



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and date of Committee	<b>CABINET – 17 AUGUST 2022</b>
Report Number	<b>Agenda Item 8</b>
Subject	<b>RENEWAL OF COUNTYWIDE DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES CONTRACT</b>
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Councillor Geoff Saul Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Safety Tel: 01608 648020 Email: geoff.saul@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Heather McCulloch - Community Wellbeing Manager Tel: 01993 861562 Email: heather.mcculloch@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider funding towards the new countywide Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse contract which will start on 1st April 2023.
Annexes	Annex A - Key statistics for domestic abuse in Oxfordshire
Recommendation/s	Cabinet is recommended to: <i>a) note the duty the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places on local authorities in England to provide accommodation based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation;</i> <i>b) agree funding towards the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse contract to start on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, subject to Council resolution when setting the 2023/24 revenue budget.</i>
Corporate priorities	We will enable everyone to lead healthy and fulfilling lives in thriving communities.
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	None

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. At a Cabinet meeting on 18th October 2017 funding of up to £35k per year for three years commencing in April 2018, was approved, towards a countywide contract to deliver domestic abuse services in Oxfordshire.
- 1.2. The background to this decision is that in 2014 Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) agreed a programme of savings that included reducing the budget for domestic abuse services from £337,000 to £200,000 from April 2015. Given the challenge this would cause, OCC agreed to continue funding the current level of service until a detailed review of domestic abuse was completed. This review was completed in October 2016 and recommended bringing together the disparate services being delivered across the County to ensure that services were joined up and easily accessible, as domestic abuse is present in all areas of the County.
- 1.3. As part of this joined up approach, the review recommended that the various funding streams being spent on domestic abuse services should be brought together to enable the co-commissioning of a range of services to meet local need, while reducing complexity and allowing for the increasing volume of need. This approach would also, importantly, bring consistency in quality of approach across the county.
- 1.4. The Council had made no contribution to Domestic Abuse services prior to April 2018 whereas other District Councils had funded their own outreach worker posts.
- 1.5. The original three year contract period came to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 but was extended following the agreement of all parties for a further 2 years.
- 1.6. At a Cabinet meeting on 24th March 2021 it was agreed that the Council would continue to fund the contract for the extension period until 31st March 2023.

## 2. NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

2.1. [The UK government's definition of domestic abuse](#) is “any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.”

2.2 Key facts:

- One in four women and one in six men will suffer domestic abuse at some time in their lives.

- Almost one in three women aged 16-59 will experience domestic abuse in her lifetime
- Two women a week are killed by a current or former partner in England and Wales alone
- In the year ending March 2019, 1.6 million women experienced domestic abuse
- 62% of children in households where domestic violence is happening are also directly harmed
- 85% of those experiencing domestic violence sought help from professionals an average of five times before they received effective help to stop the abuse
- Abuse lasts, on average, 25% longer in the most rural areas
- The more rural the setting the more risk of harm
- Retreating rural resources make help and escape harder

2.3 In 2021 the [Domestic Abuse Act](#) came into force. The purpose is to:

- Raise awareness and understanding about the devastating impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families.
- Further improve the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice.
- Strengthen the support for victims of abuse by statutory agencies.

2.4 Furthermore the Act will :

- create a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, controlling or coercive, and economic abuse
- **place a duty on local authorities in England to provide accommodation based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation**
- provide that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have 'priority need' for homelessness assistance
- ensure that where a local authority, for reasons connected with domestic abuse, grants a new secure tenancy to a social tenant who had or has a secure lifetime or assured tenancy (other than an assured shorthold tenancy) this must be a secure lifetime tenancy

### 3. LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Oxfordshire's overarching domestic abuse strategy is constructed around four key strategic priorities:
1. **Prevention** - preventing domestic abuse from happening by challenging the attitudes and behaviour which foster it and intervening early where possible to prevent it.
  2. **Provision** - providing high quality, joined up support for victims where domestic abuse does occur.
  3. **Pursuing** - taking action to reduce the harm to victims-survivors of abuse by ensuring that perpetrators are held to account and provided with opportunities for change in a way that maximises safety.
  4. **Partnership** - working in partnership to obtain the best outcome for victims-survivors, children and their families.
- 3.2 Key statistics on domestic abuse in Oxfordshire are shown at Annex A and show the local context for West Oxfordshire.
- 3.3 The delivery of a service to support domestic abuse victims will fit within the emerging Council Priority - 'We will enable everyone to lead healthy and fulfilling lives in thriving communities'.
- 3.4 On 26<sup>th</sup> October 2021, the Council approved a motion 'to ensure that West Oxfordshire District Council does everything in its power to build a District free from harassment violence against women and girls'
- 3.5 Support for victims of domestic abuse is a top priority for the West Oxfordshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and included in the 2022/23 CSP plan.

