

**Title:** Housing and domestic abuse: progress report.

**Information/Discussion Report:**

**Recommendations:** DMC is asked to note the report and the accreditation (DAHA) achieved

**Report Summary:** This report provides an update on the work to achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation and work to embed a housing-led response to domestic abuse across Camden.

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a progress report on work to achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation and to embed a housing-led response to domestic abuse across Camden.

**2. Strategic Context: the Council's commitment to tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)**

2.1 We Make Camden is the joint vision for the borough, developed in partnership with the community. It sets out the ambition for everyone in Camden to have a place they call home and key to this is the challenge that "everyone is safe at home and safe in our communities". Tackling violence against women and girls is an organisational priority for Camden – and the Council is committed to taking a stand, working with partners, community groups and people with lived experience, recognising that violence against women and girls is a whole-Council and whole Cabinet issue – with responsibility to protect women and girls in Camden and enable them to live safe and flourishing lives.

2.2 Despite the Council's commitment to tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, the social housing and homelessness sector more broadly is under immense pressure and the scale and challenge of achieving DAHA Accreditation within these conditions cannot be underestimated. Homeless presentations at the Council have risen sharply and are on track to have increased by almost 61% at the start of this year compared to 2022. Alongside this, austerity-driven policy changes, including bedroom tax, rent caps, Universal Credit, Right to Buy, and many more, have led to more than £168 million lost in revenue for Camden to spend on the improvement of social

housing. This all has implications on the quality of housing and services that residents receive. The Council is therefore having to be smarter about where and how it invests in improvement across its housing service and is doing so through the Housing Transformation Programme.

### **3. Context and background: domestic abuse and housing**

- 3.1 Domestic abuse is a high harm, high volume crime that remains largely hidden. It has a profoundly traumatic and disruptive impact on the lives of survivors, their families, and communities. Domestic abuse is a highly gendered crime, which disproportionately affects women and people with minoritised gender-identities: the Crime Survey of England and Wales estimates that 1 in 5 women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. Research from Stonewall has found that 80% of trans people in Scotland have experienced domestic abuse (Stonewall, 2018). The majority of domestic homicide victims are women. National evidence shows that domestic abuse differentially and disproportionately impacts structurally marginalised communities, for example, disabled people experience disproportionately high rates of domestic abuse and experience domestic abuse that is more severe, more frequent and lasts for longer periods (Public Health England, 2015).
- 3.2 Housing is a primary barrier for survivors attempting to leave abusive situations. According to figures by Safelives, over half of survivors need support to help them stay in their own home or move to new accommodation. The links between domestic abuse and homelessness are clear: 1 in 5 women who have experienced violence become homeless, compared with just 1 percent of women who have not experienced violence (Centre for Homelessness Impact, 2021). 61% of homeless women and 16% of homeless men have experienced domestic abuse (All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness, 2019), 52% of domestic abuse (DA) survivors need support to stay in their home or move to new accommodation (Safe Lives, 2019). In Camden, approximately one in ten people approaching the Homelessness Prevention Service report that they are homeless because of domestic abuse.
- 3.3 Domestic abuse is not only a cause of homelessness, but also a consequence of homelessness. The University of York found that 51% of homeless women that they surveyed in Camden reported that they had been subject to sexual violence or rape (University of York, 2021). This stark data underscores the necessity of a robust and integrated domestic abuse and housing support offer.

