

for **with** you  
**you**



ST HELENS  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

ST HELENS DOMESTIC ABUSE

PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

2025-2028





## FOREWORD

AS PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR SUPPORTING NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ON BEHALF OF OUR PROFESSIONAL PARTNERS, SURVIVORS AND THOSE AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC ABUSE ACROSS ST HELENS BOROUGH, IT IS MY PRIVILEGE TO INTRODUCE THE 2025-28 DOMESTIC ABUSE PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN.

Domestic abuse has very significant and devastating impacts on the health and wellbeing of victims, survivors and their children. It is essential that we prevent domestic abuse from happening in the first place by continuously challenging the underlying attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate it and if it does occur, then ensure that we provide the best possible care and support to those who are affected.

This strategy co-produced with partners, survivors and through wider community consultation, provides us with a strong framework to make the most effective use of the current resources across our partnership.

By setting out shared priorities and objectives and identifying the areas that need further development, the strategy demonstrates the commitment that the partners have made to work together to tackle abuse and to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and their families.

This strategy builds on the work already done in our Borough through the leadership of Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and its partner agencies. The duties in the Domestic Abuse Act enable us to go further with these important priorities but successful delivery of this strategy requires strong leadership, commitment, and engagement from all partners and the wider community in St Helens.

I ask you to read this strategy and action plan and consider actions that you, your organisations and our communities can also take to prevent and reduce domestic abuse in St Helens borough.

Finally as Portfolio Holder with responsibility for ensuring St Helens is a safe place for all, and as Chair of the Safer St Helens Community Safety Partnership I will be using my influence to ensure services are bold and ambitious in the execution of this Strategy and Action Plan and I will hold to account all those responsible for its implementation.



**Councillor Trisha Long**

Chair of the Community Safety Partnership and  
Cabinet Member - Supporting Neighbourhoods

# INTRODUCTION

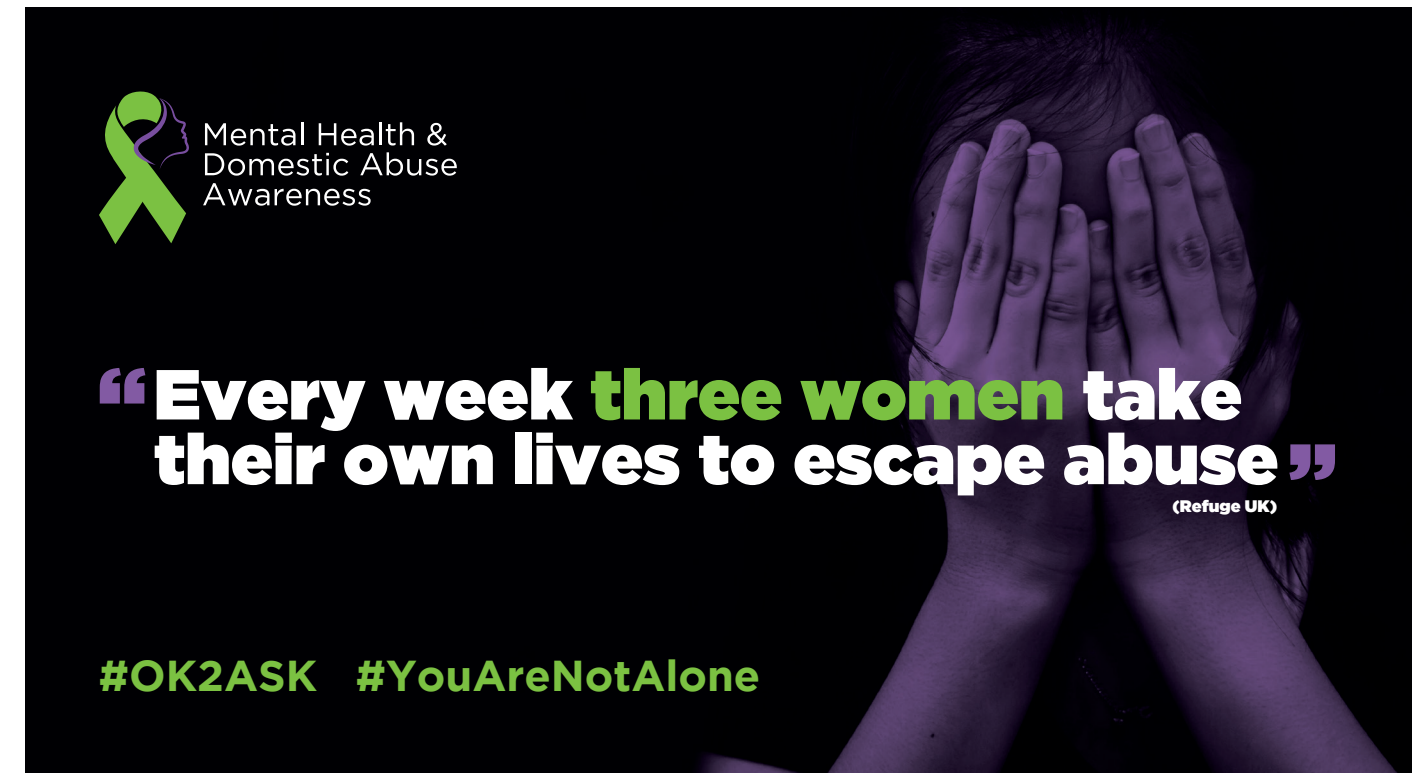
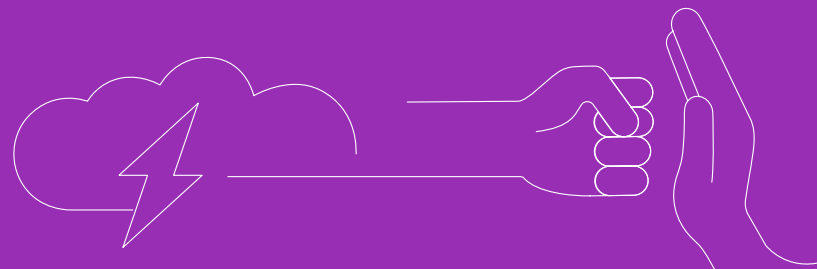
The scale of domestic abuse across the St Helens borough cannot be underestimated, there were **3,745** reports of domestic abuse in **2023/24**. This is a reduction from the number of incidents in the previous year **2022/23** of **4,706** but it remains at a very high level. For this reason, Domestic Abuse remains one of the priorities for the Safer St Helens Executive.


Domestic abuse takes multiple forms and is commonly characterised by a pattern of controlling and coercive behaviour. It disproportionately affects women, but anyone can be impacted.

The St Helens Domestic Abuse Partnership Board - Chaired by the Council's Director of Communities and supported by statutory agencies and specialist services, continues to coordinate the multi-agency response to domestic abuse in the borough and commissions services to support victims/survivors and their families.

THE DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN REAFFIRMS OUR COMMITMENT TO ENSURING OUR SERVICES AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS OFFER THE RIGHT INTERVENTIONS TO TACKLE THE ATTITUDES AND THE BEHAVIOURS THAT PERPETUATE DOMESTIC ABUSE AS WELL AS OFFERING APPROPRIATE INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF ABUSE.

It builds on our previous strategy, complements government and Liverpool City Region efforts to tackle domestic abuse, and seeks to ensure best practice becomes embedded.



 Mental Health & Domestic Abuse Awareness

**“Every week **three women** take their own lives to escape abuse”**

(Refuge UK)

**#OK2ASK #YouAreNotAlone**



# STATISTICS: THE SCALE OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

The evidence base in relation to domestic abuse is stark.

- Nationally, the Crime Survey for England and Wales estimated that 2.3 million people aged 16 years and over (1.6 million women and 712,000 men) experienced domestic abuse in year ending (YE) March 2024.
- Domestic abuse is the most common form of violence against women and girls.
- Police recorded 851,062 domestic abuse-related crimes in England and Wales in year ending March 2024.
- Domestic abuse-related crimes represented 15.8% of all offences recorded by the police in the last year.
- Women were disproportionately represented among victims of domestic abuse-related crimes, as in previous years, with 72.5% of all victims being female in the last year.

