

REPORT TO: Housing & Safer Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 18th November 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director - Environment and Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Domestic Abuse Partnership Board

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide an update regarding the work undertaken by the Domestic Abuse Board and the work programme for the period 2025/26.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) The Board notes the development of the statutory Domestic Abuse Partnership Board governance arrangements.**
- 2) Members endorse and comment on the work programme.**
- 3) Members comment on Joint Strategic Needs Analysis or Domestic Abuse (appendix 1).**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 strives to: -

- Promote awareness.
- Protect and support victims.
- Hold perpetrators to account.
- Transform the justice response.
- Improve performance.

3.2 The act places duties on relevant local authorities in England to: -

- Appoint a local Domestic Abuse Multi-Agency Partnership Board which it must consult as it performs specified functions, below.
- Assess or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for accommodation based domestic abuse support in their area for all victims and their children who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those come from outside the area.
- Prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their area having regard to the needs

- assessment.
 - Give effect to the strategy through commissioning and decommissioning decision.
 - Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of the strategy.
 - Report back annually to central government.
- 3.3 Halton's multi-agency domestic abuse partnership board has been through a period of review and reset which has included a review of membership to ensure senior level representation from defined stakeholders, published an interim strategy, mobilised a joint strategic needs assessment, and set out a partnership board work programme supported by a sub-group structure.
- 3.4 The Domestic Abuse Partnership Board is scheduled to meet quarterly however; this has currently been amended to bi-monthly in recognition of the significant work programme to be delivered.
- 3.5 Halton's interim domestic abuse strategy (appendix 2) sets out four strategic priorities: -
- Act before someone is harmed.
 - Increase safety for those at risk.
 - Identify and stop harmful behaviours.
 - Support people to live the life they want after harm occurs.
- 3.6 In responding to the priorities, the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board agreed a sub-group governance establishing four sub-groups titled Prevent, Prepare, Protect and Pursue, each sub-group has a terms of reference responding to one of the strategies core strategic pillars with a Senior Lead Officer Chairing; supported by either the Head of Service for Community Safety & Protection or the Domestic Abuse Manager. These workgroups will collectively operationalise the strategic priorities outlined in the strategy through high-level oversight, partnership coordination, and outcome-driven planning. This governance structure will also ensure the work of the board feeds through to the Boroughs other safeguarding, statutory and scrutiny boards.
- 3.7 Accommodation arrangements for domestic abuse have fed into the emerging Housing Strategy for the borough to ensure statutory requirements are met and there is an improved housing offer for emergency, supported and dispersed accommodation for domestic abuse victims and families in the future.
- 3.8 A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is in draft format (appendix one), it is anticipated that this will be signed off at the board meeting in December. This assessment provides a strategic overview of domestic abuse in Halton, supporting statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and informing future service commissioning, housing strategy, and multi-agency coordination.

3.9 The key findings thus far from the draft assessment are:

- **Prevalence & Risk:** Over 8,200 Halton residents are estimated to have experienced domestic abuse in the past year. Women aged 35–44 are the most affected group.
- **Service Strengths:** Halton’s IDVA service is highly praised for its professionalism and impact. Multi-agency working is supporting improved outcomes.
- **Areas of future focus:**
 - Support for male, LGBTQ+, ethnic minority, disabled and older victims.
 - Refuge and emergency accommodation, especially for complex needs.
 - High rates of victims returning to perpetrators (36.8% vs 3.5% nationally).
 - Waiting lists for mental health and trauma support.
 - Support for children and improving post-court support.

3.10 There are 13 strategic recommendations which the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board are asked to consider including alignment with the housing strategy, increase capacity for meeting demand and assessing complexity, increase trauma informed responses, review support for children affected and explore school-based interventions.

3.11 The JSNA will inform the next iteration of the Domestic Abuse Strategy which will be developed in 2026, to be implemented from 2027 which will be subject to further reports in due course as the strategy is developed.

3.12 The Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner secured funding to commence a ‘breaking the cycle of domestic abuse’ initiative to be piloted in Halton for twelve months which commenced in April.

