

BUSINESS CASE FOR THE PROCUREMENT OF A DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICE

Strategic commissioning, November 2022



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is to describe the commissioning plan to put in place a new Domestic Abuse service for Plymouth, to draw on our learning from those with lived experience and ensure the city is meeting its new statutory duties.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 29th April 2021. Part 4 of the Act places new statutory duties on tier 1 Local Authorities to provide safe accommodation for victims and their children, alongside a number of reporting and governance requirementsⁱ. Our current Plymouth Domestic Abuse Service has been in place since 2012 and goes some way to meeting our statutory duties. However, the guidance and direction from central government requires Plymouth to expand and enhance this offer.

The key requirements in the Act comes at a time of extreme pressure on the wider housing and homelessness system which presents a risk to the provision of safe accommodation options for people who experience Domestic Abuse.

To achieve our new legal duties Plymouth City Council was allocated £589,824 in 'new burdens' for 2021/22 via a section 31 grant agreement. Future years are subject to spending review. There are also frequent ad hoc funding opportunities from the Ministry of Justice, Home Office and DLUH. More widely this area of work links to sub-regional commissioning arrangements across different organisational boundaries such as NHS Devon ICB and Devon and Cornwall Police.

Our ambition to be a Trauma Informed City and commitment to put the voice of lived experience has driven this business case, this includes the vast evidence gathered for our Plymouth Male Violence against Women and Girls Commission. What we heard has told us we need to do things differently both as a system and also in the way in which we provide our specialist Domestic Abuse service.

CONTEXT

The narrative and statistics around Domestic Abuse are well rehearsed yet it is important to remind ourselves of the scale and impact:

- Domestic abuse can affect anyone and has a devastating impact on victims and their families. In the year ending March 2020 it is estimated 2.3 million adults aged 16-74 years were victims of domestic abuseⁱⁱ.
- Disproportionately women are victims (1 in 4) and men disproportionately cause harm.
- For the year ending March 2021 there were 845,734 domestic abuse crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales – an increase of six per cent on the previous year. This represents 18% of all crimes recorded by the police in that year.
- It is estimated that 1 in 5 children under the age of 18 children have lived with domestic abuse at some point in their childhood (NSPCC, 2020)
- In 2019, the Home Office published their analysis into the social and economic costs of domestic abuseⁱⁱⁱ. It estimates the costs of domestic abuse in England and Wales for the year ending 31 March 2017 to be approximately £66 billion every year:

Costs in Anticipation	Costs as a consequence				Costs in response				Total
	Physical and emotional harm	Lost output	Health services	Victim services	Police costs	Criminal legal	Civil legal	Other	
£6m	£47,287m	£14,098m	£2,333m	£724m	£1,257m	£336m	£140m	£11m	£66,192m

The Domestic Abuse Act was passed in April 2021 and it created a statutory definition of domestic abuse. It has four key aims:

- Protect and support victims
- Transform the justice process
- Improve performance
- Promote awareness

It places statutory duties on tier 1 local authorities e.g. Plymouth City Council, to:

- Assess the need for domestic abuse support amongst victims and their children in “relevant accommodation” (to be defined in statutory guidance).
- Provide accommodation and support to victims and their children.
- Prepare and publish a strategy for the delivery of the support.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy; and
- Appoint a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board.

To successfully deliver these duties we have developed a detailed work plan alongside a strong partnership plan based on the voice of lived experience, responding to our values of being collaborative. This will also support our priorities of being a friendly welcoming city where people feel safe.

In Plymouth, our needs assessment^{iv} told us that between 2018/19 and 2020/21:

- 14,513 domestic abuse cases were reported to the police – 21% of all crime reported
- 11,562 (estimated) victims of domestic abuse received support services
- Between 2019/20 and 2020/21, 314 people fleeing domestic violence sought homelessness assistance from Plymouth City Council – 3 a week.
- Safelives estimate 18,500 women and 10,830 men have experienced domestic abuse at some point in their lives. 1,250 high and medium risk victims are invisible to the system (2020)
- During the Covid pandemic and lockdowns there were increased concerns for those experiencing domestic abuse. Plymouth did see increases in reporting and, most worryingly, intensified control, violence, danger and suicidality.
- We recognise many people do not report or access services which means any statistics are a lower estimate, and that for some there are additional barriers in accessing support, for example of the 122 women eligible for year 1 of the Plymouth Pause programme; 89% experienced DA (significantly higher than other Pause areas)

LIVED EXPERIENCE

In 2019, we received facilitated support from the Leadership Centre to improve our partnership work and to provide a way of collaborating across the city providing leadership beyond organisational boundaries. This systems leadership work started by **listening to over 150 people** with lived experience in the city via appreciative enquiry and we used this as a form of co-design.

