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REPORT OF Deputy City Mayor/Lead Member Housing and  
Neighbourhoods

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TO: Cabinet

ON: 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021

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TITLE: Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2022 -2025

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Cabinet to:

- 1- Approve the “Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2022-2025“ to publish the final strategy by 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Domestic Abuse Bill received royal ascent on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021. The Act has placed a statutory duty on tier one local authorities (that includes lower tier one authorities including Salford) to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within refuges and other safe accommodation and provide clarity over governance and accountability.

The Act requires that a needs assessment of safe accommodation and support provision across the area must be undertaken every 3 years and refreshed annually. Salford City Council commissioned an external consultancy (Davis and Associates) to complete the needs assessment which was completed in October 2021 and has informed this strategy. In Salford the Salford Local Domestic Abuse Housing Advisory Group was set up in April 2021 to ensure the strategic priorities are delivered.

This strategy is currently in draft form for public consultation in accordance with Section 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act (2021). The draft strategy has been published on the housing strategy website as required by DLUHC, getting views from the public and professionals, providing opportunity complete an online survey. A final strategy will be published by 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022, in line with statutory requirements.

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KEY DECISION: YES

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#### DETAILS:

The Domestic Abuse Bill received royal ascent on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021. The Act has placed a statutory duty on tier one local authorities that includes lower tier one authorities including Salford to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within refuges and other safe accommodation and provide clarity over governance and accountability.

The Act requires that a needs assessment of safe accommodation and support provision across the area must be undertaken every 3 years and refreshed annually. The needs assessment will inform the development of a Safe Accommodation Strategy setting out how the identified needs will be met and associated commissioning plans. Salford City Council commissioned an external consultancy (Davis and Associates) to complete the needs assessment which was completed in October 2021 and has informed this strategy.

In addition, the Local Authority must set up a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Partnership Board to oversee the implementation and delivery of the safe accommodation strategy; and to review and evaluate effectiveness of the strategy. In Salford the Salford Local Domestic Abuse Housing Advisory Group was set up in April 2021 to ensure the strategic priorities are delivered.

This strategy is currently in draft form for public consultation in accordance with Section 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act (2021). The draft strategy has been published on housing strategy website as required by DLUHC getting views from public, and professionals and providing opportunity by completing an online survey. A final strategy will be published by 5th January 2022 as required by DLUHC.

#### **Draft Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation**

The strategy sets out how Salford City Council will respond to its statutory duty to provide support to victim survivors of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation. The strategy has been informed by the safe accommodation needs assessment (October 2021) and the voices of those with lived experience of services.

The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that all victims subject to domestic abuse and their children have access to safe accommodation support services appropriate to their needs in order to live safely and that responses to perpetrators support victim/victim safety.

#### **The aims of the strategy are to set out how we will:**

- ensure all victims and their children, including those from out of area, have

access to safe, appropriate accommodation and support services at their point of need.

- ensure victims are able to remain safely in their accommodation if they choose and it is safe to do so.
- provide move on accommodation options for victims to support long-term recovery and independence.
- ensure the effective management of perpetrators enables victims to remain safe in their homes and to access safe accommodation.
- ensure that other duties/legislation introduced as part of the Domestic Abuse Act (secure tenancies and homelessness) are considered in the context of safe accommodation and a Whole Housing Approach
- commission support in safe accommodation for individuals and children who have experienced domestic violence and abuse

## **Section 2: The safe accommodation needs assessment**

A safe accommodation needs assessment, as required by the Domestic Abuse Act (2021), was undertaken by external consultants during the period July to October 2021. A summary of the findings is set out below and have been used to help us shape this strategy.

### **Prevalence of domestic abuse in Salford**

In 2020 the total population in Salford was 262,697. It is estimated that there are 209,515 individuals aged 16 or over in Salford of which we can estimate in line with national prevalence rates that around 36,920 of them will experience domestic abuse at some point in their life. Every year we estimate that around **11,010 individuals in Salford will experience domestic abuse** (both familial and intimate partner violence).

