

The Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024 - 2029

Consultation report

November 2023



Executive Summary

In March 2020, the first Kent and Medway domestic abuse strategy was finalised. This was refreshed in 2021 when the Domestic Abuse Act gained royal assent and created statutory responsibilities for tier one authorities to support people impacted by domestic abuse within safe accommodation.

The strategy is due to end in 2023 and a new Kent and Medway domestic abuse strategy 2024 – 2029 has been developed to continue to provide the strategic direction of the domestic abuse work across the Kent and Medway Domestic and Sexual Abuse Executive Partnership Group. This document details the consultation process and findings for the Kent and Medway domestic abuse strategy 2024 – 2029.

The Kent and Medway domestic abuse strategy 2024 - 2029 is a partnership strategy supported by Kent County Council, Medway Council, Kent Fire and Rescue, Kent Police, the Integrated Care Board (safeguarding), the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, Probation, the Department of Work and Pensions (Kent) and all Kent District, Borough and City Councils.

The draft strategy has been formally developed by collecting information through in-depth interviews on lived experience of domestic abuse across both Kent and Medway, and through seeking the views of the voluntary sector and frontline practitioners through workshops and discussions. Additionally, the 2020 – 2023 strategy was reviewed and a 'Progress Made' report created which identified areas for future development. Findings were integrated into the 2024 – 2029 strategy.

A consultation on the draft strategy began on the 24 July 2023 and ended on the 9 October 2023, running for 11 weeks. A total of 244 responses were received, 4 of these were via email.

149 people responded as an individual, 43 as a professional working with people impacted by domestic abuse and 36 on behalf of an organisation. Of those who responded to the consultation and completed this question 33% of people disclosed being directly affected by domestic abuse, and a further 13% had a friend or family member impacted by abuse. Only 15% of people who responded said they had not been impacted by domestic abuse.

Findings

Upon closure of the consultation a comprehensive review of the feedback took place by a team of both KCC and Medway officers.

On the section focusing on the **Domestic Abuse Act** 73% of respondents strongly or tended to agree that the strategy gives you the information you need about the Act.

Respondents highlighted a need to expand information on children including adolescent to parent violence. In response this section of the document has been revised.

Respondents highlighted that the strategy could strengthen messaging on the impact of domestic abuse on those with protected characteristics including disability, gender (both men and women), sexuality and age. This has been made clearer within the final document through the use of infographics.

Early Intervention and Prevention - 86% of respondents strongly or tended to agree with the commitments listed. 'Increasing awareness of Clare's Law' had the highest number of people strongly agree, and 'increasing understanding of abuse' had the lowest number of people strongly agree within this section (although all were rated highly).

Changes made to this section of the strategy include an addition on better understanding the increasing use of technology and abuse, additional commitments on supporting professional awareness of those with no recourse to public funds and commitments on supporting professionals to appropriately respond to disclosure (including understanding signposting and referral options).

Immediate need - 86% of respondents strongly or tended to agree with the commitments listed. 'Supporting children and young people during immediate need' had the highest number of respondents 'strongly agree', and 'experiences of justice' and 'highlighting civil options' had the lowest number of people 'strongly agree' within this section.

In response wording on civil options has been strengthened with a link which includes further information on civil orders embedded. A number of additional commitments have been added to 'experiences of justice'. Following feedback, we have also added information on counter allegations.

Additionally, a section has been added to 'being responsive to individual need' which asks those working across services to challenge assumptions or stereotypes of abuse.

An addition on homeowners and access to support has also been added due to feedback, as well as a section on pets and the importance of safe accommodation options which can take animals.

Inclusion of flexibility of services to meet the needs of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities when seeking safety has been highlighted.

Recovery - 84% of respondents strongly or tended to agree with the commitments listed. 'Recognising the mental health impact of abuse' had the highest number of respondents 'strongly agree' and 'prioritising family bonds' had the lowest number of people 'strongly agree' within this section.

Concern was expressed around re-traumatisation caused through family courts and management of child contact. The 'prioritising family bonds' section of the strategy was redrafted.

Additionally, the subheading 'recognising the mental health impact of abuse' has changed to 'the impact of abuse on mental health' as suggested by a respondent. 'Recognising the experts' section of the strategy has been redrafted to make it clearer that the experts are those who have been impacted by abuse, and also to acknowledge the key role of the voluntary sector within this space.

The equality analysis highlighted a need to include information on access to services for those living in rural areas and to include a commitment on supporting professionals to challenge behaviours which may be linked to an interpretation of cultural identities based on subordination and unequal power. Both areas have been included within the post consultation version of the strategy.

The equality analysis also highlighted under-reporting of abuse by older adults, those with a disability and the higher likelihood of experiencing abuse as a gay, lesbian or bisexual person. Throughout the strategy there are commitments focussed on raising awareness, increasing service uptake, supporting collaboration to develop needs led work and working with the specialist 'by and for' market to combat this.

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1. Background

In April 2021, the Domestic Abuse Act was passed in law. The Domestic Abuse Act creates a statutory requirement for tier one local authorities to prepare a strategy to provide support in safe accommodation to victims of domestic abuse, give effect to the strategy, monitor the strategy and report back annually to central government¹.

In 2021 there was an existing partnership Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy brought together by the Kent and Medway Domestic and Sexual Abuse Executive Group. This group includes representation from Kent County Council (KCC), Medway Council, Probation, Police, the Integrated Care Board (ICB) (safeguarding), the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), Kent Fire and Rescue, DWP and District, Borough and City Councils.

