

Southampton Domestic Abuse and Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2023-2028

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Forewords¹

Mary D’Arcy

Executive Director for Communities, Culture and Homes

“Southampton has a strong and established network of organisations, statutory and voluntary, working together to support the victims/survivors of domestic and sexual abuse. The implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has only served to further strengthen the resolve of partners in the city to continue to collaborate and operate at a system wide level, as well as organisationally, to tackle the issues facing the city around Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls.

There are four priorities laid out this Strategy: Prioritising prevention; Support for survivors; Building an accountable community and changing perpetrator behaviour, and; Stronger coordinated response. These have been developed using data, intelligence and research, alongside consultation with stakeholders and – critically – with feedback from victims/survivors and those with lived experience too.

As the inaugural chair of the Southampton Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Partnership Board, I see this Strategy as the beginning of the next phase in our partnership work. I have been inspired by the work of so many individuals and organisations, and their passion to stop violence, abuse and harm. Positive outcomes for women, children, families and all victims/survivors, will only be achieved through collaboration, commitment and challenge, which I believe is reflected here and will be taken forward by the Board as it develops and leads this important work for the City.”

Councillor Matthew Renyard

Cabinet Member for Safer City

“Southampton is a vibrant, diverse and hard-working city. We are a ‘city of sanctuary’ that has welcomed communities from all over the globe. We are also a young city that each year welcomes thousands of new and excited students into our communities. Yet Southampton is also a city where Domestic Abuse levels continue to climb, despite the work of so many dedicated professionals and organisations, and where Violence Against Women and Girls happens all too frequently in our public places.

In recent years we have come a long way in understanding the issues we want to address, and as a city, we have taken the lead in so many ways. We were one of the first local authorities to be DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) Accredited, we were the first authority in the country to host a Violence Against Women and Girls conference (in February 2022), and in 2022 we have launched our Safe Places network.

This city-wide partnership Strategy is a key milestone in this important work, to ensure that *all* victims and survivors of domestic abuse receive the support *they* need, in a co-ordinated way. However, supporting victims/survivors is only one facet of this complex issue, and we are equally focussed on preventing further abuse and violence by addressing the behaviours of perpetrators, and working with schools and our communities to enable young men and women to develop the behaviours and values that will support healthy relationships as they mature.”

¹ Post holders and job titles correct at time of publication (December 2022)

Key definitions

What is Violence Against Women and Girls?

Violence Against Women and Girls (“VAWG”) is the umbrella term used to describe a range of violent and abusive acts and behaviours, which are predominantly, but not exclusively, directed against women and girls.

The UN defines VAWG as: “any act of gender-based violence which results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, mental harm or suffering to women and girls.”

The UK has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence 2011 (Istanbul Convention). This recognises violence against women as “a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women.” It states VAWG is both the cause and the result of unequal power relations between women and men in both public and private spheres. The Istanbul Convention entered into force in the United Kingdom in November 2022.

Locally, we have adopted the United Nations and Istanbul Convention definitions of VAWG within this strategy.

There are multiple forms of VAWG including **domestic abuse, rape** and **other sexual offences, stalking, ‘honour-based’ abuse** and harmful practices such as **Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage, ‘revenge porn’, ‘upskirting’** and many others. A dictionary in Appendix 1 of this document explains all of the terminology in bold.

What is Domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is controlling, coercive or violent behaviours carried out by a person or group towards a family member, partner or ex-partner.

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

- (a) physical or sexual abuse;
- (b) violent or threatening behaviour;
- (c) controlling or coercive behaviour;
- (d) economic abuse (see subsection (4));
- (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse.

In 2021, the Domestic Abuse Act introduced a new definition of domestic abuse. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse towards their parent, guardian or relative are now treated as victims/survivors of domestic abuse in their own right. This means they can get support from domestic abuse services. This strategy sets out how our partnership will act to ensure children receive the extra services and support that this new definition requires.

Support and safety for all victims/survivors

We are using the term VAWG because these types of violence and abuse disproportionately affect women and girls. We recognise that this terminology can raise concerns about the exclusion of other groups.

As a partnership we recognise that men, boys, and non-binary people are also victims/survivors of violence and abuse and that there are often significant barriers to them reporting abuse and seeking support. We also recognise that violence and abuse does not just present in heterosexual relationships but can be experienced in any intimate relationship.

This strategy, and the work of the partnership, is for all victims/survivors of these forms of violence and abuse and aims to bring about improvements for everybody.

Why are we aligning domestic abuse with VAWG in this strategy?

As a partnership we have reviewed our approach to take into account the evolving policy context around domestic and sexual abuse.

Aligning domestic abuse with VAWG allows us to coordinate the actions we take most effectively. Evidence shows us that the sexual and domestic abuse women face is more frequent, more extensive, and tied to broader social and structural barriers. Therefore, to address root causes we must link these forms of abuse to the continuum of VAWG.

We make specific reference to domestic abuse within the strategy's title in order to recognise the specific multi-agency processes that we have in place within the city.

How to get help

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic or sexual abuse in Southampton, the following services can be contacted for support and advice (these services are for *all* victims/survivors):

For domestic abuse:

- PIPPA Helpline: 023 8091 7917

For sexual abuse:

- Yellow Door: 023 8063 6312

If you are in immediate danger, please dial 999 for police assistance.

