

Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025–2029

Foreword

Domestic abuse has a devastating impact on individuals, families, and communities. In Staffordshire, we are united in our commitment to end domestic abuse and to create safer environments for all our residents.

This strategy represents our shared vision and commitment to work in partnership to support victims and survivors, prevent domestic abuse, and hold perpetrators to account.

Our approach is informed by local need, shaped by data, evidence, and the lived experiences of those affected.

This strategy builds on strong foundations. For many years, partners across Staffordshire have worked collaboratively to address domestic abuse. We are proud of the progress made, but we know there is more to do. By strengthening our partnerships across the Staffordshire system - including local authorities, health services, the police and other criminal justice agencies, education, housing, voluntary organisations, and communities - we will continue to innovate, improve, and deliver lasting change.

Together, we will ensure that Staffordshire is a place where domestic abuse is not tolerated, where victims are supported, and where everyone can live free from fear.

What is domestic abuse?

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides a definition of domestic abuse. It tells us that domestic abuse:

Can be a single act or a course of conduct

Includes physical or sexual abuse, violence or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological, emotional or other abuse

Impacts negatively on children and recognises that they are victims in their own right if they see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse or if they are related to or under the parental responsibility of either the victim or the perpetrator

Occurs between people who are aged 16 or over who are personally connected i.e. are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other or are related, whether or not they are living together

This includes Female Genital Mutilation¹, so-called honour-based violence², child on parent or sibling violence and elder abuse.

Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a statutory responsibility on local authorities³ to provide support within safe accommodation⁴ for victims of domestic abuse and their children.

¹ Female genital mutilation (FGM) includes procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

² An incident or crime involving violence, threats of violence, intimidation, coercion, or abuse (including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional abuse) committed to protect or defend the perceived honour of an individual, family, or community for alleged or perceived breaches of their code of behaviour.

³ The Duty is placed on Tier 1 local authorities (i.e. Staffordshire County Council) to provide support within safe accommodation and on Tier 2 local authorities (i.e. district and borough councils) to co-operate with their Tier 1 counterparts.

⁴ Safe accommodation includes refuge accommodation, specialist safe accommodation, dispersed accommodation, sanctuary schemes, move-on / second stage accommodation and other forms of domestic abuse emergency accommodation (i.e. a safe place with appropriate support).

What we are trying to achieve: our aim is for a Staffordshire-led strategy, which ensures greater democratic oversight through elected councillors.

It allows Staffordshire to set priorities based on local data, not centralised or politically driven agendas.

We are committed to creating safer communities by working together across services, sectors, and communities to prevent domestic abuse, support victims and survivors – both adults and children⁵ - and hold perpetrators to account through the criminal justice system, with access to support to change their behaviour.

We believe that:

Victims and survivors are entitled to safety, support, and recovery: their voices will be heard, they will be respected and fully supported, and central to everything we do.

Domestic abuse is preventable: through education, early intervention, and community awareness

Perpetrators will be held accountable: with access to behaviour change programmes that challenge and reduce harm, and robust enforcement action through the criminal justice system.

Real change requires a commitment to working in partnership: ensuring a whole-system approach where individuals, statutory agencies, businesses, the voluntary sector and communities collaborate to deliver consistent, effective responses.

Together, we will build a future where domestic abuse is not tolerated, and every person can live free from fear and harm.

A Staffordshire-led strategy ensures greater democratic oversight through elected councillors.

⁵ Children will be recognised as victims in their own right.

What we know about domestic abuse

The development of this strategy has drawn on a range of evidence to help us to understand the scale of domestic abuse in Staffordshire and the needs of people who are affected by it. This evidence included:

A comprehensive domestic abuse needs assessment (2024) which considered national and local data and information. The needs assessment includes information and data which will inform our continued partnership delivery of this strategy and the statutory safe accommodation duty (as required by Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021). The domestic abuse needs assessment (2024) included the following:

The **voices of victims and survivors affected by domestic abuse** which have informed the development of this strategy and the identification of our priorities. We are committed to centring the voices of people with lived experience to help shape and deliver our approach. In Staffordshire, the four commissioned domestic abuse providers (Glow (part of Honeycomb Group), New Era (a trading name of Victim Support), Pathway Project and Staffordshire Women’s Aid engaged with their service users to identify those who would like to participate in supporting the development of the needs assessment. The voices of children and young people were gathered sensitively and carefully by domestic abuse specialists.

