

Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Board

Report Title	Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021 - 2024
Item for decision or information?	Information
Sponsor	Sarah Scott, Executive Director of Public Health and Adult Social Care
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Organisation	Gloucestershire County Council
Key Issues:	
<p>The new Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021 – 2024 reflects our commitment to ensuring an ongoing robust response to domestic abuse in the county, and fulfils the statutory requirement set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.</p> <p>This report outlines the findings of the recent domestic abuse needs assessment and how the recommendations from that report have informed the development of the new strategy, giving us five priorities over the next three years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention and early intervention • Multi-agency working and pathway development • Workforce development • High quality service provision for victims and their families • Working to break the cycle of perpetrator behaviour <p>The next steps are outlined and the Board is asked to support the priorities identified in the Strategy and the development of the multi-agency delivery plan.</p>	
Recommendations to Board:	
<p>The board is recommended to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the development of the Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021 – 2024. 2. Support the priorities identified in the strategy and the development of the multi-agency delivery plan. 	
Financial/Resource Implications:	
<p>The DLUHC has allocated new burdens funding to support local authorities to meet their statutory duties in relation to providing support to domestic abuse</p>	

victims in safe accommodation. This is an annual, non-ring-fenced, grant. In 2021/22 the county council has been allocated £1,105,661 for this purpose. The district councils have been allocated a combined total of £198,956 to cover their administrative burdens. It should be noted that the Strategy is wider than our statutory duties and the delivery plan will need to be appropriately resourced.

Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021 – 2024

1. Background

Domestic abuse (DA) is a widespread societal issue, estimated to have impacted on 2.3 million people in the year ending March 2020¹. Despite its widespread prevalence, domestic abuse is still widely recognised as an underreported crime. It remains relatively hidden, even though its impact on the individual, community and society is significant.

Domestic abuse is estimated to cost society in England and Wales £66 Billion annually, with considerable costs to the economy, health services, criminal justice responses and most significantly the human cost, with physical and emotional harms incurred by victims estimated to cost £47 billion annually².

The impact and prevalence of domestic abuse has in recent years, received a greater profile nationally, in the main, thanks to the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021³ which received Royal Assent in April. The Act sets out a range of both legislative and non-legislative measures designed to;

- Protect and support victims of domestic abuse
- Transform the justice process to prioritise victim safety and provide an effective response to perpetrators
- Drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas, agencies and sectors.

Part 4 of the Act introduces a new statutory duty on local authorities, placing clearer accountability on local areas to ensure the needs of victims within refuges and other forms of domestic abuse safe accommodation are met in a consistent way. New Burdens funding has been allocated to local authorities to cover the costs of the new duty to provide support in safe accommodation for 2021-22 and Gloucestershire

¹ [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-domestic-abuse>

³ [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

County Council has received £1,105,661 for this purpose. The district councils have been allocated a combined total of £198,956 to cover their administrative burdens.

Under the new duty, tier one authorities are required to appoint a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (DA LPB) to support them in undertaking local needs assessments, including developing and monitoring local strategies, and mapping activities, ensuring representation of marginalised groups and those who are underrepresented in local services.

The Local Partnership Boards are required to: assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support for all victims in their area, including those who require cross-border support; develop and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their locality, having regard to the needs' assessment; give effect to the strategy (through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions) and monitor and evaluate its effectiveness. Tier one authorities are required to deliver their strategy, and report back annually to Government. The duty also requires tier two authorities to co-operate with the lead tier one authority.

Gloucestershire already had a domestic abuse partnership structure prior to the DA Act 2021 and it was from this strong baseline that the new DA LPB was convened, consisting of a strategic group, an operational group and a consultation group led by a Consultation Officer. The DA LPB has been meeting on a regular basis since April to progress the work around the statutory duties including development of the needs assessment and strategy and to agree recommendations for spend of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (now Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)) grant.

2. Needs Assessment

The Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment was completed as part of the statutory duty within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to assess need for support within specialist domestic abuse accommodation. The DA LPB chose to widen the scope of the needs' assessment beyond just accommodation-based support to include domestic abuse specialist community-based support services as well as Stalking, Honour Based Abuse, Forced Marriage and Child to Parent Abuse.