### 4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The existing countywide contract delivered by A2Dominion provides an access and information service including helpline, outreach and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) services including 1:1 counselling, refuge accommodation, complex needs service for those with multiple issues, and specialist support groups for victims of domestic abuse. An advantage of a countywide contract is that the service in each area is delivered to an agreed standard consistently. It also provides economies of scale around recruitment, training and the management of overheads and coverage for sickness and leave.
- 4.2 In addition the Council is taking local action to support victims:
- Sanctuary scheme – led by Housing team – provides locks and other safety measures to help people stay safe at home
  - Designated MARAC officer (DMO), in Housing team
  - Domestic Abuse specialist role in the Housing team

- £10,000 from COMF funding to Reducing the Risk to deliver Champions training to communities in West Oxfordshire in 2021/22.
- Places of Safety scheme under development - plan to identify one location in each district to give a place to those ineligible for refuge
- Championing specific approach in rural areas - chair Rural DA subgroup of Domestic Abuse Strategic Board
- £2,615 to provide doorbells and cameras for victims from community safety partnership budget in 2021/22
- Participation in 16 days of Activism in Nov 2021
- Representation on the Countywide Domestic Abuse Strategic group and Domestic Abuse Operational group.

## **5. MAIN POINTS**

- 5.1 The existing Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Services (ODAS) contract comes to an end in March 2023. It has been operated by A2Dominion since 2018. The annual value of the contract in 2021 was £545,000.
- 5.2 West Oxfordshire District Council has provided £35,000 annually for the life of the current contract. During that time £25,000 of the sum was secured via the Community Safety Partnership grant from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner in Oxfordshire (OPCC). From 2023/24 onwards funding will no longer be available via this route.
- 5.3 Oxfordshire County Council is planning to advertise the tender at the end of September 2022 with a view to the tender being awarded in December 2022 for an April 2023 start.
- 5.4 Oxfordshire County Council is seeking ongoing funding from West Oxfordshire District Council (and from the city council and other district councils in Oxfordshire) and given the timescales for the tender process timeline is seeking a commitment before the end of September 2022. The request is that the contributions from the district councils take account of cost of living increases and the demands of the new Act.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Council has contributed £175,000 towards the ODAS contract since 2018. Of that, £125,000 has been secured from external funding provided to the Community Safety partnership from the OPCC. Moving forward there will be no opportunity to secure funding from the OPCC for this purpose. There is currently £10,000 in the base budget for each year.
- 6.2 Oxfordshire County Council is hoping to be able to offer a contract with an annual value of approximately £700,000. This is above the figure for 2021 of £545,000. This increase is expected partly because of the increases in cost of living but also because the new Act requires certain services must be included – for example, Perpetrator programmes.

6.3 Contributions from district councils in 2021/22 were:

	2021	Adult population 2021 (15+)	Per head cost
West Oxfordshire DC	£35,000	95,000	0.37p
Vale White Horse DC / South Ox DC combined	£51,000	114,200 122,900	0.21p
Oxford City Council	£35,000	138,500	0.25p
Cherwell DC	£25,000	132,400	0.19p
	£165,000	603,000	

6.4 Currently the Council contributes £35,000 per year – this is 37p per head of population. The lowest contribution per head of population is Cherwell District Council at 19p per head. The figures below illustrate the cost options. Oxford City Council has already agreed its contribution at £35,000 per annum, which equates to approximately 25p per head of population. Given that when we receive grant funding it is often weighted to population, it would seem logical to apply this method to calculating our contribution.

6.5 The OPCC has indicated that whilst they plan to provide some financial assistance to support the new contract, they are prioritising funding to services and contracts which cover the Thames Valley as a whole. They are a significant contributor to the current Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service.