Views were received from groups and individuals and included people who had experience of victim services, behaviour change services and safe accommodation support. A summary of victim and survivor feedback can be found at **Appendix 1**.

The **views of professionals and partner organisations** were gathered in an independently facilitated workshop. The workshop provided an opportunity for a range of stakeholders to consider learning from the existing strategy (Breaking the Cycle, 2021-2024), its alignment with related activity and to explore future opportunities for partnership working and development.

The findings of the **Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership’s domestic abuse self-assessment** which assessed the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for children who are victims of domestic abuse.

The views of **Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board** and **Adult Services Practitioners**

National Picture

We know that domestic abuse can happen to anyone regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, income or social background.

The Home Office estimates the total economic and social cost of domestic abuse in England and Wales at £66 billion annually, with the majority attributed to physical and emotional harm to victims, alongside lost economic output and the cost of public services such as healthcare, criminal justice, and victim support⁶. Adjusted figures suggest this cost may now be closer to £78 billion. Beyond the financial burden, domestic abuse often results in homelessness, debt, disrupted employment, and barriers to housing and benefits, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage.

Research and data suggest that the majority of domestic abuse remains largely hidden and consistently under-reported to the Police and other agencies.

The Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) covers many crimes whether they are reported to the Police or not and therefore provides a reliable estimate of the prevalence of domestic abuse. This strategy draws data from the 2025 CSEW and the 2024 CSEW (as the survey methodology changed for 2025 and some of the official figures are being finalised). Our local needs assessment was undertaken in 2024 and used the data from the CSEW 2024.

Data from the CSEW tells us:

- Over **3.8 million people** aged over 16 experienced domestic abuse during the 12-month period to end March 2025 (CSEW 2025).
- While anyone can experience domestic abuse, women are disproportionately affected with **9.5% of women** (2.3 million) and **6.5% of men** (1.5 million) experiencing domestic abuse during the 12-month period to end March 2025 (CSEW 2025). Data shows that not only are women disproportionately affected by domestic abuse, they also experience more and repeat incidents.

⁶ Home Office (2019). The economic and social costs of domestic abuse. Research Report 107. London: Home Office. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-domestic-abuse>

- An estimated **827,532 children** in England and Wales were present in the household where there was partner abuse (CSEW 2024).
- Young adults aged 16 – 24 have the highest domestic abuse prevalence rates (15.8%) than older age groups, although the data shows that people of all ages experience domestic abuse (CSEW 2024).
- A higher proportion of **disabled people aged 16 and over experienced domestic abuse** compared to those without disabilities (CSEW 2024).

The Domestic Homicide Project⁷, which examines all deaths identified by police as domestic abuse related published their last report in March 2025. It found that, in the year to March 2024, there were **98 suspected suicides linked to abusive relationships**, more than the number of intimate partner homicides over the same period. As a result, suicide is now the leading cause of death in domestic abuse cases.

The published evidence in relation to Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDRs) shows strong, repeated patterns across DARDRs. The most common themes relate to multi-agency communication, professional curiosity, trauma-informed practice, recognising coercive control, addressing mental health and suicidality, hearing children’s voices, and tackling the systemic gaps that allow risk to remain unrecognised or unacted upon.

Freedom from Violence and Abuse: a cross-government strategy to build a safer society for women and girls 2025⁸ frames violence against women and girls as a national emergency, with violence against women and girls-related crimes representing approximately 20% of all reported offences nationally. The national strategy focuses on four key pillars: prevention and early intervention to challenge harmful attitudes and educate on healthy relationships; relentless pursuit of perpetrators through stronger enforcement and improved

⁷ <https://www.vkpp.org.uk/vkpp-work/domestic-homicide-project/>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-from-violence-and-abuse-a-cross-government-strategy>

justice responses; comprehensive support for victims and survivors, including trauma-informed services and safe accommodation; and a whole-of-society approach that drives cultural change through collaboration and public awareness. Our local approach is fully informed by the national strategy, ensuring consistency with its principles and priorities while tailoring delivery to meet the specific needs of our communities. This alignment strengthens our ability to access best practice and national resources, but our strategy remains locally driven, reflecting Staffordshire’s context and governance arrangements. Our response to the government strategy will be led by the Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Board and Staffordshire’s Violence Reduction Alliance.

Context for this Strategy

The section above sets out the National Picture and provides important context for this Strategy. However, this Strategy is for Staffordshire and its people – the aims are to support victims and survivors in Staffordshire, prevent domestic abuse, and hold perpetrators to account.

