
Bedford Borough Strategy to Address & Reduce Domestic Abuse

2021 - 2026



With thanks to other partners on the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board for their input into this strategy and to SafeLives for their support with the Needs Assessment, whole system review and consultancy services.

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Foreword

On 29th April 2021, a key piece of legislation - the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal Assent. The Act has placed some statutory duties on Local Authorities which have included setting up a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board, completing a Needs Assessment to identify gaps in support and in particular for those who are in specialist domestic abuse accommodation having left an abusive relationship.

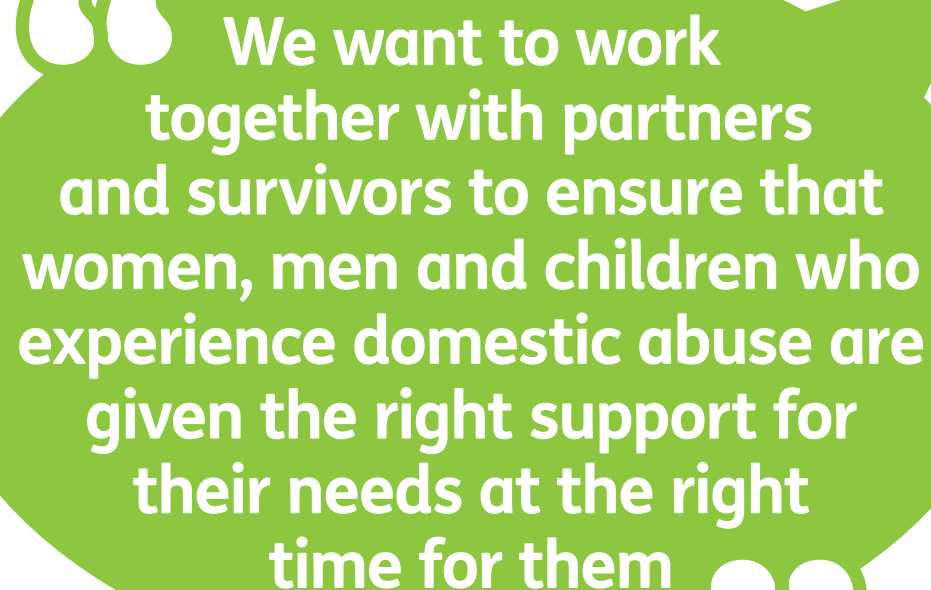
The statutory duties have provided Bedford Borough Council with the opportunity to review our existing Strategy and work in collaboration with our partners, the Local Partnership Board and take on board the voices of survivors of domestic abuse to bring together our next strategic plan.

This plan reflects what we have learnt from our needs assessment, service mapping, gap analysis and a whole system review conducted on our behalf by SafeLives.



It took a long time to get the right help, when I did it was very helpful

Domestic Abuse Survivor



We want to work together with partners and survivors to ensure that women, men and children who experience domestic abuse are given the right support for their needs at the right time for them

What is Domestic Abuse?

The **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** brings in for the first time a legal definition of domestic abuse. Section 1 of the Act applies to the definition.

The behaviour of one person towards another person is “domestic abuse” if both people are aged over 16 years old and are personally connected to each other and the behaviour is abusive.

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.
- e. Psychological, emotional or other abuse.

And it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

Domestic Abuse Behaviours

Domestic abuse doesn't always mean physical violence, it could be:

- a. Being forced into doing something sexually that you don't want to do by a partner or ex-partner.
- b. Use of weapons, damage to property, physical abuse to children and animals. Threats to harm the non-abusive person, children, animals. Threats to portray the non-abusive person in a bad light to others and removal of children.
- c. Isolating an individual from others. Controlling what they wear, who they see, where they can go. Coercive control is now an offence under Part 5, S76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015.
- d. Preventing a person from acquiring money in their own right, restricting how a person uses their money or resources. Making a person pay all the bills, taking out loans in their name. Controlling all the household money.
- e. Name-calling, being constantly criticised, stalking.