The data provided within the needs' assessment covered the years 2017/18-2019/20. Additional data was sought for 2020/21 wherever available. A range of agencies provided data and the views of those with lived experience and the general community were sort through an independent engagement and consultation service.

The needs assessment considered the national context of domestic abuse as well as the local picture. It mapped the local provision of both accommodation and community-based support services in the county and looked at how Gloucestershire currently responds to perpetrators of domestic abuse. Whilst the needs assessment

primarily considers victims 16+ it did also look at the impact of domestic abuse on children in the county.

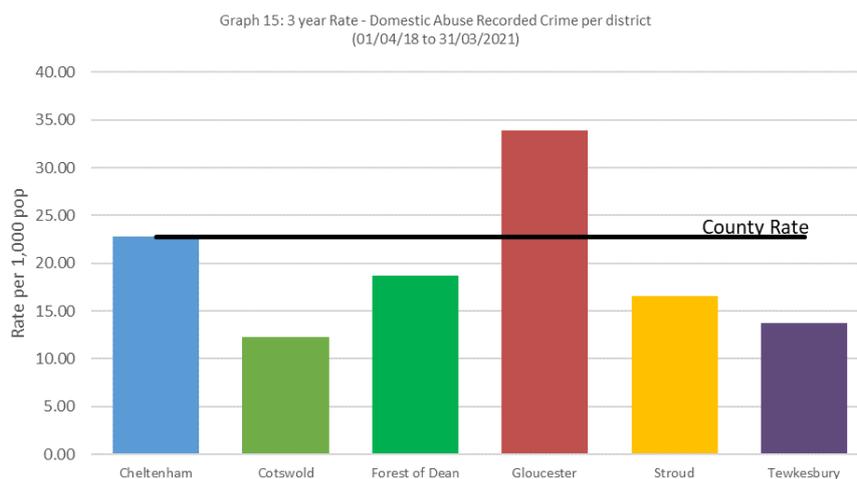
The following were outside of the scope of the assessment: sexual violence; Female Genital Mutilation; modern slavery; female prisoners and teenage relationship abuse.

2.1 Key Findings

2.1.1 DA Crimes in Gloucestershire

Domestic abuse recorded crimes within Gloucestershire have continued to increase year on year, most notably with a 45% increase from 2018/19 to 2019/20. During 2019/20, domestic abuse crimes accounted for 13% of all crime reported to Gloucestershire Constabulary and 38% of all 'Violence Against the Person' crimes. Interestingly, whilst the pandemic saw a drop in reported domestic abuse, DA accounted for the same proportion of all crime during this time period. The rate of Domestic Abuse crimes per 1000 of the population in Gloucestershire is 8.25 (2020/21) and between 75-78% of victims were recorded as female with the majority aged between 25-34.

The highest rates of domestic abuse are recorded within Gloucester and there is a clear link with our most deprived neighbourhoods with a rate of 64 DA crimes per 1000 of the population within communities that fall within the most deprived 20% of England. 'Westgate 5' has the highest rate seen in the county - 11x the county rate and 5x the rate for Gloucester district as a whole. It should be noted that this figure relates to incidents that are reported that occur in public as well as to incidents occurring in individual households.



Graph 1: 3-year rate – Domestic Abuse Recorded Crime per district
(01/04/2018 – 31/03/2021)

2.1.2 Accommodation-Based Support

District Homeless applications:

Homeless cases presenting with domestic abuse to District Councils have increased year on year, with a 36% increase from 2018/19 to 2019/20 and a further 6% increase in 2020/21 (the majority within Gloucester). For 2020/21 466 DA homeless cases were recorded by the District Councils (53% were for Gloucester). Overall for the county, between 61-69% of applications will result in placement in temporary accommodation. There is limited access to Domestic Abuse Specific Safe Accommodation in Gloucestershire.

