

Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy 2020 - 2023: Progress made



Accessing support

This is an evaluation document supporting the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy.

If you need support **now** this can be accessed by telephoning Victim Support on **0808 168 9276**, or visiting **www.domesticabuseservices.org.uk**

If you are in immediate danger please do not be afraid to call 999, otherwise you can contact Kent Police on the non-emergency telephone number 101 or visit your local police station to speak with an officer in confidence.

Alternatively, you can contact the freephone 24 hour National Domestic Violence Helpline run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge on **0808 2000 247** or the Men's Advice Line on **0808 801 0327**.

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This report is necessarily an overview given the large amount of progress which has been achieved across the partnership. Many commitments from the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy are listed, but due to duplication and to support conciseness not all commitments and completed work is included.

In partnership with and supported by





Foreword



Our Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy (2020 – 2023) has coordinated our partnership vision. This vision has enabled us to bring together our approach and the delivery of services, ensuring that we are working to the same collective aim and commitments.

Domestic abuse is wide reaching and prolific, it is destructive and abhorrent and every minute, of every day it effects those that are subject of it. To ensure that people receive the best response we must continue to work together, both as a collective partnership and as individual organisations, to strengthen the delivery of services; working towards our aim; to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse, hold to account those that commit such crimes, and ensure that where domestic abuse takes place, all those affected get the right support quickly.

We have measured our progress against the Kent and Medway domestic abuse delivery plan which has pushed forward projects that are linked to the commitments made within the strategy. We have achieved a lot over the last three years and in this progress report we celebrate some of the work which has been delivered through our partnership and look to the future to continue to work collaboratively to strengthen our response to those impacted by domestic abuse.

Thus, as we look to the development of the 2024 – 2029 strategy we need to not only assess the progress we have made, observing our achievements but also acknowledge areas where we need to retain our focus, continuing to identify opportunities for improvement. This progress report works to identify these areas.

Our progress has been supported through collaborative working across the public sector, this work would not have been possible without the invaluable support and aid of the voluntary sector organisations which work within this space. We are also extremely grateful for those people impacted by abuse who have and continue to give their feedback on experiences, and these experiences shape our strategies and commissioning decisions. Your insight and contribution is invaluable to the development of our work.

Simon Wilson, Assistant Chief Constable, Kent Police

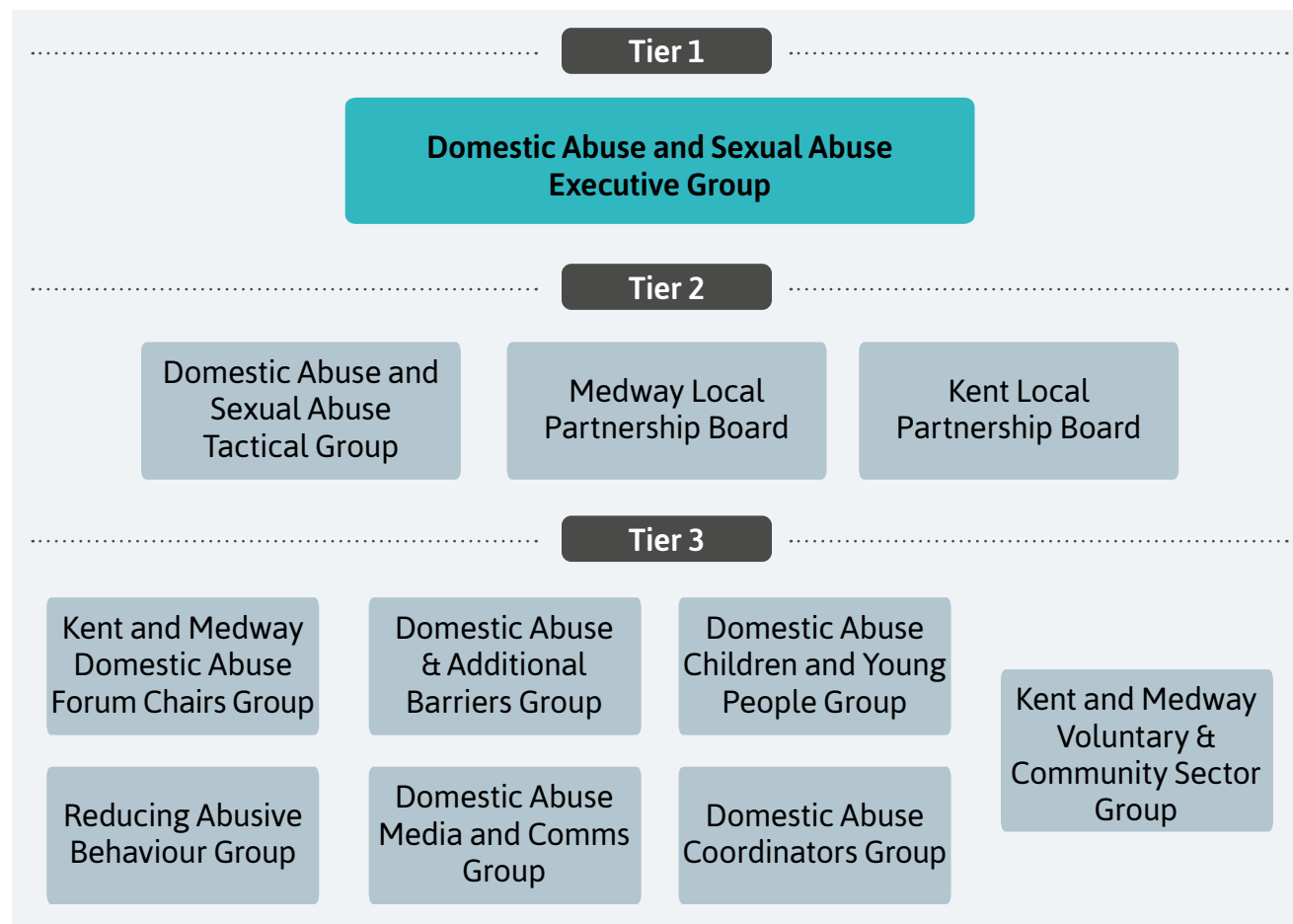


Our governance

The Kent and Medway Domestic and Sexual Abuse Executive Group is the overarching partnership group which works to ensure progress against the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse strategy.

