




Southend Borough Council The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Implementation Strategy

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DOMESTIC ABUSE IN SOUTHEND-ON-SEA

35.84
in 1000



There are 35.84 reported incidents of Domestic Abuse per 1000 people in Southend-on-Sea, which is the 2nd highest rate in Essex behind Harlow. This rate has worsened in the past year moving us from 3rd place to 2nd place.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales

For the last consecutive eight years Southend has reported the highest number of domestic abuse incidents in Essex with a total of 5277 reported in 2020-21 (next highest district Basildon 5139 and Colchester 4365).

Essex Police DA Problem Profile 2020-21

Rank based on reported rates of DA per 1000 adults	District	Reported rates of DA per 1000 adults	Rank based on volume
1	Harlow	36.25	9
2	Southend-on-Sea	35.84	1
3	Basildon	34.80	2
4	Tendring	33.72	4
5	Colchester	29.32	3
6	Thurrock	27.68	5
7	Braintree	25.50	7
8	Chelmsford	25.11	6
9	Epping Forest	23.31	8
10	Castle Point	22.72	10
11	Brentwood	21.55	12
12	Maldon	20.56	14
13	Rochford	19.45	11
14	Uttlesford	16.80	13
	Essex Total	27.8	

Domestic Abuse in Southend

- Domestic Abuse has long been a concern in all areas of society and more recently it has become a focus for the Government. As part of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 the Domestic Abuse Commissioners Office was formed, with Nicole Jacobs appointed as the Commissioner. A team of Regional DA Leads are in place and will be closely linked to each Local Authority.
- Southend has a long history of a high incidence of Domestic Abuse (DA). For every report and for those incidences that go unreported, there is an impact on an individual's quality of life and on the children and/or extended family within those households.
- Southend is committed to ensuring that this Strategy initially addresses the requirements in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 for Local Authorities and therefore begins to address the needs of survivors of domestic abuse and their families .
- It is also the intention to broaden this strategy going forward during the next year to be a more comprehensive Domestic Abuse Strategy for the Borough covering all areas of need, not just those stated in the Bill. In this we will work with our partners and with the wider Essex arrangements .



Introduction from Councillor Anne Jones-

Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing

- *Over 2 million^[1] people a year experience domestic abuse^[2]. Following on from the long-awaited Domestic Abuse Act 2021 this Strategy begins to address the needs of the many victims of domestic abuse in our Borough. Domestic Abuse impacts on all areas of society and can take many forms, not just violence, but also controlling behaviour and financial abuse. The impact on the victims, and children growing up within a household where domestic abuse is occurring, is often devastating, having long term effects on their mental and physical wellbeing and therefore, intervention for our young people is crucial to prevent future harm.*
 - *Perpetrator intervention, both punitive and supportive, are also important to interrupt the cycle of abuse,*
 - *No person should have to experience domestic abuse and Southend Borough Council will work with its partners to strengthen and coordinate the prevention, early detection and response to ensure that service provision meets the needs of all our residents and enables them to move on with their lives free from abuse.*
- ^[1] 1. Office for National Statistics, 'Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2019'
 - ^[1] 2. This figure excludes children witnessing abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The aim of the legislation is a lasting culture change in terms of the understanding of, and response to domestic abuse, leading to:

- 1. Increased awareness and understanding of domestic abuse across statutory agencies and in public attitudes.**
- 2. Improved support for all victims of domestic abuse and the children who are affected by it.**
- 3. Improved access to protection and redress through the justice system.**
- 4. A reduction in prevalence, offending and reoffending.**
- 5. Improved consistency and performance in the response to domestic abuse.**

Domestic Abuse Act Legislative Measures

- **1. Introduce a new statutory definition of Domestic abuse (to include economic abuse and to include children as victims rather than witnesses)**
- **2. Establish in law the office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner.**
- **3. Create a domestic abuse protection notice and domestic abuse protection order.**
- **4. Place the guidance underpinning the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS, also known as “Clare’s Law”) on a statutory footing.**
- **5. Create a new offence in respect of non-fatal strangulation.**
- **6. Provide clarification that consent to serious harm for sexual gratification is not a defence in law.**
- **7. Extend extraterritorial jurisdiction over specified offences as required by the Istanbul Convention.**
- **8. Providing for automatic eligibility for special measures in the civil, criminal and family courts.**
- **9. Prohibit cross-examination in person in specified circumstances in family and civil proceedings.**