### **4. Progress report**

- 4.1 A report was brought to Housing Scrutiny Committee on February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2024, entitled: 'Housing's response to domestic abuse: update on progress'. It set

out the Council's work to achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation and following areas of prioritised work:

- Co-create a Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy
  - Revise and develop new domestic violence and abuse (DVA) procedures
  - Develop a Domestic Abuse 'Early Detectors' network
  - Develop a Perpetrator Intervention Pathway
  - Adapt case management systems
  - Embed improvements from the DVA Homelessness sprint
  - Embed DVA expertise through a revised DVA learning offer
  - Embed the DVA Points Panel
- 4.2 All of these commitments have been progressed. This report provides an overview of these achievements and details the ongoing work to achieve DAHA Accreditation.
- 4.3 **DVA and Housing Policy:**
- 4.3.1 In early 2025, a **Resident-facing Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy** and accompanying **'Know your rights' Survivors' Housing and Domestic Abuse handbook** will be launched. Both documents have been co-produced with people with lived experience of domestic abuse, homelessness, and housing insecurity. This work took place in two phases: in phase one, over forty hours of interviews with people with lived experience of VAWG were conducted, homelessness, and housing insecurity and partner organisations. Following this, a co-production steering group was established, comprised of survivors with lived experience of domestic abuse. This group helped to co-design, author and edit the policy and handbook.
- 4.3.2 The policy sets the strategic direction for Camden's Housing and DVA work. As a Resident-facing document, it clearly outlines the housing support available to DVA survivors, as well as Camden's responsibilities and the trauma-informed approach that will be followed. The handbook aligns with Camden's vision to embed a rightsbased approach to housing support - by providing survivors with detailed information on their housing rights and options and Local Authority duties; it supports selfadvocacy and accountability. This work has received accolade and recognition: Camden was invited to present the work at a national panel on 'The Importance of Survivor Voice in Housing's Response to Domestic Abuse' coordinated by DAHA.
- 4.4 **DVA and Council tenants:**
- 4.4.1 A new **DVA procedure** was launched in April 2024 in the Neighbourhoods service which works with Council tenants. The procedure provides a clear framework for providing support to council tenants and their household members who are experiencing domestic abuse. It seeks to embed a safety

and survivor-led approach. A forensic and evidence-based approach was taken during procedure development, this included: case reviews and audits of all live DVA cases open to the service, comparative analysis with core datasets, such as Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), a meeting where local agencies share information about domestic abuse victims who are at high risk, housing allocations data, and extensive survivor and staff engagement through interviews and structured workshops. The procedure embeds **new assessment tools** and **risk frameworks**, clear and bespoke pathways for tenancy sustainment, emergency and long-term housing, guidance on risk-based perpetrator accountability work and exclusion tools, and clearly delineated roles and responsibilities.

4.4.2 The procedure is supported by a **compulsory level one to three domestic abuse training** programme. This includes:

- Level 1: DVA Awareness and Assessment - **92%** of staff Neighbourhood housing teams have completed this, with additional dates set in 2025.
- Level 2: Perpetrator Accountability and Housing Management - **74%** of staff have **completed** this, with additional dates set in 2025.
- Level 3: Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) Risk Assessment Training & Safeguarding – which will take place in early 2025.

4.4.3 The work is underpinned by robust case management and oversight systems, including a **new DVA Dashboard** to allow effective monitoring of cases and monthly reporting to a Neighbourhoods DVA working group. Domestic abuse expertise has been embedded into the service with a new specialist **Domestic Abuse Complex Case Coordinator** (Neighbourhoods) role, who will be in post for one year. In addition to this, a weekly **Domestic Abuse Multi-disciplinary Team**, providing case consultation and direction to DVA survivors living within Camden's Council housing stock has been embedded.

#### 4.5 **DVA & Homelessness:**

4.5.1 In October 2024, a new **Homelessness and Domestic Abuse procedure** was launched. This procedure is centred on providing robust, tightly coordinated and survivor-led housing support and introduces new assessment tools, a risk framework, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Procedure development was supported by a ten-day DVA sprint workshop and robust data analysis, including audits of 46% of identified DVA cases open to the Homelessness prevention team in Q2 and 3 2023. This procedure is supported by an accompanying **Housing, Homelessness, and DVA toolkit** that was developed with frontline staff. This toolkit aims to strengthen the offer for survivor's by ensuring that teams can easily access the information needed to provide integrated and top-tier advice.

