

<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Decision Type:</b> Key
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<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date:</b> 16 April 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	Bury Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy and associated commissioning including accommodation based support	
<b>Report of</b>	Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion	

## Summary

- 1.1 Tackling the causes and impacts of domestic violence is a priority of Bury Community Safety Partnership and Bury Council leads activity to drive this agenda. A core component of this relates to the provision of, and support associated with safe accommodation for those fleeing from harm, and for this to support breaking the cycle of domestic violence.
- 1.2 The Domestic Abuse Act of 2021 sets out the statutory requirements to assess and make arrangement for accommodation-based support for victims of such abuse. A Safe Accommodation Strategy for Bury has been produced to this effect, including a set of actions against identified themes and to inform commissioning intentions to secure future provision.
- 1.3 Since the introduction of the Duty provision has been stood up in the Borough and the strategy reflects on the strengths this has brought and the opportunities for further development. This is in the context of the broader work of Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, Bury Community Safety Partnership (including recently refreshed strategy) and Bury's LET's Do It! approach.
- 1.4 The report and associated strategy set out the further iteration of safe accommodation provision and the associated commissioning activity required to shape available and appropriate support for local people.

## Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Approve the Bury Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy.
- 2.2 Approve an open competitive procurement exercise to secure Safe Accommodation provision for the period of 1<sup>st</sup> November 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2028, with the option at the discretion of the Council to extend for a further year.
- 2.3 Approve an open competitive procurement exercise to secure core victim support (IDVA/ support workers) provision from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2028, with the option at the discretion of the Council to extend for a further year.

- 2.4 Extend the existing Domestic Abuse safe accommodation provision and core IDVA contracts, utilising existing budgets, to cover the period November 2024 to end of October 2025 to maintain provision during approval of strategy and tender exercise set out in 2.2 and 2.3 at a value of £380k and £131K respectively.

### **Reasons for recommendation(s)**

- 3.1 The strategy delivers on a statutory requirement within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to develop such an approach focusing on safe accommodation and the means by which to deliver on this.
- 3.2 The strategy outlines a proposed evolution of the approach to safe accommodation, reflecting input from those of lived experience and system partners, informing a revised set of commissioning intentions; whilst ensuring provision maintained whilst such procurement activity takes place.

### **Alternative options considered and rejected**

- 4.1 Enabling the provision of safe accommodation support is a requirement under the Duty, as is the development of a strategy to outline the approach to such accommodation. The strategy provides the means to inform the commissioning of provision that can best meet local needs and circumstances.
- 4.2 To not update develop such an approach would fail to capitalise on the journey made in recent years but more importantly miss the opportunity to further tailor and target the focus of such support provision.

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### **Background**

- 5.1 The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) sets out a series of statutory duties for local authorities (and partners) to seek to prevent individuals from harm, protect and support victims of domestic abuse, and work to tackle perpetrator behaviour. One such requirement is the provision of safe accommodation support for individuals experiencing and fleeing such abuse.
- 5.2 Domestic abuse involves any single incident or pattern of conduct where someone's behaviour towards another is abusive, and where the people involved are aged 16 or over and are, or have been, personally connected to each other (regardless of gender or sexuality).
- 5.3 Safe accommodation and accommodation-based support can be provided through a variety of functions and settings, including refuge, dispersed and

move-on accommodation and through sanctuary schemes. A Bury Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy has been developed through partnership engagement to outline proposed actions and commissioning intentions for the future provision of such provision and support in the Borough.

- 5.4 This is the evolution of such support, given the introduction of the duty in the 2021 Act, with the strategy outlining the provision which has been stood up in recent years and wider support, such as reference within the Council's housing allocation policy.
- 5.5 The strategy goes on to outline a series of thematic areas for future focus through the Bury Domestic Abuse Partnership Board with associated actions to further develop and tailor Bury's approach in keeping with the Borough's *LET's Do It!* principles.

### **Safe Accommodation provision in Bury**

- 6.1 Current provision and support in the Borough is composed of several elements.
  - 6.1.1 Bury Council's **Housing Allocations policy** sets out that victims of domestic abuse are given priority banding 1 (the highest level) for housing allocations and are considered in relation to direct lets.
  - 6.1.2 There is **dedicated safe accommodation provision** commissioned in the Borough, which to date has predominantly being through refuge but more recently included second stage move on provision. There are currently 21 units of accommodation in the Borough specifically for victims of domestic abuse, in addition to connections through Greater Manchester activity to broader support, eg a male refuge project hosted by Trafford on behalf of the region.
  - 6.1.3 Provision extends beyond the built fabric of such buildings through associated **accommodation-based support offering wrap-around assistance** including supporting a person to prepare to return home if safe to do so or to alternative longer term properties. This includes support with applying for housing, financial resilience support, emotional and wellbeing support, in addition to direct advice and advocacy specifically in relation to domestic abuse.
  - 6.1.4 There are cases where provisions can be made to support individuals remain in their own home with appropriate adaptations, particularly as part of joint work on enforcement against perpetrators. **Target hardening approaches** increase the resilience and safety of a person's own home through the provision of security measures including gates, barriers and security technology.
- 6.2 Whilst current provision has become more embedded through the previous Community Safety Partnership (CSP) strategy, the refresh of the CSP strategy and ongoing development of Bury's LETS approach provides the opportunity to refine Bury's safe accommodation approach.

- 6.3 The Safe Accommodation Strategy sets out areas of focus to further develop Bury's approach and strengthen support to victims of domestic abuse, informed by insight from data, research and engagement including through Bury's Domestic Abuse Partnership Board which includes a standing item on the voice of the victim-survivor.
- 6.4 Setting out the future direction of such accommodation-based support, the Strategy proposes partnership activity across four themes
- 6.4.1 **Prevention and earlier 'early intervention'** – this theme places a focus on training and awareness, specifically with housing providers and associated groups linked to housing, to support the prevention of homelessness presentation due to fleeing domestic abuse; and to formalise the previous target hardening activity into a more established sanctuary scheme to support individuals and families remaining safely in their own home.
- 6.4.2 **A blended accommodation model to tailor support** – this theme sets out the desired shift from a previously predominantly refuge based provision to increasingly blended and flexible approach which is better able to accommodate a greater variety of circumstances and be adaptable based on presenting need at any given time. This allows for more tailored support based on the intersectionality of a victim and their family. As such, a core-and-cluster style approach alongside dispersed provision will be central to the procurement of future provision to support greater connectivity into Bury's broader neighbourhood approach whilst increasing the flexibility of provision in the Borough. It is proposed to conduct a open tender exercise upon approval of the Safe Accommodation Strategy, to cover the period until March 2028 to align with Bury's Community Safety Partnership Strategy, with a twelve month option to provide some additional flexibility.
- 6.4.3 **Integrating 'safe accommodation'** – this theme builds on the refreshed Community Safety Partnership Strategy which increasingly brings together support around domestic abuse with that of other factors individuals may be experiencing, in particular in relation to mental wellbeing and substance use. Individually any of these lived experiences can be a barrier to accessing safe accommodation whilst considering any of these factors in isolation can inadvertently restrict the awareness of broader, and potentially more appropriate forms of support, eg supported accommodation provision commissioned through the Neighbourhood Housing Model. This also aligns with the Greater Manchester Live Well model of support.
- 6.4.4 **Increase access through further collaboration and co-design** – this theme seeks to increasingly develop a 'by and for' approach to provision, to further tailor accommodation and victim based support. In particular this seeks to build on existing co-design networks and engagement with these to consider suitable adaptations and measures which support people to stay safe in their own home; for emergency accommodation to

meet different needs; and ensure the maximum awareness of suitable move-on provision with associated support.

- 6.5 The Bury Safe Accommodation Strategy sets out a series of actions against each of these themes which will be overseen by the Bury Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (DAPB), a statutory body including colleagues from Bury Council, NHS GM Bury, Greater Manchester Police, Probation, representatives from the Bury Safeguarding Partnership ecosystem. The DAPB will in turn report into Bury's Community Safety Partnership including on metrics set out in the strategy.
- 6.6 Whilst the strategy runs for a three year period it will be kept under annual review to take account of the latest insight (data and lived experience) in addition to any changes (risks and opportunities) in national legislation or statutory guidance.

### **Wrap around support for victims of Domestic Abuse**

- 7.1 In addition to the commissioning of future accommodation-based support, a procurement exercise is to take place to secure future provision of trauma-informed, person-centred victim support provision through Independent Domestic Abuse Advisors and associated floating support workers.
- 7.2 *Save Lives* outline the role of an IDVA and the power of such roles are:
- By design, the role of an IDVA stands as a direct affront to harm. Rooted in trauma-informed practice, every interaction an IDVA has with a survivor is focused on safety and trust.
  - Survivors are empowered to reclaim the choice, control, and agency that has been stripped away by abuse.
  - IDVAs work side by side with survivors of domestic abuse to rebuild the self-esteem that was systematically chipped away – guiding them out of isolation and empowering survivors to reclaim what has been taken from them.
  - IDVAs are more than advocates—they are bridges to safety, champions of identity, and allies in the journey to healing. They work in culturally responsive ways, celebrating each survivor's unique identity while ensuring their voices are heard. Through their work, IDVAs not only identify risks and respond to needs but also restore dignity and ensure the rights of the survivor are never overlooked.
- 7.3 Bury's support provision includes a blend of domestic abuse officers within the Family Safeguarding model; IDVA trained practitioners within Family Help in Children's Services; Greater Manchester commissioned victim support service support through Catch 22.
- 7.4 In order to ensure support to high and medium risk victims of domestic abuse, especially for those where there are no children in the household, it is proposed to commission specific support provision, as highlighted in yellow in the table below. The volume of provision has been determined through engagement with the national Save Lives charity based on Bury's population, DA prevalence rate

and presentations across Bury's domestic abuse risk management meetings (eg Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences; Domestic Abuse Daily Management Planning).

High Risk	Medium Risk	Standard Risk
3 IDVAs 1 Support Worker	1 IDVA 1 Support Worker	Catch 22 (GM Commissioned Support)
Triage Worker		
Management Oversight		
3 Domestic Abuse Officers *through Family Safeguarding Model)	2 Family Help Practitioners (Children's Services)	
1 MASH Triage Domestic Abuse Practitioner (Childrens Services)		

7.5 It is proposed the tender exercise for this provision runs concurrently with the accommodation-based support provision and covers the respective time period for alignment with the CSP Strategy. It is a separate commission, which keeps the option open for either the same provider to be appointed on both elements of provision, or different providers should there be benefits identified in the tender returns of a hybrid provision.

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### Links with the Corporate Priorities:

*Please summarise how this links to the Let's Do It Strategy.*

In the context of this Safe Accommodation Strategy the LETS principles will guide the approach – with a targeted focus to ensure that the services that available reflect and are informed by the needs of our local Bury community and anchored into neighbourhood support; the approach will seek to be innovative with an enterprising approach on how best to use resources to provide the best quality Domestic Abuse provision. By working together as agencies and building on lived experiences, provision can be tailored and take a strengths-based approach which builds on what already works well within the Borough, looking to apply learning to different areas of the system and supporting people to break the cycle of abuse.

The development and delivery of the DA Safe Accommodation Strategy is a component of delivering the corporate plan action of implementing the Bury Community Safety Strategy 2025-2028

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### Equality Impact and Considerations:

*Please provide an explanation of the outcome(s) of an initial or full EIA and make **specific reference regarding the protected characteristic of Looked After Children**. Intranet link to EIA documents is [here](#).*

The strategy will have positive impacts for many of the characteristics and circumstances including intersections of these characteristics. There are no anticipated negative impacts or unintended consequences. The EIA will remain live until the adoption of the strategy and individual activities within the strategy may require independent EIAs

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### Environmental Impact and Considerations:

*Please provide an explanation of the Environmental impact of this decision. Please include the impact on both **Carbon emissions** (contact [climate@bury.gov.uk](mailto:climate@bury.gov.uk) for advice) and **Biodiversity** (contact [c.m.wilkinson@bury.gov.uk](mailto:c.m.wilkinson@bury.gov.uk) for advice)*

No direct impact as a result of this report through commissioning of safe accommodation inclusion will be made in the specification as to any core and cluster/dispersed accommodation seeking to be considerate of energy efficiency measures and approaches in any accommodation provision.

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### Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Insufficient interest in tender exercise	Core and cluster, and dispersed approach, an increasingly established approach in broader accommodation-based support provision (eg wider supported living schemes). Market awareness event to take place during initial tender stage to actively engage potential providers.
Availability of suitable provision	Demand across priority 1 allocations are high, with a limited resource of both funding and accommodation. The blended approach set out seeks to increasingly support homelessness presentations due to DA; to improve triage of any cases across a broader pool of flexible support and associated move on.

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### Legal Implications:

Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 details duties on relevant local authorities to assess the need for accommodation-based support and prepare strategies to provide such support for victims. The appended strategy and recommendations evidences compliance with those duties.

The duties in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 are separate to local authority housing duties under the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002 and does not place a requirement on authorities to provide domestic abuse victims with accommodation.

Any safe accommodation procured in the delivery of this strategy must fit the definition of such accommodation contained within Regulation 2 of The Domestic

Abuse Support (Relevant Accommodation and Housing Benefit and Universal Credit Sanctuary Schemes) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. Bed and Breakfast accommodation is not considered relevant safe accommodation.

The proposed procurements will be carried out on an open tender basis in accordance with the provisions of the Procurement Act 2023 which came into force on 24th February 2025. Existing contracts will be formally extended.

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### **Financial Implications:**

*To be completed by the Council's Section 151 Officer.*

In 2025-26, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is providing £160 million to cover the cost to local authorities in England of carrying out their statutory duties/functions relating to the provision of support within domestic abuse safe accommodation (which is contained within Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021). For Bury Council the allocation is £521,275. In addition, funding for wrap around IDVA provision includes funding contributions from Bury Community Safety Partnership and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (including as conduit from Ministry of Justice).

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### **Appendices:**

*Please list any appended documents.*

Appendix A: Bury Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2025-2028

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### **Background papers:**

*Please list any background documents to this report and include a hyperlink where possible.*

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
DA	Domestic Abuse
DAPB	[Bury] Domestic Abuse Partnership Board
CSP	Community Safety Partnership
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advisor