

To: Councillor Davies (Chair)
Councillors Lovelock, Carnell, Ennis,
Gittings, Grashoff, Hacker, Hoskin, James,
Leng, Manghnani, McGonigle, O'Connell,
Rowland, R Singh and R Williams

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29 October 2019

Your contact is: Julie Quarmby - Committee Services

NOTICE OF MEETING - HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 6 NOVEMBER 2019

A meeting of the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee will be held on Wednesday, 6 November 2019 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

| | <u>WARDS AFFECTED</u> | <u>Page No</u> |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST | | |
| Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the items for consideration. | | |
| 2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS & LEISURE COMMITTEE HELD ON 3 JULY 2019 | | 5 - 14 |
| 3. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES | | |
| 4. PETITIONS | | |
| Petitions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been received by Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting. | | |
| 5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS | | |

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Questions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been submitted in writing and received by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.

6. DECISION BOOK REFERENCES

To consider any requests received by the Monitoring Officer pursuant to Standing Order 42, for consideration of matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been subject of Decision Book reports.

7. PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL & DISABLED ADAPTATIONS POLICY **BOROUGH WIDE** **15 - 38**

This report seeks approval of the draft updated Private Sector Renewal & Disabled Adaptations Policy for consultation, with the final report and policy being presented to Policy Committee in February 2020.

8. FIRE SAFETY IN TALL BUILDINGS **BOROUGH WIDE** **39 - 46**

This report provides an update on the Council's response following the Grenfell Tower fire in Kensington on 14 June 2017, including action taken in relation to the Authority's own housing stock, other corporate buildings and schools, as well as wider work in partnership with the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) in respect of privately owned high rise residential blocks within the Borough boundaries.

9. DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY 2019-22 **BOROUGH WIDE** **47 - 100**

This report summarises the draft Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading, 2019-22 and the report on the recently completed consultation. The report also recommends that the committee adopts the draft strategy in appendix 1, as the live Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading 2019-22.

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HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 3 JULY 2019

Present: Councillor Davies (Chair);
Councillors, Ennis, Gittings, Grashoff, James, Leng, Lovelock,
McGonigle, O'Connell, Rowland, R Singh, and R Williams.

Apologies: Councillors Carnell, Hoskin and Manghnani.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of 13 March 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were submitted:

- Community Safety Partnership - 15 November 2018.

Resolved - That the Minutes be received.

3. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Questions on the following matters were submitted:

| <u>Questioner</u> | <u>Subject</u> | <u>Reply</u> |
|-------------------|--|--------------|
| Valerie Wyeth | Illegal Camping in Christchurch Meadow | Cllr James |
| Jo Ramsay | Wildflower Planting on Highway Verges | Cllr James |

The full text of the questions and replies was made available on the Reading Borough Council website.

4. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Questions on the following matters were submitted:

| <u>Questioner</u> | <u>Subject</u> | <u>Reply</u> |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Cllr McGonigle | Vacant Council Properties | Cllr Ennis |

The full text of the question and reply was made available on the Reading Borough Council website.

5. TACKLING KNIFE CRIME

Sarah Godsmark and Penny Jones, Thames Valley Police, gave a presentation updating the Committee on the progress that was being made to tackle knife crime in Reading.

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Sarah Godsmark explained that knife crime in the Thames Valley, and within Reading, had decreased over the last 12 months. This was due to a number of initiatives including week-long programmes, provision of knife surrender bins, knife sweeps and test purchases.

One of the main initiatives had been for the Schools Officers to work closely with schools and young people to educate them about knife crime. This included placing notices in and around the schools, and taking knife arches and drug sniffer dogs into the school environment. The Boxing Clever Scheme had also been successfully introduced. This scheme gave children and young people a chance to learn boxing from professional coaches after school, helped to boost their self-esteem, encouraged discipline and contributed to keeping them off the street and away from criminal activity.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted.

6. SINGLE HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING

Verena Hutcheson, Deb Courtnage, Caroline Evans, Matt Farrow, Amelia Johnson and Joanna Slotwinska gave a presentation on the Council's work to support the single homeless and rough sleepers. The presentation covered the following areas:

- Introduction to the Team;
- Achievements over the past year;
- Summary of services and projects;
- Changes to Services since September 2018;
- Rough Sleeper Outreach service, including Severe Weather Emergency Provision, Intensive and Engaging Support Services, working towards independence and floating support;
- Partnership and panel working;
- Making Every Adult Matter,
- Rough Sleeping Initiative;
- Pilot projects from April 2019;
- Introduction of the Street Support App;
- Challenges;
- Actions going forward.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted.

7. CONSULTATION FOR HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2019-2024 AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2019-2024

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which sought a review of the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 and authorisation to start a consultation exercise on three new proposed themes/priorities to underpin and develop a new Homelessness Strategy for 2019-2024. The report also presented the Council's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 and sought authorisation to consult with partners on the co-production of an action/delivery plan.

The following documents were appended to the report:

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Appendix 1 - Snapshot review of Reading's Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021;
Appendix 2 - Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 -2024;
Appendix 3 - Consultation Questions for Reading's Homelessness Strategy;
Appendix 4 - Consultation Planner for Reading's Homelessness Strategy;
Appendix 5 - Equality Impact Assessment for Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024.

The report explained that Reading's current Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 required a review due to significant reductions in the use of emergency accommodation for homeless households and significant legislative and operational changes introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and subsequent changes to the Homelessness Code of Guidance. An initial review of Reading's Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 had been undertaken (Appendix 1). A full review of the Borough's requirements would be undertaken alongside consultation on themes/priorities to inform the development of Reading's new Homelessness Strategy. Informal meetings had been held with internal and statutory partners including Housing Needs, Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care (Brighter Futures for Children), Community Safety, Berkshire West CCG and Berkshire Health Foundation Trust to inform the initial review and proposed themes for Reading's new Homelessness Strategy.

The report also explained that officers had drafted and attained sign-off from senior management on a Rough Sleeping Strategy by March 2019 (Appendix 2) in order to secure Year 2 funding for Reading's Rough Sleeping Initiative to the amount of £335,000 from the MHCLG.

The report proposed that two separate strategies should be published, one for homelessness and one for rough sleeping to ensure that each had robust aims and a focused action/delivery plan for customers that had differing needs. Separate strategies would allow for a differentiation in action planning and action plan delivery, where different cohorts required different approaches from partners, sectors and services in meeting their needs. Further to informal meetings held in April 2019 with internal and statutory partners, the following themes/priorities had been identified for consultation:

- **Priority One** - Intervening early to prevent and reduce homelessness in Reading
- **Priority Two** - Increasing access to decent, suitable accommodation
- **Priority Three** - Supporting people who are vulnerable to recurring homelessness

The report further proposed that consultation on these themes/priorities would take place over an eight week period, with a range of stakeholders, including residents across Reading Borough, customers of Housing Needs and homelessness services, internal partners in Adult Social Care, Brighter Futures, and Community Safety, the public and other external partner organisations e.g. Police, community and voluntary sector services, local businesses, Clinical Commissioning Groups, and commissioned homelessness services. The consultation would take place throughout August and September 2019. Appendix 3 provided details of the Consultation Questions for Homelessness Strategy 2019-2024 and Appendix 4 provided the Consultation Planner for Homelessness Strategy 2019-2024.

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Resolved:

- (1) That the Assistant Director for Housing and Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, be authorised to approve the commencement of a consultation on proposed themes/priorities for Reading's Homelessness Strategy 2019-2024;
- (2) That the Assistant Director for Housing and Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, be authorised to approve the commencement of a consultation on and co-production of an action/delivery plan for Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024.

8. CONSULTATION FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY 2019 - 2022

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which summarised the draft Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading, 2019-2022 and sought authorisation to complete a consultation exercise with stakeholders on the proposed priorities for the strategy.

The following documents were appended to the report:

- Appendix 1 - Draft Domestic Abuse Strategy;
- Appendix 2 - Consultation Plan;
- Appendix 3 - Equality Impact Assessment.

The report stated that the existing Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading ended in 2018 and therefore a new refreshed strategy was required. It was proposed that a consultation exercise on the priorities set out in the attached draft Domestic Abuse Strategy 2019-22 (Appendix 1) take place from 19 August 2019 to 13 September 2019. It would then be submitted to Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee with a draft action plan for formal adoption on 6 November 2019. Key stakeholders for consultation included residents, Adult Social care, Brighter Futures, Thames Valley Police, Health, commissioned services and voluntary sector services.

The report explained that the priorities within the draft strategy had been developed via a series of workshops with members of the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group (DASG), a sub-group of the CSP. They reflected the group's aspirations to move the practices and approach of partners in Reading forward in specific areas, and it was assumed that the progress made during the previous strategy would be embedded by agencies as part of their 'business as usual' and therefore continued. Data would continue to be monitored by the DASG and any changes in performance or outcomes would be challenged regularly.

The priorities within the draft strategy for 2019-22 were as follows:

Priority 1 -Raising awareness about domestic abuse with a focus on:

- **Workforce Development** - Continue to ensure a knowledgeable and well trained workforce;
- **Healthy Relationship Education** - increasing the resilience of Young People to negative relationships and behaviour;

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- **Engagement with marginalised communities** - Encouraging those experiencing abuse to seek help at an earlier stage.

Priority 2: Developing a multi-agency approach to working with perpetrators: Working with strategic partners to create a perpetrator approach to reduce and prevent repeat domestic abuse

Priority 3 - Improving our partnership response to Coercive Control: Training professionals to understand and identify coercive control, so as to increase and better manage disclosures.

Resolved: That the Assistant Director for Housing and Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods be authorised to approve the commencement of a consultation exercise on the proposed priorities for Reading's Domestic Abuse Strategy.

9. CONTRACT AWARD - MINOR WORKS BUILDING CONTRACT 2016 PVCU WINDOW AND REAR DORR REPLACEMENTS TO FLATS

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which sought approval for the award of JCT Minor Works Building Contract to replace windows and doors on up to 228 flats in 22 Council blocks starting in August 2019 and completing before the end of the 2019/2020 financial year as per the current year's programme. All the work would be funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The work would go through a competitive tender exercise using an approved list of preferred window and door manufacturers to procure works for construction and maintenance of social housing and drive value for money.

The report explained that the manufacture and installation work was of a specialist nature and Reading Borough Council through its Building Maintenance Team did not have the capacity to deliver a project such as this in-house. Therefore this project would be delivered by an approved PVCu window contractor from one of the council's preferred PVCu window manufacturers. The method for selecting the contractor was through an approved list of the preferred window and door manufacturers.

Resolved: That the Assistant Director for Housing and Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, be given delegated authority to award a contract for replacement of PVCu windows and rear doors for up to 228 properties starting in August 2019 and completing before the end of the current financial year.

10. UPDATE ON THE APPROVED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME FOR LEISURE, PARKS AND OPEN SPACES 2018 - 2020

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which provided an update on the status of the leisure, parks and open spaces schemes funded by Section 106 receipts and funded from the 15% local element of the Community Infrastructure Levy approved by Policy Committee on 26 November 2018. A brief description of each of the schemes and its current status, together with S106 schemes that had been added to the portfolio since March 2018 was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

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Resolved: That progress in relation to the projects funded by developer contributions be noted.

11. FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2019/20 AND AMENDMENTS TO THE DELEGATIONS REGISTER

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which provided the Committee with an annual opportunity to review the Council's Food Service plan. The plan set out how the Council undertook its statutory duties to deliver safe food for Reading's residents and was updated annually in line with the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities. The Food Service Plan 2019 -2020 was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report also stated that the delegations register required amendments to ensure that the legislation was up-to-date in order that officers were clearly authorised to exercise powers under Consumer Protection Act 1987, Animal Health Act 1981 and other legislation made under the European Communities Act 1972.

Resolved:

- (1) That the content of the Food Service Plan for 2019/20 be noted;**
- (2) That Delegation Register be amended as follows:**
 - (a) Addition of the following delegations to the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services:**

Power to institute legal proceedings under the following legislative provisions:

- **Animals & Animal Products (Examination for residues and maximum residue Limits) (England & Scotland) Regulations 2015;**
- **Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008;**
- **Country of Origin of Certain Meats (England) Regulations 2015;**
- **Food Information Regulations (FIR) 2014;**
- **Food for Specific Groups (Information & Compositional Requirements) England) Regulations 2016;**
- **Genetically Modified Organisms (Traceability & Labelling) (England) Regulations 2004;**
- **Olive Oil (Marketing Standards) Regulations 2014;**
- **Poultry Meat (England) Regulations 2011;**
- **Quick-Frozen Foodstuffs (England) Regulations 2007;**
- **Scotch Whisky Regulations 2009;**
- **Specified Products from China (Restrictions on Placing on the Market)(England) Regulations 2008;**

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- Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008;
- Animal Health Act 1981;
- Consumer Protection Act 1987.

(b) Addition of the following delegations to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services:

Power to exercise functions and to authorise officers to exercise functions under the:

- Animals & Animal Products (Examination for residues and maximum residue Limits) (England & Scotland) Regulations 2015;
- Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008;
- Country of Origin of Certain Meats (England) Regulations 2015;
- Food Information Regulations (FIR) 2014;
- Food for Specific Groups (Information & Compositional Requirements) (England) Regulations 2016;
- Genetically Modified Organisms (Traceability & Labelling) (England) Regulations 2004;
- Olive Oil (Marketing Standards) Regulations 2014;
- Poultry Meat (England) Regulations 2011;
- Quick-Frozen Foodstuffs (England) Regulations 2007;
- Scotch Whisky Regulations 2009;
- Specified Products from China (Restrictions on Placing on the Market)(England) Regulations 2008;
- Animal Health Act 1981;
- Consumer Protection Act 1987.

12. CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which outlined the Council's progress to date in tackling climate change, work in progress and set out the proposed approach to responding to the climate emergency declaration made by the Council on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). The matters raised in the report and recommendations would form the basis of a report to Policy Committee on 15 July 2019.

The following documents were appended to the report:

- Appendix 1: Modelling a Zero Carbon Pathway;
- Appendix 2: Existing Projects;
- Appendix 3: Item 11 Full Council, 26 February 2019, Council Climate Emergency Declaration;
- Appendix 4: Reading Climate Change Strategy 2013-20 Action Plans;
- Appendix 5: Draft Clean Air Safer Transport Forum Terms of Reference.

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The report stated that the Terms of Reference of the Committee had been amended to include: 'Climate Change Strategy - To contribute to and adopt the relevant parts of the Climate Change action plan.' A new Cleaner Air and Safer Transport Forum had also been set up. The draft terms of reference were shown in Appendix 5.

The report stated that the Housing and Neighbourhoods and Leisure (HNL) Committee would oversee all projects involved in the retrofitting of the Borough's housing stock and household level renewable energy. The housing strategy would set out a range of projects which aimed to improve the Council's own stock energy efficiency and inform the work with private landlords and homeowners to reduce energy consumption in private stock. In addition the Committee would oversee the leisure contracts and operations of the Council and their use and generation of energy and corresponding carbon emissions.

The report added that the Committee would need to consider a wide range of factors relating to these, including, but not limited to:

- The carbon footprint of operational facilities;
- The opportunity for renewable energy infrastructure;
- Travel and transport plans including cycling electric vehicle charging facilities etc;
- The sustainable design and construction of new facilities/buildings;
- The supply chains and procurement arrangements for services commissioned;
- Communication of environmentally positive behaviours to staff and users;
- The maintaining and enhancing of natural environments;
- The consideration of risks to vulnerable groups (for example fuel poverty);
- The use of natural resources;
- Encouragement and support for educational campaigns;
- Involvement of service users in the Reading Climate Action Network;
- Educational programmes relating to the national curriculum;
- The development of key skills relating to a low carbon, clean growth future.

Resolved:

- (1) That the progress made to date by the Council's proactive approach to addressing climate change issues and impacts in Reading be welcomed, while the scale of the on-going challenge be noted;
- (2) That the climate emergency declaration be embedded across all Council services, activities, plans and other relevant work to ensure a fully integrated and systematic approach to the Council's own response to this challenge and the change to the Terms of Reference to include "Climate Change Strategy - To contribute to and adopt the relevant parts of the Climate Change action plan." be noted;

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- (3) That the Council work with and through the long-established Reading Climate Change Partnership and Reading UK to align respective strategies to ensure the active participation of residents, business and other organisations across Reading;**
- (4) That the Chief Executive be asked to write to the Government and local MPs setting out the urgent need to equip Local Authorities with the policy framework, powers and funding necessary to deliver this critical agenda;**
- (5) That all future Committee reports include a section on environmental implications and necessary mitigations, plus the impact of the decisions they are taking on the Council's ability to respond to the Climate Emergency and achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.**

(The meeting closed at 9.10pm).

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READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOODS

| | | | |
|------------------|--|--------------|--|
| TO: | Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee | | |
| DATE: | 6 November 2019 | AGENDA ITEM: | |
| TITLE: | PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL & DISABLED ADAPTATIONS POLICY | | |
| LEAD COUNCILLOR: | John Ennis | PORTFOLIO: | Housing |
| SERVICE: | Regulatory Services | WARDS: | Borough Wide |
| LEAD OFFICER: | Yasmin Ahmad | TEL: | 0118 9372466 |
| JOB TITLE: | Private Sector Housing Team Manager | E-MAIL: | yasmin.ahmad@reading.gov.uk |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of the draft updated Private Sector Renewal & Disabled Adaptations Policy for consultation, with the final report and policy being presented to Policy Committee in February 2020. This report relates to the private sector only. The Council Housing Adaptations policy is a separate document.
- 1.2 The updates to the policy will enable the Council to deliver Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations in the private sector in a person centred and outcome focused way. This updated policy meets the objectives of the Better Care Fund, to increase the uptake of Disabled Facilities Grants and work collaboratively with health and social care colleagues. It is anticipated that this policy will enable a more proportionate and responsive service, delaying hospital admissions, falls or moves to residential or nursing homes. The measures in this policy will further support care and support services to actively promote wellbeing and independence, and enables early intervention avoiding crisis intervention.
- 1.3 The following discretionary grants are offered as part of the updated policy:
 - Health & Wellbeing at Home Grant
 - Discretionary Fees Grant
 - Amended Relocation Grant
 - Disabled Facilities Grant Top up

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That members agree the draft Private Sector Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy (private sector) for consultation, with the final policy being presented to Policy Committee in February 2020.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Autumn Statement 2015 contained a commitment to provide £500m by 2019/20 for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), to fund 85,000 home adaptations in year. It is estimated

that this funding will prevent 8,500 people from needing to move into a care home between 2019 to 2026. Reading received a £1.055m share of this funding.

- 3.2 The benefits of adapting the home to serve the occupiers needs are recognised as an effective way to improve the health and wellbeing of older people and disabled adults and children. A more accessible home environment can improve independence, reduce risk and reduce reliance on assistance. As the body of evidence demonstrating the benefits of home adaptations grows, so does the recognition that the sooner they are installed, the greater will be the preventative benefits. A common theme in legislation and policy across the UK is the need for a more preventative approach to interventions, including adaptations, for older people, disabled children and adults, to maximise health and wellbeing.
- 3.3 Research has shown that there is a direct impact on the health and well-being of residents resulting from the homes in which they live; therefore, poor housing can contribute to poor health. Each year hazards in the home result in unnecessary injuries, episodes of ill-health, and harm to mental health and in many cases the occupiers do not link the poor condition of their homes with a potential negative impact on their health. The poorest housing stock can be found in the private sector, and in some cases residents who own their own home are not able to maintain them and as a result hazards can develop.
- 3.4 Home adaptations can prevent falls, reduce hospital admissions, reduce reliance on care, avoid the need to move into residential care and significantly improve quality of life and wellbeing for individuals, their families and carers.
- 3.5 There is also a significant impact on care package cost avoidance and delays in care for those residents in receipt of a DFGs. In 2018/19 there was a cost avoidance of £158k as a result of DFG's. This is continuing at a similar level in 2019/20. Cost avoidance is calculated by reviewing the levels of care provided by formal or informal carers, family and friends before and after a DFG. For example before a stairlift goes in the family member is visiting 2 or 3 times a day to empty the commode, after the stairlift has been fitted the person regains their independence and access to their bathroom upstairs. The family member is no longer required to provide high levels of care, avoiding carer break down and future reliance on social care provision.
- 3.6 Foundations (appointed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government to oversee a national network of nearly 200 home improvement agencies (HIAs) and handyperson providers across England) said in their DFG Review in 2018
- 3.7 *"Home is central to everyone's lives, but is particularly important for disabled and older people, as it is where they spend most of their time. Increasing numbers are living alone, especially in later life. Ability to get in and out of the home, move around inside, access the bathroom, receive friends, cook and go to bed has a significant effect on people's dignity, autonomy and wellbeing. The majority of disabled people are living in ordinary housing but only 7% of homes in England have basic accessibility features such as downstairs toilets and level access. Three quarters of deaths relating to falls happen in the home, and falls represent 10-25% of ambulance call-outs to older adults. Once admitted in an emergency, older people use more bed days than other people (65%) and falls often precipitate a move into residential care.*
- 3.8 *90% of adaptations provided are level access showers, stair lifts or ramps. The average cost is around £9,000 but most work is under £5,000. The challenge is to join up the process and shift the thinking from 'welfare' to 'investment' so that decisions are taken, not at crisis point, but in a more preventative way that is based on the long-term health and wellbeing of disabled people and their families". (Foundations)*
- 3.9 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) remain mandatory and are available from local authorities in England under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. They are

only available to private sector residents including Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and the applicant and their partner is subject to a means test. There is no means test for children's DFGs. The DFG provides a mechanism for essential adaptations to be carried out such as stairlifts, ramps, improved lighting, bathroom adaptations to enable disabled people to give access to essential facilities within the home and access to and from their homes.

