

CABINET

16 NOVEMBER 2021

KENT AND MEDWAY DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY (ADDENDUM)

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Adrian Gulvin, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Chair of Medway Community Safety Partnership

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Summary

This report seeks to inform Medway's Cabinet about the Addendum required to the existing Domestic Abuse (DA) Strategy and asks for the Cabinet to agree the updated strategy to comply with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

1. Budget and policy framework
 - 1.1. Budget has been provided by central government for the 'additional burdens' of £592,000 (alongside £50,000 budget for preparation and implementation and £10,000 for anticipated increase in placements in Temporary Accommodation resulting from removal of vulnerability test when determining priority housing need for people experiencing Domestic Abuse) this has been used by Strategic housing to implement the requirements of the DA Act in relation to safer accommodation.
 - 1.2. To comply with the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act an additional section needs to be added to the existing Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy 2020-2023.
 - 1.3. The Local Authority must publish the updated Domestic Abuse Strategy by 5 January 2022.
 - 1.4. The Strategy and Addendum set out the joint vision of the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group, which is a partnership between Kent Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, Kent Police, Medway Council, Kent County Council, NHS organisations, Kent Fire and Rescue, Probation and District Councils.

2. Background

- 2.1. Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy 2020-2023 is a joint strategy that was agreed by Medway's Cabinet in November 2020¹. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 29 April 2021 and requires Tier 1 Authorities (for Kent with support from Tier 2 authorities) to;
- a) Create a Local Partnership Board with responsibility for conducting a needs assessment (forming a gap analysis on safe accommodation support). *Medway have expanded their Local Partnership Board to comply with the Act and have completed this gap analysis.*
 - b) Complete a Domestic Abuse Strategy on safe accommodation, regulations have recently been revised, the draft must now be published by the 26th October 2021 and finalised by the 5th January 2022. *This paper (if approved) delivers this requirement.*
 - c) Undertake commissioning activity in relation to accommodation-based services for both adult survivors and their children informed by the need's assessment. *This is being progressed by Strategic Housing in partnership with Public Health.*
 - d) Monitor delivery against the strategy. *Mechanisms are in place to monitor delivery through the Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board*

This paper focuses on the safe accommodation addendum to the existing Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy which begins on page 22 of the attached document.

- 2.2. Safe Accommodation may be Refuge, Dispersed Accommodation and Sanctuary (target hardened properties). Additional needs, overcoming barriers and complexities will be met through wrap around services. This blended model of accommodation and support will mean better support for women, men and children facing domestic abuse.

3. Options

The following options are available to the Cabinet:

- 3.1. Option 1: To agree the updated Strategy, including the Safe Accommodation Addendum. The Council must publish the complete strategy by 5th January 2022 or it will fail to meet a requirement of the DA Act and in accordance with the Domestic Abuse Support (Local Authorities Strategies and Annual Reports) Regulations 2021. This is the recommended Option.
- 3.2. Option 2: To not agree the updated Strategy. This would risk the Council failing to meet its statutory requirements.

¹ <https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=4749>

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1. The statutory guidance linked to part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act is still in draft, but guidance available requires that Tier 1 local authorities prepare and publish a strategy (reviewed every three years) which includes;
- current available provision of safe accommodation,
 - details of a gap analysis in safe accommodation, including how current provision meets the needs of different demographic groups,
 - steps which will be taken to address need across demographic characteristics,
 - how we will address barriers faced by victims in accessing services,
 - how support needs for children will be met,
 - a clear approach to how victims crossing local authority boundaries will be accommodated,
 - information on the level of funding committed,
 - how authorities will raise awareness of domestic abuse support.
- 4.2. In order to fulfil these requirements an addendum to the existing Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy has been drafted and is attached. This is currently a draft document awaiting final proof reading and page layout checks. These checks are being completed by colleagues from Kent who will then circulate the final copy for publishing.
- 4.3. The addendum was approved virtually by the Community Safety Partnership SEG and is due to be presented formally at the SEG on 9th November 2021
- 4.4. The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been updated and published. As the strategy seeks to increase access to services across all protected groups through identifying need, and bridging gaps in provision the EqIA shows a positive impact across all protected groups.

5. Risk management

- 5.1. Risks and mitigation are below. Risk scores are after mitigation has been applied.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Fail to comply with law regarding strategy	DA strategy including safer accommodation addendum are not published in a timely manner and the Authority are challenged	Addendum to follow governance and sign off procedure used for existing strategy. Presented to Cabinet November 2021	D2
Fail to provide suitable safe accommodation	Insufficient resources available to provide Refuge,	New burdens funding used by Strategic Housing	D2

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
	dispersed and sanctuary accommodation	to procure and mobilise schemes. Existing funding streams (Housing Related Support budget – general fund) already used to meet demand by refuge provision.	

