

Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024-29

Healthwatch Birmingham welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024-29. Our key role is to make sure that patients, the public, service users, and carers (PPSuC) are at the heart of service improvement in health and social care. In line with our role, we have focused our comments on:

- Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement
- Health and Social Care aspects of the strategy

Healthwatch Birmingham welcomes that the opportunity to feedback on the draft strategy at this stage. We were pleased to read about the engagement work that took place to create this draft strategy. We note the additional engagement activities that are taking place too, and are pleased to see the council using multiple engagement and involvement routes to strengthen the final strategy.

Values and principles

Healthwatch Birmingham agrees broadly with the proposed values and principles. We would like to see a greater focus on education for communities, organisations and agencies to enable them to be best placed to meet the needs of survivors and holding the perpetrators to account. Without a strong baseline understanding of domestic abuse and how it can present, it can be hard for those best placed to help, to be able to assist families as needed.

We would also like to see a greater commitment to resources for the lifetime of the strategy. Without a solid financial commitment behind the strategy it is hard to see how it can work towards any of the aims and priorities it wishes to tackle. We are all aware of the financial pressures on the local authority at this time, and services within the local authority and those funded by it will be under intense pressure during the life of this strategy. Clear ringfenced financial backing is the only way to show that this strategy is a priority at this difficult time.

Strategic priorities

Healthwatch Birmingham agrees that the six priorities developed will go a long way in meeting the needs of the people of Birmingham. However, as Birmingham is such a culturally diverse and vibrant city, we would like to see a priority that addresses identifying domestic abuse and how it presents in all communities, whether



communities of geography, identity or experience. Whilst the six proposed priorities have a uniform basis, there may be additional barriers faced by other communities that cannot be addressed unless specific focus and support is given to identifying and understanding them in the first place.

Priority 1: Whole Systems approach

We strongly encourage the council in this approach to identify barriers and gaps in support. As well as sharing learning from reviews with all agencies, we would also suggest sharing best practice examples from other similar urban local authorities that could be applicable to Birmingham. We would like to encourage the council to work closely with Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care system to liaise with partner agencies in health and to add the weighting of this organisation towards meeting the aims of the strategy.

Protection, provision and prevention are key issues that need to be addressed in tackling domestic abuse. Therefore, a whole system approach that includes the private, public (including the police), government, and voluntary sectors will help achieve sustainable results. Everyone has a role to play.

Priority 2: Prevention – Changing attitudes and behaviours

Healthwatch Birmingham recognise the importance of a clear educational communications plan and strongly agree with work around this. We urge the needs of different communities in the city to be considered, and communications to be tailored for these communities and organisations as needed.

Regarding changing the attitudes of key agencies, we have previously heard concerns from survivors that health organisations have not always appeared to have taken their situation seriously, leading to concerns about data security and inappropriate information sharing with perpetrators.

We agree with encouraging all employers in the city to adopt workplace policies and suggest using existing schemes such as the Birmingham Business Charter for Social Responsibility to encourage this.

Priority 3: Prevention – Early identification

We agree that early identification is key to reach people at risk of domestic abuse or those experiencing escalating behaviours from perpetrators. Early identification however can only be effective if there are resources to direct people to.



It is key that routes for support and information are clear and accessible for people from all communities. We suggest that consideration is particularly given to making support and information available to those with sensory disabilities.

Priority 4: Children and young people

Healthwatch Birmingham agrees with the focus for children and young people. When looking at education on healthy relationships, we would urge the council to look at successful programs already in place by organisations such as Tender.

We are aware of existing pressures on mental health support for children and young people in Birmingham, and are keen to see how this can be overcome as part of specialist support for children during the life of this strategy.

Priority 5: Safety, Support and Recovery

We agree with the focus on safety, support and recovery. We would like to highlight the need for survivors to be supported in registering with appropriate health and social care services, especially when relocating any distance.

Priority 6: Hold perpetrators to account

We agree with the focus on holding perpetrators to account. Whilst we agree with information sharing for relevant agencies, we would like to ensure safeguards are put into place to make sure this information cannot be abused in anyway by perpetrators or those known to them.

Summary draft strategy

Healthwatch Birmingham is pleased to see the work that has gone into this draft strategy, and we look forward to seeing how it is developed into the final strategy. We would urge the council to continue this important engagement work throughout the life of the strategy to further develop it as needed.



Yours Sincerely,



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