Domestic Abuse Act Legislative Measures

- **10. Mandatory polygraph examinations of high risk domestic abuse offenders on licence.**
- **11. Introduce a statutory duty on tier one local authorities in England to support victims and their children in domestic abuse safe accommodation and a duty on tier two authorities to co-operate with tier one authorities in the fulfilment of their duties.**
- **12. Amend the Housing Act 1996 to give those who are homeless as a result of fleeing domestic abuse priority need for accommodation secured by the local authority.**
- **13. Protect security of tenure for domestic abuse victims.**

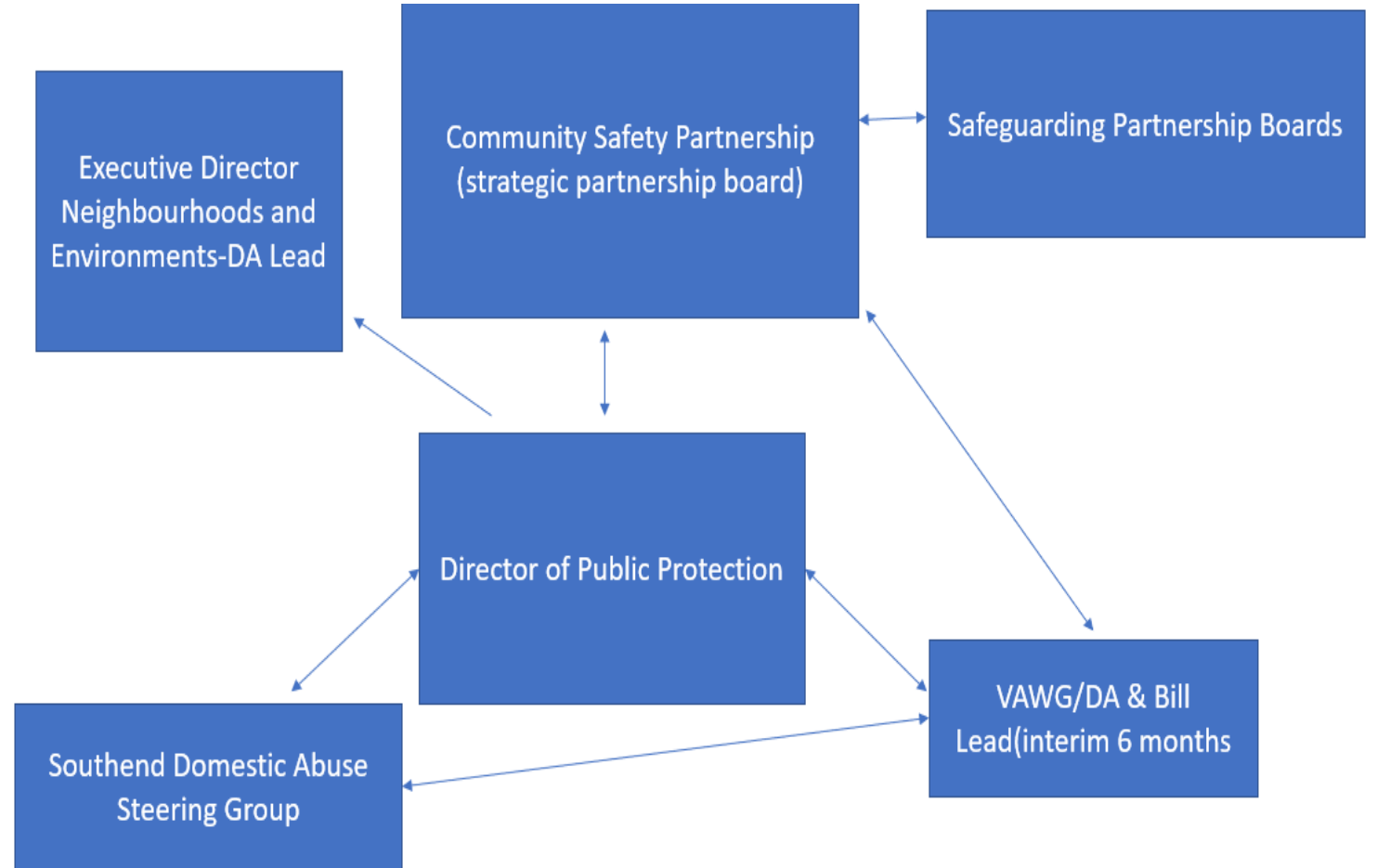
Key Agencies Affected By Proposals in Legislative Measures