	Adult pop 15+	25p per head	28p per head	30p per head	37p per head
West Oxfordshire DC	95,000	£23,750	£26,600	£28,500	£35,000
Vale White Horse DC	114,200	£28,550	£31,976	£34,260	£42,254
South Oxfordshire DC	122,900	£30,725	£34,412	£36,870	£45,473
Oxford City Council	138,500	£35,000*	£35,000*	£35,000*	£51,245
Cherwell DC	132,400	£33,100	£37,072	£39,720	£48,988
Total	603,000	£151,125	£165,060	£174,350	

\*Oxford City has a 3 year agreement in place at 35k. Alternative figures would be £34,625, £38,780, £41,550

	2021	Year 1 25p p/h	Year 2 (Yr1 + 3%)	Year 3 (Yr2 + 3%)
West Oxfordshire DC	£35,000	£23,750	£24,463	£25,196

6.6 All illustrations above represent a base budget increase for the Council. Inflationary increases at 3% per annum have been illustrated. The Cabinet would need to determine whether or not an increase in base budget can be recommended and if it is, propose this in the 2023/24 revenue budget for Council resolution in early 2023. As an alternative Cabinet may wish to consider utilising some of the existing grants budget, which is currently subject to review, to cover the growth beyond the existing £10,000 base budget.

6.7 Oxfordshire County Council has confirmed that the contract duration has yet to be determined. ODAS is currently a 3 year plus 2 contract.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The Council is under no legal obligation to contribute to the service after March 31<sup>st</sup> 2023. If funding is approved beyond that then this arrangement will be subject to a legal agreement.

## **8. RISK ASSESSMENT**

8.1 West Oxfordshire may see a more limited service available for residents should the Council decide not to make a contribution. A reduced service would increase risk to victims. OCC is looking for a contribution for the Council for the life of the contract which would present a financial risk to the Council. There will be a monitoring regime in place and the Council will have the opportunity to raise concerns if performance does not match expectations, and seek remedial action.

## **9. EQUALITIES IMPACT (IF REQUIRED)**

9.1 The decision to fund the service will have a positive effect on the people using the service. Using the funding for this purpose may have the effect of reducing resources available for other purposes.

## **10. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS (IF REQUIRED)**

10.1 There are no implications in relation to climate change

## **11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

11.1 The Council could decide not to fund the service as there is no legal obligation to do so.

## **12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1 The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:

- Countywide Domestic Abuse Support Service Report to Cabinet dated Wednesday 24th March 2021 and associated minutes
- Domestic Abuse Services in Oxfordshire Report to Cabinet dated Wednesday 18th October 2017 and associated minutes

12.2 These documents will be available for inspection at the Council Offices at Woodgreen, Witney during normal office hours for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting. Please contact the author of the report.

## Annex A - Key statistics on domestic abuse in Oxfordshire

### What is the local context?

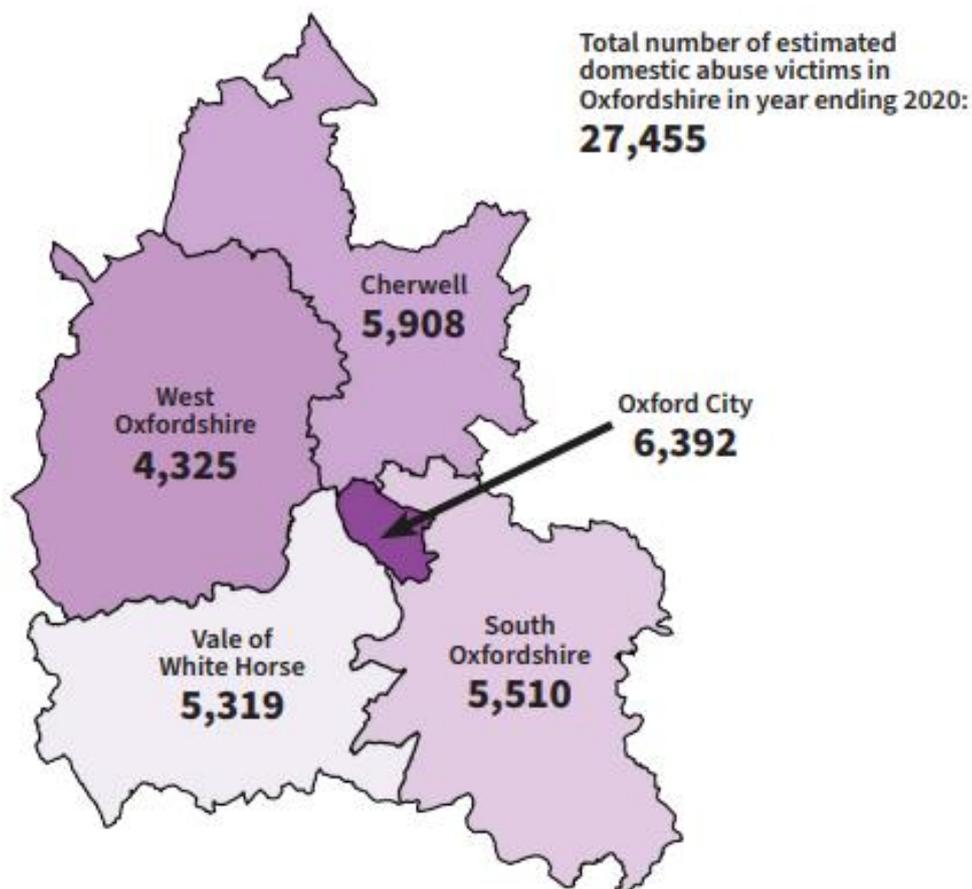
In 2021, Oxfordshire County Council conducted a needs assessment looking at the number of victims-survivors, including children and young people, of domestic abuse in Oxfordshire and the current provision of services available to meet their needs. The estimated number and current provision of services for perpetrators was also included in the needs assessment. A range of national and local statistics are summarised to provide an overview and snapshot of the current profile in Oxfordshire.