### **Demand through homelessness**

There were 4,473 homeless applications in total in 2020/21, **7% (n=307) of which were households with domestic abuse**. This is slightly lower than the national picture in which 1 in 11 households (8.7%) recorded domestic abuse as their main reason for being homeless or threatened with homelessness<sup>1</sup>. Numbers of applicants experiencing domestic abuse has **increased over the past 2 years** as has the overall number of homeless applicants. This means the proportion of applicants who present due to domestic abuse has remained at 8% in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

### **Demand through Salford Women's Aid**

There is **currently no commissioned refuge provision in Salford**. Salford Women's Aid operate a grant funded safe accommodation service which includes **3 refuges with 21 spaces**. These spaces are within a shared building in which the kitchen, lounge and bathrooms are shared by all residents.

Overall **the number of referrals into the refuge service have declined year on year**. It is not clear whether the pandemic had an impact on this, but it was certainly likely to have during 2020 as there were a number of regulations including a 72 hour turn-

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (October 2020)

around window for spaces to ensure 'deep cleaning' and sanitisation could happen.

### Section 3: Our strategic priorities

#### The Salford vision

**Our vision is to lead a co-ordinated effort to ensure:**

- Inclusive, quality, affordable, and appropriate safe accommodation support is available to all victims of domestic abuse including their children irrespective of their needs and background
- Domestic abuse is prevented and identified earlier so that there is less reliance on crisis accommodation, as part of the overarching Salford Community Safety Strategy 2020 – 23 and Tackling Domestic Abuse Board Action Plan

#### Overview of our priorities

The safe accommodation strategy will deliver our vision through the delivery of our four priorities:



#### Strategic priority 1: Early intervention and prevention

Victim-survivors (adults and children) are supported at an early stage and provided with options to remain safe at home to prevent homelessness. This includes holding perpetrators to account for their behaviour.

We know from the survey that 38% of victims did not tell anyone within the community including friends or family. This combined with the fact that 1 in 5 (20%) did not tell a professional means a considerable number of survivors may not tell anyone about the abuse. In response to these we want to:

- Raise awareness
  - Develop a protocol for response that registered social landlords can sign up to
- Remove the barriers victims face in staying safe in their own home
- Manage perpetrators

#### Strategic priority 2: Accessible services

Victim-survivors and professionals know how to access safe accommodation options,

both within and outside of Salford.

We know that survivors often struggle to access the services and support they need. This is partly due to a lack of awareness of support available. From our survey in Salford we found that the majority (57%) of survivors had not accessed support and of those that did not 77% said it was because they did not know how to. This is a key issue in terms of accessibility and understanding how to best ensure professionals are skilled in identifying domestic abuse in order to signpost survivors to appropriate support. In response to these we want to do:

- Training and awareness for housing professionals
- Coproduce pathways with victims and survivors
- Monitor pathways through the local partnership board

### **Strategic priority -3: Appropriate safe accommodation**

Accommodation options and appropriate support is in place for all victims and survivors who need it.

The Temporary Accommodation Service provides a range of self-contained dispersed accommodation to homeless applicants who have fled from/experienced domestic abuse. Support workers are trained to Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) standards and are experienced in supporting the client group. When refuge accommodation has been discussed with homeless households it has been refused in a high proportion of circumstances. Not only has self-contained dispersed accommodation been the option of choice, but it also meets the needs of a diverse group of people including larger families, families with older male children, male victims, younger people and victims from BAME and LGBT+ groups.

Overall the 21 refuge service spaces Salford Women's Aid deliver are all suitable for single people and families with up to 3 children. There is a gap however for larger families with only 4 spaces. There is currently only one refuge provider in Salford who provide 100% of the estimated safe accommodation need recommended by the Council of Europe. However there are three key risks in terms of the capacity of the refuge provision that must be considered;

- 1) The service is not commissioned and therefore is unregulated
- 2) The demand for the current service is higher than capacity – but this demand appears largely from households who originate from outside of the borough
- 3) The demand for out of area refuge placements for Salford residents is not currently known

In response we want to:

Commission safe accommodation capacity to meet estimated need  
Ensure safe accommodation pathways exist for *all* residents