For more information on local and national support services and practical advice on how to get help (whether you still live with your abuser, or you have left), please go to:

<https://www.southampton.gov.uk/health-social-care/domestic-abuse/>

Introduction

The Southampton Domestic Abuse and Violence against Women and Girls Partnership

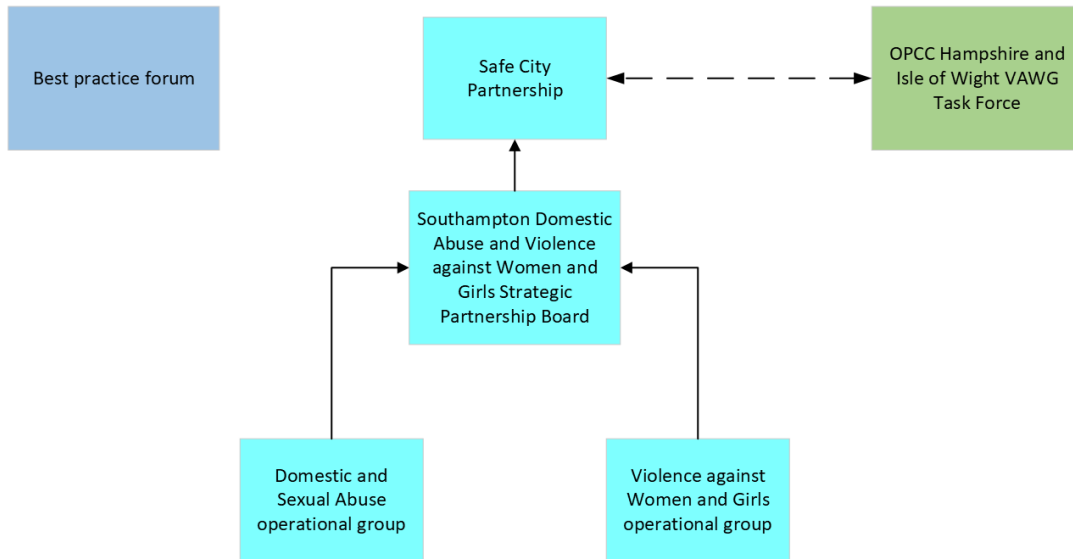
In Southampton, key public services and agencies have joined up to take action to prevent violence against women and girls (“VAWG”) and to find better ways to support victims/survivors of abuse.

The Partnership has the following members:

- Hampshire Constabulary.
- Local services representing interests of charities and voluntary organisations working with victims/survivors.
- NHS Hampshire, Southampton and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board (ICB).
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.
- Southampton Probation Service.
- Solent NHS Trust.
- Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust.
- Southampton City Council (SCC).
- Southampton Local Safeguarding Boards (represented jointly).
- University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust
- Representation of survivor voices

Partner representatives (senior leaders with the power to make decisions about how resources are used) meet as a ‘Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Partnership Board’ quarterly. The Board is provided with the latest intelligence around domestic abuse and VAWG in Southampton and decides how best to respond. The Board is supported by two operational groups, the ‘Domestic and Sexual Abuse Operational Group’ and the ‘Violence Against Women and Girls Operational Group’ who will implement the actions set out in the strategy across partner organisations. New Terms of Reference for the Board and for the operational groups have been drawn up to align with this new strategy.

A report on the partnership’s progress is provided to the Safe City Partnership (a group of agencies required by law to work together to make Southampton safer) quarterly. The Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Southampton Local Safeguarding Adults Board also monitor the partnership’s progress.



The value in working together

Working in partnership on such an important issue is vital. Together we will make improvements that we can **only** make together.

Our partnership aims are as follows:

- We will work in partnership to make Southampton safer for women and girls.
- We will improve the connections between the services we provide so victims/survivors get the support they need, in the right place, at the right time.
- We will join up our training and communications to ensure our services are reliable, consistent and known by everyone who needs them.
- We will collect robust data across our systems and use it to improve decision making by our practitioners, and to inform decisions about how we use our money and resources to achieve our aims.
- We will pool our intelligence and hear the voices of survivors, service providers and our residents to learn about gaps in our services and barriers to accessing our support.
- We will own up to our mistakes and learn from them.
- We will hold each other to account as partners, and we will be held accountable by the people we exist to support.
- We will work together to tackle inequalities in our service provision and to promote equality, diversity and inclusion across our workforces and the workforces of our service providers.

Understanding the picture of Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls

It is not easy to get an accurate picture of domestic and sexual abuse, and wider violence against women and girls, in the city. This is partly because we know that our partners each record incidents and reports differently. There are also (for good reason) robust data protections in place to keep safe the information that victims/survivors give services.

We also know that many victims/survivors under-report the abuse they are subjected to or are too scared to report at all. In some cases, they may not even have an opportunity to report abuse and may be prevented by their abuser(s) from seeing professionals or support services on their own.

This is part of the complex picture that surrounds this issue. It is also what makes it so vitally important that when somebody reports abusive or violent behaviour, their concerns are taken seriously, knowing that this might be the only time that the victim/survivor has an opportunity to disclose what is happening.

The information we have included below pulls together as much data as we have – across all our partners – to try and build a clearer picture of the issue in Southampton, to understand the needs of residents, and crucially to direct resources to the right places.

The data – national, regional and local – that has been used to inform and develop this strategy has come from a range of sources, including (but not limited to):

- Our Southampton City Council Needs Assessment and Problem Profile (2021/22).
- Our Part 4 – Safe Accommodation Strategy (2021).
- Policing, criminal justice and OPCC (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner) data.
- Colleagues in homelessness, adult social care and other relevant teams.
- The PIPPA helpline for Domestic Abuse in Southampton.
- Southampton’s Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA).
- Other local service providers (such as Yellow Door, The Hampton Trust and STOP).
- Public Health data and frontline healthcare services.

We are aware that a measure of the success of the strategy could be that we temporarily see these statistics around domestic and sexual abuse, and other violent gendered crimes, increase in the city across our partners. Whilst increases in domestic abuse and VAWG statistics are never ‘good news’, we are also mindful that increased reporting is not always an increase in the volume of the crime/incidences as there is currently a huge volume of underreporting. A fuller picture will enable us to target resources more fully to those who need it the most.

We know that the picture is not yet complete and that there may be things that we do not yet know. However, we have made a strong commitment within this strategy to further understanding and enhancing the data we have during the lifetime of this strategy.