### Key statistics on domestic abuse victims-survivors who are ADULTS in Oxfordshire

The number of victims of domestic abuse in Oxfordshire is calculated using either national data which is modelled to produce a synthetic estimate for Oxfordshire or local data from police and crime datasets to produce recorded or known numbers for Oxfordshire.

What is the **estimated** number of domestic abuse adult victims in Oxfordshire?

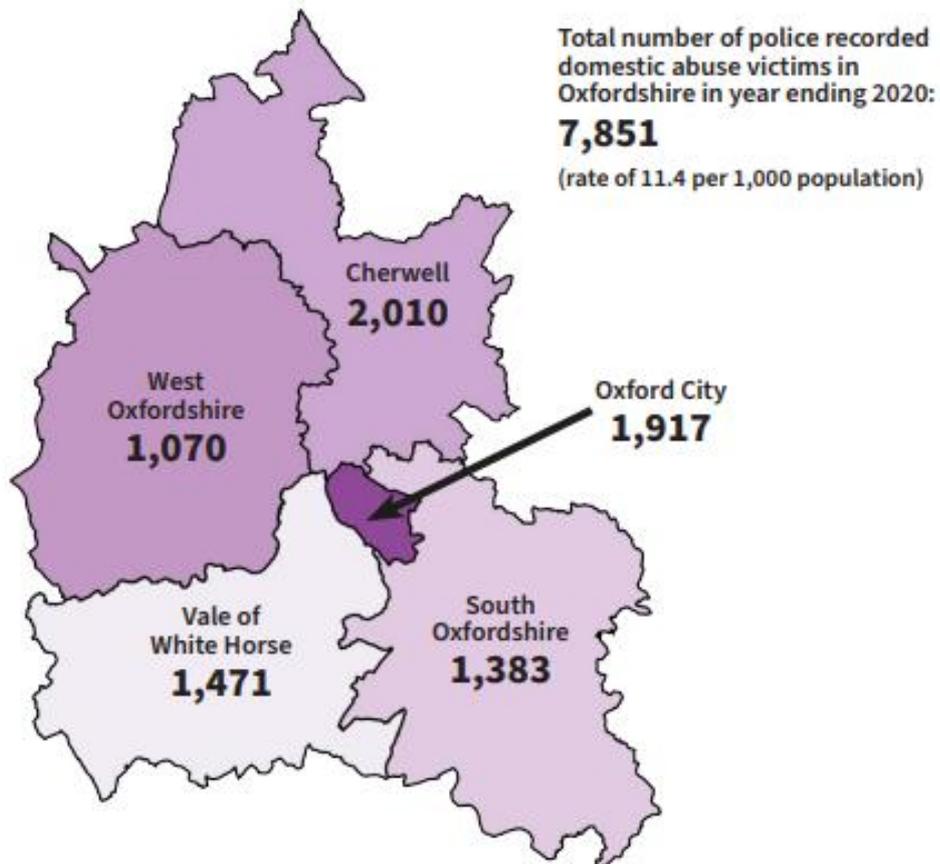
Figure 1: Map of estimated number of domestic abuse adult victims by district in Oxfordshire<sup>4</sup>:



4. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (synthetic estimate)

What is the **recorded** number of domestic abuse adult victims in Oxfordshire?

