



Crisis Local Authority Practice Network

Practice Exchange Session 23/07/2021

New Domestic Abuse Act – How can we best integrate into our services

Notes from Practice Exchange 23/07/2021

Theme: New Domestic Abuse Act – How can we best integrate into our services

Topics

1. Prevention work/Housing solutions/best practice and ideas and Numbers through the system
2. Procuring suitable support services/Officer training/NRPF and the support for migrants pilot scheme.

Actions:

LN to circulate notes prior the next exchange

Local Authorities in attendance:

- Leeds
- North Northants
- Central Bedfordshire
- Norwich
- BCP
- West Northants
- Southwark
- Bristol
- Manchester
- Islington
- Durham
- Lewisham
- Gravesham
- Northampton

- West Northants – non-stock holding authority so need to work with RP. Concern is that don't want RPs to put them on introductory tenancy, want to be in secure tenancy if that's where they came from.
- Increase already in number of men that have approached with experience of abuse and coercive control, something that would have previously been classed as relationship breakdown.
- Lewisham – set up a partnership placement process. People can approach the council's emergency panel and wouldn't necessarily have to make homelessness application. If not safe to stay – awarded band 1 priority for accommodation in the borough. The difficulty is when household is not based within Lewisham. Officers have been given stat training ready to carry out assessment.
- Durham – domestic abuse review, also seeing increase of men coming forward. A lot of out of area presentations.
- North Northants – in-house refresher training, includes reading the bill and code of guidance. Saw a big jump in June when people fled domestic abuse, assuming that was down to football
- Norwich – domestic abuse is the second highest reason for people presenting as homelessness. Stock-holding authority. Struggle to get people into refuges. Asking themselves: what is safe accommodation for people fleeing domestic abuse? At the moment people are placed in TA – looking at how to place people in properly safe accommodation in the immediacy, refuges often can't take risk to accommodate people with complex needs. DA specialist advisor has been in post 2 years, operational, works well. Regular conversations ongoing, looking to use new funding for spot-purchasing to enable them to move people into safe accommodation whilst manage move on. Need to consider support too. Created a lot of work, lots to do.
- Northants – small pot of money awarded. Will be put towards training, moving generic housing advisors to become specialist. Rest of money for short-term interventions (placing people in B&Bs while waiting for refuge space).
- Lewisham – using money for consultants to look at need's assessment and DAHA accreditation.

- West Northants – haven't decided yet what to spend the money on. Did appoint Red Quadrant to survey gaps in DA service, which has been really informative to be able to do needs assessment. Specialist accommodation provider consultant looking at partnerships.
- Durham – training health and homelessness officer to become DA officer. Personalised pot of money available to help people fleeing with clothes, toiletries, etc
- West Northants – looking at accommodation important, but need to look at support around that. Gave example of having to provide travel cot for mother at short notice and out of hours.
- Norwich – revisiting sanctuary scheme, sometimes difficult to keep people safe in the city. Trying to avoid moving people around all the time and would like to keep people stable in their home – aware it's not for everyone and is client-centred offer.
- West Northants – also looking at sanctuary scheme as a priority. Small town, people often want to keep child at same school, difficult to keep people safe in same area. Often confusion around funding for this.
- Durham – have run a successful sanctuary scheme for last seven years, partnership between police and maintenance teams who fit safety equipment within properties. Looking at improving support offer alongside this.
- Central Bedfordshire said 59% per cent increase in emergency presentations a day – difficulties getting people into refuges. Difficult conversations with professionals. Customers don't feel listened to.
- Data analysis in Southwark covid caused a rise. They introduced singles priority need from April 2020 but covid muddied the waters and have been unable to properly evaluate this. 27% increase in total approaches and 35% in abuse cases. Singles approaching and getting access to accommodation was 92%. 101 temp accommodation places for single people more than in the year previous. Financial impact of circa 250,000 - 65% rise in single people approaching.
- Coventry 40% in DV through covid. Similar picture in Leeds. MHCLG monies will cover about 3rd of cost. Coventry referred to refuges or waiting for support in temp accommodation.