The local picture – what we already know

- Domestic violence is a driver of overall violent crime in Southampton. 35.5% of all **violent crimes in Southampton were flagged as domestic** in 2020/21.
- There were 4,804 **domestic flagged crimes** reported in Southampton during 2020/2021, which is a 2.6% increase compared to the previous year.
- Domestic flagged crime in the city continues to have strong links to **deprivation**, with rates approximately 5 times higher in the most deprived neighbourhoods compared to the least deprived.
- Nationally, domestic abuse is a leading cause of **homelessness** for women, and a Southampton homelessness hostel reported that, before moving into the hostel, 90% of female residents reported having experienced domestic abuse.
- Over 50% over women in Southampton **refuge had children**, with 115 children supported in one refuge (2018-2021). Furthermore, over half (54.3%) of Southampton High Risk domestic abuse (“HRDA”) Referrals in Southampton have children or young people in the household (2019/2021).
- The Southampton Community Safety Strategic Assessment has consistently highlighted the following three priority crime groups over the last three years in Southampton: violent crime (all forms), domestic crimes and sexual offences. These crime types are also known to disproportionately impact on women and girls.
- Southampton is an outlier for violent and sexual offences, with Southampton ranked among the worse 10% of Community Safety Partnerships nationally for the rate of violent and sexual offences in 2020/21.
- Southampton is significantly higher than the national average for the rate of **stalking and harassment** offences. This has increased by 22.3% in Southampton between 2019/2020 and 2020/2021. This increase is in part still being driven by changes in counting rules for stalking and harassment offences introduced in 2018. Nonetheless, this is something that should continue to be monitored as these offences can be a precursor for more serious offending.
- Rape is the crime group that causes the most harm in Southampton, accounting for 1.4% of recorded offences, yet 24.5% of the harm (relative severity) caused by crime in the city.
- Victim profiling highlighted that VAWG can affect women and girls of any age and from all walks of life.
- There is a strong relationship between VAWG (all definitions) and deprivation, with the rate of VAWG over five times higher in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in the city, compared to the 20% least deprived neighbourhoods.
- VAWG shows a link with the night-time economy, which is evidenced through hotspot mapping highlighting concentrations of VAWG incidents occurring in parts of the city centre where a large number of night-time economy venues are located.
- Additionally, profiling highlighted peaks of incidents occurring late at night and on weekends. Analysis of associated factors highlighted that 14% of overall VAWG, 1 in 5 (20.4%) domestic VAWG and 13.4% of public place VAWG incidents had alcohol recorded as a factor. Alcohol is a known driver of violence, particularly intimate partner violence, which would explain levels of alcohol related domestic VAWG incidents.

More data and information, including the annual Safe City Assessment are available from [Southampton Data Observatory](#).

Our new Strategy to tackle Domestic and Sexual Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls in Southampton

This strategy explains how the partnership will work together over the next five years (2023-28) to make Southampton safer for women and girls, and to support the victims and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse.

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, local authorities are obliged to prepare and publish a strategy outlining their provision of accommodation-based support to victims/survivors of domestic violence (our [‘Strategy for Provision of Support in Safe Accommodation 2021- 2024’](#)). This new Domestic Abuse and Violence against Women and Girls strategy builds upon the council’s Safe Accommodation strategy to set out wider strategies for tackling domestic abuse and VAWG in the city over a five-year period.

The strategy aligns closely to the following SCC strategies and plans:

- Strategy for the Provision of Support in Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-2024. (Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires local authorities to have a strategy for this in place).
- Safe City Partnership Strategy (2022-2027).
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2017-2025).
- Children and Young People’s Strategy (2022-2027).
- Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Strategy (2023-2028).
- Homelessness Prevention Strategy (2018-2023) and updated version.
- Youth Justice Strategy (2022-2027)
- Southampton City Council Corporate Plan (2021-2025).

The views of survivors, practitioners, senior commissioners, public health experts and residents have guided us in producing this strategy including the following:

- Preventing perpetrators of intimate partner abuse in Southampton: A needs assessment. (Public Health, Southampton City Council, June 2019).
- A rapid joint strategic needs assessment of Women Selling Sex “On Street” (Southampton City Council, July 2020).
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment (Standing Together, on behalf of Southampton City Council, August 2021).
- Reducing Violence against Women and Girls in Southampton City (Safe City Partnership, Making Southampton safer, 2021).
- Southampton Violence against Women and Girls Problem Profile (Southampton City Council Data Observatory 2022).
- Report for Practitioner and Public VAWG Survey (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight’s 2022).

This strategy has also been informed by national guidance published by the Home Office in their ‘Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Strategy’ (July 2021) and ‘Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan (March 2022) and the information that was gathered from practitioners and victims/survivors as part of the national ‘Call for Evidence’ public surveys for both of these documents.

This strategy also reflects our commitment to address the comments and recommendations in reports published following Domestic Homicide Reviews carried out in Southampton. A Domestic Homicide Review is a multi-agency review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person.

Setting out our 4 key priorities for the city

This Strategy is split into actions ('what we will do') under four priority areas. These priorities have been identified by careful review of the evidence about local needs and service performance, and are set out in detail further in the document.

Our priorities			
1. Prioritising prevention	2. Support for survivors (early intervention and support)	3. Building an accountable community and changing perpetrator behaviour	4. A stronger coordinated response

Coordinated Community Response (CCR)

This Partnership is committed to implementing a Coordinated Community Response (CCR) to domestic abuse and VAWG. This is an approach pioneered in the UK by Standing Together, a national specialist domestic abuse and VAWG charity.

“The Coordinated Community Response brings together services to ensure local systems truly keep survivors safe, hold abusers to account, and prevent domestic abuse... The CCR enables a whole system response to a whole person. It shifts responsibility for safety away from individual survivors to the community and services existing to support them.”

The CCR model recognises that agencies and organisations are often responding to one aspect of the issue and/or the same problem from different angles and that survivors and their children are often caught within these structures, unclear of how to navigate services to get the help they need.

This diagram shows some of the different agencies and groups to be involved in the response:



For more information on CCR, visit: <https://www.standingtogether.org.uk/what-is-ccr>

What area does our strategy cover?

Our strategy deals with services provided by partners and their service providers in Southampton. Services provided across Hampshire and England are also available in Southampton.

Child Friendly City status

The actions in this strategy support work by services in Southampton to become a 'Child Friendly City'. Child Friendly City status is awarded by UNICEF to cities where children's rights are put into practice and children have a meaningful say in, and truly benefit from, the local decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives.

Domestic abuse and VAWG: how our joint service currently works

Victim/Survivors

If a member of the public experiences or becomes aware of domestic abuse or VAWG they can phone the police (dial 999 in an emergency) and/or contact one of the specialist services in the city.

