

The background of the image is a photograph of a park or forest. Sunlight filters through the dense canopy of tall, mature trees, creating bright rays and lens flare effects. The foreground is a lush, green lawn. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

# Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy

2019–2022

Consultation document, July 2019

# How to get involved and have your say

We want to hear your feedback on our proposed Domestic Abuse strategy. Your views are important in helping us ensure that we continue to develop and improve our support and services for people and families affected by Domestic Abuse.

The consultation will run from the 8th July to the 30th September 2019.

Please visit [www.kent.gov.uk/domesticabusestrategy](http://www.kent.gov.uk/domesticabusestrategy) to complete the online questionnaire. If you have any questions, please contact us on PSRPolicy@kent.gov.uk.

## What happens next

Following the end of the consultation a full analysis and report will be completed and will be presented to the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive before the strategy is agreed and finalised. It will also be published on this website for you to see.

## Alternative formats

If you require any of the consultation material in an alternative format or language please email [alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk](mailto:alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk) or call **03000 421553** (text relay service number: 18001 03000 421553). This number goes to an answering machine, which is monitored during office hours.

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## In partnership with and supported by



Kent Fire &  
Rescue Service



Kent  
Police



# 1

## Foreword



Nearly 2 million<sup>1</sup> people a year in England and Wales experience domestic abuse<sup>2</sup>. The impact of abuse can result in a range of negative and harmful effects on health, wellbeing and outcomes in life. Domestic abuse impacts upon future generations and their ability, capacity and attitude towards relationships, parenting, self-esteem and mental health. Domestic abuse affects the whole family, and prevention or responses must recognise both the immediate impacts which domestic abuse may have on an individual or family, and also its long-term consequences.

Many different services, both statutory and voluntary, work to support families and individuals affected by domestic abuse. These services engage with the complex and often chronic nature of domestic abuse and collaborate to challenge it. The Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive will look to strengthen and coordinate our responses across our services. We will work strongly as a partnership to ensure that those at risk of, or experiencing domestic abuse in Kent and Medway, have the support and service provision that they need.

No person should experience domestic abuse, and through this strategy and its clear commitments, we will work together to prevent abuse from happening, to strengthen our service provision and to make sure we are learning from the latest research and understanding of what works best to continually improve the effectiveness of how our services tackle domestic abuse across Kent and Medway.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "X m/s".

**Peter Ayling**  
Chair of Executive  
Assistant Chief Constable, Kent Police

1. Office for National Statistics (2018) 'Domestic Abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2018' available at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018>

2. This figure excludes children witnessing abuse

## 2

# Introduction

The Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive is a partnership between the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner's office, Kent Police, Medway Council, Kent County Council, NHS organisations, Kent Fire and Rescue, the National Probation Service, KSS Community Rehabilitation and District Councils. The group works together to meet our shared goals, defined through this strategy, on preventing and responding to domestic abuse.

This strategy sets out our joint vision, priorities and commitments. Our overall aim is to **prevent and reduce domestic abuse across communities and ensure that when people experience abuse, they can access the help and services they need.**

This strategy sits within a context where many organisations have experienced reduced funding. We will work together to avoid duplication, consolidate evidence, explore what works best, share information early and thus ensure the best use of available resources across the partnership.

This strategy is accompanied by a strategic assessment and joint action plan. The strategic assessment uses data from services to identify Kent and Medway's strengths in delivering support for those affected by domestic abuse and also highlights any gaps in support and provision, or areas which we need to strengthen.

The strategic assessment will be updated annually to a rolling time table, and will be used to inform our commissioning and action planning. Our joint action plan will work to implement this strategy and will be built in response to our priorities and the findings of the strategic assessment.



# 3

## Definition of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse includes:

physical or sexual abuse

violent or threatening behaviour

controlling or coercive behaviour

economic abuse, defined as a behaviour which has substantial adverse effects on a person's ability to acquire, use or maintain money, other property or obtain goods or services

psychological, emotional or other abuse.

Honour based abuse and violence and forced marriage are forms of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse happens across different types of relationships and is not limited to people who are or have been in an intimate personal relationship. Domestic abuse may happen across household relationships including against or by carers or between adult family members.

In the case of adolescent to parent violence, domestic abuse occurs when both parties are over the age of 16, however the government recognises that adolescent to parent violence can equally involve children under 16<sup>3</sup>.

3. Home Office: Information guide – adolescent to parent violence and abuse (APVA) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/732573/APVA.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732573/APVA.pdf)

# 4

## Strategy at a glance

Our overall aim is to prevent and reduce domestic abuse across communities and ensure that when people experience abuse, they can access the help and services they need.

### 1

**Driving change together**  
Recognising the adverse impact of domestic abuse on society, and the need to promote change through joint commitment, leadership and partnership working.

### 5

**Justice, recovery and ongoing protection**  
Provision of effective, engaged, supportive, responsive and timely protection and justice.

