

Equality Impact Assessment Template

Please complete this template using the [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance document](#)

Version 4: January 2019

Title of proposal <i>(include forward plan reference if available)</i>	Domestic abuse safe accommodation strategy 2021-24
Directorate and Service Area	Domestic Abuse Team, Community Safety & Resilience, Borough Economy
Name and title of Lead Officer completing this EIA	Maryrose Lappin Domestic Abuse Team Manager
Contact Details	maryrose_lappin@sandwell.gov.uk
Names and titles of other officers involved in completing this EIA	None
Partners involved with the EIA where jointly completed	None
Date EIA completed	10 November 2021
Date EIA signed off or agreed by Director or Executive Director	
Name of Director or Executive Director signing off EIA	Nicholas Austin
Date EIA considered by Cabinet Member	15 December 2021

See [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance](#) for key prompts that must be addressed for all questions

1. The purpose of the proposal or decision required (Please provide as much information as possible)

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a new statutory duty on local authorities for the provision of specialist support for victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation. This duty requires that a safe accommodation needs assessment is undertaken which informs a safe accommodation strategy, the final version of which should be published by 5 January 2022. The Cabinet report seeks approval for the domestic abuse safe accommodation strategy 2021-24 which has been informed by a robust needs assessment.

Final [Statutory guidance](#) on the new duty for local authorities was issued by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) on 1 October 2021. The guidance outlines the definition of safe accommodation. The Act also outlines the requirement for support services to include a range of services namely: advocacy, prevention, advice, specialist support for both adults and children, counselling and therapy.

The domestic abuse safe accommodation strategy outlines commitments on the provision of specialist support to all victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation, thus enabling Sandwell MBC to meet the statutory duty.

2. Evidence used/considered

A Domestic Abuse safe accommodation needs assessment was undertaken in 2021 to inform the domestic abuse safe accommodation strategy 2021-24. The key findings from the needs assessment are included in the strategy, which also outlines how the identified issues will be addressed.

The needs assessment identified that the existing safe accommodation system in Sandwell is highly effective. However, it also identified some further work needed to improve the response which victims receive.

The strategy identifies three themes that will be delivered via a range of actions and initiatives as follows:

1. Improving the survivors' recovery journey;
2. Enhancing the ability for survivors to stay in their own home;
3. Developing a more responsive and cohesive system.

3. Consultation

Linxs Consultancy were commissioned by Sandwell MBC to undertake an independent domestic abuse needs assessment and develop a domestic abuse strategy. The first phase of this work has focused on the safe accommodation element, in order to meet the statutory duty to publish a draft safe accommodation strategy by 25 October and a final safe accommodation strategy by 5 January 2022. Work on the wider domestic abuse needs assessment and domestic abuse strategy is underway and this will be covered in a separate report to Cabinet in early 2022.

Consultation to date has involved a range of stakeholders and victims-survivors of domestic abuse in the production of the safe accommodation needs assessment which has informed the safe accommodation strategy. Feedback from victims-survivors on their pathway journey through services was gained via an online survey and via one-to-one consultations. Data and feedback was also provided by a range of partner organisations and stakeholders. A multi-agency task and finish group has overseen the development of the safe accommodation needs assessment and strategy, which has reported to the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP).

All partners involved in the DASP have been consulted on the safe accommodation needs assessment and DASP/task and finish group has agreed the draft safe accommodation strategy.

4. Assess likely impact

The domestic abuse safe accommodation strategy outlined in the Cabinet report includes the delivery of specialist support to all victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation. The details of how this will be addressed are outlined in the Domestic Abuse safe accommodation strategy 2021-24.

The strategy reflects the cultural and demographic diversity of Sandwell and outlines specialist support which will be accessible to all victims and delivered in a sensitive way which considers individual needs in respect of age, ethnic origin, care and support needs, language, culture, religion or faith, sexuality, disability or any other lifestyle preference.

Please see further details below.

