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

**practice exchange pre-read 23/07/2021**

**The new legislation**

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 came into force on the 5th July 2021. All local authorities are now working under the new Act and providing assistance based around the new legal duties placed on them. The Act requires local authorities to make a number of changes, some of which necessitate working in partnership with other support services to fulfil the duties. There will be a need to commission additional vital support services for victims and improve links between existing local services. The act also gives those who are homeless as a result of domestic abuse automatic priority need and offers further support around preserving security of tenure, in certain circumstances.

**Code of guidance**

The code of guidance states that “authorities should not have a blanket approach to domestic abuse which requires corroborative or police evidence to be provided”. How are we working within these guidelines? What processes and procedures have we developed which help us to process people through the system? How will this alter the way we have dealt with these customers historically?

Guidance is also given around understanding what domestic abuse is, the context in which it takes place and what the impacts are on victims; as well as how the impact may be different on different groups of people. Have you commissioned staff training around this? What might staff need in this regard? Do we have any best practice to share in this area?

**The future**

Local authorities were allocated £125m in February to fund their new duties, in readiness for enactment in July. No reassurance has come from the government on future years funding amounts, putting local authorities in the difficult position of being unable to commission longer-term, sustainable services. How can we plan for services into the future without an understanding of what funding will be allocated? How much funding is needed to implement the new legislation effectively?

How can we make sure we are offering services that meet the need of customers under the new legislation? Can we predict what affect the new legislation might have on numbers of domestic abuse victims coming through our services. What services do we have in place already in our local areas to work effectively with this cohort?

How will the duty on authorities to appoint a multi-agency domestic abuse local partnership board work in practice? Who will the board need to include to best meet the needs to consult and assess accommodation-based domestic abuse support and develop and publish a strategy for the provision of this support, as well as monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy?

**Good practice in this area**

* Relationship building with customers and using TIC approach
* Working in close partnerships both internally and externally
* Having an effective and strong local partnership board
* Specific officers / support workers to manage domestic abuse customers
* Training staff around victim impact and new definitions.

**Something to think about before the exchange.**

* What potential solutions have we trialled before? What potential solutions could we trial?
* How have we/can we strengthen partnerships to provide the best possible service?
* How can we work with existing providers to change support services to meet future demand?
* Can more innovation help us to plan and provide future services?
* What might help us to improve our prevention services in this area?