### 2

**Prevention and early intervention**  
Reduce the incidence of domestic abuse through effective preventative educational programmes, a skilled and resourced workforce and promotion of a culture of prevention, and earlier intervention at societal, governmental and local levels.

### 3

**Provision of services**  
Responsive, effective services for individuals and/or groups at risk of, or subject to, domestic abuse and its reoccurrence.

## Our 5 key priorities

The priorities and their commitments are for all people irrespective of gender, sex, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion, recognising intersectionality of these characteristics. This will be reflected within our action plan.

### 4

**Minimising harm**  
Providing positive outcomes and promoting equality of access for all survivors of domestic abuse. Recognising and reducing barriers to reporting. Supporting a person or family through longer term support needs.

# 5

## What do we know?

Domestic abuse is widespread and chronically under-reported. Although statistics are helpful in giving an indication of how far reaching domestic abuse is, reported statistics will be much lower than actual abuse levels, and estimates may mask under-reporting within groups across populations. We know that individuals and families may live with domestic abuse for a significant period of time before asking for help and suffer a number of incidents.

As a partnership we recognise the high level of unreported abuse taking place within Kent and Medway and that people in different circumstances are impacted by domestic abuse in different ways. It is important that we work together to strengthen our collective knowledge of unreported abuse and expand local research where needed to gain a fuller picture.

**SafeLives suggest that on average high-risk victims live with domestic abuse for**

# 23 years

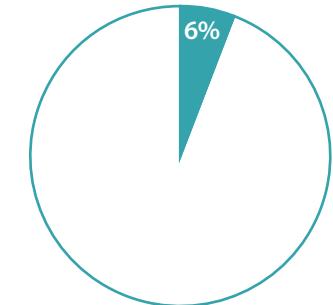
**and medium risk victims for**

# 3 years

**before getting help<sup>4</sup>. On average victims experience 50 incidents of abuse before getting help<sup>5,6</sup>**

**An estimated  
2 million  
adults aged 16-59  
have experienced  
domestic abuse within  
the last year. This is a  
prevalence rate of  
around 6 in 100  
adults<sup>7</sup>.**

Experience of domestic abuse in adults aged 16-59



**Women are around twice as likely to experience domestic abuse than men, equating to an estimated**

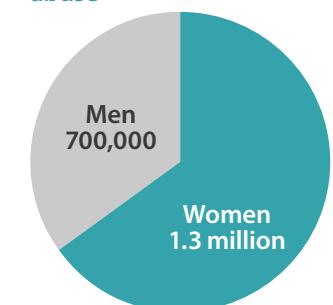
# 1.3million

**women**

# 700,000

**men**

Experience of domestic abuse



4. SafeLives (2015), Insights Idva National Dataset 2013-14. Bristol: SafeLives

5. SafeLives (2015), Insights Idva National Dataset 2013-14. Bristol: SafeLives

6. Walby, S. and Allen, J. (2004), Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey. London: Home Office

7. From the Office of National Statistics, Domestic abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2018 available at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018>

## 5. What do we know? continued

X2

Disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic abuse as non-disabled women, and typically experience abuse for a longer period before accessing support<sup>8</sup>.



2.5%  
LGBT+

SafeLives estimates that LGBT+ are often under-represented in statistics and highlights that currently 2.5% of people accessing support from domestic abuse services identified as LGBT+ survivors<sup>9</sup>.

**Stonewall estimates that**

**More than a quarter of trans people (28%)**

**in a relationship in the last year have faced abuse from a partner<sup>10</sup>.**

Nationally

74% white women

report being victims of abuse compared with

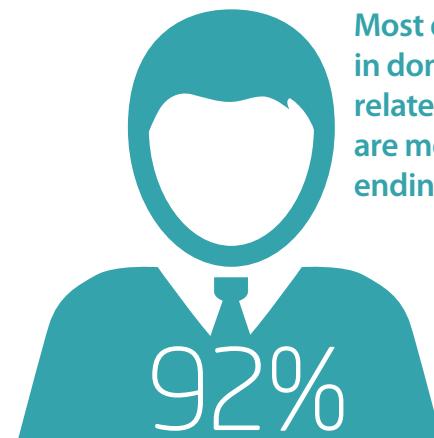
4.4% ethnic minority women<sup>11</sup>

This may represent under-reporting within the ethnic minority population.

Police and Fire Services (HMICFRS) recorded a total of

201,656

child protection referrals as a result of domestic abuse-related incidents in the year ending March 2018<sup>12</sup>.



**Most defendants in domestic abuse-related prosecutions are men (92% year ending March 2017<sup>13</sup>).**

### Statistics from Kent and Medway<sup>14</sup>

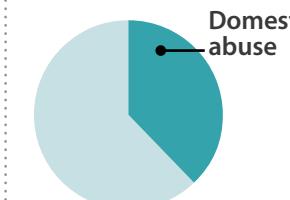


In 2017 26,149 incidents of domestic abuse were recorded by the Police in Kent and Medway.