What does Personally Connected Mean?

- Intimate partners
- Ex-partners
- Family members
- Individuals who share parental responsibility for a child

There is no requirement for the individuals to live in the same household.

So this could include:

- Those who are in a same sex relationship of any kind.
- A child over 16 who is abusing a parent or parents.
- A family member who is a carer for a relative.
- Family members who are forcing a child into marrying someone they don't want to marry (forced marriage).
- Family members who “punish” another family member for purportedly bringing shame to the family by behaving in a way that they deem inappropriate for their culture (so called Honour Based Abuse).

The devastating impact of domestic abuse on those who experience it can be long lasting from the physical injuries received and the trauma of the abuse. It can affect the individual's financial, employment and accommodation status and some people sadly never recover.

Children who live in homes where domestic abuse is happening are also greatly impacted in terms of their health, wellbeing and development. This is not just the children who actually witness the domestic abuse, it is all children living in the house who may hear the arguments, items being smashed and see the injuries or damage to the house the next day.

Some children are also verbally or physically abused too and may try to intervene and get hurt. Other children come to accept the behaviour as normal and behave in a similar way towards the non-abusive adult or grow up to be abusive in their own relationships.

National Statistics

“ LGBT+ survivors of domestic abuse are almost twice more likely to have attempted suicide than any other group ”



“ We know that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will be affected by domestic abuse at some stage in their lifetime ”



“ 30 men a year are killed by their current or former partner ”

“ 2 women a week are killed by a current or former partner - this figure doubled to almost 5 women a week during lockdown ”

“ Disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic abuse and are also twice as likely to suffer assault and rape ”



Local Picture

2317 Domestic Abuse incidents (crimes and non-crimes) reported to Bedfordshire Police



329 cases heard at the local Domestic Abuse Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences

104 cases had been previously heard at the conference

498 children living in these households

Of incidents reported to Bedfordshire Police:

1794 victims were identified as women

628 victims were identified as men

116 Referrals into Housing: **107** were women & **9** were men

176 Adult Safeguarding Referrals: **153** were women & **23** men

At Police callouts:

1777 children identified as present/living in the home



Local Picture *continued*

Of the **Single Assessments** completed:

37.8% identified **Domestic Abuse** as a presenting factor

54 referrals were received into **Adult Safeguarding** where the **victim** of the **abuse** was **55 and over** and **23** of these were aged **75 and over**



43 adult victims identified themselves as having a **disability**



Of the **known ethnicity**:

1580 victims identified themselves as **white**

491 victims identified themselves as **BAME**



Our Aim

Bedford Borough
WILL NOT TOLERATE
domestic abuse in
our community

Our overall aim
is to reduce the

PREVALENCE of domestic abuse,
and ensure that where domestic abuse
takes place, all those affected get
the **RIGHT SUPPORT,**
QUICKLY



Our Aim *continued*

We have identified 5 key areas of priority:

Provision of Services in Safe Accommodation

Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a duty on relevant local authorities to ensure all victims of domestic abuse including their children, regardless of their relevant protected characteristics, within 'relevant' accommodation (as defined by The Domestic Abuse Support (Relevant Accommodation and Housing Benefit and Universal Credit Sanctuary Schemes) (Amendment) Regulations 2021) have access to the right accommodation-based support when they need it.

Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse

We know from our survivor and professionals surveys that more work needs to be done to ensure that all individuals and children impacted by domestic abuse know how to get help and members of the community and professionals recognise domestic abuse in all its forms and are able to respond appropriately to those affected.

Provision of Services in the Community

We want to ensure that a range of responsive services are available and accessible to all individuals and groups who are at risk of, or who are subject to domestic abuse and its reoccurrence.

Justice, Recovery and Ongoing Protection

In order to reduce the incidences of domestic abuse occurring we need to make sure that those who use harmful behaviours are held to account for their actions, and are dealt with swiftly through the criminal justice system.

