



Report to Cabinet

Date: 28 September 2021

Title: **Director of Public Health Annual Report: Domestic Violence and Abuse**

Cabinet Members:

- Angela Macpherson, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
- Carl Jackson, Deputy Cabinet Member for Public Health
- Steve Bowles, Cabinet Member for Communities
- Arif Hussain, Deputy Cabinet Member for Community Safety

Contact officer: Jane O'Grady

Ward(s) affected: All wards

Recommendations: Cabinet is requested to note the Director of Public Health Annual Report and endorse the recommendations within it.

Recommendations within the Director of Public Health Annual Report: Domestic Violence and Abuse

The following recommendations should, in addition to statutory duties for support for people living in safe accommodation, inform the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board strategy and delivery plan:

1. The Domestic Abuse Board should support awareness raising of domestic abuse through coordinated, county-wide participation in a selected national campaign
2. The Domestic Abuse Board should consider how bystander training could be utilised locally and promoted, as an evidence-based intervention to challenge harmful attitudes, language and behaviour relating to domestic abuse for people of all ages

3. Buckinghamshire Council Community Safety team should consider how to increase the diversity within the domestic violence and abuse champions scheme by actively recruiting network members that reflect the diversity of people that may experience domestic abuse
4. The Domestic Abuse Board should develop and roll-out high-quality, shared, scenario-based training across Buckinghamshire for key stakeholders and front-line staff. Primary care should also consider implementing the IRIS training package as an effective evidence-based training programme across Buckinghamshire
5. The Domestic Abuse Board should oversee the development of a Buckinghamshire domestic abuse referral pathway for all staff to follow, to ensure timely and responsive delivery of services, fully understood by frontline staff and accessible to victims seeking help
6. All Board member agencies to support the development of an evidence base for what works for perpetrators, to inform commissioning of promising interventions, and evaluation of their effectiveness

1. Background

- 1.1 Each year the Director of Public Health produces an annual report on the health of the population. This year the report focuses on domestic violence and abuse.
- 1.2 One in 20 adults are estimated to experience domestic violence every year equating to almost 21,000 people a year in Buckinghamshire or 57 people every day. Women are more commonly victims of domestic abuse than men but it can happen to anyone, at any age, across all gender identities, ethnic groups and walks of life.
- 1.3 This report covers some key areas including how to recognise signs of domestic abuse and signposts where to get help, who may be at greater risk of experiencing domestic abuse and when, including research on warning signs leading up to domestic homicides. It also covers what is known about interventions that contribute to reducing the risk and harms of domestic abuse and the need for more work to focus on preventing perpetrators from committing domestic abuse.
- 1.4 The report makes recommendations based on our local situation for the new Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Board and a range of partners in Buckinghamshire to implement. The Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Board will be responsible for strategy development and development and oversight of an action plan which should include the responses to these recommendations. This will fall under the remit of the Communities portfolio.
- 1.5 The report was written taking into account the views of a range of partners from Buckinghamshire Council, the NHS, Thames Valley Police, Women's Aid and the views of survivors of domestic abuse and service users who contributed to our needs assessment.

2. Main content of report

- 2.1 Ending domestic abuse is everyone's business and requires a co-ordinated response from national government, local partners and the public. Tackling domestic abuse, and providing effective support services for victims as well as perpetrators is a national priority; the Domestic Abuse Bill 2021 was passed by Parliament in April. The Bill and its statutory requirements, such as the formation of a Domestic Abuse Board, will inform local actions.
- 2.2 Domestic abuse can be poorly recognised by victims and those around them. It can take place in different types of relationships such as between family members, ex-partners and people not living together. Children are particularly vulnerable given the wide ranging and long lasting impacts of observing and suffering domestic abuse.
- 2.3 Latest figures for England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics estimate that there were 1.28 million incidents and crimes relating to domestic abuse in 2019/2020. Twice as many women experienced some form of domestic abuse as men. Being younger, disabled, unemployed, from a single-parent household, and/or of mixed ethnicity increased the risk of experiencing domestic abuse. Between 2017 and 2019 there were 357 domestic homicides in England and Wales. Between 2011 and 2020, there were 39 domestic homicides in the Thames Valley area, 15 of which were in Buckinghamshire.
- 2.4 Perpetrators are more likely to be men and are more often a partner or ex-partner. 86% domestic homicides between 2017 and 2019 in England and Wales were committed by men. Police data for Buckinghamshire show that 72% of perpetrators in Buckinghamshire were male (10 months to January 2021).
- 2.5 In England and Wales, domestic abuse rates had been gradually decreasing between 2005 and 2020. However, since the Covid-19 pandemic, this trend has reversed. During the first lockdown (March-June 2020), Police data showed a 7% increase in domestic abuse related offences. Contacts to the National Domestic Abuse charity Refuge rose by 61% and contacts to the charity Respect which supports male victims of domestic abuse rose by 70%. Local data for Buckinghamshire showed an increase in both reported domestic abuse crimes and use of services by victims.
- 2.6 Some people are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse. However, a lack of complete data on victims limits our understanding of the full picture. Much of our data comes from surveys or services. A lack of data may reflect reluctance to provide information, poor data collection, or barriers to accessing services, either because they are not inclusive or are perceived not to be.
- 2.7 We know that being disabled, having mental ill health, being from an ethnic minority, and identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or another definition

of gender and sexuality identity increase the risk of being a victim. This risk is increased at certain times: when drugs or alcohol are used, when separating or fleeing from abuse, during or after pregnancy, and around the time of football matches. We know that having low self-esteem or depression, being hostile towards women, having economic or marital stress, low social cohesion and social capital, and low bystander intervention in a community increase the risk of being a perpetrator.