Tier one duties linked to safe accommodation were integrated into the existing 2020 strategy, recognising that safe accommodation is part of a wider partnership response to domestic abuse. The current strategy finishes in 2023 and a 'progress made' report was published on the consultation web page which shows previous work to meet the strategy commitments. Opportunities for improvement identified within the 'progress made' report are built in to the 2024 – 2029 strategy.

In early 2023 a team across Kent County Council and Medway Council started work on the 2024 - 2029 Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse strategy, working with a small project group which included representation from the ICB, Police, Probation and OPCC. The team also worked closely with the Domestic Abuse Coordinators group which includes representation from all District, Borough and City Councils in Kent.

The development of the 2024-2029 strategy has been based on research, workshops and in-depth interviews completed with those who have experienced abuse and practitioners who support them. As detailed within this report, the learnings have been used to develop strategy.

2. Strategy purpose

The Kent and Medway Domestic and Sexual Abuse Executive Group oversees the development of the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy, and seeks a partnership response to *'reduc[ing] the prevalence of domestic and sexual abuse, and ensur[ing] that where domestic abuse takes place, all those affected get the right support, quickly, and those who show abusive behaviours are held to account'*.

The partnership recognises that multiple organisations are involved in a person's journey when they are impacted by abuse and through working across the

¹'Delivery of support for victims of domestic abuse' Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. (accessed Nov 23) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation/delivery-of-support-to-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services>

partnership, responses can be strengthened. The purpose of the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse strategy is to work collaboratively to improve responses to domestic abuse by working and monitoring process against joint commitments for change. The strategy also details tier one statutory obligations within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Once the strategy is finalised a delivery plan will be established and monitored to support meeting commitments by the Kent and Medway Executive Group. Activity indicators are also included as part of the strategy which will form a dashboard to support monitoring.

Statutory requirements for tier one organisations are overseen by Local Partnership Boards (one within Kent and one within Medway) as stipulated within the statutory guidance and through internal meetings.

3. Informal consultation process

To support the voice of lived experience, research was commissioned which included 10 in-depth interviews and workshop sessions with those impacted by abuse. Previous research on the experiences of men impacted by abuse, and research on the experiences of children and young people were also used in the development of themes.

Learnings from this research created the structure of the strategy with quotes of experience being used to support identification of opportunities for change.

A 'Progress Made' report was completed in April 2023. This was key to show the impact of strategic and partnership working on the delivery of change to date, but also to support the identification of areas where we could work better. The 'Progress Made' report highlights opportunities for improvement and these were reviewed by the partnership project group (ICB safeguarding, Police, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Probation, Medway Council and Kent County Council) before being integrated into the 2024 – 2029 strategy.

The project team then worked with the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Coordinators Group (with representation across each District) to explore opportunities within early intervention, immediate need and recovery.

The Coordinators Group then supported the facilitation of a workshop with a wide range of frontline staff and voluntary sector organisations with approximately 80 people in attendance, where options for working together and change were brainstormed. Learnings supported the development of draft commitments.

- Ensure commissioned services have a robust Domestic Abuse policy
- Sharing information of the services available in a better way
- Consistency in information
- Empathic services
- A collaborative, comprehensive training package
- Shared language
- High quality, accessible and appropriate training on trauma, sexual abuse, domestic abuse and online safety for staff in universal services
- Training people on support programmes like Freedom
- Utilise social prescribing
- Multiagency training, mandatory training for domestic abuse and sexual abuse, public awareness raising - comms

One to one sessions were held with each partner to discuss the development of the draft strategy. The project team presented at a number of meetings which included the Local Partnership Board, the Domestic Abuse Chairs Forum (Chairs of each local forum), the Voluntary Sector subgroup, the Kent Community Safety Partnership and Kent Housing Group.

From this information an Executive Summary, full strategy document, and both a British Sign Language and Easy Read versions of the strategy were produced and uploaded for consultation.

A consultation stage Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was carried out to assess the impact the strategy could have on those with protected characteristics. The EqIA was available as one of the consultation documents and the questionnaire invited consultees to comment on the assessment that had been carried out.

4. Formal consultation process

A 11-week public consultation period took place between the 24th July to the 9th October 2023. This extended period was chosen partly recognising the impact of summer, but also to support gaining as many responses as possible.

To raise awareness the project team:

- emailed stakeholder organisations and partners,
- invited 7,548 people registered with 'Let's Talk Kent' under the filtered topics public health and wellbeing, community safety and children and families to participate in the consultation.
- delivered a workshop for 13 attendees with lived experience across Kent and Medway and collated their feedback.
- organic and paid for media posts from KCC corporate, and Medway Council accounts across Twitter (now X), Facebook, Instagram and Linked In

- social media posts shared by partners.
- electronic flyers and posters sent to all Youth Centres, Libraries and Children’s Centres.
- emailed known interfaith groups and faith organisations.
- emailed contacts on ‘voluntary community and social enterprise organisations’ in Kent and Medway.
- emailed the Kent Association of Local Councils
- postings in newsletters and Teams channels (x17, listed **Appendix A**)
- internal communication channels (Kent and Medway)
- attended voluntary and community sector meetings
- attended community events including;
 - Tovil Community Event
 - DAWN Maidstone
 - Adult Social Care Summit
 - AgeUK, Thanet
 - Rise4Disability
- media releases and website publications (detailed in **Appendix A**).

Meetings attended during this period are listed in **Appendix A** with reach of approximately 900 people². Feedback was recorded using a template and analysed during the consultation process.