Our approach is informed by local need, shaped by data, evidence, and the lived experiences of those affected. The section below informs the Strategy as it provides the local picture.

Local Picture

Staffordshire has a total population of 907,200⁹, spread across eight districts. The county has an ageing demographic, with 21% of residents aged 65 and over, which is higher than the national average. Projections indicate a significant rise in those aged 85+ over the next two decades. Children and young people under 18 account for around 21% of the population, with East Staffordshire having the highest proportion. Ethnically, Staffordshire remains predominantly White British, with around 6.3% from minority ethnic backgrounds, reflecting growing diversity. Deprivation levels vary widely across the county,

⁹ <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Observatory/insights/Health-and-wellbeing/Joint-Strategic-Needs-Assessment/Health-and-wellbeing-most-recent/Joint-Strategic-Needs-Assessment.aspx>

with pockets of significant disadvantage concentrated in urban areas such as Tamworth and Cannock Chase, while rural areas face challenges linked to access to services and social isolation. These combined factors shape health inequalities and service demand across the county¹⁰.

Our understanding of the prevalence of domestic abuse in Staffordshire is informed by national statistics, as well as locally available data.

- Using the CSEW 2024 estimation of the prevalence of domestic abuse (4.8% of people aged 16 or over) and the local population figures at that time, our needs assessment estimated that approximately 34,947 people aged 16 years and over in Staffordshire (excluding Stoke-on-Trent) are victims of domestic abuse.
- It is estimated that 24,183 (69%) are women and 10,764 (31%) are men.
- Staffordshire Police data for Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent for the 12 months to March 2025, shows 72% of suspects / offenders were male and 28% of suspects / offenders were female.
- In Staffordshire, there were 12,013 domestic abuse crimes recorded, which equated to 21.5% of all recorded crime for the county. There were also 4,872 domestic abuse non-crimes. (Staffordshire Police data for year 01.02.2024 – 31.01.25).
- Staffordshire Police data shows that during the year Feb 2024 -Jan 2025, 8,595 children (under 18 years of age) were recorded as victims of domestic abuse. This includes children who were present in the household where there was domestic abuse, and those who have been victims of domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships.
- The areas with the lowest rates of Police recorded victims of domestic incidents and crime are also larger geographical areas with rural, more affluent populations. Evidence suggests that people from rural areas are less likely to report domestic abuse when it does occur. Staffordshire is estimated to have around 76% of its

¹⁰ <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Observatory/insights/Health-and-wellbeing/Joint-Strategic-Needs-Assessment/Documents/Joint-Strategic-Needs-Assessment-for-Staffordshire.pdf>

population living in urban areas, with the remaining 24% living in rural areas.

- In Staffordshire, between 1 October 2024 and 30 September 2025, 4,722 people were supported in our commissioned community-based specialist domestic abuse support services. 1,048 children were supported in the victim service and 125 children received support from the behaviour change service. 330 adults received support from the behaviour change service.
- From the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDR) legislation in 2011 to the end of 2025, there have been a total of 12 DARDRs completed in Staffordshire. Of these 7 victims were female and 5 victims were male; 3 perpetrators were female, 9 were male; 7 victims were the intimate partner/ex-partner of the perpetrator, 4 were a member of the same family and 1 was a member of the same household; 1 was where the victim took their own life. The local picture is that the volume of DARDRs have increased considerably over the few years, a picture also seen nationally.
- In Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, a clear association has been identified with suicide and domestic abuse, with both victims and perpetrators being at elevated risk of suicide.

What we know about domestic abuse - safe accommodation

National Picture

- During 2023-2024 63,950 individuals were supported in safe accommodation, which is a 26% increase from the previous year.
- 36,870 (58%) were women, 1,830 (3%) men, 320 (1%) transgender and 24,930 (39%) children.
- Domestic abuse remains one of the leading causes of homelessness nationally, with statutory data showing that around 12% of households cite domestic abuse as the main reason for being homeless or threatened with homelessness¹¹.

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

- It disproportionately affects women and families, with research indicating that up to 40% of homeless women report domestic abuse as a contributory factor¹².