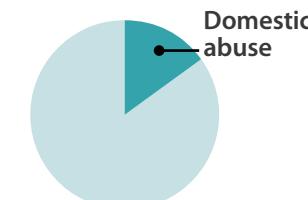
**26,149**

Current trends show that 38% of all violent crime is categorised as domestic abuse and domestic abuse makes up 15% of all crime<sup>15</sup>.

Violent crime



All crime



8. 3.3 years average length of abuse versus 2.3 years. Source: Safelives, 'Spotlight #2. Disabled people and domestic abuse' <http://www.safelives.org.uk/knowledge-hub/spotlights/spotlight-2-disabled-people-and-domestic-abuse>, information from 2015.

9. These are services registered on the Insight tool - Safelives (September 2018) 'Free to be Safe: LGBT+ people experiencing domestic abuse' available at <http://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Free%20to%20be%20safe%20web.pdf>

10. Stonewall, LGBT in Britain: Trans Report (2017) <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/lgbt-in-britain-trans.pdf>

11. Equalities and Human Rights Commission, Race Report Statistics <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/race-report-statistics>

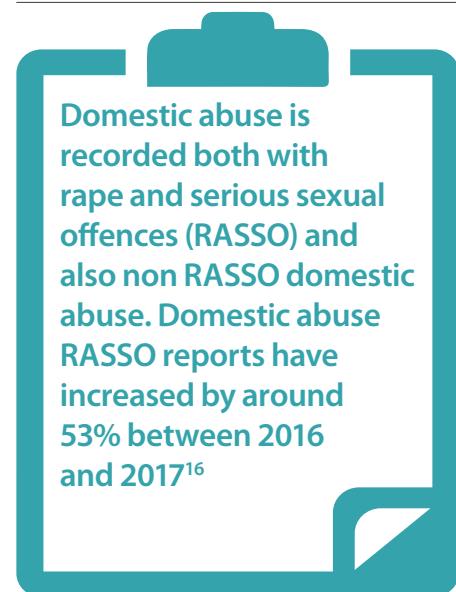
12. This figure is based on adequate data supplied by 25 police forces in England and Wales. Multiple child protection referrals can be made for each domestic abuse-related incident recorded by the police.

13. From the Office of National Statistics, Domestic abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2018 available at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018>

14. The below information comes from the Strategic Assessment (6th Feb 2019)

15. 2017 data

## 5. What do we know? continued



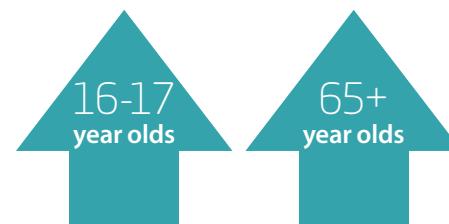
The age group most represented by those reporting and perpetrating abuse is between

25-34

Over the past

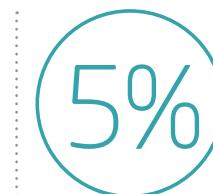
5 years

the perpetrator age groups which has seen the greatest proportional increase is the 16-17<sup>17</sup> and 65+ age groups, however these groups still remain the least represented<sup>18</sup>



Age groups with greatest increase of abuse

Highest incidence rates are in Thanet, Gravesham, Medway and Swale, with lower numbers in West Kent.



BME survivors represent 5% of recent reports of domestic abuse. With the total population of BME in Kent at 6.33% and in Medway at 10%, this figure may suggest under-reporting.



Because of the high numbers of people experiencing domestic abuse and because of its potentially long-term impact on individuals and families, the public sector cost of domestic abuse is considerable. This includes costs to the Police, the NHS including accident and emergency departments, primary care and family planning, public health, the criminal justice system, education, and specialist children's and adult's services<sup>19</sup>.

16. Police forces may be improving identification and recording, more victims also may be reporting crimes

17. The government definition of domestic abuse changed in March 2013 to include 16 and 17 year olds.

18. From the Strategic Assessment

19. NICE (Feb 2014) 'Domestic violence and abuse: multi-agency working' available at <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph50/chapter/3-Context>

# 6

## National policy and legal context

In March 2016 the Government published its strategy for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (2016-2020). This strategy defined government priorities as reducing the number of women and girls who experience violence and increasing the focus on early intervention and prevention. The strategy also highlighted the importance of engagement with children at the earliest opportunity and effective partnership working between services<sup>20</sup>.

In March 2019 the Government published a position statement on male victims of crimes considered in the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls strategy<sup>21</sup>. This statement recognises the significant number of men and boys who experience domestic abuse and barriers to accessing support.