5. Findings

Findings were analysed by Kent County Council and Medway Council officers, and core areas discussed with a cross partnership project group. A ‘You Said, We Did’ document has been developed which highlights the main changes made to the strategy in **Appendix B**.

5.1 Who responded?

The formal consultation generated 244 responses (4 of these were via email).

1,035 participants interacted with the page (such as downloading a document), and there were 2,424 visits to the consultation page³.

Participation in the consultation was self-selecting and is not an indicative sample of the whole Kent and Medway population.

Of those who responded to the consultation and gave information 33% disclosed being directly affected by domestic abuse, and a further 13% had a friend or family

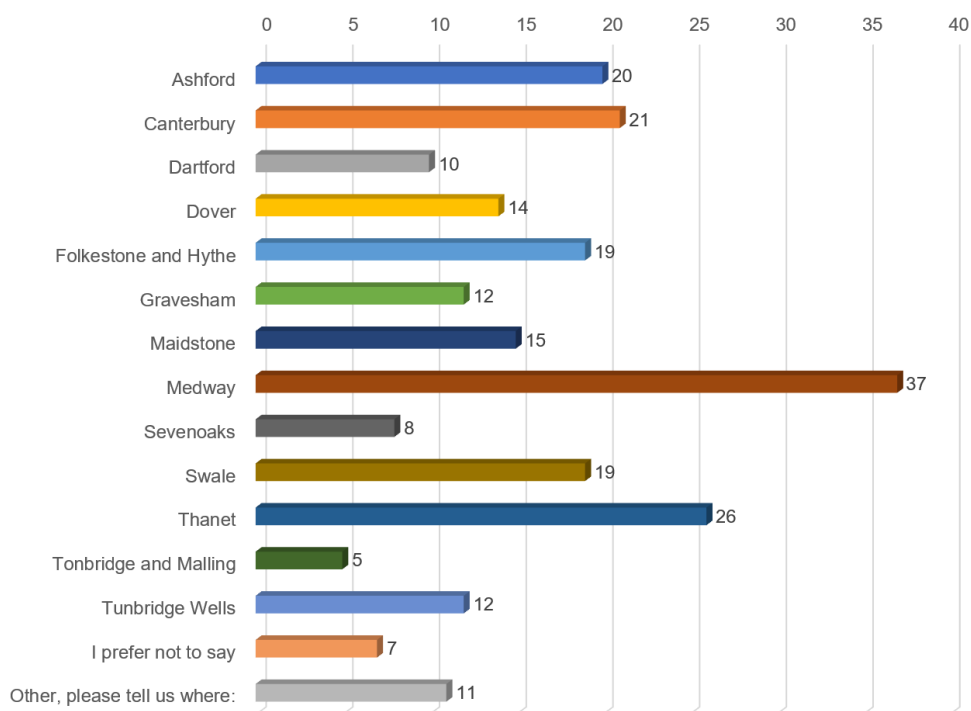
² There may be duplication within this number with some individuals being at the same meetings.

³ This figure will include repeat visits/ downloads

member impacted by abuse. Only 15% of people who responded said they had not been impacted by domestic abuse.

Because of the sensitive nature of this topic area postcode data was not recorded within this consultation, however for those who gave additional information the following was collected:

Figure 3: shows district coverage where this information was given:



While the majority of people found out about the consultation via 'Let's Talk' (114), a number also learned of the consultation via social media (42).

Around half of respondents chose not to give additional information about themselves. The information below is for those who did.

- 17 men, 87 women and 1 person who preferred to use their own term responded to the consultation.
- 45 people belonged to a particular religion or belief, with 37 being Christian, 2 being Hindu and 1 being Muslim.
- 10 people described themselves as having a physical impairment, 4 as having a sensory impairment, 12 as having a longstanding illness or health condition, 10 as having a mental health condition, 1 as having a learning disability and 4 as 'other'.
- 24 people described themselves as a carer.

- 90 people described themselves as White English, 1 person as White Scottish, 1 person as White Welsh, 1 as White Gypsy/Roma, 2 as Asian or Asian British Indian, 1 as Mixed White & Black Caribbean and 1 as Mixed White & Asian.

