



**Open Report on behalf of Martin Samuels,  
Executive Director - Adult Care and Community Wellbeing**

Report to:	<b>Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date:	<b>19 March 2024</b>
Subject:	<b>Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-2024 Progress Update</b>

**Summary:**

This report provides the Committee with an update on progress in the last two years of the Domestic Abuse (DA) Strategy 2021-2024, the duties introduced by the DA Act 2021, and the key areas of focus for the DA partnership in the next 12 to 18 months.

**Actions Required:**

Members of the Committee are invited to:

1. review and comment on the contents of this report and the Council's role in driving the Domestic Abuse agenda forward.
2. seek assurance on the progress made in the last two years through the delivery of the Domestic Abuse Strategy.

## **1. Background**

The Domestic Abuse Act became a statutory duty on 1 April 2021. The Act introduced:

- A legal definition of domestic abuse which recognises children as victims in their own right;
- A Domestic Abuse Commissioner to stand up for survivors and life-saving domestic abuse services;
- A legal duty on councils to fund support for survivors in 'safe accommodation';
- New protections in the family and civil courts for survivors – including a ban on abusers from cross-examining their victims, and a guarantee that survivors can access special measures (including separate waiting rooms, entrances and exits and screens);

- New criminal offences – including post-separation coercive control, non-fatal strangulation, threats to disclose private sexual images;
- A ban on abusers using a defence of ‘rough sex’;
- A guarantee that all survivors will be in priority need for housing, and will keep a secure tenancy in social housing if they need to escape an abuser;
- A ban on GPs for charging for medical evidence of domestic abuse, including for legal aid;
- A duty on the government to issue a code of practice on how data is shared between the public services survivors’ report to (such as the police) and immigration enforcement.

All of these elements of the Act have had a positive impact on the DA agenda and have impacted on how services across partners and the DA partnership have been delivered over the last two years, however the area that affected Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) significantly was under part four of the Act.

Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed a four-part statutory framework for the delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation and provided clarity over governance and accountability.

1. Section 54 specifically placed a duty on each tier one local authority in England to appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board which it should consult as it performs certain specified functions under section 53. These are to:
  - assess the need every three years as a minimum for accommodation-based domestic abuse support for all victims in their area, including those who require cross-border support.
  - develop and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their locality, having regard to the need’s assessment, of which this is to be reviewed and refreshed every three years.
  - give effect to the strategy (through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions).
  - monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy which in Lincolnshire is undertaken through the DA partnership quarterly meetings by monitoring the progress against the DA delivery plan.
  - report back to central government, which in Lincolnshire the DA Business Manager and Commercial team have been undertaking through an annual request through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
2. Require local authorities to have regard to statutory guidance in exercising their functions.
3. Require the Secretary of State to produce statutory guidance, having consulted the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, local authorities and such other persons as considered appropriate. (This has been produced by DLUHC.)
4. Require tier two councils to co-operate with the lead local authority, so far as is reasonably practicable.

In Lincolnshire, a full needs assessment was undertaken in 2021 by an independent consultancy, which included the whole of the Domestic Abuse agenda and not just limited to accommodation-based services. This was a conscious decision to ensure that Lincolnshire was able to respond to the wider domestic abuse agenda, create consistency in service provision and support the interrelated nature of Domestic Abuse and the needs of service users. Subsequently the DA Strategy was developed and produced having regard to the DA needs assessment and was widely consulted with all partner agencies and service providers in Lincolnshire. A further needs assessment was undertaken in 2022 in order to inform the commissioning of Lincolnshire’s community based Domestic Abuse services and supported the vision of the Strategy.

As a reminder, the strategy that we developed in 2021 summarises the national and local context in relation to Domestic Abuse, sets out the shared ambition and key priorities for the Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Partnership in tackling Domestic Abuse and outlines the key areas of action that the partnership have focused on over the last two years, including the new statutory duties that were introduced in relation to accommodation-based services through the DA Act 2021. The strategy is inclusive of all victims of Domestic Abuse and was published in line with the statutory duty on 5 January 2022.