- 3.10 There is a thorough application processes whether for a stairlift costing £1500 or a £30,000 extension. In order to qualify for a DFG the required adaptations need to be necessary and appropriate (as determined by Adult Social Services and Brighter Futures Occupational Therapists) to meet the needs of the disabled person. It must also be reasonable and practicable (determined by the Private Sector Housing Team) for the relevant works to be carried out.
- 3.11 In 2015 the government introduced the Better Care Fund (BCF) in an attempt to bring health and social care together in an integrated way. The fund is a combination of government funding from the Department of Health and the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government and includes the grant allocation for DFGs. The 2017-19 Integration and BCF policy framework document lists the conditions that BCF must be used to address. Funding must be used to contribute to the maintenance of adult social care services in each local authority, which also has a health benefit.
- 3.12 BCF long term plan outcomes includes properly joined-up care and actions to cut delayed hospital discharges which will help free up pressure on hospital beds. The plan seeks to join-up health and care services, so that people can manage their own health and wellbeing, and live independently in their communities for as long as possible.
- 3.13 The BCF has been created to improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our society, placing them at the centre of their care and support, and providing them integrated health and social care services, resulting in an improved experience and better quality of life.
- 3.14 The BCF objectives for Reading are:
- Reduced admissions to residential and nursing care homes
 - Reduce avoidable emergency admissions
 - Assist disabled adults and children to remain in their own homes
 - Prevent admissions to care and to assist with delayed transfers where possible.
 - Falls prevention
 - Cost avoidance of care
 - Support for carers and families
- 3.15 Council Housing does not attract the DFG funding and whilst the same principles of the DFG criteria are followed in Reading the funding for adaptations in Council stock are funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and a separate adaptations policy exists.
- 3.16 In 2016 the Home improvement Agency Service was bought in house with the Private Sector Housing Team managing the adaptations and home improvements grants and loans service in the private sector and Property Services managing the adaptations in the Council stock as well as delivering minor adaptations cross tenure.
- 3.17 There are 2 Housing Occupational Therapists (OTs), one based in the Private Sector Housing Team and one in RBC housing. This has resulted in improved links with Adult Social Care and Brighter Future for Children and created a one stop shop process through direct referrals, assessment and delivery of the adaptations.
- 3.18 Over the last five years (including this financial year) the Council have completed approximately 200 major adaptations (stairlifts, bathroom adaptations, ramps, extensions)

with a total value of £2million in the private sector. The majority of these adaptations are in the homes of adults with an average of 4 adaptations per annum in the homes of disabled children.

- 3.19 In addition to the DFGs, Reading are one of the few local authorities who continue to provide home improvement grants to assist residents to carry out essential repairs to their homes and enable them to remain living there. These grants are discretionary and funded through capital resources. Over the last 5 years (including the current financial year) the council have assisted 45 residents with essential repairs such as electrics, roof, damp proofing, and repairs to windows/doors to reduce excess cold as well as providing boilers. Often these grants will be linked to DFGs, for example the council may need to carry out electrical works such as a rewire to enable a stairlift or shower to be fitted and to make the property safe.
- 3.20 Reading is also part of a 17 Local Authority consortium that delivers the Flexible Home Improvement Loan Scheme (FHIL). There are a number of loans in the suite to include a Home Improvement Loan for people over 60, an empty homes loan and landlord loan. Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead are the lead authority.
- 3.21 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (the “Order”) came into effect in July 2003 and led to a major change in the way local authorities can provide financial assistance to people to repair and improve private sector homes. The Order set aside the previously prescribed grants (other than the Disabled Facilities Grant, which remains a mandatory grant) and allowed local authorities to adopt a flexible approach to providing financial assistance to reflect local circumstances, needs and resources. In 2008-09 the Government extended the scope of the Regulatory Reform Order to include the use of DFG funding. This allows Local Authorities to use specific DFG funding for wider purposes. This includes help with the cost of moving and adapting or improving another property where it is deemed to be a more cost effective option.
- 3.22 If a local authority wishes to use the powers under the Order it must adopt a policy setting out how it will use these powers. The purpose of the policy is to detail the type of assistance available to households living in the private sector, the eligibility criteria and the procedures for accessing assistance.
- 3.23 Following the introduction of the Order a policy was developed in 2003 and this was updated in 2007 and a separate Housing Adaptations policy was produced in 2012.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The updated draft policy will enable the council to deliver Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations in a person centred and outcome focused way. The updated policy meets the objectives of the Better Care Fund, to increase the uptake of DFGs and work collaboratively with health and social care colleagues. It is anticipated that this policy will enable a more proportionate and responsive service, delaying hospital admissions, falls or moves to residential or nursing homes. The measures in this policy will further support care and support services to actively promote wellbeing and independence, and enables early intervention avoiding crisis intervention.
- 4.2 The policy is attached in Appendix 1 and details all the grants and loans on offer but outlined below are the main changes introduced in this draft policy:
- 4.3 **Health & Well Being at Home Grant** - this is a new grant and the purpose of it is to enable:
- An applicant to manage their health and wellbeing in their own home;
 - Make a property suitable to facilitate safe hospital discharge;
 - Prevent hospital admissions or readmissions and
 - Reduce admission to long term care.

This grant will not be means tested and will have a maximum upper limit of £5,000. The types of adaptations/housing assistance that will be provided include stairlifts, ramps, deep clean, de-cluttering of essential rooms, repair/replacement of boilers. This grant will enable Hospital OTs and social care staff to respond to unsafe housing to ensure safe and more responsive discharges from hospital in many cases with low cost input to resolve imminent risks.

- 4.4 As part of the policy review the councils Lead Occupational Therapist and the Head Occupational Therapist at the Royal Berkshire Hospital carried out a survey in 2018. The survey examined the cost impact on the number of bed days lost with 6 patients in Royal Berkshire Hospital who were “bed blocking” due to inadequate Housing. These patients all owned their own properties and for a number of health reasons were no longer able to maintain their homes and with no support from friends or family required input from the hospital OT and adult social care. All 6 patients were assessed as being able to return home with care packages but could not be discharged due to the unsafe environments they were living in. The cost to RBH was £96,250 in delayed discharges
- 4.5 This proposed new grant will reduce delayed discharge and help with avoiding unnecessary admissions into hospital.
- 4.6 **Discretionary Professional Fees** - where there are extensive adaptations needed and an Architect is required to draw up plans; or where there is concern about the structure of the existing building and a structural engineer is required the cost of these professionals is often needed to be paid prior to the grant approval. This is usually the case with complex adaptations in the homes of children to meet long term needs and generally the family are unable to fund these costs. The outcome is that adaptations potentially not going ahead. By offering this grant will enable adaptations to proceed in a more timely fashion. The grant will have an upper limit of £5,000 and the funds will be added to the Disabled Facilities Grant once approved.
- 4.7 **Discretionary Accommodation Fees** - this is a new grant with a maximum spend of £5,000 towards the cost of temporary accommodation where there are significant and disruptive works to be carried out at the property which would render it unsuitable for the resident to remain. An assessment will be made by the Private Sector Housing Technical Officer and OT. There have been a number of cases where either it has not been possible to adapt the property or where trying to find sources of funding to enable someone to temporarily move out of the property has caused significant additional delay and distress to the resident and their well being.
- 4.8 **Relocation Grant** - This grant has been amended to include tenants in the private rented sector, with an upper limit of £5,000 to enable them to move to more suitable alternative accommodation that would better meet their needs. This grant already exists for owner occupiers.
- 4.9 **Top up funding for a DFG** - The mandatory DFG grant limit is £30,000 which no longer meets the cost of providing extensions such as a wheelchair accessible downstairs bathroom or bedrooms. The current costs can range from £45k to £60k+. This new grant will enable a discretionary maximum grant of an additional £30,000 to top up a mandatory DFG, where the cost of work has exceeded the grant maximum. This will enable extensions and complex adaptations to go ahead, to support families to continue to care for disabled adults and children in their own homes.
- 4.10 The top up grant will be means tested to include parents of disabled children and will only be offered if there are no other sources of funding available. A charge will be placed against the property and registered with HM Land Registry with repayment whenever the property is sold.

- 4.11 Over the last 5 years there have been 5 cases of which 3 were for children where the cost of work has exceeded the grant maximum by an average of £15,000. The children's DFGs are typically over the grant maximum, with one case in 2018/19 requiring funding to be sought by the family of £27,000. The council do not have records of the number of people who have withdrawn due to inability to fund additional costs but Officers experience and anecdotal evidence suggests more than the 5 recorded had not proceeded with the DFG.
- 4.12 In 2017, there was a backlog of DFG assessments and 2 OTs were employed on a temporary basis to fast track assessments. As part of this project they were tasked with looking at the outcomes for customers. They had 71 cases of which 59 were assessed for a Disabled Facilities Grant. 11 of these did not progress due to the inability to afford their means tested contribution. It is the proposal of this new policy where it can be evidenced, that where applicant is unable to make their contribution, they will be offered to have the Social Services test of resources carried out which looks at both income and expenditure (unlike the DFG means test) and depending on the outcome their contribution will be paid for as part of the grant. This will link to the BCF priorities described above and more importantly potentially reduce the risk of hospital admission and delayed discharge and also intensive care packages having to be provided.
- 4.13 **Occupational Therapist Assistant** - From information recently received from Brighter Futures for Children Occupational Therapists, there is no waiting list for DFG assessments, but there are capacity issues within the existing work force with priorities stretched to meet complex needs. To address this, it is proposed that the existing DFG OTs capacity is increased in the Private Sector Housing Team to take direct referrals for children's DFGs. This will be done by creating a new OT assistant post.
- 4.14 There is funding within existing resources to fund the new OT assistant post, and the post holder will also access the Occupational Therapist degree apprenticeship though the apprenticeship levy. With supervision and oversight by the Senior OT within the team for simple DFGs e.g. stairlift and wet rooms. This also reflects the OT apprentice posts created to support the Council Housing OT.

4.15 There is no significant change to the Housing Assistance grants and loans being offered.

5.0 CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 In relation to the Council's Corporate Plan the following themes are appropriate:
- 5.2 Providing homes for those most in need - this policy will improve housing conditions and enable residents to remain living in their own homes.
- 5.3 Protecting and enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The policy will be consulted on and the final policy will be presented to Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee in March 2020.
- 6.2 Publicity will be carried out both in the form of press releases and contact with community groups and organisations such as Age Concern.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 No group will be adversely affected by the introduction of these schemes.

8.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Adaptations and repairs will be carried out to meet the Building Regulations Standards for sustainable design and construction.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 **The Care Act 2014** - is applicable to adults - Section 1 of the Care Act states that local authorities have a general duty to promote the wellbeing and independence of the disabled person. This includes the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Therefore home adaptations are highly relevant to the individual's wellbeing and regard should be given to their own views, wishes and feelings.

9.2 Section 2 places duties on the local authorities to identify, provide and arrange services that help people prevent developing needs for care and support or delay people deteriorating such that they would need on-going care and support.

9.3 However, eligibility criteria from the Care Act or any other legislation should not be applied to adaptations, but the principles of wellbeing should be considered.

9.4 **The Chronically Sick and Disabled Person Act (1970 Section 2)** - Continues to apply to children, it gives local authorities a duty to assess and assist chronically sick or disabled children that may be necessary and appropriate with assistance in arranging adaptations or the provision of additional facilities to promote safety, comfort and convenience.

9.5 **Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996** - Disabled Facilities Grants are governed by this legislation and DFGs remain a mandatory duty for Local Authorities

9.6 **The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002** -

Came into effect in July 2003 and led to a major change in the way local authorities can provide financial assistance to people to repair and improve private sector homes. The Order set aside the previously prescribed grants (other than the Disabled Facilities Grant, which remains a mandatory grant) and allowed local authorities to adopt a flexible approach to providing financial assistance to reflect local circumstances, needs and resources.

9.7 In 2008-09 the Government extended the scope of the Regulatory Reform Order to include the use of Disabled Facilities Grants money. This allows Local Authorities to use specific DFG funding for wider purposes. This includes help with the cost of moving and adapting or improving another property where it is deemed to be a more cost effective option.

9.8 If a local authority wishes to use the powers under the RRO it must adopt a policy setting out how it will use these powers. This policy details the type of assistance available to households living in the private sector, the eligibility criteria and the procedures for accessing assistance.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The funding for DFGs sits within the Better Care Fund and for 2019/20 it is £1,055million.
- 10.2 The funding for Housing Assistance Grants is £320k and this is funded from RBC capital funds.
- 10.3 The Private Sector Housing Team charge a 10% fee for managing each DFG for applicants and this is re-invested back into the service running costs. An average of £40k is achieved
- 10.4 There is funding available for the OT assistant post within existing budgets
- 10.5 The financial implications arising from the proposals set out in this report are set out below:-

Revenue Implications

| See note below | 2020/21 £000 | 2021/22 £000 | 2022/23 £000 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Employee costs | £234k | £234k | £234k |
| Other running costs | £5k | £5k | £5k |
| DFGs and Private Sector Renewal Grants | £1,136,000 | £1,136,000 | £1,136,000 |
| Expenditure | £1,375,000 | £1,375,000 | £1,375,000 |
| Income from: | | | |
| Fees and charges | | | |
| Grant funding - Better Care Fund DFG | £1,055 | £1,055 | £1,055 |
| Capital Funding | £320k | £320k | £320k |
| Total Income: | £1,375,000 | £1,375,000 | £1,375,000 |

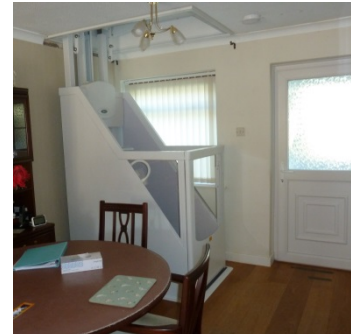
Note - this team is funded by DFG funding and capital recharge relating to Private Sector Renewals

- 10.6 Risk Assessment
- 10.7 The key risk might be the demand outstrips funds available however in this case mandatory DFGs will be given priority

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 The Royal College of Occupational Therapists 2019 Adaptations without delay
- 11.2 The UK Government's recent review of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)⁴ in BRIEFING PAPER Number 03011, 28 December 2016 House Of Commons.
- 11.3 Foundations DFG Review 2018
- 11.4 Better Care Fund www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/rcot-publications/downloads/care-act-2014-dfg

Reading Borough Council's Private Sector Renewal & Disabled Adaptations Policy



The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002

February 2020

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (the “Order”) came into effect in July 2003 and led to a major change in the way local authorities can provide financial assistance to people to repair and improve private sector homes. The Order set aside the previously prescribed grants (other than the Disabled Facilities Grant, which remains a mandatory grant) and allowed local authorities to adopt a flexible approach to providing financial assistance to reflect local circumstances, needs and resources. In 2008-09 the Government extended the scope of the Regulatory Reform Order to include the use of Disabled Facilities Grants funding. This allows Local Authorities to use specific DFG funding for wider purposes. This includes help with the cost of moving and adapting or improving another property where it is deemed to be a more cost effective option.
- 1.2 It is therefore the policy of the Council to examine all the options available to the individual before immediately embarking on plans to adapt the current property where major adaptations are required.
- 1.3 If a local authority wishes to use the powers under the Order it must adopt a policy setting out how it will use these powers. This policy details the type of assistance available to households living in the private sector, the eligibility criteria and the procedures for accessing assistance.
- 1.4 Disabled Facilities Grant funding is not permitted to be used for Local Authority owned properties. This means that this policy is not applicable to Reading Borough Council tenants. There is a separate Housing Adaptations policy for Council Housing tenants.
- 1.5 This policy will enable the Council to deliver Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations in a person centred and outcome focused way. This updated policy meets the objectives of the Better Care Fund, to increase the uptake of DFGs and work collaboratively with health and social care colleagues. It is anticipated that this policy will enable a more proportionate and responsive service, delaying hospital admissions, falls or moves to residential or nursing homes. The measures in this policy will further support care and support services to actively promote wellbeing and independence, and enables early intervention avoiding crisis intervention.
- 1.6 **Policy Implementation & Review**
- 1.7 This policy shall come into force on 1st April 2020 and remain until such time as the Council approves any successor policy.

- 1.8 The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and any changes will be implemented as soon as practically possible
- 1.9 Situations that might result in an earlier review will be where there is a change in funding available, legislative changes or significant change in the Councils strategies.
- 1.10 **Funding**
- 1.11 Should the situation arise where the demand for grants outstrips the funding available Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants will be given priority
- 1.12 **Appeals & Complaints**
- 1.13 The Council has an established corporate complaints procedure for dealing with appeals and complaints. All Council officers have copies of the leaflet explaining how to make a complaint.
- 1.14 A complaint should be linked to the Council's systems and procedures and may be about delay, lack of response, discourtesy or any item that leaves cause for dissatisfaction with the Council' conduct.
- 1.15 Where service users remain unhappy with the outcome of the formal complaint, they may wish to contact the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 2.0 **BACKGROUND**
- 2.1 **Housing & Health**
- 2.2 Housing is a key determinant of Health and by promoting good quality housing this policy contributes to improving housing conditions
- 2.3 The benefits of adapting the home are recognised as an effective way to improve the health and wellbeing of older people, and disabled adults and children. A more accessible home environment can improve independence, reduce risk and reduce reliance on assistance. As the body of evidence demonstrating the benefits of home adaptations grows, so does the recognition that the sooner they are installed, the greater will be the preventative benefits. A common theme in legislation and policy across the UK is the need for a more preventative approach to interventions, including adaptations, for older people, disabled children and adults, to maximize health and wellbeing.
- 2.4 Research has shown that there is a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of residents resulting from the homes in which they live; therefore, poor housing can contribute to poor health. Each year hazards in the home result in unnecessary injuries, episodes of ill-health, and harm to mental

health and in many cases the occupiers do not link the poor condition of their homes with a potential negative impact on their health.

The poorest housing stock can be found in the private sector, and in some cases residents who own their own home are not able to maintain them and as a result hazards can develop.

- 2.5 Home adaptations can prevent falls, reduce hospital admissions, reduce reliance on care, avoid the need to move into residential care and significantly improve quality of life and wellbeing for individuals, their families and carers.

2.6 **Better Care Fund (BCF)**

- 2.7 In 2015 the government introduced the BCF in an attempt to bring health and social care together in an integrated way. The fund is a combination of government funding from the Department of Health and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and includes the grant allocation for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG). The 2017-19 Integration and BCF policy framework document lists the conditions that the BCF must be used to address. Funding must be used to contribute to the maintenance of adult social care services in each local authority, which also has a health benefit.
- 2.8 BCF long term plan outcomes includes properly joined-up care, actions to cut delayed hospital discharges which will help free up pressure on hospital beds. The plan seeks to join-up health and care services, so that people can manage their own health and wellbeing, and live independently in their communities for as long as possible.
- 2.9 The BCF has been created to improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our society, placing them at the centre of their care and support, and providing them integrated health and social care services, resulting in an improved experience and better quality of life.

3.0 **Better Care Fund objectives in Reading**

- 3.1 In Reading the Better Care Fund objectives are:
- Reduced admissions to residential and nursing care homes
 - Reduce avoidable emergency admissions
 - Assist disabled adults and children to remain in their own homes
 - Prevent admissions to care and to assist with delayed transfers where possible.
 - Falls prevention
 - Cost avoidance of care
 - Support for carers and families

- 3.2 The assistance detailed in this policy has been designed to reflect these objectives

4.0 **MINOR ADAPTATIONS**

The Council's policy is to provide simple adaptations i.e. those that cost under £1000 such as grab rails and bathing equipment, direct to the resident without the need to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant.

The adaptation belongs to the individual and therefore they will need to maintain it.

All minor adaptations will be installed by Council's Property Services Team following a recommendation by an Occupational Therapist.

5.0 **MAJOR ADAPTATIONS**

5.1 **Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants**

- 5.2 Mandatory DFGs are available from local authorities in England under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. The applicant or home owner is subject to a means test, for essential adaptations to give disabled people access to essential facilities within the home. There is no means test in the case of adaptations that are for the benefit of a child

- 5.3 The types of work that a mandatory DFG can cover include:

- making it easier to get into and out of the dwelling e.g. widening doors and installing ramps;
- ensuring the safety of the disabled person and other occupants e.g. improved lighting to ensure better visibility or, place of safety for a child with behavioural challenges;
- making access easier to the living areas;
- providing or improving access to the bedroom, kitchen, toilet, and bathroom e.g. wet floor shower;
- installing a stair lift or providing a downstairs bathroom;
- improving or providing a heating system in the home which is suitable to the needs of the disabled person;
- adapting heating or lighting controls to make them easier to use;
- enabling the disabled person to carry out parenting or carer roles or
- facilitating access to and from the garden by a disabled occupant.

- 5.4 In order to qualify for a DFG the required adaptations need to be 'necessary and appropriate' (as determined by Adult Social Services and Brighter Futures Occupational Therapists to meet the needs of the disabled person. It must also be 'reasonable and practicable' (determined by the Private Sector Housing Team) for the relevant works to be carried out.

- 5.5 Hoists in the homes of Adults and Children are fitted without going through the DFG application process in order to speed up service delivery
- 5.6 **Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant**
- 5.7 In addition to the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant, the council is not obliged but may consider Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants, depending on funding constraints and legislation.
- 5.8 The Regulatory Reform Order (Housing Assistance) 2002 gives the Council the power to offer discretionary DFG's to residents in the private sector.
- 5.9 If the demand for Disabled Facilities Grants outstrips the funding available Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants will be given priority.
- 5.10 **Housing Assistance Grants and Loans**
- 5.11 These grants and loans are discretionary and are subject to funding being available. This funding can be withdrawn without prior notice to include funding not being made available to grants waiting approval.