Organisation	Legislative Measures
Local Authorities	1,2,11,12,13
SETDAB (Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board)	1, 2
Essex Police	1,2,3,4,5,13
Probation services	1,2,3,5,6,10
CPS /Courts	1,2,3,5,6,7,8,9,10
Social Housing Providers	1,2,11,12,13

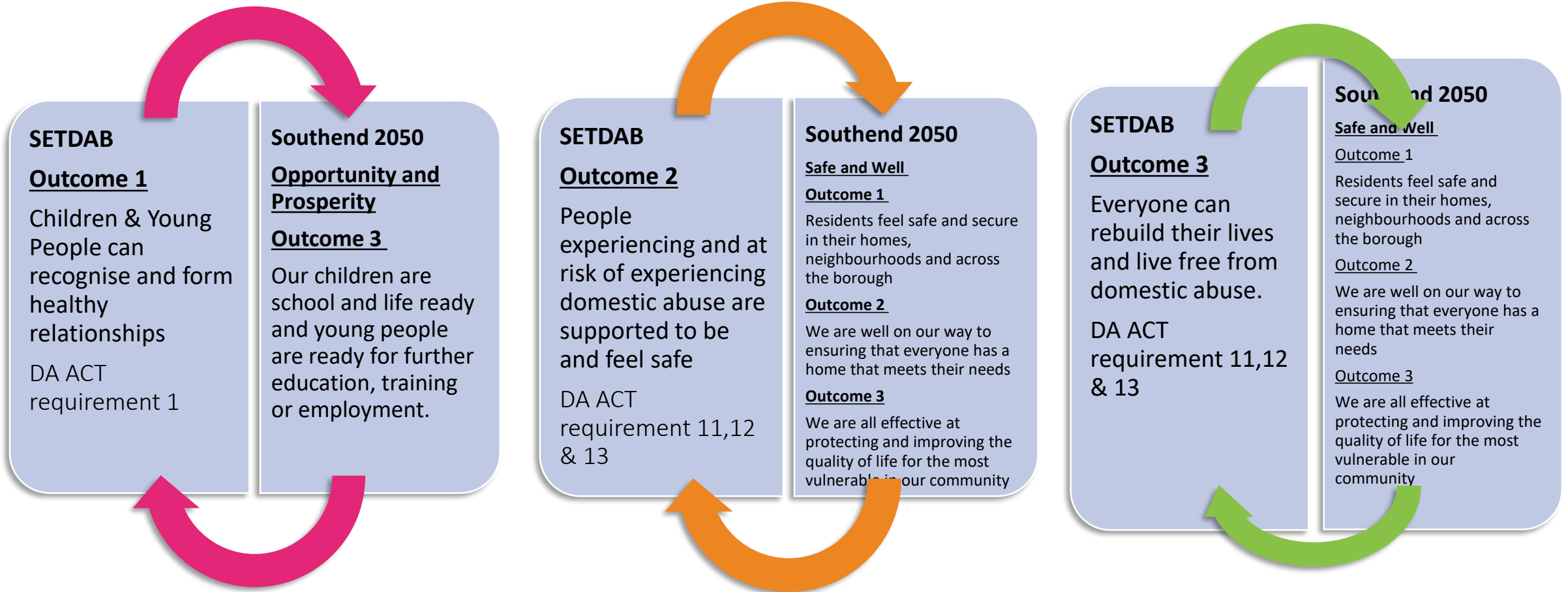
Current Arrangements – what do we already specifically do?