- In the year ending March 2023, 4.4% of people aged 16 or over in England and Wales reported experiencing domestic abuse in the 12 months before being surveyed - People with a mixed ethnic background experienced the highest rates of domestic abuse at 7.9%. Asian people experienced the lowest rates of domestic abuse at 2.0% and approximately 3.1% of Black or Black British women reported experiencing domestic abuse.

(Source: Victims of domestic abuse - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures).

AT A LOCAL LEVEL, DOMESTIC ABUSE REMAINS A KEY ISSUE FOR ST HELENS BOROUGH.

THE STATISTICS BELOW ILLUSTRATE THE CHALLENGE IN ST HELENS THAT WE MUST ADDRESS TOGETHER:

IN 2023/4 THERE WERE 3745 INCIDENTS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE IN ST HELENS RECORDED BY MERSEYSIDE POLICE

SINCE 2022 THERE HAVE BEEN 184 HOUSEHOLDS ACCEPTED AS HOMELESS DUE TO DOMESTIC ABUSE

DURING 2023/24 582 CASES WERE HEARD AT THE MARAC INCLUDED CHILDREN – THIS WAS A TOTAL OF 1147 CHILDREN

SINCE 2021, ST HELENS REFUGE HAS ACCOMMODATED 200 VICTIMS & THEIR CHILDREN

ON AVERAGE SAFE2SPEAK IDVA SERVICE RECEIVES 32 NEW REFERRALS EACH WEEK

DOMESTIC ABUSE REMAINS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOR CONTACTS TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

SINCE 2020, THE PARTNERSHIP HAS COMMISSIONED SIX DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEWS

DURING 2024 THE LOCAL HEALTH TRUST COMPLETED 132 MERIT ASSESSMENTS AND REFERRED 77 PATIENTS TO MARAC

SINCE 2021, 194 CHILDREN HAVE RESIDED AT REFUGE ACCOMMODATION

SINCE 2021, SAFE2SPEAK IDVA TEAM RESPONDED TO OVER 4700 REFERRALS INTO THE SERVICE

DURING 2022/23, 42% OF ALL CHILDREN'S AND FAMILIES ASSESSMENTS HAD DOMESTIC ABUSE AS AN IDENTIFIED FACTOR

22% OF ALL CONTACTS TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE HAD DOMESTIC ABUSE AS THE PRESENTING CONCERN



# OUR SHARED PRIORITIES

The overarching vision of this Strategy is:

WORKING TOGETHER TO PREVENT AND REDUCE THE HARM CAUSED BY DOMESTIC ABUSE WHILST ADDRESSING THE UNDERLYING ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS THAT PERPETUATE IT.

To deliver this vision, our five shared priorities are:

## COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

raising awareness and tackling attitudes and behaviours.

## LISTENING TO VICTIM / SURVIVORS

ensuring that lived experience shapes how we respond to domestic abuse.

## SUPPORTING CHILDREN AS VICTIMS OF ABUSE

listening to the voice of the child to ensure effective action is taken to support and/or safeguard them.

## STRENGTHENING SAFE ACCOMMODATION

ensuring that victims and their families have access to the right accommodation-based support when they need it.

## IMPROVING SERVICES AND SUPPORT

ensuring that the voice of those with lived experiences is reflected in the continuous improvement of support services.

Together, the partners in St Helens agree that:

- We will work together to prevent domestic abuse and to support all victim / survivors of abuse.
- We will use our platforms to tackle the attitudes and misinformation that exist in the Borough.
- We will improve employee's awareness and equip them with the skills to ensure they can respond to victim and survivors needs.
- We will offer services that are accessible for those experiencing multiple barriers to services.
- We will ensure that our services are trauma informed for victims and survivors of abuse.
- We will recognise children as victims of abuse and listen to their voices to ensure their needs are met; this includes taking protective action to keep them safe.
- We will use every opportunity to challenge the harmful behaviours of perpetrators of abuse and support victims to seek redress in the criminal justice system.
- We will be accountable to our residents and each other for our services and performance and will set and maintain high standards for service delivery for victims and survivors of abuse.
- We will ensure leaders and managers understand the experiences of children who are victims of domestic abuse and the prevalence of this issue within the borough.





# THE DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT 2021

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced a robust framework for the protection of victims of domestic abuse.

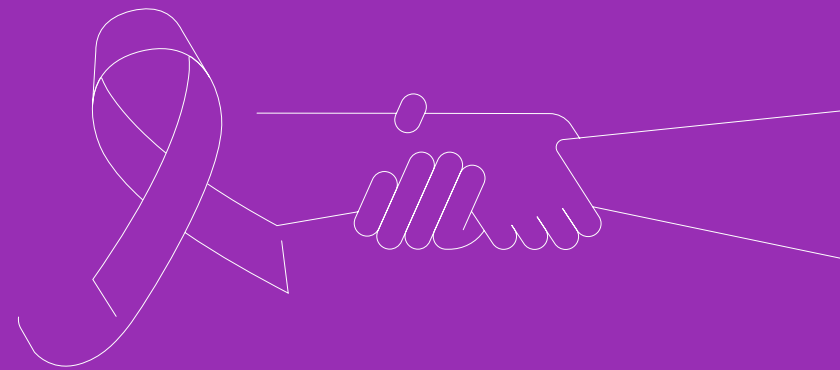
The Act created a statutory definition of domestic abuse, which includes not only physical violence but also emotional, coercive, or controlling behaviour and economic abuse.

The Act defines domestic abuse as:

*“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are personally connected to each other.”*

The Act also recognises children as victims of domestic abuse to ensure that they receive support and protection in their own right - Children who see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse and are related to either of the parties are considered victims of domestic abuse independently of the adult who experiences the abuse.

The Act introduced new duties introduced for local authorities these included the statutory duty to provide support into safe accommodation for victims and their children the requirement to establish and manage a Domestic Abuse Partnership.



## Serious Violence Duty

In 2024, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 introduced a Serious Violence Duty to ensure that statutory agencies work together to prevent and tackle serious violence. As other legislation is in place to manage domestic abuse, the Merseyside Strategic partnership agreed that domestic abuse would not form part of the serious violence definition for the purpose of the Duty and therefore would not be included in the Serious Violence Strategy for Merseyside.

Whilst Domestic Abuse does not form part of the Serious Violence Strategy for Merseyside, the partnership recognise the impact on victims, survivors, and their families, and will continue to support the pre-existing mechanisms in place across the region to oversee and govern activity to prevent domestic abuse and protect victims.

The Strategy outlines the partnerships commitment to continue to ensure preventative activity is directed at addressing underlying risk factors which are shared between domestic abuse and serious violence, to ensure a whole-systems approach to reducing risk and harm.