6.0 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

6.1 The types of assistance provided through the Disabled Facilities Grant funding is detailed in the table below

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant

| Type of Assistance | Eligibility Criteria | Eligible Works | Non-Eligible Works | Conditions |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants Max £30,000 plus up to £10,000 discretionary assistance to pay for architects, agents and other ancillary costs where the cost of the actual adaptation work is up to the grant maximum | Means tested for over 18 years old. Not means tested for those under 18 years Must have been assessed under Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (Children). Must be eligible for services under the Care Act 2014 (Adults) Can be an owner, tenant (with at least 5 years of the tenancy left to run) or a landlord applying on behalf of a disabled tenant A relative who fits these criteria may apply on behalf of someone who lives in their home or as part of their household | Works recommended by an Occupational Therapist (OT) Works required because of the disabled person's condition, for facilitating access, making the building or dwelling safe, facilitating adequate bedroom, bathroom and/or kitchen facilities. Providing suitable heating installations, provision of a hard standing in certain circumstances Facilitating and enabling a disabled person to care for dependent residents Where the adaptation is only a stairlift no means test. | Works not supported by an OT or Technical Officer (Private Sector Housing Team) Works that do not relate to the disabled person's medical and/or independence needs. Major Adaptations (extensions) where the existing property can be adapted to meet identified needs. Works that have already been started or completed Scooter storage | Works must be agreed and signed off as 'necessary and appropriate' by the OT and 'reasonable and practicable' by a Technical Officer (Private Sector Housing Team) and agreed by the Disabled Facilities Advisory Group (DFAG) Works must be carried out within 12 months of the date of the grant approval letter. For grants over £5,000 awarded to owner occupiers a charge of up to £10,000 is secured on the property, to be repaid if the property is sold within 10 years Grant will be managed and administered by RBC Private Sector Housing Team and contractors will be paid directly We work with Housing Associations (RSLs) to secure funding towards the costs of works in their properties. |

Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant

| Type of Assistance | Eligibility Criteria | Eligible Works | Non-Eligible Works | Conditions |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| Health & Wellbeing at Home Grant Grant Maximum £5,000 Enable an applicant to manage their health and wellbeing in their own home Make a property suitable to facilitate safe hospital discharge Prevent hospital admissions or readmissions Reduce admission to long term care Page 31 | Not means tested Must have been assessed under Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (Children). Must be eligible for services under the 2014 Care Act. (Adults) For private sector residents only including RSL tenants A relative who fits these criteria may apply on behalf of someone who lives in their home or as part of their household Can be an owner or tenant | Make the property safe and accessible for discharge and admission avoidance. This may include deep clean, declutter of essential rooms, repair/replacement of boiler, or small adaptations such as stair lifts, ramps, ceiling track hoists | Works not supported by an OT and Technical Officer (Private Sector Housing Team) Non-essential works for health & wellbeing Where alternative adaptations to the existing home could be provided more cost effectively to meet the identified needs Works costing over £5,000 Works that are not able to be completed within 6 weeks Works or adaptation that have already been paid for prior to submission of the grant application Works that have already been started or completed | Referral can be from Adult Social Care hospital discharge team, hospital OTs, community OTs, staff from Willows, Oakwood or Winter Watch Works must be completed within 6 weeks from point of referral. To be agreed by Disabled Facilities Advisory Group Grant will be managed and administered by RBC Private Sector Housing Team and contractors will be paid directly The grant does not cover modifications or adaptations in common parts of rented accommodation such as communal staircase. No further grant for 5 years |
| Professional Fees Architect, structural engineer or other relevant fees which allow a DFG application to proceed Grant maximum £5,000 | Eligible where it has been agreed a DFG application can be made | The cost of architect, structural engineer or other relevant fees to enable the DFG application to progress | DFG application has not been submitted or where it has not been agreed that a DFG application can be made | Fees approved by Private Sector Housing Team Manager DFG does not proceed, unless the proposed DFG is no longer viable because the disabled person has been moved into residential care or has passed away, the fees will be reclaimed or registered as a local land charge on property. |

| | | | | Fees are paid directly to Architect, Structural Engineer |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Type of Assistance | Eligibility Criteria | Eligible Works | Non-Eligible Works | Conditions |
| Accommodation Fees Alternative accommodation costs where it is not feasible to remain living in the property while works are carried out Grant maximum £5,000 | Where a DFG application has been approved Technical Officer identifies that it is not feasible to remain living in the property while works are carried out | The cost of alternative accommodation to enable the DFG building works to progress | Where all alternative options (e.g. staying with relatives) and/or equipment (e.g. commode) have been explored by the OT DFG application has not been approved | Fees approved by Enablement, Risk and Review Group OT costed and recommended resource Fees will be paid directly to the accommodation provider |
| Relocation grant Owner Occupiers £10,000 maximum for fees for moving to more suitable property and minimal adaptations if required to the new home Private Rented Tenants £5,000 maximum for fees for moving to more suitable property and minimal adaptation if required in the new rented property | Means tested for over 18 years old. Not means tested for those under 18 years Must have been assessed under Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (Children). Must be eligible for services under the 2014 Care Act (Adults) Private sector residents only, not including RSL tenants A relative who fits these criteria may apply on behalf of someone who lives in their home or as part of their household | Fees (estate agents, solicitors, removals and surveys) to move to more suitable property and minimal adaptations if required to the new home In exceptional circumstances, grants of a maximum of £20,000 would be considered if the works contribute to a significant reduction in commissioned care In the case of private rented tenant's expenses such as rent deposit, professional or removal costs. Permission will need to be sought and provided in writing by the landlord prior to moving in | Move and works not supported by an OT or Technical Officer in the Private Sector Housing Team Move where alternative adaptations to the existing home could be provided more cost effectively to meet the identified needs Moving costs or expenses that have already been paid prior to submission of the grant application. | Move and works must be agreed and signed off by an OT and Technical Officer Works must be carried out within 12 months of approval A charge will be secured on the property for a period of 10 years to be repaid if the property is sold within this time Grant will be managed and administered by RBC Private Sector Housing Team. Contractors can be paid directly or the applicant can be paid directly on presentation of appropriate receipts |

| Type of Assistance | Eligibility Criteria | Eligible Works | Non-Eligible Works | Conditions |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <p>Top up funding for a DFG</p> <p>Maximum of £30,000 funding to top up a mandatory DFG where the cost of work has exceeded the grant maximum of £30,000</p> <p>Only available when customer unable to raise funding elsewhere</p> | <p>Means Test for all including parents of children that require the home adapted</p> <p>Owner Occupiers only, not including RSL tenants or private tenants.</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances where a customer is unable to afford their means tested contribution</p> | <p>Top up funding to a mandatory DFG where the cost of work has exceeded the grant maximum of £30k.</p> <p>This will have occurred when the adaptations, in order to meet the assessed needs, exceed the DFG or where there are unforeseen necessary work and no other source of funding is available.</p> <p>Will require Adult Social Care test of resources to establish eligibility in the case of means tested contributions</p> | <p>Works do not meet mandatory DFG criteria</p> <p>Works that have already been started or completed</p> | <p>To be agreed by Head of Service.</p> <p>Works must be carried out within 12 months of approval</p> <p>With the top up funding of up to £30k a charge will be registered against the property with Land Registry and reclaimed whenever the property is sold</p> <p>As with the mandatory DFG the contractor will be paid directly.</p> |

- 7.0 The following types of assistance are discretionary and are subject to funding being available. This funding can be withdrawn without prior notice to include funding not being made available to grants waiting approval

Discretionary Grants

| Form Of Assistance | Description, Eligible Works and Client Group | Non-eligible Works | Summary of Conditions |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>5. Housing Health & Safety Repairs Grant</p> <p>This grant is intended for homeowners or private tenants (tenants must have a repairing obligation) to remove category one and two hazards and bring properties up to the Decent Homes Standard.</p> <p>The grant limit is £20,000.</p> | <p>Applicants are means tested to calculate how much they should contribute to the cost of the work in the same way as the statutory means test for disabled facilities grants.</p> <p>The Housing, Health & Safety Rating System will be used to carry out an assessment of the property and those applicants whose properties fall into the category one or two hazard bands will be invited to make an application for a Decent Homes Grant</p> <p>Works must as a minimum ensure that the property no longer has category 1 or high category 2 hazards on completion of work</p> | <p>In order to maximise funding we will not be modernising internal facilities such as kitchen and bathrooms as a matter of course</p> <p>Works covered by insurance</p> <p>Decorating</p> <p>Replacing or Upgrading non defective installations</p> <p>Repairs to rectify poor DIY</p> <p>Servicing of boilers and other installations and equipment</p> <p>Energy Efficiency work that can be funded by an 'Energy Efficiency Scheme'</p> | <p>Not available for landlords or RSLs</p> <p>Property must be over 10 years old and Owner occupiers will need to have owned and lived in the property for at least 3 years prior to the date of the application</p> <p>Tenants must have been in occupation for 3 years, have a repairing obligation and the tenancy must have no less than 5 years to run.</p> <p>Note: where someone is living in a property owned by a family member they are not a tenant, the owner/s needs to make the application</p> <p>Work must be carried out within 12 months of grant approval.</p> <p>A local land charge will be registered for a period of 10 years. If the grant conditions are breached then the full grant is repayable</p> |

| Form Of Assistance | Description, Eligible Works and Client Group | Non-eligible Works | Summary of Conditions |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>LANDLORD GRANT</p> <p>50% of the cost of work will be funded by grant aid with the minimum grant being £1,000 and the maximum grant being £10,000</p> | <p>Grant assistance is open to private landlords for the purposes of remedying items of disrepair that have a direct detrimental effect on the health, safety, security or welfare of the occupants.</p> <p>The HHSRs will be used to assess the hazards and those landlords who are issued with an enforcement, prohibition or emergency remedial notice because their properties have failed due to category one hazards will be invited to make an application for a landlord grant to bring the property up to the Decent Homes Standard.</p> <p>On completion of work the property should:</p> <p>Be free from category 1 hazards as defined by the HHSR System</p> <p>Be in a reasonable state of repair e.g. remedying dampness, have a reasonable degree of thermal comfort. Central heating with timing and temperature controls, Effective insulation (both cavity and loft insulation).</p> <p>Have reasonable modern facilities.</p> <p>Have adequate means of escape and detection system that provides early warning system to occupants in the event of a fire</p> <p>Works to improve the security of the property</p> <p>Have sufficient facilities to comply with the Housing Act 2004 'Amenity Standards'</p> | <p>Work that has not been specified by an Environmental Health Officer</p> <p>Any non-structural works required under S372 of the Housing Act 1985, Management Regulations for e.g. cleaning communal areas, rubbish removal, decoration, servicing of gas or electrical installations</p> | <p>The landlord must be the freeholder of the property or have a lease with at least five years unexpired term at the time of application</p> <p>A local land charge will be registered for a period of 10 years</p> <p>The grant is repayable should the property be sold or no longer continue to be let within five years of the completion of work.</p> |

| Form Of Assistance | Description, Eligible Works and Client Group | Non-eligible Works | Summary of Conditions |
|--|--|---|---|
| 7. Empty Homes Grant Grant limit is £10,000 and can be combined with an Empty Homes Loan (FHIL) | <p>Intended to assist with bringing properties that have been empty for more than six months back into circulation</p> <p>Grant aid is available to assist with the renovations, repairs and/or energy efficiency measures e.g. heating, boilers, insulation and double glazing required to make the property habitable and bring it up to the Decent Homes Standard</p> <p>HMO work: including fire precautions, means of escape and the provision of adequate facilities and amenities for the number of people and households</p> | <p>Works covered by insurance</p> <p>Decorating</p> <p>Replacing or Upgrading non defective installations</p> <p>Repairs to rectify poor DIY</p> <p>Servicing of boilers and other installations and equipment</p> <p>HMO: any non-structural works required under S372 of the Housing Act 1985, Management Regulations for e.g. cleaning communal areas, rubbish removal, decoration, servicing of gas or electrical installations</p> | <p>Not open to RSLs</p> <p>Property must have been empty for more than six months</p> <p>Not eligible for grant assistance where any form of statutory notice has been served.</p> <p>On completion of work a 5 year charge will with registered against the property and breach of grant conditions will mean full repayment of the grant</p> <p>Must provide nomination rights for 5 years to the Council</p> |
| Flexible Home Improvement Loan (Empty Homes) 5 year fixed term loan available to empty property owners to bring the property back into use The loan must not exceed the lesser of the cost of the works or two-thirds of the value of the property Further advances or stage payments maybe possible if the value of the property increases as the work progresses | <p>Must have sufficient equity in the property to support the loan</p> <p>Can be used to supplement an Empty Homes Grant</p> <p>The loan is available to assist with the renovations, repairs and/or energy efficiency measures e.g. heating, boilers, insulation and double glazing required to make the property habitable.</p> <p>HMO work: including fire precautions, means of escape and the provision of adequate facilities and amenities.</p> | <p>Works covered by insurance</p> <p>Decorating</p> <p>Replacing or Upgrading non defective installations</p> <p>Repairs to rectify poor DIY</p> <p>Servicing of boilers and other installations and equipment</p> <p>HMO: any non-structural works required under S372 of the Housing Act 1985, Management Regulations for e.g. cleaning communal areas, rubbish removal, decoration, servicing of gas or electrical installations</p> | <p>The cost of the loan is secured as a charge on the property</p> <p>The loan must be paid in full by the end of the 5 year term.</p> <p>The loan must be repaid if the property is sold</p> |

| Form Of Assistance | Description, Eligible Works and Client Group | Non-eligible Works | Summary of Conditions |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Flexible Home Improvement Loan (over 60)</p> <p>The loan must not exceed the lesser of the cost of the works or two-thirds of the value of the property</p> | <p>Owner Occupiers over the age of 60. If joint owners one can be 55 years of age.</p> <p>Must have sufficient equity in the property to support the loan</p> <p>Works relating to for example, heating, plumbing, electrics, roofing, drainage, damp proofing, gutter and disabled adaptations.</p> <p>To fund disabled adaptations in excess of DFG limit.</p> | <p>Works covered by insurance</p> <p>Decorating</p> <p>Replacing or Upgrading non defective installations</p> <p>Repairs to rectify poor DIY</p> <p>Servicing of boilers and other installations and equipment</p> | <p>The cost of the loan is secured as a charge on the property</p> <p>The loan must be repaid in any of the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Regular repayments ▫ Occasional repayments ▫ Loan is repaid in full when the property is sold or the owners cease to occupy it. |
| <p>Flexible Improvement Loan for rented accommodation.</p> <p>The maximum loan is the lesser of the cost of repairs/improvements, or 75% of the value of the property.</p> | <p>Loans will be made for the purpose of improving the quality of the accommodation for the tenants, or prospective tenants.</p> <p>Applicants must be able to demonstrate that the loan can be repaid from the net income from the property. Alternatively the landlord can prove income from other sources sufficient to fund loan repayments.</p> | | <p>Loans are secured by a first charge or, in some cases, a second charge on the property.</p> <p>The length of the loan will be agreed at onset, subject to a maximum term of 15 years.</p> <p>Repayments of capital and interest must be made monthly by direct debit.</p> <p>The loan may be repaid (in whole or part) at any time without penalty.</p> |

8.0 **Constraints**

- 8.1 **Extensions** - the Council will direct resources so that an adaptation is carried out within the existing structure of the dwelling and will only consider approving a DFG for an extension to a property if all other options have been exhausted.
- 8.2 **Modular adaptations** - the Council, where appropriate, will offer modular adaptations/extensions or the equivalent budget limit. Applicants who choose a more expensive build of extension will have to fund the difference.
- 8.3 **Bulk Purchase** - where the Council or its partners has negotiated a “bulk” contract e.g. stairlifts, applicants will be offered the use of the discount provided by the bulk purchase contractor(s). If they choose to use another, more expensive contractor they will have to fund the difference.
- 8.4 **Recycling** - where available the Council will offer recycled adaptations or equivalent budget limit where the adaptation offered meets the needs of the occupier at the best price available.
- 8.5 **Schedule of rates** - the Council will use a schedule of rates for bathroom adaptations. If applicants choose to use another, more expensive contractor they will have to fund the difference.
- 8.6 **Ongoing maintenance** - The Council will provide extended warranties where possible for example stairlifts but has no responsibility for any future maintenance costs for works or equipment installed to the property.
- 8.7 All adaptations are the responsibility of the applicant.

9.0 **DELIVERING THE SERVICE**

- 9.1 Reading Borough Council’s Private Sector Housing Team will assist applicants with the grant process to include plans, tenders, obtaining the necessary permissions e.g. Planning Permission, Building Regulations, grant application paperwork, monitoring work, sign off and payments. Applicants can if they choose manage the work themselves and detailed guidance will be given as to the requirements
- 9.2 In all cases payments will be made direct to the contractor, Architect, Structural Engineer etc on receipt of a valid invoice and works having been inspected
- 9.3 There is a 10% fee charged for managing the grant process by the Council. This is funded through the grant or loan
- 9.4 An application for assistance shall be in a form prescribed by the Council.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------|------------------------------|
| TO: | Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee | | |
| DATE: | 6 November 2019 | AGENDA ITEM: | |
| TITLE: | Fire Safety in Tall Buildings | | |
| LEAD COUNCILLOR: | COUNCILLOR JOHN ENNIS | PORTFOLIO: | HOUSING |
| SERVICE: | REGULATORY SERVICES | WARDS: | ALL |
| LEAD OFFICER: | James Crosbie | TEL: | 0118 9372222 |
| JOB TITLE: | Acting Head of Planning and Regulatory Services | E-MAIL: | James.crosbie@reading.gov.uk |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Council's response following the Grenfell Tower fire in Kensington on 14th June 2017. This includes action taken in relation to the Authority's own housing stock, other corporate buildings and schools, as well as wider work in partnership with the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) in respect of privately owned high rise residential blocks within the Borough boundaries.
- 1.2 In summary the local authority has taken the following action post the Grenfell Tower incident:
- As reported to this committee in March 2019, the council instructed Fireskills, an independent fire safety specialist to audit tall buildings within the Housing Revenue Account. The audit went further than Government's guidance and included buildings below 18 metres in height. As a result of the audit an action plan was drawn up that is being managed to ensure works can be completed. The council has also as necessary responded to the Government's latest guidance on issues such as fire doors.
 - A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between RBFRS and the 6 Berkshire councils was signed, to enable a partnership approach to inspections and enforcement.
 - As a result of the MOU, a building safety programme was implemented and joint work commenced in March 2018 between RBFRS and the council. This work involved joint fire safety inspections of 32 of the most high risk residential buildings over 18 metres. Inspections were completed on 1st August and work to meet fire safety standards was required where necessary.
 - Four high rise residential buildings have been identified with Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding which failed the required fire safety standards. These buildings have had interim measures installed and monitored in accordance with the current Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) guidance. The council and RBFRS are working with stakeholders of the buildings to support plans to remove, and in some cases replace, the cladding.
 - The council has begun work in response to a requirement from MHCLG in July 2019 to complete a data collection exercise to identify external wall materials and insulation on all high-rise residential buildings 18 metres and over within their area. There are approximately 106 high-rise residential buildings in Reading which are applicable to

this request. Legislation under the Housing Act 2004 is being used to require this information from freeholders.

- There is regular communication and sharing of information between the council and RBFRS, plus joint meetings with relevant stakeholders where required.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee note this update following the Grenfell Tower fire as detailed in this report.**

3. POLICY CONTEXT

The Grenfell Tower Fire

- 3.1 Grenfell Tower was a 24-storey, 67m high residential tower block in North Kensington built in 1970. The concrete structure's top 22 storeys consisted of 127 flats. The block was managed by Kensington and Chelsea Tenants' Management Organisation.
- 3.2 A major fire seriously damaged the building on 14 June 2017. The fire burned for about 60 hours until finally extinguished. More than 200 firefighters and 40 fire engines from stations all over London were involved in efforts to control the fire. At least 80 people were confirmed or presumed dead, according to the Metropolitan Police Service.
- 3.3 The fire remains under investigation and is the subject of a Public Inquiry which opened on 14th September 2017. The Inquiry suggests that external fire loading was partly responsible for the rapid fire spread. The ACM cladding of the building has become the main focus of concern.
- 3.4 The cladding system which was fitted as part of an £8.4 million refurbishment completed in 2016 consisted of an Aluminium Composite Material which was effectively a sandwich of two sheets of aluminium foil covering a 3mm polyethylene core acting as a rain screen. The insulation was Celotex RS5000, which is an insulant that has subsequently been withdrawn from the market. This was all fixed to the original concrete façade of the building.
- 3.5 After Grenfell, seven large scale tests were undertaken by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) to understand what combination of ACM and insulation may or may not be safe to use as part of a wall system in high rise buildings, in line with current Building Regulations guidance. These results confirmed which categories of ACM and insulation passed the BS8414 test and enabled MHCLG to provide urgent advice to building owners.
- 3.6 MHCLG has since set up its 'Building Safety Programme' to provide guidance to building owners, councils and local fire brigades.
- 3.6 The fire at Grenfell Tower follows other significant incidents in social housing in recent years which have been widely reported in the Housing and national press:
- fire in Lakanal House, Camberwell on 3rd July 2009 (6 deaths)
 - fire at Shepherds Bush House on 18th October 2016 (no deaths)
 - fire at Samuel Garside House, Barking Riverside on 9 June 2019 (no deaths)
 - fire at Limehouse Lodge, Clapton on 16 September 2019 (no deaths)

There were marked similarities between the features of the Lakanal House fire and Grenfell Tower and nationally there remain calls for change, including to Building Regulations.