### Other key legislation includes:

- the Children Act 1989 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002. This legislation places a duty on local authorities to provide services to Children in Need and to investigate the circumstances of a child where they are informed that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. Section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act extends the legal definition of harming children to include harm suffered by seeing or hearing ill treatment of others, including in the home.

the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, which extends provisions to combat domestic violence and creates a new offence of 'causing or allowing the death of a child or vulnerable adult'<sup>22</sup>.

the Protection of Freedom's Act 2012 makes stalking and linked to this, harassment an offence<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> HM Government 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls' (March 2016) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/522166/VAWG\\_Strategy\\_FINAL\\_PUBLICATION\\_MASTER\\_vRB.PDF](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/522166/VAWG_Strategy_FINAL_PUBLICATION_MASTER_vRB.PDF)

<sup>21</sup> HM Government 'Position Statement on male victims of crimes considered in the cross-Government strategy on ending violence against women and girls' (March 2019) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/783996/Male\\_Victims\\_Position\\_Paper\\_Web\\_Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/783996/Male_Victims_Position_Paper_Web_Accessible.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/libertycentral/2009/jan/13/domestic-violence-act>

<sup>23</sup> Women's Aid, 'What is Stalking' <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/stalking/>

## 6. National policy and legal context continued

- the Care Act, 2014; which introduced the general duty on local authorities to promote an individual's 'wellbeing', which includes considering a person's domestic, family and personal relationships. Carers or those being cared for may be victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse and may require safeguarding interventions. The Care Act includes Section 42 which states that if an adult with care and support needs (such as a disability) is suspected to be at risk of any form of abuse or neglect, the local authority must make enquiries and take steps to protect them. This includes working with other agencies such as health and the Police and providing independent advocacy when it is needed<sup>24</sup>.
- the Serious Crime Act, 2015; which introduced the offence of coercive or controlling behaviour against an intimate partner or family member and holds a maximum penalty of five years. Abuse can include a pattern of threats, humiliation and intimidation or behaviour<sup>25</sup>.
- at the time of publication other legislation and guidance which will impact how we will address Domestic Abuse was being commented on and approved.

### Clare's Law

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) is often called 'Clare's Law' after a landmark case. Clare Wood, was killed in 2009 by an ex-partner who unknown to her had been violent to previous partners.

Clare's Law gives any member of the public 'the right to ask' which enables someone to ask the Police about a partner's previous history of domestic violence or violent acts, and gives the Police powers to disclose information through 'the right to know'.

Under 'the right to ask' a member of the public can also make enquiries into the partner of a close friend or family member<sup>26</sup>. These are then considered by a panel of Police, probation services and other services. Information is only passed on if it is deemed lawful, proportionate and necessary. The information will be passed on to the person at risk<sup>27</sup>.

We will increase awareness of Clare's Law through local social marketing and awareness campaigns on domestic abuse, making sure that people are aware of the available process to access information if they have concerns.

24. SafeLives, Spotlight report, Disabled Survivors Too: Disabled people and domestic abuse (March 2017) <http://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Disabled%20Survivors%20Too%20CORRECTED.pdf>

25. Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy Group (2016-2020) (October 2016) [https://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/75199/KMDASG-Strategy-2016-20.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/75199/KMDASG-Strategy-2016-20.pdf)

26. Metropolitan Police 'Clare's law and requesting domestic violence offender data' <https://www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/daa/domestic-abuse/af/clares-law/>

27. From the Office of National Statistics, Domestic abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2018 available at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018>



## Our strategic priorities

This strategy is constructed around five key priorities which are designed to contribute to the overall vision of the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group. These priorities and commitments will form our key areas of work as we move forward over the next three years.

### Aim:

to prevent and reduce domestic abuse across communities and ensure that when people experience abuse, they can access the help and services which they need.

#### 1 Drive change together

- Promoting change by working together
- Ensuring strong governance processes
- Challenging negative societal attitudes

#### 2 Prevention and early intervention

- Preventing domestic abuse from happening through prevention and education
- Ensuring where possible schools are aware where children may have witnessed domestic abuse
- Being aware of intersecting vulnerabilities and risk
- Up skilling the workforce to support early identification of abuse

#### 3 Provision of services

- Ensuring responsive services which meet need quickly, these are integrated and follows a clear pathway
- Developing services with those who have experienced DA
- Mapping provision so any gaps can be identified

#### 4 Minimising harm

- Recognising and being responsive to under reporting
- Strengthening transitional safeguarding between children and adults services
- Being responsive to the longer term effects of DA
- Developing practices based on research

#### 5 Justice, recovery and ongoing protection

- Ensuring that the judicial system works to support those who experienced DA and promotes behavioural change in perpetrators
- A robust multi-agency approach to perpetrators, to bring individuals to justice, or divert their offending.



## Priority 1

### Drive change together

This priority focuses on strengthening our governance processes and improving the way that we work together. We will promote a more cohesive approach to tackling domestic abuse, working together to meet our collective aims. We acknowledge that more can be done to promote integrated working across all sectors.