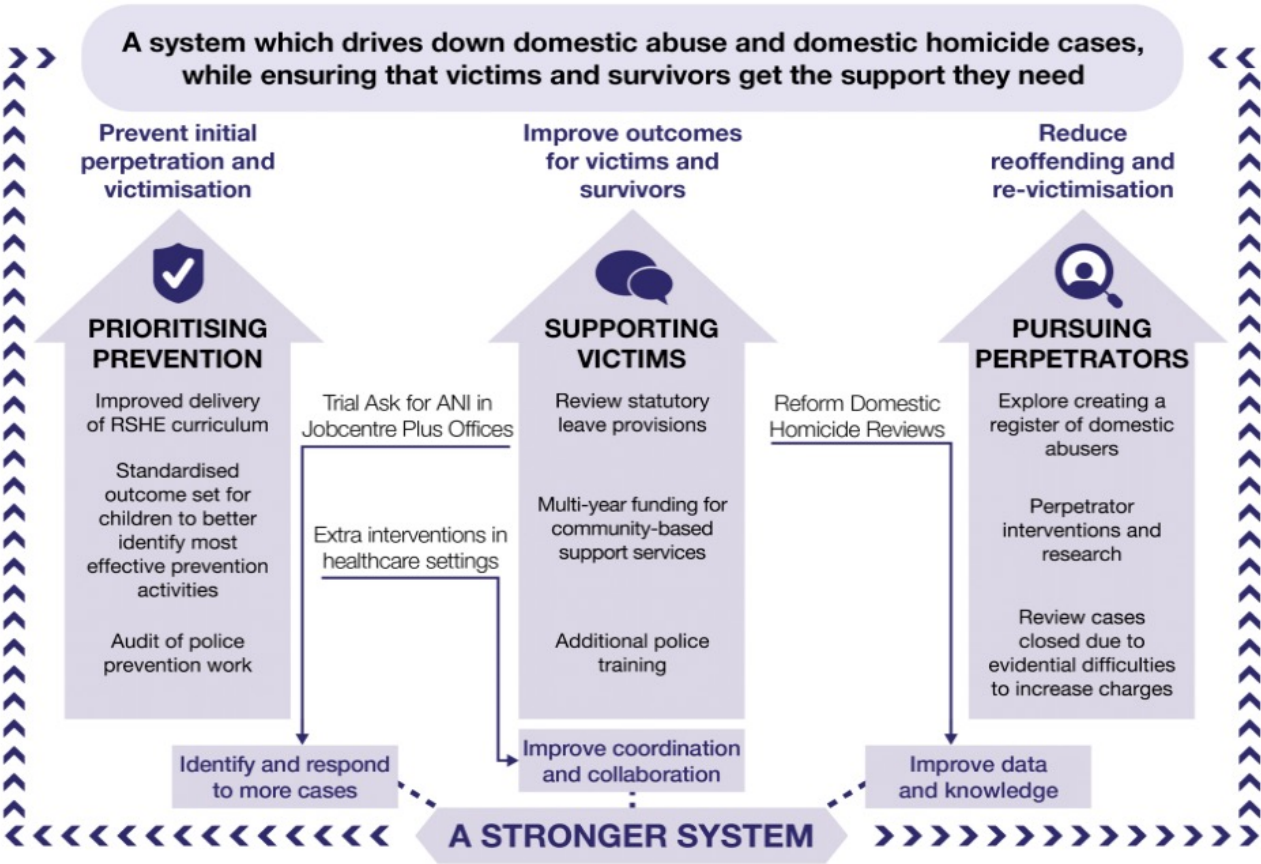
SAFER, STRONGER  
MERSEYSIDE



Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan

In March 2022, Government produced the ‘Tackling Domestic Abuse’ Plan – setting out the intention to move the onus for action towards targeting those who perpetrate abuse and to build a system that prevents domestic abuse from happening as well as delivering better outcomes for victims and survivors.

This Strategy is aligned to the overarching national Plan and the wider aims captured in this Plan:





## Violence Against Women and Girls Delivery Plan – Merseyside PCC

In 2022, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside, Emily Spurrell, published 'Working in partnership to tackle Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Delivery Plan'.

The Plan set out a clear ambition to protect women and girls who live, work and visit Merseyside, preventing violence, pursuing offenders and ensuring that violence against women and girls is prioritised and treated with urgency.

THE STRATEGY, CONTRIBUTED TO BY NEARLY 50 PARTNERS ACROSS THE REGION, SETS OUT 57 ACTIONS. WITHIN THE PLAN ARE SEVERAL OBJECTIVES RELATING TO DOMESTIC ABUSE AND HOW SERVICES ACROSS MERSEYSIDE WILL WORK TOGETHER TO PROTECT VICTIMS AND TACKLE PERPETRATORS.





# GOVERNANCE



IN APRIL 2021, THE DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT RECEIVED ROYAL ASSENT AND BECAME LAW. WITHIN THIS NEW LEGISLATION WAS THE REQUIREMENT TO ESTABLISH A DOMESTIC ABUSE PARTNERSHIP BOARD.

In May 2021, the St Helens Domestic Abuse Partnership Board was formed and supported by both statutory agencies and specialist services.

Since its creation, the Board has commissioned a Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment. This assessment, produced with the support of Linx Consultancy, highlighted the strengths of the local support offer and identified gaps in provision. The needs assessment led to the development of the Safe Accommodation Strategy for the borough to address gaps in provision.

The Board retains responsibility for the strategic direction of service development in relation to domestic abuse, with responsibility for commissioning of services and the development of the strategic response to abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Partnership Board is embedded within the wider governance structures of the local authority and wider partnership as outlined in the diagram above. The Board reports to the Community Safety Partnership for the borough (Safer St Helens Executive) and is supported and informed by the activity of the Survivor Forum and the MARAC Steering Group.

At a Merseyside level, the SDVAG (Strategic Domestic Violence and Abuse Group) – led by Merseyside Police – provides the Forum for co-ordinating activity to address domestic abuse across Merseyside.

The Place Services Scrutiny Committee has also received regular updates on the activity to prevent and respond to domestic abuse. The Scrutiny Committee has also conducted a wider review into the issue of violence against women and girls and continues to offer challenge and support on these important issues within its wider work programme.

The Safeguarding Adults Board held a development session in December 2024 identifying domestic abuse as a key area of focus for the Board. This will inform the priorities for tackling domestic abuse within adult social care and a service specific action plan will be developed during Spring 2025.

## DELIVERY: 2020-2024

The previous Domestic Abuse Strategy provided an important milestone in the development and delivery of a shared framework across the partnership in St Helens borough and assisted in shaping key activity from 2020 onwards.

This included a period in which services had to mobilise to respond to the direct impact of a pandemic and periods of lockdowns, which had heightened risks for victims of domestic abuse, and a subsequent growth in reporting of domestic abuse incidents.

Key achievements to date across the partnership have included:

- Developed and delivered the Voices Against Domestic Abuse campaign
- Creation of the St Helens Survivor Forum
- Delivering the first 'Domestic Abuse through the lens of a Child' workshop
- Delivered two Practice Learning Events for the partnership following Domestic Homicide Reviews which in turn led to improved practice among practitioners
- Promoted a local version of a video to raise awareness of the issue of coercive control

- Developed new services and roles to support victim / survivors of abuse – including the creation of a dedicated IDVA post in the MASH to support children and families and the development of the Court IDVA to support victim / survivors access the criminal justice system
- Funded a new role of Resettlement Officer which has helped families move on from Refuge accommodation.
- Opening of an additional space within the Refuge to enable children to have a dedicated space for homework and learning, plus additional laundry facilities
- Enhanced funding for Chrysalis Centre for Change and Listening Ear to provide counselling support for women
- Delivery of dedicated training sessions for Children's Social Workers
- Creation of a dedicated role within Change, Grow, Live of a Building Resilience IDVA
- Completed a multi-agency training audit focused on children and the effectiveness of the MARAC process on their needs
- Torus Housing achieved accreditation with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (October 2024).

## Domestic Abuse Strategy

2020 - 2022



It is time to **STOP** the silence



## CAMPAIGNS AND AWARENESS RAISING

The previous Strategy aimed to raise awareness of the issue of coercive control. Whilst positive action has been delivered in this regard, the recognition of coercive and controlling behaviour and ensuring that services offer an appropriate response remain a priority within this refreshed Strategy.

New and developing risks in relation to the use of technology to perpetrate abuse continue to emerge and therefore both the public and professionals will require further advice on how to identify these methods and appropriate responses to the use of technology by perpetrators.

Following the learning from a recent Domestic Homicide Review, a priority for public facing campaigns over the coming period will be a focus on friends and family members of those experiencing abuse.

A recent Survey completed in St Helens highlighted that people would reach out to friends and family for support more than to professional services. A new campaign will address how to recognise the indicators and signs of abuse, how to have safer conversations about this issue with family and friends and how to reach out for support. Tackling attitudes and behaviours at the earliest opportunity to support prevention of domestic abuse will also feature in the campaign and the new strategy will aim to work with Family Hubs, schools and colleges to deliver awareness training and challenge.