4.5.2 A new case management system, Locata, has been launched with a **bespoke domestic abuse workflow** and integrated domestic abuse assessment tools. This facilitates improved oversight and monitoring of domestic abuse cases to ensure that all residents are receiving a high-quality service. DVA expertise has been further embedded within the service through a new **DVA Complex Case Coordinator** (Homelessness) role and two domestic abuse specialist homelessness prevention advisors.

4.5.3 A **specialist, compulsory level one to three domestic abuse learning offer** for Homelessness Prevention Advisors is being rolled out. This covers:

- Level 1: Domestic Violence and Abuse Awareness and Housing Law – training is underway, with a final session scheduled in January 2025.
- Level 2: DVA Assessment and Housing Options - which will be rolled out in January 2025.
- Level 3: DVA Risks and Safeguarding - which will be rolled out in February 2025.

4.5.4 The expanded practise-based learning offers further support staff development: the weekly **'VAWG Thinking Together'** drop-in for Housing Solutions staff now includes the Council's Perpetrator Lead. To date, the drop-in has provided specialist VAWG case consultation support to 141 homelessness cases.

4.5.5 The work to support multiply disadvantaged and street homeless DVA survivors has been strengthened: there are **ninety bedspaces within women-only projects** in the Adult and Off-the-streets pathways, 40 of which are within VAWG specialist provision and 33 are within multiple-disadvantage specialist provision. Work continues to embed gender-informed approaches to women's homelessness, through an **intelligence-led verification pilot** and annual delivery of the **Women's Homelessness Census**.

#### 4.6 **Domestic Abuse Early Detectors Network:**

4.6.1 In September 2024, the 'DVA Early Detectors' network was launched for Camden staff working across repairs, caretaking, property management, cleaning, and transport services. The network provides a framework for staff to identify and respond to domestic abuse through a clear DVA procedure. A bespoke training film for Camden was co-created with staff. The network utilises the community expertise and unique access of these teams to improve identification and strengthen pathways into domestic abuse support for residents. This enables survivors to access support from officers who are closely embedded within communities and who are equipped with the skills to identify and respond to DVA in a safe and trauma-informed way. So far over **250 staff have completed the training**, with more sessions scheduled through-out 2025.

## 4.7 Allocations:

- 4.7.1 Camden is in the process of reviewing its housing Allocation scheme with a view to making both minor and major changes. An accompanying report to the January Scrutiny Committee summarises minor changes to the scheme which have been adopted. Part of the minor changes to the allocations scheme involves bringing the language of the scheme in line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and differentiating between domestic abuse and other kinds of violence and harassment. The Council will be reviewing the impact of the allocation policy on those fleeing domestic violence and abuse when reviewing and consulting on major changes to the policy.
- 4.7.2 The test and learn '**DVA Points Assessment Panel**' pilot has now been embedded which provides structure and due process to the assessment of applications made for 'Group D: Violence and Harassment' points under the Allocations Scheme 2018. The panel was designed in response to a growing body of research that has found that assessments of abuse risks undertaken by professionals without DVA expertise systematically results in an undervaluation of DVA risk factors, including the risk of domestic homicide. The panel responds to this risk by integrating domestic abuse expertise into the allocations process: with a manager from Camden Safety Net, the Council's in-house domestic abuse and sexual violence service, sitting as a member of the panel. Through this, barriers have been removed whilst ensuring statutory compliance by rolling-out a template referral form. This allows the panel to receive the core information needed for assessment purposes without adopting a blanket approach to evidence that could exclude many survivors. Impact is measured through a DVA Points Panel dashboard, which captures outcomes, housing and support need data, and demographics information. The panel has facilitated positive outcomes for residents: between October 26th, 2023, and 16th October 2024, 178 cases were heard at the panel, of these 122 awarded points.