- Prevention work for BCP is key. Need to review what offer we have as realised how much is going on for single clients who have been accommodated through covid and have shown difficulties in their relationships connected to drugs and alcohol. Don't have a sensible offer in terms of these cases. Lots of cases where needed to move one out and back and out and back. Had to place people back together because of rough sleeping – lack of support services need to create partnerships to pull people in. A lot of work needs to be done. Numbers haven't gone up necessarily because of the bill not seen those numbers yet but we have uncovered the fact that the problem is bigger than we thought through Covid.
- Southwark moving over to leased accommodation at the moment. Number of initiatives trying to house and move people on. Womens HMOs with onsite support with move ons into social housing. Working with HA and St Mungos to reopen an old 6 accommodation in one unit female. Big increase has come from general needs – rough sleeping DA presentations look broadly the same as before. 15% or 20% of rough sleeping numbers.
- Julie Matthews Bristol – entered into arrangement with providers where they lease from private sector and use this but also use accommodation on nightly rates but by purchasing on block contract is about half price. Also taken four properties and used those for complex clients and funded St Mungos to provide wrap around support for those with complex needs. In terms of the bill were placing people previously when they had become homeless had that approach for many years in Bristol so no real change needed in services in respect of this.
- Central Beds has large acquisition programme - buying up blocks to use as temp accommodation. Not allowed to accommodate out of Central Beds or use nightly paid. Looking at providing best service by using safe spaces self-contained temp accommodation units and respite accommodation for people to stay for a short space of time to make their minds up if undecided. Offender disruption work is also taking place - where we get approaches from people we know have perpetrated DA trying to have conversations at the outset to try and manage behaviours and try and stop the cycle. Working with strategic domestic service to help the perpetrators with the long-term view that this will help them help survivors in the future. DA team have finalised needs assessment but not acted on accomodation side. Has been a concern that transitional accommodation doesn't meet safe standards.
- Leeds are not yet advanced in their strategies. The general public don't know about the bill – so there is work to do there regarding communicating this. Pressure has been on an increase in sanctuary referrals. Needs to be more understanding when looking at a life-time tenancy. The picture around offering secure tenancies is unclear.

- There are some big pressures in some councils around secure tenancies and the link to UC and being able to claim dual housing benefit for 52 weeks only eg. Not easy to find a tenancy in a 4 or 5 bed property for someone fleeing domestic abuse for a secure tenancy. Some interpretations mean that there is a prospect of person giving up previous secure tenancy – needs to be more joined up with welfare. Could be issues with rent being paid in some circumstances and the Act does not appear to make this clear.
- New burdens funding was mentioned with some confusion and discussion around how they distributed the preventions grant funding. Looks like this was done in brackets some got 5k some got 40k banding for allocations of funding. Central bedfordshire got no allocations at all.
- Manchester was well funded. Have a specific DVNA homelessness prevention team ensuring that they are safe. 6 womens refuges in Manchester and they are constantly full. Don't have anywhere to put people. Had DV team looking at sanctuary scheme with fire-proof letter boxes, police alerts, alarms outside opening doors etc. Try and get people to stay with friends and family and making efforts to link PRS in with them.
- Evolving service managed to get 6 full time staff funded to deal with the 900 – 1000 presenting each year. Takes much longer to get an assessment because of the the sensitive information. Hoping it will work as a longer- term solution. Figures skewed by pandemic as created even more additional cases in DV. Interesting to do analysis this year going forward. Hopeful then we can do really good prevention work. Staff are able to secure private rented accommodation quite readily.

- **Part 2**
- Norwich – housing options can't do this on their own, People need the wrap support around to sustain it. Tier 2 authority so having conversations. Try to pick up the prevention duty when someone flees DA and work very closely with local specialised agencies. Interesting dynamic between PCC support and County Council support.
- Durham – identified specialised support as an area of weakness. Intensive support early on in case, bringing in floating support services alongside what can be provided inhouse.
- Northants – police worked with Red Quadrant to assess gaps in services, which brought about good case studies. The Act will bring more numbers in the future, even if not seen it so far. Have some great services, but they have huge demands on them and a serious lack of funding. Meetings are in place between police and housing to look at how to develop partnership approach to support people with NRPF fleeing DA.
- Norwich – not many examples of people fleeing DA with NRPF. But discretion for 12 weeks so would place them. Would have to involve social services if they have children. Would maybe look to charities like Red Cross to assist.
- Durham – small number of NRPF. The charity Angelou Centre provides support.
- Northants – not aware of local voluntary organisations helping people with NRPF. Rough sleepers in the area work with International Lighthouse, might be able to help families fleeing DA too.
- Norwich – DA specialist advisor is crucial. They have a wealth of knowledge and do a huge amount of work. Need to channel specialist knowledge into dealing with people when they first present and looking at move on plan with them. The role is jointly funded by neighbourhood team. Looking to appoint another admin person to help with workload and training up neighbourhood teams to have DA advisory champions – who can link in with the specialist advisor, which helps increase wider team awareness.