4. Current Position

RBC Housing stock

- 4.1 Following the review by FireSkills, officers have been working towards delivering the recommendations within the action plan. The key actions taken to date are:
- 4.2.1 External and internal doors to each flat within high rise blocks are being inspected. To date, the majority of issues that have been identified are minor. Whilst good progress is being made with the inspections and rectification of any issues with doors, there still remain some issues in gaining entry to some tenant's flats to carry out the inspection, access to these dwellings is now being pursued with legal assistance.
- 4.2.2 The design for the replacement of the 'break glass' fire alarm system for Coley High rise has been completed and the procurement method agreed. The new system is programmed to be installed in November 2019. The upgrade to the communal alarm system will be concurrent with the installation of a sprinkler system.
- 4.2.3 Fire alarms to communal areas will be installed in those blocks identified as higher risk in the FireSkills report. The majority of these will be installed as the alarms are upgraded within the flats and are being worked through in risk order.
- 4.2.4 A specification for higher risk flats which includes upgrading smoke detection and in some cases installing a sprinkler system within kitchens has been agreed. The work to upgrade the smoke detection system has now commenced, however, contractors continue to have access issues which causes delays to the programme. Fire alarm work to the flats in the high rise blocks has almost been completed; installation is being undertaken in the remaining stock based on a risk programme. The sprinkler installation work is due to start in October 2019.
- 4.2.5 The removal and replacement of cladding on Coley high rise is programmed to coincide with the replacement of windows in 3-5 years. The replacement is not related to any identified fire risk, but the outcome of the Hackitt review and any changes in Government policy may influence the materials used as part of the replacement works.
- 4.2.6 In response to the latest guidance, the new build at Conwy Close has benefitted from upgraded fire doors and each flat will be completed with a sprinkler system, with an Autoquench system fitted in buggy and internal bin stores.

Corporate Buildings and Schools

- 4.2.7 All fire risk assessments have been completed and any priority works have been completed.

Cross Tenure Residential Buildings

- 4.3 A County-wide Steering group was convened by RBFPS with representatives of the six Unitary Authorities in Berkshire. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between RBFPS and the 6 Unitary Authorities was signed last year with the purpose of strengthening the current draft Protocol for Fire Safety Enforcement and putting into place a joint plan of action with regards to the roles and responsibilities of each party.
- 4.3.1 A programme of joint work was agreed to facilitate sharing of learning, information and resources. A multi-disciplinary operational team comprising RBFPS and an Environmental Health officer from the Council was formed with the remit of

holistically reviewing the safety of high rise residential blocks in Reading on a prioritised basis.

- 4.4 RBFRS built a risk profile for all high rise residential premises across Berkshire which informed prioritisation for inspections. By using these calculated risk profiles, 32 of the highest risk residential buildings over 18 metres in Reading were jointly inspected between March and August 2018. Joint letters were sent out to notify all residents prior to the inspections and to offer home fire safety checks by fire officers. In addition to the communal areas, at least 5% of flats were inspected for each residential high rise block. RBFRS and the council followed up separately on the issues found under their respective enforcement legislation - The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the Housing Act 2004.

The common deficiencies found in high rise blocks in Reading included:

- Compartmentation breaches
- Fire lifts not in operational use
- Fire doors in disrepair

- 4.6 All building owners are responsible for determining whether there is ACM on the outside of their high rise residential building. In Reading there are four residential buildings over 18 metres which have been identified to have ACM cladding which failed the required fire safety standard and is not of limited combustibility. The council and RBFRS are working with the relevant stakeholders of these buildings to ensure a long term remediation plan is established.

- 4.6.1 **St. Lawrence House** (social housing accommodation). Interim measures are in place in accordance with the current MHCLG guidance dated 29 September 2017 and they are monitored by RBFRS. The Building Control application for the removal and replacement of the external cladding was approved on 13th September 2018. No Planning permission was required as the replacement material will have the same appearance. The work started in October 2018 and is to be completed in October 2019. The ACM cladding remedial works on buildings owned by Local Authority and Housing Associations have been funded by the Government.

- 4.6.2 **Queen's Court** (student accommodation). The cladding is situated on the top two storeys of the building. In September 2018 the MHCLG released guidance for owners of buildings which are partially clad in ACM. It advised that the most appropriate remediation solution was to remove all ACM, including small or partial areas of ACM, and replace it with a safe material. Following this guidance, the building owner engaged with relevant bodies to arrange for the removal and replacement of the ACM cladding. The remediation work commenced at the beginning of July 2019 and it is expected to be completed by February 2020.

- 4.6.3 **Hanover House** (private residential accommodation). Interim measures are in place in accordance with the current MHCLG guidance and these are monitored regularly. The Alterations Notice served by RBFRS for closure of the car park located underneath the building is still in force. In May 2019 MHCLG announced the plan for the provision of funding for the removal and replacement of unsafe ACM cladding from privately owned high-rise residential buildings. The council and MHCLG are working together to progress the planning and confirm a start date for the works.

- 4.6.4 **Crossway Point** (social housing accommodation). The council were notified on 25th September 2019 that the building had been recently identified as having ACM cladding on it. A joint inspection with RBFRS was carried out and the Housing Association had implemented interim measures in accordance with their fire risk assessment. A planning application has been made to remove the ACM and replace with non-combustible cladding. The council continues to work with the Housing Association to ensure correct measures are in place while the ACM cladding remains on the building.

4.7 The council has begun work in response to MHCLG requiring local authorities to complete a data collection exercise to identify external wall materials on all high-rise residential buildings 18 metres and over within their area. There are approximately 106 high-rise residential buildings in Reading which meet this criteria. Legislation under the Housing Act 2004 will be used to assist officers in requiring the information from freeholders. The MHCLG would like all the required information by 31st March 2020.

4.7.1 To date, six blocks of flats have been identified in the Borough where the cladding fails to meet Building Regulations. The management companies of these blocks have had to put in place interim measures in line with their risk assessments. The Council and RBFRS will continue to monitor the situations and liaise with managers to ensure risks are properly dealt with.

Some leaseholders are facing elevated costs through their service charges in order to fund the extra measures and work required to rectify hazards found in the blocks they live in. Some leaseholders have reported poor communication between managing agents and leaseholders and have resorted to contacting the council and RBFRS to help them resolve issues. This understandably causes tension between leaseholders and managing agents and may result in Councillor enquiries.

4.8 MHCLG's data reporting system, DELTA, is updated regularly by the council and there is frequent communication with staff from the Tower Casework Team at MHCLG.

4.9 The Corporate Fire Safety Working Group has regular meetings to discuss progress with the work on fire safety in high rise residential buildings.

4.10 The council and RBFRS have also met regularly throughout the year to discuss progress with the Building Safety Programme and the effectiveness of the MOU. The current position is that the council will need to progress the identification of the materials used to build high rise residential accommodation in the borough, which may require steps to be taken to enforce the requirement for information to be provided.

5 Options Proposed

5.1 The council and RBFRS officers have discussed how the Steering Group set up as part of the MOU might, in future, prioritise checks on certain non-high rise residential properties such as care homes, sheltered accommodation and other specialist housing where the occupants may be more vulnerable and less mobile. Houses in Multiple Occupation are another accommodation type which, through the County-wide Steering group's joint work, could result in improved safety for residents. Scope of partnership work will depend on the nature of issues arising from high rise residential stock and the councils and RBFRS capacity.

5.2 Communications with stakeholders on the high rise residential buildings with ACM will continue. The priority will be to secure remediation of the cladding where required as quickly as possible.

5.3 The council will undertake steps to obtain external wall details of all applicable buildings in response to the request from MHCLG in order to submit the required data by 31st March 2020.

5.3 The council will keep updated with the latest Government guidance and take action where appropriate. This includes any new changes derived from recommendations in the final Hackitt review.

5.4 RBFRS are planning to release information to the media detailing the joint work that has been undertaken on the building safety programme to date.

- 5.5 MHCLG recently published a consultation, “Building a Safer Future - Proposals for reform of the building safety regulatory system”. This consultation was in response to Dame Judith Hackitt’s Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety and proposes fundamental reforms of building safety requirements.
- 5.6 The proposals introduce:
- The concept of duty holders, who will be legally responsible for ensuring the building is designed and built to be safe for its residents. Gateways are proposed to prevent a building moving through the process without the proper checks being made.
 - A stronger voice for residents including a requirement for a Resident Engagement Strategy.
 - A new national Building Safety Regulator who would have oversight of building safety and wider regulation; setting guidance; advising government based on evidence of risk and oversight of competence.
 - Strengthening enforcement and sanctions to deter non-compliance with the new regime and existing regulations. This includes creating a criminal offence to ensure that those responsible for a high rise residential buildings safety during design, construction and occupation comply with their responsibilities and giving local authorities more time to serve enforcement notices so that they can take action where problems are uncovered at a later date, as well as enabling private individuals to make a claim for damages where work on a building has not met building regulations standards.
- 5.7 The proposals have been broadly welcomed, however, the practicality of a single central regulator has been questioned by a number of professional bodies.
- 5.8 The government is currently reviewing consultation responses.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 6.1 This report supports the following objectives in the corporate plan:
- Improving access to decent housing to meet local needs
 - Protecting and enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Not relevant to this report.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 As this is an update report there are no direct Environmental Implications for the Council. However, there are wider implications of the cladding material much of which will be removed before the end of their scheduled lifetime. This is however necessary to key safety issues.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are several important pieces of legislation which impact on fire safety within dwellings, principally:
- Building Regulations 2010 Part B.
 - Housing Act 2004.
 - The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

In addition, the Local Government Association (LGA) published guidance in 2012 ‘Fire safety in purpose builds blocks of flats’.

- 9.2 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the FSO) came into force in October 2006. It does not apply to individual flats but does apply to the common parts of flats such as stairwells, a plant room or caretaker room, shared facilities and lobbies. Guidance on the FSO and its requirements has been issued in a series of guides. Blocks of flats are included, among many other types of residential premises, in the HM Government guide 'Fire safety risk assessment: sleeping accommodation' published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The FSO imposes duties on the 'responsible person' who has control of the premises - usually a company or organisation and usually the freeholder or landlord. Responsibilities also apply in respect of anyone who has a contract or responsibility for maintenance, repairs or for the safety of premises. The FSO is normally enforced by the fire and rescue authority.
- 9.3 The FSO requires that suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments (FRAs) are carried out - this forms the foundation for the fire safety measures required in a block of flats. The fire and rescue authority will review the FRA at the time they audit a building. Further detail is provided above in this report. An FRA will result in an action plan detailing managerial and physical measures with prioritisation commensurate with the risk. LGA guidance suggests that a low risk, low rise block might need an FRA to be completed every 4 years and reviewed every two years. For blocks with higher risk and over four storeys in height a new FRA every 3 years and an annual review would be more appropriate.
- 9.4 Material alterations to existing blocks of flats, including alterations to individual flats, are controlled under the Building Regulations 2010, and need to be approved by a building control body otherwise an offence is committed. Even if the block satisfied earlier legislation, proposed alterations must be considered in the light of the current Building Regulations; it is not sufficient to carry out alterations on the basis of the earlier legislation. In practice, any proposals to carry out alterations including to fire alarm systems, means of escape, smoke control arrangements and structural alterations, should be submitted to ensure compliance with regulations.
- 9.5 The Housing Act 2004 makes requirements regarding the condition of a broad spectrum of housing including both individual flats within a block and the common parts of a block. Local authorities are the enforcing authority for this legislation. Assessment of conditions is carried out using the Housing health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) - where 'category 1' (more serious) hazards are identified the local authority has a duty to take some form of enforcement action. Under the Housing Act 2004, the housing authority must inspect properties if they become aware of significant fire hazards. Housing authorities have powers of entry for this purpose. The housing authority may make requirements for improvements in fire precautions. In the event of serious risk, the housing authority has the power to prohibit or take emergency remedial action.
- 9.6 There is overlap between the Housing Act and FSO. The Housing Act covers flats and common parts whilst the FSO covers common parts. The safety of common parts can sometimes rely on fire safety measures within flats which is an added complexity.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are a number of potential financial liabilities arising which are being factored into financial planning:
- a) Works which are advised as a result of external review or mandated through changing regulation to the Council's own housing/other residential stock. Capacity to fund additional safety works has been modelled within the Housing Revenue Account.

- b) Resourcing joint work with RBFRS to review cross tenure residential high rise buildings and managing any regulatory actions arising. To date, this has been resourced within existing resources.
- 10.2 In addition to the above, there is uncertainty in relation to the financial implications of any Fire Service or any council using relevant regulatory powers to secure the removal and replacement of cladding (or undertake other critical fire safety works) through direct action where necessary and where the owner fails to take responsibility. This remains a concern which has not been addressed by MHCLG.
- 10.3 The new MHCLG data collection exercise is resource intensive and the initial phase of this is being managed within existing budgets. However, once the information has been submitted, there will be a requirement for it to be reviewed by a competent professional. Currently, the council are using the services of a contractor to conduct a detailed assessment as to whether based on the information submitted, the building will be compliant. It is estimated therefore, that if every building owner submits the relevant requested information, it could cost the council £100k in 2019/20 to properly assess.
- 10.5 MHCLG has allocated £31,314.00 “New Burdens” Funding to the Council as a contribution towards the cost of the data collection exercise. However, this still leaves a cost pressure and Officers are currently working on options to reduce or mitigate this.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/707792/Building_a_Safer_Future_-_foreword_and_summary.pdf

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/building-a-safer-future-proposals-for-reform-of-the-building-safety-regulatory-system>

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOODS

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------|----------------|
| TO: | Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee | | |
| DATE: | 6 November 2019 | AGENDA ITEM: | |
| TITLE: | Domestic Abuse Strategy 2019-22 | | |
| LEAD COUNCILLOR: | Cllr James | PORTFOLIO: | Neighbourhoods |
| SERVICE: | Neighbourhoods | WARDS: | All |
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report summarises the draft Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading, 2019-22 (Appendix 1) and the report on the recently completed consultation (appendix 2). The report also recommends that the committee adopts the draft strategy in appendix 1, as the live Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading 2019-22.
- 1.2 Appendix 1 - Draft Domestic Abuse Strategy
- 1.3 Appendix 2 - Consultation Summary
- 1.3 Appendix 3 - Equality Impact Assessment

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee approve the draft strategy as the adopted Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading 2019- 2022.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 After the successful delivery of the 2015-18 Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading a refreshed strategy is required. The attached draft strategy for 2019-22 will support the delivery of both the Community Safety Partnership and the Berkshire West Children's Safeguarding Partnership strategic plans.
- 3.2 The draft strategy is impacted but both the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill 2019 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017, plus associated draft statutory 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education guidance'.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The existing Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading ended in 2018 and new refreshed strategy is required.

- 4.2 A consultation exercise on the attached draft Domestic Abuse Strategy 2019-22 (appendix 1) was completed from the 19th August 2019 to the 13th September 2019. A summary of the consultation responses is included in the report (appendix 2).
- 4.3 The priorities within the draft strategy were developed via a series of workshops with members of the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group (DASG), a sub-group of the CSP. They reflect the group's aspirations to move the practices and approach of partners in Reading forward in specific areas, and it is assumed that the progress made during the previous strategy will be embedded by agencies as part of their 'business as usual' and therefore continued. Data will continue to be monitored by the DASG and any changes in performance or outcomes will be challenged regularly. The respondents to the consultation strongly agreed with the priorities so they remain as follows:
- 4.4 The priorities within the draft strategy for 2019-22 are as follows:

Priority 1 -Raising awareness about domestic abuse with a focus on:

- **Workforce Development** - Continue to ensure a knowledgeable and well trained workforce.
- **Healthy Relationship Education** - increasing the resilience of Young People to negative relationships and behaviour.
- **Engagement with marginalised communities** - Encouraging those experiencing abuse to seek help at an earlier stage

Priority 2: Developing a multi-agency approach to working with perpetrators - Working with strategic partners to create a perpetrator approach to reduce and prevent repeat Domestic Abuse.

Priority 3 - Improving our partnership response to Coercive Control -Training professionals to understand and identify coercive control, so as to increase and better manage disclosures.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The draft strategy supports the delivery of the following Corporate Plan priorities:
1. To protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable adults and children
 2. Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe
- 5.2 It also supports the delivery of the following Strategic Aims
1. To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all
- 5.3 Reducing the impact of Domestic Abuse has an impact of both the Health and Wellbeing and Community Safety agendas of the Council and partners.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 A consultation exercise on the draft strategy was completed between the 19th August and the 13th September 2019, and a summary of the responses can be found in Appendix 2.
- 6.2 24 people responded to the consultation and as well as supporting the proposed priorities they provided clear and helpful suggestions for how these priorities could be delivered effectively.
- 6.3 As a result of the consultation the draft strategy has been amended as follows:

- As part of the delivery of priority 1, support available for men who experience Domestic Abuse will be publicised.
- The support available for perpetrators who wish to change their offending behaviour has been made clearer within priority 2.
- Support for perpetrators of child to parent violence is included in priority 2.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed (appendix 3) in respect to the draft strategy. It is considered that the priorities within the strategy could have **positive** differential impact on groups with the following protected characteristics:

- Racial
- Disability
- Gender
- Sexuality
- Religious belief

7.2 No Negative impact was recorded on any group.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Some elements of the strategy may be impacted by the draft Domestic Abuse Bill 2019 currently progressing through parliament.

8.2 The Healthy Relationship programme in schools will be impacted by the legislative changes within the Children and Social Work Act 2017, and the draft statutory guidance published in February 2019.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None - the consultation exercise and expected outcomes within the strategy will be delivered within existing resources.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Domestic Abuse Strategy 2015-18

10.2 Draft Domestic Abuse Bill 2019

10.3 Children and Social Work Act 2017

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Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading

2019 - 2022

Overseen by the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group

A sub-group of Reading's Community Safety Partnership

DRAFT



Foreword

I am very proud to introduce the 2019 Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading, particularly since this is designed to build on the immense progress that has been made locally for survivors over the past three years.

Despite the positive developments we have been able to create in Reading - from more accessible support services to enabling an increased rate of incident referrals - the national picture regarding Domestic Abuse is extremely concerning. Recent research reported that in 2017, the number of domestic abuse related deaths per year reached a five-year-high.

The last three years saw us work determinedly to make sure the people of Reading did not become part of this trend. We continued to invest significantly in refuges, outreach support workers and training for frontline staff. We have made it easier for people with disabilities who are experiencing domestic violence to seek help. And we introduced a new multi-agency approach to support families reporting a high number of domestic abuse incidents.

Going forward, we will work with community safety partners to deliver this new strategy for 2019 - 2022 and help many more people face the future without fear. Acting together, we will focus on making progress in areas that have been identified as crucial to helping reduce the risk of domestic abuse. We will concentrate on educating young people about healthy relationships. We will earn the trust of marginalised communities and encourage them to come forward. We will develop a multi-agency approach to working with perpetrators - because only by changing the behaviours of abusers can we truly create a safe place for all of us. And we will work hard to deliver an effective response to incidents of coercive control - an all-too often overlooked area of abuse.

Today, as has always been the case, anyone can experience domestic abuse. Age, ethnicity, sexual orientation or background - none of it matters. It is why I am so proud to say that this strategy is for everyone. The following pages highlight a determination to keep each of us safer and our community stronger. We all have a responsibility to turn that determination into reality.

Councillor Sophia James

Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods

WHAT IS DOMESTIC ABUSE?

A coherent strategy that tackles domestic abuse effectively needs to be informed by an understanding of the various forms of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse and domestic violence are terms used interchangeably by many organisations. However, in line with the Government definition below, this strategy will use the term ‘domestic abuse’, in order to encompass both violent and non-violent behaviours.

The draft Domestic Abuse Bill 2019 proposed statutory definition, defines domestic abuse as:¹

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexual orientation. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- economic
- emotional

Controlling behaviour: Controlling behaviour defines acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour: Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. The significance of this new definition is its intention to be underpinned by statutory guidance, and the rewording of financial abuse to economic.

While the definition outlined is not yet legal, it is used across all Government departments. One of the changes includes the replacement of ‘financial abuse’ with ‘economic abuse’, as part of the Government’s ‘expansive approach’ to recognising that “victims may be forced into taking out loans or entering into other financial contracts by [perpetrators]”.² By changing the term in this way, wider forms of domestic abuse can be identified and addressed.

Forms of Domestic Abuse

All genders, and those that define as any sexuality, experience domestic abuse in a variety of forms. Domestic abuse can also occur between wider family members when they are living within the same household. In addition to the methods described in the above definition, other forms of domestic abuse include:

¹ Gov.uk, *Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse Consultation Response and Draft Bill*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-consultation-response-and-draft-bill> (accessed June 2019)

² Ibid

‘Harmful Cultural Practises’: Abuse in relation to:

- **‘Honour’ Based Abuse (HBA):** Abuse committed to protect or defend the perceived ‘honour’ of a family and/or community, although not condoned by any cultural or religious belief. Young women are the most common targets, and become victims after deviating from their community’s boundaries of perceived acceptable feminine/sexual behaviour. Victims have been murdered in extreme cases of HBA.
- **Forced Marriage:** A marriage conducted without valid consent of one or both parties, where duress or lack of capacity is a factor. Please note that this is not to be confused with *arranged* marriages, where consent is indeed supplied.

Domestic Servitude: Domestic Servitude can occur in some instances of forced marriage, and involves victims being forced to perform all household tasks, including cooking, cleaning and child-care. They may work 10 to 16 hours a day, and are rarely allowed out of the house without a chaperone.

Inter-Familial Violence/Parental Abuse: Violence between adult family members.

