

Domestic abuse accommodation and support strategy consultation



Date: December 2021

Document summary

Results report from the consultation about the draft domestic abuse accommodation and support strategy

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About this document:

Enquiries: Consultation Team

Author: Cathy Heys

Telephone: 01273 418 565

Email: consultationASC@eastsussex.gov.uk

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Related information

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Background

We wanted to know what people thought of the draft domestic abuse accommodation and support strategy for Sussex and whether we have got the priorities right.

Why we consulted

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires local authorities to publish a strategy setting out how they will protect and assist survivors of domestic abuse in safe accommodation. In Sussex we have developed a draft strategy that covers East and West Sussex and Brighton & Hove.

Over 70 stakeholders, professionals, service providers and survivors took part in engagement meetings to inform a needs assessment. This helped us to understand current provision, and identify gaps and opportunities for improving the offer.

In response to the findings of the needs assessment we have identified six strategic priorities. Each priority is supported by a number of recommendations.

The priorities are:

- **Consistent and Collaborative:** Promoting multi-agency and partnership commissioning and working to ensure a consistent offer across Sussex.
- **Diverse and Appropriate:** Providing a wide range of appropriate safe accommodation and support options.
- **Accessible and Inclusive:** Ensuring services are accessible to all victims/survivors and meet the specific needs of those with the full range of protected characteristics.
- **Responsive:** Establishing specialist provision to support victims/survivors with Multiple Complex Needs.
- **Victim-centred:** Empowering victims/survivors through expanding choices and enabling more victims/survivors to remain in their own homes.
- **Trauma-informed:** Embedding trauma-informed practice in services and processes through training and specialist knowledge.

We believe the proposed strategy will make a real difference to the lives of survivors and their children. What people told us in the consultation will help us ensure we get it right and make the most of the additional funding that is being provided.

The draft strategy has been updated based on people's comments ready for the final version to be published in January. We will then have a duty to deliver on the commitments we have made and report our progress to the Secretary of State each year.

The Domestic Abuse Partnership Board will oversee the delivery of our annual Action Plans. The Strategy itself will be reviewed and refreshed every three years in response to the changing needs of victims and survivors of domestic violence and abuse.

What happens next?

The final draft of the strategy will be reviewed and approved by the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and the Department Management Team for Adult Social Care & Health.

Consultation summary

About the consultation

The consultation ran for eight weeks, opening on 25 October and closing on 19 December.

The consultation was shared with people and organisations who took part in the engagement work to develop the strategy. We also promoted it through established Council channels including: our consultation website; social media accounts; engagement groups; our People Bank volunteers; various newsletters such as the Public Health Bulletin, Provider Bulletin, Health and Social Care News, staff updates To the Point and Reach; and we asked local partners to share it with their networks.

Consultation activity

44 people completed the survey, and the topic was also discussed at an East Sussex Seniors Association meeting (see appendix 4 for details). Most people who took part live or work in East Sussex (42 people). The biggest groups of respondents were survivors of domestic abuse (12 people), people who ticked the 'other' option (11 people), and people who work in services (10 people).

What people told us in the consultation

All the comment themes were mentioned by fewer than 10 people. The summary below covers the top themes for each question. You can find more details in appendix 2 of all the other issues raised.

Summary

While the results were broadly positive, particularly for the priorities, there were lots of detailed comments and suggestions for improving the strategy. Quite a few people shared personal experiences and told us about the challenges they, or family members, have faced in accessing support.

Views on the six priorities

86% of respondents (38 people) agree that the priorities set out in the strategy are the right ones. The top comment themes for people who disagreed and others who added comments were: involve victims/survivors when devising service provision (3 comments) and some areas in the county lack service provision (2 comments).

Views on the recommendations

We asked people which of the recommendations they would prioritise.

More accommodation for women with children was the most popular top choice with 10 votes. It also scored well in total votes, getting 18.

Offering a broader menu of accommodation options was second in the top choice vote with eight. It also received the most votes across the board, with 23.