#### **Driving change together**

**The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group will continue to recognise the adverse impact of domestic abuse on society, and the need to promote change through joint commitment, leadership and partnership working.**

**Commitments under this priority are:**

**1.** All agencies<sup>28</sup> reaffirm their commitment to working together to provide co-leadership, pool resources, take a more strategic and effective response to domestic abuse, and actively engage

in meeting our collective aims and objectives, working through governance structures at an appropriate level.

**2.** We will challenge societal attitudes that allow domestic abuse to occur, so it is unacceptable in any form, and increase awareness of how to better prevent and respond to domestic abuse across all agencies, services and our local communities. We will work using a 'grass roots upward' approach, involving community assets, social hubs and community leaders, to engage people across diverse and minority groups.

**3.** Partners will work collectively to bring together comparable, accurate and consistent data on areas such as commissioning, provision and gap analysis. This information-sharing will work to strengthen the future development of our strategic assessment and support our understanding around under-reporting, ensuring we learn lessons and draw out the right narratives from the evidence. Where possible we will commission research where gaps in knowledge exist.

**4.** The strategic assessment will be reviewed and updated annually. All partners will provide information which is contextualised and meaningful in a timely way in order to support this process.

**5.** All agencies will ensure they participate in the Domestic Homicide Review process, and that learning from this, Serious Case Reviews and Safeguarding Practice Reviews are proactively shared with the wider workforce.

**6.** Agencies will ensure that they are aware of the links to each different area of business such as Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), Integrated Offender Management (IOM), Local Criminal Justice Board, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and other partnership bodies so that they can work cohesively.

**7.** We will work together to seek and access external funding opportunities, working collectively to identify areas of need where funding can make the most impact.

**8.** All agencies will work together to make sure that their workforce is trained to identify those at risk of becoming affected by or perpetrating abuse. Staff will have a strong understanding of appropriate responses and pathways including referrals and interventions.

<sup>28</sup>. Agencies refers to all members of the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive: Kent Police, the Police and Crime Commissioners Office, Medway Council, Kent County Council, the NHS (inclusive of CCGs, Hospitals & Primary Care settings), Kent Fire and Rescue, the National Probation Service, KSS CRC (rehabilitation services) and District Councils

## 1. Drive change together continued

### What the Strategic Assessment tells us:

Domestic abuse services have historically been commissioned by a number of different partners and while coordination and responsiveness of services have been improved it is essential that partners work collectively to ensure strong service delivery.

An important way of monitoring our performance as a partnership is through collecting and sharing comparable data. The partnership must work to bring comparable and contextualised data and information together, so we are able to track and improve our performance and identify any gaps in provision.

'Ways in Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies' (PATHways) is a project which is run in partnership across providers. It targets adolescents who have experienced violence and victimisation within their own homes and who are disengaging with their communities or are on the brink of the criminal justice system.

The programme works to support early intervention work, which has been vital to aid rebuilding family and peer relationships to support mental health and healthy relationship education to young people.

This programme will be delivered in East Kent and in Medway.





## Priority 2 Prevention and early intervention

This priority aims to increase the focus on early intervention and prevention (which is not only about stopping domestic abuse but also preventing the escalation of abuse).

A person's needs impact on and are influenced by other members of a family, and we will take a whole family approach to prevention and early intervention services. Where possible we will share information across service providers so that services can work collaboratively across the family. We will encourage staff to have professional curiosity to explore and understand what is happening more widely within a family, think about whether other services should be involved, or connections made, and not necessarily take things at face value. This requires a collaborative response by all agencies. We will ensure that staff have appropriate training and supervision and are supported in their work.

Effective support must also make the links to targeting wider vulnerabilities such as child exploitation, mental health, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, gangs and substance misuse. This will be achieved through promoting better knowledge and understanding of violence and abuse, promoting healthy relationships, and early intervention for those at risk of harm – such as vulnerable individuals, children and older people. It will focus heavily on the risk posed by perpetrators and ensure there are robust services in place to manage the risk and address the cause of domestic abuse in the relationship.

We acknowledge that many families wish to stay together and we will work with families to support informed decisions; supporting a family to stay together if this is their choice and is a safe option.

Early recognition will lead to earlier interventions, thus reducing the impact of domestic abuse on individuals and their families. Education within schools and a zero tolerance within the community will reduce the acceptance of abuse and violence within relationships.

### **Prevention and early intervention**

Reduce the incidence of domestic abuse through effective preventative educational programmes, a skilled and resourced workforce, promotion of a culture of prevention, and earlier intervention at societal, governmental and local levels.