What we heard:

People told us they didn't feel listen to or believed. They were afraid to tell their friends and family and then when they had contact with services they didn't feel heard.

"It was hard to be believed as I didn't have scars and bruises"

People told us they were frightened. Frightened that professionals would take their children, that they would lose their homes, frightened that their family and friends would reject them. Ultimately they were afraid that their partner would kill them.

"I am terrified just walking around the Mall, looking over my shoulder even though I know he is in prison on the Isle of Wight for 18 years"

People told us they felt isolated. They had often lost contact with their family and friends. Their support networks had been stripped away.

"I had lost all my friends and had no confidence before engaging with services"

Staff told us that they were fearful in their work around domestic abuse and feel like they are operating in a blame culture. That the system does not always work in a collaborative way, leaving them feeling isolated and unsupported.

"We are driven by managing risk – we don't want to do anything wrong"

"Doesn't feel like we are on the same side"

Staff told us that the system does not always allow them to work in the best interests of the people they are trying to help.

"I feel frustrated. I am shaped by policies, procedures and protocols – not the needs of the person"

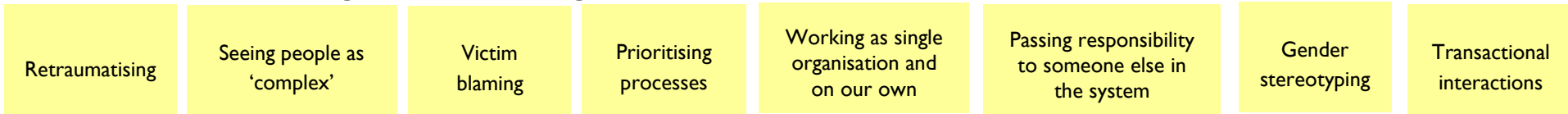
People who have carried out acts of domestic abuse told us:

"I tried to get help when I realised I had a problem but when I rang the DA service they were rude and told me to just google it."

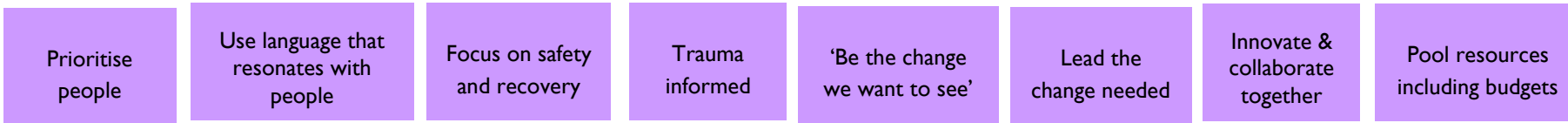
No one knows me, no one cares or is interested. This is the first time anyone has bothered to really listen"

This work was vital in shaping how we want to work as a system and helped us understand:

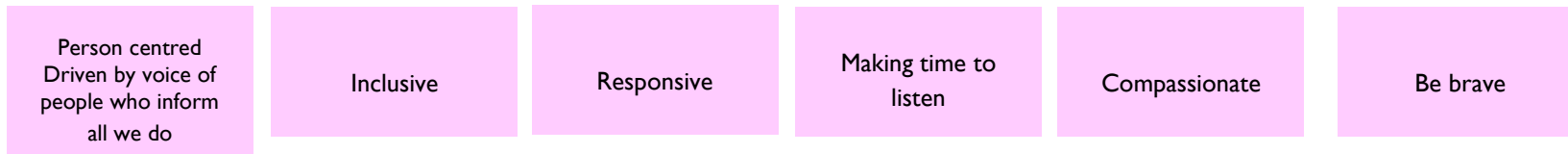
How we have been working and want to change:



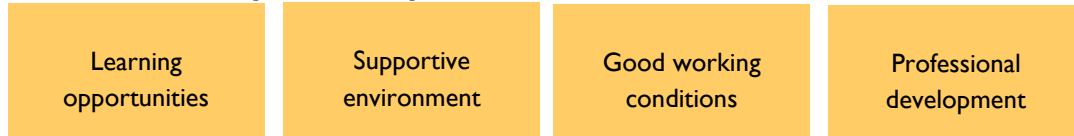
and work more like this:



so that people can expect us to be:



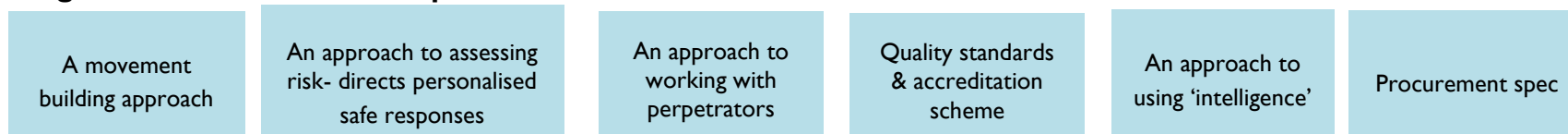
and staff can expect us to provide:



Our ideal system design principles are:



to get here we need to develop:



CURRENT PROVISION

The current commissioned **Plymouth Domestic Abuse Service (PDAS)** has been provided by Sanctuary Housing since December 2012 and comprises:

- an accommodation based support in a refuge (11 units) and dispersed units (13 units);
- Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) service;
- Children and Young Person IDVA
- 1:1 support;
- Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment training;
- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference co-ordination;
- Group Programmes
- Sanctuary scheme provision

The accommodation provides 28 units which is slightly above the Council of Europe recommendations. When at full capacity the refuge can take total 45 people (11 adults, 34 children) and the dispersed units 35 people (13 adults, 22 children) 9x3 beds and 4x2 beds.

Between 2018 and 2020:

- the Plymouth Refuge supported 138 people in accommodation and supporting up to 50 children at any point
- 45% of people referred to the specialist accommodation don't meet current criteria (this compares to 64% nationally)
- On average 40% of people in the specialist accommodation are from out of area.

The service also provides support outside of the accommodation via **community outreach**:

- 1:1 support and safety planning; improving security measures to enable people to stay in their own homes; support to move out of area if appropriate
- Liaison and advocacy with the criminal justice system including the Police and Courts
- CSC liaison – supporting strategy and CP meetings with input and advice
- Group programmes such as Freedom^v and CAST^{vi}
- Deliver DASH risk assessment training
- Attend events to promote services such as 16 days of action, Fresher's Week and Pride

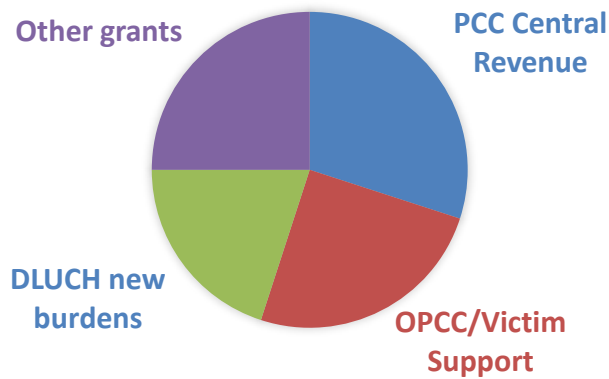
Finance

The current core budget for the above service is £555,000 pa. It has been funded by a combination of Plymouth City Council central revenue grant and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. However, ad hoc opportunities have arisen to secure additional investment to meet increased demands and new duties via Central Government funding bids.

Whilst this has provided more capacity and innovation, multiple short term funding bids have added complexity, fragmentation and uncertainty in planning. **This provides a challenge to our ability to commission long term and substantial risk to Local Authorities finances at a time of significant pressure** for all demand led services including our housing system. The short term and ad hoc nature of funding is also problematic for our delivery partners to be able to recruit and retain a suitably experienced and skilled workforce.

The current annual funding structure is set out below:

FUNDING STREAMS



Our ambition is to commission a new enhanced service that meets our statutory duties alongside activity that the voice of lived experience has highlighted as important. This service would be estimated at £815,000 per annum based on our assessment of current contract pricing, costs associated with new duties and benchmarking with other authorities.

We have identified grant income from the OPCC and new burdens funding which is confirmed until March 2025 to support a domestic abuse service of £815,000 per annum (including core revenue). It is anticipated that up to £122,000 a year will be available to the service as part of the ad hoc bids from national funding opportunities.