## 4.8 Perpetrator accountability

4.8.1 The **perpetrator intervention schemes and pathways** have been embedded through the Drive Programme and Restart. Drive work with high-risk, harm-harm cases and the intervention can be composed of one-to-one support, behaviour change work, and/or disruption actions. Restart is a specialist early intervention, case management, and assessment programme for standard – medium risk cases for families that are open to Children's Services. This includes the Cranstoun partnership, which features a bespoke **perpetrator accommodation pathway**. This pathway enables the perpetrator to leave the family home for the duration of the intervention and prevents the survivor and their family having to flee. In addition to this, the team is developing an **in-house perpetrator intervention** programme, with recruitment due to commence in early 2025.

4.8.2 In August 2024, a **Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Panel (DAPP)** was launched, a joint endeavour between Camden Council and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) with involvement of statutory and voluntary sector organisations. It is a multiagency forum for professionals to share and discuss information relevant to the effective case-management of high-risk domestic abuse perpetrators.

4.8.3 In addition to this, the **specialist DVA perpetrator training** has been delivered across the Housing Directorate and to externally commissioned homelessness services. This includes bespoke training for Neighbourhoods teams, 'Safe and Together Model' training, and a large-scale roll-out of "Confidence in Complexity: working with multiply disadvantaged survivors and perpetrators in homeless settings".

## 4.9 Communication campaigns

4.9.1 In November 2024, a multi-channel, community-wide domestic abuse awareness campaign was launched entitled '**Know you're not Alone**'. The campaign featured nine DVA awareness posters (appendix 1), digital comms across social media and the website, print, and an in-person workshop series. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the support available to people in Camden who are experiencing or at risk of domestic violence and abuse and to build awareness of the signs of abuse to ensure that staff, partners, family members, residents and others know how they can help survivors.

4.9.2 A key campaign objective is to reach groups that are currently underrepresented within VAWG and DVA support services both locally and nationally. To support this, an **evidence-led approach** to campaign development was taken: utilising service and census level-data to identify under-represented groups for targeted comms. Following this, collaborative design methodologies were used to build campaign insights. This involved delivering consultation sessions with local partners, specialist by-and-for groups, and a domestic abuse co-production group. This included, Stay Safe East, Sign Health, National Domestic Abuse Helpline, Hopscotch Women's Centre, Somali Cultural Centre, Camden Safety Net, and Camden Voices Against Abuse.

4.9.3 The campaign launched on White Ribbon Day as part of a full VAWG programme delivered for the 16 days of Activism, featuring daily 'lunch and learn' sessions with voluntary and charity sector partners and 'specialist by and for' organisations such as Women at the Well, Solace, Jewish Women's Aid, Asian Women's Resource Centre. Campaign materials are also being distributed via resident networks with information about the campaign going on Housing District Management Committee microsites.

- 4.9.4 In addition to this, housing and VAWG content on the website has been refreshed in partnership with people with lived experience, to ensure that content is accessible, includes the appropriate level of advice and information, and reflects the core message: that support is available. To strengthen accessibility, **translated domestic abuse and housing overview** pages have been produced in six key languages spoken within Camden as well as an Easy-read format.
- 4.9.5 In January 2025, **'No place for abuse'**, a housing sub-campaign of 'Know You're Not Alone' will be launched. This will aim to promote and increase referrals into the housing and homelessness support available for people who are experiencing, or at risk of, domestic abuse. The campaign will promote the DVA Housing Policy and 'Know your rights' Survivors' Housing and Domestic Abuse handbook and highlight the key routes into support.

## **5. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services**

- 5.1 In December 2021 the Council added £400,000 a year to its General Fund budget to expand its work tackling Violence Against Women and Girls. The work described in this paper is either funded from this expanded budget or from existing General Fund and Housing Revenue Account service budgets elsewhere in the Council.

## **6. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

- 6.1 There are no relevant legal implications for this report which provides an update to the Committee on work to achieve the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation taking place across the Council.
- 6.2 Consideration should be given and advice sought from Legal Services in relation to the appropriate governance process should any policies require decision and publication by the Council.

## **7. Environmental Implications**

- 7.1 There are no environmental implications.

## **8. Appendices**

Appendix 1: 'Know You're Not Alone' campaign posters



**Report Ends**