Stalking: Repeated (i.e. on at least two occasions) harassment causing fear, alarm or distress. It can include threatening phone calls, texts or letters; damaging property; spying on and following a person.

Harassment: The term harassment is used to cover the 'causing alarm or distress' offences under section 2 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 as amended (PHA), and 'putting people in fear of violence' offences under section 4 of the PHA. The term can also include harassment by two or more defendants against an individual or harassment against more than one victim.

This strategy does not include our approach to reducing Female Genital Mutilation as this is covered within a separate work stream within Children’s Services. It also does not cover child to parent violence where the aggressor is under the age of 16.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Tackling domestic abuse continues to be a national priority for the Government. In response, local authorities are expected to outline their approach to reducing the prevalence of domestic abuse in their areas, addressing the particular challenges presented by local demographics.

In 2016, the Home Office launched its 'Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG)', which intends to transform the delivery of services, make prevention and early interventions the foundation of its approach, and embed an "everyone's business" ethos across agencies, services and the wider public.³ The strategy reports that domestic violence costs the UK £15.8bn annually, and to meet the challenge the Government have pledged £80m of funding to provide 'core support for refuges and other accommodation-based services'.⁴ Although a strategy aimed at addressing violence against women and girls, the principles of the strategy can also be applied to men, boys, and people that define as LGBT+⁵.

Domestic Abuse in the Law

While a wide variety of behaviours defined as domestic abuse are universally recognised as destructive, not all such behaviours are illegal. While this situation is changing, it is important for the purposes of this strategy to recognise the current legal boundaries we must operate within.

In criminal law, domestic abuse is an umbrella term used to refer to a number of different offences against a family member or intimate partner, such as assault. Unfortunately, not all reports to the police can be recorded as a crime, such as verbal aggression towards a partner, and therefore get logged as a 'non-recordable' domestic abuse incident.

However, legislation around domestic abuse is changing. Recent updates include:

The Serious Crime Act 2015 by the Home Office, which criminalises patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour where they are perpetrated against an intimate partner or family member.

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, commonly known as Clare's Law, which was introduced in 2012 by the Home Office. This development allows that police to disclose information about a partner's previous history of violence under some circumstances, and where the risk to the victim can be identified as prevailing over the right to privacy of the partner.

The introduction of Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) in March 2014. These notices and orders were introduced to tackle situations where perpetrators are arrested, but not charged, and are thereby able to return directly to the location of the victim. Prior to these developments, there were no restraints on the perpetrator as bail conditions are not enforceable without an official charge. The DVPNs and DVPOs are designed to provide individuals with temporary respite (to a maximum of 48 hours and 28 days respectively) so that they can make decisions for the future, and potentially apply for a civil injunction, before the perpetrator is able to make contact.

³ Gov.uk, *Violence against women and girls* (2016). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans, plus other identities considered to fall under this umbrella, including but not limited to queer/ questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual*

Draft Domestic Abuse Bill - Central Government's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020⁶, Victims Strategy 2018⁷ and Female Offender Strategy 2018⁸, provide the back drop for a significant review of the existing response to domestic abuse. In 2017 the Government launched a consultation called 'Transforming the response to Domestic Abuse' and in January 2019 the response to the consultation and draft Domestic Abuse Bill⁹ was published.

The document is based around four main objectives:

- Promote awareness - to put domestic abuse at the top of everyone's agenda, and raise public and professionals' awareness.
- Protect and support - to enhance the safety of victims and the support they receive.
- Pursue and deter - to provide an effective response to perpetrators from initial agency response through to conviction and management of offenders, including rehabilitation.
- Improve performance - to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas, agencies and sectors.

Other legislation that impacts on the development of this strategy is the Children and Social Work Act 2017¹⁰ and associated regulations¹¹ which require relationships and sex education to be taught in all English schools from September 2020.

⁶ Gov.uk, *Violence against women and girls* (2016) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020>

⁷ Gov.uk, *Victim Strategy* (2018) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/victims-strategy>

⁸ Gov.uk, *Female Offender Strategy* (2018) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-offender-strategy>

⁹ Gov.uk, *Draft Domestic Abuse Bill* May 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-consultation-response-and-draft-bill> (accessed June 2019)

¹⁰ Children's and Social Work Act 2017 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents/enacted> (accessed June 2019)

¹¹ Draft Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/9780111181997> (accessed June 2019)

PREVELANCE

It is the responsibility of all Local Authorities and partners to tackle Domestic abuse and protect local residents from harm. Reading's Community Safety Partnership places value in collaborative working across organisations to collect data and plan strategic approaches.

Police reports

The national picture identifies high levels of domestic abuse around the country. The police recorded 599,549 domestic abuse-related crimes in the year ending March 2018, and 598,545 non-crime incidents reported to the police. This was an increase of 23% from the previous year. This in part reflects police forces improving their identification and recording of domestic abuse incidents as crimes and an increased willingness by victims to come forward.¹² However this doesn't show the full picture, as the Crime Survey for England and Wales show little change to previous years, with 2 million adults aged between 16-59 reporting that they have experienced domestic abuse in the same period (65% women, 35% men).

In Reading there has also been a significant increase in crimes reported in the last year also partly reflecting both a national and local change in practice within the police.

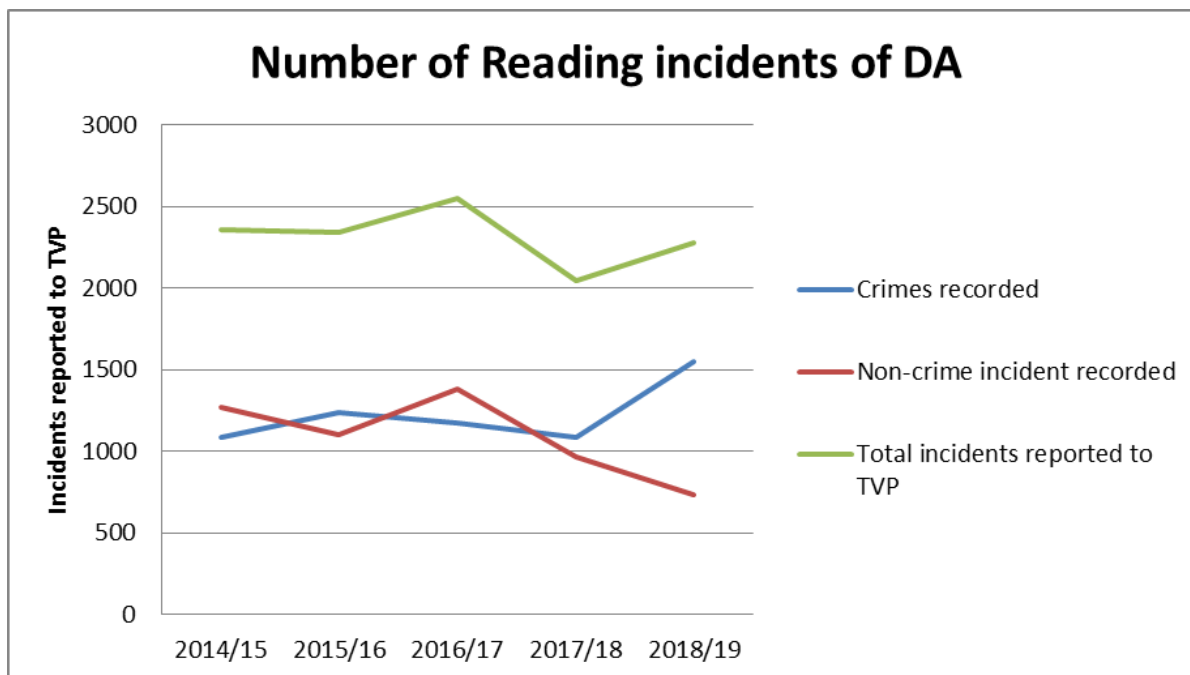
| Thames Valley Police Recording | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Domestic Abuse Incidents: Recorded Crime | 1086 | 1240 | 1171 | 1082 | 1547 |
| Domestic Abuse Incidents: Non-Crime Occurrence ¹³ | 1,271 | 1,102 | 1,380 | 963 | 732 |
| Total | 2,357 | 2,342 | 2,551 | 2,045 | 2,279 |

Domestic Abuse Incidents in Reading:

The graph below shows the same data and highlights that although the total number of incidents is 13% lower than 5 years ago, there has been a significant increase in crimes recorded (42%).

¹² ONS, *domestic abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2018*, November 2018.

¹³ A non-recordable incident of domestic abuse is not regarded as an offence and does not contribute to Home Office statistics. Recordable incidents of domestic abuse are those considered pursuable as an offence.



Thames Valley Police recorded and non-recorded crime 2019.

To provide further context the number of crimes recorded per 1000 population during 18/19 is compared to the figure in other major towns in the Thames Valley, the TV average and national average.

| | Crimes per 1,000 Households recorded in 18/19 | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|---------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| Thames Valley Police Recording | Reading | | Oxford | | Slough | | Thames Valley | | National | |
| Year | 17/18 | 18/19 | 17/18 | 18/19 | 17/18 | 18/19 | 17/18 | 18/19 | 17/18 | 18/19 |
| Domestic Abuse Incidents: Recorded Crime | 6.14 | 9.51 | 5.07 | 7.02 | 9.05 | 11.2 | 4.71 | 6.83 | 10 | Not yet available |
| Domestic Abuse Incidents: Non-Crime Occurrence | 5.86 | 4.5 | 4.95 | 3.18 | 9.36 | 5.29 | 5.58 | 3.66 | 10 | Not yet available |
| Total | 12 | 14.01 | 10.02 | 10.2 | 18.41 | 16.49 | 10.29 | 11.49 | 20 | Not yet available |

The table above indicates that Reading is experiencing levels of domestic abuse above the Thames Valley average for both recorded and non-recorded crime. This is to be expected as an urban area and is only slightly above the other urban centres in the Thames Valley. However all of the Thames Valley, including Reading, remain significantly below the average for England and Wales.

Domestic abuse consistently represents c.10% of all crimes reported to the police within the Reading area. This matches the Thames Valley and compares to 12% for England and Wales.

DRAFT

DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY FOR READING 2015-18

In 2015 Reading Community Safety Partnership published a three year Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading which set out the following priorities:

1. Encouraging people to seek support earlier - Improving information, education and prevention.
2. Providing the right response first time - Improving identification, encouraging disclosures and ensuring an appropriate immediate response.
3. Having the right services available - Improving support to move from victim to survivor or to change abusive behaviour.
4. Understanding of the challenges in our town - improving data analysis and community engagement.

This strategy has been successfully delivered by the Community Safety Partnership as summarised below.

Procurement

A key driver in the 2015-19 Strategy, impacting on all strands of strategic delivery was the requirement to recommission all domestic abuse support services in the town, including support within refuge provision. After an extensive review of current and projected needs this procurement was completed with two new contracts implemented in October 2017, which will remain in place for the life of this updated strategy, 2019 - 22. One contract (£90,000 p.a.) funds the support provided to 15 refuge spaces located in the town (4 specialist spaces for women from the Asian community) and a wider contract (£255,000 p.a.) funds a range of services from providing training for the Reading workforce on domestic abuse; delivering support at the point of crisis; and supporting those who both experience and perpetrate abuse to break the cycle of abuse. A local domestic abuse charity, BWA, deliver both these contracts.

Priority 1 - Encouraging people to seek support earlier - Improving information, education and prevention.

Increasing professional and public knowledge on the subject of domestic abuse will make it easier for those who are experiencing abuse to access support and broadens their opportunities to do this as early as possible. It will also enable people to make more informed judgements regarding their relationships.

Actions completed:

- Improvements to both the Council's and partners' websites have been completed and Police-led awareness raising campaigns have been supported.
- BWA have delivered 33 training course and trained 579 front line staff on domestic abuse (level 1 and 2), and continue to deliver 10 days of training per year
- Training sub-group of the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group has reviewed the training to ensure that it remains relevant and up to date. The training continues to receive positive feedback. Of the 88 people that attended level 1 training, 47% rated it as excellent and 47% as good, and of the 70 people that attended level 2 training, 63% rated it as excellent and 34% as good. Combined candidates stated that (on a scale of 1-10) their confidence and knowledge had improved by an average 2.8 points.

- As set out in the 2015-18 strategy, Domestic Abuse forums to promote professional development of staff across agencies were re-introduced in 2016 and delivered quarterly. The forums have proven to be extremely popular with between 50-80 staff in attendance at each session, providing training on a specific topic followed by a wider group discussion. The topics have included:
 - 'Why don't they just leave?'
 - The impact of domestic abuse/ trauma on child development
 - Victimless prosecutions
 - Stalking and Harassment
 These forums will remain a key part of our staff development and engagement programme moving forward.
- Introduced an online training programme focusing on DA within LGBT+ relationships.
- Programme to encourage reporting/ appropriate recording of incidents of domestic abuse towards adults with a disability.

Outcomes:

- Increased referrals to the MARAC (58% increase since 2015)
- Increased MARAC referrals involving adults with a disability (from 0 - 11% since 2015), reflecting better recognition and recording of incidents.
- Increased use of support agencies with clear referral routes.

Further action required:

The partnership has made limited progress in promoting and ensuring a consistent educational offer around healthy relationships for young people in schools and other settings. Supported by the recent change in Government legislation this remains a focus of the refreshed strategy, and is a shared priority with the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (previously the Local Safeguarding Children's Board).

Outcome in focus: Increased referrals to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

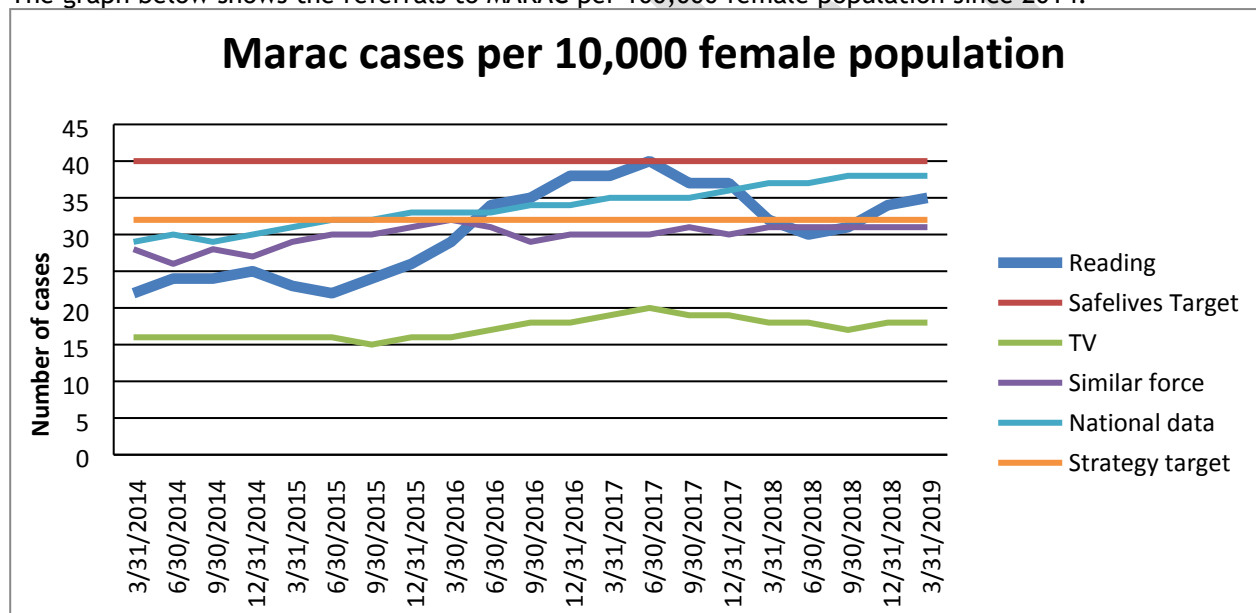
Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) are regular local meetings where information about high risk domestic abuse victims (those at risk of serious harm) is shared between local agencies. By bringing agencies together at a MARAC and ensuring that whenever possible the voice of the individual experiencing abuse is represented, a risk focused, co-ordinated safety plan can be drawn up to support the individual.

The Reading MARAC, chaired by Thames Valley Police, aims to review and co-ordinate service provision where the victim is assessed as being at high risk of harm.

Key actions in the previous strategy were to:

- Increase referrals to the MARAC to a minimum of 80% of the Safelives¹⁴ target (of 40 referrals per 10,000 population, which equates to 200 cases a year and 34 per 100,000 female population).
- Increase the referrals from partner agencies *other than* the Police to within the Safelives target (25-40%). This helps ensure that high risk cases that have not contacted the police have access to the additional safety planning at the MARAC.
- Increasing referrals from people who define as LGBT+ and where the person experiencing abuse has a disability to be in line with the Safelives target (5% and 17% respectively).

The graph below shows the referrals to MARAC per 100,000 female population since 2014.



The graph above shows that apart from a small dip mid 2018, the MARAC (high risk) referrals increased to above the Reading strategic target in June 2016 and have remained there since.

The Reading MARAC has seen increases in cases over the past three years for victims with disabilities and from residents who define as LGBT+. Reading is above both the Thames Valley and National reporting levels, highlighting the work that has been done in the area to target under-represented groups. Strategic partners of DASG believe the increase in referrals from these groups can be attributed to improved reporting opportunities and increased training and awareness. Both areas are still below the Safelives target, however, the trend for referrals relating to an adult with a disability indicates significant progress in this area (increased from 0- 11%). The trend for referrals from victims that define as LGBT+ is less encouraging and therefore this will remain a focus for the separate but connected MARAC action plan.

¹⁴ SafeLives is a national charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse - <http://www.safelives.org.uk/> (accessed June 2019)

Priority 2- Providing the right response first time - Improving identification, encouraging disclosures and ensuring an appropriate immediate response.

Actions completed:

- Delivered a bespoke MARAC training package for Designated MARAC officers.
- In order to ensure the continued effectiveness of the Reading MARAC, the partnership welcomed an audit of practice by BWA in 2017/18. Actions are contained with the MARAC improvement plan.
- Introduced new contract arrangements that enable the local support agency to attend the Children's Single Point of Contact/ MASH on a daily basis (2 hours a day).
- Published referral pathways to support agencies/Police services
- Improved local safeguarding training in relation to DA
- Specialist training for GPs delivered with over 40 GPs attending.

Outcomes:

- Professionals across agencies are equipped to notice the signs of and encourage disclosures of domestic abuse - Reading consistently remains above the SafeLives target in terms of MARAC referrals from partner agencies.
- Increased partnership work between support services and Children's Services, now Brighter Futures for Children.
- Clear referral pathways between GP's and support services, with an average of 2 referrals a quarter.

Further action required:

There remains to be limited referrals to support agencies and the MARAC from people within the LGBT+ relationships.

Outcome in Focus: Increased partnership work with Brighter Futures for Children

Children who live with domestic abuse are likely to feel that impact all their lives. Not only can the impact of trauma significantly impact the development of young children, there is increased risk of children becoming victims of abuse themselves, an ever-increasing harm to the child's physical, emotional and social development and a strong likelihood that this will become a continuing cycle of violence for the next generation.^[1] Recognising the high number of Children's Safeguarding Cases where domestic abuse was a concern, there was a focus on improving how children are supported where there is domestic abuse in the home.

The procurement exercise completed in 2017 ensured that commissioned services were able to continue to support children and young people, predominantly in a school setting. It also introduced the requirement for BWA to spend two hours a day minimum within the Children's Single Point of Contact office, supporting social care to triage domestic abuse cases and to provide information to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

In late 2018, Reading Borough Council announced the launch of a new children's services company for Reading, called Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC). The company is wholly owned by, but independent from, Reading Borough Council. The Domestic Abuse Strategy Group will ensure that essential relationships are maintained and built with the staff in this company, in order to continue the collaborative approach to tackling domestic abuse.

^[1] Unicef - *Behind Closed Doors The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children* (2006)

Priority 3 - Having the right services available - Improving support to move from victim to survivor or to change offending behaviour.

A key focus of the previous strategy was to reduce repeat incidents of domestic abuse delivered via three key strands through commissioned services:

Actions completed:

- Services requirements review as part of the procurement of new services resulting in an increased focus in non-accommodation based support, whilst refuge spaces supported remain above average.
- DARIM (Domestic Abuse Repeat Incident Meetings) introduced and embedded.
- Supported the implementation of the Troubled Families Programme.
- Support for people who experience domestic abuse increased via funding from the Police and Crime Commissioners Office.
- Promoted the use of the Sanctuary Scheme to support households who choose to remain in their own home
- The Council has adopted a more proactive approach to early intervention and prevention approach to Homelessness and is able to rapidly facilitate access to private rented sector accommodation; including offering financial assistance where needed with deposits and rent in advance. The Council is no longer placing families in Bed and Breakfast even where an emergency placement is required.
- Choices and self-esteem programme continued and supported 240 people in the financial year 2018-19.
- Perpetrator programme supported c.50 people per year to understand and reduce their offending behaviour.

Outcomes:

- Improved coordination of high-risk cases and cases with multiple incidents.
- Comprehensive support provided for those that have experienced domestic abuse who wish to seek alternative accommodation or remain in their own homes.
- Appropriate services remain available to both those experiencing and those that are perpetrators of domestic abuse in order to reduce incidents.

Further action required:

Support for people that report incidents to the police and pursue them through the criminal justice system still needs to be reviewed and increased. This is critical to increasing the number of successful police and court outcomes.

