

Public Question to the Health and Wellbeing Board, 19th June 2025

Question to be read by Mr. John Palmer.

On 12 May 2025, the inspirational Jess Phillips MP, Minister for Safeguarding, and Violence Against Women and Girls, announced a national near-£20m investment boost in life-saving support via specialist services for victims of domestic abuse.

Wendy Bulman's latest report to this meeting (Item 4) relates that every £1 extra invested in specialist domestic abuse services could yield a £9 return in local public sector savings.

Will the Board discuss and/or express opinions on an idea of locally raising much-needed additional funding for specialist domestic abuse support services?

Perchance, Shropshire Council could increase tenfold, its Licensing Act 2003 statutory annual fees for public licensed premises? These currently range from just a measly £100 (Band A), to a drop-in-the-ocean £350 annual fee for a Band E premises with a non-domestic rateable value of £125,001+.

Add a feminist additional zero to those, and we're getting somewhere, showing our local progressive stripes aplenty?

Response from Portfolio Holder Ruth Houghton

Shropshire Council is currently managing an unprecedented financial position as budgeted for with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 29 February 2024 and again on the 27th February 2025. These are detailed in our monitoring position presented to Cabinet monthly. This demonstrates that significant management action is required over the remainder of the financial year and beyond to ensure the Council's financial survival. Statutory services continue to be funded, but reallocation of additional funding remains a challenge.

In terms of funding for Domestic Abuse, the Council's Domestic Abuse strategic lead keeps abreast of the funding we receive from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government to comply with our statutory duty. We are working alongside the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner with a view to ensuring our needs assessments and commissioned services are becoming aligned.

The team also work hard to maximise other funding opportunities for example working with colleagues across West Mercia to access funding awarded to Community Safety Partnerships to tackle Serious Violence. On average, across West Mercia, domestic abuse was a factor in 50% of all serious violence. Shropshire Council took the lead on a West Mercia wide project that is providing fully funded sessions across education and community settings to young people aimed at addressing the factors that lead to domestic abuse and serious violence. Staff working in schools and across those community groups are also provided with sessions to assist them in understanding how best to support the young people who access these

sessions. The team ensured we commissioned services that deliver an all-inclusive offer so young people with disabilities and special educational needs can access the intervention.

The team have previously looked to the Youth Endowment Fund, Children Affected by Domestic Abuse fund and other opportunities as they present themselves and will keep working on funding applications as they arise.

After a successful application, Homes England has awarded the Council with funding from the Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP) and we have secured three properties with some of this funding to house very complex single victims/survivors of domestic abuse with a history of homelessness and other disadvantages; generally substance use, mental health and some offending history. The Programme also came with revenue funding so we have commissioned a peer-led organisation to deliver peer mentor support whilst also co-ordinating a multi-agency response to those living in the accommodation. This programme is being delivered taking a housing first/led model which provides intensive, person-centred, holistic support that is open-ended.

Our Sanctuary Scheme is part funded by the Domestic Abuse Grant and part funded by the Homeless Prevention Grant. This enables us to provide all eligible victims of domestic abuse with a security assessment and any target hardening, to reduce the need for them and any children to flee to safe accommodation. We deliver alongside West Mercia Police and Shropshire Fire & Rescue service.

It is worth noting that funding opportunities external to the Council can come into various departments and people, so some opportunities are missed. The Council are considering a single central point to support us to be more successful in applications.

With regards to licencing, fees set under the Licensing Act 2003 are statutory fees set by Central Government. Shropshire Council is unable to revise the fees set, as this is the responsibility of Central Government.

ENDS