Three other categories also got more than 15 votes when all the choices were totalled up: support for children and young people (17 votes), exploring having a single point of contact (17), and offering a minimum standard of care and support (16 votes).

The top comment themes relating to people's choices were:

- Victim-centred approach is preferable (6 comments)
- Accommodation: should not be accessible to some at the expense of others (6 comments)
- Set minimum standards (5)
- Early-stage support, eg, legal and housing, for victims is crucial (5)
- Holistic approach needed – all parties and multiple agencies (4)
- More than five of the recommendations are important (4)
- Single point of contact as the starting point for everyone (3)

What needs to change

Half the respondents said something needed to change. The top comment themes, with three comments each, were:

- greater support for victims,
- the views and knowledge of people using services should be included,
- the strategy document approaches the issue from perspective of local authorities rather than victims/survivors, and
- the limitations of the strategy should be highlighted in the document.

What is missing

Nearly half the respondents said something is missing. The top comment themes were: ensure certain victim/survivor groups aren't overlooked (6 comments), inter-agency communication is vital (3 comments), and safe provision for victim accommodation is needed via councils (3 comments).

Other comments and suggestions

Over a third of respondents added a final comment or suggestion. The top comment themes were:

- Positive comment: consultation deserves good number of responses (4 comments)
- Suggestion: increase focus on perpetrator behaviour change (3)
- Suggestion: having one key worker aids the process of gaining their trust (2)
- Negative comment: consultation when drafting strategy was not wide-ranging enough (2)
- Suggestion: prioritise safe spaces for women (2)

Appendix 1: Consultation survey

Q1) Do you live or work in East Sussex?

Yes

No

Q2) Are you filling the survey in as:

A survivor of domestic abuse

A family member or friend of a survivor

Someone who works in services

Other individual (please provide details below)

An organisation (please provide your name and job title below)

Other individual:

Your organisation name:

Your job title:

Q3) How much do you agree or disagree that the six priorities set out in the strategy are the right ones?

[Note: A list of the priorities was included within the questionnaire.]

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

If you disagree, what would you suggest?

Q4) Which recommendations would you prioritise?

[Note: A list of shortened versions of the recommendations was included within the questionnaire.]

Your top choice: *[selected from a drop-down menu]*

Choice 2: *[selected from a drop-down menu]*

Choice 3: *[selected from a drop-down menu]*

Choice 4: *[selected from a drop-down menu]*

Choice 5: *[selected from a drop-down menu]*

If you ticked 'other' please provide details here:

Your comments about your choices:

Q5) Is there anything that needs to change in the strategy?

Yes

No

If you said yes, please tell us what:

Q6) Is there anything missing from the strategy?

Yes

No

If you said yes, please tell us what:

Q6) Any other comments or suggestions you would like to make?

Respondents also had the option of completing the optional 'About you' questions. (See appendix 3 for the questions asked in this section.)

Appendix 2: Survey results

We received 44 completed surveys.