For domestic abuse, including harmful practices such as forced marriage and honour-based violence, the PIPPA helpline (023 8091 7917) is open to practitioners and members of the public. It is staffed by trained specialists to provide initial guidance, support, and safety advice and, with consent, undertake a risk assessment (DASH, an evidence-based risk assessment used nationally).

Victims/survivors who are assessed as medium risk will be referred, with consent, to appropriate community-based support in the city. Those assessed as high risk are referred, via the Children's Resource Service (formerly the MASH), into the High-Risk Domestic Abuse ("HRDA") process. This is a multi-agency process where relevant information is gathered and shared between partner agencies to inform appropriate support and safeguarding actions. When professionals identify a high level of risk to victims/survivors, they can refer directly into the HRDA process.

Victims/survivors who are assessed as being at standard/medium risk are offered outreach community support from a specialist domestic abuse worker (including specialist workers for harmful practices, disability advocacy and for those victims/survivors who need support for mental health, or with drugs or alcohol). Those assessed at high risk are referred to the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy service (IDVAs). Via either route, victims/survivors are offered support and advocacy that focuses on increasing safety and reducing harm. Independent Domestic Violence Advisors ("IDVAs") and outreach workers can support victims/survivors to access services e.g., housing, benefits, health, Children's Services, legal advice and navigate complex systems e.g., criminal and civil court processes. They are there to advocate on the victim's/survivor's behalf and ensure that support is victim-centred and focused on safety.

For those who have experienced any form of sexual abuse, there is a specialist helpline, open to the public, provided by a specialist service, which provides advice, support and referrals to appropriate advocacy (Independent Sexual Violence Advisors "ISVAs"), and one-to-one and group therapeutic support.

For victims/survivors of stalking, there is a specialist stalking service (operating across Hampshire) that offers support, advice, and guidance, regardless of involvement with the criminal justice system.

Referrals to this service can be made directly by the victim/survivor, or on their behalf by any service provider who is working with them.

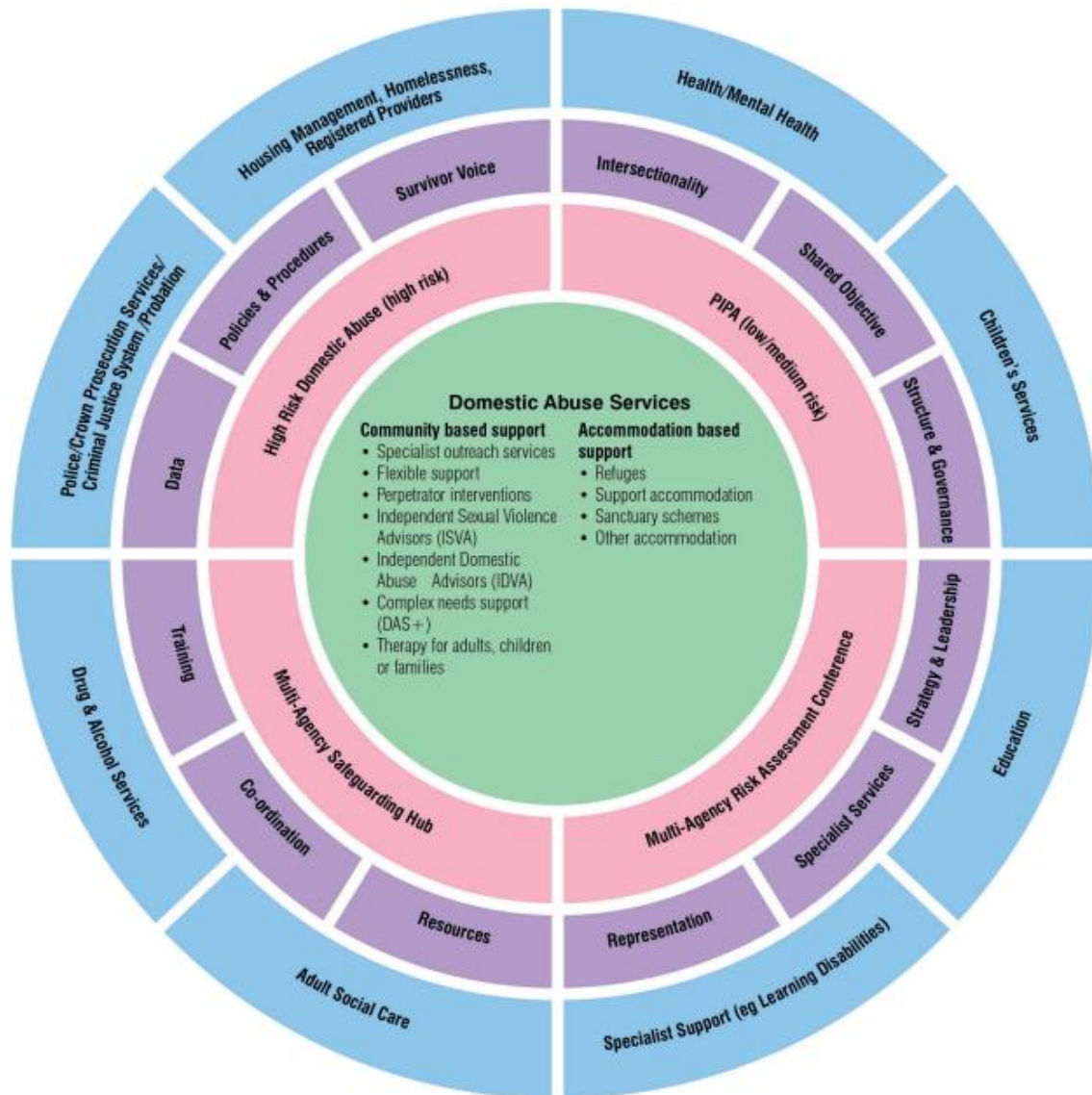
The city provides accommodation-based support in specialist refuges (and has access to a nationwide network of refuge provision) and supported accommodation. There are also ‘sanctuary schemes’ which provide additional security such as lock changes to allow victims/survivors to remain in their homes where safe to do so.