Outcome in focus: Use of support services

A key objective of the previous Domestic Abuse Strategy was to ensure that appropriate services were available in Reading at the point of crisis and to break the cycle of abuse. The recent procurement of new domestic abuse services enabled the partnership to shape the nature and focus of that support. Alongside support at 15 refuge places, the services now provided by BWA include those listed below:

- **Helpline:** A 24 hour helpline run by BWA for anyone seeking information and support.
- **Drop in Service:** BWA provide an accessible safe venue for members of the public to 'drop in'. The service offers face-to-face support and access to BWA and external support services.
- **Outreach Support:** BWA provide 1:1 support for people experiencing abuse which includes safety and support planning, and support to access other services such as housing, legal and the criminal justice system.
- **Choices and self-esteem sessions:** These are predominately provided within a group environment to those who have experienced abuse.
- **Support to children and young people:** Direct support for children, predominantly within the school setting, who have been living in a household where there is domestic abuse.
- **Perpetrator programme:** Support to perpetrators to decrease their abusive behaviour.

The table below shows the demand for helpline and outreach services in Reading over the last 5 years:

| Service | 14/15 | 15/16 | 16/17 | 17/18 | 18/19 |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Helpline | 1,702 | 2,697 | 3,239 | 2,695 | 2,266 |
| Outreach Support | 363 | 464 | 597 | 454 | 469 |

86% of the calls to the helpline are consistently only for information rather than requiring any further referrals. This indicates that it is a key tool in enabling those experiencing abuse, or their friends and family, to increase their knowledge of the options available to them and make informed decisions regarding their future. 14% of the calls are referred to other BWA services - from outreach support through to refuge provision.

Outreach support is still BWA's most pressurised service area and partners remain committed to ensuring that only appropriate referrals are submitted. Currently c45% of referrals are self-referrals, 43% of clients are still in a relationship with the perpetrator and the breakdown of risk across all referrals is as follows:

- High risk - 38%
- Medium risk - 20%
- Standard risk - 23%
- Unknown - 19%

165 clients were seen at the drop-in service this year.

109 clients attended the Choices or Self -Esteem course during the financial year 20/18-19 and user feedback of the support sessions remains extremely positive. In 2018/19 100% of those that completed the courses stated that they found them useful and, critically, that they felt safer as a result of it.

It is harder to assess the impact of the support for children and young people (193 engaged with BWA) but 75% of those that completed the course showed an improvement to the question "Do you know what to do when you feel worried/scared/unsure?"

55 perpetrators of domestic abuse worked with BWA during 2018-19, but the outcomes of the perpetrator programme are more difficult to establish. A focus of this strategy is to build on the work of BWA and increase the engagement activity of all agencies with perpetrators of domestic abuse.

BWA also deliver a Thames Valley-wide project funded by the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to provide additional support for clients with mental health issues, and a separate project to provide specialist support for women from BAMER (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee) communities.

These services will remain in place for the lifetime of this strategy and remain part of the partnership's key response to supporting those who are experiencing abuse.

Priority 4 - Understanding of the challenges in our town - improving data analysis and community engagement.

Actions completed:

- Data dashboard created and reviewed regularly by Strategy Group
- Prevalence of forced marriage recorded
- DA data published within JSNA
- Stalking and Harassment featured as a focus within Domestic Abuse Forum.
- Successful bid to MHCLG (then DCLG) to obtain funding to support a Thames Valley wide BAMER project.

Outcomes:

- Data now supports evidence based decision making
- Increased awareness of Stalking and Harassment

Further action required:

A consultation with people who define as LGBT+ to ensure services are inclusive and accessible is still to be completed.

Outcome in Focus: Successful bid for funding to support the Thames Valley wide BAMER project

In 2017 Officers at Reading Borough Council successfully bid, in consultation with of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and other Local Authorities in the Thames Valley, to the then DCLG to fund the support at four refuge spaces of specialist provision for women from the Asian community (for two years). This was in addition to the four spaces funded by Reading Borough Council as part of the recently award contract to BWA. These 8 refuges spaces in Reading remain the only specialist units within the Thames Valley.

The proposal also requested funding for an additional post to provide advice and support to other refuges and outreach workers/ IDVAs throughout the area, and a strategic resource to review current services and increase the understanding of what individual communities may require in terms of specialist resource throughout the Thames Valley. Both roles would be additional resources in the area.

In parallel, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner were again successful in bidding for Home Office funding for a similar proposal that would be completed in other areas of the Thames Valley. Therefore it was agreed that the two pots of money would be combined and an all-inclusive Thame Valley wide BAMER project was created.

This project is governed by the TV BAMER board chaired by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and due to the efficient use of money is able to fund the following:

- 4 units of specialist Asian refuge provision delivered by BWA
- 6 specialist BAMER outreach and engagement workers across the Thames Valley - West of Berkshire post delivered by BWA
- 1 strategic post to review resources, consult with communities to fully understand the needs of marginalised groups within the Thames Valley and inform future commissioning.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2019-22

Many of the actions and improvements set out in the 2015-18 strategy have now become 'business as usual' for professionals working in Reading. The Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading 2019-22 looks to build on this and focuses on four priority areas:

Priority 1 -Raising awareness about domestic abuse with a focus on:

- **Workforce Development** - *Continue to ensure a knowledgeable and well trained workforce.*
- **Healthy Relationship Education** - *increasing the resilience of Young People to negative relationships and behaviour.*
- **Engagement with marginalised communities** - *Encouraging those experiencing abuse to seek help at an earlier stage*

Priority 2: Developing a multi-agency approach to working with perpetrators - *Working with strategic partners to create a perpetrator approach to reduce and prevent repeat domestic abuse, including increasing the number of cases that progress through the criminal justice system.*

Priority 3 - Improving our partnership response to Coercive Control -*Training professionals to understand and identify coercive control, so as to increase and better manage disclosures.*

Priority 1 -Raising awareness about domestic abuse with a focus on:

a) Workforce Development - *Continue to ensure a knowledgeable and well trained workforce.*

All front line services across Reading Borough Council and partner agencies have the potential to interact with someone experiencing domestic abuse. The Community Safety Partnership is committed to making sure that people in Reading get the right response first time from professionals, and that it does not take the average five contacts with services that national research suggests. Effective training to notice the signs of domestic abuse and respond appropriately will mean that more domestic abuse concerns are resolved at an earlier stage and the impact on those experiencing it and their children will reduce.

Ensuring that all areas of the workforce have an understanding of domestic abuse and are aware of the referral pathways, including for make victims, is critical to enabling an effective response. Significant improvements have been made during the previous strategy and these activities will continue. The focus now will be in working with targeted teams across the partnership to increase the training take up, and developing mechanisms to allow a consistent level of training and understanding.

This strand will be led by the training sub-group of the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group.

b) Healthy Relationship Education - *increasing the resilience of Young People to negative relationships and behaviour.*

In recent years, there has been both a national and local identification of unhealthy teenage relationships. While this may be due to a variety of factors, such as increasing mental health diagnoses or exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs),¹⁵ the Reading Community Safety Partnership is committed to addressing unhealthy behaviours so that young people are prevented from becoming both perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse.

When designing actions to implement a Healthy Relationship Programme, a steer will be taken from the draft statutory 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education guidance'¹⁶ and all ideas for the best approach will be considered. These include:

- Starting the programme in both primary and secondary schools, in order to implement healthy relationship awareness from a young age and prevent harmful behaviours.
- Tackling low self-esteem in both a general and domestic abuse context, following identification of this being a factor that can make a young person more vulnerable to perpetrating and experiencing domestic abuse.
- Ensure the approach and delivery of Healthy Relationship Education in PSHE lessons is consistent across all schools.
- Ensure schools are equipped to receive an increase in disclosures if the programme is successful.

¹⁵ Parliament.uk *Outline of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)*,
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmsctech/506/50605.htm> (accessed June 2019)

¹⁶ DfE, *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education guidance'* (2019)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781150/Draft_guidance_Relationships_Education_Relationships_and_Sex_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education2.pdf

- Ensure that young people not in school have access to this education.

This stream of work will be delivered by the 'Adolescent Risk' strand of the One Reading Prevention and Early Intervention Partnership.

c) Engagement with marginalised communities - *Encouraging those experiencing abuse to seek help at an earlier stage*

Referrals to the MARAC relating to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women has remained at between 40%-45% throughout the term of the previous strategy. This is higher than the estimated BME population of Reading, meaning that BME women are disproportionately represented at the MARAC. At the same time, BME women are significantly under-represented in take-up of preventative and support services provided in the town. Reading is participating in a Thames Valley-wide project researching the needs of BME women experiencing abuse. The project is chaired by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, which is focused on increasing support for these communities. The findings of this work will inform the further development of this strategy.

As highlighted above, under representation within those accessing support or being referred to the MARAC of people who define as LGBT+ continues to be a concern. This strategy will progress the consultation programme previous outlined to increase the partnership's understanding of any barriers to accessing services people are experiencing.

This priority will include an action to ensure that it is publicised that services also support men that experience abuse from a female partner.

This strand will be led by the Training sub-group of the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group

Target Outcomes:

- Increase the take up of level 1 and 2 Domestic Abuse training to ensure all areas of the workforce are aware of the resources.
- Increase the confidence of the workforce in completing DASH¹⁷ assessments
- An increase in the number of young people with an understanding of healthy relationships.
- Increased referrals to the support services from BAMER communities.
- Increase in referrals to support services and MARAC for LGBT+ relationships.
- Increase referrals in to support services for male victims.

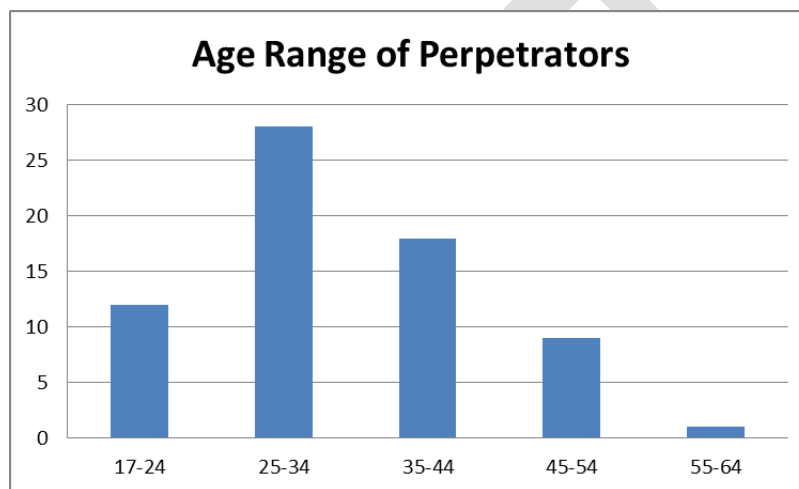
¹⁷ Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment Risk Assessments

Priority 2: Developing a multi-agency approach to working with perpetrators - Working with strategic partners to create a perpetrator approach to reduce and prevent repeat domestic abuse, including increasing the number of cases that progress through the criminal justice system.

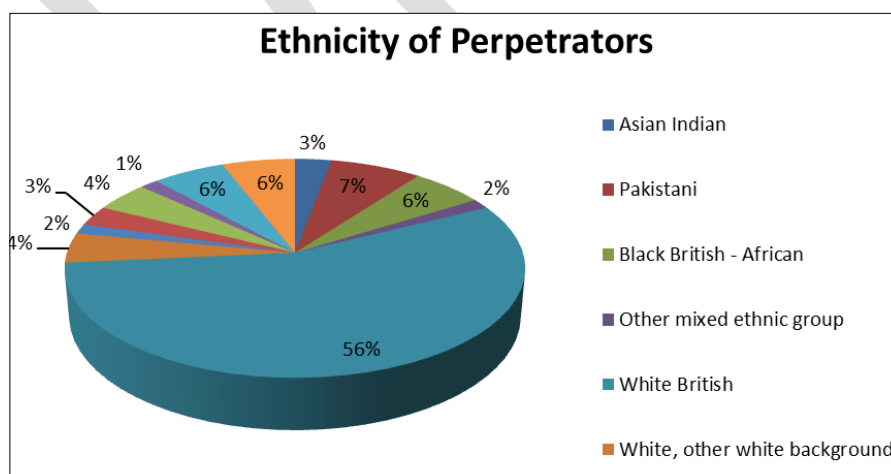
Perpetrator Profiling

BWA offer a Perpetrator Programme, and have a range of demographic data similar to that collected for victims. Of the 68 new perpetrators they worked with between April 2017 and March 2018, 97% were male. This profile only represents the perpetrators that access the BWA programme.

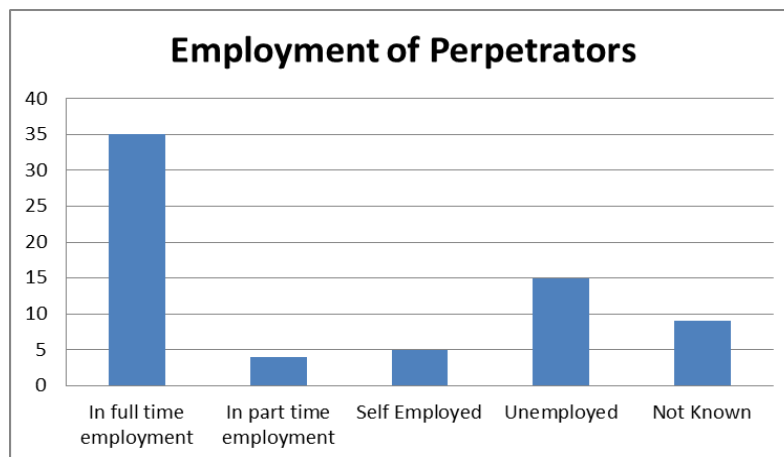
Almost half of perpetrators were between 25 and 34:



Over half of perpetrators were White British:



Over half were in full-time employment:



The profile indicates that the most common types of perpetrators are young men, white British Males, employed, and have underlying issues such as substance misuse (60%). While this profile is generated based on those involved in BWA's Perpetrator Programme, it provides useful insight into the types of domestic abuse perpetrators in Reading.

The Government's Domestic Abuse Bill consultation in May 2018 provided partners with an opportunity to think creatively about how they would work with perpetrators.

It was agreed that the focus will be on implementing an improved local Integrated Offender Management (IOM) programme. The IOM is a national and local programme that brings a cross-agency response to the crime and reoffending threats faced by local communities. The most persistent and problematic offenders are identified and managed jointly by partner agencies working together.¹⁸

IOM helps to improve the quality of life in communities by:

- Reducing the negative impact of crime and reoffending
- reducing the number of people who become victims of crime
- helping to improve the public's confidence in the criminal justice system

A recent report highlighted that only 6 of the 30 perpetrators in the IOM system were perpetrators of domestic abuse. This figure is below the force average across Thames Valley, and due to the prevalence of domestic abuse nationally this figure should be higher. It has therefore been decided that more involvement from partner agencies is needed in the management of domestic abuse perpetrators.

The Multi-Agency approach will be essential for sharing intelligence and increasing the number of offenders on the IOM programme; targeting perpetrators who have not yet been criminalised and who therefore cannot be included in IOM; determining the type of intervention programmes to put perpetrators are linked in with; and monitoring the actions of perpetrators before, during and after interventions in order to evaluate the programmes' impact.

¹⁸ Gov.uk, 'Integrated Offender Management', <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/integrated-offender-management-iom> (accessed June 2019)

The main focus for reducing the offending behaviour of perpetrators will be to ensure the availability of appropriate support and encouragement to attend the sessions provided. BWA continue to deliver a long establish perpetrator support programme, and the Probation Services provide programmes for perpetrators both as a result of a criminal conviction or in advance (the latter funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner across the Thames Valley). Partners will continue to work together to continue to implement programmes to support perpetrators to amend their abusive behaviour, and to review and improve these services where required. A specific focus on support and interventions for young people exhibiting abusive behaviour towards a parent will be included in this priority.

The IOM approach will be supported by the introduction of the Multi Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) meeting which will replace the DARIM and be delivered alongside the MARAC. The MATAC will be chaired by Thames Valley Police but will be a multi-agency conference with the objective of reducing the risk behaviour of high risk and high volume perpetrators.

Part of the IOM approach includes the disruption of perpetrator behaviour with interventions from the police and criminal justice system.

Improving successful outcomes for identified crimes is a priority, as is increasing alternative police interventions including, but not limited to, Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders and implementing Clare's Law.

This intention is further supported by the Thames Valley Police Strategic Plan 2019/20¹⁹ which includes a focus on domestic abuse including stalking and harassment, and has the following targets:

- An improvement in how quickly domestic abuse incidents are attended.
- An improvement in the arrest rate for attended domestic abuse crimes.
- An increase in the use of DVPNs/DVPOs.
- An increase in the volume of domestic abuse crimes that lead to a positive outcome.
- Consistently effective investigations into stalking and harassment offences.

Successful police intervention will be more effective when linked with the parallel support for victims. Therefore it is necessary to have a clear pathway regarding referrals, and an increase in support to people when a victim/ witness of domestic abuse.

The increase in police outcomes should be supported by an improvement in Court outcomes. In 2017/18, 2,399 domestic violence cases were brought to Thames Valley courts; 958 of which took place in Berkshire specifically. The number of cases taken to court across Thames Valley has increased by 214% (713) since 2013/14. This increase is aligned with the national picture.

¹⁹ Thames Valley Police - *Strategic Plan 2019-20* www.thamesvalley.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/foi-media/thames-valley-police/priorities_and_how_we_are_doing/strategic-plan/strategic_plan_2019-20.pdf (accessed June 2019).

The number of successful and unsuccessful cases is detailed below:

| | No. of cases brought to court | No. of successful cases | % of successful cases | No. of unsuccessful cases | % of unsuccessful cases |
|---------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Thames Valley | 2,399 | 1,832 | 76.4% | 567 | 23.6% |
| Berkshire | 958 | 725 | 75.7% | 233 | 24.3% |

As outlined, both Berkshire and Thames Valley have similar outcome rates. Of the 233 unsuccessful cases in Berkshire, 11.6% (27) were due to Evidential Issues that prevented the case from proceeding and 52.8% (123) were due to Victim Issues. The same analysis of Thames Valley shows that of the 567 unsuccessful cases, 9.2% (52) were due to Evidential Issues and 53.4% (303) were due to Victim Issues.

Overall, both Berkshire and Thames Valley have made positive improvements in the number of cases taken to court and successful outcomes. While the number of unsuccessful cases is proportionally low, 50% are due to Victim Issues, which suggests that more support is needed for victims within the court process, so that they pursue their case through to completion.

This strand will be led by the perpetrator sub-group of the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group.

Target Outcomes:

- The delivery of a cohesive action plan that outlines how various strategic partners will collaborate to tackle perpetrators of domestic abuse, including perpetrators of 'Child to Parent' violence²⁰.
- Review and continue with appropriate support programmes to enable perpetrators to understand and amend their abusive behaviour.
- Implementation of an Integrated Offender Management approach to domestic abuse perpetrators.
- Improved monitoring of perpetrators.
- Increase in positive police outcomes for domestic abuse Cases.
- Increased use of Domestic Violence/ Abuse Protection Notices and Orders, including in cases of coercive control.
- Increased use of the Domestic Violence Disclosure scheme (Clare's Law)
- A mapped and utilised pathway in to support for victims engaging with the Criminal Justice System.

²⁰ To meet the definition of Domestic Abuse the perpetrator needs to be 16 or over.

Priority 3 - Improving our partnership response to Coercive Control -Training professionals to understand and identify coercive control, so as to increase and better manage disclosures.

Since 2015, Thames Valley Police have recorded 316 instances of coercive control; only 36 of which were in Reading. Considering both the commonality of coercive control in cases of domestic abuse and the statutory guidance underpinning its identification, the outlined figure is significantly low.²¹ The impact of coercive control and psychological abuse cannot be understated, with 94% of victims citing mental health cruelty as more painful to endure than physical violence.²²

Mirroring other organisations in the South-East, Thames Valley Police has faced the challenge of reduced funding and staffing changes, with many long-standing officers retiring and a younger cohort of officers needing training. It is important that the TVP workforce recognise cases of Coercive Control and ensure that appropriate actions are completed and police outcomes are obtained.

Another factor in low recording of coercive control is its low identification by professionals, even when a DASH form is completed.²³ This suggests that one of the main issues is a lack of training in this area. The Domestic Abuse Training Team has and is continuing to work with GPs and Royal Berkshire Hospital to provide training in Domestic Abuse. However, as coercive control reporting levels are low, training will remain a priority in order to build confidence in professionals to identify and report identified cases.

Improvements to recording incidents within the Police have already started. Previously where multiple crimes are reported at once, only the most serious crime was recorded on the system and then all investigated together. However more recently the recording rules have changed and Coercive Control is always record as a separate occurrence and linked to other crimes that may also have occurred. This will meant that we should see an increase of reports as they're being recorded accurately and separately.

As safeguarding agencies, Domestic Abuse Strategy Group partners have the responsibility to train the public in identifying coercive control so that they can refer themselves and stay safe. Training for professionals is therefore the first action of a two-part plan to train and stabilise coercive control identification, before running an awareness campaign to increase referrals. By focusing on professionals first, the safeguarding sector will be able to efficiently and confidently receive disclosures and provide victims with effective support.

In conjunction with Priority 2, DASG will also aim to improve recording of coercive control and use the multi-agency approach of sharing intelligence to increase the number of coercive control cases taken to court. By requesting evidence collected by partners, the Police can better shape their prosecutions and better record cases of coercive control where the victim does not want to be involved in legal proceedings.

The following case study indicates that coercive control cases can certainly achieve convictions:

Case Study:

²¹ Gov.uk, 'Statutory guidance framework: controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship', <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-guidance-framework-controlling-or-coercive-behaviour-in-an-intimate-or-family-relationship>.