The following shows current identified income streams:

Budget streams core contract	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 New contract start	2024/25	2025/26	
OPCC grant contribution income (via Victim Support from 2022/23)	£210,000	£210,000	£200,000	£200,000	tbc	
Community Safety/Commissioning/Public Health (Core CRG) income	£345,000	£245,000	£245,000	£245,000	£245,000	
Additional burdens income DLUCH new from 2021	£117,000 (total grant £589,824)	£220,000 (total grant £591,456)	£370,000 known from CFWD (total grant *value tbc)	£370,000 total grant value tbc	Not confirmed	Confirmed until March 25 value tbc
Additional income streams						
Ministry of Justice grant funding for specialist IDVAs	£61,250	£107,000	£122,000	£122,000	Not confirmed	Current grant ends March 25
Home Office grant funding for perpetrator programme currently outside of PDAS	£64,290	£62,400	tbc	tbc	Not confirmed	Current grant ends March 23 – awaiting update on multi-year fund

There is a financial risk to the local authority if the OPCC and additional/new burdens funding is not continued after March 2025. On current calculations, if both sources of funding were to cease this would leave an annual shortfall of funding of £570,000. Given the new statutory requirement for the local authority in relation to domestic abuse services, this could mean that the Council needed to make up the funding shortfall.

To mitigate against this, negotiations on future years of funding will be sought as early as possible with partners and any potential risk escalated to senior managers and elected members promptly.

Recommendations:

To commission a new service in an open competitive procurement in line with Procurement Regulations.

To procure a 10 year contract with a structure of 3+3+3+1 committing to a core budget value of £345,000 of revenue funding to provide stability and include additional funding streams of up to a total contract value of £815k per annum.

To ensure a new contract transparently acknowledges the funding arrangements in this area which regularly leads to requirements to bid for 1 – 3 year funds. This will require flexibility to vary the contract when necessary and for the provider to be able to respond.

A NEW SERVICE AND APPROACH

Driven by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, our needs assessment and conversations with people with lived experience it is clear we need to expand our offer and change our approach. We propose to procure a new Plymouth Domestic Abuse Services which will be an integrated service providing safe accommodation and support for adults and children; behaviour change programmes for those who harm and a programme of workforce development and advice.

We are striving for a system response, and to secure a service, that:

- Delivers support to anyone experiencing (or impacted by) domestic abuse
- Committed to trauma informed practice, prioritises kindness and doing the right thing
- Is a passionate advocate for domestic abuse victims/survivors
- Committed to collaboration and a strong prevention model focussed on behaviour and cultural change
- Is a strategic partner and leader that will be the expert/specialist for Plymouth
- Will work with 'By and For' organisations to build capacity and remove barriers for people who need to access services, including but not limited to those with NRPF.

We intend to seek an integrated service, with the following key elements in scope:

Service Element	Statutory requirement	Horizon scan/likely future requirements
Safe Accommodation	Statutory	
Support in all safe accommodation – both adults and children and young people	Statutory	
Community outreach	Non-statutory	Victims Bill likely to place new duties to provide on local authorities
Behaviour Change Programme for people who harm	Non-statutory	National perpetrator strategy and funding from Home Office
Peer Support	Non-statutory except elements connected to 'by and for'	

	organisations to improve service accessibility	
Workforce Development/consultancy	Non-statutory except elements that promote awareness of Act and service	
Therapeutic counselling for adult and children and young people	Statutory	

Accommodation

Our needs assessment suggests that 385 units/bed spaces of safe accommodation are needed each year in Plymouth across our total accommodation offer. This will require more provision that meets the Government definition of Safe Accommodation. This provision to be of good quality in line with minimum standards and will strive to be psychologically informed environments.

We want more people to be able to flee domestic abuse; and more people to be accepted into safe accommodation. Our ambition is that people with lived experience will tell us that they feel safe and have the best options for their housing needs.

To ensure victims of domestic abuse can flee and are safe we will implement the whole housing approach and the provision of Safe Accommodation for victims of domestic abuse. It will develop a suite of offers across the system to best meet individual needs:

- Female only accommodation including continuation of the purpose built refuge
- Dispersed units/safe houses including
 - family accommodation;
 - Single person units;
 - Small HMOs for those who may require additional support services
- To continue and expand the Sanctuary Scheme to continue to ensure people can stay safely in their own homes where it is safe to do so via safety adaptations

The interface with the Plymouth Alliance is critical here as the lead response in the city to homelessness. It will need to assist with the continued provision of temporary and move on accommodation.

Support

Support will need to span across all safe accommodation, including those outside of the specialist refuge and dispersed units. It will be trauma informed and prioritise trauma stabilisation and recovery. It should enable people to feel able to move on from temporary accommodation. We want people with lived experience to report that they feel believed, listened to and that the service and system is kind and compassionate.

Support will come from both IDVAs (when appropriate) and domestic abuse support workers. Support should be available at a time most suitable for those requiring it, including an offer and 'in reach' into other safe accommodation provision. The service will also work alongside out of hours services.

Children and young people will receive support specifically designed to be age appropriate and safe.

Outreach/community

The service will be available for people to contact and receive advice and support as needed regardless of their accommodation requirements, relationship status or allocated risk score.