Figure 4 A spread of ages who responded to the consultation

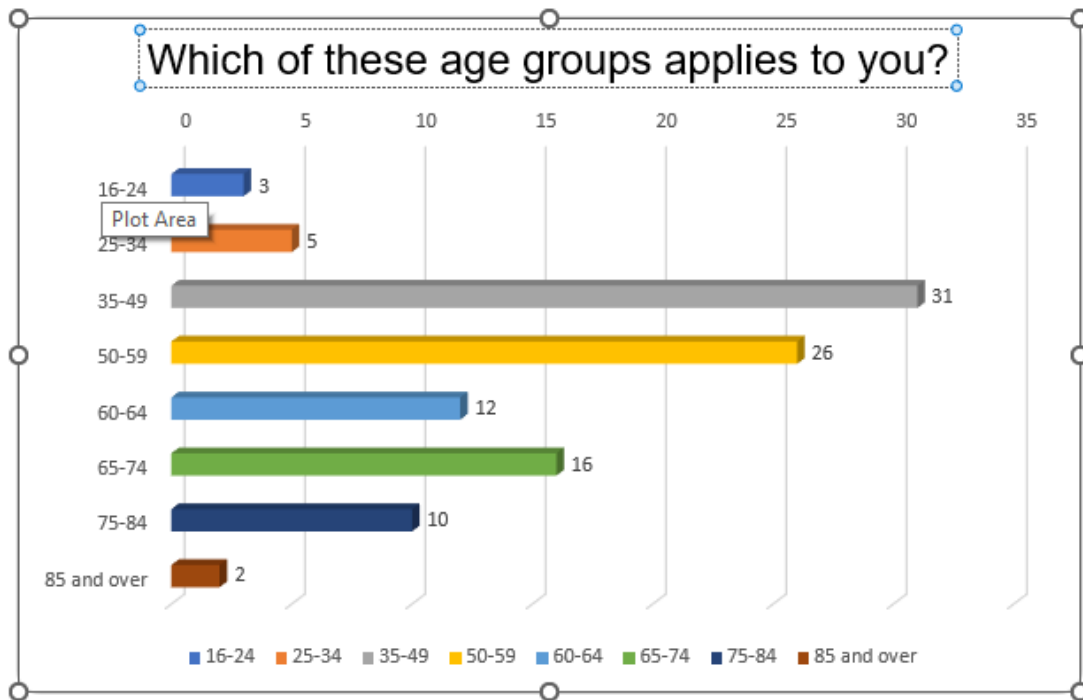


Figure 5: Organisational responses gained:

Kent Fire and Rescue	Dartford Council	Oasis Domestic Abuse Service	Switch Youth Services	Tunbridge Wells Soroptimists
Kent County Council (early help and integrated commissioning)	Lydd Parish Council	SATEDA	Medway Family solutions	New Road Primary School
Tonbridge and Malling Community	Gravesham Borough Council	Mankind Initiative	Inspire Academy	Peninsula East Primary

Safety Partnership				
Kent and Medway ICB Safeguarding Team	Swale borough Council	Protection Against Stalking	Virtual Schools Kent	Wainscott Primary School
Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust	Ashford Community Safety Partnership	Clarion Housing Group	Luton Primary	Millmead Children's Centre
Sevenoaks District Council	Rising Sun	Moat Homes limited	St James Academy	Super Stars Preschool
NHS Kent and Medway ICB		Dad's Unlimited	Greenacre Academy	

5.2 Information on the Domestic Abuse Act

The strategy provides an explanation of parts of the Domestic Abuse Act. It also provides statistics on domestic abuse nationally, and safe accommodation statistics given from Kent and Medway.

The following question was asked: *'to what extent to you agree or disagree that the strategy gives you the information you need about the Domestic Abuse Act?'*

Strongly agree	55 respondents
Tend to agree	119 respondents
Neither agree or disagree	40 respondents
Tend to disagree	13 respondents
Strongly disagree	8 respondents
Don't know	3 respondents

Comments included:

'More recognition of adult child/parent abuse'

'What the domestic abuse act doesn't cover / commonly confused situations such as child abuse'

'Where statistics are given, they should be the same for Kent and Medway, so we can compare services across the authorities'

Respondents highlighted a need to expand information on children and the Domestic Abuse Act. In response this section of the document has been revised.

Respondents highlighted that the strategy could strengthen messaging on the impact of domestic abuse on those with protected characteristics including disability, gender (both men and women), sexuality and age. Although some information was included within the consultation document on these characteristics this has been made clearer within the final document through the use of infographics.

5.3 Findings across key themes:

The consultation lists a number of commitments from the partnership across the areas of early intervention and prevention, immediate need and recovery. As detailed above these draft commitments were based on discussions on opportunities within the 'Progress Made' report, learnings from lived experience and workshops, and learnings from the informal consultation process.

5.3.1 Early Intervention and Prevention

The following subheadings sit under this area:

- **Increasing understandings of abuse.** Commitments under this section include to work collaboratively to promote consistent messaging and to increase awareness and make sure communication is accessible.
- **Professional training.** Commitments under professional training includes supporting professionals across services to be domestic abuse informed and taking opportunities to identify risk and using trauma informed responses.
- **Preventing escalation of abusive behaviours.** This includes supporting awareness of adverse childhood experiences, working alongside communities to promote positive behaviours and challenge harmful gendered stereotyping and work on bystander and upstander interventions.
- **Clare's Law** includes reviewing the process around Clare's law to try to increase accessibility and awareness.

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Increasing understandings of abuse	140	65	15	10	6	0
Professional Training	146	59	17	7	6	0
Preventing escalation of abusive behaviours	152	47	23	6	7	0
Increasing awareness of Clare's Law	159	44	23	5	3	1

86% of respondents strongly or tended to agree with the commitments listed.

'Increasing awareness of Clare's Law' had the highest number of people strongly agree, and 'increasing understanding of abuse' had the lowest number of people strongly agree within this section, however all scored highly.

Comments in this section included:

'...there may be benefit to adding a commitment to facilitating safe disclosure as there can be challenges for staff to support with this, especially for colleagues at work, where confidential spaces are limited.'

'A strategy to help people be more aware of what coercive behaviour [is] would be very beneficial. It would be very helpful and future-thinking to include a project to raise awareness of this in secondary schools at sixth form level as this is often where coercive behaviours first start to develop and it would be pro-actively supporting future generations of adults.'

With the increasing use of technology, addressing online harassment, cyberstalking, and other forms of digital abuse is becoming more important. Integrating strategies to tackle these issues can be valuable.

'Increasing awareness amongst professionals advising victims (and making victims themselves aware) of what level of support is available to individuals with no access to public funds.'