Places of Safety:

Between 1st April 2018 and the 31st December 2020 45 cases were placed in this DA specific safe accommodation. During this same time period 105 cases were not able to be accommodated in Places of Safety (POS) and other solutions had to be found. The majority of victims accessing this provision were already in social housing accommodation when they required POS.

Refuge:

Requests for refuge space account for 1% of all Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) contacts. Stroud Beresford refuge is only able to offer safe accommodation for 27% of those referred, resulting in 90 victims recorded as being denied refuge space in 2019/20 (and this is likely to be an underrepresentation).

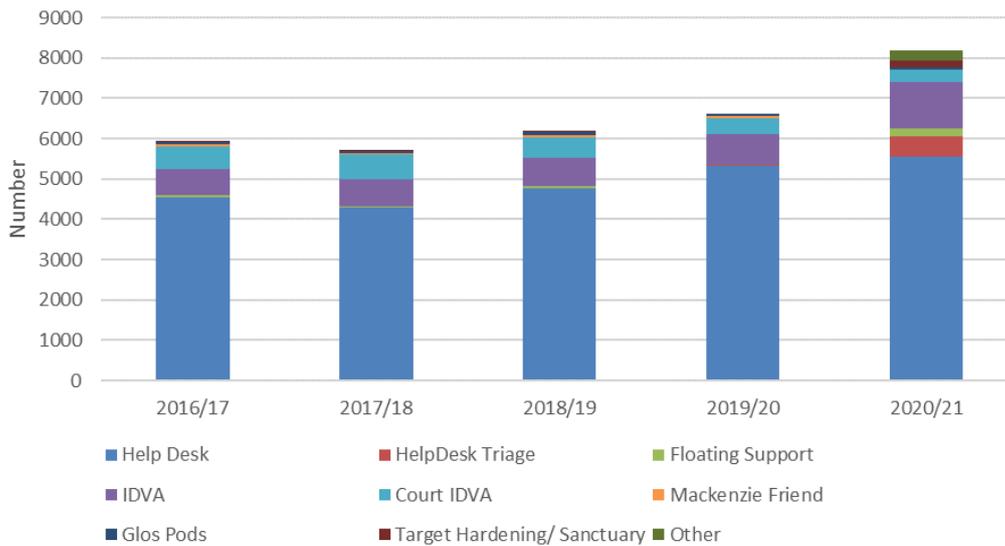
Issues with access to DA safe accommodation:

There are a number of issues that might impede access to DA safe accommodation. These include the amount of spaces available; access for those with no recourse to public funds; whether or not the accommodation is suitable for those with more complex needs; suitability and availability of accommodation for those with larger families or older male teenagers; availability of accommodation for those with specific needs and a lack of move-on options.

2.1.3 Community Based Support

Referrals in to GDASS have increased year on year with a 24% increase from 2019/20 to 2020/21 (more than 7000 referrals in 2020/21) with the majority of these referrals entering the service via the helpdesk. 14% of referrals in 2020/21 were for the IDVA service for high risk victims of DA and 64% of referrals made to GDASS come from the police (a considerably higher level than seen nationally at 21% police referrals into similar services).

Graph 37: New referrals to GDASS based on service offer for years 16/17, 17/18, 18/19, 19/20 and 20/21



Graph 2: New referrals to GDASS based on service offer for years 16/17, 17/18, 18/19, 19/20 and 2020/21

14% of referrals were for male victims (compared with 4% nationally). Victims from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority groups are more likely to disengage from the service than victims from 'white ethnicities' and we found underrepresentation of LGBTQ victims who were also more likely to disengage than those identifying as heterosexual.

2.1.4 Perpetrators

Police recorded DA perpetrators:

93% of DA perpetrators are male (20/21) with the majority aged between 25-34 (rate of 2.71 domestic abuse offenders per 1000 of the pop. for this age group). 10% were recorded as being from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority backgrounds (compared with 4% of pop.). This increases to 13% when looking at MARAC cases. Between 60-70% of MARAC perpetrators were noted as serial/repeat perpetrators.