Whether they live or work in East Sussex

Answer	Number
Yes	42
No	2

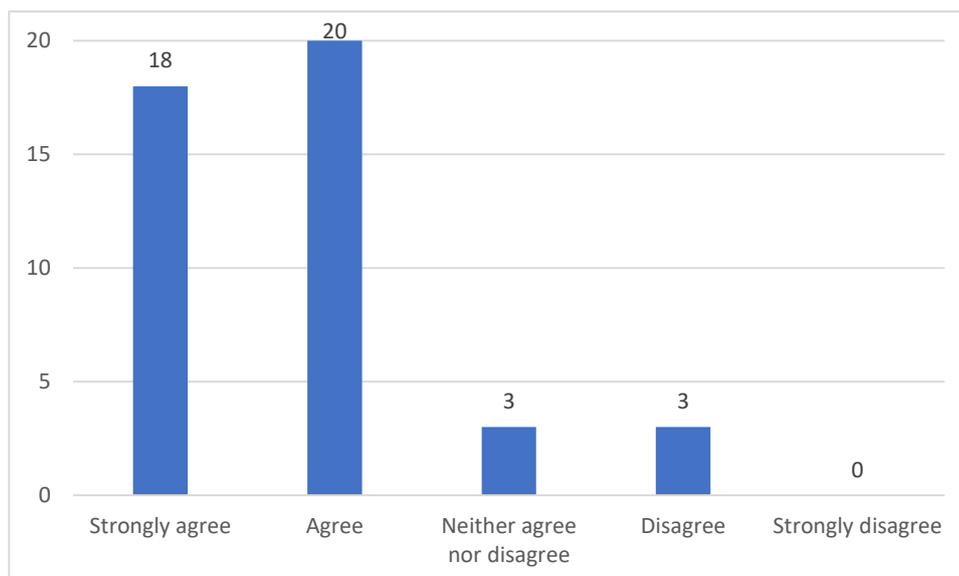
Who took part

Completing as...	Number
A survivor of domestic abuse	12
A family member or friend of a survivor	5
Someone who works in services	10
Other individual	11
An organisation	6

12 people provided additional information in the 'other individual box, with the following breakdown: Practitioner (6); Volunteer (4); Practitioner – lived experience (2); Survivor (2); Name given (2); Forum volunteer (1); and Member of the public (1).

Organisation: Six people ticked that they were completing the survey on behalf of an organisation, although one of the names given wasn't an organisation. The five that remained were: Hastings Borough Council, Hastings Women's Voice, Optivo, Rother District Council, Wealden District Council.

Are the six priorities set out in the strategy the right ones?



Comments on the priorities

We asked people if they disagreed to tell us what they would suggest instead. There were 10 comments for this question, which is more people than ticked disagree.

The themes were:

- Involve victims/survivors when devising service provision (3 comments)
- Location: some areas lack provision (2)
- Accessible and inclusive – appears to be positive comment based on other responses (1)
- All agencies need to be responsive (1)
- Emphasis should be on actively ensuring improvements rather than passively promoting (1)
- Involve loved ones of victims/survivors when devising service provision (1)
- Measure the impact of the priorities (1)
- Preventative educational work is important (1)
- Safe spaces are especially essential for certain groups (1)
- The strategy does not support the priorities (1)

Which recommendations would you prioritise?

Not everyone answered this question: 43 people chose their top choice; 40 their second choice; 39 their third choice; 37 people their fourth; and 36 their fifth choices.

The recommendations that received the most top choice votes were:

- More accommodation for women with children (10)
- Broader menu of accommodation options (8)
- Offer a minimum standard of care and support (5)

The recommendations that received the most votes overall were:

- Broader menu of accommodation options (23)
- More accommodation for women with children (18)
- Support for children and young people (17)
- Explore offering a single point of contact (17)
- Offer a minimum standard of care and support (16)