Domestic abuse prevention and abuser behaviour change

There is a specialist commissioned service within Southampton that provides support for men who wish to understand and change their abusive and controlling behaviour. This service can be accessed directly by any man who is concerned about his behaviour and the impact it is having on his family. Referrals can also be made by any practitioner who has gained consent. Men can access group and one-to-one support to build skills for better, non-abusive relationships. Support is also offered to the partners/ex-partners of those who undertake this work to ensure safeguarding is in place for the whole family. In addition to this work, a Male Engagement Worker (“MEW”) has been added to the IDVA service. The MEW works with fathers who are using abusive behaviours in their relationships and whose children are receiving support from Children’s Social Care. The MEW works with fathers on a one-to-one basis to help them to acknowledge their abusive behaviours and understand the harm they have caused.

Tackling Domestic Abuse in Southampton

The model below represents the CCR model for tackling domestic abuse in the Southampton:



KEY

Domestic Abuse and VAWG Partnership Board Partners ensuring that the

Coordinated Community Response Components provide

Domestic Abuse Pathways to

Domestic Abuse Services

Priority one – Prioritising Prevention

Objective: VAWG and domestic abuse is prevented

Outcomes:

- We will strengthen prevention work across the city so that individuals, organisations and communities in Southampton will be better able to identify and respond to domestic abuse and VAWG.
- Southampton’s local environment will be changed to make it safer.

What we are already doing

- STAR project in schools and community settings. For children and young people to raise awareness of issues surrounding domestic and sexual abuse, to develop skills around negotiating respect and consent within relationships and to provide information about how to access guidance and support.
- White Ribbon Day. White Ribbon Day awareness raising event in Guildhall Square.
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight VAWG Task Force. Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight VAWG Task Force unites key partners to improve the response to VAWG across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.
- Violence Reduction Unit interventions (VRU). The VRU is working on VAWG-specific interventions in the Southampton including collaborating with the Cyber Ambassadors a peer-led cyber safety education and support scheme for primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and working in partnership with Southampton’s universities and services in the night-time economy to improve student safety.
- VRU funding. The VRU is continuing to bid for Home Office funding to improve the safety of women and girls in the night-time economy and in public places. £190,000 was secured via the ‘Safer Streets 3’ Fund to improve education, enhance LED Lighting, implement CCTV in known hotspots, and to expand awareness campaigns for support services for victims/survivors of VAWG.

What are the issues we need to address?

Across the city, we need to raise awareness and understanding of what VAWG, and domestic abuse look like in everyday life. Over a third of respondents in the Southampton Community Safety Survey (2021) answered ‘don’t know’ when asked about the following issues in the city that are known to disproportionately impact women and girls: VAWG, domestic abuse, sexual offences and stalking and harassment.

Socially and culturally, domestic abuse and VAWG are normalised. Sexism and disrespect towards women and girls is often tolerated and/or minimised. This lays the groundwork for more serious acts of VAWG to be justified and makes it harder for abusive behaviour to be ‘called out’ and for perpetrators to be held accountable. Responsibility for safety is often placed on women and girls, rather than with the perpetrators and others in positions of authority.

To address this, we need to develop and embed an ecological model for the prevention of violence and abuse which recognises the need to develop interventions across multiple levels – the individual, the community, organisations/institutions and society.

To end domestic abuse and VAWG in Southampton, we must prevent it from happening. This means better education for everyone, but especially boys and men, about domestic abuse and VAWG and the harms it causes. By doing this, we want to empower more people to challenge VAWG and the misogynistic attitudes that enable it.

Domestic Homicide Reviews and the needs assessments carried out within Southampton demonstrate that there are areas of weakness in understanding of domestic abuse and VAWG by practitioners as well as the public. We also need to develop a better understanding across all organisations of how differences in physical and mental health (for adults and children) impact on, or are caused by, experiences of VAWG.

What we will do 2023-2028

1. Professionals will be supported to educate children and young people about equality, respect, gender roles and the harmful effects of gendered expectations. We will explore the development of a city-wide 'whole school approach' to VAWG, with genuine engagement across the entire community: staff, pupils, governors, parents, and external services. The 'whole school approach' includes tackling VAWG in all educational settings, such as specialist schools, and home-schools.
2. The relationships and sex education (RSE) and personal, social, health and economic education (PHSE) curriculums in Southampton's schools will raise awareness and understanding of VAWG, including domestic abuse – and the support available to victims/survivors in Southampton. This education will address that abuse can happen in all types of relationship and to all genders.
3. City-wide awareness raising campaigns – under the 'Safe City' brand - will challenge harmful attitudes towards domestic abuse and VAWG and support and encourage appropriate active bystander intervention whether in public places (including on-line spaces), at home, in the workplace, education or social settings.
4. We will work with health, social care and education providers from Early Years to Adult Social Care to develop the knowledge and awareness needed to intervene to prevent VAWG by identifying and supporting high risk groups before violence and abuse occurs.
5. More organisations and businesses in the city will be encouraged to join the 'Safe Places Network', where they will receive training about how to respond appropriately to VAWG.
6. Data gathered by partners will be used to improve safety, and feelings of safety, for women and girls in Southampton by informing changes to the local environment (CCTV, for example) and improving safety on public transport in order to 'design out' VAWG.

Priority two – Support for survivors (early intervention and support)

Objective: Survivors are supported

Outcomes

- Access to domestic abuse and VAWG services in Southampton will be straightforward and on an equal footing for everyone
- Professionals will be supported to identify violence and abuse early and to know how and when to intervene safely and appropriately to prevent harm.
- Services will be better prepared to support child victims/survivors of domestic abuse.
- There will be sufficient provision of safe accommodation to meet need in Southampton, particularly for those victims/survivors who are unable to access refuge.