- Engagement with the Southend, Essex and Thurrock arrangements for commissioning of the IDVA Service for high-risk victims, the Compass call service for all DA victims and the Change Hub for perpetrators
- 7 bed refuge in Southend with reciprocal arrangements with other areas across England for these spaces within national refuge
- Commissioning of the Southend contract for Domestic Abuse services which includes support for medium and standard risk victims and their children
- South Essex Homes provide domestic abuse victim tenancy support

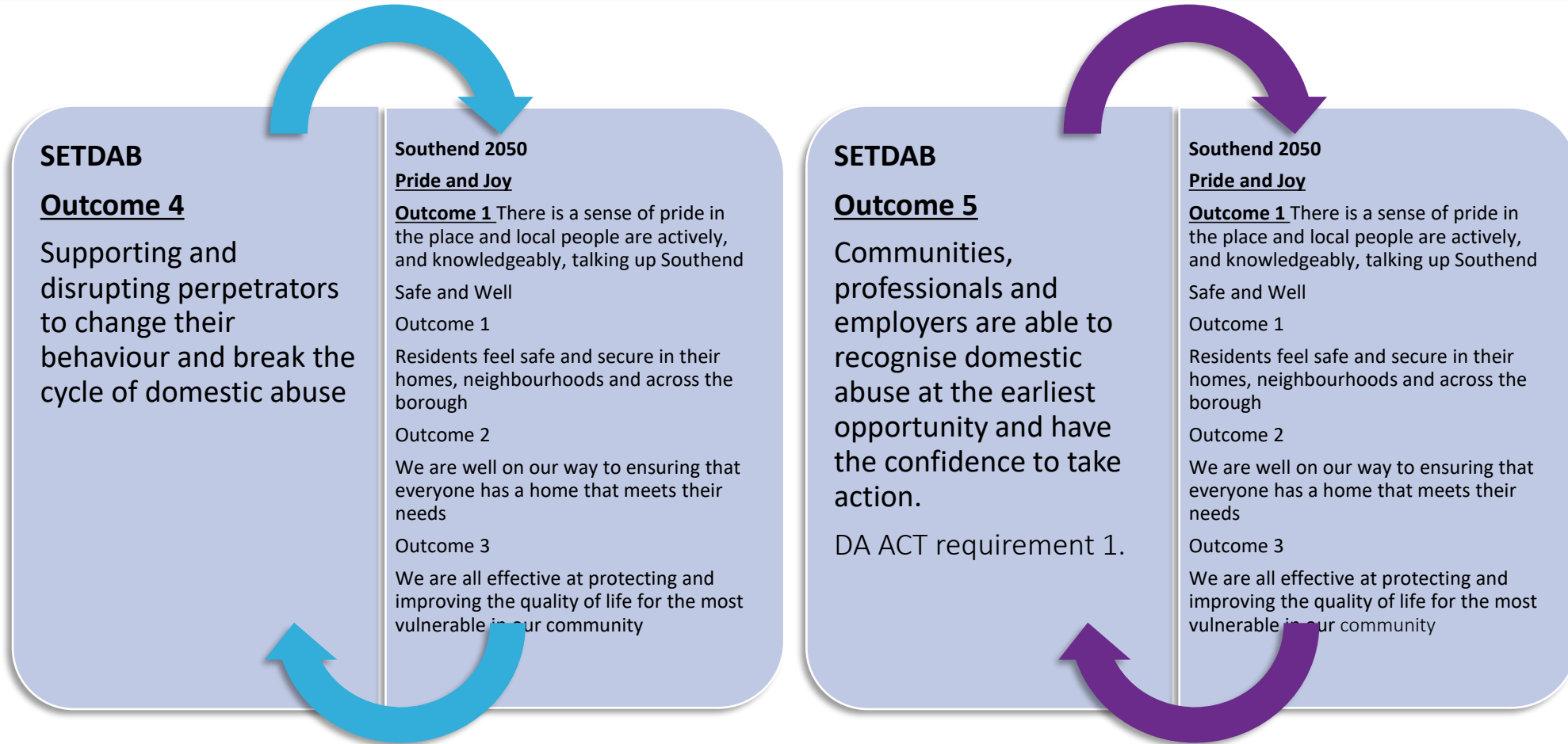
Southend Governance



Southend 2050 Outcomes links to SETDAB Outcomes



Southend 2050 Outcomes links to SETDAB Outcomes (cont.)



Key Messages from the Needs Assessment for Southend completed for the DA Act 2021

- The highest level of domestic abuse in Southend occurs in the most deprived areas
- In 2020 there were 2933 reported domestic abuse incidents where a child was in the household
- Within Southend there appears to be no coordinated approach to joint commissioning of domestic abuse services
- Older age groups of victims, CYP, LGBTQ+ and Males are underrepresented in the data collected
- Within Southend there appears to be a lack of data to support and identify the levels of housing and support required

Key Messages from the Needs Assessment for Southend completed for the DA Act 2021

- There appear to be gaps in commissioning specifically housing, information and advice, advocacy services within children's and adult services required by the new Domestic Abuse Act
- The new Domestic Abuse Act will impact on the ability on service providers to access grants due to the change in statutory responsibilities of councils
- Inflationary increases are not always written into current contracts, and this will need to be addressed going forward
- There are a low number of perpetrators being referred to the Change Hub due to strict criteria (on bail or court pending at time of MARAT, plus victim must agree to perpetrator being offered). There are a low numbers completing the intervention

Recommendation from the Needs Assessment for Southend completed for the DA Act 2021

1. Southend Council and its partners to improve recording across all services of protected characteristics, particularly ethnicity to ensure all needs are identified.
2. Southend Council and partners to map services provided to targeted groups for CYP, Older People, LGBTQ+ and males
3. Southend Council and partners to review current pathways and support packages to ensure individual planning of those experiencing domestic abuse and undertake more detailed work to understand what is needed across all housing, support, finance and care pathways
4. Southend Council in consultation and collaboration with partners will need to undertake an audit to identify the precise gaps and identify the funding, commissioning and procurement activity that will need to take place.