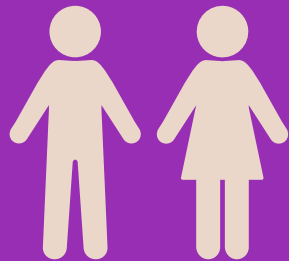
# This is not OK



**Being fearful of your  
boyfriend/girlfriend  
is not healthy.**

Consultation

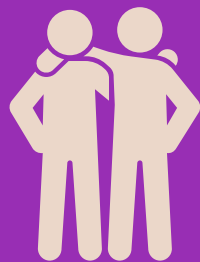
During 2023/24, a Survey was completed to understand the views of residents in relation to domestic abuse and to inform the development of this Strategy. Over 300 residents completed the online form or completed a face-to-face discussion with service representatives. Of the 238 respondents to the Survey, the following key findings have informed the development of this Strategy:



Over **90%** recognised that domestic abuse is an issue in our communities



When presented with the various forms of abuse, **94%** recognised all of the forms of domestic abuse that can occur



When asked who they would reach out to if experiencing abuse, **61%** advised that they would seek support from friends, **56%** indicated they would seek support from family and **50%** referenced Police. Only **27%** referenced seeking support from a Doctor or Healthcare professional. Just over one third (**37%**) advised that they would seek advice online via websites



In relation to named organisations, over half of the respondents stated that they would contact the Police if they were experiencing abuse, followed by the National Domestic Abuse Helpline. Only **38%** of respondents referenced that they would ask Safe2Speak for support and a lower number (**14%**) said that they would seek help from a workplace

# USE YOUR VOICE

## DOMESTIC ABUSE CONSULTATION

TAKE PART IN OUR ONLINE SURVEY



ST HELENS  
BOROUGH COUNCIL





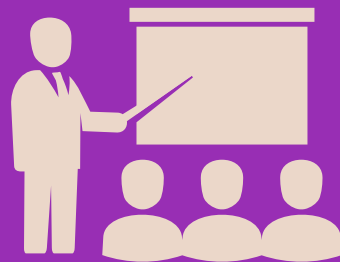
The Survey asked the question 'if you knew a family member was experiencing domestic abuse, would you bring up the subject with them – **85%** of respondents said 'yes'. The same percentage confirmed that they would do the same for a work colleague



When asked which groups or communities should receive further support – the largest number of respondents highlighted both children and people with mental health needs



The consultation also highlighted the need for greater awareness raising of local services – of the respondents, the highest recognition level related to 'Refuge' (**71%**) however the awareness levels of the organisations identified for local support varied from **35–52%** of respondents)



When asked how we can prevent people from harming other people – **89%** of respondents highlighted the importance of education, **81%** recognised the value of awareness campaigns and action

#### Key Messages from the consultation also included:

- Share survivor stories and case studies, to empower victims who are too frightened or embarrassed to access help and support.
- More emphasis on working with perpetrators and repeat offenders as the current strategy is missing a large part of the picture.
- Social Workers need to understand how to detect counter allegations.
- Male specific provisions to be available.
- Key community messages to be 'Domestic Abuse is everyone's responsibility'.
- Ensure suicide prevention and Self-harm is incorporated into the Domestic Abuse Strategy.
- Services and service design to take into consideration of intersectional barriers, race, disability, class etc.
- Stigma around DA and victim blaming needs to be addressed as this still exists.
- More public and professional training of domestic abuse, the signs and where to go for help.
- More visible Prevention work in the community.

The findings of this Survey have informed partners and have directly shaped the vision and specific actions within this Strategy.





# LISTENING TO SURVIVORS

In October 2021, the partnership in St Helens launched the Survivor Forum. Since its creation the Forum has considered key areas such as:

- Family Courts
- Social work practice
- First responders
- Life after abuse
- Early intervention

The Forum has also welcomed several guest speakers and representatives of statutory organisations.

In December 2023 a relaunch event was held, recognising the work of key individuals and the impact of the Forum since its inception as well as offering an opportunity to reflect on how the Forum can be supported to develop further. This also presented an opportunity to award certificates to the survivors in a celebratory atmosphere. A Survivor Forum representative is a member of the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and feeds in the findings from the forum members on the topics above to assist statutory and other services to improve their ways of working by listening to the voices of survivors.

THERE ARE NOW STRONG FOUNDATIONS TO BUILD UPON TO ENSURE THAT THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SURVIVORS CAN INFLUENCE AND SHAPE SERVICES AND THE DELIVERY OF SUPPORT.

During 2025, an external advisor will be appointed to further develop the Forum and to ensure that the voices of victim / survivors are heard in St Helens.





# SUPPORTING CHILDREN AS VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

CHILDREN WHO EXPERIENCE DOMESTIC ABUSE ARE VICTIMS OF ABUSE IN THEIR OWN RIGHT.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises this and therefore this means that services should work to support children who have experienced abuse within their family home and also to consider the needs of children when responding to an adult victim / survivor.

As a partnership, keeping the needs of children at the heart of our service responses – from the frontline operational practice, through to the services commissioned and funding secured, will mean that we can improve the response to children and young people.

Over the past two years, the St Helens Safeguarding Children Partnership has focused on Domestic Abuse Through the Lens of the Child, leading to significant cultural and procedural changes across agencies.

In education, over 90% of primary schools now have a named Domestic Abuse lead, with Head Teachers working to recognise children as victims under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

The National Probation Service has shifted to a whole-family approach, assessing children's risk levels alongside adult victims and encouraging engagement with them during home visits.

Agencies are moving from crisis-driven responses to prevention-focused, family-centred approaches, ensuring children's voices and lived experiences are fully considered. Increased training and an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) in MASH have helped social workers better understand the impact of domestic abuse on children. Health services now prioritise children's emotional and physical well-being, ensuring strong support plans.

This initiative has driven a cultural shift, ensuring children are recognised and supported as victims in their own right.

Ensuring timely access to Counselling support has been a key priority for the partnership since 2020 and will continue to remain a priority for future investment by the Partnership Board. Prior to the funding the average wait was around 5-6 months and had at some points risen to 8 months (approximately 150 – 240 days). The additional funding has brought the average wait time down to approximately 59 days. In general, victims are booked in as a priority when the referral is from Refuge and Safe2speak.



# Domestic abuse hurts you too

**If you feel unsafe at home, help is available.**

**Call Childline (9am-midnight) on: 0800 1111 or click this advert to go the childline support page**

**If you are in danger, call: 999.**

**Let's #LOCKDOWNDOMESTICABUSE**



A multi-agency audit was commissioned in 2024 to understand the impact that the MARAC process has in relation to the children included in the household and found that the MARAC process has played a significant role in supporting children and families affected by domestic abuse, offering early interventions, multi-agency collaboration, and protective measures to reduce immediate risks. In many cases within the audit, it found that children's needs have been prioritised, with agencies providing therapeutic support, safety planning, and referrals to necessary services.

The audit findings did also confirm that there remain challenges in fully integrating children's voices and ensuring that safety plans are both thorough and sustainable in the long term. For the MARAC process to be even more effective, stronger coordination, more consistent agency involvement, and clearer safety plans are needed to address children's needs more comprehensively and reduce long-term risks.

In response to the findings, which will be taken forward by the MARAC Steering Group, during 2025 the partnership will support the development of a Children's Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) to be a permanent member of the MARAC and to ensure that the voices and needs of children are represented at future MARAC meetings.