3.13 The initiative involves commissioned services working in close alignment with Halton’s dedicated domestic abuse services to deliver perpetrator behaviour change. The PCC Office, Council departments, Police and providers have developed joint working arrangements including co-location and shared case management. The project aims to work with perpetrators and their families in Halton to change offending behaviour and break the cycle of abuse. The objectives are: -

- To deliver a service across Halton that looks at multi-disciplinary support a contextual safeguarding approach to address Domestic Abuse.
- Develop behavioural change programmes which provide immediate and longer-term support to both victims and perpetrators, enhancing the offer that is received through the ‘Choices’ provision.
- Ensuring the behavioural change program is supporting and

actively engages with the victim and has a 'whole family' approach.

- Reduce re-offending.
- Increase safety for victims and children safer, and support families to stay together, where it is appropriate.

3.14 Whilst the initiative is a twelve-month programme, there is potential this may be extended as the project has only recently reached a fully staffing compliment, and it has taken some time to align procedures across multiple agencies.

3.15 In addition to the work above, the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, and the Councils Domestic Abuse team are working Adults Safeguarding Board and partner agencies to raise awareness of older persons Domestic Abuse.

3.16 An event is planned for 21st November 2025, bringing together professionals from across the partnership and Halton. The event includes guest speakers from Age UK, Hourglass (domestic abuse charity for older people), and Halton Domestic Abuse Team to discuss prevention and best practice management for those supporting individuals at risk of or experiencing domestic abuse in later life.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Domestic Abuse Partnership Board delivers on statutory requirements as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and Halton's Strategy for Domestic Abuse (appendix 2)

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Domestic abuse delivery is currently within budgeted forecasts and allocated resource.

5.2 The PCC Breaking the Cycle project is externally commissioned and funded.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Improving the outcomes of those affected by domestic abuse directly supports this priority, improving physical and mental health, promoting wellbeing of self and family and enabling resilience and independence after experiencing harm.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Investing in workforce awareness of domestic abuse is essential to building organisational capacity and fostering a consistent, informed response across the local authority also recognising many of Halton's workforce are also our residents.

Enhanced training equips teams with the knowledge and confidence to identify, respond to, and support individuals affected by domestic abuse, promoting a more integrated and collaborative approach across services. Furthermore, supporting individuals to achieve safety and stability can significantly reduce barriers to employment, education, and training, therefore empowering them to rebuild their lives and access wider opportunities.

This dual focus on workforce development and survivor empowerment contributes to long-term resilience and social inclusion within the borough.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Domestic abuse is frequently intergenerational, with its impact often extending across multiple generations within families. As a local authority, Halton has a statutory obligation to safeguard children and young people from harm. Beyond this duty, there is a strategic opportunity to invest in early intervention and preventative measures that support children and young people in developing healthy relationships and fostering positive family environments.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

A robust domestic abuse provision plays a critical role in supporting the borough's most vulnerable residents and addressing entrenched inequalities. By confronting domestic abuse directly through coordinated prevention and protection strategies, the local authority contributes to the creation of safer, more resilient communities. Targeted interventions not only safeguard those at greatest risk but also help to reduce disparities in access to safety, support, and justice, ensuring that individuals affected by abuse are not further marginalised by systemic barriers.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

By strengthening multi-agency collaboration, addressing intergenerational harm, and empowering individuals through recovery and opportunity, these efforts foster safer households and

more resilient communities. This holistic approach not only meets statutory obligations but also reinforces Halton's commitment to reducing harm, tackling inequality, and promoting long-term wellbeing across the borough.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 Halton Borough Council has a statutory duty to provide support to individuals experiencing domestic abuse, as outlined in relevant legislation. Failure to fulfil this duty could result in serious consequences, including domestic abuse-related fatalities or significant harm to residents. Such outcomes would not only have profound human and social impacts but could also expose the Council to reputational damage and potential legal liability. Ensuring robust and responsive domestic abuse services is therefore essential to safeguarding vulnerable individuals and maintaining public trust and accountability.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 Domestic abuse affects individuals across all demographics, but evidence shows that certain groups, such as women, children, disabled individuals, LGBTQ+ communities, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds may face heightened risks and additional barriers to accessing support. Halton Borough Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that its domestic abuse services are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the diverse needs of its residents. This includes recognising intersectional vulnerabilities and tailoring interventions to promote fair access to safety, justice, and recovery.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None to report.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Domestic Abuse Service, Safer Policy Performance Board, 6th February 2024