5. Southend Council and partners to consider patterns of perpetrators behaviours in order to know what services to commission.
6. Ensuring clear operational and strategic accountability within the organisation moving forward

Recommendation from the Needs Assessment for Southend completed for the DA Act 2021

The recommendations from the Needs Assessment cover the wider picture of the Domestic Abuse need for Southend, not just compliance with the DA Act 2021.

It showed that there are areas where data is insufficiently recorded to enable decisions to be made about whether services are providing adequate support.

It also highlighted gaps in provision

It is the intention of this strategy to ensure compliance of Southend Council with the DA Act 2021 requirements within timescales.

However, it is also the intention to do the further work required and highlighted in the Needs Assessment, and to include partners, to complete an overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy for Southend in 2021/22. This may also need to cover the Perpetrator Strategy that the Government intends to publish later this year.

1. Introduce a statutory definition of domestic abuse

Victims themselves highlighted in the needs assessment that they felt that there was a lack of understanding of what they had been through already, the impact on them and how they could, at times, feel "treated as a number".

- I. We will raise awareness amongst staff and partners by means of ongoing digital communications and by delivering training by means of e-learning and by more in depth specific domestic abuse training for those staff working front line. Agencies that come into contact with the public need to understand the many different forms of domestic abuse, the impact of these on individuals and how to interpret individual needs and circumstances. This will ensure early detection and offer of support. This will be monitored by completion of training figures, follow on from training feedback, and victim survey findings.
- II. We will engage with the wider Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse communications strategy. The intention is to engage in the SET monitoring of impact of campaigns
- III. We will raise awareness in the community of Domestic Abuse by means of ongoing communications campaigns.
- IV. We will ensure that Children's services staff are made aware that children are deemed to be victims under the new legislation rather than witnesses. We will also make children's services partners and education services aware of the new definition and its implications.
- V. We will include the new definition in Southend, Essex and Thurrock Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures.
- VI. We will introduce a new version of the Domestic Abuse Staff Policy to bring up to date Policy and support for staff who experience domestic abuse, need to support colleagues who are experiencing abuse, and staff who perpetrate domestic abuse.