Changes made to this section of the strategy have been based on this feedback. This includes:

- developing a new section on better understanding the increasing use of technology and abuse,
- additional commitments on supporting professional awareness of those with no recourse to public funds,
- commitments on supporting professionals to appropriately ‘ask the question’ and respond to disclosure,
- working with schools will be integrated into the delivery plan as this is developed. More changes are detailed in the ‘**You Said, We Did**’ document (**Appendix B**).

5.3.2 Immediate Need

The following subheadings sit under Immediate Need:

- **Being responsive to individual need** focuses on meeting the needs of our diverse population which may include working with specialist services.
- **Reducing risk** focuses on the management of risk and seeking to reduce this.
- **Strengthening services** explores the importance of using available resources across the partnership wisely, working collaboratively and taking advantage of available opportunities.
- **Highlighting civil options** includes increasing awareness and understanding of civil options.
- **Experiences of justice** explores commitments which support people through their justice process.
- **Supporting children and young people during immediate need** recognises that children and young people who have experienced abuse may have specific support needs.
- **Access to housing** recognises the importance of a safe space to be in immediate need and seeks to work collaboratively to strengthen responses.

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Individual need	151	59	12	10	4	0
Reducing risk	146	63	11	6	8	0
Strengthening services	156	54	15	2	6	0

Highlighting civil options	122	73	25	7	7	1
Experiences of justice	118	66	30	8	6	5
Supporting children	162	40	16	7	8	2
Access to housing	149	48	17	8	9	3

86% of respondents strongly or tended to agree with the commitments listed. 'Supporting children and young people during immediate need' had the highest number of respondents 'strongly agree', and 'experiences of justice' and 'highlighting civil options' had the lowest number of people 'strongly agree' within this section.

'I would like to see mention of how authoritative abuse would be dealt with if the abuser is a "professional" within the services that are meant to help.'

'Realise pets are support animals for many survivors and will not leave their home if they cannot take them with them. Therefore, it may be useful to have some temporary accommodation that accept pets.'

'A trained effective response team. Client are re traumatised by being referred on and on to many organisations. They give up.'

'Autistic children need to have their specific needs understood. I couldn't take mine from their home and routine with no warning to a place they don't know. They wouldn't have coped at all.'

'Support with paying for accommodation where the person has a mortgage. When you are being financially controlled the fact you have a mortgage means nothing. You can't force them to sell the house to get your name off the mortgage whilst you are living with and being abused by them.'

The project team have made the following changes to this section:

- a number of respondents highlighted the specific experiences of men and domestic abuse. Within 'being responsive to individual need' we have added a section on challenging our assumptions or stereotypes of who might be a 'victim', and who may be a 'perpetrator'.
- a section on homeowners and access to support has been added.
- a section on recognising the importance of pets to those that need to flee has been added.
- an additional commitment has been included for those impacted by No Resource to Public Funds.

- recognising the risk caused by the emotional and psychological impact of abuse and the associated coping mechanisms that people may use has been added.
- information on strengthening referral pathways has been added.
- a requirement for flexible services which can support children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities has been highlighted.

5.3.3 Recovery

The following headings sit under the 'Recovery' section of the strategy.

- **Recognising the mental health impact of abuse**, being responsive to the trauma of domestic abuse and understanding the possible mental health impacts.
- **Processing experience and promoting connection**, this section focuses on rebuilding self-confidence after abuse.
- **Prioritising family bonds**, acknowledges the impact on the whole family of domestic abuse, and explores whole family approaches to support.
- **Reaching economic independence** highlights the financial and economic impact of abuse and the importance of regaining financial security.
- **Recognising the experts** discusses the importance of always listening to those with lived experience within work on domestic abuse.

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Mental health impact of abuse	171	41	12	5	6	1
Processing experience	132	73	16	6	5	3
Prioritising family bonds	107	68	37	11	8	1
Reaching economic independence	133	66	21	8	6	0
Recognising the experts	122	67	29	4	11	1

84% of respondents strongly or tended to agree with the commitments listed. 'Recognising the mental health impact of abuse' had the highest number of respondents 'strongly agree' and 'prioritising family bonds' had the lowest number of people 'strongly agree' within this section.

Concern was also expressed around re-traumatisation caused through family courts and child contact. Meetings were held with Integrated Childrens Services (KCC) and with The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) to support the redrafting of this section.

'More focus on post-separation abuse from a co-parent when there are children involved. Using emotional abuse or coercive control against the mother by not looking after the children properly when in the co-parent's care.'

'In the Prioritising family bonds section, it is important to restate the issue of "restricting access to children" being an abusive behaviour and how much this is perpetrated.'

'In terms of recognising the experts, the experts need to be able to empathise and understand not just pay lip service. And with regards strengthening family ties they need checking first as not all family is sympathetic.'

'In addition to economic impact of those living with serious illness'

'Recognising the mental health impact of abuse - feel this is worded round the wrong way - should it not be the impact of abuse on mental health?'

In response the project team has made the following changes to the 'Recovery' section of the document:

- the subheading 'recognising the mental health impact of abuse' has changed to 'the impact of abuse on mental health'.
- recognition of the link between mental health needs, problematic substance use and domestic abuse as linked to multiple episodes of trauma has been included.
- The 'prioritising family bonds' section has been rewritten to aid clarity.
- the 'recognising the experts' section of the strategy has been redrafted to make it clearer that the experts are those who have been impacted by abuse, and also to acknowledge the key role of the voluntary sector within this space.

Changes are highlighted in **Appendix B: You Said, We Did**.