What we are doing already

- Community domestic abuse services. There are a range of community domestic abuse and VAWG services within the city, including: PIPPA, a dedicated domestic abuse helpline for professionals and the public; women’s refuges; the provision of advocacy support to high-risk survivors through the Safe Lives accredited IDVA service the provision of independent sexual violence advocacy; outreach workers; specialist therapeutic support and recovery groups for adults and children; and a dedicated ‘floating support’ service for women who experience multiple disadvantage.
- Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy service. There is a specialist Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy service to support victims/survivors of ‘harmful practices’ (such as FGM and Forced Marriage) and to raise awareness within communities.
- IRIS. The IRIS project supports early identification and referrals for support within primary health settings.
- DAHA. Southampton City Council Housing is Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (“DAHA”) accredited and is recognised for embedding best practice for responding to domestic abuse
- Healthcare for Homeless Team. There is a dedicated Healthcare for Homeless Team who proactively visit victims/survivors and their children in refuges/temporary accommodation.
- Kaleidoscope. A new service providing support to women who are selling sex on the street. Kaleidoscope outreach workers support women to access specialist services (such as homelessness or drug and alcohol recovery services) according to their individual needs.
- Voice of the Child. ‘Voice of the Child’ is as an area of focus for Hampshire Constabulary. Child Centred Policing Champions provide scrutiny and feedback to officers who have attended incidents in order to support and develop best practice.

What are the issues we need to address?

There is evidence that victims/survivors in Southampton are not being identified and supported early enough. There are significant numbers of victims/survivors who are assessed as being at high

risk, which suggests that opportunities to intervene earlier are being missed by professionals who may be working with families.

We need to improve awareness in the city of the support that is available for victims/survivors (adults and children). Feedback from survivors in Southampton tells us that earlier awareness of, and access to, services would have improved their experience.

National data shows that higher rates of domestic abuse and VAWG are experienced by women in ethnic minority groups, LGBT+ people, migrant women, disabled women victims/survivors, women who sell sex and women experiencing multiple disadvantage (substance-use, mental health, poverty). We know that victims/survivors of DA and VAWG will often also be subjected to racism, classism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia and ableism. Victims/survivors from these groups experience additional barriers to safety and in Southampton, there are low numbers of people from these groups recorded as accessing services.

This strategy recognises the need to embed an intersectional approach which understands the barriers victims/survivors' face and how these connect with each other and impact on their experience of abuse. We need more information and better recording of data so that we can improve our services and reduce barriers for victims/survivors. In the absence of local, specialist 'by and for' services, generic domestic abuse services in the city need to be better equipped to meet the needs of a diverse range of victims/survivors.

Nationally, domestic abuse is a leading cause of homelessness for women. Approximately 10% of presentations to Southampton Housing Needs are related to domestic abuse and a homelessness hostel in Southampton reported that 90% of female residents had previously experienced domestic abuse. Currently, Southampton does not have any single-sex supported accommodation provision.

Local data from Southampton's refuges mirrors the national picture, showing that provision cannot meet demand. In Southampton, there is evidence of unmet need for disabled survivors (especially those who require wheelchair accessible accommodation), those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and those who experience multiple disadvantage (especially drug and alcohol use).

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires agencies and service providers to treat children who are impacted by domestic abuse as victims/survivors. At present, not all agencies/providers in Southampton record information about the dependent children of adult victims/survivors accessing their services. Therefore, there is no reliable information about how many children are victims/survivors of domestic abuse in the city.

What we will do 2023-2028

7. A 'Whole Housing Approach'(WHA) to domestic abuse will be implemented across Southampton. The WHA is a framework for addressing the housing and safety needs of victim/survivors across all housing tenure types (social, private rented and private ownership). Using New Burdens Funding (provided by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities), SCC will recruit a 'Whole Housing Approach Coordinator', who will lead on work to ensure that this approach is delivered in a safe, consistent and coordinated way.
8. Staff and volunteers working for partner agencies will be trained to identify domestic abuse and other forms of VAWG and respond sensitively and intervene appropriately with all family members.

9. Using New Burdens Funding, SCC will recruit a Domestic Abuse Training Coordinator. The Training Coordinator will ensure crucial domestic abuse training is provided to key organisations and agencies across Southampton.
10. Access to our services by people with protected characteristics will be reviewed and services changed to improve equality of access. To support this work, SCC will commission pilot projects to provide specialist advocacy and gather information about need within the city for disabled, LGBTQ+ and/or ethnic minority victims/survivors.
11. Children who see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse will be treated by agencies and service providers in Southampton as victims/survivors of domestic abuse in their own right and data will be recorded to inform the development of appropriate support and intervention for them.
12. New collaborative approaches to assessing and supporting families where children are victims/survivors of domestic abuse will be developed.
13. The identification of and response below high-risk cases of domestic abuse will be improved by consistent high-quality training for service providers in identification of DA and VAWG and the pathways to support. This will mean that support can be offered to families as early as possible.

Priority three – Building an accountable community and changing abusers’ behaviour

Objective: Abusers are held to account

Outcomes

- Abusers will be provided with support to reform, and opportunities for self-referrals into community-based behaviour change programmes will be optimised.
- There will be an increase in the numbers of those completing behaviour change programmes and a reduction in reoffending.
- Systems and processes will be better equipped to withstand manipulation by abusers and professionals will be confident in holding abusers to account.
- There will be more referrals from social care and health-related services (e.g., community mental health teams and drug/alcohol support services) to specialist support and behaviour change programmes.

What we are doing already

- MEW. There are dedicated Male Engagement Workers (“MEWs”) in the IDVA team, and a local behaviour change service providing community interventions, including a group work programme. A public health grant and funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight has been secured and an additional Young Person’s MEW has been recruited to the team.
- Community Perpetrator Programme. Southampton has a commissioned community perpetrator programme, provided by The Hampton Trust. The programme provides group and one-to-one work to support behaviour change for those perpetrators whose behaviour is not addressed within the criminal justice system.
- DARE. The commissioned perpetrator service has developed a routine enquiry model – Domestic Abuse Routine Enquiry Model (“DARE”) – to support practitioners to identify domestic abuse perpetrators, to explore the risks and to support them into specialist services. This model will be subject to an independent evaluation.
- Operational Foundation. Within Hampshire Constabulary, Southampton Neighbourhoods High Harm Team have delivered a pilot project ‘Operation Foundation’ providing targeted management of repeat perpetrators of domestic abuse identified as posing the highest risk of causing further harm.
- There is a need for a robust response to domestic abuse cases involving police employees as victims/survivors and suspects. As part of its ‘Domestic Abuse Workforce Pledge’, Hampshire constabulary has rewritten policies to provide clear guidance in relation to police employees who are victims/survivors and suspects/perpetrators of domestic abuse.

What are the issues we need to address?