Group which has a focus on community-based support, and the statutory Local Partnership Boards across Kent and Medway which oversee work linked to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

There are a number of subgroups which support the delivery of the strategy, including the Kent and Medway Domestic and Sexual Abuse Tactical





Our priorities

The Kent and Medway domestic abuse delivery plan is a project-based plan. Projects sit under 5 priorities.

As we move to the 2024 – 2029 strategy we will maintain a project-based monitoring process but will also work to include quantitative key performance indicators into our measurements of achievement.





Priority 1 Drive change together

The priority of driving change together recognises the adverse impact of domestic abuse on society, and that working together across agencies will support greater progress and stronger outcomes.

Commitments identified within the 2020 – 2023 strategy include:

- working to 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,
- working to collectively bring together comparable, accurate and consistent data on areas such as commissioning, provision and gap analysis,
- ensuring strong participation in safeguarding review processes for both adults and children, making sure that key learning is proactively shared with the wider workforce.

Increasing awareness

The ‘Domestic Abuse Aware’ campaign is entering its third year.

This campaign is commissioned via the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Services (KIDAS) and supported by a group that includes representatives from across the partnership.

The creation of coordinated, impactful social media content works to amplify messages whilst content calendars and toolkits have steadily increased the campaigns reach.

One of the focuses of this work is to ensure that the campaign is inclusive, promoting the understanding that domestic abuse happens to everyone irrespective of age, gender, orientation, ethnicity or disability. Images and content themes have been chosen to increase representation and the campaign has built relationships with community groups to increase the audiences.

By proactively delivering public facing campaigns this work has raised awareness of abuse in all its forms, promoted domestic abuse as everybody’s business and educated people on how to get support from local and national services.

1. Drive change together continued

The Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) was commissioned by Kent County Council to create an events programme that would provide free information, advice and resources to educate people across all areas of the community about the impact of domestic abuse.

The Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service created a free virtual conference with sessions for all knowledge and expertise levels.

The conference was designed to promote understanding of the barriers to reporting, and how best to reach and engage minoritised groups. Workshops included how domestic abuse affects older adults, responding to forced marriage, LGBTQ+ perspectives on domestic abuse support, domestic abuse and learning disabilities among many other topics.

There was a total of 10,301 registrations across the 16 events with over 1000 people watching the post event recordings. This conference content is still available for people to learn from and listed within useful links at the end of this document.

Standardised training modules have been developed by the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) and Medway Domestic Abuse Services (MDAS) and are available to all. This includes information on safe enquiry and sign posting, impacts on adults and children and safety planning.

Championing the Needs of People Affected by Abuse

The Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Champions project is being developed by the Domestic Abuse Forum Chairs and is delivered through the nine local forums across Kent & Medway.

There are two project streams under the Champions umbrella – Professional Champions & Employer Champions.

These schemes promote a joined-up approach to providing the best support to those impacted by domestic abuse by increasing the knowledge and competency of key people throughout formal and informal networks.



Working together to support White Ribbon accreditation

Kent County Council, Medway Council, Gravesham Borough Council, Tonbridge and Malling District Council, Dartford Borough Council, Sevenoaks Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue Service have worked to gain White Ribbon accreditation.

While we know that anyone can be impacted by domestic abuse, we also know that women have a higher risk of being impacted by violent and sexual behaviour. By supporting the White Ribbon campaign, we are standing against violence and supporting dialogue around harmful behaviours.

Each organisation who has committed to becoming White Ribbon accredited has signed up to a three-year action plan, which demonstrates how core criteria are met across the organisations in relation to violence against women and girls (VAWG). The action plan offers achievable goals for the organisation to bring about genuine change.



Using an evidenced based approach to support our work

Since 2020, Kent County Council (KCC) in collaboration with partners have published an annual domestic abuse needs assessment.

1. Drive change together continued

The partnership is committed to revising the needs assessments yearly (with a full local needs assessment being completed every three years). The needs assessment supports us to ensure that we are making the most of data collected across the partnership, bringing this together and strengthening information year on year. It supports the identification of gaps in provision, helping us to understand where we need to focus work.

The partnership has completed additional qualitative work including specific projects looking at the experiences of male survivors, work with professionals to better understand barriers of access to refuge, and work with children, young people, parents and professionals to understand how services should be shaped and improved. This work has supported the development of commissioned services.

In line with KCC, Medway aims to update its needs assessment annually with a full review every three years. Medway uses data collated from providers to identify gaps in provision. It also relies on the work from its Survivor Voice Group, a subgroup and project collating ongoing quantitative and qualitative feedback from those with lived experience and partner agencies who provide front line support to those who have experienced abuse. Medway uses focus groups with young people, and input from stakeholders to feed into the needs assessment and shape commissioning decisions.

Community Safety Partnership Team and Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) are published on both the Kent and Medway council websites. The publication process is vital in ensuring the dissemination of the lessons identified and as part of this process, the Kent Community Safety team also inform a wide variety of professionals and groups.

In addition, the Kent Community Safety team produces a short briefing document for completed DHRs which provides a short narrative, themed lessons to be learned and reflective questions to support the reader in applying the lessons to their own practice. These documents have been very well received, enabling partners who utilise them to cascade a consistent and succinct message to the professionals in their agencies.

The Kent Community Safety Team also hold 'Lessons to be Learnt' seminars with Independent Chairs, agency representatives, expert and bereaved family speakers. Six DHRs were published in 21/22 and a further two in 22/23. In 2022, five themed webinars were delivered to present these recent publications. 615 frontline professionals from multi-agency partners attended across the events. All webinars were recorded, edited and made available on the Safer Communities Portal.

The Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board developed a joint learning document with the Kent Community Safety Team on successfully engaging with service users, which was published to the KMSAB website and shared widely to partners.

Opportunities for improvement

As we look to the development of future priorities, we would like to continue to develop work on;

- continuing to strengthen collaborative commissioning, using data available to identify gaps and need,
- continuing to strengthen available information to front line services, so that referral options are clear to those working with people impacted by abuse,
- continue to strengthen the support we offer to our collective workforce, aiming to ensure that any person within the workforce who is experiencing domestic abuse is supported well,
- to continue to work with businesses to ensure that they have access to information on how to support staff members who may disclose abuse.

2

Prevention
and early
intervention

Priority 2 Prevention and early intervention

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

Commitments identified within the 2020 – 2023 strategy include:

- working to identify and support families at risk of domestic abuse,
- challenging gender inequality, sexual stereotyping and domestic abuse normalisation where it exists,
- working with partners to promote safety where children are displaying harmful behaviours,
- expanding Operation Encompass,
- the early identification of abuse of adults at risk.