Local Picture

- Statutory data on homelessness indicates that domestic abuse is one of the main causes of homelessness in Staffordshire.
- In Staffordshire, victims in safe accommodation are supported in 59 units across five refuges and an additional 12 units of dispersed accommodation. In addition, victims can also be supported in the wider community in sanctuary schemes, where their own home has been fitted with specialist target hardening equipment.
- The level of known direct referrals made for potential refuge space outstrips the availability of provision. There were **1,236 direct referrals for refuge space in Staffordshire** during 2024-2025.
- There were **925 referrals which were unable to be accepted**. Reasons for this included capacity constraints and an inability to meet needs. For example, due to family size, drug and alcohol issues, victims having no recourse for public funds, victims being ineligible for housing benefit etc.
- The table below shows the number of people who were supported in safe accommodation between April 2024-March 2025. The figures include people who were resident prior to April 2024 and some who were from outside of the geographical area.

Type of safe accommodation	No. supported in Staffordshire
Refuge	491
Dispersed safe accommodation	34
Sanctuary Scheme	73
Other Schemes	7
Total supported	605

- For the year ending March 2025, **257 children** were supported within safe accommodation in Staffordshire.

¹² <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/domestic-abuse-and-homelessness/> and <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/research-and-publications/>

- **348 adults** were supported in safe accommodation settings, of which **89% were women, 10% were men and 1% were transgender.**
- Of all individuals supported (adults and children), where specialist characteristic data was shared:
 - **156** were **Black and Minoritised individuals**
 - **113** people **had disabilities**
 - **12** people **identified as LGBTQ+**
- The top three support needs for people being supported in refuge and dispersed units are housing, emotional health and wellbeing and financial / debt management.
- For children, the top three support needs are safety, confidence and self-esteem and understanding of healthy relationships.

Our commitment to continuous improvement of the evidence base

The development of our strategy has been informed by a wide range of evidence from a number of sources as outlined above.

We are committed to continuing to develop the evidence base to ensure that the ongoing development and delivery of our approach to domestic abuse is underpinned by reliable and insightful data. This will be a key area of activity in our domestic abuse action plan. It will support how we measure our performance and will help to improve transparency, support evidence-based decision making, and strengthen public accountability.

We commit to continuous improvement by embedding lessons from Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDRs), safeguarding case reviews, and the lived experiences of victims and perpetrators. This will be supported by evidence from local, regional, and national research and best practice, so that our system evolves through shared learning and delivers transparent, measurable improvements.

Achievements under the previous strategy

This strategy builds on the foundations laid by our previous strategy, which was supported by a comprehensive action plan and delivered through five working groups: Prevention and Early Intervention, Provision of Services, Perpetrators, Safe Accommodation, and Communication.

Some of the key achievements include:

Improved Mental Health Pathways: Strengthened links between domestic abuse and mental health services, mapped referral routes, and embedded mental health representation in DA governance.

Enhanced Partnership Working: More effective information-sharing and improved links between specialist DA support providers in the local area and across other local authority areas resulting in better support for victims moving across local authority boundaries.

Inclusive Support and Awareness: Delivered targeted campaigns for hidden victim groups (male, rural, older people, inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities) and expanded specialist IDVA roles.

Better Data and Voice of Victims: Continued development of the performance framework, enabling clearer understanding of demand and experiences, and launched the Authentic Voices Forum to ensure that victims and survivors inform the approach.

Children and Families: Strengthened collaboration with children's services.

Criminal Justice Engagement: Increased victim support through streamlined protective measures, reviewed special court measures, and introduced additional facilities for giving evidence.

Perpetrator Interventions: Continued to offer early intervention through behaviour change programmes and began monitoring long-term outcomes of perpetrator support.

Safe Accommodation Improvements: Utilised government funding to establish a sustainable financial model that ensures ongoing support for local safe accommodation providers, introduced counselling within refuge contracts, and commissioned specialist posts to tackle housing barriers.

What we are going to do: our priorities

Our priorities are based on our understanding of need and have been shaped by what victims and survivors, professionals and partner organisations have told us. They also reflect what we need to do to fulfil our statutory responsibilities.

Our strategy is underpinned by a trauma-informed approach, ensuring that all services recognise the impact of trauma, avoid re-traumatisation, and empower survivors through safe, respectful, and collaborative support and integrates this knowledge into policies and practices.

We aim to:

- **Prevent domestic abuse**
- **Support victims and survivors**
- **Hold perpetrators to account with robust enforcement through the criminal justice system and support for them to change their behaviour**
- **Work together in partnership to deliver a co-ordinated community response to tackling domestic abuse**

Support Victims and Survivors

We will provide high quality, accessible and inclusive services and support which will keep victims and survivors safe and support their recovery.