2. Establish in law the office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner.

The Commissioner will play a key role in holding local and national Government to account in order to improve the response to domestic abuse; shining a light on both good and poor practice and policy. All statutory agencies and Government Departments will have a legal duty through the Domestic Abuse Bill to cooperate with the Commissioner and respond publicly to any of her recommendations within 56 days. Southend Borough Council will actively engage and comply with the Commissioners Office.

11. Introduce a statutory duty on tier one local authorities in England to support victims and their children in domestic abuse safe accommodation and a duty on tier two authorities to co-operate with tier one authorities in the fulfilment of their duties.

The duty will be placed on local authorities who will be required to commission these services in accordance with local need. The duty will promote a consistent approach to delivering support in safe accommodation, and increase accountability for this provision, ensuring that victims and their children get the support they need in safe accommodation.

- I. Governance - We will utilise the Community Safety Partnership as the governance for the DA Strategy and action planning.
- II. We will assess the DA support pathway along with IDVA, DAPS, BTC, Fledglings and the pre-existing refuge in order to ensure adequate and appropriate provision of support within safe accommodation.
- III. Give effect to this strategy (through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions), engagement in the DA Steering Group and the Action Plan will be formulated with outcomes as per the 2050/SETDAB outcomes.
- IV. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy, including eventual monitoring of the CSP and Action Plan.
- V. Report back annually to central government.

12. Amend the Housing Act 1996 to give those who are homeless as a result of fleeing domestic abuse priority need for accommodation secured by the local authority.

This will help to ensure that all eligible homeless households who are fleeing domestic abuse will automatically be considered in priority need under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as a result ensure that victims do not remain with their abuser for fear of not having a roof over their head.

- New homelessness legislation came into effect 5th July, which incorporated priority accommodation for DA victims into the statutory housing assessment process. Staff have been made aware of the priority. Provisions are being made for new DA victim specific accommodation and support through a housing navigator and DA support workers.
- The amendment will require consideration of personal circumstances. This could potentially entail consideration of the perpetrator's housing needs going forward.
- The amendment will impact the Housing Register, which will be reviewed in light of the new Housing Allocations Policy - (going live September 2021)
- Housing Solutions and South Essex Homes are undertaking Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation. This training is vital for South Essex Homes to manage their tenancies with a trauma-informed approach.

13. Protect security of tenure for domestic abuse victims.

This will ensure that where a local authority grants a new tenancy to a victim of domestic abuse who already has or had a lifetime tenancy, this must be a further lifetime tenancy if it is granted in connection with that abuse.

- I. We will review the tenancy strategy.
- II. We will review registered provider policy.
- III. Provisions will be made to secure tenure for domestic abuse tenure as per findings from the needs assessment.

Support in Safe Accommodation and next steps

- Southend Council in consultation and collaboration with partners will undertake an audit to identify the precise gaps and identify the funding, commissioning and procurement activity that will need to take place. Commissioning of services, consideration of pulling together of the new funding and current contract, and the need to look at the current contract which expires in January 2023 is key to planning
- We will continue to fund the 7 bed refuge and its support as per the current contract.
- We will introduce further specific domestic abuse survivor accommodation in accordance with the Priority need for DA survivors and with the highlighting of the needs assessment that more specific accommodation and support is required.
- Performance measurement will be introduced in order to evaluate each provision and this will be overseen by the Community Safety Partnership
- The commissioning and provision of services will be informed by the views of those who have been affected by domestic abuse or are at significant risk of it. We will gather their input via a survey initially, with the intention to expand this survey and revisit findings annually.