



NEL Domestic Abuse Safer Accommodation Strategy

1. Introduction

Domestic Abuse is a traumatic experience and can have significant impacts upon the lives of victims and their children. The way in which Local Authorities and our partners respond to the needs of those requiring support is changing.

In April 2021, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) determined under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 that a grant of £125 million should be paid to the local authorities, to enable delivery of the new statutory duty within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

The Act places a statutory duty on tier one local authorities relating to the delivery and access to support for victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation.

Further information about the Act can be found within the [Local authority support for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation factsheet](#)

2. Why is the Safe Accommodation Strategy required?

North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC) are responsible for the appointment of a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (DALPB). The DALPB is required to develop this strategy for the provision of such support to cover their locality, having regard to a needs assessment.

As the responsible local authority for the delivery of the safer accommodation duty in North East Lincolnshire it is important that a local strategy is developed to enable the DALPB, our organisation, our partners and our communities understand how we will meet this new duty, and the impacts the DALPB aspire to achieve for victims of domestic abuse and their children.

This strategy outlines North East Lincolnshire Council's commitment to provide support and access to safe accommodation to victims of domestic abuse and their children.

It is important that the DALPB and NELC work closely with our partners and victims to deliver the right services at the right time to the right people.

3. Vision and values

North East Lincolnshire has developed a multi-agency [Domestic Abuse Strategy](#) that details the partnership approach that will be delivered locally to tackle incidences of domestic abuse across our borough.

This strategy details the wider vision and values, “We will reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse across North East Lincolnshire and ensure that where it does occur, we will provide the right support and services to minimise the short-term and long-term impact it has on local victims, children and their families”.

This Safer Accommodation Duty strategy will form a part of our response to this vision for North East Lincolnshire.

This strategy will also contribute to the delivery of our [Outcomes Framework](#), specifically:

- Sustainable Communities – reducing the number of people in housing difficulties
- Feels Safe and Are Safer – % of residents who feel safe, domestic abuse rates

To achieve our vision, NELC and its partners will embrace the following values:

1. The safety and wellbeing of victims of domestic abuse and their children is our priority
2. We provide safe and supportive spaces for victims of domestic abuse and their children that consider their individual needs and circumstances
3. Victims of domestic abuse and their children are respected and shown empathy. Their voice is heard and influences the services provided
4. We work together at a pace lead by victims and their children. We should not force anyone to move at a pace they are not ready for or equipped to manage
5. We work together to prevent reactive changes and have robust plans in place to enable victims and their children to access the support they need when they need it
6. We believe in victims of domestic abuse and their children, especially when they appear to not believe in themselves, and we will work together to help them all to fulfil their potential
7. The behaviours we see in our victims and their children are a form of communication. It is our roles as professionals to understand what is being communicated and to respond in ways that help, not hinder
8. We will continually strive to monitor, evaluate, and improve services, acknowledging that there will always be room for improvement

4. The needs of domestic abuse victims and their children in North East Lincolnshire

As a part of our duty to meet the needs of victims and children, we need to work with our local partners to complete a needs analysis. The need analysis will provide the DALPB with a comprehensive overview of the following areas:

- The prevalence of and trends in domestic abuse and other forms of violence including that against women and girls
- The needs for support, protection, and safety of those who are affected by domestic abuse in the local population
- The nature and extent of the need for and provision of specialist support in respect of those persons affected by domestic abuse with presenting protected characteristics
- The nature and extent of the need for and provision of specialist support to women who are affected by domestic abuse and their children

Although the needs analysis is in development, we can identify recurring issues that are being reported across multiple services. These relate to the number of referrals into services for victims of domestic abuse, the dramatic increase in the proportion of high-risk referrals and cases during the Covid19 pandemic and the overall presence of Domestic Abuse across the borough. We can see a connection between the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and the rates of Domestic Abuse reported and the number of children in need of the support of statutory services. We are well informed about which of our local services are proactive in reporting incidents of Domestic Abuse and which organisation are making referrals for victims and children to access support. We are also able to identify gaps whereby some of our local services have not been reporting or referring. We can understand from talking to our partners that there is a need for us to work together to deliver a trauma informed pathway, enable victims and their children to safely share their story, without the need to repeat this to several professionals.