- 2.8 Experiencing and witnessing domestic abuse can have devastating impacts on victims, and their children, friends and wider family. Harm as a result of domestic abuse can have lifelong impacts on physical, mental and sexual health. The more severe the abuse, the greater the impact. In the worst cases, domestic abuse can result in homicide, including suicide as a result of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse also has a societal impact. Our report estimates that the potential annual cost of the consequences of domestic abuse in Buckinghamshire is £687 million. We estimate that the cost of responding to the domestic abuse cases *that we know about* in Buckinghamshire is about £3.5 million.
- 2.9 Domestic abuse is a complex societal issue and prevention of domestic abuse and the response to domestic abuse must be multifaceted and multi-agency. Embedding early intervention and prevention into a multiagency response to domestic abuse is highlighted in the government's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. The response includes government-led initiatives as well as local authority multi-agency working, safeguarding, and commissioning. It highlights the multi-layered and co-ordinated health, social and criminal justice approaches required to tackle this issue and can be applied to all victims.
- 2.10 Historically, many interventions addressing domestic abuse have not been thoroughly evaluated so it is vital that new and existing programmes should be monitored and reviewed to improve the robustness of the evidence. We know that there are many potentially effective domestic abuse interventions for victims, including school-based awareness raising, bystander interventions, improving public awareness and advocacy, training of frontline staff, and high risk support such as independent domestic violence advisors and multiagency risk assessment conferences. Interventions for perpetrators are even less well understood, however national guidance suggests that these interventions are an important part of domestic violence and abuse services and should be developed and thoroughly evaluated.
- 2.11 Preventing domestic abuse from occurring must be a priority and we are supporting our schools to implement recent RSHE (relationships, sex and health education) that includes recognising domestic abuse and abusive relationships, coercive control, consent, and mutual respect in friendships and relationships. Looking ahead, the

new multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board will be championing good practice in awareness raising, education and training and the provision of high-quality support and advocacy services. Services for victims (including children) and perpetrators will be further developed to meet the needs of diverse groups and people with protected characteristics, recognising that anyone can be a victim. Starting with partners on the Board, all organisations will be encouraged to adopt measures to keep employees and service users safe from domestic abuse including during home working, remote digital working, and consultations. The Board will also explore how we can share and learn from past and current domestic homicide reviews to understand how such tragedies can be prevented in the future.

3. Outcomes from last year's Director of Public Health report

- 3.1 Last year's annual report (2020) focused on providing an overview of the health of our residents to the new unitary council for Buckinghamshire, the new Community Boards, the local Primary Care Networks and our Integrated Care Partnership and local residents. It reviewed our current health and what factors influence it, recent health trends and some glimpses of what the future might hold. It highlighted how the broad range of responsibilities of the new council can be used to positively influence resident's health and the importance of working at a local level with communities and partners to benefit all.
- 3.2 The report was being finalised when the UK was hit by the first wave of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and since then all our efforts have been refocussed on responding to this. We are now planning our recovery, while we continue to learn about the virus and it's impacts on our communities.
- 3.3 The recommendations in the 2020 report will continue to be implemented as we move into the recovery phase of the pandemic. Our recovery work will be informed by how the virus has affected some communities more than others. This unequal impact reflects some of the variations in people's health which were highlighted in the 2020 report. Working in partnership we are taking forward the recommendations of the 2020 report including working with communities to tackle the common long term conditions such as heart disease and diabetes that affect people's health and result in differences in health and early death between different communities in Buckinghamshire and also accounted for some of the differential harms we saw from COVID.
- 3.4 A more detailed report is currently being prepared regarding progress against the 5 recommendations within the DPHAR 2020.

4. Other options considered

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report aim to improve prevention of domestic abuse in Buckinghamshire, and improve services for both victims and perpetrators. It acknowledges the opportunities afforded by the Domestic Abuse Bill and linked funding and statutory changes such as the formation of a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board. If the recommendations are not supported and implemented there is potential that valuable opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents is missed. Furthermore, as domestic abuse crime and service use have been seen to rise since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, this should be a key part of Buckinghamshire's recovery from COVID.

5. Legal and financial implications

- 5.1 This is a report setting out a high level summary of domestic abuse, and its impacts on individuals and society. There are no direct financial implications of adopting this report.
- 5.2 No direct legal implications for this report.

6. Corporate implications

- 6.1 Value for Money: This is a high level report covering a diverse range of areas and therefore cannot be covered by a single value for money assessment. Individual policy decisions may flow from the report which will have individual value for money assessments.
- 6.2 Other Consideration: This report is for partners as well as Buckinghamshire Council and will be disseminated and presented after approval by Cabinet in a variety of partnerships.

7. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 7.1 The Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member for Adults and Health, and the Cabinet Member for Communities and Deputy Cabinet Member Community Safety have reviewed this report as it relates to their responsibilities.
- 7.2 Local members will be sent copies of the report after Cabinet Decision and the report is also being presented at the Health and Adult Social Care Committee, and the Health and Wellbeing Board and will also be presented at the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board.
- 7.3 A plan will be put in place to share the report and the recommendations with community boards after publication.

8. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 8.1 Beyond the above, normal communication channels will be used to disseminate the report to partners and residents.

9. Next steps and review

- 9.1 The report and needs assessment will provide an evidence base for the work of the new Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board. The Board's remit will include the development of a new domestic abuse strategy and action plan, and decisions relating to services for perpetrators and victims. The Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board will report on progress of multiagency actions tackling domestic abuse which will incorporate the recommendations from the DPH report.

10. Background papers

- 10.1 The full Director of Public Health Annual Report is included as an appendix to this report.

11. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 11.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report.
- 11.2 Report author: Jane O'Grady (jane.ogrady@buckinghamshire.gov.uk) 01296 387623