

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Health Scrutiny Committee
Date: 28th January 2021
Report for: Information
Report of: Jo Bryan/ Helen Grant

Report Title

Domestic Abuse in Trafford during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Summary

This report seeks to identify the impact of covid-19 in Trafford during 2020, outline the support and efforts put in place to support victims and detail the next steps that are needed in the coming months.

Recommendation(s)

Committee to note report content and look to support next steps.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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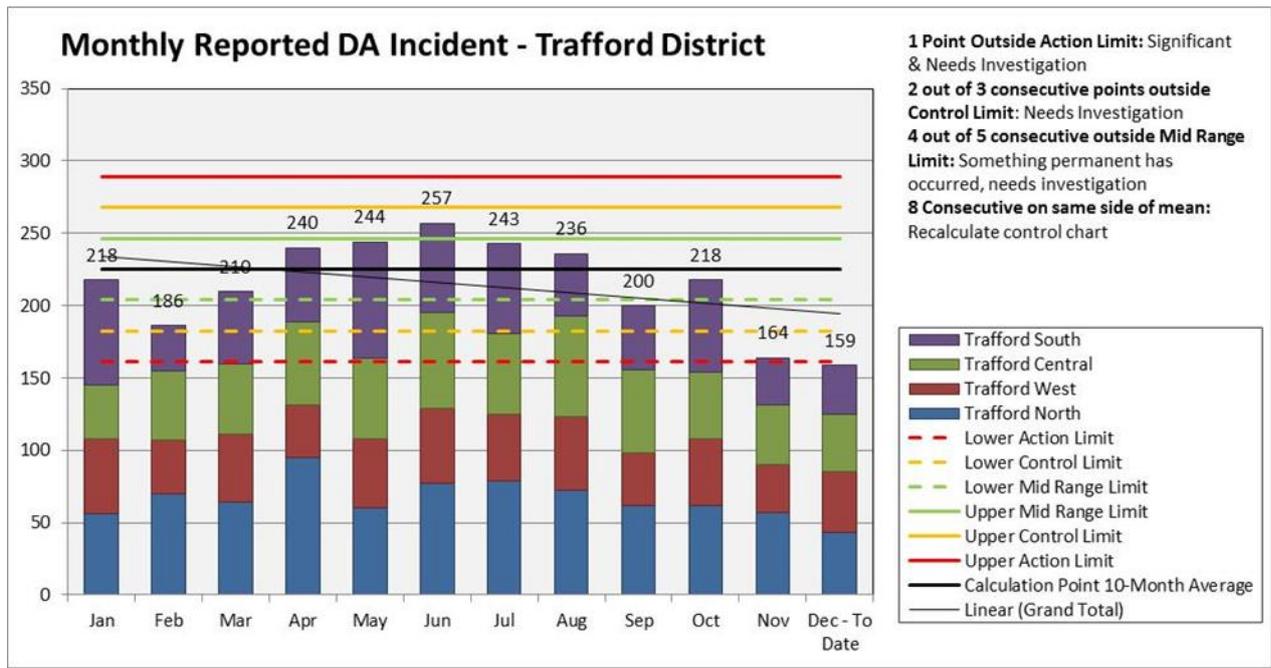
1. Introduction

- 1.1 Globally, nationally and locally there have been widespread concerns that covid-19 would cause a pandemic within a pandemic for victims of domestic abuse. Lockdown rules design to protect the spread of covid-19 and keep people safe were in fact trapping victims at home with their abusers and giving opportunities for further control and isolation from support mechanisms.
- 1.2 People of all races, cultures, socioeconomic statuses, genders, sexual orientations and religions can be affected by domestic abuse, but we know that there can be a disproportionate impact where there is economic instability, inappropriate housing, lack of stable childcare and a lack of support. The pandemic has exacerbated these factors through job losses and financial insecurity, added stresses through children's home education and a reduction in opportunities for domestic abuse to be spotted by health, education and a wide range of other professionals in touch with families and individuals.
- 1.3 The impact of the pandemic on the property, construction and housing sectors also risked victims feeling trapped with a perceived lack of alternative accommodation being available.
- 1.4 This report seeks to identify the impact of covid-19 in Trafford during 2020, outline the support and efforts put in place to support victims and detail the next steps that are needed in the coming months.