5.3.4 Equality analysis:

Respondents were asked if they feel there is anything which should be considered relating to equality and diversity.

Comments included the following:

'Rural communities struggle to access services- transportation issues also housing in rural areas and accessing ongoing support'

'Under religion, I noted the emphasis on honour-based violence. But there was not recognition of the issue of so-called 'male headship' in some Christian churches, which provides leverage and cover for domestic abuse, and the use of doctrine to prevent people from reporting abuse, leaving relationships or processing experiences as abuse.'

'Learn about different types of abuse in the community [as] it's there it's hidden.'

In response to feedback the project team have:

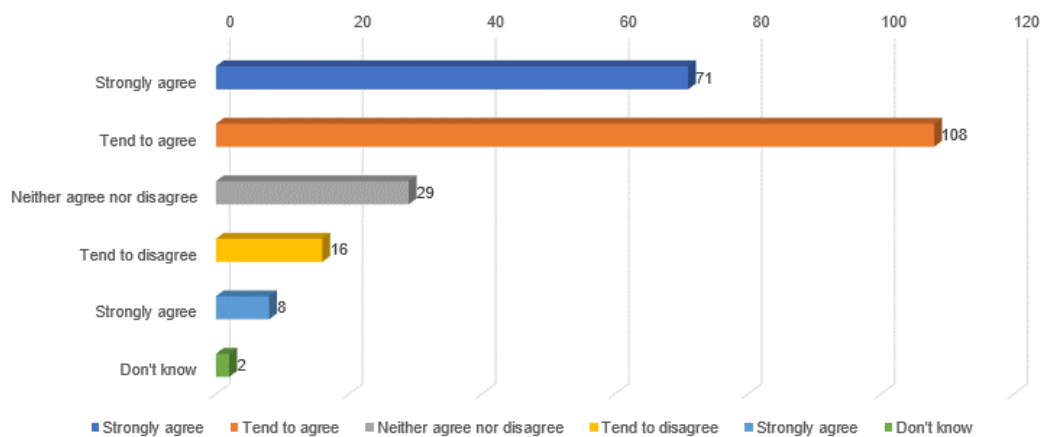
- added a section on those living in rural areas in the Immediate Need section of the strategy.
- included an additional section within professional development (early intervention and prevention) which includes training to challenge behaviours which may be linked to an interpretation of cultural identities based on subordination and unequal power. This will further be developed as the Executive Group moves to create the delivery plan.

The equality analysis also highlighted under-reporting of abuse by older adults, those with a disability and the higher likelihood of experiencing abuse as a gay, lesbian or bisexual person. Throughout the strategy there are commitments focussed on raising awareness, increasing service uptake, supporting collaboration to develop needs led work and working with the specialist 'by and for' market to combat this.

5.3.5 Anything else

Respondents were asked *how much do you agree or disagree the commitments in the strategy could achieve this aim?*

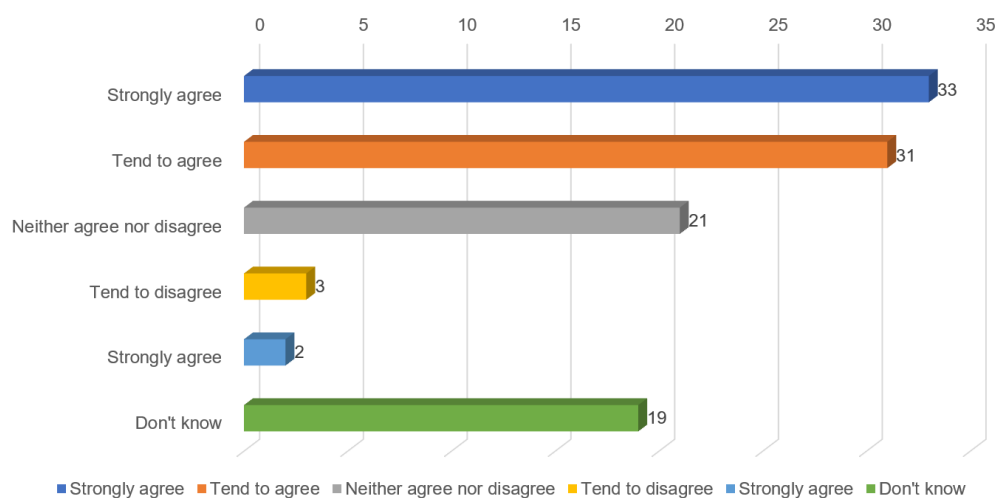
Figure 6: how much do you agree or disagree the commitments in the strategy could achieve this aim?



179 respondents either strongly agreed or tended to agree that the commitments within the strategy could achieve the aim. 24 respondents either tended to disagree or strongly disagreed.

To the question ‘If you are responding as an organisation, please tell us how much you agree or disagree that your organisation will be able to support the commitments made in this strategy’ the following responses were gained.

Figure 7: If you are responding as an organisation, please tell us how much you agree or disagree that your organisation will be able to support the commitments made in this strategy?



64 respondents either strongly agreed or tended to agree and 5 respondents either tended to disagree or strongly disagreed with 19 not knowing.

The aim of the strategy is consistent with the 2020 – 2023 strategy and with the Terms of Reference of the Kent and Medway Domestic and Sexual Abuse Executive Group. These findings will be used by the group to explore the development of the aim in the future.

There were a number of really positive comments on the strategy. Some are included below.