Probation - Building Better Relationships:

We found that there were low numbers of positive completions of the Building Better Relationships programme although the numbers were increasing (43 in 2019/20, an increase from 23 in 17/18). In addition, there were 17 positive completions of the Respectful Relationships Course.

Positive Relationships Gloucestershire (PRG):

There is an increase year on year in the number of referrals to the PRG service and 60 perpetrators took up the offer of an intervention (following suitability assessment) in 2019/20 with 70% of those completing the service intervention. The majority of referrals into the service are from Children's Social Care and self-referrals (mainly for Gloucester and Cheltenham).

2.1.5 Children and Vulnerable Adults

Children:

30% of all children's social care (CSC) referrals are made with a concern for domestic abuse, accounting for around 6000 referrals between 2018 and 2021. The largest volume of CSC referrals for DA were made for the Forest of Dean. There is again, a link to our most deprived communities.

For 2020/21, GDASS recorded 8138 children connected to victims of domestic abuse with the majority of these children aged 10 and under. 7% of high-risk victims were recorded as being pregnant.

In the 2020 Pupil Wellbeing Survey (a voluntary survey run in our schools every other year), 10% of pupils completing the service noted not feeling safe at home and 20% reported a personal experience of DA and/or witnessing DA. 8% reported a need for more support and education for DA.

The 2019 Violence Prevention Needs Assessment that 24% of youth violent offenders had disclosed witnessing DA at home (compared with estimates of 14% of children nationally).

Vulnerable Adults:

From 01/04/2018 to 31/03/2021 Gloucestershire received 672 safeguarding alerts relating to individuals identified as experiencing domestic abuse. The majority of these alerts were for individuals living within Gloucester (26%) and Cheltenham (21%) and again there was a link to deprivation.

Stalking:

Stalking Crimes in Gloucestershire have increased significantly since 2017/18, with 93 crimes recorded in 17/18 compared with 557 recorded in 20/21. In part this huge increase is reflective of the new service and processes being put in place to identify and address stalking. For 2020/2021 the rate of stalking crimes accounts for 0.87 crimes per 1000 of the population with the highest rate seen in Gloucester at 1.3.

The ISAC service for high risk victims supported 140 victims of stalking in 2020/21 with 69% related to DA. Stranger stalking accounted for 4% of ISAC referrals and 4% were victims stalked by a client.

No link was identified between stalking offenders and deprivation. The themes coming out of the stalking clinic include links to sexual violence, links to social isolation, professionals being stalked as part of their role (health and social care) and gaps in stalker perpetrator interventions.

Honour Based Violence (HBV) and Forced Marriage (FM):

We identified gaps in data in this area and the need for community engagement to help us to understand the picture better. GDASS recorded more than 5 cases of FM and under 10 HBV in 2019/20.

Child to Parent Abuse:

Again, there were gaps in data in this area although since Jan 2021, the support service Parental Education Growth Support (PEGS) received referrals for 21 families from Gloucestershire. There is a need for awareness raising and local provision.

2.2 Needs Assessment Summary and Recommendations

Overall Gloucestershire is a county with well-established domestic abuse partnerships and specialist services that offers a variety of provision to meet the needs of a broad range of victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

Local services are formally accredited in line with national best practice and these services receive a large number of referrals each year to provide support to both victims/survivors, perpetrators and professionals responding to domestic abuse. Services are ever evolving to meet changes in need and demand and regularly look towards innovative practice to continually develop the pathways to support.

The Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (DA LPB) and Coordinated Community Response (CCR) adheres to national standards and the local commissioning arrangements are considered best practice nationally.

There is a clear understanding of the prevalence and impact of domestic abuse locally and the strategic response ensures a focus on all areas of the domestic abuse agenda including: Prevention and early identification; Provision of Service; Partnership working and Perpetrator responses.

The needs assessment concluded that Gloucestershire is well placed to respond to the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and ensure the ongoing implementation of a shared vision and collective aims and objectives to continue the development of the local approach to addressing domestic abuse.