Rates of charging, prosecution and conviction for sexual offences, domestic abuse and stalking are disproportionately low. This means that most abusers do not have any contact with the court-mandated behaviour change programmes provided by the Probation Service. In addition, re-offending is a significant issue: there were 2,853 domestic flagged crime offenders identified in Southampton in 2020/21, of these 31.4% were repeat offenders. There is a need to raise awareness of, and improve referrals to, the community behaviour-change programmes by organisations outside of the criminal justice system. Service providers are often not sufficiently confident in identifying abusive behaviours or equipped with the skills to safely hold challenging conversations to support perpetrators into specialist services.

The focus of professionals (as with society more widely) can still often be on the victim/survivor (adult and/or child) taking decisions to ‘keep safe’ and not on the behaviour of the person causing the harm. A focus on victim/survivor behaviour can leave the abuser invisible, unaccountable and free to continue their harmful behaviours.

There is manipulation of systems/services by perpetrators of abuse to bolster their own power and abuse (for example, by making malicious reports about the victim/survivor to professionals). This is a critical problem which legitimises the power of the person behaving abusively and reinforces survivors’ sense of their own powerlessness.

What we will do 2023-2028

14. Services provided by partner agencies in response to domestic abuse will enable children and young people to remain ‘Safe and Together’ with their non-abusive parent/guardian wherever this will help to achieve the best outcomes for them. Safe and Together is an evidence-based, child-centred model of working which promotes partnership with the non-abusive parent and holding the abusive parent accountable for their abuse, which is recognised as a parenting choice. Training is already being provided to practitioners within Children’s Social Care and for practitioners across the partnership.
15. Perpetrators of VAWG and domestic abuse will be supported to understand the impact of their actions and to take responsibility for and change their behaviours.
16. Agencies and service providers in Southampton, particularly Adult Social Care, Children’s Services, mental health and drug and alcohol services will identify and respond to perpetrators consistently and effectively, including making early interventions with the aim of preventing the escalation of abusive behaviours.
17. We will share information about best practice and local domestic abuse and VAWG services and pathways with stakeholders within the civil (Family Court) and criminal justice system.
18. Will work together to develop safeguards for systems and services in Southampton against manipulation by perpetrators.

Priority four – A stronger coordinated response

Objective: Improved partnership working that addresses prevention, early intervention, crisis responses and longer-term support.

Outcomes

- The voices of survivors will be systematically collected and reflected in decisions about system design and improvement
- Agreed standards of data collection and information sharing will be developed by partner organisations in order to drive system improvement.

What we are doing already

- New partnership. Establishment of the Southampton Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Partnership Board in August 2021.
- Domestic Abuse Coordinator. A Domestic Abuse Coordinator was appointed in January 2021 to support the work of the Partnership.
- New service commissioned by Integrated Commissioning Unit (ICU). New domestic abuse services (commencing July 2022), with flexibility to vary service in line with emerging need.
- DAHA accreditation. Several local Registered Housing Providers are either working towards or have achieved DAHA accreditation.
- Life-limiting illness. Southampton City Council are collaborating with a Public Health researcher to enhance understanding of domestic abuse and life-limiting illnesses.
- HRDA evaluation. An evaluation of HRDA and system pathways by the University of Southampton has been commissioned.
- VAWG problem profile. The VRU has developed a 'VAWG Problem Profile' to collect data on VAWG offences reported across Southampton. Using New Burdens Funding, SCC has recruited a Domestic Abuse Data Analyst to develop and build a 'data dashboard' to a shared understanding of need and response to DA and VAWG across the partnership.

What are the issues we need to address?

There is no embedded approach to survivor engagement/consultation/co-production, limiting the voice of the survivor in this strategy. Addressing this will support future needs assessments and strategies and inform practice and service development.

Some key data metrics are not captured by data holders and there are significant differences in the way data holders define, capture and report on data, with a wide variety of case management systems used. This undermines analysis of system performance.

What we will do 2023-28

19. Continue to develop and improve a 'data dashboard' for the partnership so that data will be shared appropriately between agencies/services in our system to protect victims/survivors.

20. Multi-agency arrangements for assessing and responding effectively to domestic abuse will be evaluated and improved. This will include a focus on:
 - Multi-agency safeguarding hub (“MASH” – now part of the Children’s Resource Centre).
 - High-risk domestic abuse arrangements (“HRDA”).
 - Multi-agency risk assessment conference (“MARAC”).
21. We will make decisions about service provision informed by research, practice and the views of people accessing services.
22. The voices of victims/survivors will be heard and will inform the design, development and implementation of local services. A specific ‘Survivor Voice’ role will be developed to lead this work.

Strategy engagement, funding, and measuring success

Engagement and Public Consultation

As part of this strategy process, we conducted a 12-week full public consultation, which ran from 20 July 2022 to 12 October 2022. In total, we received 246 responses during this consultation process (186 from the consultation questionnaire, and a further 60 responses via either email, letter or focus groups). During this consultation period, we set up focus groups and listened to the voices of victims/survivors of various ages. We also had focus groups with key front-line practitioners, including tobacco, alcohol and drug practitioners, health care practitioners, and members of key statutory partnerships across Southampton. We also received valuable feedback from members of the community at the Love Where You Live event, and Solent University Freshers Week. We have carefully compiled and examined all feedback, which has been used to inform revisions and updates to the final strategy version.

Funding

The work identified within this strategy will be funded from various sources including external grant funding (such as New Burdens and Safer Streets funds), as well as each organisation's own budgets. Our partnership will continue to identify and apply for funding to meet needs identified in the city.

Measuring Success

An action plan will be developed to carry out the priorities and aims identified within the strategy. The action plan will be overseen and managed by the Board who will hold partners accountable for their work towards meeting the strategic priorities.

The DA Data Dashboard (which will include VAWG data) will provide updates on 'key performances indicators' (KPIs) which will be agreed by the Board. Progress towards these KPIs will be reported at each quarterly Board meeting. We know that new opportunities and challenges will emerge over time. This is why we are committed to an evidence-based approach that incorporates data and research findings and learns from experience. Through engagement with victims/survivors and stakeholders we will adapt our strategic aims to new circumstances.