‘Really encouraging and positive that the Strategy makes commitments to address what have been identified as gaps in provision e.g. strengthening services around recovery, more support to safely keep victims in their own homes and piloting making refuge accommodation available to male victims. Thank you - we will look forward to working with you to deliver the Strategy in our area.’

‘The strategy is excellent, and reassurance that it is a promise, and not something organisations will pay lip-service to, [it] will help survivors have trust that they can seek support and will be seen and heard’.

‘The Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy is comprehensive and has a thoughtful approach to addressing the complex issue of domestic abuse. The strategy effectively highlights a broad spectrum of essential areas, demonstrating a strong commitment to providing support and resources for survivors and their families.’

‘The inclusion of early intervention and prevention measures, such as raising awareness of domestic abuse and its various forms, is an excellent step toward fostering a safer environment and promoting healthy relationships. Additionally, the strategy’s emphasis on professional training is crucial in ensuring that those in positions of influence are equipped to identify and respond to domestic abuse effectively.’

‘I particularly appreciate the strategy’s dedication to recognising the diverse needs of survivors and its commitment to providing equitable and accessible support services. The focus on addressing barriers such as mental health support requirements and financial independence underscores the strategy’s understanding of the multi-faceted challenges survivors often face.’

‘The strategy’s commitment to collaboration among partners is a key strength. The call for continued liaison and collaboration is essential for maximising the impact of the strategy. By working together, partners can avoid duplication of efforts, streamline resources, and ensure a more cohesive and holistic approach to support services. This collaborative approach is crucial in reaching as many individuals as

possible and preventing any unnecessary burden on both survivors and service providers.’

6. Next Steps

Once approved the Kent and Medway Domestic and Sexual Abuse Executive Group will be responsible for creating a delivery plan to support the commitments within the strategy and to monitor outcomes. These will be reported to Kent County Council’s Policy and Resource Cabinet Committee on a yearly basis.

Report Author

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Responsible Assistant Directors/Directors

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Links to documents:

Consultation documents: Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy

<https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/domestic-abuse-strategy-2024-2029>

Appendix A: Engagement during informal and formal consultation

Meetings attended:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suicide Prevention meeting (adults) • The Domestic Abuse Voluntary Sector subgroup • Kent Community Safety Partnership • Kent Community Safety Information Session

- Medway Safeguarding Board
- Medway Community Safety Executive Group
- Blue Light Project
- Medway Voluntary Action Forum
- Children and Adults Directorate Management Team
- Medway Homelessness Forum
- Kent Housing Options Group
- The Domestic Abuse Forum Chairs
- Tunbridge Wells Members Briefing
- KCC All Party Members Briefing
- Single Parent Staff Group (KCC)
- Rainbow Staff Group (KCC)
- Soroptimist (Folkestone and Hythe, Maidstone and Medway)
- Health Visting Services (across Kent)
- Domestic Abuse Forums (across Kent and Medway)
- Joint Kent Chiefs
- Children's Suicide Prevention Meeting
- Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership
- Kent and Medway Women's Forum
- SPACE Matters
- Reducing Abusive Behaviour Working Group

Newsletters

- People's Panel
- Adult Social Care – For You, Newsletter
- Kent and Medway Better Health and Suicide Prevention newsletter,
- Learning Disability Partnership Board,
- Keeping Safe group,
- Your Voice Network
- Let's Talk Kent,
- Armed Forces Leads and Unit Welfare Officers
- Disability Assist October Newsletter
- Kelsi e-bulletin September and October
- Kent Association of Head Teachers
- Dad's Unlimited newsletter
- Aspire, MS Teams Channel and August Communications Round up
- Staff Ethnic Diversity Forum – Allies, MS Teams Channel
- Carers East Kent
- East Kent Partnership Bulletin
- DA Practice Newsletter September for ICS staff
- A Better Medway

Awareness raising workshops:

- Informal consultation workshop (April 23) – approximately 80 attendees from the public and voluntary sector
- Formal consultation (September 23) approximately 40 attendees from the public and voluntary sector including:
 - Kent Police, Tunbridge and Malling Borough Council, Dover District Council, Folkestone and Hythe District Council, Sevenoaks Council, Gravesham Borough Council, Medway Council, Ashford Borough Council, Thanet District Council, MHS Homes, Department of Work and Pensions, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Forward Trust, Dads Unlimited, Angel Lane, Home Start, Protection Against stalking, New Leaf Support Domestic Abuse Service, Safe Arms.
 - Medway Survivor Feedback Workshop with 13 people with lived experience, from across Medway and Kent.

Presence at community events:

- Tovil Community Event
- DAWN event Maidstone
- Adult Social Care Summit
- Age UK, Thanet
- Rise4Disability

Media releases and website publications:

- North Kent Mind – news release
- Kent and Surrey bylines
- Dunkirk Parish Council
- Faversham Town Council
- Chartham Parish Council
- Neighbourhood Alert
- The Isle of Thanet News
- Kelsi
- Lydd Town Council
- Newington Parish Council
- Ryarsh Parish Council
- Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists
- Horsmonden Parish Council
- Ditton Parish Council
- Stronger Kent Communities (shared via Linked In)
- Health Watch Kent

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrotham Parish Council
Other actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emailed posters sent to all libraries and children centres • Emailed interfaith groups and known faith groups • Knet • Emailed contacts on 'Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise Organisations in Kent' • Emailed 'Let's Talk' consultation list • Emailed KALC (Kent Association of Local Councils)

Appendix B – You Said, We Did.

