

A photograph of a sunlit forest with large trees and a grassy field. The sun is shining brightly through the trees, creating a warm, golden glow. The trees are large and leafy, and the grass in the foreground is tall and green.

# Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy 2020 – 2023

---

# Accessing support

---

This is a strategy document about how we want to develop and improve our services over the next 3 years.

If you need support **now** this can be accessed by telephoning Victim Support on 0808 168 9276, or visiting <http://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.

## Contents

1 Foreword.....	04
2 Introduction .....	05
3 Definition of domestic abuse .....	06
4 Strategy at a glance .....	07
5 What do we know? .....	08
6 National policy and legal context .....	11
7 Our strategic priorities .....	13
8 Achieving our objectives – how we’ll deliver.....	23

## In partnership with and supported by





# Foreword



Over 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.

**Peter Ayling**

Chair of Executive

Assistant Chief Constable, Kent Police

1. Office for National Statistics, 'Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2019' [www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabuseprevalenceandtrendsendlandandwales/yearendingmarch2019](http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabuseprevalenceandtrendsendlandandwales/yearendingmarch2019)

2. This figure excludes children witnessing abuse



---

# 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 **reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse, and ensure that where domestic abuse takes place, all those affected get the right support, quickly.**

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.

## **The Strategic Assessment and our Action Plan**

This strategy is accompanied by a strategic assessment and joint action plan. The strategic assessment brings our data together in one place and helps us understand what is working well in Kent and Medway and what needs to be improved. Bringing together information from across our Partnership is vital as it enables us to see the 'whole picture' in relation to provision of services and to identify any gaps.

The strategic assessment will be updated annually to a rolling timetable, and will be used to inform our commissioning and action planning.

Our joint action plan brings together the actions which need to be completed to implement this strategy. This action plan will be overseen by the Executive Board who have the responsibility of ensuring progress. The plan is a 'live' document which will be updated regularly.



## Definition of domestic abuse

### Domestic abuse includes:

physical or sexual abuse

violent or threatening behaviour

controlling or coercive behaviour, such as threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten, or acts designed to make a person feel subordinate, dependent or isolated<sup>3</sup>

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

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 family members over the age of 16.

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 involve children under 16<sup>4</sup>.

**Honour-based abuse, violence and forced marriage are forms of domestic abuse. This includes female genital mutilation (FGM) and breast ironing. Under-reporting of this type of hidden crime remains an issue. Victims are often very reluctant to criminalise their families who may be the perpetrators. Successful outcomes may not always be criminal convictions but may exist in protective civil orders, for example FM/FGM protection orders or other safeguarding measures. The risks associated with these offences are often considerable.**

3. Crown Prosecution Service 'Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship' <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/controlling-or-coercive-behaviour-intimate-or-family-relationship>

4. 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)



# Strategy at a glance

Our overall aim is to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse, and ensure that where domestic abuse takes place, all those affected get the right support, quickly.

We have identified 5 key priorities





## 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**

**2.3 years**

**and medium risk victims for**

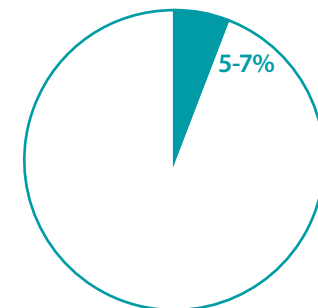
**3 years**

**before getting help<sup>5</sup>. On average victims experience 50 incidents of abuse before getting help<sup>6,7</sup>**

An estimated **2.4 million**

**adults aged 16-74 have experienced domestic abuse within the last year. This is a prevalence rate of around 5-7% of 100 adults<sup>8</sup>.**

Experience of domestic abuse in adults aged 16-74



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

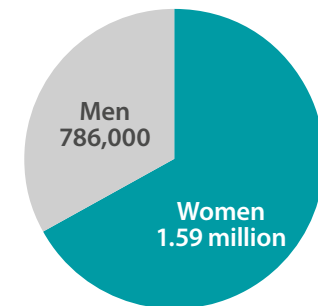
**1.59 million**

Experience of domestic abuse

women

**786,000**

men



<sup>5</sup>86. SafeLives (2015), Insights Idva National Dataset 2013-14. Bristol: SafeLives

<sup>7</sup> Walby, S. and Allen, J. (2004), Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey. London: Home Office

<sup>8</sup> Office for National Statistics, Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics - Appendix tables <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/domesticabuseprevalenceandvictimcharacteristicsappendixtables>



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>9</sup>.



2.5%  
LGBTQ+

SafeLives estimates that LGBTQ+ men and women are often under-represented in statistics and highlights that currently 2.5% of people accessing support from domestic abuse services identified as LGBTQ+ survivors<sup>10</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>11</sup>.