Our work to deliver this priority will include:

Continued delivery of high-quality support services

- Continuing to provide high quality, accessible, inclusive and equitable services for victims and survivors of domestic abuse, which understand and respond to local need.
- Where gaps are identified in service provision, working together to ensure we respond appropriately to the needs of victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
- Promoting trauma-informed practice for all those who work with victims and survivors of domestic abuse and ensuring timely, trauma informed services.

- Ensuring that victims receive support at the earliest opportunity, to prevent crisis interventions and reduce numbers of people becoming homeless as a result of domestic abuse.
- Strengthening risk assessment and management, including the use of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) approach, to ensure safety is not limited to accommodation but extends to feeling secure in one's own home, when out in the community, and through confidence in available support networks. Our commitment includes providing reassurance from professionals and fostering a community environment where victims and survivors feel protected and supported.

Sustainable recovery

- Considering innovative practice to best meet the additional needs of domestic abuse victims and perpetrators, for example in relation to mental health and substance misuse. Working together to determine how this best practice can be implemented effectively in Staffordshire, including consideration of the role of community in recovery.
- Developing and promoting integrated pathways into support services ensuring those with additional needs such as mental health, alcohol and substance misuse, counselling, financial or legal, employment etc. can access the support they need.
- Prioritising recovery from domestic abuse for all victims and survivors, regardless of additional support needs, by promoting confidence and self-esteem building as essential steps in rebuilding lives free from further abuse and enabling individuals to thrive, not just survive.
- Supporting survivors to manage life after services and provide them with the best possible opportunities to have lives free of domestic abuse.

Children and young people

- Ensuring that children and young people who are affected by domestic abuse are recognised and responded to as victims in their own right and that services are tailored to meet their needs.
- Recognising unborn children as victims when exposed to domestic abuse during pregnancy and ensuring safeguarding and support measures are in place to protect maternal and foetal wellbeing.

- Strengthen information sharing with schools through Operation Encompass, to protect children affected by domestic abuse and allow the school to provide timely, informed support.
- Improving our understanding of children’s lived experience of domestic abuse and using this to inform our approach.
- Ensuring that domestic abuse is considered in the development and delivery of the DfE Families First Partnership Programme¹³ in Staffordshire.

Those who may be more at risk of experiencing domestic abuse

- Ensuring that those who may be more at risk of experiencing domestic abuse are effectively identified and supported through robust safeguarding measures. This includes over-represented groups (meaning those who are more likely to experience harm or who appear disproportionately in our support services) such as women, people from global majority backgrounds, individuals with disabilities, adults with care and support needs, inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities, and those rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness.
- Recognising that overlapping disadvantages and barriers (sometimes referred to as ‘intersectionality’) can amplify vulnerability and risk for individuals and lead to poorer outcomes.
- Engaging with grassroots community-based organisations who are supporting potentially marginalised communities.

Safe accommodation

- Ensuring the availability of safe, secure, community-based accommodation.
- Ensuring the provision of support within safe accommodation, in line with the requirements of the Safe Accommodation Duty.
- Ensuring victims are not unfairly disadvantaged by the domestic abuse they have suffered, when seeking settled accommodation.
- Supporting victims to stay in their own homes, where it is safe to do so and where this is what they want.
- Ensuring that Registered Housing Providers and Councils with responsibility for housing have a clearly documented approach to

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/families-first-partnership-programme>

domestic abuse, which supports the delivery of this strategy and meets their regulatory requirements.

Prevent domestic abuse

We will continue to raise awareness of abuse, promote gender equality, and challenge societal norms which enables abuse to occur. We will promote early intervention to address domestic abuse as early as possible and stop it from escalating. We will equip professionals and communities with the skills and knowledge to recognise domestic abuse and know when, where and how to refer.

Our work to deliver this priority will include:

Awareness raising

- Increasing awareness of the signs, forms, and impact of domestic abuse, and empowering individuals and communities to identify, prevent, and respond to abuse effectively.
- Ensuring that our awareness raising activities are accessible and inclusive of diverse populations and appropriately target the diverse needs of those most affected by domestic abuse, including children and young people. This includes over-represented groups (meaning those who are more likely to experience harm or who appear disproportionately in our support services) such as people from global majority backgrounds, individuals with disabilities, adults with care and support needs and is inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities. It also includes those communities who may face additional barriers in seeking help, for example, those living in rural communities or experiencing / at risk of homelessness. Our approach will ensure messaging is inclusive, culturally sensitive, and accessible, so that everyone can recognise abuse, seek support, and feel confident that services understand and respond to their specific needs.
- Making links with national and regional awareness raising campaigns.
- Challenging myths and stereotypes that perpetuate abuse or silence victims.