Working to reduce risk

In KCC the Domestic Abuse Development Programme was designed in response to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, to ensure an appropriate staff response to domestic abuse across Integrated Children's Services.

Kent's multi-agency domestic abuse forums developed a set of practice principles for staff working with people impacted by domestic abuse, aiming to align with the Kent Practice Framework.

This training was rolled out between September 2022 and January 2023 and supports staff to address domestic abuse complexities which they deal with every day. Four sessions have been completed with 40 practitioners from across Integrated Children's Services attending each session, there are plans to formally evaluate this programme.

KIDAS work with Integrated Children's Services in providing joint supervisions for complex cases which involve domestic abuse. Staff within Early Help and social work teams can access specialised domestic abuse expertise through KIDAS to support understandings of trauma and best responses.

Healthy relationship education in schools

The Police and Crime Commissioner has commissioned a new early intervention programme which is available to schools and youth settings in Kent and Medway designed to examine healthy relationships, online harms as well as cyber safety and cyber bullying.

This programme will offer an interactive media workshop to discuss healthy relationships and online safety. The multi-media experience uses compelling video, creative thinking, data analysis and mind-mapping to explain and explore healthy relationships and online safety. Young people are encouraged to create their own scripts, produce podcasts, dance, rap, poems, or videos on these topics. Time is given for reflection and to actively demonstrate understanding and empathy.

Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust have created resources available to schools to enable the inclusion of domestic abuse and healthy relationships within the curriculum. The Kent school health team deliver free training opportunities and resources to support schools in this process.

2. Prevention and early intervention continued

Brighter Worlds Animation and package

The Brighter Worlds project was developed by the Local Children’s Partnership Group in West Kent as a direct response to the increasing number of schools and partners highlighting concerns around the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on children and young people pre and post pandemic.

Each animation involves an ‘alien spacecraft’ looking into a child’s world through a range of different scenarios and then encouraging the children watching to review and analyse the presented scenes. Animation can be a strong preventative resource that can support the sustainability of ACEs and trauma awareness amongst primary school age children.

KCC and partners are seeking opportunities to expand access to this animation across Kent.



Medway Personal Social Health Education (PSHE) Network

Medway has created a networking forum for PSHE leads or equivalent, and teachers to obtain information, share good practice and resources and make links with other schools and organisations.

There are resources available to Medway schools accessed via Google drive and the PSHE Association. These include primary and secondary work packages and lesson packs on abusive relationships and managing family conflict. Medway provide training to teachers to support the delivery of high-quality relationship and sex education.

Currently Kent is looking at joining this network as a collaboration and to support even stronger partnership working.

Bystander Training and Prevent

Violence which happens in a public place can significantly overlap with violence and abuse that happens or occurs in the home or as part of a relationship.

A key part of the work to tackle violence, including domestic abuse, is active bystander training. The active bystander approach equips professionals with the knowledge and skills to discuss with young people about the importance of intervention whenever they see something which they feel is

unacceptable. This may be when a friend is carrying a knife, or when they witness misogynistic or homophobic behaviour.

The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) have trained 20 trainers and run workshops for approximately 250 professionals to learn about the approach and how it can be incorporated into their practice. Further training sessions are being planned for 2023 – 24, and work is underway with Kent County Council’s marketing team to create resources to support the development of the approach across the County.

Over the last 3 years the Kent and Medway Prevent team who deal with individuals vulnerable to radicalisation have seen a presence of domestic abuse in referrals coming through to the Channel panel (a multi-agency panel that assesses the risk of radicalisation).

The Prevent Team have noticed an overrepresentation of males between ages of 16+ as having a presence of domestic abuse as a factor in their referrals. This includes an individual who has either experienced domestic abuse, shown abusive behaviours, or witnessed domestic abuse. Funding has been provided by the Home Office to commission a project exploring the link between domestic abuse and extremism, and the team are starting to assess the results. These results will be shared widely with organisations.

2. Prevention and early intervention continued

Over the last two years the Prevent Education Officers (PEO) and Prevent Coordinator include Incels and extreme misogyny in their training. The PEOs have seen an increase in schools requesting materials during this time to assist them in challenging students' curiosity into misogynistic narratives. This is addressed by a whole school approach to healthy relationships through the PHSE curriculum, and relevant resources are shared with the schools. Misogynist comments and aggressive behaviours towards female staff and peers should be addressed robustly, as part of a school's wider approach to sex and relationships. Following the tragic Plymouth shootings, training in relation to Incels has been delivered by the Prevent Coordinator to domestic abuse charities and partner organisations across Kent and Medway.

Adolescent to parent violence

The Police and Crime Commissioner commissions support for adolescents who are displaying violent or abusive behaviour or conflict towards their parents. This service provides a restorative led intervention to reduce family conflict and abuse within homes, aiming to help families communicate more effectively and agree how to better manage conflict.

Working to expand Operation Encompass

Kent Police continues to be a proud participant of Operation Encompass supporting children when they are experiencing domestic abuse.

When Covid-19 and lockdown took hold back in Spring 2020, Kent Police made a renewed commitment to continue to share notifications with schools. Since then, Police have strived to improve and develop this early information sharing with schools further. One way this has been achieved is through the development of the 'Operation Encompass PLUS' notification and where appropriate information on non-domestic abuse safeguarding concerns are shared with schools. In addition, the Health Visitor service now receive Domestic Abuse Notifications.

Kent Police have launched a new child AWARE risk assessment in January 2023. These risk assessments are now completed by Officers and staff who deal with safeguarding concerns for children including at domestic abuse incidents. Use of the *AWARE* mnemonic; *Appearance, Words, Activity, Relationships and Dynamics and Environment* now helps to accurately identify and prioritise risk.

Identification of the abuse of adults

While domestic abuse can affect anyone, data collection shows that older people may be underrepresented in service use. We also know that those who are older are more likely to be impacted by a disability.

Media content has been developed and scheduled with domestic abuse partners, to raise awareness with professionals and the public on the abuse of

adults including those with learning disabilities, older people and intergenerational abuse. Awareness of this has been raised through the 16 days campaign and National Safeguarding Week.