There are however key areas for further development that have been identified by the needs' assessment:

We identified seven overarching areas for development:

- Training for frontline staff across all agencies (early identification & prevention)
- Further development and embedding of DA Pathways (Coordinated Community Response) and partnership approach
- Ongoing awareness raising and community engagement to increase reporting and access to support

- The need to develop a response to DA victims with complex needs &/ or multiple disadvantage/ intersectionality
- The need to take a place-based approach to DA/ deprivation/ access to support
- The need to improve DA data collection across all agencies
- Preparations for new measures introduced in the DA Act 2021

We also found eight themed areas for development:

- **Accommodation based support:** increasing DA specific accommodation across all tenures/ specialist accommodation to meet specific needs (protected characteristics)/ Whole Housing Approach/ consider cross border access to accommodation/ supporting victims with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)
- **Community based support:** capacity within current service (need for growth)/ multi agency engagement & increasing referrals/ engagement with protected characteristics groups (consideration of 'by and for' approach)
- **Perpetrators:** capacity within the service (need for growth)/ increasing perpetrator support 16+/ young people prevention & early intervention/ CJS response to perpetrators/ improvement of arrest rates and crime recording for DA
- **Children & young people:** dedicated services for under 13 witnessing domestic abuse/ capacity within current 13+ service (need for growth)
- **Vulnerable adults:** consider and clarify multi agency response to vulnerable adults experiencing DA
- **Stalking:** capacity within current service (need for growth)/ training and awareness raising/ response to stalking perpetrators/ use of SPOs
- **HBV/ FM:** greater understanding of local need required/ community engagement & awareness raising
- **Child to Parent Abuse:** greater understanding of local need / community engagement & awareness raising/ investment in dedicated services

These were taken forward by the DA LPB in workshops to inform the development of the new Strategy and multi-agency delivery plan.

3. The Strategy

3.1 Vision and principles

The vision of the new Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy is:

For Gloucestershire to be a county where domestic abuse is not tolerated and everybody can live free from abuse and harm, where healthy relationships are the norm and where victims/ survivors and their children have access to the right support at the right time.

For domestic abuse to be everybody's business, where a collaborative approach creates lasting change across our systems and communities, where the voice of the victim is at the heart of our response.

The DA LPB were very keen to ensure that we incorporated learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews into the strategy and delivery plan and this has been embedded in our principles:

- We will respond to our local need based on a needs assessment and lessons learnt from domestic homicide reviews
- We will ensure the voice of the victim is at the heart of our response
- We will work collaboratively to promote a consistent response to domestic abuse across our agencies and communities

3.2 Strategic Priorities

Gloucestershire's priorities have been developed collaboratively through the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and are informed by the National VAWG Strategy and National Statement of Expectations for domestic abuse.

All priorities have been informed by the voice of the victim/survivor and the wider community and place the victim at the centre of service delivery. The continued inclusion of victim/survivor voice will be at the heart of the DA LPB (via the Consultation group).

We have identified five priority areas each of which are further broken down into objectives and the desired outcomes we wish to achieve:

Priority 1: Prevention and early Intervention

Responding to domestic abuse effectively is not just about focusing on high risk victims, but also recognising the need to take a population-based approach, understanding and addressing the underlying causes of domestic abuse and determining which factors may increase risk and how those might be modified. By tackling 'upstream' risk factors we can help to lessen 'downstream' consequences, ensuring that communities and society are strengthened to support people experiencing domestic abuse to be safe, well and resilient.

Objectives:

- To ensure the continued understanding and assessment of the way in which domestic abuse presents within Gloucestershire and the exploration of mechanisms to respond to its root causes.
- To ensure young people are provided with evidence-based education and interventions that promote healthy relationship behaviours and the delivery of messages that prevent the normalisation of abuse.

- To ensure those experiencing domestic abuse can access support at an early stage, preventing the risk of escalation (secondary prevention) and reducing exposure to the harmful consequences of domestic abuse.

Priority 2: Multi-agency working and pathway development

To fully address domestic abuse a clear and robust multi-agency response is required. There is a need to ensure agencies effectively share information, risk assess and collaborate in their response to victims, perpetrators and their families, with clear pathways into specialist support. The Coordinated Community Response (CCR); an approach that Gloucestershire has adopted provides a framework for this approach and is considered to be best practice in responding to domestic abuse.