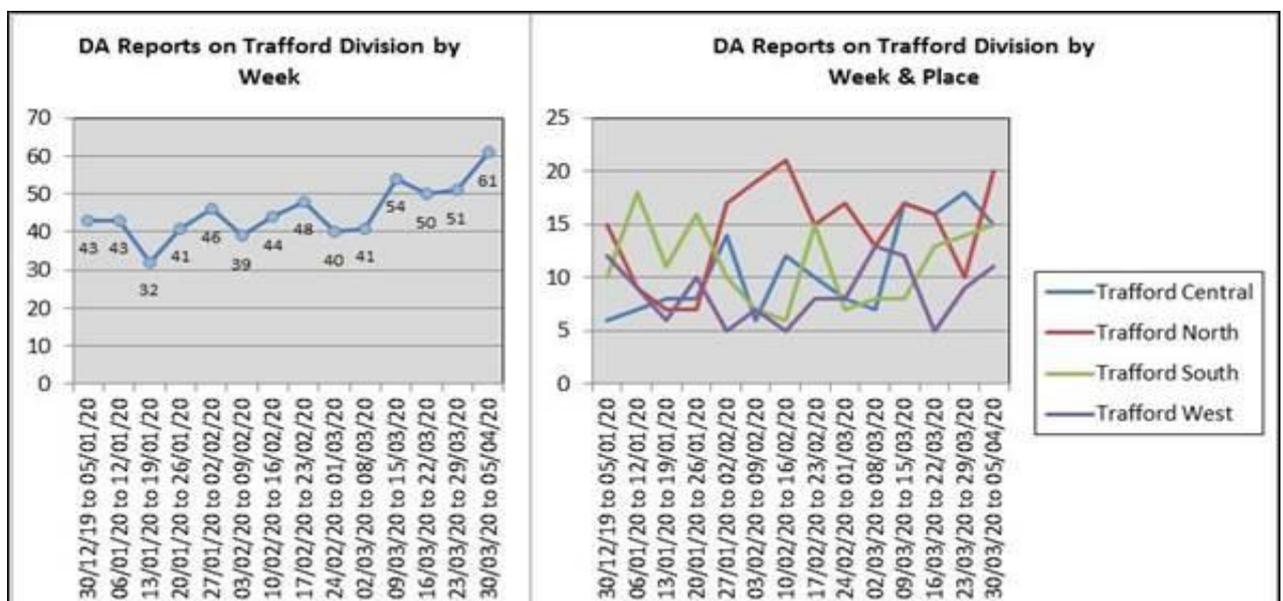
2. Impact of the Pandemic on Domestic Abuse Victims

- 2.1 Women's Aid produced a national report¹ in August 2020 that showed that 61% of women living with their abuser during the pandemic said that the abuse had worsened and more than two-thirds said they felt they had no one to turn to during lockdown. Over a third of those living with children said that their abuser had shown an increase in abusive behaviour towards the children. In April 2020, 78% of women experiencing abuse at that time said that they thought that the Covid-19 made it harder for them to escape abuse and 67% said that Covid-19 had been used as part of the abuse they suffered.
- 2.2 Trafford Council has access to data from a variety of sources to indicate impact of the pandemic on domestic abuse in Trafford.
- 2.3 The following table from GMP shows the number of Domestic Abuse incidents reported by month from January 1st 2020 – December 21st 2020. It shows an increase in incidents during the first lockdown, carrying on through until measures were relaxed. There is no second peak in incidences aligned to the November 2020 lockdown. Greater Manchester Police confirmed that reports were within the parameters seen in previous years.