Kent Safeguarding teams support early identification of abuse of adults including those with learning disabilities and abuse affecting older people. The 'Safeguarding Adults at Risk – Financial Abuse Toolkit' now makes appropriate links to domestic abuse and identifying coercive and controlling behaviour. The toolkit was reviewed to ensure it makes links to the definition of domestic abuse and how to offer support where domestic abuse is suspected. It also highlights referral pathways to domestic abuse agencies.

Domestic abuse is considered as a factor within the Kent Adult Carers strategy. Ensuring that the links and distinction between carer burn out and coercive controlling behaviour are made with clear risk information and referral pathways available to staff.

The Police and Crime Commissioner has commissioned specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advisor support for older people impacted by domestic abuse. The commissioned service provides tailored support from the point of crisis and beyond recovery.

2. Prevention and early intervention continued

The Hospital Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (HIDVAs)

Hospital Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (HIDVAs) have been in place at Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley, Medway Maritime Hospital and East Kent Hospital Foundation NHS Trust acute sites since 2018.

HIDVAs are based at the hospital sites and raise awareness of domestic abuse, providing specialist support to staff and patients around disclosures of domestic abuse. The hospital IDVA services have found that health-based support will often identify survivors who are otherwise missed by services such as the older population and men, offering people the chance to engage and receive specialist support. The Integrated Care Board have achieved further funding to provide this service across Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust acute sites.

To recognise the significant impact of domestic abuse on a person's mental health, Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust (KMPT) have appointed a Health IDVA. The HIDVA works with KMPT healthcare staff and patients to improve the identification of domestic violence and abuse, and make sure people are referred to the right support. This has been supported by funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Opportunities for improvement

There are a number of areas of work linked to prevention and early intervention which we would like to continue to focus on as we move into the development of the next iteration of the strategy. This includes:

- continuing to work to improve content and the promotion of uptake of more consistent domestic abuse curriculum content as part of relationship and sex education,
- ensure that all relevant people especially schools are aware of resources available,
- work to closely align Operation Encompass with the midwifery service,
- explore ways to promote learning and development on issues of complexity - particularly intersections between mental capacity, coercive control behaviour and vulnerability,
- and continuing the work on understanding trauma reactions and how these impact practice and practical ways to apply learning.



3

Provision of services

Priority 3 Provision of community and safe accommodation services

This priority recognises people’s experiences of domestic abuse as individual and that people will need different types of support and solutions based on their experiences. Support must be holistic, trauma informed and with an awareness that healing can be complex and take time.

Commitments identified within the 2020 – 2023 strategy include:

- working together to ensure staff understand the landscape of provision, using and referring to services effectively,
- ensuring we use an evidence-based approach to commission services,
- building on trauma informed approaches to support individuals and families.

Referral pathways

Domestic abuse is prolific and impacts many of the services delivered by partner organisations. Because domestic abuse is linked to many other areas of business, commissioning happens across different partnerships and agencies.

The Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) and the Medway Domestic Abuse Service (MDAS) has greatly increased coordinated delivery.

Comprehensive Domestic Abuse Services

Kent

The Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) was commissioned in April 2017. This contract is supported by Kent County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Thanet District Council, Dover District Council, Swale Borough Council, Canterbury City Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Folkestone and Hythe District Council, Ashford Borough Council and Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

This service covers both safe accommodation and community-based support. The service includes;

- a single county wide point of access, creating dedicated referral, triage and response pathway for people affected by domestic abuse,
- creating clear pathways of support which can be stepped up and down,
- specialist support delivered across a variety of accommodation settings and in the community,
- qualified Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA).

- training provided to professionals, those impacted by abuse, and communities around domestic abuse to educate and raise awareness.

Medway

In 2019 budgets were pooled from Housing, Children’s Services, Public Health and Medway NHS Clinical Commissioning Group to commission an integrated domestic abuse service in Medway (MDAS).

The contract offered support for medium and high-risk victims and survivors in Medway for the first time (previously only high-risk clients had access to support).

MDAS works with children and adults who have experienced abuse, offering educational services including workshops to young people and professionals, support services for those experiencing abuse and project and programme work.

3. Provision of services continued

The partnership structure has greatly supported information sharing between commissioners. Monthly meetings are being held between the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, Kent County Council and Medway Council to share commissioned service information. The Domestic Abuse Coordinator and Domestic Abuse Forum Chairs meetings offer opportunities to share information across local and countywide spaces.

Childrens Commissioning within KCC have brought together and are maintaining a directory of services offered to young people impacted by abuse. This is being made available to Early Help and social workers.

Evidence led commissioning

Our approach to strategy, commissioning and service provision is evidence led and based on findings from our needs assessments.

The Kent Domestic Abuse Research programme collates and triangulates research to provide evidence to decision-makers across the full range of organisations represented by the cross-agency domestic abuse partnership. This includes literature reviews, qualitative and quantitative projects and bringing together data and other information across the partnership.

Two learning events have been hosted by the partnership to support shared learning and development.

The first event focused on understanding the narratives and experiences of children and young people impacted by domestic abuse, and the second focused on life threatening illness and domestic abuse.

Both events have been attended by organisations across the partnership, supporting organisational learning and the sharing of experience across sectors.

Medway Public Health conducted focus groups on healthy relationships and support needs with primary, secondary and college students.

The feedback has been included in the Medway Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment and will inform commissioning decisions. Medway's Survivor Voice Group has collated feedback directly from the voluntary sector via the One Stop Shop, Refuges and Advisory Groups, which are fed into the Local Partnership Board, and needs assessment.

Building on trauma informed approaches to support individuals and families

Trauma informed practice supports practitioners to respond effectively to the different ways trauma

can impact a person. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Ambassador programme (Kent) launched in May 2022. Ambassadors support practitioners by working with them to build knowledge, to help develop initiatives to reduce the impact of ACEs and seek to support a trauma informed approach to care. As of March 2023, over 300 people had completed the programme of training.

The Police and Crime Commissioner has commissioned services to upskill professionals to deliver the Healing Together programme which is a trauma informed programme for children aged 6-16 years old who are impacted by domestic abuse. The majority of professionals trained have been from educational establishments.

The Police and Crime Commissioner has also funded a Young Women's Trauma Informed Mentor, and Children & Young People Trauma Informed Worker. One-to-one psychoeducational mentoring and emotional support is available for young women and girls aged 16-24 years who have experienced, are at risk of, or are currently experiencing domestic abuse within their intimate relationships.