Chart of combined votes for recommendations they would prioritise

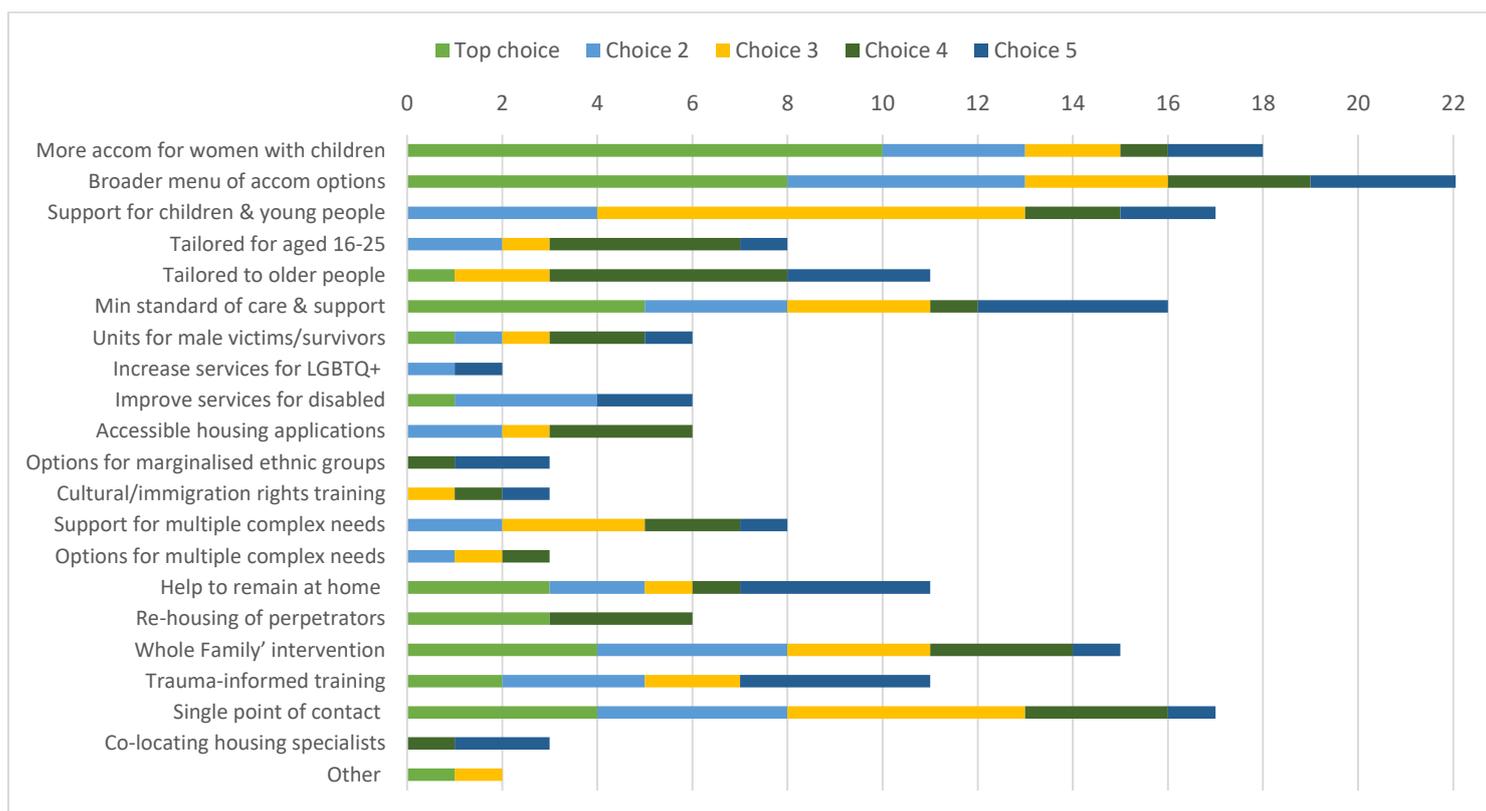


Table of votes for recommendations they would prioritise

Recommendation	Top choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice	4 th choice	5 th choice
Diverse and appropriate: more accommodation for women with children	10	3	2	1	2
Diverse and appropriate: broader menu of accommodation options	8	5	3	3	4
Accessible and Inclusive: dedicated, personalised, and holistic support for children & young people	0	4	9	2	2
Accessible and Inclusive: tailored for victims/survivors aged 16-25	0	2	1	4	1

Accessible and Inclusive: tailored more directly to older people	1	0	2	5	3
Accessible and Inclusive: offer minimum standard of care and support	5	3	3	1	4
Accessible and Inclusive: consider units for male victims/survivors	1	1	1	2	1
Accessible and Inclusive: increase services for LGBTQ+ victims/survivors	0	1	0	0	1
Accessible and Inclusive: improve services for disabled victims/survivors	1	3	0	0	2
Accessible and Inclusive: offer accessible housing application process	0	2	1	3	0
Accessible and Inclusive: options for victims/survivors from marginalised ethnic groups	0	0	0	1	2
Accessible and Inclusive: cultural and immigration rights awareness training	0	0	1	1	1
Responsive: holistic support for those with multiple complex needs	0	2	3	2	1
Responsive: explore service options for those with multiple complex needs	0	1	1	1	0
Victim-centred: help people to remain at home if they wish	3	2	1	1	4
Victim-centred: re-housing of perpetrators	3	0	0	3	0
Victim-centred: promote and invest in 'Whole Family' intervention	4	4	3	3	1
Trauma-informed: consistent trauma-informed practice training	2	3	2	0	4
Trauma-informed: explore a single point of contact approach	4	4	5	3	1
Trauma-informed: consider co-locating housing specialists	0	0	0	1	2
Other	1	0	1	0	0

Other

Two people ticked 'other' and made the following suggestions:

- Ensure victims are supported to prevent further abuse.
- Two additional priorities on 1. Participatory approaches 2. Prevention – develop and early help and system.

Comments about their choices

There were 21 comments for this question.

The themes were:

- Victim-centred approach is preferable (6 comments)
- Accommodation: should not be accessible to some at the expense of others (6 comments)
- Set minimum standards (5)
- Early-stage support (e.g., legal; housing) for victims is crucial (5)
- Holistic approach needed – all parties and multiple agencies (4)
- More than five of the recommendations are important (4)
- Single point of contact as the starting point for everyone (3)
- Accommodation: some should be non-child centred (2)
- Strategy lacks reference to published research (2)
- Victim group: specific provision for men needed (2)
- Adequate resourcing and time for work is required (2)
- Perpetrators: importance of rehousing them (2)
- Add recommendation: disaggregate data by specific characteristics, eg, sex (1)
- Add recommendation: funding should be sustainable, long-term, and independent of other monies (1)
- Add recommendation: meet needs of women and girls (1)
- Add recommendation: Trauma-informed services must include single-sex provision for women (1)
- Consultation document feedback: greater clarity needed in presenting choices of recommendations (1)
- Cross-county work needed (1)
- Focus on what is achievable (1)
- No indulgence of discriminatory language or attitudes towards particular groups, eg, trans people) (1)
- Preventative work is needed (1)
- Remove/reduce jargon (1)
- Victim group: specific provision for women and delivered by women (1)

- Victim group: specific provision for substance misusers needed (1)
- Victim group: specific provision for those with mental health needs required (1)

Whether anything needs to change

Six people didn't answer the question.

Answer	Number
Yes	22
No	16

There were 23 comments for this question.

The themes were:

- Greater support for victims – general (3 comments)
- The views and knowledge of people using services should be included (3)
- Strategy document: approaches issue from perspective of local authorities rather than victims/survivors (3)
- Strategy document: highlight its limitations (3)
- Inter-agency communication is vital (2)
- Perpetrator: as appropriate, remove from family home (2)
- Perpetrators: importance of working with them (2)
- Single point of contact as start point for everyone (2)
- Strategy document: improve accessibility and remove jargon (2)
- Strategy document: include a summary (2)
- Strategy document: no mention of community-based approaches (2)
- Accommodation: avoid use of temporary places (1)
- Early intervention necessary (1)
- Ensure investigation of allegations is thorough (1)
- Greater support for victims to press charges (1)
- Maximise services to take account of geographic location, public transport accessibility and concentration of facilities/activities (1)
- More health intervention needed (1)
- No indulgence of discriminatory language or attitudes towards particular groups, eg, trans people (1)
- Strategy document: does not locate domestic abuse within wider societal norms (1)
- Strategy document: excludes women who have experienced domestic abuse (1)
- Strategy document: include more statistics (1)
- Training needed: of staff, by councils (1)

- Accommodation: more needed (1)
- Accommodation: single sex needs to be available (1)

Whether anything is missing

Six people didn't answer the question.

Answer	Number
Yes	21
No	17

There were 21 comments for this question.

The themes were:

- Ensure certain victim/survivor groups aren't overlooked (6 comments)
- Inter-agency communication is vital (3)
- Victim accommodation – safe provision needed via councils (3)
- Cultural attitudes need addressing – in various settings (2)
- Perpetrator work: consider stability factors, eg, housing (2)
- Victim health intervention – more needs to be done (2)
- Inter-agency involvement – ensure all relevant groups are involved, eg, in the risk assessment (2)
- Strategy is missing reference to single-sex services (2)
- Access to support as soon as possible (1)
- Ensure investigation of allegations is thorough (1)
- Greater support for victims to press charges (1)
- Locate services in appropriate settings/buildings (1)
- Measure the impact of the priorities (1)
- Strategy document does not acknowledge disproportionate need for different victim groups (1)
- Strategy document does not recognise women's expertise on trauma-informed services (1)
- Strategy document omits references to educational and therapeutic programmes focused on power/control (1)
- Strategy document: contains insufficient data (1)
- Strategy document: highlight its limitations (1)
- Strategy document: include a summary (1)
- Support to be free (1)
- Training for a wide range of public sector workers is necessary (1)

- Maximise coverage to include outside Sussex (1)
- Widen access to specialist support (1)

Other comments and suggestions

There were 17 comments for this question.

The themes were:

- Positive comment: consultation deserves good number of responses (4 comments)
- Suggestion: increase focus on perpetrator behaviour change (3)
- Suggestion: having one key worker aids the process of gaining their trust (2)
- Negative comment: consultation when drafting strategy was not wide-ranging enough (2)
- Suggestion: prioritise safe spaces for women (2)
- Negative comment: consultation does not include sufficient About You gender options (1)
- Negative comment: presentation of document could be clearer (1)
- Negative comment: single door access to services in Sussex has been replaced by a more homogenous approach which is less satisfactory (1)
- Negative comment: top-down commissioning is not working (1)
- Positive comment: holistic approach (1)
- Suggestion: avoid victims having to leave home and then being penalised for returning (1)
- Suggestion: highlight strategy limitations (1)
- Suggestion: services to adopt less judgmental approach (1)

Appendix 3: About you summary

Please note that the number of people who answered each question varied.

Gender table

Gender	Respondent number	Respondent percentage	Census percentage
Male	6	14%	48%
Female	32	73%	52%
Prefer not to say	0	0%	N/A
Not answered	6	14%	N/A

Transgender

Two people identify as transgender, 36 don't, and six people didn't answer.

Age table

Age	Respondent number	Respondent percentage	Census percentage
under 18	0	0%	19.8%
18-24	0	0%	7.3%
25-34	3	7%	9.6%
35-44	7	16%	12.5%
45-54	10	23%	14.2%
55-59	9	20%	6.3%
60-64	3	7%	7.5%
65+	6	13%	11.2%
Prefer not to say	0	0%	N/A
Not answered	6	14%	N/A

Post codes

24 people provided their post code, one the area they live, 13 chose 'prefer not to say', and six didn't answer.

Area	Number
Bexhill	7
Brighton	3
Eastbourne	3
Hailsham	2
Hastings	3
Lewes	2
Peacehaven	2
Rye	1

Ethnicity table

Ethnicity	Respondent number	Respondent percentage	Census percentage
White British	30	68%	83% (all White categories combined)
White Irish	1	2%	83%
White Gypsy/Roma	0	0%	83%
White Irish Traveller	0	0%	83%
White other	2	5%	83%
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	2	5%	1% (all Mixed categories combined)
Mixed White and Black African	0	0%	1%
Mixed White and Asian	2	5%	1%
Mixed other	0	0%	1%
Asian or Asian British Indian	0	0%	0.4% (all Asian categories combined)
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	0	0%	0.4%
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	0	0%	0.4%
Asian or Asian British other	0	0%	0.4%
Black or Black British Caribbean	0	0%	0.4% (all Black categories combined)
Black or Black British African	0	0%	0.4%
Black or Black British other	0	0%	0.4%
Arab	0	0%	0.1%
Chinese	0	0%	0.2%
Prefer not to say	1	2%	0.3%
Other	0	0%	N/A
Not answered	6	14%	N/A

Disability

16 people consider themselves to have a disability, while 22 do not, and six did not answer.