Figure 2: Map of recorded number of domestic abuse adult victims by district in Oxfordshire<sup>5</sup>:



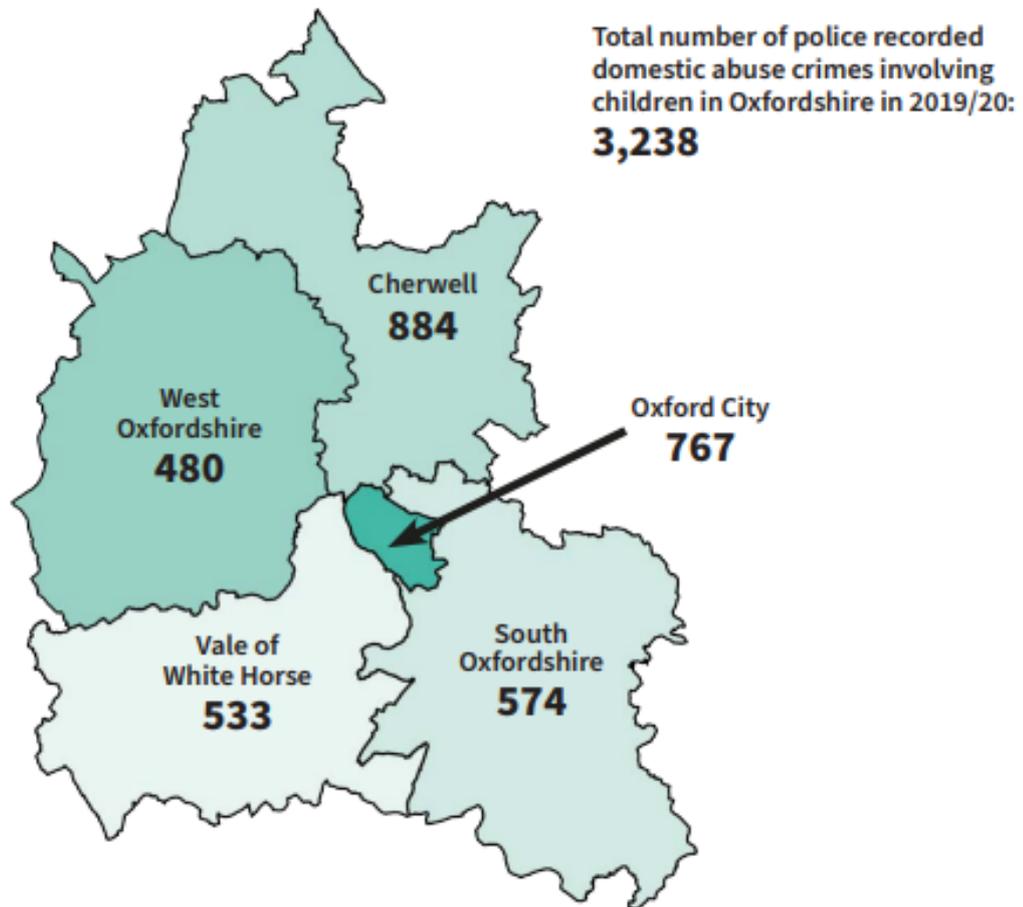
The synthetic estimate is significantly higher than the recorded number as only a proportion of victims report domestic abuse to the police. This highlights that the local dataset represents only a proportion of victims and therefore there is a large unrecorded number of victims of domestic abuse in Oxfordshire.

<sup>5</sup> Thames Valley Police Crime Recording System - Niche RMS

## Key statistics on domestic abuse victims-survivors who are CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE in Oxfordshire

What is the recorded number of domestic abuse crimes involving children in Oxfordshire?