It will be trauma informed and prioritise kindness with support from domestic abuse support workers and IDVAs when needed. Support should be available at a time most suitable for those requiring it, including an offer and 'in reach' into other parts of the system. Design of service will take into account current plans to improve locality working alongside our Family and Wellbeing Hubs. The service will

also work alongside out of hour's services and have a clear and distinct offer for **children and young people**.

We will expect services in Plymouth to report they can access professional support to enable them to work safely with people experiencing domestic abuse and staff in the system feel a collective responsibility for people experiencing domestic abuse and report a positive relationship with the specialist service.

Behaviour Change

To prioritise prevention and recognise the need for long term change this service will include the provision of a trauma informed behaviour change programme for those who cause harm. It will require best practice design with a variety of offers. This must include an offer for ex/partner support.

We want to ensure that people who perpetrate domestic abuse feel listened to and have opportunity for help and change. The system will see a reduction in reoffending and less repeat victimisation.

Peer Support

To ensure that we continue to prioritise and value the voice of lived experience, relationships and inclusion the service will have group programmes that support and promote, peer support, lived experience groups and survivor groups. People who experience domestic abuse will tell us that they have built trusting relationships and receive longer term mutual support. People with lived experience will tell us they feel heard and have clear opportunities to be involved in system design and improvement.

To include opportunities for 'By and For' organisations to strengthen and build capacity and capability of the system to respond to anyone experiencing domestic abuse. People who experience additional barriers to accessing support report they can now access services that are appropriate to their needs

Workforce development/consultancy

We recognise that we need to significantly improve our workforce development offer to ensure that the system feels confident to recognize and respond to both those who experience domestic abuse and those who cause harm. Using best practice and learning from other areas, we will develop a tiered approach aligning to role requirements. It will be vital to have a new service that will provide professional guidance and support – this will reinforce our ambition for people to be supported by the person that is best not handing off to someone else. It will also emphasize the need to be gender sensitive and masculinity aware.

The specialist service will act as a system leader for domestic abuse. This will include providing professional advice to other services to enable people to remain where they have the best relationships (when safe to do so)

We will continue to practice strong system leadership and the system and service will move to a more relational model with those it comes into contact with including the commissioner rather than transactional. We expect less hand-offs in the system and people will tell us that when they disclose the system knows how to respond. More people will then feel confident to disclose and report.

Therapeutic offer

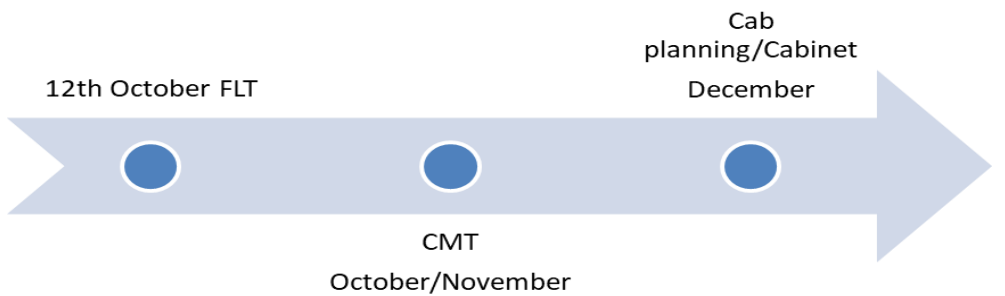
This service will be for adults and children and young people with age and situational appropriate counselling. It will be trauma informed and prioritise recovery. The provision will focus on those who have fled domestic abuse. We will co-design the offer and will review best practice (including the Devon offer and current procurement 'Trauma focused therapeutic psychological intervention service for victims and survivors of Domestic Violence').

It is vital that people who experience domestic abuse have an opportunity to recover from trauma. We want people tell us that they feel better able to stay safe, cope and build new relationships.

Recommendations:

That we seek a collaborative bid that can provide an integrated service whilst recognising individual organisations specialisms including ‘by and for’ organisations.

That the new service is based on trauma informed practice and moves away from risk based approaches

PROPOSED TIMELINES**Recommendation:**

To agree timelines, delegate decision and contract award sign off to the Director for People

ⁱ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents/enacted>

ⁱⁱ the Crime Survey for England and Wales

ⁱⁱⁱ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/918897/horr107.pdf

^{iv} Needs assessment can be provided as a background document

^v [The Freedom Programme. Learn about domestic violence and abuse](#)

^{vi} [Plymouth Domestic Abuse Service CAST programme \(sanctuary-supported-living.co.uk\)](https://sanctuary-supported-living.co.uk)