

# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

**DECISION TAKEN BY:**

**Roger Gough, Leader of the Council**

**DECISION NO:**

23/00097

**For publication****Key decision: Yes**

Key decision criteria: The decision covers more than two electoral divisions and involved the adoption of a new strategy.

**Title of Decision:** Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024 – 2029**Decision:**

As Leader of the Council, I agree to:

- adopt the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Partnership Strategy 2024 – 2029 on behalf of Kent County Council.
- delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Adult Social Care and Health in consultation with the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, to refresh and/or make revisions with the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Executive Group as appropriate during the lifetime of the strategy.
- delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Adult Social Care and Health in consultation with the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.

**Reason(s) for decision:**

The Kent and Medway Domestic and Sexual Abuse Executive Group, and the associated governance structure, is a partnership which includes Kent County Council, Medway Council, Kent Police, the Police and Crime Commissioners Office, Probation, Kent District, City and Borough Councils, the Department of Work and Pensions, the NHS and Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

The current Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy was developed in 2020 and refreshed in 2021. This strategy was revised to include new statutory tier one duties linked to safe accommodation, recognising that safe accommodation is part of a wider response to domestic abuse. The current strategy finishes in 2023 and a 'progress made' report is published on the consultation web page, showing work completed to meet the strategy commitments and highlighting opportunity areas which are incorporated within the 2024-2029 strategy.

In developing the 2024-2029 Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy, Kent County Council and Medway Council have worked with the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Executive Group to create a document which supports a coordinated partnership response across services. The Executive Group seek to utilise available funding from across partners to improve outcomes, working towards the strategies aim: 'to *reduce the*

*prevalence of domestic abuse and ensure that where domestic abuse takes place, all those affected get the right support, quickly.'*

**Financial Implications:** The impact of domestic abuse has financial costs to many services within the public sector including Police, Probation, Health and Social Care. The strategy aims to support partnership working to improve collaboration and enhance service design to maximise outcomes from available funds from across the partnership to improve the experiences of those accessing services.

Tier 1 and tier 2 authorities receive funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to discharge specific statutory duties within the Domestic Abuse Act.

Within KCC this funding is used to support safe accommodation provision, enhance service delivery and to support staff costs both across commissioning and the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Partnership. Partners gain funding from multiple routes including the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office.

Changes in financial allocation including through revision in political priorities could impact delivery against the strategy.

Provision of support for people who remain in the community and functions supporting the review and management of domestic homicide reviews is financed through partnership arrangements. In relation to community-based support this includes non-statutory allocations.

The strategy acknowledges that it is aspirational and that funding routes for both KCC and partners may change within the lifetime of the strategy.

The Kent and Medway Executive Group, of which KCC is a key partner, can review and revise the strategy if needed. This includes through a review period built into the strategy after three years, in 2027, when the Executive will consider whether this strategy is still representative of the challenges faced and ambitions of the members of the Executive Group given resources available.

**Legal Implications:** The Local Authority has a statutory obligation to meet the duties set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, including to:

- assess need for accommodation-based support<sup>1</sup>,
- prepare a strategy to provide such support,
- give effect to the strategy,
- monitor the strategy, and
- report back annually to central government

The strategy must clearly set out the overall and holistic purpose, aims, priorities and approach to deliver a rounded offer of support to those impacted by domestic abuse. This includes detailing the purpose, plans and approaches working across tier one and two local authorities with partners, including other services within the authority, specialist domestic abuse providers, PCCs, housing and health bodies (not limited to) through a Local Partnership Board.

The Local Partnership Board was established in Kent in May 2021, and is part of the Kent and Medway Domestic and Sexual Abuse Executive Group governance structure. Kent County Council and Medway Council's statutory requirements to create a strategy on domestic abuse safe accommodation services is integrated within the full partnership strategy to support coordinated responses across services.

Additional relevant legislation includes:

- The Children Act (1989) which recognises harm caused to children by domestic violence including '*impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another*' (Adoption and Children Act, 2002).

<sup>1</sup> 'Domestic Abuse' Kent Public Health Observatory <https://www.kpho.org.uk/joint-strategic-needs-assessment/health-intelligence/population-groups/domestic-abuse#tab1>

- The Human Rights Act (1998) including Article 2, Right to Life, and Article 3, Freedom from Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment.
- The Care Act (2014), including Section 42 which states that if an adult with care and support needs is suspected to be at risk of any form of abuse or neglect, the local authority must make enquiries and take steps to protect them.

The strategy summarises additional relevant legislation within Appendix B.

Implementing the Kent & Medway Partnership Domestic Abuse Strategy will support meeting Domestic Abuse Act duties across 2024-29 and support the council in meeting its statutory duty to provide support for all survivors residing in what is defined as safe accommodation.

Specific legal implications for operational or funding allocation activity will be considered through the delegated decision-making as normal.

**Equality implications:** Protected characteristics and the intersectionality of these directly impacts risk of domestic abuse and the types of abuse which an individual may experience. The Equality Impact Assessment shows a positive impact from the strategy due to commitments which recognise this. The strategy seeks to ensure that services meet needs across protected characteristics.

The strategy recognises that people experiencing abuse who may have limited access to public funding due to their immigration status may be highly vulnerable (no recourse to public funds) and seeks to support collaborative and innovative working to support those impacted by this status.

**Data Protection implications:**

The development of the strategy does not require a Data Protection Impact Assessment to be completed.

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**

The Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy was publicly consulted on between the 24<sup>th</sup> July and 9<sup>th</sup> October and the consultation report is included with the decision paper.

The proposed decision was discussed at the Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**

Consideration was given to the following:

The option of not renewing a domestic abuse strategy was discarded as the council has a statutory duty to have a strategy covering safe accommodation for those experiencing domestic abuse.

The option of having a single agency strategy was considered. However, this would not bring with it the benefits around building a coordinated partnership response to domestic abuse across service provision.

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:**



23 February 2024

signed

date