Figure 3: Map of recorded number of domestic abuse crimes involving children by district in Oxfordshire<sup>11</sup>:

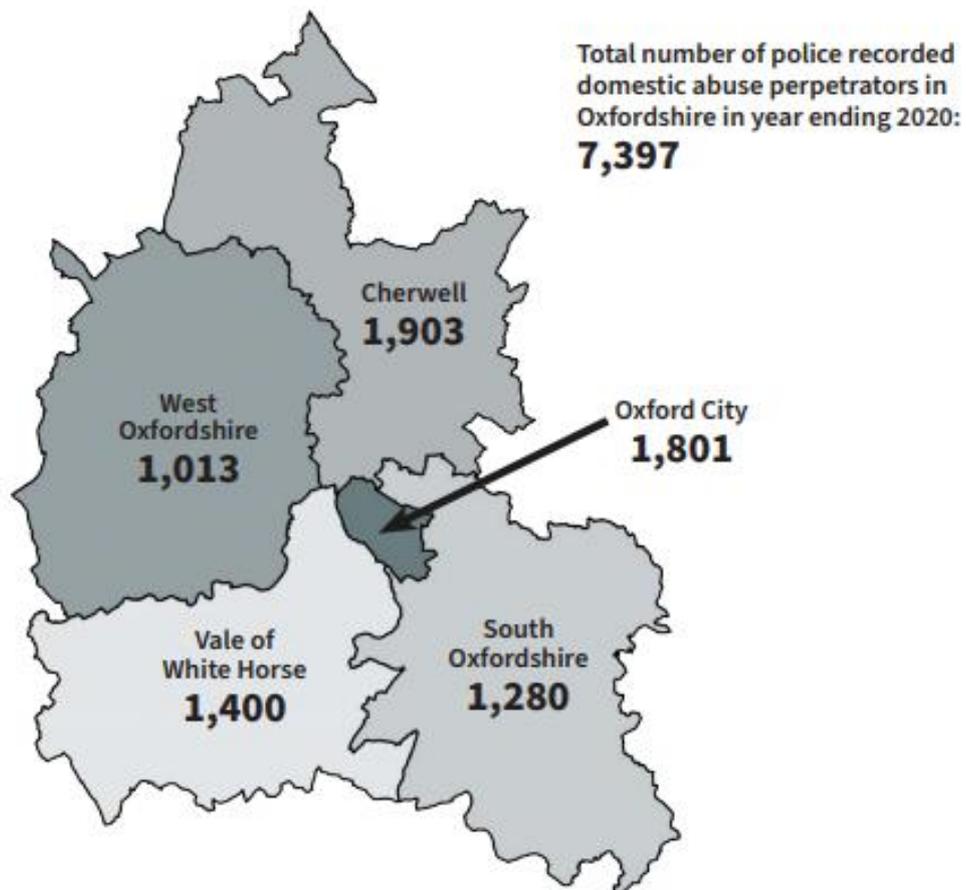


11. Thames Valley Police Crime Recording System - Niche RMS

## Key statistics on domestic abuse PERPETRATORS and young people who use abusive behaviour in Oxfordshire

What is the **recorded** number of domestic abuse perpetrators in Oxfordshire?

Figure 4: Map of recorded number of domestic abuse perpetrators by district in Oxfordshire<sup>25</sup>:



25. Thames Valley Police Crime Recording System - Niche RMS

- 10% increase in the police recorded number of domestic abuse victims in Oxfordshire when comparing year ending December 2020 with the average of the previous 3 years (2017 to 2019)<sup>7</sup>. The increase may be real, or due to improved recording by the police, or both
- Overall, in the year ending 31 March 2017, domestic abuse is estimated to have cost over £66 billion in England and Wales.
- Females are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse: 69% recorded as female compared to 29% male in year ending December 2020 in Oxfordshire. This aligns with national data
- It is estimated that 20% (1 in 5) children in the UK are exposed to domestic abuse. Applying this to the population of Oxfordshire (131,373 children aged 0-15 years) it can be estimated that 26,274 children in Oxfordshire may have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse in their childhood.
- People with a long-term illness or disability compared to those without are considerably more likely to be victims-survivors of domestic abuse. 34.8% of adults aged 16-59 and 52.1% of adults aged 60-74 with experience of partner abuse had long- standing illness or disability
- The prevalence of all types of abuse among LGBT+ victims-survivors is higher than among those who do not identify themselves as LGBT+ and there are higher rates of repeat experiences of abuse and discrimination over their lifetime (i.e. 'poly-victimisation').
- Domestic abuse is more frequent during pregnancy. It is estimated that approximately 6.7% of pregnant women are abused during their pregnancy or soon after the birth<sup>23</sup>. An estimated 500 women in Oxfordshire may experience domestic abuse during pregnancy and postnatally every year.
- Victims over 60 will typically experience abuse for 6.5 years before accessing help compared to approximately 3 years for those under 60
- Victims of domestic abuse with mental health needs were more likely to have visited their GP and A&E before accessing support for the abuse