²² White Ribbon campaign UK

²³ DASH Risk Model, 'Introduction', <https://www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk/>. (accessed June 2019)

“Mr A was sentenced for offences against his ex-partner Ms B. He was convicted and sentenced on 08.10.2018 for coercive and controlling behaviour within an intimate relationship between 16/05/18-13/08/18. This conviction is to encompass all the offences against Ms B which include 7 other charges of Assault by beating x 5, Criminal Damage & ABH - these were to lie on file as he pleaded not guilty.

Mr A was sentenced to 2 years & 2 months imprisonment, 20 year Restraining Order made for Ms B, victim surcharge £170.

Mr A has had 15 offences of a domestic abuse nature since 2000 and he poses a high Risk of Serious Harm to partners and known adults whom he enters into a relationship with, through abuse, controlling behaviour and violence. Joint working over a period of time with the Police and National Probation Service ensured clear evidence was given to the Court for sentencing under the new legislation of coercive control. Evidence was gathered without the assistance of the victim, who was still under the effects of coercive control and afraid to act against the perpetrator. This is the theme of many of these cases - the perpetrator instils fear into the victim so that they are afraid for their life to leave them.”

By creating a collective understanding of coercive control and improving recording, more convictions like these can be achieved.

This strand will be led by the Coercive Control Sub-group of the Domestic Abuse sub-group.

Target Outcomes:

- Professionals in a variety of sectors/specialisms understand how coercive control works and how they can identify it.
- Build confidence in the referral pathway, so that in the future an awareness campaign can be rolled out to increase coercive control disclosures.
- In coordination with Priority 2, create an intelligence network to share information about cases that involve coercive control.
- Thames Valley Police receive more referrals and record more cases of coercive control.
- Thames Valley Police will have built relationships with partners, in order to request information and evidence to form cases against perpetrators of coercive control.
- Increase number of police outcomes²⁴ in cases of Coercive Control

²⁴ A police outcome is a caution or charge

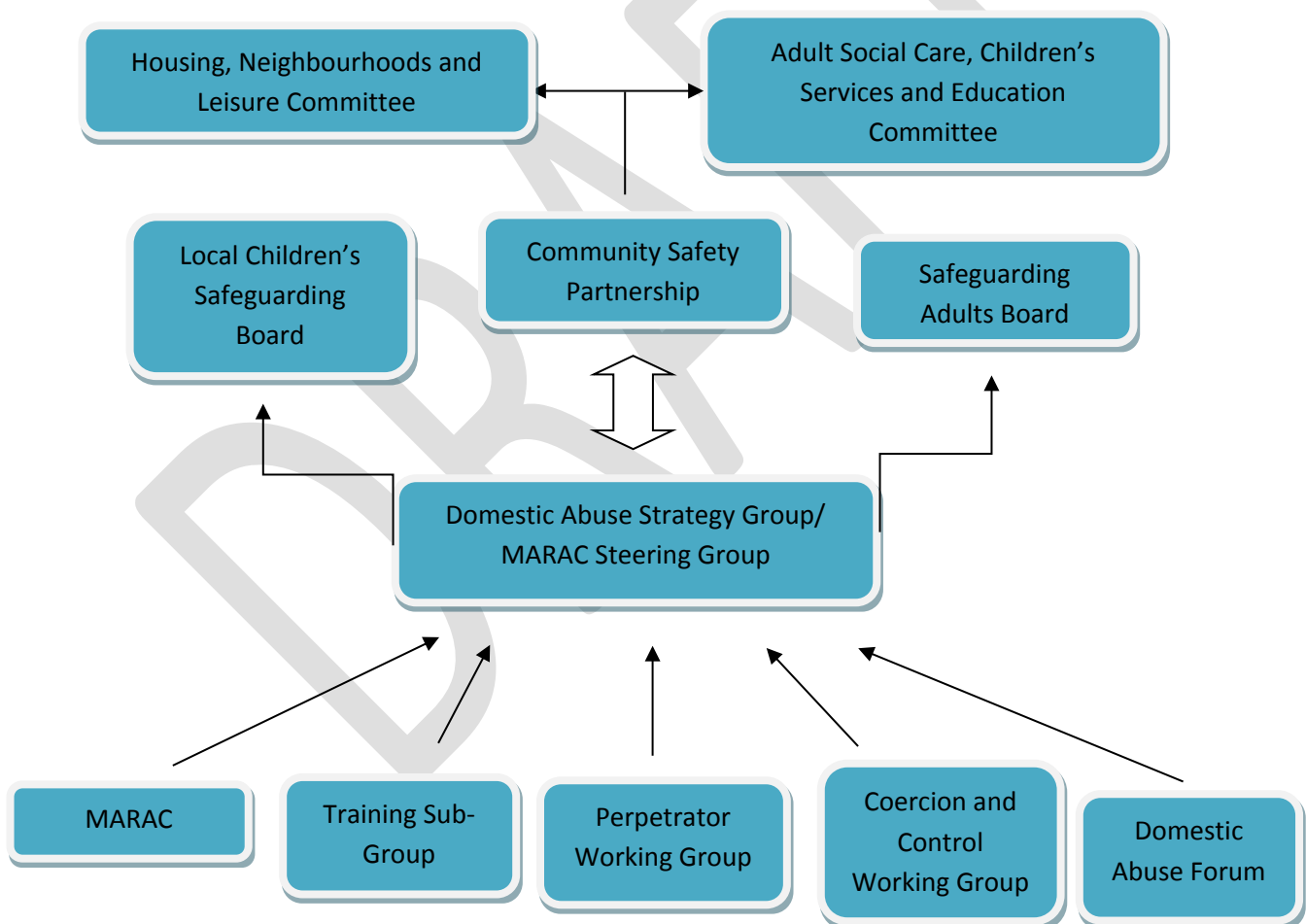
Implementation and Governance

Having clearly outlined our strategic priorities and target outcomes, the delivery of the strategy will be achieved through an associated action plan. When implemented effectively, the Community Safety Partnership's Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading will ensure those who experience domestic abuse can access the support they need for a safer life and more secure future.

The action plan which accompanies this strategy will be implemented by the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group. The Strategy's progress will be regularly reported to the CSP.

Accountability

The structure chart below illustrates the governance of the strategic approach to domestic abuse in Reading.



As well as touching many lives throughout the town, the Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading will also complement other key strategies aiming to improve day-to-day life for residents. These include:

Sustainable Communities Strategy for Reading

The Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading directly aligns with the Reading 2030 vision of ensuring residents feel comfortable, safe, secure, and well-housed. The service empowers those experiencing abuse to find safety and security from perpetrators, thereby increasing the amount of choice and control they have over their lives.

Community Safety Partnership

The priorities within the Community Safety Partnership's 2019-2022 Strategy are Violent Crime, Modern Day Slavery, and Drugs. The Domestic Abuse Strategy Group is one of five partnership delivery groups which report into the CSP.

Reading Borough Council Corporate Plan

The service priorities of Reading Borough Council's 2018-21 Corporate Plan outlines the Authority's commitment to "Protecting and enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children". This priority directly aligns with the goals of the Domestic Abuse Strategy for Reading.

Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership Action Plan

Domestic abuse remains a key focus for the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Pathway

Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Pathway for new referrals (cases which are not open to Children Social Care - Brighter Futures) which will be integrated into the Children's Single Point of Access and where appropriate the daily MASH meetings. These are regular local meetings where information about standard and medium risk domestic abuse families is shared between local agencies and multi-agency agreement. By bringing all agencies together and ensuring that wherever possible the voice of the child is represented and a risk focused outcome is achieved.

West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board

The West of Berkshire Adult Safeguarding Board is in the process of developing their Strategy for Safeguarding Adults in the West of Berkshire 2018-2021.

Reading Borough Council's actions, as outlined in this strategy, supports the commitment made by the West of Berkshire Adult Safeguarding Board and will work in partnership with them to help vulnerable adults live free from domestic abuse.

Domestic Abuse Consultation Summary

Domestic abuse has a significant effect on victims and their family, friends and carers and it is of paramount importance that Reading Borough Council, service providers and partner agencies work collaboratively to limit the emotional distress experienced. Domestic abuse is a priority for Reading Borough Council and this consultation has enabled us to gather the opinions of a variety of people who have experienced domestic abuse or who have provided support to victims or perpetrators.

The draft Domestic Abuse Strategy outlines Reading Borough Council's priorities moving forwards from 2019 to 2022. These priorities incorporate raising awareness of domestic abuse and healthy relationships amongst all communities; a focus on a multi-agency approach to support perpetrators of domestic abuse; and responding to coercive control.

The consultation period for the draft Domestic Abuse Strategy spanned from 12th August to 13th September.

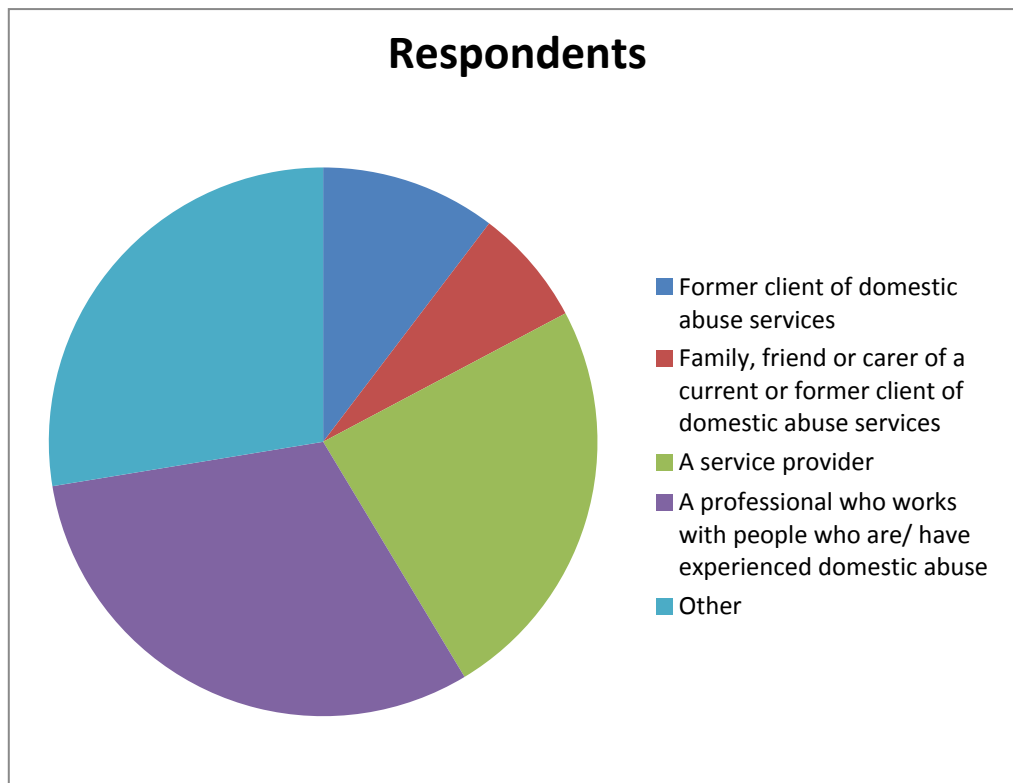
The Consultation

The consultation for the draft Domestic Abuse strategy was published on Reading Borough Council's website alongside a full version of the draft strategy. Respondents were able to mark their agreement or disagreement with each of the three priorities and answer questions around these priorities by using a free text box. The consultation asked for each respondent's profile to enable Reading Borough Council to understand the diversity of responses.

The consultation was shared with Reading Borough Council partners and was advertised through Reading Borough Council's website.

The Respondents

The consultation received responses from a total of 24 people who are former clients of domestic abuse services, family, friends or carers of current or former clients of domestic abuse services, professionals and service providers as shown in Chart One.



(Chart One – Respondents of the draft domestic abuse strategy consultation)

Respondents were from a variety of voluntary and statutory organisations including;

- Brighter Futures for Children
- Launchpad
- PACT
- SAFE! Support for Young People Affected by Crime
- Families Need Fathers - Reading branch
- Healthwatch Reading
- Youth Offending Service
- Reading Voluntary Action
- Free Legal Advice Group for Domestic Violence (Flag DV)
- Crossroads Care
- Reading Refugee Support Group
- Reading Deaf Centre
- Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Trust
- Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust

A breadth of responses from different perspectives proves beneficial for finalising the strategy, and both Thames Valley Police and BWA provided significant input into the draft strategy; however the consultation could have been enhanced through receiving responses from, members of marginalised communities, current victims of domestic abuse and perpetrators.

A full display of the respondent profiles can be found in Appendix One.

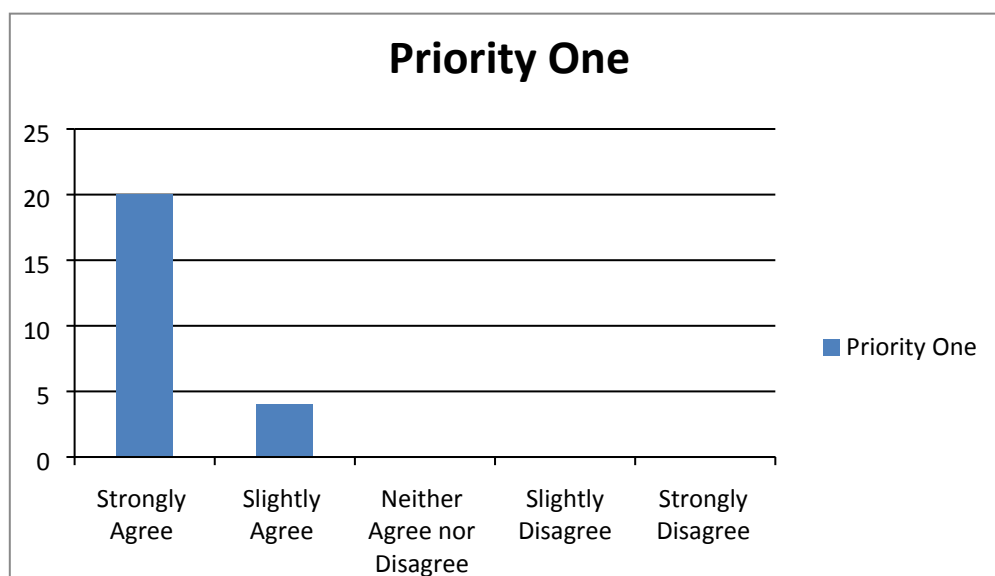
Key messages

The respondents felt that there is a good organisational understanding of domestic abuse and how to support victims in Reading and acknowledged the ease of having a clear referral point for concerns to be expressed. Support provided by BWA, Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub with Brighter Futures for Children, the Police, Support U and Alana House were all identified as being beneficial to victims of domestic abuse and their families.

It was noted that more could be done to increase accessibility to domestic abuse services for all victims, including men and people with disabilities such as deafness. Respondents are keen for further focus to be placed on providing an effective multi-agency response and for more refuge places to be provided, particularly to men and individuals with complex needs. It was felt that the support that is available needs to be publicised further and greater help could be provided with outreach support, counselling and legal advice.

Priority One: Raising awareness about domestic abuse with a focus on workforce development, healthy relationship education and engagement with marginalised communities.

All of the respondents agreed with priority one with most strongly agreeing and a small number slightly agreeing (Chart Two);



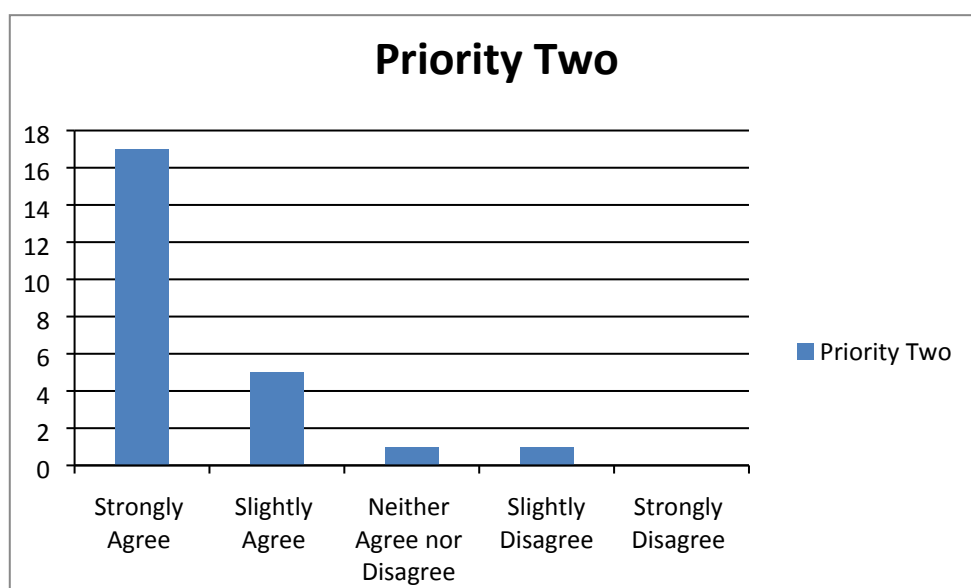
(Chart Two – Respondent's Agreement/Disagreement to priority one)

Respondents provided the following comments in response to questions asked around priority one;

- Awareness of domestic abuse should be raised through social media, posters and adverts that represent both female and male victims
- Training, education and workshops with a focus on healthy relationships, recognising domestic abuse and signposting and safeguarding victims should be provided in schools and workplaces
- Domestic abuse services could engage better with BAME¹ communities and those that define as LGBTQ+² through employing a culturally diverse workforce and engaging volunteers from these communities to aid the building of positive relationships
- Engagement could be improved through accessing community hubs and informing the communities of available services in an accessible way such as translating service information into multiple languages

Priority Two: Developing a multi-agency approach to working with perpetrators.

The majority of respondents strongly or slightly agreed with priority two, however one respondent neither agreed nor disagreed and another slightly disagreed (Chart Three);



(Chart Three - Respondent's Agreement/Disagreement to priority two)

Respondents provided the following comments in response to questions asked around priority two;

- Agencies should work positively with perpetrators and focus on early intervention
- Perpetrators would benefit from access to appropriate support such as counselling and other services such as drug and alcohol treatment.

¹ Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic

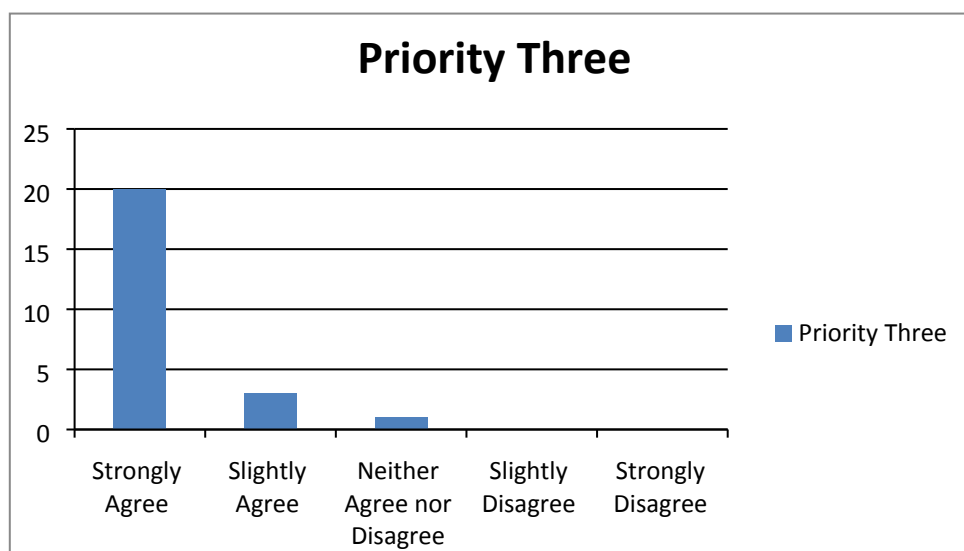
² Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (or questioning) plus other identity terms

- A victim led response to domestic abuse should be practiced, ensuring victim's safety through providing protection and support
- Emotional and financial support should be received by victims and their families
- Victims should feel confident and assured by the enforcement action taken with perpetrators

The respondents who 'neither agreed nor disagreed' or 'slightly disagreed' with priority two felt that further training should be provided to help professionals to understand how to help perpetrators and a trauma informed approach should be taken to understand the causes of a perpetrator's behaviour.

Priority Three: Improving our partnership response to Coercive Control.

The majority of the respondents strongly agreed or slightly agreed with priority three with one respondent neither agreeing nor disagreeing (Chart Four);



(Chart Four - Respondent's Agreement/Disagreement to priority three)

Respondents provided the following comments in response to questions asked around priority three;

- Effective partnership working between BWA, the Police, criminal justice services, health services, social services, schools and housing services would provide an efficient coordinated response to coercive control
- Workforce training provided by professionals and experts by experience around understanding, recognising and reporting coercive control would improve partnership knowledge

The respondent who 'neither agreed nor disagreed' with priority three felt that professionals need to understand how relationship dynamics and coping behaviours can effect coercive control. This could be provided through training to professionals which would improve the partnership response to coercive control.