Objectives:

- To ensure the development and embedding of clear pathways between all agencies and specialist domestic abuse services to provide a consistent approach to victims of domestic abuse and their families and clear joint working arrangements for agencies across Gloucestershire.

Priority 3: Workforce development

To provide a robust countywide response to domestic abuse, we need to ensure professionals across all organisations are skilled in identifying and responding effectively to those vulnerable to domestic abuse both within the community and the workplace.

- To ensure professionals across all agencies have access to specialist training that enables them to feel confident and competent in their response to Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Honour Based Violence, Forced Marriage and Child to Parent Abuse.
- To ensure workplaces and business within Gloucestershire take a proactive approach to addressing domestic abuse and have in place effective policies and procedures which support organisations and staff in their response to colleagues who may be victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Priority 4: High quality service provision for victims and their families

The provision of high-quality domestic abuse services is central to any local response to victims and their families. Service provision needs to be accessible to all victims and be available at the right time to secure their immediate safety and support their longer-term recovery from abuse. Services should be informed by the service user voice to ensure everyone who requires support feels empowered to access it. Services must be flexible to changing demand and need, ensuring appropriate solutions that acknowledge the wide-ranging impact domestic abuse can have.

Objectives:

- Through robust collaboration between Gloucestershire's tier 1 and tier 2 Local Authorities the identified local need for specialist domestic abuse safe accommodation is addressed and the support needs of those accessing safe accommodation are met. This objective supports us to meet our statutory duty, ensuring all victims of domestic abuse and their children have access to the right support within safe accommodation when they need it.
- To ensure the development and delivery of high-quality specialist community-based support for all victims of domestic abuse (aged 13+) and their families that ensures the availability of the right support at the right time.
- To contribute to the development of a countywide approach to complex needs/multiple disadvantage, ensuring that issues relating to domestic abuse victims and perpetrators are considered in any ongoing developments.
- To ensure we take a place-based approach to domestic abuse, recognising the differing needs of individuals and the specific characteristics of communities across the county. For services and activities tackling domestic abuse to be reflective of these characteristics, taking a flexible strengths-based approach.

Priority 5: Working to break the cycle of perpetrator behaviour

To break the cycle of domestic abuse and create lasting change for victims, we need to address perpetrator behaviour, holding individuals to account and providing support that facilitates the development of healthy relationship behaviours; recognising the impact of perpetrator behaviours on families as a whole.

Objectives:

- To ensure the development and delivery of local specialist support for perpetrators of domestic abuse and other harmful relationship behaviours, that addresses these behaviours and creates lasting positive change.
- To ensure a system wide joined up approach to addressing perpetrator behaviour that enables all agencies to identify perpetrators and respond appropriately. To have a robust criminal justice response that brings perpetrators to justice.
- To raise awareness of perpetrator behaviour both in the community and for the individual by enabling people to recognise abusive relationship behaviours, be aware of support available and feel empowered to respond effectively, supporting a county wide approach where domestic abuse is not tolerated.

3.3 Next Steps

The Strategy has now been signed off by the DA LPB and the Safer Gloucestershire Partnership Board and will be published, alongside the needs' assessment, on the GCC website as well as the Glostakeastand website. We are required to publish our strategy by 26th October and for it to be operational by 5th January 2022. Thereafter, strategies must be reviewed every three years.

Successful delivery of this strategy requires strong leadership, commitment and engagement from all partners in Gloucestershire and work has now begun on the delivery plan which will bring life to our priorities and help us achieve our objectives and outcomes. We will be developing actions that will be delivered across the three-year period of the strategy and expect partners to take ownership of and drive forward those actions that they are best qualified to lead. The Safer Gloucestershire Board has asked to be informed of our progress at regular intervals.

We are now also progressing the commissioning activity associated with the MHCLG/ DLUHC grant funding to support us with our statutory duties to provide support in domestic abuse safe accommodation and this we hope will help to address some of the issues identified in our needs' assessment.