The Police and Crime Commissioner has also commissioned trauma focussed therapeutic services for children impacted by physical and emotional abuse, sexual abuse or domestic abuse.

3. Provision of services continued

Farm based activities provide children and their family members with a quiet and peaceful setting to visit during their recovery.

Medway refuges, have trauma informed counselling for adults and play therapy sessions for children and young people. Due to feedback from the Survivor Voice Group work, additional provision has been commissioned to expand this service, and it has now been commissioned to provide support to clients within the dispersed accommodation scheme in Medway.

Provision of services, safe accommodation

In response to the Domestic Abuse Act, the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Executive Group added an addition to the original strategy, this was published in January 2022. The addition focussed on safe accommodation services.

Housing options, flexibility and access

Journey mapping

In wanting to take a trauma-aware approach to the housing journey for those impacted by domestic abuse, Maidstone Borough Council overhauled the previous housing operational mechanism.

Maidstone Borough Council were aware that the housing process for people who have experienced domestic abuse could be difficult to navigate and

wanted to improve the language and system being used to support equity, empathy, and to be trauma informed.

The system itself changed to include safe enquiry as the first priority. Maidstone Borough Council also eliminated several steps when someone discloses abuse before they receive an assessment. This change sought to reduce the need for a survivor to re-tell their circumstances and to reduce the risk of re-traumatisation. Maidstone Borough Council created a visual flowchart to share with both those who have experienced abuse and professionals to support understanding of processes.

Maidstone Borough Council have committed to work with Kent Police in sourcing temporary accommodation for those using abusive behaviours who have been issued a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) to reduce rates of further domestic abuse and prevent them returning to the property.

Tenancy Support

Tenancy support Officers have been recruited as part of the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Services (KIDAS) contract. These posts support those in safe accommodation to find permanent housing, and also support clients to maintain their tenancies if this is their chosen outcome. The officers act as a broker with other agencies such as landlords in both the private and public sector.



3. Provision of services continued

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation

The Domestic Abuse Coordinators group includes representation from all District, Borough and City Councils, Kent County Council and Medway Council. This group is working to create a local network of support to strengthen housing responses through collectively working towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation.

Working collaboratively across areas this work will be pioneering as the group works together to share progress, resources and best practice to strengthen responses.



Swale Borough Council support DAHA and are working to improve the housing response to domestic abuse. They have signed up for membership and finished their self-assessment and will now be looking at changes to be made to improve services.

Training has been revised and Swale Borough Council will be rolling out refreshers on trauma informed practice, non-judgemental language and risk assessment. The training incorporates input

from 'by and for' services available locally to deliver inputs to staff.

Staying Close By:

Safe Access for Eligible Residents (SAFER), KCC

SAFER is a scheme which has been developed by Kent County Council (KCC) with engagement from all partner agencies and those with lived experience of domestic abuse. The contract is due to be procured and in place by 1st October 2023.

The scheme looks to extend the availability of sanctuary services within Kent (additional security within a home) and the availability of support for those residing in properties where sanctuary has been applied.

A countywide single point of access will receive the referral and notify the organisation/s responsible for delivering the property security element who will conduct a property assessment and install the



required security measures. A support package for the adult survivor will also be offered. Support for children residing in the home will be offered through the Safe Accommodation Support Service (SASS).

Safe Accommodation Support Service (SASS), KCC

A support service has been designed and procured for children living in safe accommodation. This service has been developed through survivor engagement and co-production.

The service supports access to group, one-to-one and peer support, and (based on feedback) has extended the length of provision available for therapeutic support for young people.

Feedback recommended training and development of the wider workforce in relation to supporting children and young people and this has been incorporated in SASS which will support the development of knowledge and skills of our inhouse Integrated Childrens Service.

Safe in Medway

Medway has the dispersed accommodation offer which is known as Safe in Medway (SiM). Within this project is the family practitioner who provides support for young people and families, with accessing schools and general well-being. Medway also commissions counselling and play therapy to children within their refuge accommodation. This offer has recently been extended to include SiM.

3. Provision of services continued

Kent Fire and Rescue Service supporting more people affected by abuse:

Kent Fire and Rescue Service have been developing their policies to ensure people experiencing abuse are consistently supported to stay safe, this includes staff experiencing domestic abuse, ensuring that where threats of arson are made against a person impacted by abuse everyone in the house is supported including children.

There has also been an increase in the Out of Hours Team to ensure that all safeguarding concerns can be acted on, no matter what time they come in, ensuring that people impacted by domestic abuse can get the right safety support 24/7. These changes are backed by an increased level of training across teams.

Homelessness and recognising multiple need

The Blue Light Project

In Medway, there is the Blue Light Project, which is formed of professionals such as mental health services, probation, rough-sleepers initiative, substance misuse services and the core domestic abuse support provider. The project aims to discuss cases where the clients are facing multiple-disadvantage and can struggle to have meaningful engagement with services, many of whom are street homeless.

The reciprocal agreement

Kent and Medway Councils, District, City and Borough Councils, Kent Housing Group and the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA), have established a Kent and Medway wide domestic abuse reciprocal scheme.

The managed reciprocal scheme will enable individuals and families at risk of domestic abuse and who have a social tenancy, to move to a safe area whilst retaining their tenancy, aiming to make it faster and easier for people to find properties while retaining the benefits of their current tenancy.

The scheme is a formal collaboration between social housing landlords. Benefits include supporting increased housing options for people experiencing abuse, providing a supportive framework to both people impacted by abuse and social landlords, and making the best use of housing stock across Kent and Medway.

Access of services to all

Our protected characteristics such as our ethnicity, gender, sexuality and age can impact our risk of domestic abuse. Our demography may also influence the forms that abuse might take. 'By and for' services can offer specialist support, holding understanding of experience, and of power dynamics within and outside the domestic space and how this may impact abuse.

The Police and Crime Commissioner has commissioned a dedicated male Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service and a support service providing British Sign Language for Deaf people impacted by domestic abuse and sexual violence. There is also a child and young persons' advocate providing support for 8 -18-year-olds county-wide.

Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) have worked with the KCC Sensory Services team to help improve access for Deaf people experiencing abuse. The working group has implemented access to a video relay service, for all the teams to enable effective communication with Deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first or preferred method of communication and voice-over relay.

Posters, websites and social media comms have been created to highlight and reflect the use of SignLive to spread the word so that Deaf people can access services and support.