Respondent's suggested changes to the final Domestic Abuse Strategy

1. Support for children who have witnessed or been victims of domestic abuse should be prioritised as well as early intervention to prevent child to parent violence.
2. Accessibility to services and information for people with disabilities
3. More refuge places and support available for male victims of domestic abuse
4. Inclusion of the issue of 'Child to Parent' violence

Changes to the final Domestic Abuse Strategy

Responses to the above:

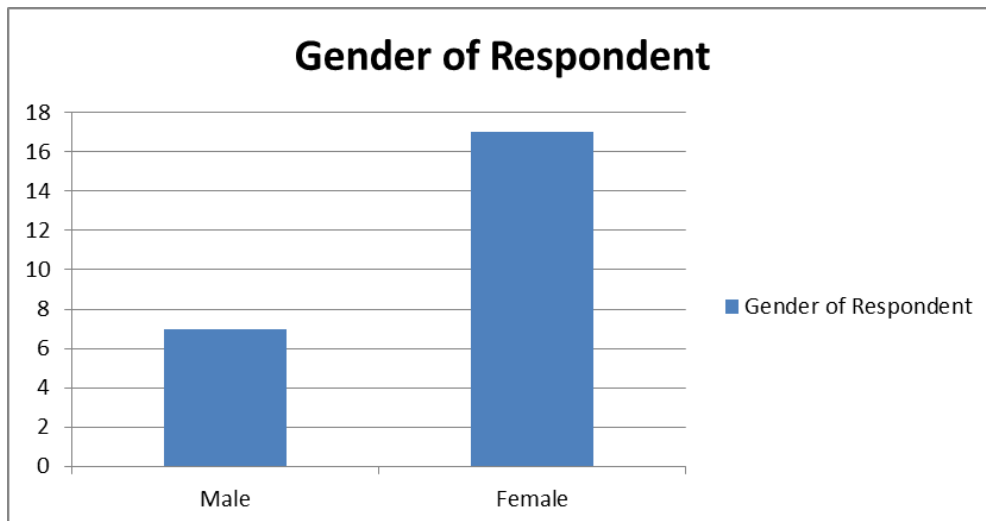
- 1 - Reading Borough Council recognises the impact that domestic abuse can have on families and children. Providing support to children who have witnessed or who have been victims of domestic abuse has consistently been a priority for Reading Borough Council and Brighter Futures for Children and continues to be in the forefront of our approach. This activity is already part of our response to Domestic abuse and will continue to be prioritised as part of 'business as usual'.
- 2- The strategy already sets out an intention to make information, advice and support readily available for a range of clients including those from BAME communities, LGBTQ+ communities and with disabilities.
- 3- The request for additional refuge provision will be factored in to the next procurement exercise. Priority one will be amended to ensure that support services for men will be publicised.
- 4 – This issue will be included in the final version of the strategy.

Appendix One

Gender:

Male: 7

Female: 17



Age:

16-25: 1

26-35: 5

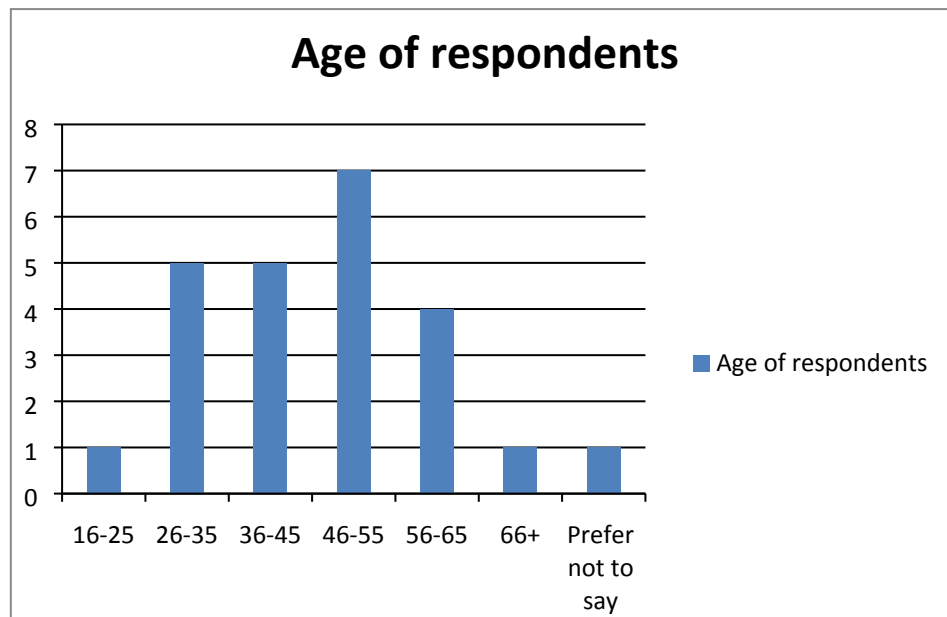
36-45: 5

46-55: 7

56-65: 4

66+: 1

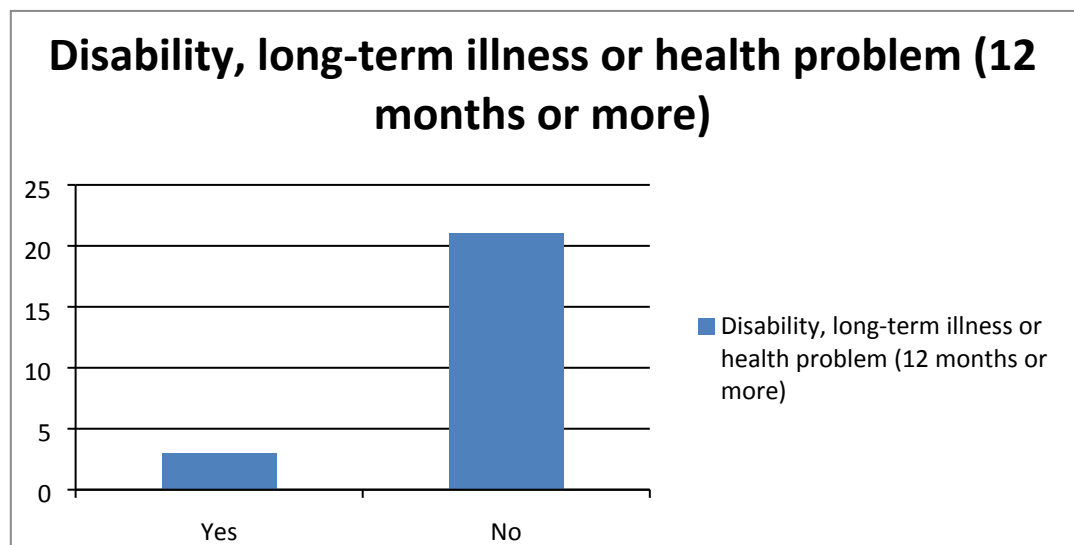
Prefer not to say: 1



Disability, long-term illness or health problem (12 months or more):

Yes: 3

No: 21



Ethnicity:

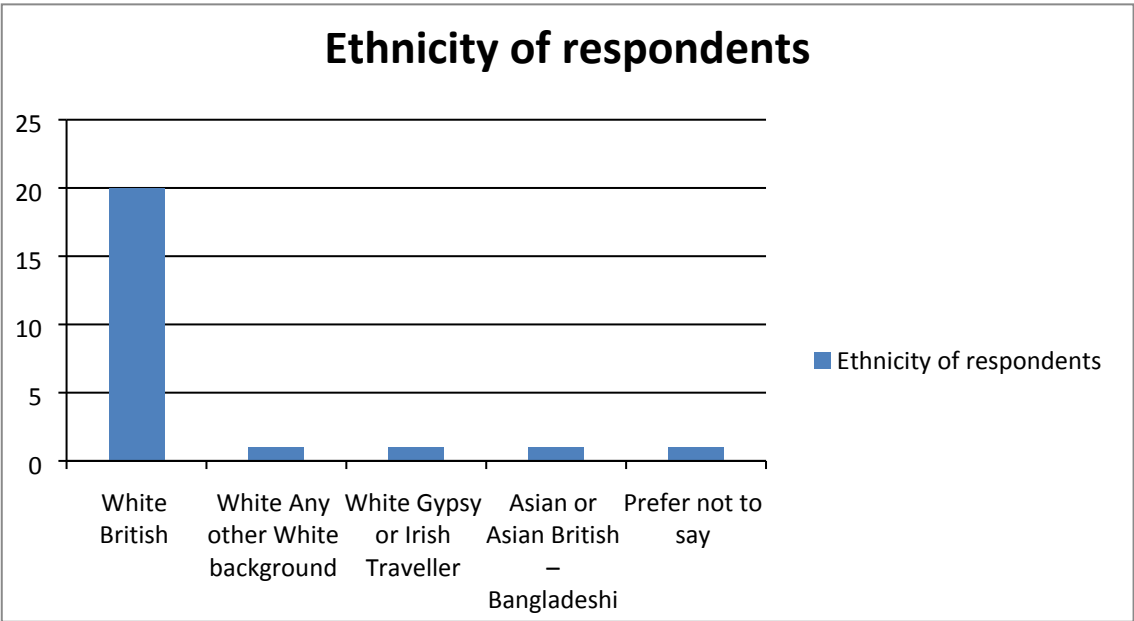
White British: 20

White Any other White background: 1

White Gypsy or Irish Traveller: 1

Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi: 1

Prefer not to say: 1



Religion or Belief:

Christian: 7

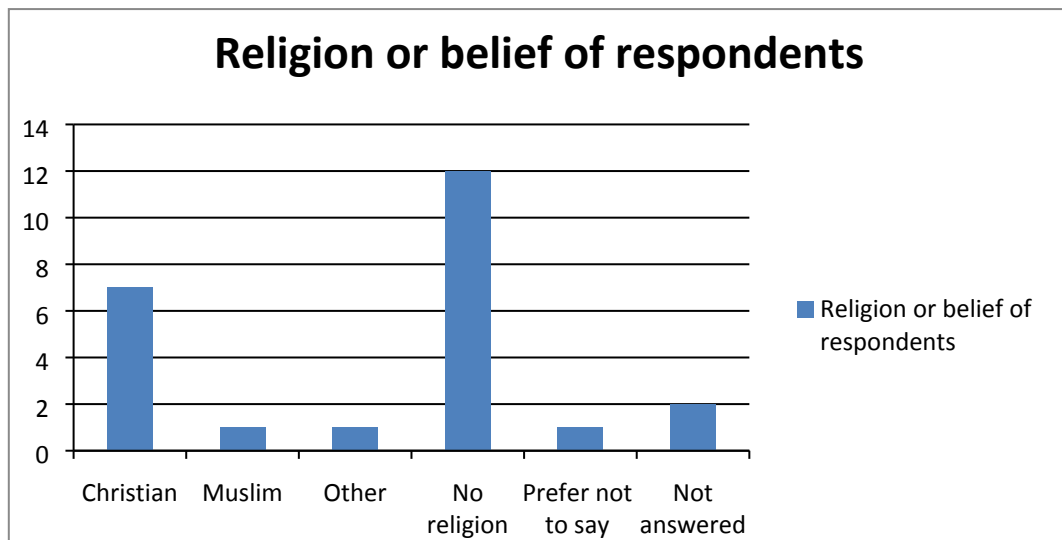
Muslim: 1

Other: 1 – this respondent then listed themselves as spiritual

No religion: 12

Prefer not to say: 1

Not answered: 2 – one of these respondents then listed their religion as Catholic



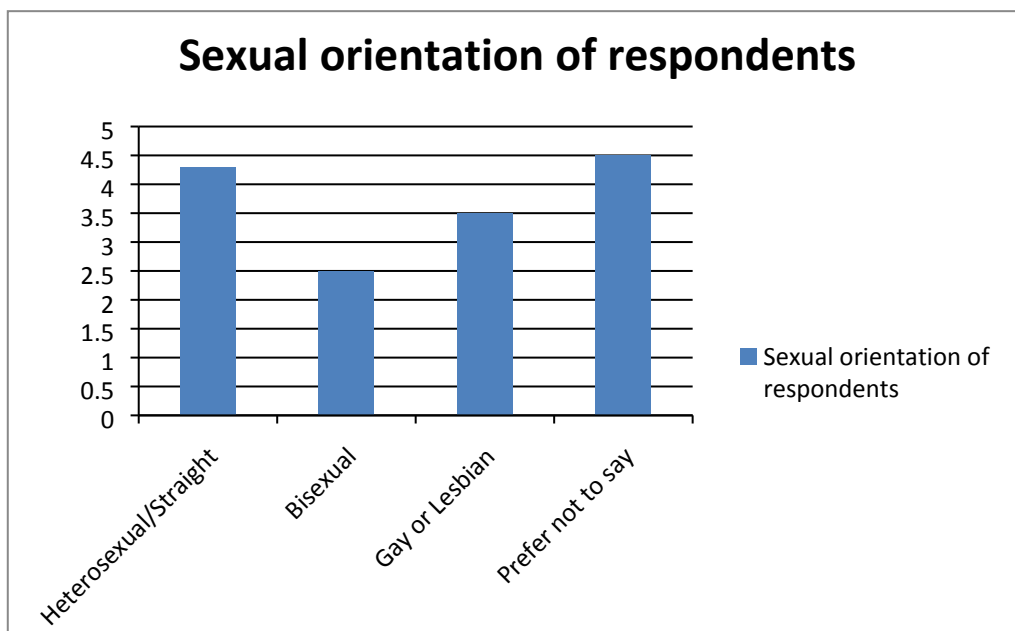
Sexual Orientation:

Heterosexual/Straight: 17

Bisexual: 1

Gay or Lesbian: 3

Prefer not to say: 3



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Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit

What is an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)?

The Equality Act 2010 places an 'Equality Duty' on public bodies, to understand the effect of their policies and practices on equality. This involves looking at evidence, engaging with people, staff, service users and others and considering the effect of what they do on the whole community.

An Equality Impact Assessment is tool which helps you to identify how your plans to introduce new, or change existing, policies, procedures or services will affect groups protected under equality legislation (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.)

It **MUST** be completed before the policy, project or service has been set up or changes implemented so that you can make changes if your assessment identifies groups that could be adversely affected by your proposals.

The assessment covers impacts on employees, existing and potential service users, the wider community and contracted out services.

EqIAs aim to

- stop direct and indirect discrimination from happening now and in the future
- highlight diversity as a strength and an integral part of our work, not just an add-on that you feel you must do
- recognise the fact that we don't all have an equal chance in life, and find ways to address this through your work
- ensure that our services are accessible to everyone in the community. The process is not the most important thing - it's the outcomes that matter.

What should an EqIA include?

An Equality Impact Assessment **MUST**:

- contain sufficient information to show the Council has paid "due regard" to equality duties in our decision-making
- identify methods for mitigating or avoiding any adverse impacts identified.

Assessments do not necessarily have to take the form of one document called an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) but it is recommended and helps you make sure you cover everything and sets out your rationale and evidence in one place.

What is the Equality Duty?

Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are—

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—

- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The Equality Duty explicitly recognises that disabled people's needs may be different from those of non-disabled people. Public bodies should therefore take account of disabled people's impairments when making decisions about policies or services. This

might mean making reasonable adjustments or treating disabled people better than non-disabled people in order to meet their needs.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—

- (a) Tackle prejudice, and
- (b) Promote understanding.

Compliance with the Equality Duty may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under the Act.

When should I carry out an Equality Impact Assessment?

You **MUST** carry out an assessment as part of your planning process when you are putting together your proposals for new (or changes to existing) policies, procedures and service (including financial changes) before the decision is made **UNLESS** you have good reason to show that it is not relevant.

Making sure your EqlAs are in place in could save you problems, time and even money in the long run. See the example below where not completing an EqlA properly has caused problems.

Example: Southall Black Sisters judgement

The judgement by Lord Justice Moses in the case of Southall Black Sisters and London of Ealing was published on 29 July 2008.

Southall Black Sisters (SBS) successfully challenged Ealing Council’s decision to end funding their services to Asian and Afro-Caribbean women experiencing domestic violence.

Lord Justice Moses’ ruling stresses the need to carry out an equality impact assessment **BEFORE** formulating policies.

Southall Black Sisters won the case and Ealing Council was charged with failing to carry out a proper EqlA and misinterpreting the race equality legislation, subsequently Ealing carried out a full EqlA, including consultation, and had to pay £100,000 because of the case.

Who needs to see my Equality Impact Assessment?

The public equality duty means that equality issues must **consciously** influence the decisions reached by public bodies. Equality Impact Assessments **MUST** be provided for all Committee Reports to enable members to have 'due regard' to the equality duty when making decisions. In the Committee Report you **MUST** state whether the duty is relevant to the decision. If it is not relevant you **MUST** state why. If it is, attach the completed EqlA template as an appendix, and summarise its conclusions.

So what do I have to do?

Save this document and follow through the steps on the following pages. You can fill in the details as you go or come back to it as necessary.

For further advice you can contact Clare Muir on 72119 or email clare.muir@reading.gov.uk. You can also get further guidance on Equality and Human Rights Commission Website - www.equalityhumanrights.com.

Provide basic details

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed

Directorate: Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

Service: Housing and Neighbourhoods

Name and job title of person doing the assessment

Name: Sarah Tapliss

Job Title: Strategic Housing Finance and Development Manager

Date of assessment: 27/9/19

Scope your proposal

What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?

Domestic Abuse Strategy 2019-22

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

Residents at risk of, experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse

What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?

The new Domestic Abuse strategy for 2019/22 will encourage those experiencing domestic abuse to come forward early in order to keep themselves and their families safe. And it will ensure that, when they do come forward, staff are equipped with everything they need to support individuals, including perpetrators, to build a more secure future. Actions within this strategy that affect protect groups will be subject to further consultation and equality impact assessment.

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

- Those experiencing or at risk of domestic abuse
- Organisations in the town, statutory and voluntary, supporting residents experiencing domestic abuse or the impact on other family members.
-

Assess whether an EqlA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; promoting equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? (Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.)

Yes

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation, and feedback.

No

If the answer is **Yes** to any of the above you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If No you **MUST** complete this statement

Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

- **Consultation**
- **Collection and Assessment of Data**
- **Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive**

Think about who does and doesn't use the service? Is the take up representative of the community? What do different minority groups think? (You might think your policy, project or service is accessible and addressing the needs of these groups, but asking them might give you a totally different view). Does it really meet their varied needs? Are some groups less likely to get a good service?

How do your proposals relate to other services - will your proposals have knock on effects on other services elsewhere? Are there proposals being made for other services that relate to yours and could lead to a cumulative impact?

Example: A local authority takes separate decisions to limit the eligibility criteria for community care services; increase charges for respite services; scale back its accessible housing programme; and cut concessionary travel.

Each separate decision may have a significant effect on the lives of disabled residents, and the cumulative impact of these decisions may be considerable.

This combined impact would not be apparent if decisions are considered in isolation.

Consultation

How have you consulted with or do you plan to consult with relevant groups and experts. If you haven't already completed a Consultation form do it now. The checklist helps you make sure you follow good consultation practice.

[My Home > Info Pods > Community Involvement Pod - Inside Reading Borough Council](#)

| Relevant groups/experts | How were/will the views of these groups be obtained | Date when contacted |
|--|---|--|
| Agencies supporting those who experience domestic abuse or their household, statutory or voluntary. Safeguarding Boards Service Users Domestic Abuse Strategy Group Partners Community Safety Partnership members Reading MARAC Member of Reading Voluntary Action | The consultation adopted a number of different approaches reflective of the stakeholders whose views are sought. Discussions and meetings with colleagues Targeted emails Attendance and discussion at relevant internal and partner meetings Online survey and information | A period of public consultation was completed between 19 th August and 13 th September 2019. |

Collect and Assess your Data

Using information from Census, residents survey data, service monitoring data, satisfaction or complaints, feedback, consultation, research, your knowledge and the knowledge of people in your team, staff groups etc. describe how the proposal could impact on each group. Include both positive and negative impacts.

(Please delete relevant ticks)

Describe how this proposal could impact on Racial groups

The strategy outlines the intention to work with the Thames Valley wide BAMER project. This project should enable the Council to plan more effective interventions - any change of policy or activity would involve further consultation with affected groups.

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Gender/transgender (cover pregnancy and maternity, marriage)

An improved preventative approach and coordinated response to domestic abuse would reduce the impact on all those experience it. Statistics indicate that domestic abuse affects women more than men and that abuse often escalates during pregnancy.

It has been identified in the strategy that men experiencing abuse are not being referred to support services at a level expected. It is a priority to understand if this is a recording issue and that male victims of abuse are being adequately support, or if there are barriers to accessing services. This will improve the support and interventions available men experiencing domestic abuse in Reading. With this information we can plan more affective interventions if required - any change of policy or activity would involve further consultation with affected groups.

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability

It has been identified in the previous strategy that adults with a disability are not being referred to support services at a level expected. Due to actions in the last strategy this has improved but it remains a focus to ensure that adults with a disability are being adequately support, or if there are barriers to accessing services.

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)

It has been identified in the strategy that adults that define as LGBTQ+ are not being referred to support services at a level expected. It is a priority to understand if this is a recording issue and that LGBTQ+ victims of abuse are being adequately support, or if there are barriers to accessing services. This will improve the support and interventions available to adults that define as LGBTQ+ experiencing domestic abuse in Reading. With this information we can plan more affective interventions if required - any change of policy or activity would involve further consultation with affected groups.

Is there a negative impact?

No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Age

No disproportionate impact has been identified.

Is there a negative impact?

No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief?

AN element of the Thames Valley wide BAMER project is to further understand the prevalence and impact of Harmful Cultural Practices in Reading such as forced marriage and honour based violence, practices that are more prevalent in certain religious communities than others. With this information we can plan more affective interventions if required - any change of policy or activity would involve further consultation with affected groups. With this information we can plan more affective interventions if required - any change of policy or activity would involve further consultation with affected groups.

Is there a negative impact?

No - but may be perceived differently.

Make a Decision

If the impact is negative then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you **MUST** assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

Tick which applies (Please delete relevant ticks)

1. No negative impact identified Go to sign off

How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

Any change in practice or policy will be subjected to further specific consultation and equality impact assessment.

Signed (completing officer) Sarah Tapliss Date 27/9/19

Signed (Lead Officer) Zelda Wolfle Date 27/9/19