6. Consultation

- 6.1. The addendum was published for a 6-week consultation and has also been made available in an easy read format.
- 6.2. There were 92 submissions to the consultation from Kent and Medway. 66 people responded as an individual, 14 as a professional and 9 on behalf of an organisation. Organisations represented through responses included Kent Police, Medway Safeguarding Children’s Partnership, Oasis, The PCC, KCC, One Big Family, Porchlight, Chalk Hill Farm Youth Activities, DAVSS, Langley House Trust, Medway Council, Thanet District Council, KCHFT, Enhance Living, ManKind, Gravesham Borough Council and West Kent Housing Association.
- 6.3. The results of the consultation were presented to the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group on 4 October 2021 (Appendix 2)
- 6.4. Areas identified for improvement from the consultation:
- In Kent the areas identified for improvement by the strategy include:
- developing an equitable sanctuary offer,
 - investigating and working to overcome barriers between substance misuse, domestic abuse and mental health services,
 - strengthening support to increase access to settled or move on accommodation so that people can move out of refuge and other safe accommodation when they are ready to do so,
 - consistently funding support for children in safe accommodation, both for children from Kent and those who are from other local authority areas,
 - enhancing specialist support where barriers exist to access, including for men, LGBTQ+ and for those over 50 years old,
 - piloting support in safe accommodation for male survivors,
 - increasing awareness within our workforce of barriers to access,
 - strengthening awareness of available safe accommodation services, and how this can meet need across demographics.

- 6.5. 69 people agreed with these identified areas, 3 did not, 16 agreed with some but not all and 4 were not sure.
- 6.6. In Medway areas for improvement identified by the strategy include improved support for:
- male survivors
 - survivors with multiple needs (such as those with mental health support requirements or people affected by drug or alcohol abuse)
 - survivors with disabilities
 - strengthen available support for children in safe accommodation
 - increasing safe accommodation options for Medway residence
 - developing dispersed accommodation services to support those who may not be able to access refuge
 - enhancing support for those fleeing with animals.
- 6.7. 58 people agreed with these identified areas, 3 did not, 14 agreed with some but not all, 17 were not sure. It should be noted that the majority of responses came from Kent.
- 6.8. Appendix 2 includes the draft 'you said, we did' which detail the changes proposed in response to the consultation.
- 6.9. Key themes include:
- Housing – concern around the availability of housing and how this can make it difficult for people to access accommodation. Also ensuring that housing teams have the right expertise to support victims and survivors.
 - More focus on a whole family approach – more emphasis that all members of a family are victims and survivors of abuse.
 - Accommodation must be flexible to the needs of families in all their forms including those with teenaged/older boys.
 - Support for staying close by and increasing options for this, recognising the importance of formal and informal support networks.
 - More should be done to tackle abusive behaviours and people should not be forced to flee.
 - Having more information around how we will support those with mental health support needs and substance misuse support, also ensuring staff are trauma informed.

7. Climate change implications

- 7.1. No implications.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1. There are no direct financial commitments made in the strategy. The implementation and mobilisation of the safer accommodation elements has been achieved through the use of Additional Burdens funding. We are

currently awaiting confirmation of ongoing funding for future years. The service can be scaled according to the funding that we continue to receive.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1. To comply with the Domestic Abuse Act Medway Council must publish the final version of the complete strategy by 5th January 2022 as set out in the and the Domestic Abuse Support (Local Authorities Strategies and Annual Reports) Regulations 2021. The Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment, which informs commissioning decisions, must be reviewed yearly and refreshed every three years.

10. Recommendation

- 10.1. It is recommended that the Cabinet agrees the addition of the Safe Accommodation Addendum to the existing Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy 2020-2023 and that authority is delegated to the Director of Public Health, in Consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources, to agree the final published version of the document, once the document has been provided by Kent County Council.

11. Suggested reasons for decision

- 11.1. The addendum is required to ensure that the existing strategy complies with the DA Act.
- 11.2. The existing strategy and the addendum are common across Kent and Medway.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – DRAFT Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy 2020-2023 with Addendum: Safe Accommodation (Page 22-33)

Appendix 2 – Summary of Consultation Responses

Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers

[Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy – Cabinet Report, November 2020](#)

Consultation [Documents](#)

<https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/domesticabuseconsultation/widgets/32221/documents>