Bisexual women are nearly twice as likely to have experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months than heterosexual women (10.9% compared with 6.0%)<sup>12</sup>.

Nationally



report being victims of abuse compared with



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

Women who identify as mixed/multiple ethnicities were more likely to have experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months (10.1%) than any other ethnic group.

The 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>15</sup>.



Most defendants in domestic abuse-related prosecutions are men (92% year ending March 2017<sup>16</sup>).

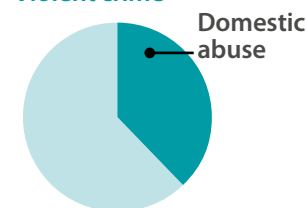
Statistics from Kent and Medway<sup>17</sup>



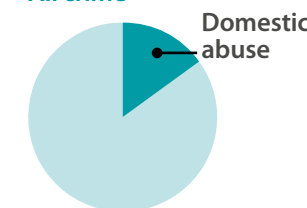
In 2017 26,149 incidents of domestic abuse were recorded by the Police in Kent and Medway.

Current trends show that 38% of all violent crime is categorised as domestic abuse and domestic abuse makes up 15% of all crime<sup>18</sup>.

Violent crime



All crime



9. 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.

10. 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>

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

12. Office for National Statistics (2018) 'Women most at risk of experiencing partner abuse in England and Wales: years ending March 2015 to 2017' <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/womenmostatriskofexperiencingpartnerabuseinenglandandwales/yearsendingmarch2015to2017>

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

14. Ref ONS, women most at risk of experiencing partner abuse in England and Wales, 2015-2017.

15. 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.

16 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>

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

18. 2017 data

5. What do we know? continued

Domestic abuse is recorded both with rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) and also non RASSO domestic abuse. Domestic abuse RASSO reports have increased by around 53% between 2016 and 2017<sup>19</sup>

Women are much more likely to report domestic abuse and serious sexual offences in Kent and Medway than men with a ratio of 3:1

...however more men are reporting abuse than in the past: in 2013 16% of reports came from men, in 2017 this had gone up to 25%. For domestic abuse which is with RASSO 95% of people reporting abuse are female.

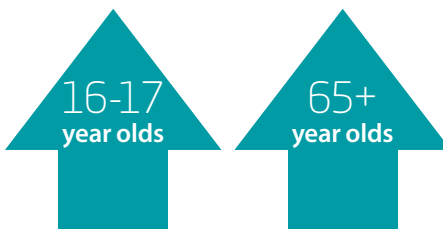
The age group most represented by those reporting and perpetrating abuse is between

25-34

Over the past

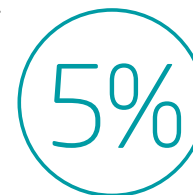
5 years

the perpetrator age groups which has seen the greatest proportional increase is the 16-17<sup>20</sup> and 65+ age groups, however these groups still remain the least represented<sup>21</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.

Reporting of domestic abuse within same sex relationships remains low at 2% (1% male/male and 1% female/female)



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>22</sup>.

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

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

21. From the Strategic Assessment

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



## 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 as increasing the focusing 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>23</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>24</sup>. This statement recognises the significant number of men and boys who experience domestic abuse and barriers to accessing support.

In October 2019 the government confirmed a number of statutory responsibilities for local authorities linked to provision of accommodation which will be included within new Domestic Abuse legislation. At the time of the publication of this strategy the Domestic Abuse Bill was moving through Parliament. The legislation includes a focus on greater consistency of provision over areas and increased support for survivors moving through the criminal justice system.

### 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 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>25</sup>.
- the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 makes stalking and linked to this, harassment an offence<sup>26</sup>.

23. 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)

24. 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)

25. Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/28/contents>

26. 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>27</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>28</sup>.

### 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>29</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>30</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.



27. 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>

28. 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)

29. 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/>

30. 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 reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse, and ensure that where domestic abuse takes place, all those affected get the right support, quickly.

### 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
- Ensuring provision is person-centred, and driven by the needs of survivors
- 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's and adults' services
- Being responsive to the longer term effects of DA
- Developing our service provision based on best practice 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.

1

**Drive change together**

## 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>31</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 in a Strategic Assessment. This information-sharing will work to strengthen our understanding around under-reporting and 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.** 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.

**5.** Staff and volunteers will have a strong understanding of appropriate responses and pathways including referrals and interventions. 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.

**6.** 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.

<sup>31</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, focusing on education and prevention.

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.