The Police and Crime Commissioner has also commissioned a mentoring support service for men affected by emotional, financial and domestic abuse. This service includes some support for children and young people.

Kent County Council is currently developing a training offer to domestic and sexual abuse service providers, in supporting people who face additional barriers and vulnerabilities. This training will support knowledge and skills to aid those supporting people who may have mental health support needs or be impacted by substance dependencies.

Medway 'We Hear You' (W.H.Y) is a project which has been set up by those with lived experience of substance misuse. The service also includes those with lived experience of various types of trauma including domestic abuse, and is working to represent the voice of service users and bridge gaps between support services. Medway Council is linking in with the project to ensure that the work being carried out by W.H.Y is forming part of the Survivor Feedback Group and feeding into the domestic abuse Local Partnership Board.

Kent and Medway Councils are currently scoping work to expand support of 'by and for' service provision.



Opportunities for improvement

There are a number of areas of work linked to the provision of services which we would like to continue to focus on as we move into the development of the next iteration of the strategy. This includes:

- further collaborative, needs led, work by commissioners across the market of by and for services,
- building additional support mechanisms for those with barriers to access such as drug or alcohol dependencies or mental health support needs, and those who may be unable to access refuge due to high level needs.

4

Minimising harm

Priority 4 Minimising harm

This priority is about supporting positive outcomes and promoting equality of access for anyone who experiences domestic abuse.

This outcome recognises the longer-term impact of domestic abuse and the importance of working collaboratively to support people in their recovery.

Commitments identified within the 2020 – 2023 strategy include:

- recognising that domestic abuse may impact children, young people and the whole family in the longer term,
- understanding that for many children and young people the experience of managing parental conflict can be traumatic and difficult,
- working to increase understanding of abuse that happens in family relationships so that victims & survivors of adult family violence and 'honour' based violence are identified and supported,
- local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) will be used effectively to reduce repeat victimisation.

Understanding longer term impacts

Research was commissioned by KCC to better understand the impact of abuse on children, young people and the whole family, and to understand what children and young people view as good interventions.

Themes that came out strongly included:

- the importance of having someone trusted to talk to,
- young people wanted to make sure that the non-abusive parent had access to support, they also talked about having support together as a family,
- the importance of having friends or peers who may have had similar experiences and therefore a better understanding your experience,
- the importance of schools in supporting an understanding of healthy relationships.

For young people experiencing abuse the Young Person's Independent Domestic Violence Advisor service helps people aged between 16 and 25. This service aims to support young people to stay safe and process experiences as well as helping with practical aspects such as employment and housing.

The Police and Crime Commissioner has commissioned online therapeutic counselling support for children, young people and where appropriate their parents and families. Case studies have shown that clients with complex needs feel overwhelmed and emotional at the start of their

counselling journey, but at the end are better able to cope with life and show improvements in their mental health.

'Honour-based' violence

Kent and Medway was the 9th highest Police Force Area for residents contacting Karma Nirvana, the specialist 'honour-based' abuse organisation helpline in 2020/21.

For the day of memory for those lost to 'honour-based' abuse, a campaign led by Karma Nirvana, created social media posts for partners to share to help spread awareness.

The Know, See, Speak Out Domestic Abuse awareness campaign created social media posts for partners to share. There was also a new page created for the Kent & Medway Domestic Abuse website to help people to identify 'honour-based' abuse and reach out for help.

Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) providers have commissioned training for staff from Southall Black Sisters to further develop their awareness, knowledge and support to those impacted by this form of abuse.

The Kent Community Safety Team also held lessons learnt seminars after Domestic Homicide Reviews, with Independent Chairs, agency representatives, expert and bereaved family speakers.

4. Minimising harm continued

The final webinar of 2022 was themed around cultural competency and focussed on the DHRs of Simran and Tamana, both of which highlighted learning in relation to 'honour-based' violence. All webinars were recorded, edited and made available on the Safer Communities Portal.

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

Kent Council Council (KCC) have been leading on work to better understand options for support for those experiencing domestic abuse who have No Recourse to Public Funds. Working across the partnership, we have pulled together information around experience and how professionals may be able to support this group.

This included talking to our frontline professionals, exploring internal and external training offers, discourse across our voluntary sector partners, working with other local authorities through our regional group and seeking ways to develop the work.

We have presented this work in various partnership forums, with plans to support a cross partnership workshop and training development.

Local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)

MARAC is a safeguarding forum to discuss how to help people experiencing domestic abuse at high

risk of murder or serious harm. A series of reviews had shown that the MARAC system in Kent & Medway needed additional resource to help professionals effectively support those who need it most.

Steering and working groups brought together professionals from across the county, with a breadth of safeguarding expertise, to address the issues and enable in-depth risk management.

The MARAC review has resulted in a new hub model which is partnership funded, doubling the coordinating staff available to fulfil this crucial function, with new technology creating more efficient information sharing and action planning.

Due to launch this year (2023) the new model should deliver innovative ways to reduce the risk posed by people using abuse to gain power and control.

Highlighting the link between domestic abuse and suicide

Following discussions with the KCC Community Safety team, the Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention Programme worked with Kent Police to show that 30% of all suicides in Kent and Medway between 2019 & 2021 were impacted by domestic abuse. This work has been nationally recognised and continues to shape national discussions.

The work of the Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention programme has supported:

- inclusion of domestic abuse as a priority within our local Suicide Prevention Strategy,
- funded local partner pilots into trauma impact workshops for people who have experienced domestic abuse where the abuse has stopped,
- investment in qualitative research with those who have been impacted by domestic abuse, who have previously attempted suicide or have self-harmed,
- funding for six community level projects with a specific focus on reducing the risk of domestic abuse related suicides,
- targeted local mental health campaigns.

The Kent & Medway Suicide Prevention Team have also commissioned domestic abuse & suicide prevention training.

This was developed in October 2022, test run and is now being rolled out for free across all Kent & Medway partnerships. The aim of this training is to highlight risk and protective factors related to suicide and domestic abuse, navigate emotionally sensitive conversations and to assess and de-escalate risk.

The Police and Crime Commissioner have commissioned a specialist 1:1 advocacy service and peer support for families who have been bereaved by suicide or unexplained death following domestic abuse.