Commitments under this priority are:

- 1.** We will work together to identify and support families at risk of domestic abuse, where there have been past experiences of abuse or where other risk factors are present and deliver preventative and early intervention services linked to understanding vulnerabilities and risk. We recognise the complexity of the interplay between vulnerabilities and that support must be shaped to meet individual needs.
- 2.** By 2021, Kent Police, through Operation Encompass (see case study) and working with HeadStart Kent and Medway Council, will aspire to be working with all Kent and Medway schools.
- 3.** We will ensure that a robust offer on domestic abuse awareness and healthy relationships is curriculum based and available to all schools and educational settings. We will work with schools to challenge gender inequality, sexual stereotyping, and domestic abuse normalisation where it exists.

## 2. Prevention and early intervention continued

**4.** All agencies will work together to reduce the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people through early intervention by supporting activities and services to develop their resilience and improve their emotional wellbeing. Partners will support appropriate training and resources to those who work with children and young people in schools and in the community.

**5.** We will work with our safeguarding teams to support early identification of abuse of vulnerable adults including those with learning disabilities and instances of elder abuse, working in accordance with the Kent and Medway safeguarding protocols.

### What the Strategic Assessment tells us:

While domestic abuse can affect anyone, it is closely associated with a number of other vulnerabilities including mental health, substance misuse and homelessness.

Sometimes these vulnerabilities are linked to or are a result of the abuse experienced.

Information collected in the Strategic Assessment highlights significant prevalence of other vulnerabilities across providers. One provider in Medway found that 11.4% of people engaging with the service identified mental health vulnerabilities, 10.6% identified substance misuse vulnerabilities and 8.9% identified as having experienced sexual abuse.

A strong understanding of cross-vulnerabilities can help to guide and develop our preventative and early intervention work. New Police processes are identifying repeat survivors with mental health requirements to ensure they receive a bespoke response suitable to their needs.

### Operation Encompass<sup>29</sup>

Operation Encompass is a national initiative which aims to support children affected by domestic abuse. This work has been trialed in Deal but is now being rolled out across Medway and Kent, working in coordination with HeadStart services.

Operation Encompass is a process by which schools and early years settings are informed that a child attending school in that area has been affected by domestic abuse.

If a young person has been present during an incident of domestic abuse the police will share information, in confidence, at the earliest opportunity with a Designated Safeguarding Lead in the school/early years setting in which the child attends.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will have been provided with Operation Encompass training by the Police and Education Safeguarding Team. The school or early years setting will then be able to offer the child or young person support and will assist them to remain in school to continue learning in a safe and secure environment.

<sup>29</sup>. Kent Safeguarding Children Board 'Domestic Abuse' <https://www.kscb.org.uk/guidance/family-and-relationships-issues/domestic-abuse2>



## Priority 3

### Provision of services

This priority focuses on preventing further abuse of those survivors and families who have or are experiencing abuse or are at risk.

We recognise that there are a variety of factors which may increase the likelihood of domestic abuse and therefore a range of different solutions which may be offered to those affected by it. These will range from victim support, perpetrator programmes, child-centred approaches and both couple and whole family interventions. All agencies should work together to build more responsive services which meet needs quickly. This is not just about statutory or community services but about everyone knowing their roles and responsibilities. Family members and co-workers, professionals, community workers and faith leaders should all be able to recognise signs and symptoms and be able to access information and advice to assist individuals.

When services are working with survivors, they will address both the physical and mental health needs of the individual and their family. This includes being aware of links between domestic abuse and mental health including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance misuse disorders, psychotic disorders and suicide attempts<sup>30</sup>.

#### **Provision of services**

**Responsive, effective services for individuals and/or groups at risk of, or subject to, domestic abuse and its reoccurrence are provided.**

Commitments under this priority include:

**1.** A multi-agency evidence-based approach will be developed and utilised to inform the commissioning of domestic abuse services to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are provided with the appropriate outreach and advisory services using an integrated pathways approach to facilitate the four key elements of service<sup>31</sup> provision.

**2.** We will work to ensure that our priorities and commitments highlighted within the strategy form a narrative across our commissioned services.

**3.** All partners will work together to ensure staff understand the landscape of provision, using and referring to services effectively. This includes understanding the thresholds for referring to Children's and Adults' Services are well understood and applied, and when it may be appropriate to refer to other service provision.

**4.** We will build on trauma-informed approaches to support individuals and families who have experienced abuse in order to improve outcomes. We will use learning and research on Adverse Childhood Experiences to further understand the impact of domestic abuse on young people, and how to minimise harm experienced to build resilience.

**5.** The provision of information on available services will be reviewed by all agencies and support services to take account of the integrated pathways approach, and the diversity and emerging needs of client groups, and ensure clear signposting and referral mechanisms, particularly for addressing minority or complex needs and supporting those with multiple vulnerabilities.

<sup>30</sup>. Kent Public Health Observatory 'Kent domestic abuse JSNA chapter summary update 2014/15' [https://www.kpho.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/44074/Domestic-Abuse-JSNA-Chapter-FINAL.pdf](https://www.kpho.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/44074/Domestic-Abuse-JSNA-Chapter-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>31</sup>. a) Encourage and recognise disclosure of violence and abuse,  
b) Respond to disclosure,  
c) Identification of harm, and  
d) Coordinated action following disclosure.