Early Education & Intervention

The Government's Tackling Violence against Women & Girls Strategy 2021 suggests that there is evidence to show that education initiatives can have promising effects on changing attitudes relating to violence against women and girls. The Department for Education has made Relationships Education compulsory in all primary schools in England and Relationships and Sex Education compulsory in all secondary schools, as well as making Health Education compulsory in all state-funded schools. It is therefore important and necessary to incorporate this as a priority in our strategy as well as providing support services to children and young people who are impacted by domestic abuse.

Key National Policies & Legislation

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

- Part 4 of the Act: Support provided by local authorities to victims of domestic abuse - Each relevant local authority in England must assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for accommodation-based support in its area and prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support in its area.

Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy 2021

- Addresses all forms of violence against Women and Girls. This Strategy will be followed by a dedicated and complementary Domestic Abuse Strategy later this year, along with a refreshed National Statement of Expectations.

Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (amended by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021)

- The Act extends priority need to all eligible victims of domestic abuse who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse. The 2021 Act brings in a new definition of domestic abuse which housing authorities must follow to assess whether an applicant is homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse.

The Equality Act 2010

- Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010 to ensure survivors with protected characteristics as well as those who face multiple disadvantage have access to the safe accommodation and support services they need.

Serious Crime Act, 2015

- Introduced the offence of coercive or controlling behaviour against an intimate partner or family member and holds a maximum penalty of five years.

Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004

- Made changes to non-molestation orders and gave the Courts the power to impose restraining orders on acquitted defendants.

Children Act 1989 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002

- This legislation places a duty on local authorities to provide services to Children in Need and to investigate where they are informed that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. Section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act extends the legal definition of harming children to include harm suffered by seeing or hearing ill treatment of others, including in the home.

The Care Act 2014

- Introduced the general duty on local authorities to promote an individual's 'wellbeing', which includes considering a person's domestic, family and personal relationships. Carers or those being cared for may be victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse and may require safeguarding interventions. The Care Act includes Section 42 which states that if an adult with care and support needs (such as a disability) is suspected to be at risk of any form of abuse or neglect, the local authority must make enquiries and take steps to protect them. This includes working with other agencies such as health and the Police and providing independent advocacy when it is needed.

Objectives

Objective	How we will achieve this	What will success look like
<p>PROVISION OF SERVICES IN SAFE ACCOMMODATION</p> <p>Where identified in the Needs Assessment, expand the availability of accommodation based support to ensure it is accessible to all individuals and families experiencing domestic abuse who are in different forms of safe accommodation and appropriate to their individual needs.</p> <p>Ensure that individuals and professionals are aware of the Local & National support services that are available to them.</p> <p>Prevent homelessness via early intervention methods where individuals want to remain in their own homes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a Whole Housing Approach to DA including flexible funding, co-location of advocacy, DAHA accreditation. • Consultation with survivors of domestic abuse and in particular those with protected characteristics and their children to understand their experiences to inform service provision. • Via the Personalised Housing Plan when domestic abuse is identified. • Access to domestic abuse advocacy within housing. • Domestic abuse training for housing staff. • Making available a directory of support services. • Utilising the Bobby Scheme (Sanctuary) for additional security measures and target hardening in the family home. • Use of Protective Orders – Domestic Violence Protection Notices & Orders, Restraining Orders, Occupation Orders. • Advocacy for those who remain in their own home with additional security measures (Sanctuary). • Holding those who use harmful behaviours to account and encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All survivors of domestic abuse and their children who are in safe accommodation within Bedford Borough, have access to support which is timely and appropriate to their needs. • Housing staff are confident to identify those in need of additional support and how to access this. • More survivors are able to stay in their own home if they want to.

