

CONSULTATION ON DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To obtain feedback from Peoples Board members in order to send a collaborative response from St Helens to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, to their consultation paper on Domestic Abuse services.

2. BACKGROUND

In May 2019, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government launched their consultation paper Domestic Abuse Services, Future Delivery of Support to Victims and their Children in Accommodation-Based Domestic Abuse Services.

Domestic abuse is defined as “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 consultation paper seeks views on the government's proposals for a new approach to support victims of domestic abuse and their children in accommodation-based services in England.

The aims of the proposals are to deliver more sustainable support services, to improve national coverage and to have greater accountability for provision of support.

The Government has recognised that whilst many authorities are already providing tailored support to those fleeing domestic abuse, further work is needed to end the variation across the country and ensure a consistent approach. To address this, the paper proposes a new delivery model for accommodation-based support. This includes a new legal duty on local authorities to provide accommodation based services that meet the diverse needs of domestic abuse survivors and their children, ensuring that they have access to provision that is right for them. This will include not only Refuge accommodation but specialist support from safety to independence. This will be supported by funding to ensure services are placed on a sustainable footing. The exact level of funding will be determined with stakeholders as part of the consultation process.

Local authorities will also be required to work together with neighbouring authorities to ensure that domestic abuse services reflect the needs of local people, including targeted, specialist support for BAME, LGBTQI and Gypsy, Traveller and Roma survivors.

The proposal would place a statutory duty on St Helens Council to convene a Local Partnership Board for domestic abuse accommodation support services. This Board

should include representation from Police and Crime Commissioners, health bodies, children's services and housing providers, along with specialist domestic abuse service providers. The Board would be required to assess need for domestic abuse services, develop and publish domestic abuse strategies, decide what support services are required and commission as appropriate. The Board would be required to monitor and evaluate local delivery and report back to central government.

The consultation is part of wider work across Government to bolster protection for survivors of domestic abuse including proposals in a new Domestic Abuse Bill which will introduce for the first time a statutory government definition of domestic abuse that will include specifically economic abuse and controlling and manipulative non-physical abuse. The Bill will also establish a new Domestic Abuse Commissioner and prohibit cross-examination of victims by their abusers in family courts.

3. CONSULTATION

The government is specifically seeking views on:

- the definition of accommodation-based services and support
- leadership and responsibilities
- local and national accountability
- guidance

The consultation is running for 12 weeks from 13th May to 2nd August 2019.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- **That the Peoples Board note the Consultation paper on Domestic Abuse Services**
- **That members of the Board feedback their comments to the Senior Assistant Director, Housing, Safer Communities, Recreation and Libraries by Monday 15th July 2019**

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Domestic Abuses Services Consultation Paper

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