From talking to male and female victims who were not able to access refuge accommodation we have been able to understand that keeping connections and the support of friends and family is important and a great help. Victims worry about more than just the abuse they and their children are experiencing; they also worry about where they will live, how they will be able to afford to move or live if they choose to leave or move, and the overall responsibilities that come with maintaining accommodation. Victims have told us that they feel it is important to know there is access to accommodation and support in a time of crisis. Victims said that they want local services to work with them, not do things to them or for them. Victims have told us at a time in their lives when they have lost everything, they feel they are then left with living in places that are horrible and often cause them to be stigmatised and that these stigmas are having wider implications on their lives because of where they live. Victims have said that sometimes they felt like they had too many tick boxes to pass to get access to accommodation and felt like they had to keep repeating their stories to lots of professionals to get anywhere. They told us they believe a system that is quicker and removes the pressure of having to worry about how long they can stay there would be a big help in being able to make a decision about leaving their partners or choosing to move because of the impacts of domestic abuse.

5. The need for Safer Accommodation in North East Lincolnshire

We know that to give victims of domestic abuse and their children the best opportunities to thrive, we need to support them to find somewhere safe, that they can call home. We understand and accept that depending on the individual circumstance, what a suitable home looks like, will be different to everyone.

In addition to the legal duty for North East Lincolnshire Council to provide access to a designated refuge, access to a refuge is not the most suitable option for everyone. Some people have needs that cannot be appropriately supported in a refuge, whilst others may feel a refuge is not a place suitable for them or their children. There is a need to explore a wider range of accommodation options that can provide victims and their children with a safe place to call home.

Data collected via the Housing Related Support Gateway between June 2016 to March 2020 shows:

- 890 people accessed Housing Related Support, accounting for a total of 1,221 HRS episodes identified as in need of domestic abuse support.
- Of the 1,221 episodes recorded, 327 were to access refuge accommodation, 541 were to access floating support delivered by women's aid and 333 episodes were to access the Freedom Programme. The remaining episodes were to access housing or HRS via other providers.
- 242 people accessed 2 or more episodes of support, 61 people accessed more than 3 episodes of support.
- Of the 1,167 completed episodes we can understand that over 50% completed their support however we are unaware of their move on destination or outcome. Just over 10% of episodes came to an end because a person was asked to leave, evicted or abandonment. 12% of completed episodes resulted in people moving onto accessing a private sector tenancy.
- Out of 1,249 clients who were reviewed as part of the HRS transition, 11 people had indicators relating to them being a victim of Domestic Abuse who continued to access additional support from HRS providers.

We understand that developing an accessible pathway to enable accommodation and support to be accessed when needed is important. Although we know current domestic abuse services can complete comprehensive assessments regarding the needs of victims relating to domestic abuse and their safety, there is a need to consider how a joint assessment process could be developed to enable assessment of housing needs to be incorporated. We are also able to understand that although some direct work is being undertaken with children and young people, there is currently no offer of support commissioned for Young People's Violence Advisors in North East Lincolnshire.

We understand we have gaps in our local offer to provide safe accommodation to some members of our communities who have protected characteristics. We need to work with local partners to develop the local offer to enable safe accommodation options to be accessible to victims with protected characteristics, where there is a local need.

There is a shared view across local services that as a matter of routine it feels like the system is moving victims and children from their homes, with perpetrators being left in the family home. The system is not currently set up to enable services to work together to enable victims and their children to remain in their family homes, where this could be safe to do so, and it is what they wanted. This links to the identified lack of direct work offered with perpetrators, with a proportional number of domestic abuse incidents being committed by the same perpetrators. This

is resulting in victims having multiple referrals or episodes of access to support and or accommodation.

We are also able to recognise a need for access to emergency accommodation as there is no specific or specialist offer to provide this for victims of domestic abuse or their children.

6. Current offer to access Safer Accommodation in NEL

The current offer to access safer accommodation in North East Lincolnshire specifically for victims of domestic abuse and their children is limited. Below we have been able to identify the current commissioned accommodation options.