Although not specifically referenced under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, it is important that practitioners recognise and consider wider forms of abuse such as Child to Parent Abuse (CPA). CPA is where a child (of any age) displays repeated abusive behaviours towards a parental figure. This abuse may be physical, verbal, economic, digital, coercive or even sexual - and it's thought to occur in at least 3% of UK

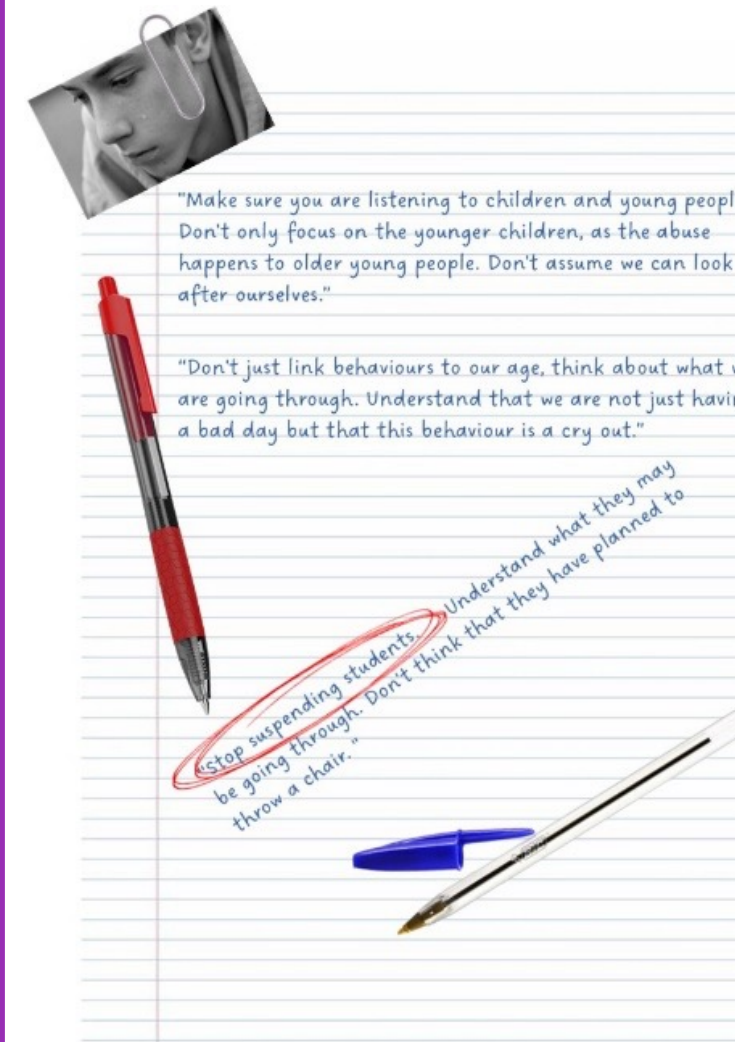
homes, although the real figure could be much higher. CPA is not 'normal' challenging behaviour experienced by most parents. It causes parents to feel fearful, isolated and like they're treading on eggshells, forces them to leave their careers and change their routines and lifestyles, and has a profound impact on families. Due to the impact of such abuse, it is important that practitioners within the borough are able to explore concerns, identify CPA, and take appropriate action to safeguard all members of the family.

The important role of schools in identification of needs and the provision of a safe place and continuity for children is also recognised by the partnership. Opportunities to further strengthen the role of schools will be undertaken during this Strategy period, including an overview of the Healthy Relationships programme in schools and its link to domestic issue and how children can raise this as a concern, as well as understanding the impact of Operation Encompass. Operation Encompass is a police and education partnership aimed at providing immediate support to children who experience domestic abuse. It involves collaboration between police services, schools, and safeguarding organisations to ensure that children affected by domestic abuse receive timely information and support. The initiative aims to reduce the long-term impacts of domestic abuse by facilitating early intervention and safeguarding measures.

The Department for Education guidance states that schools should be alive to issues such as everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes and take positive action to build a culture where these are not tolerated, and any occurrences are identified and tackled.

## A FURTHER ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS OF THE CHILDREN RESIDING AT REFUGE WILL ALSO BE UNDERTAKEN DURING 2025/26 TO ENSURE THAT THE SERVICES REACHING INTO REFUGE ARE MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

Domestic Abuse continues to be one of the main reasons for referrals into Children's Social Care services, representing 22% of presenting concerns at the point of referral. During the period of this Strategy there will be a focus on further raising awareness across all agencies of the prevalence of domestic abuse and early identification of risk and interventions to prevent escalation. The children's services practice model will be refreshed and will include the adoption and implementation of a domestic abuse evidence-based practice tool. This will further enhance our multi-agency response to supporting children and their families who are victims of domestic abuse.





# SAFE ACCOMMODATION

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced a statutory duty to local authorities to provide support to victim/survivors of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation.

A Needs Assessment was commissioned in July 2021 to understand the current gaps in service provision and to recommend a future commissioning strategy. The outcome of this commission was the delivery of a Support into Safe Accommodation addendum to the Domestic Abuse Strategy in January 2022. This Strategy outlined the future commissioning priorities for the borough – including providing additional Refuge capacity, providing further counselling support and continuing support for survivors when they leave safe accommodation.

The table below demonstrates that most of the priorities have now been delivered:

Area of Need Identified	Proposed Commissioning Activity 2022-2024	Status at the end of the Strategy period
Children living in safe accommodation	Play therapy and age-appropriate support for children residing in safe accommodation to be commissioned	<b>Completed</b> - Additional funding provided to Listening Ear to meet additional demand for children's Counselling support
Children living in safe accommodation	Embedded Children's Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) post within Children's Social Care / MASH	<b>Completed</b> - an IDVA post has been funded for 24 months to operate within the MASH of Children's Social Care
Victim / Survivors with complex needs	Commission a Complex Needs Worker to provide 'in reach' to Refuge	<b>Completed</b> - Change, Grow, Live have secured funding for a Complex Needs IDVA
Resettlement / Move On	Funding for a Resettlement / Support worker to support victim / survivors when they leave safe accommodation	<b>Completed</b> - Resettlement post funded within Refuge for 24 months

Counselling Support	Provision of additional counselling capacity to reduce waiting times and offer longer sessions of counselling	<b>Completed</b> - Chrysalis Centre for Change funded for waiting list initiative
Victim / Survivors with No Recourse to Public Funds	Funding for emergency placements and initial support for victims who have no recourse to public funds	<b>Completed</b> - allocation agreed by Domestic Abuse Partnership Board
Victim / Survivors who are working	Discretionary funding pot to fund rent / support charges to ensure no victim has to leave their job or return to a perpetrator for financial reasons	<b>Completed</b> - allocation agreed by Domestic Abuse Partnership Board
Refuge provision	Additional capacity to meet demand and accommodate service users who cannot access Refuge	<b>In progress</b> - As there is no scope for a physical extension at the existing provision, work is progressing well with the existing service provider to progress an alternative suitable location for a further six units of accommodation and support in the borough
Sanctuary Scheme	Commissioning of a Sanctuary scheme to offer additional security and support to victim / survivors	<b>In progress</b> - Initial funding provided for IDVA support to assess properties whilst a Sanctuary programme is developed

As outlined above, one of the recommendations from the Safe Accommodation Strategy was to commission additional refuge capacity – specifically in response to the demand for this provision and in order to provide an alternative offer within the borough. Working with Torus, who are a Registered Social Landlord – the core delivery partner for Refuge and support provision – an additional six-unit setting has been identified and this has received endorsement from the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board. The new units will open in Spring 2025 and will provide much needed capacity for this service.



The Needs Assessment completed in 2022 recommended that the Council progress with the development of a Sanctuary Scheme for the borough. As outlined above, this is in progress and whilst this is developed during 2025, the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board has provided additional funding to Safe2Speak to provide additional target hardening measures to support victims remaining at home when safety planning indicates that it is appropriate to do so.

#### **Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance**

Torus, the provider of Refuge and IDVA services in the borough achieved accreditation status in 2024 with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA). DAHA accreditation is the UK benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse in the UK. Achieving accreditation is a significant achievement for Torus and will have a positive impact across the partnership.

Activities that assisted Torus in securing this status included delivering domestic abuse training for all housing and Torus Foundation colleagues, the development of a network of 20 Domestic Abuse Champions from across the group, the embedding of a safety led case management process, and strong partnership links being created with specialist services. This good practice will be shared with the Registered Social Housing Providers Forum to encourage all social housing providers to become accredited.

# It's time to speak up





# REDUCING BARRIERS

## Homelessness and Domestic Abuse

Over recent years, due to multiple factors, there has been a growth in rough sleeping in the borough, including a small number of females. People experiencing rough sleeping are very vulnerable and can often experience difficulties in accessing services. Some of the relationships between people rough sleeping can be abusive, with wider factors such as entrenched drug and alcohol use and mental health needs also impacting the ability of people to receive support.

A priority for the coming period is to ensure that the dedicated services addressing rough sleeping receive specialist training on the response to domestic abuse within this group and learning from best practice on engaging people into safety and specialist services.

## ‘Honour based’ abuse

Ensuring that the partnership has a strong and developing awareness of so called ‘honour based’ abuse within our communities will be a key action in reducing barriers to accessing support. This will include raising awareness via education campaigns, ensuring that this form of abuse is recognised in partner training and ensuring that partners within the criminal justice agencies are assisted to support victims and to bring perpetrators to account.

Partners delivering services directly to victims will be requested to monitor trends and report this via strategic partnerships to ensure future commissioning is evidence led and responsive to local needs.

## Mental Health Support

Domestic abuse can have a significant impact on the mental health of victim survivors. For victim/ survivors in need of support with existing mental health support needs, it is essential that services recognise this need and can respond to this appropriately. This includes ensuring that all local mental health advocacy services are invited into the wider domestic abuse partnership and that practitioners in this sector are supported by the specialist organisations to ensure that there are co-ordinated care and support plans.

## Victims with no recourse to public funds

The partnership recognises the need to ensure that services and support is accessible to all victim / survivors of abuse. The previous Strategy highlighted the need to ensure that there are no barriers to accessing emergency accommodation for people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and that the overriding aim should always be to keep victim / survivors safe. Since this time, XXX people have been supported into safety and this important intervention will continue throughout the lifetime of this Strategy.

Partners also commit to the development of a protocol on how those with no recourse to public funds are managed (including by MARAC), funded, and the responsibilities of partner agencies to support victims.

## Coercive Control

Over recent years there has been a growing recognition of the impact of coercive and controlling behaviour as a form of domestic abuse. The behaviours involved in this form of abuse are often pervasive yet can commence as subtle and difficult to detect - often remaining hidden from wider friends and family networks. St Helens Council recently conducted an awareness raising campaign to educate residents on the types of behaviour that are coercive and controlling – using an animated story across short media clips. Partners recognise the need for this awareness raising to continue – both for practitioners but also for residents to know the signs and how to reach out for assistance.

For survivors of coercive and controlling behaviour, there is a need for ongoing support to rebuild confidence and independence. This will remain a key action for the partnership in the identification of this harmful behaviour and strengthening access into services to respond.

For criminal justice partners, it is recognised that the number of reports and convictions of coercive behaviour, whilst growing, do not reflect the scale of this behaviour perpetrated. Therefore, opportunities to highlight enforcement against perpetrators will be supported and amplified across the partnership to build confidence in reporting and in communicating to perpetrators that this behaviour will be prosecuted.



# IMPROVING OUR SERVICES AND SUPPORT

## Training

Good quality training and a supportive working environment enables practitioners to be confident and empowered in addressing the issue of domestic abuse in our communities.

Over recent years, the need for trauma informed practice has grown across the partnership. Individual agencies have responded to this and commissioned bespoke training packages to assist practitioners. However, as a partnership there is value in working together to ensure that this training is standardised, of good quality and meets the needs of victim / survivors of abuse. A priority over this period is therefore to work together to secure a suitable training intervention to enable employees to improve their practice, using a trauma informed approach and tools.

Wider training across the partnership will ensure that frontline practitioners are aware of the wider physical and emotional health indicators that a child/young person is experiencing domestic abuse – recognising the signs that can include evidence of emotional and psychological harms, behavioural issues, and developmental delays.

In creating a culture of improvement, how we speak about victim / survivors is important. This includes ensuring that our language will be non-victim blaming. Partners will review current training and processes and look to address poor practice in this regard. Similarly, as a partnership,

frontline practitioners will be trained to approach domestic abuse cases with professional curiosity, gathering all necessary information and asking appropriate questions.

During 2024, the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board completed a training audit in order to receive assurance that partners are delivering suitable training to their employees so that professionals have a good level of awareness of domestic abuse and the confidence and capabilities to provide timely support. Partners will explore the opportunity to make training on domestic abuse mandatory and to set and retain high expectations for staff to maintain continuous professional development in this area.

Priorities for future training during the period of the Strategy will include:

- Victim blaming language
- HBA and harmful practices
- Counter allegations – how to identify perpetrator presentation and avoid colluding with perpetrators
- Adult child – parent abuse
- Technological abuse.

Partners will be encouraged to look at alternative models of training to reach frontline practitioners, including lunch and learns, practice briefings, 7-minute briefings, etc.





### **Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) in St Helens**

During 2023/24, the St Helens MARAC responded to over 700 referrals and cases, that had met the threshold for support. This represents an increase of 7.6% on the previous year and is consistent with the wider trend across Merseyside.

This volume of cases presents a significant challenge to the partnership – it is essential to ensure that all cases heard on the day of the MARAC receive a high-quality review and opportunities for support and intervention where required.

In recognising the current caseloads, the Council has restructured its staffing structure to enable the provision of a second dedicated MARAC Support Officer and has invested in the implementation of a new information management system, to enable greater analysis of this function and enhanced recording mechanisms.

Across Merseyside new models of MARAC delivery are currently in the early stages of implementation and the partnership across St Helens has committed to learning from the models that are working well with a proposal to review the local MARAC function during 2025/26.

### **Domestic Homicide Reviews**

Since 2020, the Community Safety Partnership has commissioned six Domestic Homicide Reviews for the borough.

Domestic Homicide Reviews are a mechanism by which the partnership should establish what lessons are to be learned from a domestic homicide regarding the way in which local professionals and organisations work individually

and together to safeguard victims. This learning has informed and shaped this strategy and will improve service responses for all domestic abuse victims and their children by developing a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to ensure that domestic abuse is identified and responded to effectively at the earliest opportunity.

In November 2024, the partnership came together to listen to the feedback from two of the Independent DHR Chairs on the theme of suicide. This Practice Learning Event offered the opportunity to disseminate the learning from the Reviews into the death of 'Sarah' and 'Gill' and highlighted the activity, led by the Public Health Team, on recognising the links between domestic abuse and suicide.

Further Practice Learning Events will be completed following completion of the ongoing Reviews to enhance the sector learning and ensure that the key messages of improving services for victim / survivors.

It is expected that during the lifetime of this Strategy, the DHR process will change to reflect the Domestic Abuse Related Death Review's. The Partnership will work together to embed this new methodology and to ensure that new Statutory Guidance is implemented.

There is also shared learning across the wider Merseyside Partnership, led by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, to ensure that thematic areas receive a wider response and that recommendations that relate to systems changes are considered across a wider geographical footprint.





## Suicide Prevention and Domestic Abuse

Over recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the links between domestic abuse and suicide – with research demonstrating that people who experience domestic abuse are at higher risk of suicidal ideation.

The St Helens Borough Suicide Prevention Strategy recognises this and contains objectives to identify and reduce suicide risk factors, with a commitment to 'Develop risk assessment and support for those affected by domestic abuse'. St Helens has also supported the development of the wider Cheshire and Merseyside Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2027.

As a partnership, learning has taken place through three DHR's commissioned since 2020 that have related to the death of an individual by suicide in which there had been evidence of domestic abuse. This learning culminated in a Practice Learning Event in 2024 in which partners provided their pledges on how the awareness raising of the risk of suicide could be adopted into their practices and agreement on the need to strengthen pathways into support.

DURING THE PERIOD OF THIS STRATEGY, PARTNERS WILL, LED BY THE PUBLIC HEALTH TEAM OF ST HELENS COUNCIL, CONTINUE THE FOCUS ON THE NEED FOR TIMELY INTERVENTIONS TO PREVENT SUICIDE, AND TO IMPROVE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE WIDER RISK FACTORS AND INTERSECTIONALITY IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING FRONTLINE PRACTITIONERS WITH THE TOOLS AND KNOWLEDGE OF HOW TO IDENTIFY AND RESPOND TO RISKS.

## Community Responses

The partnership recognises the work of local organisations that have dedicated their time to supporting victim and survivors of domestic abuse. Whilst there are a small number of commissioned services in the borough, there is also space for local 'by and for' groups to develop to meet needs within our local area. Therefore, the partnership will work to support local services that are run by the community that they are designed for. Partners will assist such groups with practical advice and support to ensure that they have the opportunity to work within the wider community of practice with the shared aim of preventing and tackling domestic abuse.

# SUICIDE IS PREVENTABLE



[www.oktoaskcampaign.co.uk](http://www.oktoaskcampaign.co.uk)

**St.Helens Suicide Prevention Action Group**



## Perpetrators

Responding to perpetrators of abuse remains a key priority for the partnership and despite securing additional funding for the delivery of the MASC (Males Actively Seeking Change) programme delivered by CGL and LDVS, there is currently no long-term programme for delivering interventions to perpetrators of abuse.

The partnership recognises the need to ensure that there is a consistent approach across Merseyside in relation to perpetrator programmes. However, the lack of dedicated long-term funding and the ringfencing of existing funding to rightly protect victim / survivors, has resulted in a current gap in provision. The Partnership will continue to work collaboratively at a sub-regional level to secure additional funding and will also lobby for further capacity to meet this need in order to deliver opportunities for change via interventions in addition to disruption and a suitable response from the criminal justice system to those who perpetrate abuse.

The partnership is also open to explore the learning from the Multi Agency Tasking and Co-ordination (MATAC) approach to managing perpetrators of abuse. Again, additional funding could unlock the potential to deliver this response in St Helens. During the Strategy period, opportunities will be explored to determine how a multi-agency approach to perpetrator management can be delivered in the borough.

The use of existing powers and tools is an essential component of tackling harmful behaviours. Working together, Merseyside Police and Safe2Speak have responded to develop a comprehensive service offer to victims during the time period in which Domestic Violence Protection

Orders / Notices (DVPO/N) are in place. The Domestic Abuse Partnership Board has recently provided additional funding to Safe2Speak to ensure that this offer is available to all victim / survivors and that those identified as 'lower risk' of harm are also offered timely support and interventions whilst an alleged perpetrator is restricted in their activities. The impact of this enhanced service will be monitored alongside the learning from the current pilot police forces implementing the DAPO – Domestic Abuse Protection Orders.

The partnership commits to using all of the tools available to disrupt perpetrator behaviours. Merseyside Police has conducted a number of days of action against perpetrators and will continue this focus during this Strategy period. The Police will also use powers where appropriate to distance the perpetrator from the family home and will require the assistance of the wider sector to support victim / survivors during this time in order to maximise all opportunities for intervention and to safeguard victims and their families.

As a partnership, it is essential that victim / survivors are supported to access the criminal justice system. It is recognised that this can be a traumatic and daunting experience. The introduction of a dedicated 'Court IDVA' – funded by Ministry of Justice grant secured by the Police and Crime Commissioner - has enabled specialist support to be offered to victim / survivors who require support to access both the criminal and family court processes. This post continues to demonstrate the impact that dedicated advocacy can provide, and the partnership will look at options to secure this role into mainstream service delivery over the coming period.

# WE ARE #TakingAction TO TACKLE DOMESTIC ABUSE

Report it and we  
will take action



Visit: [www.merseyside.police.uk/VAWG](http://www.merseyside.police.uk/VAWG)



## DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

IN ORDER TO FOCUS ACTIVITY AGAINST THE AGREED PRIORITIES OF THE PARTNERSHIP, AN ACTION PLAN HAS BEEN DEVELOPED TO OUTLINE THE KEY ACTIONS THAT WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO SUPPORT THE WIDER VISION OF THE PARTNERSHIP.

PROGRESS AGAINST THE ACTION PLAN WILL BE MONITORED BY THE ST HELENS DOMESTIC ABUSE PARTNERSHIP BOARD.



# ACTION PLAN

	Action	Rationale	Who	When	Measurable Impact
	Community and Culture				
CC1	Delivery of a year-long campaign with consistent messages across the partnership to raise awareness of domestic abuse and reporting concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Previous DHR recommendations re: friends and colleagues</li><li>• Ensuring longevity of campaign and reach across the borough</li><li>• Amplified by partners across platforms</li><li>• Consolidation of messages and resources</li></ul>	Domestic Abuse Partnership Board Support via St Helens Borough Council	2025/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Campaigns delivered during period.</li><li>• Reach of campaign</li><li>• Recording data</li><li>• Feedback from partners and stakeholders regarding impact</li></ul>
CC2	Diversify the existing 'Voices Against Domestic Abuse' (VADA) campaigns to target specific issues – e.g. coercive control, use of technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building on the impact of the overall VADA message to ensure that future campaigns are targeted and align with both national campaigns and local needs</li></ul>	St Helens Borough Council Community Safety Team	Throughout the lifetime of the Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Campaign refresh</li><li>• Feedback from Survivor Forum</li><li>• Metrics on reach and impact</li></ul>
CC3	Attain White Ribbon status (St Helens Borough Council) and partners explore the potential of similar initiatives designed to tackle violence against women and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrable commitment to organisational commitment to tackling Violence Against Women and Girls</li><li>• Delivery of Champions and Ambassadors to retain a focus on Action Plan delivery</li></ul>	St Helens Borough Council Community Safety Team  Wider partners to consider White Ribbon status	Attainment of status by October 2025  Annual Plan produced as part of the status requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Status achieved.</li><li>• Annual review with evidence of impact</li><li>• Three-year renewal process</li></ul>



CC4	Increase prosecution and improve management of domestic abuse perpetrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition within strategic objectives within criminal justice agencies of need to increase prosecution.</li> <li>• Management of perpetrators key part of reducing domestic abuse and protecting victims</li> </ul>	Merseyside Police & Probation Services	Throughout the lifetime of this Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in prosecutions and DVPOs of perpetrators</li> <li>• Increased engagement in designated programmes and interventions</li> </ul>
CC5	Increase the number of Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme applications and disclosures (Claire's Law)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current level of disclosures</li> <li>• Key tool in supporting victims of domestic abuse</li> </ul>	Merseyside Police	Throughout the lifetime of this Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metrics on disclosures</li> <li>• Feedback from statutory and partner agencies</li> </ul>
	<b>Action</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Measurable Impact</b>
	<b>Listening to Victims and Survivors</b>				
VS1	Ensure voices of those who have lived through and who have been subjected to domestic abuse are listened to by refreshing the management, facilitation, and support to the Survivor/ Lived Experience forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following Survivor Forum refresh – opportunity to review governance, recruit additional members, develop a work-plan.</li> <li>• Appoint external Experienced consultancy support to provide capacity to deliver this</li> </ul>	Commissioned by DAPB	To be completed by December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultant Appointed</li> <li>• Engagement with previous Forum members</li> <li>• Updates to DAPB</li> <li>• Revised governance of SF</li> <li>• Services and agencies can evidence improved responses so that victims/ survivors get the support and protection they need</li> </ul>
VS2	Commitment from core partner agencies to attend the Survivor Forum once per annum to receive feedback and scrutiny on their performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that agencies receive direct feedback from victim / survivors and that this is used to shape services and delivery</li> </ul>	All core partners within the delivery of domestic abuse services	Throughout the lifetime of this Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of attendance</li> <li>• Feedback from Forum members</li> <li>• Impact following feedback from victim / survivors</li> </ul>

VS3	Commissioned services to present their service user feedback on an annual basis to the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ensuring that the governance framework is informed by direct feedback from recipients of services and that gaps in provision are identified and responded to in future commissioning cycles</li></ul>	Domestic Abuse Partnership Board	On an annual basis within forward plan of Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Reporting cycle established.</li><li>Evidence of feedback presented.</li><li>Evidence of change due to feedback from service users</li></ul>
	Action	Rationale	Who	When	Measurable Impact
	Supporting Children as victims of domestic abuse				
SC1	Implementation of the recommendations of multi-agency audit into the MARAC and voice of children  Expansion of auditing processes across domestic abuse service provision for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Audit undertaken during 2024/25 to ascertain if the needs of children are considered in MARAC safety planning</li></ul>	Safeguarding Children Partnership / Individual agencies	In line with recommendations of audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Evidence of impact of multi-agency audit process</li><li>Learning from reviews</li><li>Evidence of change delivered from recommendations made.</li><li>Feedback should include how practice, planning and the design of services are informed and improved by feedback from children and families, as well as from research and intelligence about effective multi-agency practice</li></ul>
SC2	Conduct a review of the needs of children residing at Refuge and use this to inform future commissioning decisions on support for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ensuring that the needs of children at Refuge are being met across the partnership</li><li>Informing future commissioning decisions</li></ul>	Torus / Safe2Speak and Safeguarding Children Partnership members	Torus / Safe2Speak and Safeguarding Children Partnership members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Review completed.</li><li>Recommendations shared with Safeguarding Children Partnership and Domestic Abuse Partnership Board</li><li>Implementation of recommendations</li></ul>



SC3	Deliver a dedicated Children's IDVA to represent children and young people at the MARAC meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognition of the number of children supported by MARAC process and the need for a dedicated presence at meetings to represent the needs of children</li></ul>	Children's Social Care	Recruitment to commence June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recruitment progressed via an initial pilot to monitor impact</li><li>• Postholder appointed</li><li>• Evaluation of role and longer-term funding secured</li></ul>
SC4	Review and strengthen the current service offers for pregnant women and for younger children (preschool age)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is limited external support for children under the age of 4</li></ul>	Domestic Abuse Partnership Board / Children's Social Care Commissioning	Reviewed as part of wider Needs Assessment for the borough.  Opportunities to pilot new / expanded service offers prior to this Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Needs clarified and programmes / support offers identified.</li><li>• Funding secured.</li><li>• Delivery and evaluation of impact</li></ul>
	Action	Rationale	Who	When	Measurable Impact
	Strengthening Safe Accommodation				
SA1	Co-ordinate activity to ensure that all available external funding is secured to enhance delivery of support to victim / survivors of abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multiple funding streams in place to fund services for victim / survivors of abuse.</li><li>• Need to mitigate impact of short-term funding and potential termination of grant sources.</li><li>• Maximise future opportunities for investment into services</li></ul>	All agencies across the domestic abuse partnership	Throughout the lifetime of this Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Funding secured</li><li>• Evidence of evaluation and impact of funded services</li></ul>

SA2	Embed additional Refuge capacity in the borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identified within Needs Assessment and Safe Accommodation Strategy</li></ul>	Commissioned by DAPB / Delivered by Safe2Speak	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Additional units available for occupation</li><li>Reduction in number of refusals due to capacity</li><li>Increase in number of in borough placements.</li><li>Reduction in use of other forms of temporary accommodation for people fleeing domestic abuse.</li><li>Increasing availability and capacity to meet the needs of larger families</li></ul>
SA3	Commission a Sanctuary Scheme for the borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identified as a need within the Safe Accommodation Support Strategy</li></ul>	St Helens Borough Council Community Safety Team	During 2025/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Specification and pathways developed and approved.</li><li>Tender process completed.</li><li>Provider appointed</li></ul>
	Action	Rationale	Who	When	Measurable Impact
	Improving our services and support				
ISS1	Review and improve the suicide prevention pathways in relation to domestic abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews and recognition of the relationship between domestic abuse and suicide</li></ul>	Public Health Lead – Suicide Prevention	March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Prevention pathways reviewed.</li><li>Impact reported to Domestic Abuse Partnership Board</li><li>Implementation of suicide prevention training for professionals working with young people</li></ul>



ISS3	Secure additional funding to enable further innovation in functions to meet the needs of victim / survivors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track record of innovation to meet needs (e.g., Court IDVA) – however dependency on external / short term funding</li> <li>Ability to respond to initiative and ideas emerging from Survivor Forum</li> </ul>	Whole partnership response	Throughout the lifetime of this Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total grant funding secured.</li> <li>Evidence of innovation</li> <li>Survivor led interventions and services</li> </ul>
ISS4	Review the existing support offer for victims assessed as ‘Silver’ or Bronze’ in the MERIT risk assessment and secure opportunities to strengthen this offer – specifically for support in the DVPO / DAPO process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring there is a sufficient service response to victims of domestic abuse.</li> <li>Partnership response to the DVPO process and learning from the emerging DAPO pilots</li> </ul>	Merseyside Police Safe2Speak	During 2025/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report to Domestic Abuse Partnership Board on existing provision</li> <li>Update on DVPO and learning from DAPO pilots.</li> <li>Pathways refreshed and agreed</li> </ul>
ISS5	Partners to ensure that domestic abuse awareness training is mandatory across all relevant front-line roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Previous audit undertaken by Domestic Abuse Partnership Board</li> <li>Learning from DHR recommendations</li> <li>Assurance to be sought across the partnership.</li> <li>Continuity of training offer from Safe2Speak</li> <li>Foster strong partnerships and collaboration between different agencies to share information, resources, and best practices in addressing domestic abuse</li> </ul>	Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (oversight)  Responsibility for each agency re: workforce training	Throughout the lifetime of this Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training audits completed on a regular basis.</li> <li>Oversight by Domestic Abuse Partnership Board</li> <li>Impact of training into practice</li> </ul>



ISS6	Agree and implement a shared training mechanism to ensure that organisations and their practices are trauma informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for trauma informed workforce recognised across the partnership.</li> <li>• Opportunity for collaboration in respect of domestic abuse</li> <li>• Learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews and wider partnership reviews</li> </ul>	Governance Groups across the partnership – SCP, SAB and CSP	Delivery of training during 2025/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scoping of existing trauma informed training offer</li> <li>• Identification of shared opportunities for commissioning future training in this area</li> <li>• Impact across workforce</li> </ul>
ISS7	Provide support to local 'by and for' organisations in the borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that there is a supportive operating environment for new service development</li> </ul>	Domestic Abuse Partnership Board	Throughout the lifetime of this Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of sector growth and development</li> <li>• Provider feedback</li> </ul>
ISS8	Implement the new Statutory Guidance when received on Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that the existing processes in place for the commissioning of DHR's are amended to reflect the expected change to the new Review process</li> </ul>	Domestic Abuse Partnership Board / St Helens CSP	Awaiting national guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation via new Statutory guidance</li> </ul>
ISS9	Secure funding for the delivery of a long-term Perpetrator programme across the partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently limited provision for the delivery of a perpetrator programme in borough</li> <li>• Identified as a priority across partnership</li> </ul>	St Helens People's Board	During 2025/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of funding available from partner agencies</li> <li>• Scoping of programmes / interventions</li> <li>• Decision making regarding local provision.</li> <li>• Implementation and evaluation of agreed programme</li> </ul>
ISS10	Review opportunities for the implementation of a MATAC approach to response to perpetrators of abuse in the borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MATAC in operation across other local authority areas in Merseyside</li> <li>• Consideration for introduction in St Helens subject to evaluation of impact from other areas</li> </ul>	Domestic Abuse Partnership Board	Review existing MATAC approach 2025/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitation to other areas to feedback on MATAC</li> <li>• Scoping of impact on partnership and resources to determine local applicability.</li> <li>• Decision making via Domestic Abuse Partnership Board</li> </ul>

ISS11	Commission a Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment in 2026/27	To provide a refresh of the 2022 Needs Assessment and to ensure that commissioning during the lifetime of this Strategy is informed by contemporaneous evidence base	Domestic Abuse Partnership Board	Commissioned during 2025/26 – delivered during 2026/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evidence base produced</li><li>• Opportunity for stakeholder engagement</li><li>• Mid-strategy refresh based on outcome of Assessment</li></ul>
ISS12	Develop a DA services directory (including Local, Regional & National Services) to support practitioners in identifying appropriate services for victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse (this should also include advice on preventative orders, DVDs Schemes etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multi-agency benchmarking against the Domestic Abuse Joint Target Area Assessment identified that agencies knowledge of services available and understanding of preventative orders could be strengthened</li></ul>	Domestic Abuse Partnership Board	2025/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase in applications for preventative orders.</li><li>• Increase in referrals to support agencies.</li><li>• Reduction in repeat DA incidents</li><li>• Feedback from partners and stakeholders regarding impact</li></ul>





ST HELENS  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

for **with** you  
you



EMILY SPURRELL  
MERSEYSIDE POLICE  
& CRIME COMMISSIONER