Ensure we have high quality services through robust contract monitoring processes

Create options for victims to move without accessing refuge if they can

Support to return home or move on

#### **Strategic priority 4: Support to return home or move on**

Victim and survivors are supported to return home safely and/or move into alternative permanent accommodation

We know that longer term options for victims and survivors in Salford are essential to ensure they are not living within unsettled accommodation such as refuge or temporary accommodation for a considerable length of time. For victims in social housing and privately rented accommodation, sharing a joint tenancy with the perpetrator presents the greatest barrier to safety and housing security (DAHA, 2019). As joint tenants they are classed as a single legal entity meaning the victim can be left with financial liability for any damage or rent arrears if the perpetrator refuses to pay. In response to these issues we want to:

- Remove practical barriers to moving on
- Support victims and survivors with emotional and wellbeing recovery

#### **Section 4: Delivery of the strategy**

##### **Governance**

This strategy will be owned and delivered by the Salford Local Domestic Abuse Housing Advisory Group and the Tackling Domestic Abuse Board. The Salford Local Domestic Abuse Housing Advisory Group will undertake the statutory local partnership board duties as set out in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) statutory guidance. These duties are:

- assessing the local needs for support within safe accommodation
- preparing and publishing a Strategy to meet locally identified need
- giving effect to the strategy by supporting the commissioning decisions and delivery of quality services which meet the needs and priorities identified by our needs assessment
- a mechanism to manage performance and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy in line with the requirements of DLUHC
- reporting on progress and how funding has been used to the DLUHC

##### **Measuring success**

To measure our progress against this strategy we have developed a number of key performance indicators for each strategic priority which will enable us to measure the outcomes and impact of our strategy. These indicators will be reported on by key partners to the Salford Local Domestic Abuse Housing Advisory Group.

- Early intervention and prevention
- Accessible services
- Appropriate safe accommodation

- Support to return home or move on

## Consultation

This strategy is currently in draft form for public consultation in accordance with Section 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act (2021). The draft strategy has been published on the housing strategy website getting views from public, and professionals providing opportunity by completing an online survey. A final strategy will be published by 5th January 2022.

The strategy has been considered by:

- Place and People (Adult/ Children) Strategic Directors
- Corporate Management Team
- Lead member for Environment and Community Safety
- Deputy City Mayor and Lead Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods
- Cabinet briefing

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## RECOMMENDATION

- 2- That the Cabinet to Approve the “Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2022-2025” to publish the final strategy by 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022

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## KEY COUNCIL POLICIES: Allocations Policy 2021

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## EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

The introduction of the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy and its implementation plan is considered as having an overall positive impact on Salford residents. The Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment 2021 that has informed the strategy has identified the “Protected Characteristics” and ensures that its implementation plan addresses the strategic priorities to meet the requirements of these groups.

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## ASSESSMENT OF RISK: Low

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LEGAL IMPLICATIONS Supplied by: Frances McBride 09/11/21  
TEL NO: 0161 234 3417

The introduction of the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy and its implementation plan gives effect to the new duties contained in Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. It ensures statutory compliance, provides governance and ensures public accountability.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS  
TEL: 0161 793 2574

Supplied by: Paul Hutchings 11/11/21

The strategy itself has been funded through the Domestic Abuse Capacity Building Fund which was allocated to support local authorities with their preparation work and discharging the functions of the duty effectively.

Whilst the strategy itself has no further financial implications at this stage, there may be direct financial implications resulting from the implementation of the strategy. The Government announced earlier this year that tier 1 local authorities will receive £125 million of funding to cover the cost of new burdens placed upon local authorities in meeting their new statutory duty under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act for this financial year (2021/22). The allocation for Salford for 2021/22 is £677,601. The funding is for one year and no announcements have been made about future year's funding. It is imperative that we have a fully costed plan of how this funding will be spent.

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PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS Supplied by: N/A

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KEY COUNCIL POLICIES: Allocations Policy 2021

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OTHER DIRECTORATES CONSULTED: Policy and Partnership, Children Services, People, Public Health

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WARDS TO WHICH REPORT RELATES: All