You said, we did

The below table summarises some of the themes from the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy consultation and how changes have been made in response.

You told us:	Changes we've made:
Background information and the Domestic Abuse Act	
We could make stronger links within the strategy to issues such as stalking and homelessness.	<p>We have included information on interlinking strategies and boards which support this join up.</p> <p>We recognise that stalking and homelessness interlink with domestic abuse and have strengthened the references within the strategy.</p>
We could include more detailed information on the definition of domestic abuse, including the impact	We have revised this section of the strategy and included further information on children.

on children and adolescent to parent abuse.	A hyper link to the Domestic Abuse Act is also included.
You highlighted increased risk across different protected characteristic groups.	We have included an infographic section which gives information around risk.
We could include more data on domestic abuse in Kent and Medway.	We agree, and this has been added.
To include commitments on how we will support those with No Resource to Public Funds	This is now included within the 'immediate need' section of the strategy.
Early Intervention and Prevention	
We need to strengthen work with schools, making sure they have the information that they need to support education and early intervention.	<p>The Partnership will commit to inviting schools to events to increase information sharing across Kent and Medway as part of the delivery plan.</p> <p>We will seek opportunity to work with schools to support healthy relationship, upstander and bystander education.</p> <p>We will support training on trauma informed responses where children disclose abuse and seek support.</p>
You asked if professional training could include increasing knowledge regarding immigration status, honour-based violence, forced marriage and challenges faced by the LGBT+ community	A commitment has been added to reflect this.
Professional development must include training on how to challenge behaviours which may be linked to an interpretation of cultural identities	We agree. Our staff need to be equipped, confident and able to explore and challenge behaviour which may be linked to interpretations of aspects of culture

based on subordination and unequal power.	which put people at risk of harm, abuse or death.
We need to have strong and transparent management of accusations of abuse against our own staff.	We agree and have added a commitment within experiences of justice.
You highlighted the importance of active listening and non-judgemental responses.	We have added a commitment supporting this to 'professional training'.
You highlighted the importance of staff understanding how to manage and respond to disclosures.	We agree, and this has been added to 'professional training'
You have highlighted the increasing risk of technology, and how this can be used in abuse.	We agree. We have included a section on better understanding changing technology and how this is used in domestic abuse within 'strengthening services'.
Immediate Need	
We need to recognise that abuse of pets can be used by the person perpetrating abuse, and that many people will not flee if their pet is not safe.	This is an important point. We have added a section on pets.
We should commit to better referrals and stronger communication between agencies to reduce a person having to re tell their experience multiple times.	We agree and have added this to 'immediate need'.
We should include more information on available legal protections.	These protections may change over the lifetime of the strategy so we have included

	<p>a link to the Crown Prosecution Service website which will include the latest information.</p>
<p>The strategy should include strengthening management of counter allegations.</p>	<p>We will include a commitment to better understand counter allegations within the 'Experiences of Justice' section.</p> <p>We will reference typologies of abuse and the importance of professional training on these typologies.</p>
<p>The strategy currently does not address gendered experiences of abuse.</p>	<p>The draft has sought to be inclusive of all experiences of abuse.</p> <p>We recognise that women suffer higher risk of serious violence and death, and also that more women than men are impacted by domestic abuse.</p> <p>We also recognise that men and those who have transitioned gender or are non-binary may experience further barriers to reporting or accessing services.</p> <p>We have added information on challenging stereotypes and bias, supporting evidence-based understandings of the perpetration and impact of abuse.</p>
<p>We should recognise the impact that moving to safe accommodation has on children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities</p>	<p>We have added a commitment to support children with Special Educational Needs having their needs considered when moving into safe accommodation.</p>
<p>You highlighted that it can be difficult to access safe accommodation support if you are seen to hold assets (such as a mortgage).</p>	<p>We agree and have added this to the strategy and will continue to look at this area within the delivery plan.</p>

<p>We should include the way that children can be used within abuse, including within the court process.</p> <p>Children may copy abusive behaviours which can create a form of secondary abuse.</p>	<p>We have included this within the 'Immediate Need' section of the strategy.</p>
<p>You highlighted that both Kent and Medway have rural communities, and this can increase barriers to access.</p>	<p>We agree and have included this within 'immediate need'.</p>
<p>Recovery</p>	
<p>You highlighted that we should recognise that drugs and alcohol use may be linked to ways of coping with experience.</p>	<p>We agree and have included this within the 'recognising the mental health impacts of abuse'.</p>
<p>Some were concerned that the wording around 'prioritising family bonds' could lead to these bonds being prioritised over safety.</p>	<p>This section has been re drafted to aid clarity.</p>
<p>You fed back on counter allegations and the impact of these on emotional and physical safety, particularly where post-separation abuse impacts recovery.</p>	<p>As well as adding a new paragraph and additional commitments under Immediate Need we have included promoting professional training on the use of counter allegations, family court and safe child contact arrangements to the 'prioritising family bonds' section of the strategy.</p>
<p>You highlighted that 'recognising the experts' must be people who have experienced domestic abuse rather than professionals. Also, we should clearly acknowledge the role of the voluntary sector within this work.</p>	<p>We have made this clearer in the strategy.</p> <p>We agree that this work is dependent on the vital contribution of the voluntary sector and have added this to the strategy.</p>
<p>How we will measure success</p>	

We should have more details on the individual projects which will meet the commitments.

This information will be within the delivery plan which will support the strategy and will be monitored by the Kent and Medway Domestic and Sexual Abuse Executive Group.