4. Minimising harm continued

Opportunities for improvement

There are a number of areas of work linked to minimising harm which we would like to continue to focus on as we move into the development of the next iteration of the strategy. This includes to:

- promote access to mental health support that is trauma informed,
- recognising the importance of strengthening the relationship between the non-abusive parent/caregiver and child by giving them spaces to discuss their experiences and tools to grow together,
- acknowledging the non-linear process of recovery, enabling, where possible support to be accessed longer term and for historic cases of abuse.





Priority 5 Justice, recovery and ongoing protection

This priority focuses on reducing the impact of domestic abuse on the family and reducing the likelihood of future incidents, whether through pursuing those showing abusive behaviours through the criminal justice system, via civil outcomes, through working with families to change behaviour or through rehabilitation.

Our commitments included:

- working with partners to support assessment of the criminal justice response to current, new and emerging issues in relation to the protection of people who have experienced abuse,
- all agencies working together to ensure that there is a robust approach to those showing abusive behaviours,
- accessible information about protection orders, disclosure schemes and what people who have experienced abuse can expect from the criminal justice system.

Kent Police Domestic Abuse Hub

The Domestic Abuse Hub was launched in May 2022, and provides innovative support for those being impacted by abuse via technology. This enables people to immediately speak with an officer via video, allowing for fast-time crime recording, statement taking and capture of evidence including the scene of the incident and any visible injuries.

The Hub will contact people reporting standard risk domestic abuse where it is recent and the person using abusive behaviour is not at the scene using rapid video response. This is recorded and can then be used as the first account, to formulate a statement to save the person retelling their story and to evidence fear and emotional impact where it would be appropriate to consider an evidence led prosecution.

By having instant contact with the person experiencing abuse an officer can also implement immediate safeguarding and referrals to partner agencies to provide protection to people, where needed.

The Police and Crime Commissioner led a detailed analysis of Kent Police offender data to build a perpetrator profile in Kent. This found that 10% of offenders are responsible for 63% of harm.

The Multi Agency Tasking and Coordination Panels (MATACs) are a multiagency panel managing the highest harm repeat perpetrators of domestic abuse. The Panel brings together agencies to produce an action plan bespoke to each offender.

These include education, prevention, diversion, disruption and enforcement tactics. Perpetrators are contacted and told that they are a priority offender, to explain the seriousness of their offending and determine whether they will engage in the MATAC process. The approach is designed to get to the root of the problem - to challenge offender behaviour and either influence behavioural change or engage in disruption and enforcement.

This system has resulted in a 65% average reduction in all offending after MATAC intervention and a 63% reduction in domestic abuse offending.

Preventing unwanted contact from prisoners

To stop unwanted contact while a person is in prison and protect those being impacted by abuse, a new Victims' Helpline has been set up to prevent unwanted contact.

5. Justice, recovery and ongoing protection continued

This Justice Department project is especially important if the person impacted by abuse is subject to controlling, coercive behaviour, exploitation, harassment or intimidation. Preventing contact is critical in stopping further harm, maintaining confidence and supporting prosecutions.

A robust approach to those showing abusive behaviours

In 2021 the Home Office made funding available to Police and Crime Commissioners to support the delivery of domestic abuse perpetrator focussed programmes. A pilot programme was successfully secured for the delivery of both domestic and stalking perpetrator programmes in Kent & Medway, alongside support for those impacted by abuse and their children. Programmes are delivered in both one to one and group settings.

The programme focuses on building an individuals' skills to cope with challenging situations, overwhelming feelings, and difficult emotions. The work is strengths based, drawing on the perpetrators (non-abusive) strengths to develop changes, whilst robustly holding them to account for their abusive behaviour. A dedicated Victims Link Worker works in conjunction with Kent Police, and existing victim support services.

Local access to programmes to reduce abusive behaviours

Domestic Abuse Forums and Community Safety Partnerships have ensured that residents of Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, Swale, Medway, Folkestone & Hythe and Ashford are able to access a 27-week programme designed to help those who acknowledge that their behaviour to their partner has been, or is still, abusive. The programme seeks to support respectful relationships between partners or ex-partners and any children who may be witnessing abuse.

Domestic abuse training for family lawyers

Invicta Law and Kent County Council (KCC) were successful in their bid to host a Safe Lives pilot training programme for those working in Family Law. This specialist training spanned the whole family justice system, delivering a cultural-change training programme to create systemic transformations within the family justice system and strengthen practitioner capacity to respond well to domestic abuse.

Three training sessions were delivered to staff across a number of organisations. There was significant appetite for further training, information and networking with local services.



5. Justice, recovery and ongoing protection continued

In response Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS), Medway Domestic Abuse Service (MDAS) & Invicta Law have been collaborating to design a further session to explore the use of court as a tactic of abuse, avoiding victim blaming language, using safety planning and the orders available to protect those affected by abuse.

In addition, it has been identified that those who are affected by domestic abuse are often facing court without legal representation or with no eligibility for legal aid. A legal support project has been developed by KCC and KIDAS to provide legal support and advice to assist people impacted by abuse through court processes.

The Police and Crime Commissioner has commissioned a legal advice service for those impacted by domestic abuse. This service supports documentation for special measures in court, non-molestation orders and child related orders. The providers have their own legal team consisting of experienced, qualified, and fully regulated barristers and solicitors.

Integrating Research into Practice

To support social work staff confidence and knowledge around domestic abuse in family court, a workshop was run on the ways the court needs to protect the safety and wellbeing of both children affected by abuse and their non-abusive parents, as well as how The Children and Family

Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass) and social workers have an important role to play in assisting the court to do so.

This formed part of Integrated Children's Services 2021's Communities of Practice spotlight on domestic abuse. This included workshops on local services, typologies of abuse, domestic abuse and suicide, assessment tools as well as providing a reflective space for staff.

Coming together to tackle abusive behaviour The Reducing Abusive Behaviour Group helps to coordinate the approaches to tackling abusive behaviour across Kent and Medway and to promote a greater focus on holding the individual causing harm to account and changing their behaviour.

As part of this work the group has explored ways to increase the confidence of organisations to respond to people using abusive behaviour. Tools being developed to achieve this include template policies, designed to be used and adapted to help a range of organisations to respond appropriately to clients and staff members who may be causing harm through their behaviour.

To ensure clear information is available to help people navigate the criminal justice process the Police and Crime Commissioner has created an easy-to-use Victim Voice guide to support confidence in reporting crimes.