Objectives *continued*

Objective	How we will achieve this	What will success look like
<p>RAISING AWARENESS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE</p> <p>Create an environment where members of the public, employers and employees from all walks of life are aware of what domestic abuse is, know how to report it, and what support is available to those who are experiencing it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-agency domestic abuse communications & promotions campaign aimed at the general public and Bedford Borough workplaces. • Commission Domestic Abuse training package for Bedford Borough workplaces and work with our Safeguarding Boards. • Community policing initiative linked in with The Emerald Team and Community Safety Partnership. • Work with the Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership on joint communications and awareness raising events, such as the annual international 16 Days Campaign. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the public, employers and employees are better informed and feel more able to report domestic abuse and know where to get help. • More individuals and families who are experiencing domestic abuse or have left the abusive relationship are accessing services. • Bedfordshire Police see an increase in reporting of domestic abuse incidents and crimes.
<p>PROVISION OF SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY</p> <p>Diversify the range of support available to survivors and their children to ensure that the right support is available at the right time taking into account age, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, race and nationality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate survivor voices into Local Partnership Board, commissioning process and domestic abuse consultations. • Hold survivor voice focus groups incorporating individuals from protected characteristic communities. • Engage and consult with children & young people to seek their views on what support they need. • Commissioning of trauma informed services who can support long term recovery, as well as crisis support. • Developing a data dashboard which assists in identifying need for future provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those with protected characteristics have a voice and access to support services that meet their needs rather than a one size fits all service. • Children and young people who are experiencing domestic abuse receive appropriate support to recover and thrive. • Positive feedback from survivors and children and young people on the services they have accessed. • Services are effectively commissioned and are informed by the dashboard which includes performance data and service user experiences.

Objectives *continued*

Objective	How we will achieve this	What will success look like
<p>JUSTICE, RECOVERY & ONGOING PROTECTION</p> <p>Work with those who use harmful behaviours, challenge unacceptable behaviour and offer appropriate support to make positive changes.</p> <p>Adopt a culture amongst professionals where responsibility for the abusive behaviour is placed firmly with the abusive partner, and the burden of responsibility for wholly protecting the children from the abuse is removed from the non-abusive partner.</p> <p>Where appropriate those who use harmful behaviours are arrested promptly, and brought to justice swiftly where criminal offences have taken place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A declaration of undertaking from all partners to achieving this objective. • All agencies have an information sharing protocol in place to allow for effective communication between them. • Professionals receive training in risk assessing and working with those who perpetrate harmful behaviours to increase their confidence in challenging attitudes that justifies the behaviour. • Training on reframing negative language used by professionals which can place blame and responsibility on the non-abusive partner. • Adopting Safe & Together Principles. • Utilising Strength Based Approaches. • All available police powers are utilised to safeguard those who are experiencing the abuse - Domestic Abuse Protection Notices & Orders and “the Right to Know” under the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme. • Multi agency commitment to participating in the Management of Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Panels (MDAP) and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic abuse incidents decrease both in frequency and seriousness. • Survivors have confidence in the strategy, reporting domestic abuse to the police, the criminal justice process and feel enabled to support prosecutions. • Professionals are more confident in this area of work. • Increase in referrals to sources of support for those who perpetrate the behaviour. • Improved healthy and safe relationships between those who use harmful behaviours and their children.

Objectives *continued*

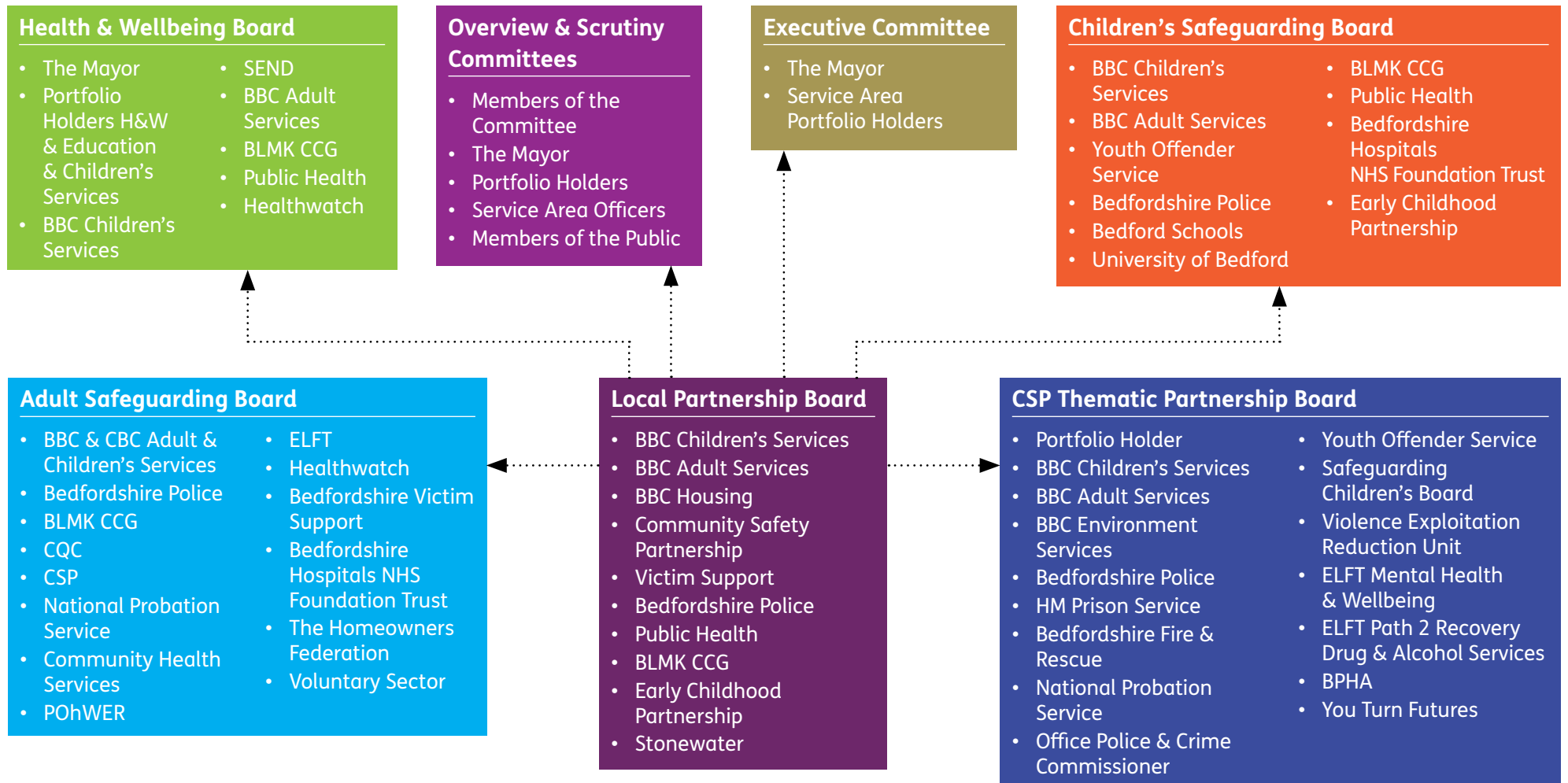
Objective	How we will achieve this	What will success look like
<p>EARLY EDUCATION & INTERVENTION</p> <p>Support education settings to ensure that they have implemented statutory relationships and sex education into the curriculum and confidently incorporate discussions on domestic abuse and violence.</p> <p>Early identification & support for children and young people living in households with domestic abuse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain our close working relationships with education settings through Early Help Professionals, Safeguarding Leads Forums, School Improvement Team. • Implement Operation Encompass to ensure children receive support as early as possible via a formal Police partnership where this is available. • Access to adolescent child on parent abuse programmes. • Evidenced based recovery programme for child victims of Domestic Abuse. • Work with the voluntary sector to create a co-ordinated community response to domestic abuse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people and children are able to identify the dynamics of unhealthy relationships and know how to access support. • Young people are able to make informed decisions about their relationships as they transition into adulthood. • Increase in accessing early help and advice services. • Reduction of children & young people experiencing adverse effects of domestic abuse leading to school exclusions, criminality, exploitation and poor health.

How Will We Measure the Impact of the Strategy?

- Service user feedback obtained from both our service providers and through the voice of the survivor.
- Progression on the Action Plan which will sit under the strategy.
- Consistent approach of data collection and analysis.
- Quarterly and annual progress reports providing quantitative and qualitative data.
- Case studies of the survivors journey.

Governance

The strategy and its actions will be developed and monitored by the Bedford Borough Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and be reported on to Bedford Borough Council Executive Committee, Overview & Scrutiny Committees, Children’s & Adult Safeguarding Boards, Health & Wellbeing Board, and Community Safety Partnership Safer Thematic Partnership Board.



Getting Help

For details of services that can help, please visit: <https://bedsdv.org.uk/get-help/>.

Glossary of Terms

BAME

Black, Asian and minority ethnic.

Bobby Scheme

Fit security devices and provide advice on securing homes and staying safe.

DAHA

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance, national partnership working to improve housing sectors response to domestic abuse.

Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board

Made up of statutory partners and voluntary organisations who oversee the domestic abuse strategy, make commissioning decisions, monitor the effectiveness of the strategy and report back to Central Government.

Domestic Abuse Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference

Multi Agency safeguarding meeting made up of statutory and voluntary organisations, where information is shared regarding high risk victims/ survivors of domestic abuse and perpetrators with the purpose of identifying safety measures and support that can be put in place to reduce the risks.

Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme – Clare’s Law

Gives anyone a right to ask the police if they believe that they, or a friend or relative, is in a relationship with someone that could be abusive towards them. It also allows the police to disclose information on previous abusive behaviour to an individual if they believe they are at risk, this is called the Right to Know.

Domestic Abuse Protection Notices & Orders

A notice will last for 48 hours and could require the person using the harmful behaviour to leave the family home. An order will be of a longer duration and will place notification requirements on the person using the harmful behaviour to notify the police of their address. It may have other requirements. If breached this could lead to a custodial sentence.

LGBT+

Relates to individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. The plus relates to gender expressions outside of the ones identified in the acronym.

Non-Crime

A term used for an incident which doesn’t constitute a criminal offence

Occupation Orders

Allow the Court to decide who should live, or not live in the home or a part of it. It can also state who is responsible for paying the mortgage or rent and utilities and who is responsible for the maintenance of the property.

Operation Encompass

Police Scheme where incidents of domestic abuse where a child lives are reported to the child’s school to enable the school to appropriately support the child.

Personal Housing Plan

Sets out the steps that will be taken to prevent homelessness or to secure accommodation.

Restraining Orders

Can be issued when a criminal offence has been committed and the Court can order the individual who has been abusive to stay away from the non-abusive partner and not to have contact with them.

Safe & Together Principles

A model of working which focusses on keeping the children together with the non-abusive parent, working in partnership with the non-abusive parent and intervening with the abusive parent to reduce the risk of harm to the child.

Safe Accommodation

Accommodation as defined by the Government in the accompanying guidelines to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

SafeLives

UK wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse.

Single Assessments

An assessment carried out by a Social Worker which seeks to gather information from professionals, the family and the children involved about the child’s development needs, parenting capacity and environmental factors, to identify whether the children’s needs are being adequately met and if not, how they and the caregivers can best be supported to meet their needs.

Strength Based Approaches

Help individuals to identify their areas of strength and focus on them to improve their wellbeing.

Whole Housing Approach

The Whole Housing Approach (WHA) is a framework for addressing the housing and safety needs of victim/ survivors in a local area.

Notes

Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please telephone or write to us at our address below.

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