- Northants – small office and small areas, so everyone is multi-skilled and no specialist roles (this can generate unfair caseloads.) Instead champions for various areas. Advisor can feed in expertise, but clients get to keep one officer throughout their whole journey – means that people don't have to repeat story.
- North Northants – considered trialing specialist voluntary organisation support to help with PHPs, decided against this because wouldn't be flexible with timings etc.
- Out of hours situations are the hardest to manage (even with in-house regular services). Always comes down to money, but better to have a partnership that helps both.
- Norwich – often a lot of pressure to move people out of refuges.
- Northants – timing is crucial when supporting people newly into refuges. Came to an agreement with their local refuge to take an early joint, client-centred assessment of what people want. Allocations policy already has priority for people receiving this multi-agency response, which helps to stop bottleneck of people stuck in refuge. The group agreed that early intervention is really important to avoid obstacles later down the line (eg dealing with past arrears) and set fair expectations for all.
- Durham – pilot scheme with providers to look at people who have been excluded from the register. Work with people on individual basis to make case for accommodation, has been successful for a few people.
- Leeds has always had a safe-guarding team as staff team is big. They have an understanding of it but are not experts. They did Ok in terms of the funding given the numbers so looking to increase that team to make more robust and give a higher management structure. The MARACs it is often junior members of staff who have the expertise and they don't always have the decision making mandate or the option to get things done. So need more robust management team. More sway with partners getting that across. Where possible try to keep people in their own homes with adaptations where possible. Focus is on the perpetrator doing a lot of work with the police and the offender management team trying to work with them to try and accommodate ex-offenders into the private sector. Keeping family home safe and moving perpetrator out.

- BCP have done some internal training and have a champion officer.
- Coventry 20 HOs generic will be having training on DA through public health through the refuge.
- In Islington linked best practice training by Solace Womens Aid and linked to training for all staff – everyone front of house and back house. Building development for new staff as well as training all other staff as well.
- Manchester are actively providing support at the moment. They were providing the support service anyway but looking to procure further support services for people in temporary accommodation. Manchester work with a number of organisations who are looking to recruit new staff. Lots of authorities are trying to find people who are appropriately trained and it is a challenge.
- BCP have good links with DA service providers in the area and good quality support is out there but not a sufficient amount to extend to what this bill proposes and not used to picking up in accommodation. BCP continuing with everyone in, but insufficient amount of services out there to meet the need. Others are seeing this as well. Are others seeing this as well.
- Seeing an issue with recruiting knowledgeable staff – back up plans approaching recruitment agencies to see if they have anyone on their books. People working in that remit get snapped up. HO officers to do the training as well to meet this need, HO used to do the work and they wore both hats worked well but due to budget cuts this could not continue.. Would like to bring it back and do KADDA training 1.5k per person to provide training to existing staff.
- BCP does joint assessments with care services for NRPF customers. Manchester refer through NRPF to social services and they pick them up. Bristol they don't see high numbers but this is probably an unmet need rather than a lack of. Unless the care service assessment comes under the Children's Act then it can be difficult. Social services might try to contact family and friends and then try for a DV for three months accommodation.
- Bristol has set up operations management meetings, review groups to look at what the outcomes might be for specific customers for Everyone In.. Adult care etc with people who might be tricky to sort out which could be used for this.

- Southwark. HMOs set up and the model has had a positive impact getting people ready to move on. Using 4 bed stock turning one into office for on site support and communal area and three people staying at any individual time . 24 7 support and weekend support – intensive support funded through RSi funding. It is delivering. Outreach office based there during pandemic. Outreach have now gone along St Mungos outreach route. This seems more effective to deliver the role. Paying dividends. Challenge is being able to provide housing soon enough. Looking to adapt to see if they would consider PRS to get more move on through the system and get more people in.
- HMOs might be extended to less complex customers. Hostels might be a good move on and help with the blockage through. Lucky to use the RSAP funding to alter that buildings. Could have expanded the HMOs but still had limited time managing safelives org. Uk CADD training.
- Ian at Islington thinking of doing a similar system. All rough sleepers 25% are women and they are all DA sufferers so do need something like Southwark have, for this particular DA cohort with complex needs.
- Clarification needs to be gained around the sofa surfing DA cohort who don't present as homeless until they are having to leave the temporary accommodation they are using. Some approaches might have fled violence three months ago but are now just needing to be moved on because family or friends can no longer accommodate - they may no longer be in danger.

Main takeaways:

1. True numbers due to the Bill have not yet come through.
2. Need to look at post-covid for comparisons as covid has muddied the waters for most authorities.
3. HMO's may be a way to provide interim accommodation.
4. Prevention work to iron out any problems at an early stage helps if cases progress further in the future.
5. Lease agreements are being used in this area to meet need.
6. Specialist DA advice/well trained staff is crucial to meet customer need.
7. Working alongside Adult social care services may be key for some customers.

Thank you



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