To support the operational realisation of the DA strategy, a detailed delivery plan was produced in close collaboration with all partners as part of the DA partnership agenda. The delivery plan has been monitored closely by the DA partnership over the last two years to ensure progress against actions using a flagging and rating system and has also helped inform key decisions regarding the commissioning of the Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Specialist Service (LDASS) and additions to the Refuge contract.

Progress has been made against all five priorities within the strategy, being:

- Business Intelligence Picture
- Safe Accommodation
- Early Intervention
- Community Engagement
- Perpetrator Response

60% of actions across the priority areas have been completed, with 100% of those within timescale, 38% of actions are in progress and only 2% not started to date. The strategy runs until the end of 2024 due to the statutory publication timescales, therefore progress is very much on track to achieve most if not all actions set within the strategy and delivery plan for 2021-24.

In tangible terms, some of the key areas of progress have been:

What we set out to achieve in the Strategy	What we have achieved to date
<u>Priority one - Business Intelligence</u> Invest time into developing our business intelligence picture for Lincolnshire,	This area of work has been slow to progress for various reasons such as resource, access to data, realignment of services and new commissioning

<p>looking at partnership data and how we can develop a continual cycle of data analysis that will support the partnerships ambitions. We acknowledge that further work is needed to understand the needs of all victim groups. Evaluation and performance against the strategy and delivery plan will also be developed.</p>	<p>arrangements, however strides have been made and by the end of 2023/24, we will see a data dashboard that supports our community based commissioned service, with an aim to extend this to a partnership data set within 2024/25 which will sit alongside the DA strategy and delivery plan and be outcome focused.</p>
<p><u>Priority Two - Community Engagement</u> The importance of community engagement is acknowledged by the partnership; however, development work would be beneficial in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survivor engagement programme</li> <li>• Communications activity</li> <li>• Business engagement</li> <li>• Community/neighbourhood engagement particularly looking at the role of the voluntary sector and community groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A significant community engagement element has been introduced and mobilised within the LDASS contract with a purpose to engage with the communities in Lincolnshire and build a network of support and identify champions to tackle Domestic Abuse at its very roots.</li> <li>• The DA team has worked closely with Lincolnshire Police to launch ‘Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) voices’ an independent advisory group that creates a safe space for women to speak openly, have challenging, constructive and reflective conversations about their individual lived experiences with the aim to shape the delivery of services in Lincolnshire.</li> <li>• An annual communications plan is produced by a multi-agency group to ensure relevant and timely public engagement is undertaken in relation to tackling Domestic Abuse and other related agendas.</li> <li>• Launched a Business Engagement programme, hosted two County business engagement events, reached 7500 employees through engagement events and specifically trained 690 managers across 21 separate national, regional and local business regarding Domestic Abuse and how they can support their workforce.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Priority Three - Safe Accommodation</u> Through the initial needs assessment, we have identified some areas of work specifically looking at a county wide approach to a Sanctuary Scheme/target hardening, the need to explore move on accommodation options and the continued support for complex needs. However, the partnership acknowledges that further diagnostic and analytical work needs to be</p>	<p>The Local Authority (LA) now commissions 12 more refuge units, four more dispersed units, introduced six new move on units across the County, provides support for children and young people within safe accommodation, appointed a Safe Accommodation Project Coordinator that will coordinate the delivery of a consistent county wide approach to target hardening which will, where appropriate, keep victims of Domestic Abuse, including children, in their own homes and safe from harm. In</p>