¹ <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/A-Perfect-Storm-August-2020-1.pdf>

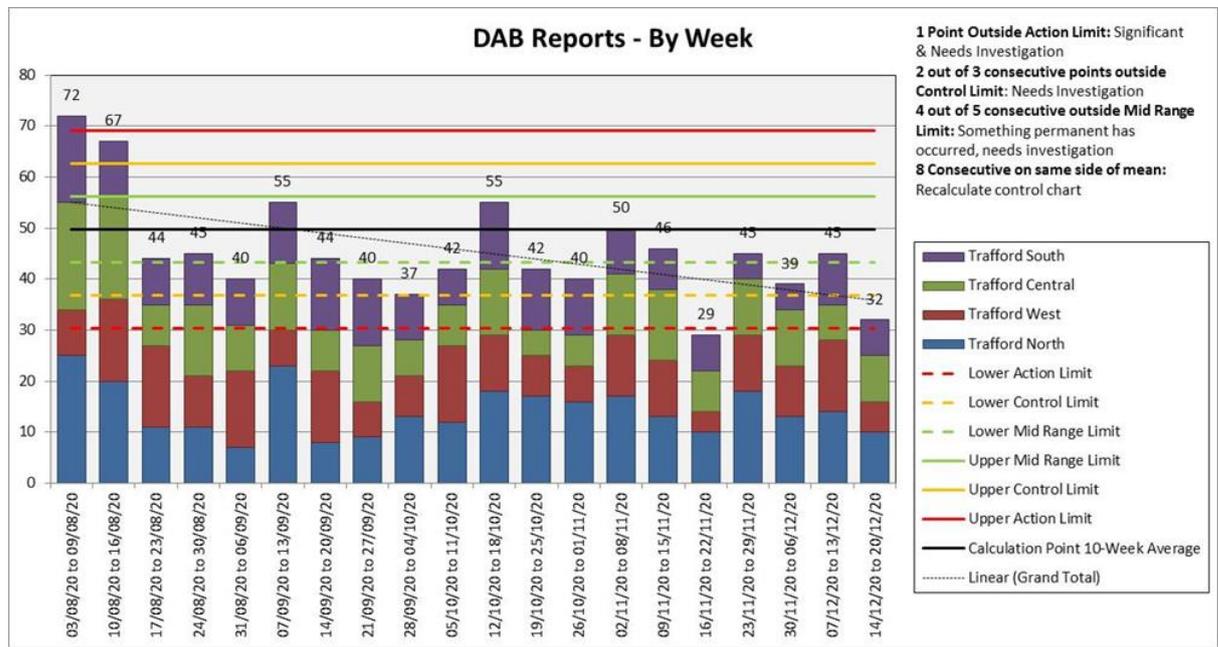


2.4 The first national lockdown for Covid-19 in England started on March 23rd 2020 and was introduced as advice on March 16th by the Health Secretary. This graph from GMP shows the number of Domestic Abuse Records created per week from the beginning of January 2020 to the 4th April 2020. It shows a rise in reports as lockdown measures are warned and come into force.



2.5 This graph from GMP shows the number of Domestic Abuse Reports created per week from 3rd August 2020 to 20th December 2020. There is some indication that there are increased Domestic Abuse Reports in the weeks following announcements to tighten restrictive measures in Greater Manchester, although

it does not exactly align in all instances. For reference local restrictions affecting Trafford were announced at the end of July 2020, on the 2nd September, 1st October, 20th October 20th and 31st October.



2.6 Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) are held in each borough to share information about the highest risk domestic abuse cases where there is a risk that is life threatening and/or traumatic. Its intention is to coordinate support and increase the safety for the victim. The number of MARACs held are another indicator of domestic abuse at the highest level. The following table shows the number of cases heard at MARAC within Trafford from April 2019 to December 2020. A steady rise can be seen over time with increasing repeat cases and those involving children. It is unclear whether this growth would have been seen regardless of Covid-19.

2.7 A review of MARAC has been carried out and the findings contained within the report implemented in 2020 to enable greater capacity and more effective responses. MARAC is now held weekly.