### 3. Provision of services continued

**6.** The commissioning and provision of services will be informed by the views of those who have been affected by domestic abuse or are at significant risk of it.

**7.** We will ensure staff are trained in self-harm and suicide prevention to help them recognise risks and include these in safety plans where appropriate for both survivors and perpetrators.

**8.** We will develop a comprehensive service map to maintain a clear overview of service provision, to ensure that the development of provision meets changing needs within the community and that we are able to quickly identify any gaps in support.

**9.** We will support any person within the workforce who is experiencing domestic abuse, and ensure our processes work to assist and support any staff member who discloses domestic abuse to us. We will work with businesses to ensure that they have access to information on how to support staff members who may disclose abuse.

#### What the Strategic Assessment tells us:

There are a high number of volunteers which support the provision of services. We must work to ensure that all volunteers have the support and skill set needed to enable them to meet the demands and adequately support survivors seeking assistance.

Historically, the provision of services has been commissioned or grant funded by a wide range of agencies including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, districts and boroughs and Kent County Council. This created complex funding arrangements which could lead to duplication of services.

Partners worked with survivors of abuse to plan the recommissioning of services from a pooled budget in a more integrated and outcome focussed way. The Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Support Service was commissioned in April 2017. This new model has many benefits including:

- creating clear pathways of support which can be stepped up and stepped down
- establishing a single point of contact via the Police and Crime Commissioner's victim support unit
- creating a single referral point
- supporting the refurbishment of the North Kent Refuge and opening a new refuge in Tonbridge and Malling
- working to increase support for all survivors including those not classified as 'high risk'.

Support available through integrated services includes refuge accommodation, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) support, outreach, therapeutic support programmes, emergency welfare support and sanctuary services.

The new services offered support to 3313 new entrants during 2017/18. Of these 3069 were community-based clients, this is an increase of 991 compared to the previous arrangements<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>32</sup>. Kent County Council (30th Nov 2018) 'Commissioning of Integrated Domestic Abuse Services: Update' <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s87889/Item%209%20-%20Commissioning%20of%20Integrated%20Domestic%20Abuse%20Services%20Update.pdf>

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**Minimising harm**

## Priority 4

### Minimising harm

Minimising harm is about making sure that services are accessible and meet the needs of everyone, recognising barriers to reporting. We will learn from past experiences and improve services.

This priority is also about the support which may be needed to come to terms with what has happened and to manage the longer-term consequences of domestic abuse. Support comes in many forms and can include educational support services, housing support, outreach and advocacy services and improving access to more specialist psychological interventions.

**Minimising harm**

**Providing positive outcomes and promoting equality of access for all survivors of domestic abuse. Recognising and reducing barriers to reporting. Supporting a person or family through longer term support needs.**

**Commitments under this priority include:**

- 1.** We will work with the community to strengthen community capacity to support those who have experienced domestic abuse.
- 2.** We recognise that domestic abuse may impact the whole family in the longer term. We will continue to develop longer term support mechanisms using the voice of those affected to shape provision.
- 3.** All agencies will consider transitional safeguarding issues for adolescents and young people who are exposed to, or are perpetrating, domestic abuse, to ensure there is no disconnect between services for children and adults.
- 4.** All agencies will review service provision and support to survivors from minority groups, focusing on understanding and reducing barriers to reporting, how best to reach and engage with minority groups and ensure that support meets need.
- 5.** Safeguarding teams in Kent and Medway will work with partners to protect vulnerable adults at risk of abuse or neglect.
- 6.** Local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences will be used effectively to reduce repeat victimisation. Partners, children and family members will be supported and included in these programmes and their voices will be heard.

- 7.** We will continue to develop and deliver practices and interventions, based on the latest research and best practice, to effectively address harmful, violent and abusive behaviour within different contexts.

**What the Strategic Assessment tells us:**

Under-reporting is particularly evident for under 25s, over 65s, black, Asian and minority ethnic survivors, lesbian, gay and transgender survivors and male survivors. Very few statistics are available for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Further review is required to examine how best to reach and engage with these groups.

Kent has been successful in securing funding to deliver specialist Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) support within two hospital settings. These advisors work directly with survivors in hospital and work with staff in Accident and Emergency and Paediatrics to ensure that the workforce recognise domestic abuse and understands how to access support and services.

Additionally, specialist IDVAs have been commissioned to support male survivors, LGBTQ+ survivors and those with complex needs.



## Priority 5

### Justice, recovery and ongoing protection

The harm caused by domestic abuse is immediate and long term. This harm can be both physical and emotional and reinforced by societal attitudes to those who experience harm and those that cause it.

