

Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy and Initial Action Plan 2017-2020

Consultation: 24 October 2017 – 30 November 2017

Summary Document

1. Introduction

Birmingham City Council and our partners from across Criminal Justice, Health and the Third Sector have adopted domestic abuse as a shared priority for the City.

Having shared leadership in this challenging area is a positive start but to achieve our vision, domestic abuse must become everyone's business.

2. What are we trying to achieve?

Birmingham strives to be a city where domestic abuse is not tolerated; where everyone can expect equality and respect in their relationships, and live free from domestic abuse. This is our vision for the new Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy for Birmingham.

To deliver our vision, we have identified the following priorities for Birmingham to focus on:

- Changing Attitudes
- Early Identification and Early Help
- Safety and Support

To be successful in each of these priority areas, we aim to:

- Ensure that those individuals experiencing domestic abuse are protected from harm and supported to recover. By doing this we will increase the number of adults and children who feel they can live their lives in safety, and reduce the risk of harm from domestic abusers.
- Intervene early to prevent harm and reduce the impact of domestic abuse on victims and families. By doing this we will identify domestic abuse earlier, help people to recover from abuse, and reduce the harm caused by domestic abuse.
- Prevent domestic abuse by challenging the attitudes and behaviours that foster it. By doing this, we will increase healthy and positive relationships, and decrease social tolerance for domestic abuse.

3. Why do we need a Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy?

Domestic abuse touches the lives, directly or indirectly, of many people in Birmingham, particularly women and children. The scale of domestic abuse causes harm to individuals, families, communities and our city as a whole.

Domestic abuse in Birmingham, as elsewhere, is increasing and more people, both adults and children, are known to be at risk than ever before.

Domestic abuse takes place in all types of relationships, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) relationships. We know that it can also significantly affect other family members, particularly children.

By the time they become adults, at least 1 in 5 of children and young people in Birmingham may have been exposed to domestic abuse. Locally, domestic abuse is a major reason for children needing Local Authority support, care and protection.

Some groups including Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and LGBT communities, disabled women, and older adults can experience multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage or additional barriers to accessing support.

The most serious violence continues to increase and some aspects of domestic abuse, such as forced marriage and honour-based violence, remain significantly under-reported.

More abusers are being held to account but overall only a small proportion of domestic abusers are effectively dealt with by the Criminal Justice system.

At the same time, our public services are shrinking and we need to find new ways of keeping our population safe and healthy and enabling our communities to thrive.

4. What has been done so far?

Over the last 18 months we have been rethinking the way we tackle domestic abuse in Birmingham.

Between October 2016 and January 2017, we received 273 peoples' views about our vision and priorities for tackling domestic abuse and preventing it from happening in the future.

We listened to the views of people who had experienced domestic abuse, professionals, and other citizens and have used these to develop a plan that details what we will do over the coming years to achieve our vision for Birmingham. This is known as an Action Plan.

During this period, the Government have set out what local areas need to do to ensure their response to domestic abuse and broader violence against women and children issues is as collaborative, robust and effective as it can be. We have also used this information to help us develop our plan.

5. What you told us during the first consultation

- 273 people gave us their views.
- 22% of people who responded had experienced or been affected by domestic abuse.
- Most people agreed that Changing Attitudes (94.5%), Early Help and Early Identification (96.3%) and Safety and Support (95.2%) were the right priorities to focus on.
- 96.3% supported work with schools, youth settings and higher education to promote healthy relationship skills based on equality and respect

- 96.3% supported encouraging communities to raise awareness of domestic abuse, including honour based violence and forced marriage
- 95.6% agreed we should make it easier for people who experience abuse to know what services are available and how to access the help that they need.

You also told us it was important to:

- Ensure the strategy was co-owned at a strategic level across a wider range of multi-agency partners, operationally linked through staff resource and financial allocation.
- Place children and young people at the heart of the strategy to ensure we limit the impact of their experience of domestic abuse now and prevent it from happening to future generations.
- Recognise the cumulative nature of domestic abuse.
- Strengthen the links between other strategic priorities in the city including Early Help, Financial Inclusion and Homelessness.
- Empower young men and boys to challenge peers and to not be by-standers to abusive attitudes and behaviours.

6. Why we are consulting with you now

We have used the feedback we received during the first stage of consultation to help us design the initial Action Plan and further develop our approach to tackling domestic abuse.

We now want to check that these are still the right actions to take forward to achieve what the strategy sets out to do.

7. What we want to do to tackle domestic abuse

7.1 Safety and Support

It is important that people experiencing abuse and their children are supported and protected, whilst action is taken against their abuser.

The actions that we are proposing to deliver the Safety and Support priority include:

- Ensure there is access to a broad range of options to provide safe spaces for people who need it.
- Strengthen the multiagency response for complex and / or high need victims of domestic abuse and their families that also includes guaranteed independent support.
- Agree a common approach to assess risk and threat from domestic abuse.
- Establish a clear understanding of the family and community context in which abusers work.
- Develop a multiagency framework to address the way abusers are managed which involves wherever possible, the prosecution of abusers.
- Develop and embed a common process for measuring victim satisfaction with the support they receive.

7.2 Early Identification and Early Help

When domestic abuse is left unchecked and without intervention, the scale and severity of abuse increases. The earlier agencies can recognise how domestic abuse affects different members of the family – and respond effectively - the better.

The actions that we are proposing to deliver the Early Identification and Early Help priority include:

- Strengthen the city’s understanding of need with input from victims, Local Authority, Health, Police, Education, Housing and the Third Sector.
- Stabilise and expand the domestic abuse training, support and referral programme based with family doctors.
- Develop an integrated, multiagency commissioning model that balances provision of safety and protection with earlier intervention and recovery models for both victims and their children.
- Better understand the training needs of Health and Social Care professionals to recognise coercive control and abuse, understand its impact, and refer appropriately to specialist services.
- Strengthen partnership and development arrangements between domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health workforces.
- Introduce early identification and early help pathways with Trusted Professionals and across Health and Social Care.

7.3 Changing Attitudes

Raising awareness and expectations of what a healthy and positive relationship looks like is critical to preventing domestic abuse for our next generation.

The actions that we are proposing to deliver the Changing Attitudes priority include:

- Ensure linked strategies such as Homelessness, Housing, and Early Help recognise, enable and ensure a robust response to domestic abuse.
- Ensure West Midlands Domestic Abuse Standards are adopted consistently across the city.
- Develop a Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Workplace Standard
- Work with Birmingham Education Partnership and the Multi-Academy Trust to agree a citywide whole school approach to promoting healthy and positive relationship skills based on equality and respect.
- Refresh and roll out guidance to schools, colleges, universities and youth settings on recognising and responding to domestic abuse.

8. What next?

We have developed a questionnaire that asks for your views on the new Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy and initial Action Plan.

Please complete the questionnaire and return to the FREE postal address below.

Alternatively, you can share your thoughts by contacting:

Website: www.birminghambeheard.org.uk

Twitter: @healthybrum

Email: preventDA@birmingham.gov.uk

Write to: Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy Consultation
Freepost Plus RSYS – HKBC - XBLA
PO Box 16465
Birmingham
B2 2DG

Please note that you do not need to use a stamp.