- 15 unit Women's Refuge with support
- B&B accommodation only (not duty compliant)
- Non-specific dispersed accommodation with and without support (not duty compliant)
- Non-specific hostel accommodation (not duty compliant)
- Empower, Safer Homes Target Hardening scheme (not duty compliant)

7. Safer Accommodation opportunities we believe we need to explore

As part of our local offer we will develop the services below. The relative priorities of each of these services and therefore the order in which we develop them, will be determined following completion of the needs analysis:

- Outreach support linked to a dispersed accommodation model
- Resettlement accommodation with dedicated support
- Sanctuary scheme (Target Hardening with associated support)
- Complex IDVA support linked to dispersed accommodation
- A wider range of dispersed accommodation options
- Accessible dispersed accommodation (victims with protected characteristics)
- Access to Crisis/Emergency accommodation and support
- Young People's Violence Advisor offer for children and young people to access specialists and dedicated support no matter where they are living
- Accommodation and or support work with perpetrators
- Integrated pathway to access other forms of accommodation and support where Domestic Abuse or risk of is not the primary need
- Joint pathway to access all options, including assessment of Domestic Abuse risk and housing assessment

8. How will the Safer Accommodation Strategy be delivered?

A Domestic Abuse Need Analysis will be completed. This analysis will be reviewed on an annual basis to understand how local needs are changing and how service delivery needs to adapt to continue to meet local needs.

The Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board will undertake a comprehensive commissioning exercise, utilising data, and intelligence from across the borough and its partners. This will include opportunities for victims to be involved in the commissioning process, enabling their voice and experiences to become a part of developing the offer for North East Lincolnshire.

A robust delivery plan will be developed. This will detail the services or systems that will be commissioned and how we will understand if delivery is achieving the intended outcomes and impacts for victims and their children.

Pathways to access a range of safer accommodation options will be developed and delivered across all commissioned services.

Collective monitoring will be established to enable commissioned services to understand the impact of their delivery. This will also allow the Council to report back to Government and evidence that it is meeting the requirements of the duty.

9. What will our NEL Safer Accommodation Strategy achieve for North East Lincolnshire and for victims of Domestic Abuse and their children?

Through the delivery of this strategy we want to enable a consistent, and accessible pathway to be developed that is supported by all our partners. This will enable access to support options at the earliest opportunity, with comprehensive support being accessible and being delivered as a preventative.

We will create safe opportunities for victims of domestic abuse and their children to have a voice and be heard to enable partners to understand their needs.

We are committed to completing a comprehensive commissioning based upon local needs, this will enable us to work together to provide the options identified to meet these needs, whilst meeting the safer accommodation duty.

We will provide equity of choice with suitable options based upon risk and need to access the right accommodation and support. This will include options for accessible accommodation and specific accommodation and support commissioned for victims with protected characteristics.

We will encourage, support and be a part of partnership working. Partnership working enables North East Lincolnshire to benefit from us working together to utilise the skills, experiences, and knowledge of our partners to provide the right support, at the right time for our victims and their children.

When the time is right, we will work together to support victims and their children to return safely to their own homes or move to new a home if this is what is best for them and their future.

We will work together to provide flexibility and opportunities for change to enable services to deliver what is needed for our victims and their children.

10. How will we know we are making a difference and delivering the safer accommodation duty?

Through the delivery of services to meet the safer accommodation duty, we would expect to see changes taking place across North East Lincolnshire. This would include, but is not limited to:

- The number of referrals to access support and/or accommodation increase as we strengthen the conversation about Domestic Abuse and establish a clear offer
- We see support being offered and accessed at the earliest opportunity
- Reduction in the number of children and young people who go on to be involved in domestic abuse in later life
- Through the delivery of preventative work, we would anticipate to see the number of repeat victims presented to MARAC reduce
- To see a reduction in the number of high-risk cases due to timely support and intervention
- The number of victims and their children presenting as homeless, or at risk of homelessness reduces
- The number of victims being evicted from refuge accommodation reduces
- The number of victims being supported to secure suitable accommodation increases
- We increase the number of victims and their children, who can remain safely in their homes
- We are delivering an improved joint pathway across our partnerships to enable victims and their children to access the right support at the right time
- Domestic abuse services across the borough are working in partnership to deliver a person centre service for all victims and their children
- All partners are contributing to the ongoing monitoring and development of domestic abuse services to enable the borough to respond to changing needs and demands

As part of the commissioning exercise undertaken by the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board, we will work together with our partners to establish clear and robust reporting, including the development of a local scorecard. This will enable us to understand together the changes that are being achieved and why. Where the intended changes are not being evidenced, we will use this information to understand why and agree as a board what actions, if any, need to be undertaken.

11. Equality and diversity impact assessment

The initial equality and diversity impact assessment does not identify any negative impacts the delivery of this strategy would have upon any protected characteristic groups.

This assessment will need to be updated upon completion of the commissioning exercise.

We have a duty enable our services, partners, and customers to foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics, and those who do not. We would like any services

we commission as part of this duty to work with us and our partners to build these relationships in our communities.

12. Contact Details

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