This priority focuses on reducing the impact of domestic abuse on the family and reducing the likelihood of future incidents, whether through pursuing perpetrators through the criminal justice system, via civil outcomes, through working with families to change behaviour or through rehabilitation (within prison or the community). This would include continually improving protections and justice available and ensuring appropriate and effective use of sentencing.

All agencies should recognise that the harmful and violent behaviour of perpetrators needs to be addressed. Through supporting interventions that lead to sustainable behaviour change in

perpetrators themselves, we will drive an overall reduction in prevalence of domestic abuse and reduced rates of re-offending.

We recognise that approaches to domestic abuse are changing and are open to innovation and new ways of working.

**Justice, recovery and ongoing protection**  
Provision of effective, engaged, supportive, responsive and timely protection and justice.

**Commitments under this priority include:**

**1.** Focused protection, support and information will be available for all survivors throughout the Criminal Justice System process. All agencies should ensure that the survivors' voice is heard throughout these processes and used to improve and enhance service provision.

**2.** Ongoing assessment of the capacity of the Justice System to respond to current, new and emerging issues will be undertaken in relation to the protection of survivors; responding to harmful and violent behaviour; and providing greater focus on changing the behaviour of the perpetrator through a combination of disruption, support and the management of offenders. Perpetrator programmes will be tailored to meet needs, seeking behavioural change and rehabilitation.

**3.** All agencies will work together to ensure that there is a robust approach to perpetrators. This will include understanding the behaviour of the perpetrator, supporting interventions that lead to sustainable behaviour change in perpetrators themselves and having a clear plan to bring them to justice or diverting them from offending.

**4.** We will support individuals and families through a whole system, criminal justice journey from arrest through to prosecution and beyond in order to ensure the timely, meaningful delivery of justice and working to reduce further harm and provide sustainable outcomes.

**5.** Ensure staff understand the legal tools available, and how they can be put in place quickly and effectively.

#### What the Strategic Assessment tells us:

We need to do further research on the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes, how they impact motivations to change and how they work to reduce the recurrence of domestic abuse.

## 5. Justice, recovery and ongoing protection continued

'Typologies' of perpetrators or of types of domestic abuse are becoming more commonly used in a bid to understand why some people may become domestic abuse perpetrators, while others with similar experiences or environments may not. These theories are useful in challenging the idea that all perpetrators have the same personalities and motives and therefore that all individuals and families will benefit from the same types of interventions<sup>33</sup>.

While categories can be blurred and changing at an individual level; moving to a more complex view of domestic abuse, its causes and interventions will mean that we are able to strengthen our responses, ensuring that different individuals and families, with different needs receive the support they need.

This approach also recognises domestic abuse as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE). There is growing research around the impact of ACE's on health outcomes of individuals. Children and young people growing up in environments where domestic abuse occurs are likely to experience trauma and distress. These experiences may have a negative impact on social development, relationships, risk taking behaviour and health outcomes<sup>34</sup>.

We will continue to use the latest research to develop our approaches to domestic abuse, seeking to understand the multifaceted and complex nature of each person's context and experience.



33. Gadd and Corr, (Sept 16) 'Beyond Typologies: Foregrounding Meaning and Motive in Domestic Violence Perpetration' published in *Deviant Behaviour*, Routledge

34. Safe lives (2017) 'Living with domestic abuse as an ACE' available at [http://www.safelives.org.uk/practice\\_blog/living-domestic-abuse-ace-adverse-childhood-experience](http://www.safelives.org.uk/practice_blog/living-domestic-abuse-ace-adverse-childhood-experience)

# 8

## Achieving our objectives – how we'll deliver

This strategy is intended to be an overarching document setting out a common understanding and commitment from key partners to address domestic abuse across Kent and Medway. Accountability for this strategy sits with the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive.

This strategy will be supported by a joint action plan agreed to and championed by each partner within the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive and signed off by this Executive. Actions developed will be directly linked to our identified outcomes and commitments.

Below this each partner will choose whether to develop bespoke or adopt existing individual action plans to capture the actions that they, as an organisation will have responsibility for. Each agency will ensure that they have effective inspection mechanisms in place.

Feedback from those who use interventions and services will form a vital part of service development, our commissioning and our monitoring procedures. We will work to ensure that the voice of survivors, of families affected by domestic abuse and of perpetrators who have interacted with our services informs and continually improves our provision.

The Executive Group will provide annual monitoring reports to both the Kent and Medway's Community Safety Partnerships, the Police and Crime Commissioners Office, and safeguarding boards across Kent and Medway's children's and adults services, setting out progress against our vision and identified outcomes. The strategy and joint action plan will be regularly reviewed by the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group.

Implementation of the priorities will require sustained commitment from all partners if we are to continue to make a significant difference to the lives of survivors of domestic abuse and their families. We are focused on delivering real change, strengthening the coordination of services, learning from the latest research and continuing to develop and respond to the needs of our community.

## **Further information**

For further information about any aspect of this strategy please contact:

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