioned. Further information is now being collected to understand demand and capacity within these services.
- 5.5 A survey has been shared and a wide range of professionals have shared their experiences of supporting victims and children and where they feel value could be added to city provision in order to ensure that the City of Wolverhampton Council is compliant with the statutory duty.
- 5.6 The completion of a standardised needs assessment will clearly set out the demand within the city and assist in identifying any gaps and informing future commissioning. Whilst we are awaiting the needs assessment template from MHCLG, data collection has begun through the Interpersonal Violence Board to ensure that we are prepared when required to fill out this needs assessment.
- 5.7 Engagement with victims and survivors, particularly those who experience additional barriers to accessing support will also play a vital role in ensuring that services meet the needs of victims and their families. Engagement sessions are planned throughout April to gather this feedback.

- 5.8 Subject to Cabinet approval, grant funding will be awarded to local providers operating within the city to add capacity to current support offered within domestic abuse safe accommodation as well as address any unmet need identified through the mapping, data collection and feedback from victims and survivors.
- 5.9 The conditions of the new duty and associated funding are centred around support within existing domestic abuse safe accommodation rather than the creation of additional bed spaces or community-based support.
- 5.10 Based on feedback and data collection areas of focus will include:
- Support for clients with complex needs within refuge settings;
 - Wrap around support for victims and children who have accessed the Sanctuary Scheme as a result of domestic abuse;
 - Enhanced support for children across all domestic abuse safe accommodation settings (refuge, dispersed units and Sanctuary accommodation);
 - Support for victims with protected characteristics and those who may face barriers in accessing support, for example LGBT victims and male victims.
- 5.11 Commissioned activity in these areas will be closely monitored and managed by the Community Safety Team who will regularly provide feedback to the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership and report back to the MHCLG on the outcomes of the additional provision.
- 5.12 In addition, the current multi-agency Interpersonal Violence Strategy and associated action plans will be reviewed in order to reflect the new duties set out in the Domestic Abuse Bill.

6.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 6.1 Option one - Cabinet approve delegation of the MHCLG Domestic Abuse Bill funding to deliver the strategic and statutory responsibilities set out in the Domestic Abuse Bill. This will ensure that CWC are delivering on the Memorandum of Understanding issued by the MHCLG (which will be the basis for the grant conditions which are expected in April 2021) and delivering against new statutory duties when the Bill is enacted.
- 6.2 Option two – Cabinet refuse delegation of funding from the MHCLG Domestic Abuse Bill grant. This is not recommended as the City of Wolverhampton Council would not be able to deliver against the statutory responsibilities and could not provide account for expenditure to the MHCLG in relation to support for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation.

7.0 Reasons for decision

- 7.1 Granting delegated authority and ring fencing the grant allocation to the Community Safety Partnership will allow the Council and the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership to deliver against statutory and strategic responsibilities set out in the Domestic Abuse Bill.

8.0 Financial implications

- 8.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council has been allocated £650,902 by the MHCLG to commission support to ensure that statutory duties are discharged. This funding will be utilised to commission additional support for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation in line with the Memorandum of Understanding, this will be the basis for conditions of the grant and related expenditure.
- 8.2 This report seeks approval to establish supplementary budgets totalling £650,902 fully funded from grant and delegate authority to the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership to utilise the grant and to approve the award of a grants for services when the evaluation process is complete.
[LD/07042021/Z]

9.0 Legal implications

- 9.1 Subject to the successful passage of the Domestic Abuse Bill new statutory duties will be placed on the local authority. These duties include the need to provide support for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation.
- 9.2 The activity outlined in this report will utilise the MHCLG grant funding to commission additional support in these settings to ensure that the local authority is effectively discharging its statutory responsibilities as outlined in the Bill as soon as it has received parliamentary approval.
[SZ/07042021/P]

10.0 Equalities implications

- 10.1 It is recognised that some victims of domestic abuse experience additional barriers in seeking support, including underrepresented groups, children, male victims and older victims. The needs assessment and mapping activity outlined in this report will allow a better understanding of these barriers and seek to address them further in the associated commissioning of support. Additionally, findings will inform the refreshed Interpersonal Violence Strategy which will be underpinned by a full refreshed equalities analysis.
- 10.2 In preparation for the Bill, engagement has taken place across a range of specialist services. Further engagement is planned with a wide range of victims and survivors to ensure that the voice of victims informs commissioned activity. Particular efforts have been made to understand the needs of those who face additional barriers when seeking support.
- 10.3 Domestic Abuse especially affects women and this recognition is vital in ensuring that an appropriate response is given to victims and families. However, males are also subject to domestic abuse and therefore engagement with specialist services providing support to male victims is vital in ensuring that services within the city meet the needs of all victims.

10.4 Support will be commissioned to meet the needs of all victims within safe accommodation settings and equalities data around those accessing the support will be routinely collected and analysed to ensure that the services are supporting our diverse communities. Commissioning will also include specific support tailored for groups who may face additional barriers in accessing support, for example male victims or victims from the LGBT community.

11.0 All other Implications

11.1 Health and Wellbeing Implications – Commissioning to provide or add capacity to local services supporting victims and families will impact positively on the health and wellbeing of victims of domestic abuse and their children. They will support victims and children to break the cycle of abuse, respond to the negative effects of abuse and reduce the physical and mental harm of becoming a repeat victim of abuse.

11.2 Covid-19 Implications – The restrictions around Covid-19 have increased the risk to victims of domestic abuse, particularly those who live with their perpetrators. Reports of domestic abuse have increased throughout the pandemic, as has the demand on specialist services. Increasing the support which victims can access within domestic abuse safe accommodation services will contribute to the partnership response to reduce harm to these victims and ensure that they can access the support which they need as restrictions ease.

12.0 Schedule of background papers

12.1 Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel – 19 January 2021 - [Agenda item - Implementation of the Domestic Abuse Bill 2020 :: Wolverhampton City Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)