Please complete the table below at 4a to identify the likely impact on specific protected characteristics

4a. Use the table to show:

- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a negative impact on any of the equality strands (protected characteristics), that is it could disadvantage them or if there is no impact, please note the evidence and/or reasons for this.
- Where you think that the strategy, project or policy could have a positive impact on any of the groups or contribute to promoting equality, equal opportunities or improving relationships within equality characteristics.

Protected Characteristic	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact	Reason and evidence (Provide details of specific groups affected even for no impact and where negative impact has been identified what mitigating actions can we take?)
	✓	✓	✓	
Age			✓	Anyone can experience domestic abuse. Overall in the UK, one in 4 women and one in 6 men will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime, often with years of psychological abuse. It happens across all cultures and whether you are rich or poor. It happens in all kinds of relationships: heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. Older victims are already less likely to report domestic abuse and seek help and support. The safe accommodation strategy will mean that opportunities for older victims to secure help and support will be enhanced. Domestic abuse also has a significant and detrimental effect on children's physical and mental health and well-being which have a long-term impact. The proposals in the strategy to deliver specialist support will ensure there is support to victims and their children in safe accommodation.

Disability			✓	As above. National and local data inform that victims with a disability are often reluctant to ask for help and support. For example, their perpetrator may be their partner who is also be their provider of care. The safe accommodation strategy will mean that opportunities for victims with a disability to secure help and support in safe accommodation will be provided.
Gender reassignment			✓	As above. Victims who have gender reassignment are often reluctant to seek help and support and are under-represented in support services. The safe accommodation strategy will mean that opportunities for victims with gender reassignment to secure help and support in safe accommodation will be provided.
Marriage and civil partnership			✓	See above. People in civil partnerships, where two people are of the same gender are known to be less likely to report domestic abuse and sexual violence. The safe accommodation strategy will mean that opportunities for those victims to secure help and support in safe accommodation will be provided.
Pregnancy and maternity			✓	Domestic abuse often starts or escalates during pregnancy. The safe accommodation strategy will mean that opportunities for those victims to secure help and support in safe accommodation will be provided.

Race			✓	See above. Victims from black and minority ethnic communities face additional barriers to reporting domestic abuse and accessing services. The safe accommodation strategy will mean that opportunities for those victims to secure help and support in safe accommodation will be provided.
Religion or belief			✓	See above. Victims from particular communities, including communities of religion or belief, can face additional barriers to reporting domestic abuse and sexual violence and accessing services. The safe accommodation strategy will mean that opportunities for those victims to secure help and support in safe accommodation will be provided.
Sex			✓	Whilst men do experience domestic abuse, the majority of victims reporting to police and seeking access to specialist services are women. The needs assessment identifies that men are reluctant to come forward and seek help and few referrals are made for safe accommodation for men. The safe accommodation strategy will mean that opportunities for male victims to secure help and support in safe accommodation will be provided.
Sexual orientation			✓	See above. Domestic abuse happens in all kinds of relationships: heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. However, those victims are often reluctant to report and seek help. The safe accommodation strategy will mean that opportunities for those victims to secure help and support in safe accommodation will be provided.

Other				
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Does this EIA require a full impact assessment? Yes No

If there are no adverse impacts or any issues of concern or you can adequately explain or justify them, then you do not need to go any further. You have completed the screening stage. You must, however, complete sections 7 and 9 and publish the EIA as it stands.

If you have answered yes to the above, please complete the questions below referring to the guidance document.

5. What actions can be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts?

Not applicable

6. As a result of the EIA what decision or actions are being proposed in relation to the original proposals?

To continue with the recommendations.

7. Monitoring arrangements

The implementation of the domestic abuse safe accommodation strategy will be regularly monitored, and reports provided to the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership.

8. Action planning

None

9. Publish the EIA

This EIA will be published as part of the Cabinet Report and will be available on Corporate Management Information System of Sandwell Council.

Where can I get additional information, advice and guidance?

In the first instance, please consult the accompanying guide “Equality Impact Assessment Guidance”

Practical advice, guidance and support

Help and advice on undertaking an EIA or receiving training related to equalities legislation and EIAs is available to **all managers** across the council from officers within Service Improvement. The officers within Service Improvement will also provide overview quality assurance checks on completed EIA documents.

Please contact:

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