This process aims to enable the individual to access the information and support they need and are legally entitled to. The guide takes people through each stage of the criminal justice system - from how to report a crime, the protective orders available to what happens if the case goes to court.

Opportunities for Improvement

There are a number of areas of work linked to justice, recovery and ongoing protection which we would like to continue to focus on as we move into the development of the next iteration of the strategy. This includes:

- pressure on court systems has led to long lags in between charge and prosecution, strategies should seek to increase the capacity within the system and keep people informed of progress against their case,
- currently only a small proportion of those using abusive behaviour are accessing support services or being heard at Multi Agency Tasking and Coordination Panels (MATAC),
- Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders will come into force, strategies should encourage uptake.

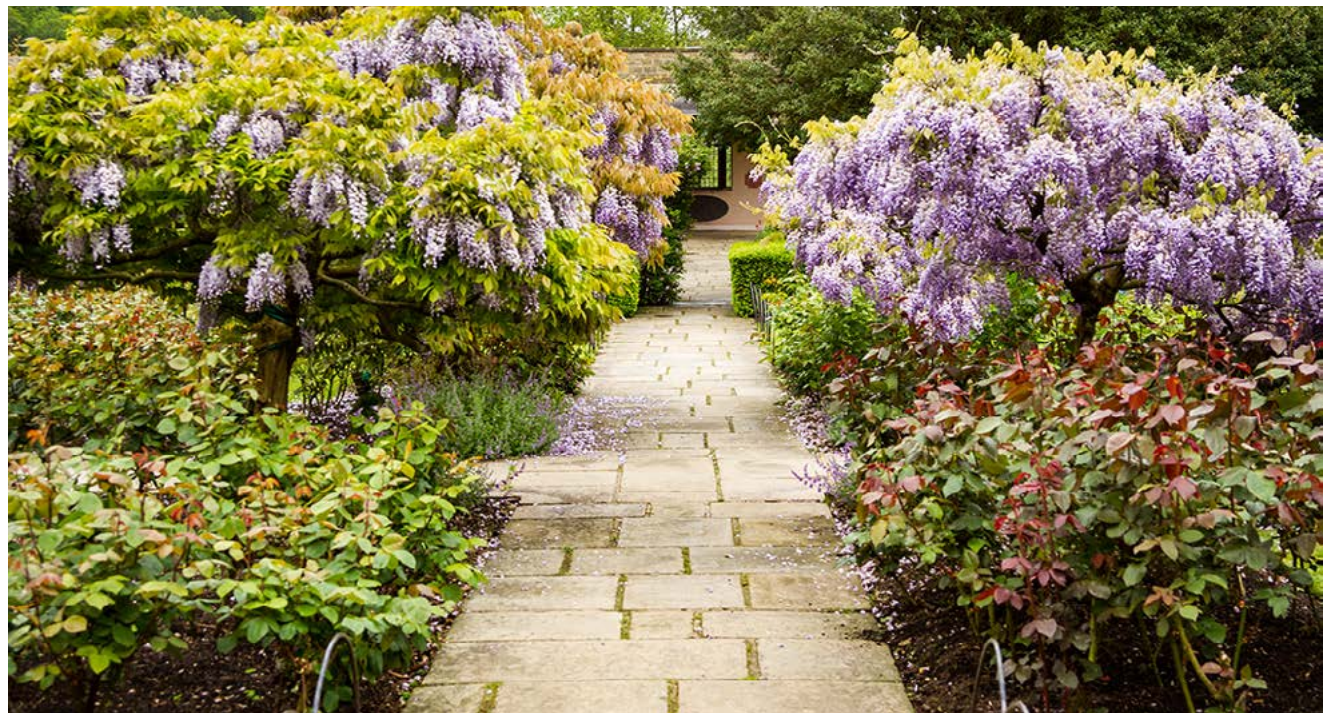
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Conclusion

Across the partnership significant work has taken place over the three-year life of the strategy. Many areas of work have been significantly pushed forward, with collaborative working supporting stronger project development, better links between services and ultimately a stronger response.

The strategy and many of the commitments set within it were rightly challenging goals. We must be visionary and continue to push boundaries to support change.

This document explores the progress which we have made, but has also identified opportunities for improvement, and, as we develop our new strategy we will seek to integrate these learnings, working to understand how we can do better, seeking to continue to push work forward which will lead to meeting our aim; *to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse, and ensure that where domestic abuse takes place, all those affected get the right support, quickly.*



Useful links

Domestic Abuse: It's Everybody's Business (2020)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiiBcbpVr7s&list=PLphMV3M-GI_R8xpBrrS-OmwlszEyGNWcU

Domestic Abuse Support Services in Kent and Medway

<https://local.kent.gov.uk/kb5/kent/directory/service.page?id=Kf8cT9ubi50>

Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment (2020) Domestic abuse – Kent Public Health Observatory (kpho.org.uk)

The Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy (2020) - Domestic-abuse-strategy-2020-2023.pdf (kent.gov.uk)

Office of Police Crime Commissioner Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (2021) Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy 2021 to 2024: call for evidence – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Office of Police Crime Commissioner, Violence Against Women and Girls Report (2021) – vawg-paper_september-2021.pdf (kent-pcc.gov.uk)

Office of Police and Crime Commissioner, The Victim Voice guide is available here <https://www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/what-we-do/projects-and-campaigns/victim-voice/>

Kent Community Safety Agreement (2022) [Kent Community Safety Agreement April 2022](https://www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/what-we-do/projects-and-campaigns/victim-voice/)

Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust, Relationship and sex education | Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust (kentcht.nhs.uk)

Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Website <https://www.domesticabuseservices.org.uk>

Kent Adult Carers Strategy (2022) Appendix B – Adult Carers Strategy Engagement and Consultation Outcome Report March 2022.pdf (kent.gov.uk)

Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board Kent & Medway SAB website (kmsab.org.uk)

Kent Safeguarding Children Multiagency Partnership Home – Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (kscmp.org.uk)

Kent Practice Framework kcc-practice-framework.pdf (proceduresonline.com)

Medway safeguarding Children Partnership Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (medwayscp.org.uk)

Safeguarding Adults at Risk: Financial abuse tool kit Financial-abuse-toolkit.pdf (kent.gov.uk)

Further information

For further information about any aspect of this progress report please contact:

Kent County Council

Strategy, Policy and Relationships

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Alternative formats

If you require this strategy in an alternative format or language please email alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk