

A photograph of a sunlit forest. Two large, mature trees with dense green foliage stand prominently in the foreground. The sun is positioned between the trees, creating a bright, glowing effect with rays of light filtering through the leaves. The ground is covered in a lush, green grassy field. The overall atmosphere is warm and serene.

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.

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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In partnership with and supported by



Kent Fire &
Rescue Service



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National
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Service



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Foreword



Over 2 million¹ people a year in England and Wales experience domestic abuse. 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' <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabuseprevalenceandtrendsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2020>

2. The 2 million figure does not include children who are also victims and survivors of 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, 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.**

We will work together to avoid duplication, consolidate evidence, explore what works best, share information early and ensure the best use of available resources across the partnership.

Data collection and our Action Plan

In 2020 a Strategic Needs Assessment was completed by the Kent Public Health Observatory which is available [here](#). This was updated in 2021 to reflect the focus of the Domestic Abuse Act.

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

This strategy and the needs assessment are accompanied by a joint action plan. This action plan is regularly updated to reflect the changing projects and programmes across the partnership which support improvement and development across domestic abuse services.

The joint action plan is iterative and works to implement this strategy. It is built in response to our priorities and the findings of the strategic assessment.



Definition of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse includes:

physical or sexual abuse

violent or threatening behaviour

controlling or coercive behaviour,

economic or financial abuse,

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, or who live together. Domestic abuse may happen across household relationships, those with parental relationships, or between relatives. The definition is inclusive of ex-partners.

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

The definition of domestic abuse within the Domestic Abuse Act states that the person carrying out the abusive behaviour and the person directly receiving the abusive behaviour must be over 16. However, it also defines children who see, hear or otherwise experience the abuse as victims or survivors of the abuse.

In the case of adolescent to parent violence, domestic abuse occurs when both parties are over the age of 16. While it is recognised that adolescent to parent violence can equally involve children under 16³ responses to this group may be different from responses to adults perpetrating abusive behaviours.

3. Home Office: Information guide – adolescent to parent violence and abuse (APVA) <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/HO%20Information%20APVA.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.

As a partnership we have identified 5 key priorities to support this aim:

An **A new section** has been added to priority 3 (provision of services) focused on **safe accommodation**. This section supports the new duties introduced through the Domestic Abuse Act.





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

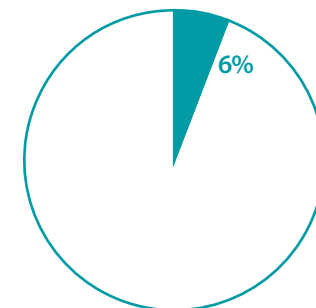
and medium risk victims for

3 years

before getting help⁴. On average victims experience **50 incidents of abuse before getting help**^{5,6}.

An estimated **2 million** adults aged 16-59 have experienced domestic abuse within the last year. This is a prevalence rate of around **6 in 100** adults⁷.

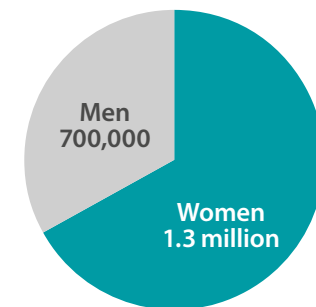
Experience of domestic abuse in adults aged 16-59



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

1.3 million women
700,000 men

Experience of domestic abuse



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

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

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

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

5. What do we know? continued

x2

Disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic abuse as non-disabled women, and typically experience abuse for a longer period before accessing support⁸.



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+ victims and survivors⁹.

Stonewall estimates that More than a quarter of trans people (28%) in a relationship in the last year have faced abuse from a partner¹⁰.

Nationally



report being victims of abuse compared with



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

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 2018¹².



Most defendants in domestic abuse-related prosecutions are men (92% year ending March 2017¹³).

87% of women leave refuges for continued temporary accommodation¹⁴.

Over 52% of domestic abuse victims need support to help them stay in their own home or move to new accommodation¹⁵.

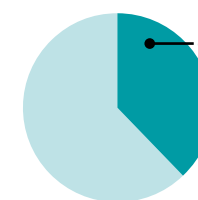
Statistics from Kent and Medway¹⁶



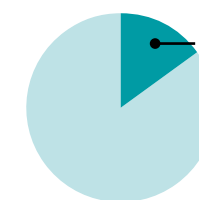
In 2017 26,149 incidents of domestic abuse were recorded by the Police in Kent and Medway.

Current trends show that 38% of all violent crime is categorised as domestic abuse and domestic abuse makes up 15% of all crime¹⁷.

Violent crime



All crime



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

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

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

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

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

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

14. Solace Women's Aid <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/NWTA-Executive-Summary-Final.pdf>

15. Safe Lives May 18 (accessed May 21) https://farm5.staticflickr.com/4357/36197015982_164fca1e3b_o.png

16. This information comes from the Strategic Assessment (6th Feb 2019)

17. 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 2017¹⁸

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.

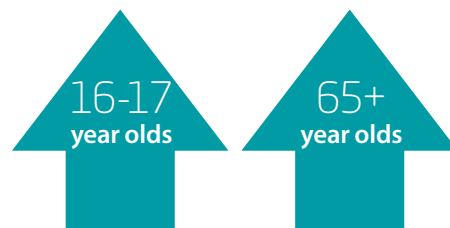
The age group most represented by those reporting and perpetrating abuse is between

25-34

Over the past

5 years

the perpetrator age groups which have seen the greatest proportional increase is the 16-17¹⁹ and 65+ age groups, however these groups still remain the least represented²⁰.



Age groups with greatest increase of abuse

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

There is increasing recognition that for many young people, their first intimate relationships in adolescence are marked by high levels of abuse and violence.²¹



Ethnic minority (all but White British) victims and survivors represent 5% of recent reports of domestic abuse. With the total ethnic minority population 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 ambulance services, accident and emergency departments, primary care and family planning, public health, the criminal justice system, education, and specialist children's and adult's services²².

18. Police forces may be improving identification and recording, more victims also may be reporting crimes
 19. The government definition of domestic abuse changed in March 2013 to include 16 and 17 year olds.
 20. From the 2020 Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment
 21. Skafida, V., Morrison, F., & Deaney, J. (2021). Prevalence and Social Inequality in Experiences of Domestic Abuse Among Mothers of Young Children: A Study Using National Survey Data from Scotland. Journal of Interpersonal Violence.
 22. NICE (Feb 2014) 'Domestic violence and abuse: multi-agency working' available at <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph50/chapter/3-Context>

No recourse to public funds

Some victims and survivors may have no recourse to public funds. Those who fall under this category may still be eligible for assistance under the Children's Act 1989 and the Human Rights Act 1998²³. There may also be assistance available to those who are married to, or are partners of a British national or someone settled in this country (Destitute Domestic Violence Concession).

We recognise that victims and survivors seeking help who have no recourse to public funds may be highly vulnerable due to this status, and that their status may be an additional way for a person using abusive behaviour to control a victim/survivor.

We will work to ensure our systems including our Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) work with an understanding around available support and risk. We will work with the voluntary sector and with our partners to offer support to survivors where this is possible, and work to increase professional awareness of the available support.

The Police and Crime Commissioners Office funds the Medaille Trust to support the provision of specialist social and emotional support to victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse through modern slavery and human trafficking.

Funding supports a Family Activity Co-ordinator and sessional play workers, based in the Safe House, and in the community project to deliver a range of integrated activities to help address the complex needs of women and children²⁴.

NEED HIGH RES IMAGE

23. <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/asylum-migration-and-refugees/no-recourse-public-funds>

24. <https://www.kmsab.org.uk/p/professionals/kmsab-policies/print>

6

National policy and legal context

In July 2021 the Government published its strategy for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

This strategy defined government ambitions as;

- Increasing support for victims and survivors,
- Increasing the numbers of perpetrators brought to justice,
- Reducing the prevalence of violence against girls and women

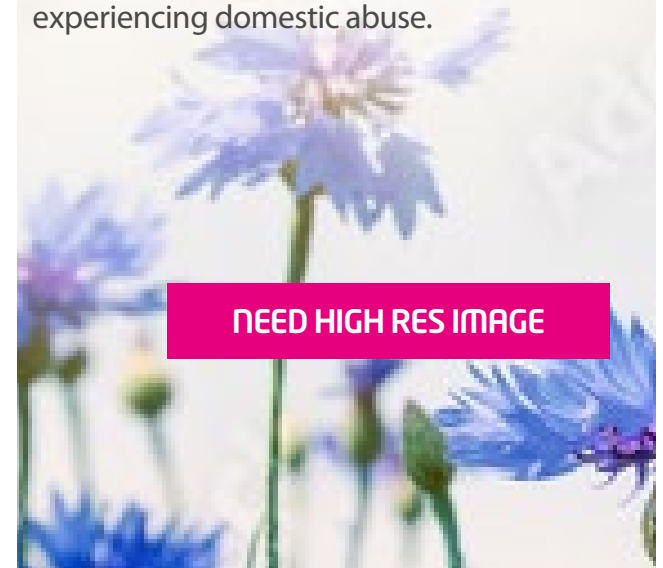
These ambitions will be achieved through prioritising prevention, improving and increasing support to victims, pursuing perpetrators and strengthening systems including the court process.

In March 2019 the Government published a position statement on male victims of crimes considered in the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls strategy²⁵. This statement recognises the significant number of men and boys who have experienced abuse and barriers to accessing support.

The Domestic Abuse Act received Royal Assent on the 29th April 2021. This Act puts into legislation a number of protections for victims, survivors and their children.

The Act creates the statutory presumption that victims and survivors of domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal, civil and family courts and puts in place additional protections and support people experiencing abuse.

The Act places new duties on local authorities, these are detailed on page 23 of this strategy, and creates new protection orders to support the response to those experiencing domestic abuse.



²⁵. 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

6. National policy and legal context continued

Other key legislation includes:

- the Children Act 1989 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002. This legislation places a duty on local authorities to provide services to Children in Need and to investigate the circumstances of a child where they are informed that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. Section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act extends the legal definition of harming children to include harm suffered by seeing or hearing ill treatment of others, including in the home.
- the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, which extends provisions to combat domestic violence and creates a new offence of 'causing or allowing the death of a child or vulnerable adult'.²⁶
- the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 makes stalking and linked to this, harassment an offence.²⁷
- 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. 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 needed²⁸.

- the Serious Crime Act, 2015²⁹; which introduced the offence of coercive or controlling behaviour against an intimate partner or family member and holds a maximum penalty of five years.

Upcoming legislation (at the time this strategy was published)

- The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill which will introduce tougher sentencing for some offenders and seek to improve the efficiency of the court and tribunal system³⁰.
- The Victims Bill which will be consulted on by the Ministry of Justice in 2021.
 - This is linked to the Victims Code which came into force on the 1st April 2021 and includes the right for victims to be provided with clear information when they report a crime with regular updates on the progress of the case and (where eligible) victims must be informed when an offender is released³¹.
 - The Victims Bill will explore the provision of community domestic abuse and sexual violence support services.
- The Online Safety Bill which will create a regulatory framework to tackle harmful content³².

The government will also shortly publish a national Domestic Abuse Strategy.



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

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

28. 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>

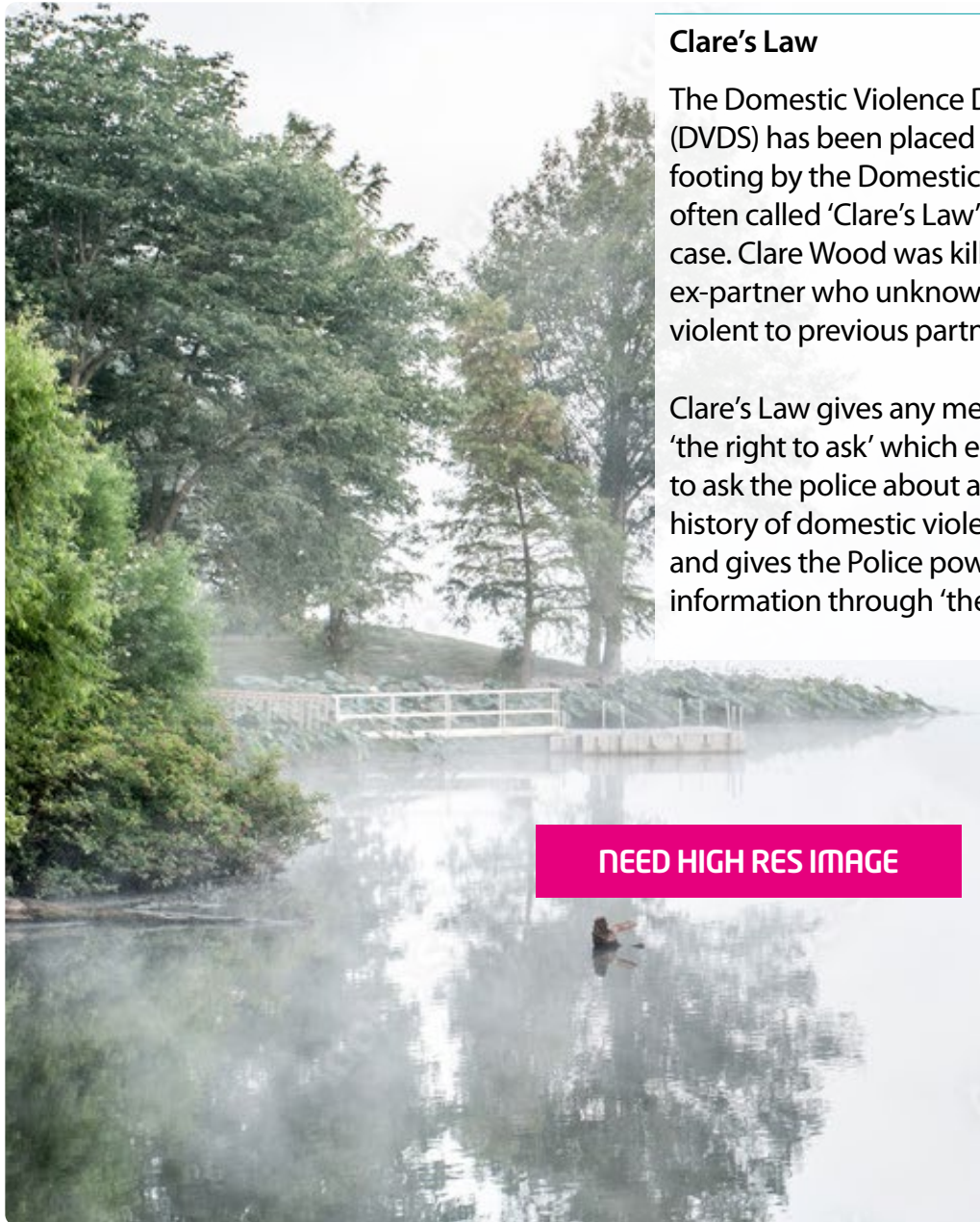
29. Controlling or Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance Framework (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482528/Controlling_or_coercive_behaviour_-_statutory_guidance.pdf)

30. Gov.uk 'Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021: overarching factsheet' (July 21) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-bill-2021-factsheets/police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-bill-2021-overarching-factsheet>

31. Gov.uk 'New victims' code comes into force' (1st April) <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-victims-code-comes-into-force>

32. Gov.uk 'Draft Online Safety Bill' (May 21) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill>

6. National policy and legal context continued



Clare's Law

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) has been placed on a statutory footing by the Domestic Abuse Act. It 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 member³³. 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 risk³⁴.

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.

NEED HIGH RES IMAGE

33. 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/>

34. 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.

The first version of this document was published in March 2020. In April 2021 the Domestic Abuse Act was finalised which introduced new statutory requirements for some Partners. In order to reflect these changes we have added a section on safe accommodation to **priority 3, Provision of Services**.

Aim:

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

- 1

Drive change together

>

 - Promoting change by working together
 - Ensuring governance processes are inclusive of lived experience
 - Challenging negative societal attitudes
- 2

Prevention and early intervention

>

 - Prevention and education
 - Ensuring schools are aware where children may have witnessed domestic abuse
 - Being aware of intersecting vulnerabilities and risks
 - Upskilling the workforce to support early identification of abuse
- 3

Provision of services

>

 - Ensuring responsive services which meet need quickly
 - Developing services with those who have experienced domestic abuse
 - mapping current provision and identifying gaps
 - Strengthening the safe accommodation response
- 4

Minimising harm

>

 - Recognising and being responsive to under reporting
 - Strengthening transitional safeguarding between child and adults' services
 - Being responsive to the longer-term effects of domestic abuse
 - Developing practices based on research
- 5

Justice, recovery and ongoing protection

>

 - Ensuring that the judicial system works to support those who experienced domestic abuse 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 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 has a joint commitment to combat 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 agencies³⁵ reaffirm their commitment to working together to provide co-leadership, pool resources, take strategic and effective response to domestic abuse, and actively engage in meeting our collective aims and objectives, working through governance structures at an appropriate level.
2. We will challenge societal attitudes that allow domestic abuse to occur, so it is unacceptable in any form, and increase awareness of how to better prevent and respond to domestic abuse across all agencies, services and our local communities. We will work using a 'grass roots upward' approach, involving community assets, social hubs and community leaders, to engage people across diverse and minority groups.
3. Partners will work collectively to bring together comparable, accurate and consistent data on areas such as commissioning, provision and gap analysis. This information-sharing will work to strengthen the future development of our strategic assessment and support our understanding around under-reporting, ensuring we learn lessons and draw out the right narratives from the evidence. Where possible we will commission research where gaps in knowledge exist.

4. The strategic assessment will be reviewed and updated annually. All partners will provide information which is contextualised and meaningful in a timely way in order to support this process.
5. All agencies will ensure they participate in the Domestic Homicide Review process, and that learning from this, Serious Case Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews are proactively shared with the wider workforce.
6. Agencies will ensure that they are aware of the links to each different area of business so that they can work cohesively.
7. We will work together to seek and access external funding opportunities, working collectively to identify areas of need where funding can make the most impact.
8. All agencies will work together to make sure that their workforce is trained to identify those at risk of becoming affected by or perpetrating abuse. Staff will have a strong understanding of appropriate responses and pathways including referrals and interventions.

³⁵ 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, and District Councils.

1. Drive change together continued

What the Strategic Assessment tells us:

An important way of monitoring partnership performance is through collecting and sharing data. This enables us to identify trends, strengths and weaknesses and any gaps in our service provision.

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’.

‘PATHways (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) targets adolescents (up to 24 years old) who have experienced violence or victimisation within their homes. It is for adolescents who are on the brink of the criminal justice system and who are disengaging with their communities.

PATHways can support 52 adolescents who have been exposed to long-term, higher intensity abuse and is a 12-16 week programme to help young people to recognise the consequences of their actions, improve conflict-resolution strategies and make different choices.

PATHways will be available in Shepway, Canterbury, Ashford, Dartford and Medway. Referral routes include Kent Police, schools, Independent Domestic Violence Advisor and domestic abuse agencies and Social Services.



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 escalation of abuse).

A person's needs impact on and are influenced by other members of a family, and we will take a whole family approach to prevention and early intervention services. Where possible we will share information across service providers so that services can work collaboratively across the family. We will encourage staff to have professional curiosity to explore and understand what is happening more widely within a family, think about whether other services should be involved, or connections made, and supporting professional curiosity. This requires a collaborative response by all agencies. We will ensure that staff have appropriate training and supervision and are supported in their work.

Effective support must also make the links to targeting wider vulnerabilities such as child exploitation, mental health problems, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, gangs, substance misuse, insecure finance and modern slavery. This will be achieved through promoting better knowledge and understanding of violence and abuse, promoting healthy relationships, and early intervention for those at risk of harm – such as vulnerable individuals, children and older people.

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

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

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

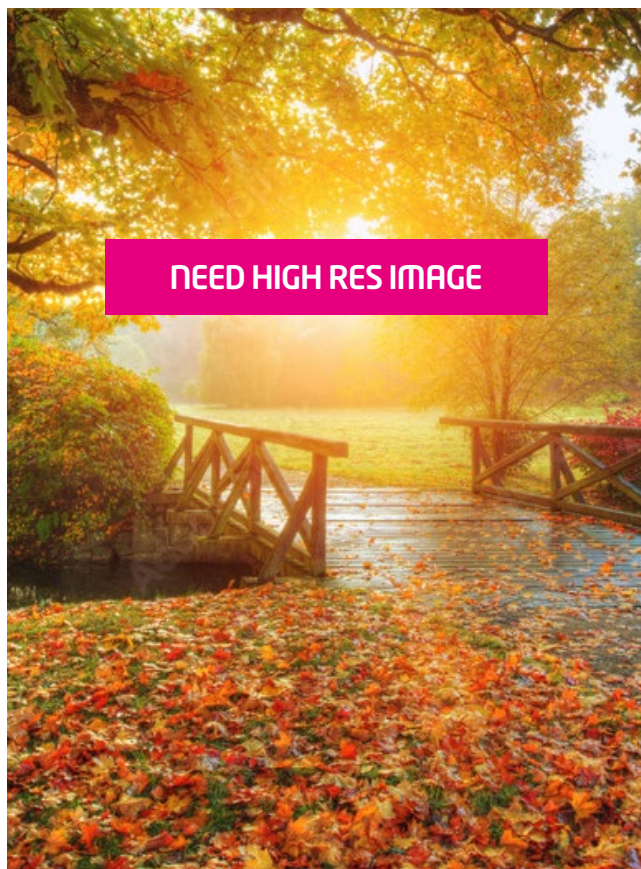
Commitments under this priority are:

- 1.** We will work together to identify and support families at risk of domestic abuse, where there have been past experiences of abuse or where other risk factors are present and deliver preventative and early intervention services linked to understanding vulnerabilities and risk. We recognise the complexity of the interplay between vulnerabilities and that support must be shaped to meet individual needs.
- 2.** By 2021, Kent Police, through Operation Encompass (see case study) and working with HeadStart Kent and Medway Council, will aspire to be working with all Kent and Medway schools.
- 3.** We will work with the community to challenge gender inequality, sexual stereotyping, and domestic abuse normalisation where it exists. 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 as well as available for adults in the community.
- 4.** All agencies will work together to reduce the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people through early intervention by supporting activities and services to develop their resilience and improve their emotional wellbeing. Partners will support appropriate training and resources to those who work with children and young people in schools and in the community.

2. Prevention and early intervention continued

5. We will work with our Safeguarding teams to support early identification of abuse of vulnerable adults including those with learning disabilities and abuse affecting older victims and survivors.

6. We will work with our partners to promote safety where children are displaying harmful behaviours, understanding that this behaviour is often routed in trauma.



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 those gaining support from safe accommodation domestic abuse services.

The 2021 update shows that 1 in 10 refuge clients in 2020/21 had mental health support requirements and substance misuse as an additional requirement.

In refuge services nationally in 2019/20 48.9% of service users had support needs around mental health and 5.6% had a dual diagnosis for substance misuse and mental health issues³⁶.

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

Operation Encompass³⁷

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

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

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

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

36. Women's Aid 2021 <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-Domestic-Abuse-Report-2021-The-Annual-Audit.pdf>

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



Priority 3 Provision of services

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

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

When services are working with victims and 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 problems including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance misuse disorders, psychotic disorders, and suicide attempts³⁸.

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

Commitments under this priority include:

1. A multi-agency evidence-based approach will be developed and utilised to inform the commissioning of domestic abuse services to ensure that those affected by domestic abuse are provided with the appropriate outreach and advisory services using an integrated pathways approach to facilitate the four key elements of service³⁹ provision.
2. We will work to ensure that our priorities and commitments highlighted within the strategy form a narrative across our commissioned services.
3. All partners will work together to ensure staff understand the landscape of provision, using and referring to services effectively. This includes understanding the thresholds for referring to Children and Adults’ Services are well understood and applied.

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

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

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

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

38. 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

39. a) Encourage and recognise disclosure of violence and abuse,
 b) Respond to disclosure,
 c) Identification of harm, and
 d) Coordinated action following disclosure.

3. Provision of services continued

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:

We should work to ensure that a network of volunteers and Domestic Abuse Champions have the support and skill set needed to enable them to raise awareness of domestic abuse and help people to access support.

Kent

Historically, the provision of services was commissioned or grant-funded by a wide range of agencies. This created complex funding arrangements and concerns regarding the possible duplication of services.

Partners, including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, district and boroughs, Kent Fire and Rescue and Kent County Council, worked with those with lived experience of abuse to plan the recommissioning of services in an integrated and outcome focussed way through a pooled budget.

The Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) was commissioned in April 2017. This service covers both safe accommodation and community-based support for those aged 16+.

The service includes;

- A single county wide point of access, creating dedicated referral, triage and response pathway for people affected by domestic abuse, delivered via the Police and Crime Commissioner's Victim Support unit.
- 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, victims and communities around domestic abuse to educate and raise awareness.

In 2019/20 the KIDAS service delivered the conference *Domestic Abuse: It's Everybody's Business* which achieved 10,301 total event registrations. Recordings of this conference can be accessed⁴⁰.

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. The contract was awarded to the charity Choices (now Oasis). 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 including the delivery of the Hospital Independent Domestic Violence Adviser scheme in Medway.

40. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiiBcbpVr7s&list=PLphMV3M-GI_R8xpBrR5-OmwszEyGNWcU&index=1

3. Provision of services continued

Safe Accommodation

The Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy is a partnership document developed across public sector agencies.

This new section has been added in response to new statutory duties linked to the Domestic Abuse Act which has a specific focus on support in safe accommodation.

1. What does the Domestic Abuse Act Say?

Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act gives local authorities, both at County Council, Unitary and District level certain legal responsibilities. This includes the duty to form a multiagency partnership board (Local Partnership Board, LPB), assess the need for support in safe accommodation, prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of support, give effect to that strategy and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

This section of the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy sets out our approach to supporting those who flee abuse to safe accommodation and seeks to meet the requirements of the Act. This includes responding to diverse need (both of adults and children) and ensuring that safe accommodation, housing provision and support services work together to provide a comprehensive response.

Support in safe accommodation – what's the change?

Kent County Council and Medway Council have a responsibility by law to assess the need for support in safe accommodation including refuge within their area for all victims, survivors and their children, including those who come from outside the area, through a needs assessment; they must then commission to meet identified need.

The needs assessment must be reviewed yearly and refreshed in full every 3 years.

The Domestic Abuse Act also introduces changes which impact housing authorities.

Prior to the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act, victims and survivors fleeing domestic abuse would only be considered to have priority need if they were found to be vulnerable as a result of the domestic abuse, or

if they fulfil another vulnerability characteristic such as being pregnant, having dependent children or being vulnerable as a result of mental illness or disability.

The Domestic Abuse Act now extends priority needs status to all those who are eligible for assistance and homeless as a result of domestic abuse. This will mean that councils will no longer need to consider if a victim or survivor is vulnerable as result of their abuse in order for them to access accommodation secured by the local authority⁴¹.

The Domestic Abuse Act places requirements on housing authorities in relation to security of tenure when rehousing victims and survivors fleeing domestic abuse who were an existing lifetime social tenant.

The Act emphasises that support is available to all those fleeing abuse, including those who cross local authority borders, and that housing and support needs for adults and children fleeing abuse should be met irrespective of whether they have stayed close to home or moved to another authority area.

41. Homelessness – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

3. Provision of services continued

2. What safe accommodation is currently available in Kent and Medway?

Victims and survivors of domestic abuse and their children often have to leave their homes for fear of repeated abuse, and although some may move in with relatives, or find accommodation elsewhere, these solutions are often unsustainable for longer than a brief interim period.

Households at risk of abuse will often suffer the disruption and trauma of having to make a succession of moves prior to finding settled accommodation. For their own safety, households may be rehoused in a new location but this may be away from important informal support networks, such as family and friends.

Domestic abuse is a key reason that people approach local authorities for support with housing. Statistics show that domestic abuse accounts for at least one in ten people who require local authority support to prevent them from being homeless in England and Wales⁴².

What is safe accommodation?

Safe accommodation is defined by the Domestic Abuse Act as:

- **refuge accommodation – refuges are a specialist form of provision for victims, survivors and children fleeing domestic abuse, and offer a package of**

accommodation and support which is tailored to the needs of households at risk of abuse

- **specialist safe accommodation – accommodation with dedicated specialist support to victims and survivors**
- **dispersed accommodation – self-contained accommodation such as individual flats**
- **sanctuary schemes – where enhanced physical security measures are put in place within a victim or survivor’s home**
- **settled accommodation (which can also be called ‘move on’ or ‘second stage’) is included within this definition – when a person or family move from refuge or other emergency accommodation to a longer-term home⁴³.**

People may require a ‘mix’ of support and may access multiple forms of housing before finding settled accommodation.

Some people will approach housing authorities for support to move without requesting specialist domestic abuse service support.

Sanctuary schemes

Households at risk of domestic abuse often have to leave their homes because of the risk of repeat incidents of abuse. Refuges and other forms of emergency and temporary accommodation

can provide a safe and supportive environment for households fleeing abuse. However, many households do not wish to leave their homes or choose to return to their homes after a short stay in temporary accommodation.

The Sanctuary scheme is an additional accommodation option for households at risk of domestic abuse which can, where suitable and appropriate, offer families or individuals the choice of remaining in their homes.

A Sanctuary scheme works to support individuals or families at risk of abuse to remain safely in their own homes by installing a ‘sanctuary’ in the home and through the provision of domestic abuse support to the household.

Sanctuaries are created by enhancing security in the property and the provision of safety equipment.

Sanctuary measures might include reinforced exterior doors, window locks, reinforced double-glazed windows, fire retardant letter boxes, smoke detectors and fire safety equipment, window alarms or intercom systems⁴⁴.

42. Live tables on homelessness – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

43. Home Office (July 2020) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/896640/Draft_statutory_guidance_July_2020.pdf

44. Home Office (July 2020) [Sanctuary schemes for households at risk of domestic violence: guide for agencies](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/896640/Sanctuary_schemes_for_households_at_risk_of_domestic_violence_guide_for_agencies.pdf) – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

3. Provision of services continued

Kent

Within Kent there are 12 district, borough and city councils (tier 2 local authorities). Tier 2 authorities have a direct role in enabling housing delivery, homelessness prevention, housing adaptation and enforcement powers to improve the condition of private rented housing. They also have a legal duty to provide individuals (where the main 'homelessness duty' is owed⁴⁵) with advice and appropriate assistance. This can include steps to help those who become homeless to secure accommodation through the private sector or social housing.

Each tier 2 authority manages a number of support services to help people find and access accommodation, although across Kent this will be managed in different ways. All Kent districts are partners in the development of this strategy and are signed up to its principles.

Safe Accommodation in Kent

The Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) provides support services for victims, survivors and their children in a variety of accommodation settings, including refuge and safe accommodation.

Across Kent there are

107 refuge placements⁴⁶

commissioned through this contract.

These are a mixture of communal, self-contained flats and dispersed accommodation. In 2021 all refuge spaces were for women and two children, although some could accommodate up to 4 children.

From April 2020 to March 2021

264 adults

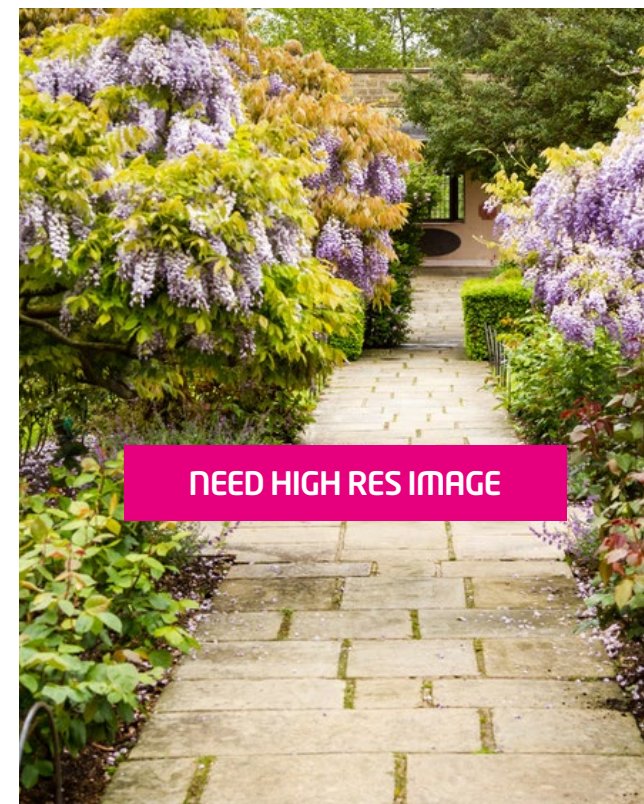
and

191 children

were supported in refuge

The KIDAS providers also deliver a private sector rented access scheme (deposits, bonds and guarantees) predominantly to support people moving on from refuge accommodation to obtain settled accommodation.

Across the county there are also refuge or safe accommodation services that are funded through alternative arrangements.



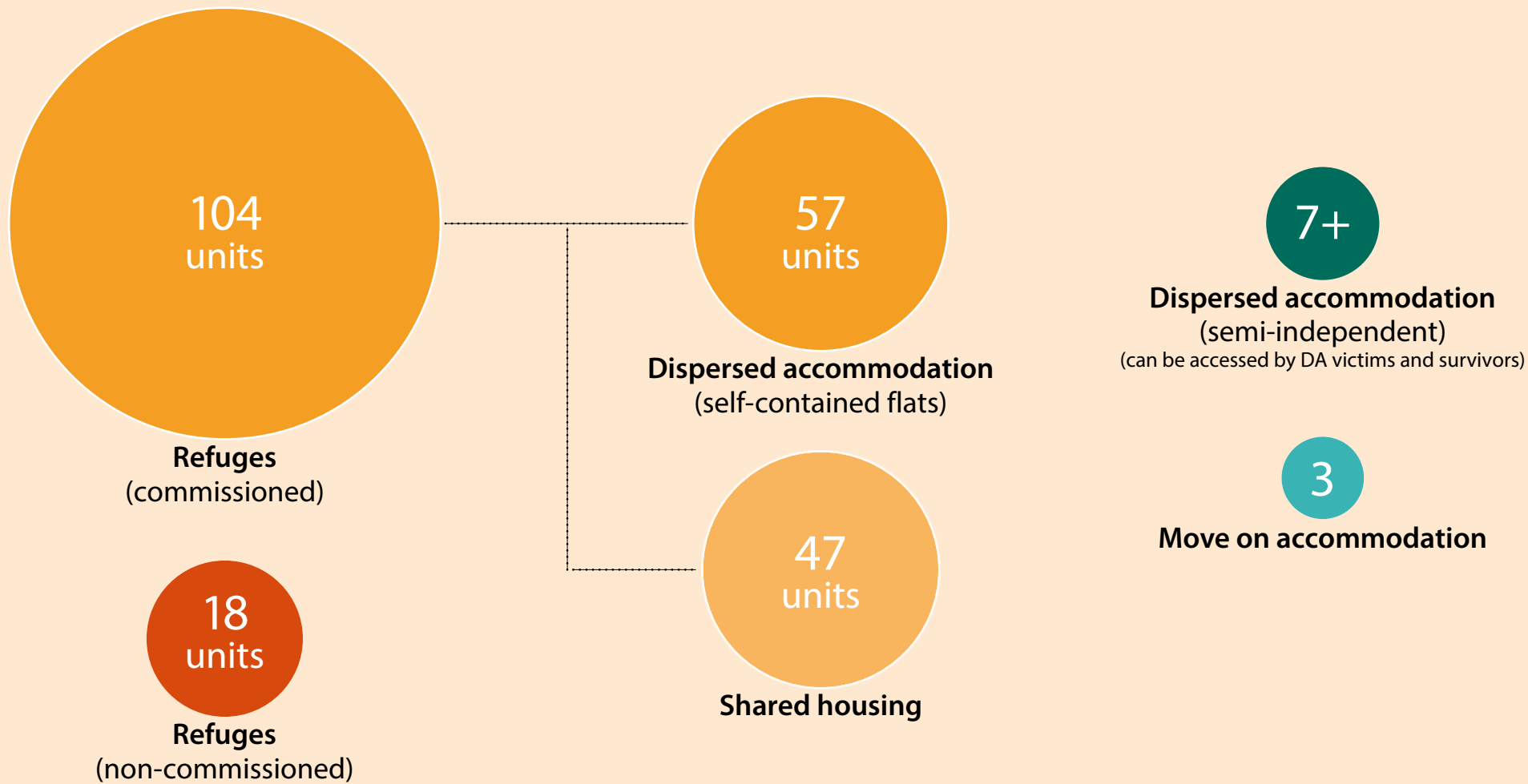
45. Where the authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified priority need group

46. In 2021

3. Provision of services continued

Refuge provision in Kent 20/21, from the 2021 Needs Assessment

Kent has a range of refuge accommodation covering both dispersed units and shared housing. Whilst the majority of support is commissioned, there is also some non-commissioned provision.



3. Provision of services continued

Refuge provision in Kent 20/21, from the 2021 Needs Assessment

Kent has a higher level of refuge accommodation per 10,000 population than the England average.

An audit of sanctuary schemes in Kent has illustrated a high degree of variation across the County in terms of provision of sanctuary schemes.



Users of our commissioned refuge services are broadly representative of the profile of all domestic abuse victims and survivors in terms of disability and sexual orientation.

Survivors with children are well represented in refuges.



59% of refuge clients in Kent in 2020/21 had children, and around half had children with them when fleeing abuse in the community.

There is also some evidence to suggest that older survivors are less likely to use refuge services.

Nearly 40%

of refuge clients in Kent in 20/21 were Black Asian and Minority Ethnic

7%

of refuge clients in 20/21 in Kent were pregnant

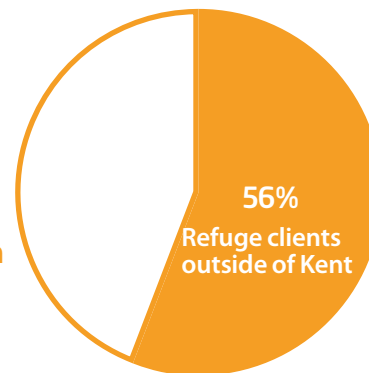


10%

of clients in refuge in 20/21 had experienced 'Honour' Based Violence, this compares to 1.5% of clients accessing support

more than half

of refuge clients in 2020/21 were from outside of Kent.



Refuges in West Kent have a particularly high proportion of clients from outside of Kent, whilst in East Kent the majority of clients come from within the county.

The most popular source of referrals to refuge services in 2020/21 are those classified as 'self referrals'.

44%

This will include victims and survivors who call the national Domestic Abuse helpline and are referred to a refuge with vacancies identified via the Routes to Support database.

Being 'unable to meet the support needs' or the feeling that 'needs are better met elsewhere' are the key reasons for refusals.



Support needs around mental health or substance misuse are the key need types that lead to unsuccessful referrals to commissioned refuge services in Kent.

Kent has refuge placements suitable for someone with limited mobility.

3. Provision of services continued

Refuge provision in Kent 20/21, from the 2021 Needs Assessment

Understanding capacity is difficult as referrals are only taken when a room is advertised as available, but we do know that:

Capacity issues only apply in 8% of unsuccessful referrals –rising to

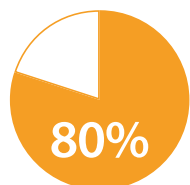
13% in the East.

This is lower than nationally, where around

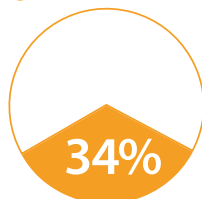
1/5

of all referrals to refuge were denied due to lack of space or capacity⁴⁷.

Refuge clients moving on during 2020/21



stayed for a more than a month



stayed for more than 6 months

The vast majority of refuge clients who moved on during 2020/21 (more than 80%) stayed for more than a month, and a third (34%) for more than 6 months.

More than half of refuge clients in Kent were either living with friends, in temporary accommodation, rough sleeping or at another women’s refuge prior to entering the service.

Amongst those who moved on during 2020/21, just over a third

36%

are known to have moved on to staying with friends/family, temporary accommodation or another refuge.



Securing suitable housing is barrier to moving on and is identified by providers as contributing to longer lengths of stay in refuge accommodation.

We estimate that around

1/3 

of those experiencing domestic abuse in Kent in 2019/20 were men.



Refuge accommodation for men is highlighted as a gap in the current service offer in Kent, with qualitative research amongst both providers and male domestic abuse victims and survivors supporting the need for this type of service.

Providers identified a need to develop further relationships with other service providers, especially in relation to mental health and drug and alcohol support, to provide not only continuity of service but a more integrated service.



47. Women’s Aid 2021 <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-Domestic-Abuse-Report-2021-The-Annual-Audit.pdf>

3. Provision of services continued

In 2021 MHCLG allocated Kent £3.1m in support of the Domestic Abuse Act. This money will be used to develop and enhance services already delivered through the KIDAS contract, which in 2021 had a value of approximately £2.3m. The monies will be used to address gaps identified within the needs assessment.

We have identified the following priorities for 2021/22.

Kent will seek to:

- develop an equitable Sanctuary offer across Kent
- investigate and work to overcome barriers between substance misuse, domestic abuse and mental health services
- strengthen support to increase access to settled or move on accommodation so that people can move out of refuge and other safe accommodation when they are ready to do so
- consistently fund support for children in safe accommodation, both for children from Kent and those who are from other local authority areas
- We will enhance specialist support where barriers exist to access, including for men, LGBTQ+ people, people with physical, sensory or learning difficulties, people with Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and for those over 50
- pilot support in safe accommodation for male victims and survivors

- increase awareness within our workforce of barriers to access
- strengthen awareness of available safe accommodation services, and how this can meet need across demographics with both staff and within the community including through social media.

Medway

Medway Council is a unitary authority and manages both housing services and commissioned domestic abuse support services. Medway holds similar housing duties to districts and as a unitary authority also commissions domestic abuse support services across the area through the Medway Domestic Abuse Service (MDAS).

MDAS offers advice and information, one to one support, specialist support groups and specialist support to families⁴⁸.

Medway Council also directly commissions two refuges with a total of 14 refuge placements and has access to temporary accommodation with the option of support from the commissioned floating support service or from the specialist Integrated Domestic Abuse service. Provision includes specific refuge support for those from an ethnic minority background.

Medway has an established contracted Sanctuary scheme which delivers around 100-120 annual interventions. Sanctuary has received 386 referrals over the last 3 years.

During the pandemic demand for this service increased greatly (approximately 200% of the previous average demand).

Medway currently has no dispersed accommodation or designated move on housing but is exploring options to develop this support.



48. <http://www.oasisdaservice.org>

3. Provision of services continued

Refuge provision in Medway (2018-21)

Refuge provision is solely available to out of area residents due to safety concerns around the proximity to the perpetrator.



Refuge provision is currently only for female victims and survivors and their children however dispersed housing options are available for men.



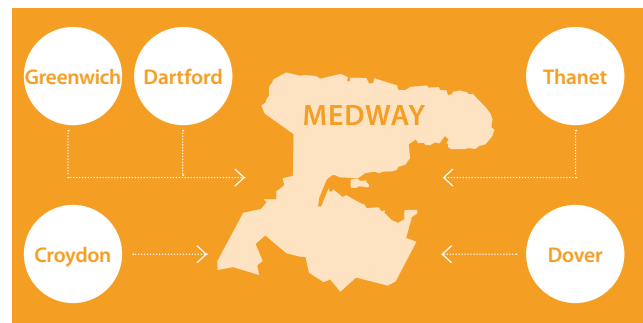
MAX. AGE 16

Different refuge policies mean that it can be harder to find a space with teenage children, particularly boys over 16 who might need an additional room.



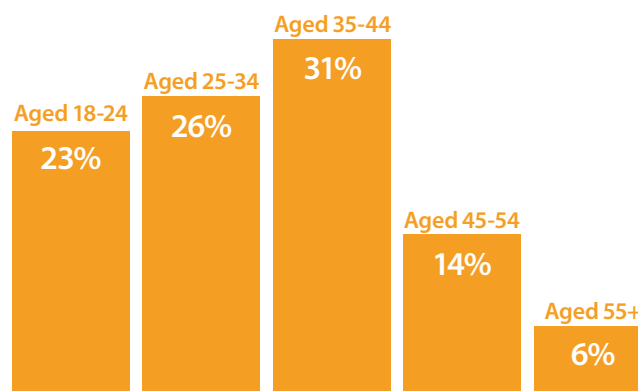
7% of the refuge space in Medway is wheelchair accessible

Referrals into Medway mainly come from; Kent (Dartford, Thanet and Dover), Greenwich and Croydon.

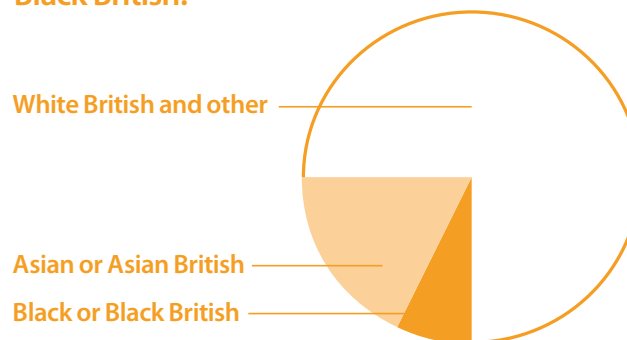


Victims and survivors who accessed refuge services were;

23% aged 18-24, 26% 25-34, 31% aged 35-44, 14% aged 45-54, 6% aged 55 or over.



Where ethnicity is recorded 75% of people supported were White British and other, 18% Asian or Asian British and 7.5% (5) Black or Black British.



Where household structure was recorded 56% had no children, 23% had one child, 18% had 2 and 3% had 3 or more.



No children: 56%



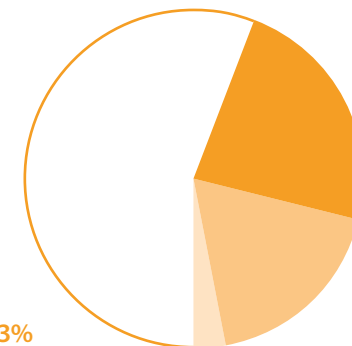
One child: 23%



Two children: 18%



Three or more children: 3%



3 out of 71 refuge residents were pregnant.

3 out of 71 had experienced honour-based violence.



Support needs around mental health or substance misuse are the key need types that lead to unsuccessful referrals to commissioned refuge services in Medway.

3. Provision of services continued

In 2021 MHCLG allocated Medway £592,126 to support new duties under the Domestic Abuse Act. This money will be used to develop and enhance services already delivered through the MDAS contract, which in 2019 saw budgets pooled from Housing, Children’s Services, Public Health and the Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to commission an integrated domestic abuse service over 5 years. The monies will also be used to address gaps identified within the needs assessment which included: the need for dispersed accommodation with wrap around support; the need for increased refuge spaces in Medway, for Medway residents; increased support for those with additional or complex needs; increased partnership working between neighbouring authorities and agencies within Medway..

Medway will seek to:

- improve access of support to:
 - male victims and survivors
 - victims and survivors with multiple needs (such as those with mental health support requirements or people affected by drug or alcohol abuse)
 - victims and survivors with disabilities
- strengthen available support for children in safe accommodation
- increase safe accommodation options for Medway residence

Working with other local authorities

Kent and Medway have seen an increase in the number of out of area placements by London authorities. To date the majority of these placements have been unsupported. We will continue to work with London districts to ensure that vulnerable people are properly supported by the placing authority and to work across local authority boarders with neighbouring boroughs.

We recognise our duties under the Domestic Abuse Act to support victims, survivors and their children who flee into Kent and Medway; access to support will not be restricted by a person’s locality⁴⁹.

- develop dispersed accommodation services to support those who may not be able to access refuge
- enhance support for those fleeing with animals.
- begin the rollout of dispersed accommodation which is adaptable to meet the needs of wide demographic groups
- appoint designated Domestic Abuse Manager and Domestic Abuse Housing Officer who together will monitor, evaluate and improve service delivery in Medway.

The 12 district Councils across Kent have a protocol in place to cover the issue of reciprocal moves across borough boundaries. This scheme sets out a commitment from the 12 districts to cooperate in a transparent and equitable way to assist applicants to move in exceptional circumstances; and local housing authorities to manage the process of accepting and referring applicants. This can prove to be particularly effective for applicants needing to move out of their current area to a safer one as a result of domestic abuse.

This protocol is currently under review with a view to update and incorporate any changes that may be required following the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act, and also for adoption by Medway Council.

Medway’s Sanctuary scheme:

The scheme received 386 referrals over the last three years (almost 50% of which have been in 20/21).

The most common referral sources were from domestic abuse service providers.

85% of referrals were for those between the ages of 20 to 49.

49. (in line with guidance on the disapplication of local connection for domestic abuse victims set out in the Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England) – from the draft statutory guidance.

3. Provision of services continued

3. Domestic Abuse Strategic Housing Approach

Kent and Medway have used learnings from the Whole Housing Approach and Tool Kit⁵⁰ which recognises the important role of housing in supporting victims and survivors, and seeks to improve housing options and outcomes whether this means survivors relocating for safety reasons or remaining in their existing home with appropriate support⁵¹.

Using this approach Kent and Medway will seek to improve access to safe and stable accommodation for people experiencing domestic abuse recognising the types of accommodation available, differences of access dependent on local authority area and the barriers which people may experience when seeking access to housing.

This approach recognises the importance of housing working with support from statutory and voluntary sectors to provide victims and survivors of abuse with a comprehensive response.

“We recognise that the threat of homelessness can be a key barrier to accessing help and that this threat can be used as a form of abuse”.

“We will provide a comprehensive response for adults and children who have experienced abuse which offers safe housing and strong support and meets our populations diverse needs”.



50. The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance in collaboration with the National Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy and Practice Group
 51. Whole Housing Approach Toolkit, DAHA Alliance, 1_-wha-toolkit-introduction.pdf (dahalliance.org.uk)

3. Provision of services continued

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>1</p> <p>Housing Options
Flexibility and access</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Working across the partnership to understand need and demand for housing for those fleeing domestic abuse by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) acknowledging pressure on housing authorities and working together to ensure consistent pathways of support and assessment of need b) working to support people to identify the accommodation which they need, recognising limited housing options available c) working towards the principles of a Whole Housing Approach to improve access to safe and stable housing options across all housing tenure types for those fleeing abuse d) evaluating our homelessness strategies against our domestic abuse strategic approach and taking learnings from this to develop our local action plans, reporting into the Local Partnership Board. 2 We will work with animal charities to develop options to support those fleeing with animals, recognising that abuse of animals can be used as a form of coercion, control and trauma. 3 We will support people to identify the most appropriate settled accommodation for those ready to move on from refuge to help minimise length of stay. | <p>2</p> <p>Staying close by
Local support and sanctuary schemes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 We recognise that many victims and survivors will choose to stay in their homes rather than flee abuse, and that they should have access to the right support to do this. 2 We will work to keep adults and children in a location where they are connected to their community where this is the choice of the person experiencing abuse. 3 Housing Authorities will work with specialist organisations to support victims and survivors in their local communities as far as is practicable. 4 We will increase the availability of Sanctuary to ensure that anyone that needs it has access to this provision, and that equivalent access is offered irrespective of location. 5 We will take learnings from areas where Sanctuary works well, supporting the sharing of best practice into areas where there is less support. 6 We will work with the person experiencing abuse to explore options that support them to stay safe when outside of their homes. 7 We will work with people using Sanctuary to make sure they have the support services they need. | <p>3</p> <p>Comprehensive Domestic Abuse Services
Support within safe accommodation and within the community</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 We will bolster the existing legal support offer (through One Stop Shop provision) to ensure that victims and survivors have access to the correct benefits and legal support as quickly as possible. 2 We recognise the importance of mental health and wellbeing support for both adults and children and will ensure that staff working with victims and survivors are equipped to understand coercive control and its impact and to respond in a trauma informed way. 3 We will work with victims, survivors and their children to develop services; we will seek to further understand experienced barriers to accessing services and develop commissioning in response to these findings. 4 Ensure that anyone who wants help can access a comprehensive service that is equitable across community and safe accommodation services. |
|---|--|--|

3. Provision of services continued

4

Homelessness

Recognising Multiple Needs – increasing access

1. We recognise that people do not face issues in isolation, and that abuse impacts on many areas in an individual's life. Support will be coordinated where this is possible to ensure an individual's full range of needs are met.
- 2 We will work to increase the support and understanding of people with multiple needs to allow them to take up placements in safe accommodation. We will:
 - a) evaluate learnings from best practice examples across the UK on how to better support those with multiple needs in order to develop a safe accommodation plan
 - b) explore options for specific support for vulnerable groups where there is evidenced need including care leavers, those with a history of offending or the armed forces community.
- 3 We will work with key institutions involved in private ownership and within the social and private rental sector to increase awareness of the impact of domestic abuse on victims and survivors to highlight economic and social conditions which may impact access to housing.
- 4 We will investigate and work to overcome barriers between problematic drug and alcohol use, domestic abuse and mental health services, recognising that a system wide approach is

5

Access of service to all

Recognising and challenging barriers to support

- 1 We recognise the intersectional nature of abuse, that the dynamics of abuse affect people differently and services need to respond to individual needs.
- 2 We will work to ensure that housing options, including safe accommodation provision, meets need including diverse and/or multiple needs.
- 3 We are committed to having the right safe accommodation options, and specialist support, that meets the needs of anyone experiencing abuse whether they are male, female or nonbinary, able bodied or disabled, experiencing abuse from a partner or family member and whatever their sexual orientation.
- 4 We recognise trauma informed practice can reduce barriers to support, getting people to safety and recovery quicker. We will work to improve the trauma informed response to victims and survivors of abuse.
- 5 We will increase awareness of available support options through strong social media and communications making sure we use messages and images that reflect diversity of experience
- 6 We will make sure that referral and signposting is clear for victims and survivors, and professionals working to support them.

6

Support to children and young people

Victims and survivors in their own right

- 1 We will ensure that all children and young people in safe accommodation have access to support that is age appropriate and meets their needs, which may include access to ongoing education, counselling, play therapy and/or advocacy services.
- 2 We recognise children as survivors in their own right, with individual requirements for support.
- 3 We will ensure that 'children's voices' and experiences are represented through formal governance and in designing and reviewing services.
- 4 We recognise the importance of schools in supporting children and young people and will work collaboratively, sharing information where appropriate to improve outcomes.
- 5 We will develop comprehensive whole family support, recognising the importance of recovery for wider family networks and blended family groups.

As with other commitments within this strategy progress on these areas will be monitored through the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Action Plan which reports into the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Executive Board.



Priority 4 Minimising harm

This priority is 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 is also 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.

Minimising harm

Supporting positive outcomes and promoting equality of access for anyone who experiences 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 children, adolescents and 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. We will support families who choose to stay together; and recognise that for many children the perpetrator of domestic abuse remains an important part of their life.
4. We understand that for many children and young people the experience of managing parental contact can be traumatic and difficult. We will work with representatives across Children’s Social Work teams, Cafcass and private and public law representatives and the Courts to work to improve experiences where this is possible.
5. 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.
6. All agencies will review service provision and support to victims and 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.
7. We will work 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’.
8. Safeguarding teams in Kent and Medway will work with partners to protect vulnerable adults at risk of abuse or neglect.
9. Local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences will be used effectively to reduce repeat victimisation.
10. 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.

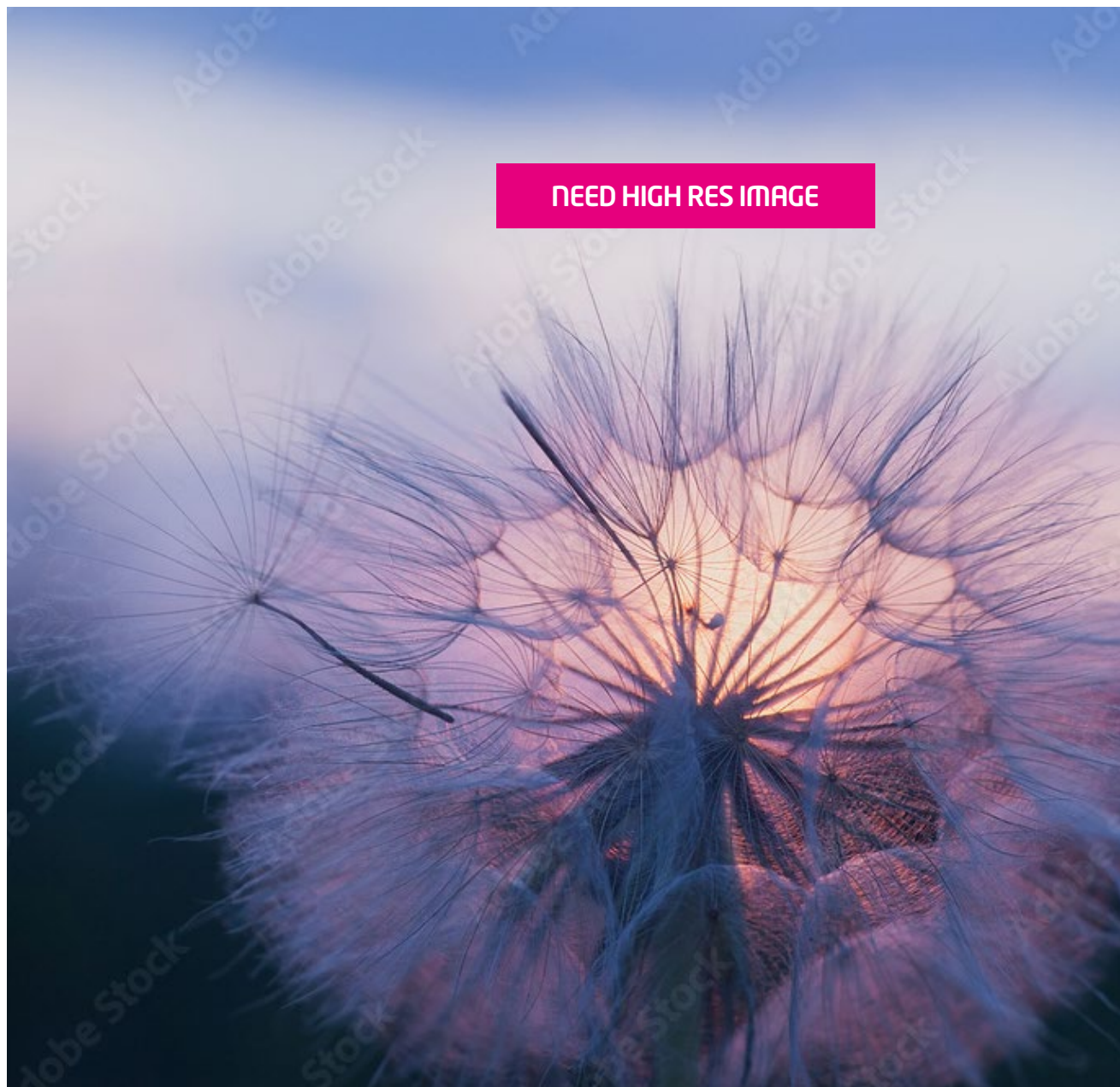
4. Minimising harm continued

What the Strategic Assessment tells us:

We believe that there may be under reporting of domestic abuse amongst certain groups, for instance under 25s, over 65s, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, lesbian, gay and transgender people and men. Very few statistics are available for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. We should explore how to best support and increase confidence in reporting with these groups.

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

Additionally, specialist IDVAs have been commissioned to support male victims and survivors, LGBTQ+ victims and survivors and those with multiple disadvantages.





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 those showing abusive behaviours through the criminal justice system, via civil outcomes, through working with families to change behaviour or through rehabilitation (within prison or the community). This would include continually improving protections and justice available and ensuring appropriate and effective use of sentencing.

All agencies should recognise that harmful and violent behaviour needs to be addressed. Through supporting interventions that lead to sustainable

behaviour change, 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 those who have experienced abuse throughout the Criminal Justice System process. All agencies should ensure that the voice of lived experience is heard throughout these processes and used to improve and enhance service provision.
2. Ongoing assessment of the capacity of the Justice System to respond to current, new and emerging issues will be undertaken in relation to the protection of victims and survivors; responding to harmful and violent behaviour; and providing greater focus on changing the behaviour of the individual through a combination of disruption, support and the management of offenders. Programmes will be tailored to meet needs, seeking behavioural change and rehabilitation.

3. All agencies will work together to ensure that there is a robust approach to those showing abusive behaviours. This will include, supporting interventions that lead to sustainable behaviour change in the individuals themselves and having a clear plan to bring them to justice or diverting them from offending.

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

5. Accessible information about protection orders, disclosure schemes and what people who have experienced abuse can expect from the criminal justice system should be created and promoted to encourage confidence and their use. We will ensure staff understand the legal tools available, and how they can be put in place quickly and effectively.

5. Where possible legal orders (now DVPN&O later to become DAPN/Os) should be sought and enforced to remove a perpetrator of abuse from the home. Partners should work collaboratively, exploring options to remove those perpetrating domestic abuse from the home to disrupt abusive behaviour and make victims and survivors safer.

5. Justice, recovery and ongoing protection continued

What the Strategic Assessment tells us:

We need to develop our understanding of how perpetrator services can form sustainable and integrated programmes to stop abusive behaviours, how they impact motivations to change and how they work to reduce the recurrence of domestic abuse.

'Typologies' of domestic abuse are becoming more commonly used, promoting understanding of coercive controlling behaviour, mutual and situational abuse and violent resistance.⁵² These theories are useful in providing additional nuance in our understanding of domestic abuse, in identifying primary perpetrators and should inform the response to domestic abuse. It should be included in training where possible.

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

This approach also recognises domestic abuse as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE). There is growing research around the impact of ACE's on health outcomes of individuals. Children and young people growing up in environments where domestic abuse occurs are likely to experience trauma and distress. These experiences may have a negative impact on social development, relationships, risk taking behaviour and health outcomes⁵³.

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.

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

53. 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



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 Group and linked governance structures.

The statutory Local Partnership Boards (Kent and Medway) will oversee work related to safe accommodation and act as advisory bodies to support commissioning and decommissioning against the duties within the Domestic Abuse Act. The Local Partnership Boards report into the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group. This is to ensure a joined up response across both safe accommodation and community provision.

This strategy is supported by a joint action plan agreed to and championed by each partner within the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group. Actions developed will be directly linked to our identified outcomes and commitments. Evaluation will ensure that what we deliver is effective, reflecting best evidence-based practice.

Tier 1 authorities must also report progress against safe accommodation objectives to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government.

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 both our commissioning and our monitoring procedures. We will work to ensure that lived experience of abuse informs and continually improves our provision. We will work to include the voice of children in the development of services which aim to support them.

The Executive Group will provide regular 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 those affected by domestic abuse. 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 communities.

Further information

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

Kent County Council

Strategy, Policy and Relationships

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

or call **03000 421553** (text relay service number: **18001 03000 421553**).

This number goes to an answering machine, which is monitored during office hours.