



## Report to Health & Adult Social Care Select Committee

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021

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

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**Recommendations/Outcomes:**

The Health & Adult Social Care Select Committee 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 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. Between 2011 and 2020, there were 39 domestic homicides in the Thames Valley area, 15 of which were in Buckinghamshire.
- 1.3 This report covers key areas: 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.
- 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 may not be 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.
- 2.4 Perpetrators are more likely to be men and are more often a partner or ex-partner. Police data for Buckinghamshire show that 72% of perpetrators in Buckinghamshire were male. 86% domestic homicides between 2017 and 2019 in England and Wales were committed by men.
- 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.
- 2.6 Data suggest that some people are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse, but data are incomplete. 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 The risk of abuse increases at specific times: when drugs or alcohol are used, when separating or fleeing from abuse, during or after pregnancy, and around the time of football matches.
- 2.8 Experiencing and witnessing domestic abuse can have devastating impacts on victims, and their children, friends and wider family. 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. Based on national evidence, our report estimates that the potential annual cost of the consequences of domestic abuse in Buckinghamshire is £687 million.
- 2.9 Domestic abuse is a complex societal issue and the response to domestic abuse must be multifaceted and multi-agency, embedding prevention and early intervention.
- 2.10 Historically, interventions addressing domestic abuse have not been consistently well evaluated, so new and existing programmes should be monitored and reviewed to improve the robustness of the evidence. Likely effective domestic abuse interventions include 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 less well understood but are an important part of domestic violence and abuse services that should be developed and thoroughly evaluated.

- 2.11 Looking ahead, the new multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board will be championing good practice and 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. Next steps and review**

- 3.1 The report and needs assessment will provide an evidence base for the work of the new Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board. 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.
- 3.2 The full Director of Public Health Annual Report is included as an appendix to this report.
- 3.3 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report.
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