<p>undertaken in the development of the delivery plan in order to fully appreciate the need in this area, especially in relation to male victims, older people and people with protected characteristics. This will be a priority focus for the partnership.</p>	<p>addition, an investment in the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) membership and accreditation to support the development of the housing sectors response to victims of Domestic Abuse.</p>
<p><u>Priority Four - Early Intervention</u> There are a number of opportunities to develop the partnership's early intervention response; however the key areas identified are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School and early years engagement.</li> <li>• Creatively using health settings to support earlier identification of Domestic Abuse and offers of support.</li> <li>• Developing the partnership response to standard and medium risk DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour-Based Violence) and how that information is shared.</li> <li>• Further development of the partnership multi-agency training programme.</li> <li>• Tackling culture and language at all levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An investment in two healthy relationships Stay Safe Officers to work in secondary and primary schools in the last two years has meant that we have seen an increase of 1,837 secondary school students receiving healthy relationships education in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22, and this is set to be much higher for 2023/24. It has meant that all primary schools can now access healthy relationships education and to date for 2023/24 academic year, 6,170 primary students have been seen.</li> <li>• An investment in a Domestic Abuse Trainer since April 2022 has meant that professionals completing DA courses has risen by 64%. At present, comparing Quarter 3 2022/23 and Quarter 3 2023/24, we have seen a further 13% increase of professionals completing DA courses. The DA Trainer has added the ability for schools to access training on a twilight basis which since February 2023 we have trained over 1400 staff from 59 schools. Since March 2022, over 1400 professionals from community groups have been trained. Over 300 staff from businesses have been trained to understand Domestic Abuse. The training packages we now offer have been streamlined and developed so that we now offer seven different packages making them easier and more accessible for professionals both face to face and online.</li> <li>• A project group has been set up to look at DA and dementia and the complex nature of this area of work and how we can best support people in these circumstances. The project group has been chaired by Adult Social Care (ASC), led by the DA partnership and supported and driven by a number of professionals from LPFT, ULHT, ASC etc. To date a pathway and guidance has been developed and a pilot will take place in March within ASC with a view to rolling out in the new financial year.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A six-month pilot with GP surgeries was launched in October 2023 in order to support GP's to increase referrals to DA services. This was as a result of recognising that referrals levels were below an expectation whilst acknowledging the difficult task GP's have with such limited appointment times. The pilot began with two identified surgeries, extended to four, and from 1 March will be extended to another four surgeries with the view to extending the pilot to 12 months.</li> <li>• Proposals have been developed regarding the management of non-high-risk DASH and agreed through the DA partnership, of which this will be operationalised in 2024/25.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Priority Five - Perpetrator Response</u> To tackle Domestic Abuse effectively, the partnership needs to develop how it responds to the behaviour of abusers and what programmes/initiatives are most appropriate for a rural county.</p>	<p>A project group has been set up to support this area of work and has to date undertaken a scoping, gap analysis and benchmarking exercise, developed a proposal outlining the gold standard perpetrator model/response we need for Lincolnshire. Funding has been sought but unfortunately not acquired. As a result, the group has revisited the proposal and are refining some of the detail which a view to resolving this in 2024/25.</p>

The Domestic Abuse team and DA partnership's key areas of focus for the next 12/18 months will be:

- Recommissioning the safe accommodation provision for Lincolnshire which will include a root and branch review to identify the key gaps in provision and areas of development.
- Undertaking a needs assessment and review of the DA Strategy and delivery plan ready for publication in January 2025 in line with the DA Act 2021 statutory duty.
- The planning and mobilisation of the target hardening and DAHA project work as part of the wider safe accommodation agenda.
- Finalising the perpetrator response for Lincolnshire and securing funding.
- Concluding an outcome-based evaluation framework including a DA partnership DASH Board.

## 2. Conclusion

This report provides the Committee with an update on the DA strategy 2021-24 and the progress made against the objectives and priorities over the last two years. In addition, the report outlines the intention and direction that Lincolnshire will be taking in the next year with a number of key focuses for the DA partnership. The intention is to develop and publish a new strategy in January 2025 to reflect the priorities for the Domestic Abuse agenda in Lincolnshire for 2025-2028. The production of the Domestic Abuse strategy will assume a collaborative approach with all partners fully engaged in the process. A full engagement plan will be developed to ensure that key stakeholders including experts by experience are driving this agenda forward.

## 3. Consultation

### a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

## 4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-2024

## 5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Jade Thursby, Domestic Abuse Business Manager, who can be contacted by e-mail at [jade.thursby@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:jade.thursby@lincolnshire.gov.uk).

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