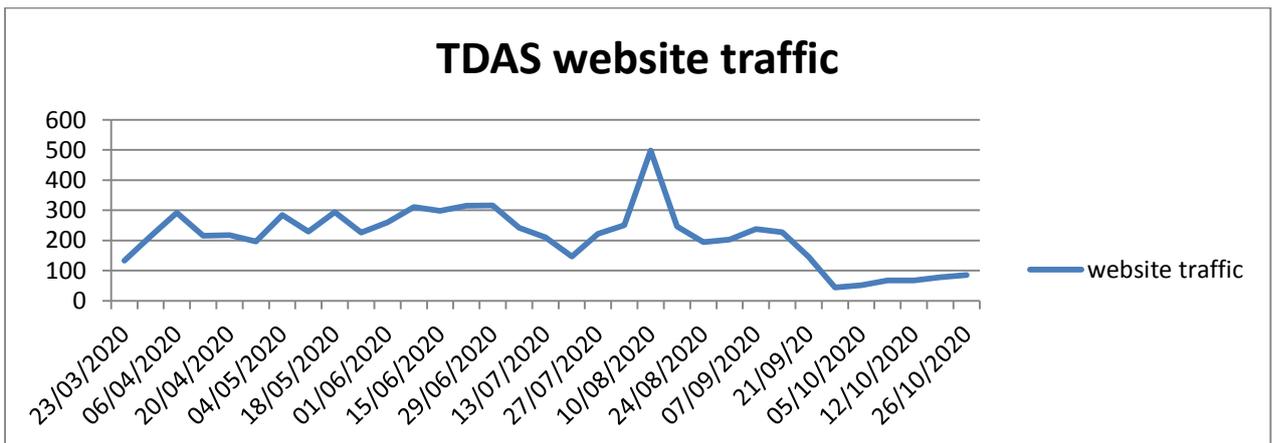
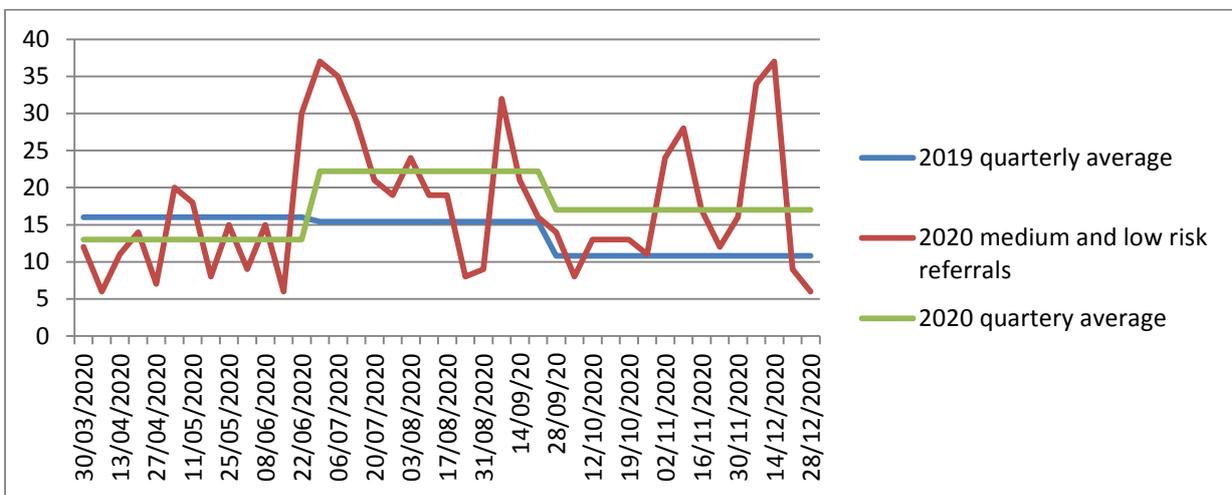
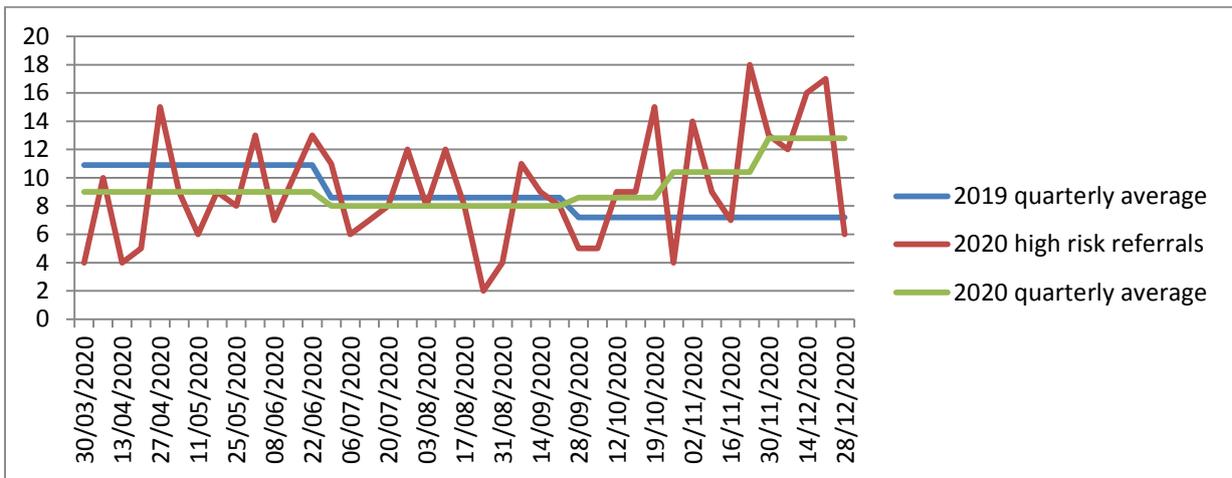
Fiscal Year	Quarter	Number of Cases Discussed	Number of Repeat Cases	Number of Featuring Children
2019 – 2020	Q1	84	26	51
2019 – 2020	Q2	126	44	74
2019 - 2020	Q3	143	58	Data to be confirmed
2019 – 2020	Q4	130	50	72

2020 – 2021	Q1	159	70	79
2020 – 2021	Q2	182	77	104
2020 - 2021	Q3	179	91	109

2.8 Trafford has a STRIVE initiative provided by Talk, Listen, Change in conjunction with GMP providing support to people where police have attended to a domestic abuse callout but no crime has been logged. These tend to be standard risk cases. The following table shows the number of referrals received and the gender of service user to STRIVE within Trafford from July 2019 to September 2020. Given the relatively high number of referrals in quarter 2 2019-2020, these figures are not exceptionally high but do show some increased referral numbers in the period leading up to the first lockdown in England and throughout and then reducing as restrictive measures eased. These figures loosely match GMP's overall domestic abuse incident trends.

Fiscal Year	Quarter	Number of Referrals Received	Number of Females	Number of Males	Number of unknown gender
2019 – 2020	Q2	265	184	73	0
2019 - 2020	Q3	196	103	47	41
2019 – 2020	Q4	283	71	19	187
2020 – 2021	Q1	230	77	22	126
2020 – 2021	Q2	116	63	19	31

2.9 The main support service for medium and high risk victims of domestic abuse is provided by TDAS (Trafford Domestic Abuse Services). The following graphs show the numbers of high risk and medium/standard risk referrals in 2020 compared to 2019 and then the number of visits to the website in 2020. The graphs generally show that referrals for high risk cases were lower than average throughout the first lockdown period, then they return to an average number. However, since September 2020 the numbers have increased significantly and are continuing on an upwards trend. The graph for standard/medium risk cases clearly shows a lower number of referrals during the first lockdown and then a large surge in cases once restrictions eased. The numbers drop in September but are still higher than the previous year. These graphs may indicate the tremendous difficulties that victims had in accessing support due to Covid-19 restrictions which became easier following lockdown. Interestingly, visits to the TDAS website were around the 100 mark prior to Covid-19 and showed massive increases throughout the pandemic, finally returning to more normal levels at the end of the year.



2.10 TDAS also run the domestic abuse refuge provision in Trafford. This year's figures in only nine months of a year surpass referral numbers from any previous year. This indicates an increase in the number of victims ready to flee abusive relationships outstripping available provision.

- 2016-2017: 25 out of 89 referrals accepted
- 2017-2018: 35 out of 170 referrals accepted
- 2018-2019: 32 out of 156 referrals accepted
- 2019-2020: 57 out of 190 referrals accepted
- 2020-2021: In a nine month period 48 referrals out of 204 were accepted.

Nationally during the period from 23 March to 31 May 2020 there was a 40.6% reduction in the number of refuge vacancies, compared to the same period in 2019.

2.11 TDAS also report increased complexity in cases causing a substantial increased demand on their time. There are more victims with multiple vulnerabilities (40% in 2020), substance misuse issues (30% in 2020), mental health needs (64% in 2020), self-harming, attempting suicide, cultural needs and where English is not their first language. 18% of victims supported by the service last year suffered from the ‘toxic trio’ of substance misuse, mental health needs and domestic abuse. Similar to national reports, local victims have reported that Covid-19 has increased levels of isolation.

2.12 Additionally TDAS has seen the impact of Covid-19 on other services which has had a detrimental effect on victims; examples include lack of access to legal aid despite entitlement and court hearings being continually pushed back. TDAS staff have provided support for longer and more intensely due to gaps in other services e.g. staff have been involved in an increased number of DIY civil orders. This has impacted on the capacity of the service substantially.

3. Support for Domestic Abuse Victims in Trafford

3.1 A number of steps have been taken during the Covid-19 pandemic to attempt to minimise the impact and protect at risk residents. Early in the first lockdown Trafford Council launched fortnightly Covid-19 Domestic Abuse Meetings, which are chaired by Trafford Councils Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator. The meetings are multiagency and provide the opportunity for information exchange on the barriers, updates, risks, changes made within their organisations to support with the response to Domestic Abuse since the pandemic and to mobilise joint initiatives quickly across agencies. The meetings have representatives from Community Safety, Public Health, Housing, TDAS, TLC, Trafford Rape Crisis, GMP, Children’s and Adult’s Social Care, CCG and Housing.

Service	Changes due to Covid-19	Capacity issues and solutions
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<p>GMP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In conjunction with community safety, set up safe spaces for victims to report domestic abuse in Stretford Tesco and ASDA Broadheath. • In conjunction with Trafford Council produced communication to ensure there was an awareness that domestic abuse should still be reported. Targeted supermarkets and community hubs. • Publicity around pressing 55 on calls to 999 when it is not safe to speak. • Police live chat facility • Grab bags available in Trafford Police Stations with essential supplies for victims fleeing domestic abuse. • Domestic Abuse communications have run throughout the pandemic with support from a dedicated qualified volunteer at GMP (Trafford) • GMP carried out visits across the borough ensuring that children were safe and well, using a range of initiatives such as the GMP Mascot which was well received. • GMP also worked with Probation to make checks on known perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse. • Due to the potential impact of Covid-19 on resourcing and GMP staff working across Greater Manchester, small plastic cards were produced for Response Officers containing relevant Trafford specific information, such as referral information, out of hours emergency accommodation, and provision of grab bags for anyone fleeing domestic abuse. 	<p>Used spare capacity due to reduction in other types of crime to proactively follow up domestic abuse cases reported in January to March 2020.</p>
<p>TDAS community support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service proactively reviewed safety plans with all victims as per national guidance prior to the first national lockdown. • Staff quickly adapted to working from home and contacting clients via skype, text, Facebook messenger and phone. Flexible hours were introduced to enable victims to have options of support at weekends and evenings. • Clients given key worker's contact details for emergencies. • Children's support worker going into schools to provide support to children and young people. Older young people accessing support during lockdowns via phone/zoom. Resource packs sent out to all families in March 2020. • Specific briefing sheets completed for police, education and health professionals on nuances of domestic abuse during Covid-19 and 	<p>Council approved use of additional resource from MHCLG grant to bring in additional capacity as lockdown eased and an increase was expected.</p> <p>Service seeing longer calls than usual and a higher level of support needed. Increased complexity of cases.</p> <p>Significant impact on staff in terms of meeting demand and intensity of work.</p> <p>Secured funding for emergency safety measures,</p>

	<p>reminder of support available. Professional training sessions moved online.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training to community hub volunteers on spotting signs of domestic abuse and support services. • Daily social media updates to reach victims • Moved Truecolour programme online due to Forever Manchester funding. Funding to assist victims in obtaining I.T. equipment where needed. 	<p>travel costs and staff increases.</p> <p>New funding from the Masonic Charitable Foundation to work with mothers on building back relationships with their children post abuse and parenting techniques.</p>
TDAS Accommodation Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid-19 screens introduced for new refuge residents in April 2020, followed by asymptomatic testing for new residents and staff from January 2021. • Change of emergency out of hours support to a more responsive provider. • Outbreak plan in place 	<p>GMCA opened up additional refuge spaces for Trafford victims to access which were filled quickly.</p> <p>TDAS worked quickly to open up a second six-bedded refuge for single women in the south of the borough. Co-working with HOST to prioritise victims of domestic abuse for emergency accommodation</p>
Strive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carried out telephone support during lockdowns from paid co-ordinators and managed to maintain same level of support to standard risk victims. 	<p>Services saw higher level of engagement from victims and calls are longer than usual. Trained other staff across TLC in the Strive programme so they could provide support if necessary.</p> <p>Retrained additional volunteers so there is extra capacity if needed.</p>
Trafford Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered free panic alarms and basic window/door alarms to support victims. • Secured some funding to support a Sanctuary Scheme in line with the Council's Homelessness Strategy. • Coordinated awareness raising campaigns to increase awareness of domestic abuse during the pandemic and support available through the Council's communications Team, local media and Partner's Communications channels. • Coordinated multi-agency steering group • Provided support to organisations on contingency planning, covid-secure practices, infection control, testing and contact tracing. • Funding for Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator secured and post recruited. • Reviewed MARAC and started to implement recommendations including increasing the frequency of the MARAC meetings. 	<p>Provided funding to support organisations such as TDAS to increase capacity</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created plastic information cards with information for victims around services that could help with domestic abuse and also Covid-19. Sterile cards were put in 'giveaway bags' and handed out at Covid-19 community engagement events. Posters were created and displayed at key locations. 	
Trafford Rape Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintained telephone helpline service and moved counselling service to an online option 	<p>Callers showed significant impact from the pandemic. Longer calls, higher frequency.</p> <p>Additional funding from Trafford CCG to support Covid-19 adaptations.</p>
Other Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GM awareness campaign on domestic abuse GM Victim Services telephone provision continued with no capacity issues. LGBT domestic abuse IDVA service operated via phone and online support. Domestic abuse continued operation Free travel on rail and tram when fleeing domestic abuse Encompass continued to provide alerts to schools following domestic abuse incidents so schools could support pupils Safe spaces established in pharmacies for victims to report abuse and receive support Supermarket initiative put in place so that specific venues can be used to report abuse through prearranged contacts National Probation Service monitored known perpetrators of domestic abuse. A supply of mobile phones has been made available through the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. 	<p>National domestic abuse helpline reported huge increase in contacts. Services across GM were similar to Trafford and did not see huge increases and saw decreases during lockdown.</p>

4. Perpetrator Support

4.1 The Council previously had funding for a Perpetrator Programme. This has now ended however places are being spot-purchased where need is identified by professionals. Sustainable funding for this provision needs to be identified as this will provide better value for money.

4.2 TLC adapted during the pandemic by moving group work sessions to 1:1 sessions via zoom or telephone. The organisation also supported the Council in raising awareness of the Respect national helpline and local support.

- 4.3 WomenMATTER are providing online group and 1:1 support for vulnerable women in developing healthy relationships. This programme is for victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse and has a focus on women in the criminal justice system. A bid is being developed currently to extend this support in 2021 to include a worker around parenting skills for mothers with multiple needs going through childcare proceedings.
- 4.4 Trafford Council are now working in partnership with Make a Change and TLC on a perpetrator program. The Make a Change program is designed to fill a significant gap in current service provision, for situations where people know that domestic abuse is taking place, but where the behaviour or concerns do not yet meet the threshold for a statutory referral. The Make a Change model is highly effective as an early response to people who behave abusively in their intimate relationships. The Make a Change program will be accessible for Trafford residents in 2021.

5. Next Steps for Domestic Abuse Services

- 5.1 Continue with fortnightly Covid-19 Domestic Abuse Meetings until pressures on victims and services ease. This will allow fast action on any emerging issues on needs or capacity.
- 5.2 Every Tier 1 local authority in England has received £50,000 to prepare for the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act on April 1st 2021. Trafford Council is spending this Capacity Building Fund on a data analyst post who will support us with gathering data across agencies and use this to evidence local need within Trafford. Through this process, we will also identify gaps in relation to data and service provision. This information will be used in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which will be completed this year and will inform the review of the Domestic Abuse Strategy. This will give clear plans for the next steps for domestic abuse provision.
- 5.3 Through the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 funding will come to Trafford to support safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse. It is unclear at present whether this funding will be of a sufficient level to maintain our current 'move on' accommodation provided by TDAS or will allow us to commission additional support.
- 5.4 Work is planned to look at information sharing between primary care/GPs and GMP. Currently reviewing this from an information governance and legal perspective. Provisional plans in place to review this and potentially create a contract where GMP will share this information with primary care to support victims and be aware of risks in perpetrators.

- 5.5 Trafford, Stockport and Tameside have been identified as the GM localities where IRISi and Manchester Foundation Trust will deliver a 12 month pilot to understand the resource requirements and barriers/ facilitators to implementation of DVA training and advocacy in sexual health clinics. The pilot will evaluate the direct and indirect costs and the barriers/facilitators to implementation of DVA training and advocacy in sexual health services.
- 5.6 Exploring Manchester's Safer Together programme for domestic abuse in Children's Social Care cases. This programme encourages perpetrators to take responsibility for their actions and the impact on the family.
- 5.7 Identify sustainable funding for the specialist Domestic Abuse worker within Children's Services.
- 5.8 Identify sustainable funding for the perpetrator programme.
- 5.9 Safe Lives Training has been commissioned by Trafford Council to train local professionals in coercive control, which is a growing area of concern in domestic abuse.
- 5.10 Trafford Council is submitting a bid to the Changing Futures Scheme for some investment to support people with complex needs experiencing domestic abuse. The bid is in partnership with TDAS, HOST, Early Break and the Counselling and Family Centre.
- 5.11 Following Covid-19 there are plans to integrate domestic abuse workers within Trafford's neighbourhood teams to facilitate better cross agency working and give access to expertise for health and social care workers. This will also be facilitated by the introduction of a dedicated, secure workspace for TDAS staff on the Council's Liquid Logic system.
- 5.12 Ensuring that the learning from Serious Case Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews is embedded across the partnership. This includes, not just learning from Trafford reviews but nationally. The last Safer Trafford Board was dedicated to domestic abuse with a particular focus on the learning from the 'Baby X Serious Case Review'.

Appendix: TDAS Case Study 2020

R made a self-referral to TDAS in December, she was currently on-street homeless and was fleeing a perpetrator from the city centre. R disclosed that she had ran out of a prescription for her drug withdrawal programme and so had used heroin and cocaine recently as it was unsafe for her to withdraw completely. R's referral was accepted on the basis that she would try to collect a new prescription before coming to the refuge and that any drug use was done off site.

In R's first week of moving in she absconded from the refuge, staff reported her as a missing person however she was found safe but withdrawing from drugs. R had returned back to risk areas to use drugs for several days. R then disclosed that she had been using drugs for the past 3 months, was not signed up with a GP and hadn't had a prescription in over 12 months. R had been borrowing money from unknown men in order to purchase drugs and didn't have access to her own money after losing her card; which increased her vulnerabilities. R began to withdraw from drugs in the refuge and attempted an overdose. Staff supported R to get emergency health care and prescription for her drug addiction that lasted her over the weekend so she wouldn't need to use. Staff then supported her to register with a local GP and make an emergency appointment; additionally R was referred to a drug and alcohol service and encouraged to engage with narcotics anonymous.

R was provided with vouchers for food and a food parcel and an agreement was put in place with additional conditions for her stay within refuge so that her needs and risk could be managed. R is currently 4 weeks into a drug withdrawal programme and is engaging well with drug services. She has been supported to complete a referral to a rehabilitation centre and her application is being assessed for a move in February.

R has been engaging with social services to access contact with her son and reports feeling much healthier. R was supported to maintain her tenancy with TDAS in order to prevent her from returning to the streets and using drugs, she has been able to break the cycle and keep up with engaging with services to start a journey free from drugs and abuse.