Final thanks

Thank you to everybody who contributed to the development and writing of this strategy, in particular to those who chose to share their own stories and experiences of domestic and sexual abuse and/or violence with us. Contributions have been used to draft and revise this final document and all feedback was gratefully received.

Whilst we recognise that we cannot eradicate the issues covered in this strategy overnight, we hope that by setting out our aspiration for a future without domestic and sexual abuse and violence against women and girls in our city, we have produced an ambitious strategy that will improve the lives of people living, working, studying in, and visiting Southampton over the next five years.

How to get help

Key information about where to access advice and support for domestic and sexual abuse and behaviour change and the services available, both in Southampton and nationally, can be found here: www.southampton.gov.uk/health-social-care/domestic-abuse/

Appendix 1 Definitions of types of abuse and VAWG

- **Coercive Control:** When a person with whom you are personally connected, repeatedly behaves in a way which makes you feel controlled, dependent, isolated or scared. Coercive control is not the same as emotional abuse, not all emotional abusive is coercive control, but coercive control is always emotionally abusive.
- **Cyber flashing:** Sending sexual or rude photos to another person's phone to shock and embarrass them.
- **Domestic abuse:** Controlling, bullying or violent behaviour, including sexual violence, by a partner or ex-partner. Women are usually the victims/survivors and men are the abusers. But men can also be victims/survivors, and the abusers can be any family members.
- **Female genital mutilation or female genital cutting:** When a young girl or teenager has part of their genitals cut off for cultural or religious reasons and not medical reasons. It is against the law.
- **Forced marriage:** When someone is made to marry a person they have not chosen themselves.
- **Harassment:** Behaving in a way that frightens or upsets another person or makes them feel stupid.
- **Honour based abuse:** Violence or threats done by someone in a person's family or community to protect the name of the family or community. Sometimes it is a punishment for breaking the family or community's rules. It can be physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse.
- **Honour killings:** When someone in the family or community kills a woman for breaking the rules of the family.
- **Perpetrator:** A person who commits a crime against someone else.
- **Prostitution and sexual exploitation:** This when someone is coerced or forced into selling sex or performing sexual acts.
- **Rape:** This is when a person forces someone else to have sex. It could be by using physical force or by frightening them. Rape can be perpetrated by a stranger, or by someone the victim/survivor knows or is/has been in a relationship with (also known as 'domestic rape').
- **Revenge porn:** Sharing private rude or sexual messages, photos, or videos to others to cause embarrassment. Often the photos or video were made with the person's agreement but are shared later to upset them.
- **Sexual harassment:** unwanted verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. It can take place anywhere, including the workplace, schools, streets, public transport, and social situations. It includes flashing, obscene, and threatening calls, and online harassment
- **Sexual violence:** sexual contact without consent. This can be perpetrated by anyone from total strangers to relatives and intimate partners, but most are known in some way. It can happen anywhere – in the family/household, workplace, public spaces, and social settings.
- **Sex worker:** Someone who earns money by doing sexual acts.
- **Sexting:** Text messages that use sexual words, photos or videos. Sexting is a form of abuse if you are pressured into doing it or if the messages are used to coerce you into any form of direct sexual contact which you do not consent to.
- **Stalking:** Repeated (i.e., happening on at least two occasions) harassment causing fear and/or distress. For example, when someone keeps bothering someone and won't leave them alone. They may keep calling them or turning up where they know the person will be.
- **Upskirting:** Taking a secret photo of another person under a skirt/dress in order to see their genitalia or underwear.

Appendix 2 Spotlight on practice

Coordinated Community Response

Susan was a European Economic Area (EEA) national with pre-settled status who had lived in the UK for over 10 years. She had three children, one of whom was disabled with complex needs. The family were open to the specialist disability team in Children's Services.

Susan's husband had subjected Susan and their children to physical assaults, emotional abuse (shouting and swearing) and controlling behaviour around finances and day-to-day decision making for several years and Susan had become increasingly fearful for her safety and that of the children. One afternoon, when her husband was at work, she fled with the children to the local family centre to seek help. The Health Visitor at family centre contacted the PIPPA helpline and the family's allocated social worker, and a risk assessment was completed with Susan. This identified a high level of risk, and a referral was made into the HRDA process.

The immediate need for the family was access to a place of safety. They were unable to remain in the family home as Susan's husband was due to return later that day. The IDVA service and Children's Services worked together to liaise with the local authority homelessness team to arrange emergency accommodation which the family moved into within a matter of hours.

Susan was clear that she needed to remain in the city with access to the specialist support networks for her disabled child.

Working together – with the family at the centre of the plans – IDVA, social services and Southampton Housing Needs coordinated to ensure that Susan and her children had a continuity of support from professionals they knew and trusted, and that Susan was not having to 'manage' communications between each system (housing needs, social care needs, safety planning). This was crucial at a time when they were all traumatised, frightened, and dealing with the stresses of insecure housing, immigration processes, and the criminal and civil justice systems.

Accountability and behaviour change

Paul has been assessed as a high-risk perpetrator of domestic abuse, both in relation to an ex-partner and his current partner. In both relationships he has used coercive and controlling behaviours, as well as physical and sexual violence.

Paul's unborn child was referred to Children's Services after he was arrested for assaulting his current partner who was in early stages of pregnancy at the time. When the MEW first worked with Paul, he minimised and denied his abusive behaviours. He was focused on the impact that being arrested and having Children's Services involved with his family had had on him as opposed to being able to think about the impact that his abuse had on his partner, or their unborn child.

The MEW was able to support Paul onto a Hampton Trust behaviour change programme. Paul initially felt that he was not going to learn anything, thinking that it was more of a punishment rather than an opportunity for him to reflect on his abusive behaviour (both violent and non-violent) and learn how to make better parenting choices.

However, as Paul progressed through the course, he has expressed how valuable he has found the support. He has started to reference what he has learned and can provide examples of how he has used the tools he has been introduced to so that he can make more pro-social choices rather than becoming verbally or physically aggressive.

Whilst he is still on his behaviour change journey, Paul has made progress such that the core group of professionals working to safeguard his child have agreed that the safety plan can be adapted for him to return to the family home whilst child protection planning is on-going. The MEW continues to provide a dynamic risk assessment to support the social worker's decision-making and safety planning for the family.