2

Prevention  
and early  
intervention

## 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 and volunteers 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 and where possible, volunteers 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, honour based abuse and violence, 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 individuals at risk, 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 in some cases, families wish to stay together and we will work with families to support informed decisions including this option if it is the family's choice and 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. 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.
3. 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.
4. We will work with our safeguarding teams to support early identification of abuse of adults including those with learning disabilities and recognising instances of elder abuse, working in accordance with the Kent and Medway safeguarding protocols.



## 2. Prevention and early intervention continued

### 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

Children and Young People that have been impacted by Domestic Abuse can be supported in schools. Operation Encompass is a national initiative which aims to support children affected by domestic abuse. This work is currently being rolled out across Kent and Medway.

Operation Encompass works to make sure that where a child or a young person has been exposed to an incident of domestic abuse a key adult member of school staff will be notified so support can be provided.

The Government's new mental health support teams will work with schools to improve their emotional wellbeing and mental health offer. Domestic Abuse partners across Kent and Medway will work to ensure these initiatives are successful.

### Using data to understand risk

Kent Police are working with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Medway Council, Health, Cambridge University and a data analytics company to pilot an innovative and preventative project to reduce domestic abuse.

Some 15 years of detailed domestic abuse crime data has been analysed and will be used to develop a predictive software tool which will assess the likelihood of a perpetrator reoffending within 12 months, and the severity of offending. The intention is to identify that relatively small group of individuals who are likely to re-offend (but not likely to be dangerously violent), and are thus most likely to change their behaviour through attending a perpetrator programme. Whilst the algorithms will be based on the historic data, the software will continue to build upon the new data that is being fed in and so can continue to be improved and refined.

If the pilot is successful, it will be rolled out across the county. It will not be used in any way to determine whether or not someone is charged with an offence, or as any part of the criminal justice process, but only in targeting access to perpetrator programmes and support.

3

**Provision  
of services**

## 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, couple and whole family interventions and criminal justice 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, volunteers, 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>32</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. Commissioners will ensure a strong use of evidence within their commissioning and decommissioning processes. An agreed multi-agency and joint commissioning approach will be developed and utilised to inform the commissioning and provision of domestic abuse services.
2. All partners will work together to ensure staff and volunteers understand the landscape of domestic abuse 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. This will also include understanding available housing provision and referral thresholds.

3. 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.

4. Commission across the partnership to meet 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.

5. 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.

6. We will ensure all front line 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.

<sup>32</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)

### 3. Provision of services continued

7. 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 linking with the Strategic Assessment.

8. 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>33</sup>.

#### Support for male victims

A charity commissioned through the partnership and focused on supporting men with children has found that 32% of their caseload in March 2019 disclosed experiencing domestic abuse, a further 20% were not sure if they had experienced abuse.

The charity works through support groups, victim support and 1:1 mentoring to support survivors<sup>34</sup>.

33. 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>

34. Dads unlimited dashboard (March 2019), main website available on <https://www.dadsunltd.org.uk/>

4

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. 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.
6. 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.

The Kent Integrated Service provides support to survivors of domestic abuse, in coping with the immediate aftermath of abuse, and empowering them to recover from the long-term effects of that abuse.

Through partnership working with organisations such as the Police, local housing authorities, social services and charities, individuals will be supported to achieve positive outcomes in areas such as;

- mental and physical health and wellbeing
- shelter and Accommodation
- family, friends and children
- education, skills and employment
- drugs and alcohol
- finances and benefits
- outlook and attitudes
- social interactions.

5

**Justice,  
recovery  
and ongoing  
protection**

## 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 lobbying for appropriate and effective use of sentencing.

All agencies should recognise that the harmful and violent behaviour of perpetrators needs to be addressed. Individuals and families may be continuing to be impacted by abusive behaviour

as their case moves through justice processes. Through supporting interventions that lead to sustainable behaviour change in perpetrators themselves, we will drive an overall reduction in prevalence of domestic abuse and reduce rates of re-offending.

We must recognise that approaches to domestic abuse are changing and be 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 are:

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. 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. We will respond robustly to harmful and violent

behaviour; and provide greater focus on changing the behaviour of the perpetrator through a combination of disruption, support and the management of offenders.

3. 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.

4. Ensure staff and volunteers 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 and options linked to prevention and early interventions, 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>35</sup>.

While categories can be blurred and changing at an individual level, moving to a more complex view of domestic abuse and its causes and interventions will mean that we are able to strengthen our responses, ensuring that 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>36</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.



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

36. 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)



---

## 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:

### Kent County Council

Strategy, Policy and Relationships

[PSRPolicy@kent.gov.uk](mailto:PSRPolicy@kent.gov.uk)

03000 415782

#### Alternative formats

If you require this strategy 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.