Impairment type chart

Please note: People may have multiple impairments and more people answered this question than said 'yes' for considering themselves disabled.

Impairment type	Respondent number	Respondent percentage
Physical impairment	7	16%
Sensory impairment (hearing and sight)	0	0%
Longstanding illness or health condition, such as cancer, HIV, heart disease, diabetes or epilepsy	6	14%
Mental health condition	9	20%
Learning disability	2	5%
Prefer not to say	1	2%
Other	3	7%
Not answered	27	61%

Religion or belief

13 people consider themselves to have a religion or belief, while 24 do not, and six did not answer.

Type of religion or belief

Religion	Respondent number	Respondent percentage	Census percentage
Christian	9	20%	0.4%
Buddhist	1	2%	60%
Hindu	0	0%	0.3%
Jewish	0	0%	0.2%
Muslim	0	0%	0.8%
Sikh	0	0%	0.3%
Other	1	2%	0.7%
Not answered	33	75%	N/A

Sexuality table

Sexuality	Respondent number	Respondent percentage
Bi/Bisexual	1	2%
Heterosexual/Straight	30	68%
Gay woman/Lesbian	0	0%
Gay man	0	0%
Other	6	14%
Prefer not to say	1	2%
Not answered	6	14%

Marital status

20 people are married or in a civil partnership, while 17 are not, and seven did not answer.

Pregnancy

One person said yes, 36 said they are not pregnant and haven't been in the last year, and seven did not answer.

Appendix 4: Feedback from meetings

East Sussex Seniors Association (ESSA) meeting

The consultation was discussed at the ESSA health and community care theme group meeting on 12 November 2021. Included below is the relevant section of the minutes.

East Sussex County Council's Joint Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Partnership Officer (N) outlined her presentation...

Questions and comments from the meeting

P mentioned that abuse is not always evident, and it would be very difficult to find someone to ask their opinion or views. N replied that the public consultation is for every member of the public and has been developed by involving people with lived experience of domestic abuse in all strategic work and in the work of the Saving Communities Partnership. There is a statutory duty to do this. A lot of development work is going on re outreach to communities within generic services. However, some abuse is hidden, and the key issue is to address this.

A is happy to support this through newsletters and distribution lists and suggested putting paper copies in foodbanks. Abuse is often linked to financial difficulties. A asked if it is known who is accessing the service and if the survey has been translated. N replied that there is no translated version, but a phone number is on the website for support which includes connecting people to the relevant interpreting companies in East Sussex. Information has been sent out to those isolating, but the consultation was not made available for various reasons. N will feed this back to other colleagues to see if some targeted work can be done, if possible.

S asked what proportion of users are in the 60 plus age range. N replied that funding has been awarded to Hourglass, an elderly abuse recovery service and she outlined how this funding would be used. CGL are developing outreach with organisations that work with older people in those services.

K mentioned that families are relocated to Newhaven and asked if support is available to help children and families in the Newhaven area. N replied that support is provided, but work is to be done to improve this. The Domestic Abuse Act now includes those who are 16 plus. There is still a lot of victim blaming and support must be provided in schools and youth centres to those relocating, including taking a trauma informed approach. Training is being provided to staff in schools through East Sussex County Council, the Safeguarding Council, and Children's services.

D asked how often referrals are received from schools with evidence of a child experiencing domestic abuse. N gave details of Operation Encompass in Sussex, how this works and the support provided to the child. There are also educational support specialists in schools to provide support to children. Domestic abuse can affect their emotional wellbeing. She does not have statistics of the number of children referred by schools.

K asked N to update us in a meeting after January 2022 when the final version of the consultation has been received and to answer any questions.