- Raising awareness and knowledge across the system of the need to recognise children as victims in their own right and to respond appropriately.
- Raising awareness of domestic abuse support services to ensure that all of those affected by domestic abuse and people who come into contact with them know how, when and where to reach out for support.
- Ensuring that Staffordshire employers are informed and educated about domestic abuse, so that they can tackle domestic abuse in the workplace and support victims.

Training and development

- Recognising the importance of cultural change among professionals, fostering a mindset of professional curiosity alongside a victim-centred and trauma-informed approach. This includes acknowledging the impact of domestic abuse on all family members, ensuring perpetrators are not made invisible within the system, and accountability for harm remains with them.
- Understanding the domestic abuse training needs of the Staffordshire workforce across all sectors.
- Delivering comprehensive multi-agency learning and development to ensure that the partnership workforce is equipped to recognise and respond to all forms of domestic abuse, including coercive control, non-physical abuse (e.g. manipulation, emotional abuse etc.) and post-separation abuse.
- Applying the learning from Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Safeguarding Adult Reviews and related audit findings to increase confidence and competence across the partnership workforce.

Education

- Reducing demand through education and community engagement.
- Improving education and awareness for all children (including those affected by SEND) at the earliest possible opportunity from early years to post-16 education to empower them to recognise and value healthy, respectful relationships and gender equality, to recognise the signs of abusive behaviour and know how to reach out for support.

- Developing targeted education and awareness raising for boys and young men, addressing harmful attitudes and vulnerability to radicalisation, including tackling harmful online content.
- Embedding age/stage-appropriate domestic abuse education into the PSHE curriculum, including healthy relationships, consent, coercive control, body image and emotional literacy.
- Ensuring all children and young people are educated in environments that are safe, informed, and equipped to prevent, identify, and respond to domestic abuse in line with best practice guidance from the Pan-Staffordshire PSHE Education Service and Department for Education.
- Supporting schools and other education settings to play their part in universal awareness raising, tackling attitudes which permit abuse to occur and creating environments which promote healthy relationships and support people to stand up to harmful attitudes and behaviours.
- Supporting early years settings to recognise the impact that domestic abuse can have on very young children. For example, recognising and responding to signs, symptoms and behaviour change in non-verbal children.
- Training staff to recognise signs of domestic abuse (including coercive control) to empower them to deliver sessions around healthy relationships with confidence and competence, and in effective PSHE pedagogy so that education sessions to children and young people are aligned to best practice guidance as advised by the Pan-Staffordshire PSHE Education Service.
- Supporting schools and other education settings to take a targeted approach to early intervention with young people affected by domestic abuse.
- Developing stronger links between schools and education settings and domestic abuse support service providers.

Hold perpetrators to account with robust enforcement through the criminal justice system and support for them to change their behaviour

We will tackle domestic abuse perpetrator behaviour to stop current abuse and keep victims safe, as well as to prevent future harm and break long-standing cycles of violence.

Our work to deliver this priority will include:

Criminal justice

- Promoting swift justice and accountability.
- Ensuring all relevant agencies are engaged in delivering the outcomes of this strategy, including Police, Youth Justice, Probation, Crown Prosecution Service Courts and Tribunal Service etc.
- Collaborative working across criminal justice partners to improve the service they provide for those affected by domestic abuse.
- Ensuring that criminal justice processes and procedures are victim-focussed to ensure a consistent, sensitive and appropriate response to those affected by domestic abuse.
- Reviewing and, where necessary, refining partnership approaches to managing perpetrators to ensure a co-ordinated joined-up approach, which holds perpetrators to account and keeps victims safe.
- Promoting Domestic Abuse Disclosure Scheme (also known as Clare’s law), Domestic Abuse Protection Orders and Stalking Protection Orders.
- Working with our criminal justice partners to drive change to ensure that Family Courts are trauma informed, that the past and present abusive behaviours of perpetrators are taken into account and that victims have appropriate litigation support, recognising that Family Courts can be used by perpetrators to exercise further power and control over their victim.

Provision of behaviour change programmes for perpetrators

- Reducing re-offending through behavioural change.

- Ensuring continued provision of high-quality, accessible and inclusive behaviour change programmes for perpetrators.
- Increasing awareness of behaviour change programmes across the system, for example within Harm Reduction Hubs.
- Continuing to capture evidence of behaviour change over time, to contribute to the national evidence base of domestic abuse behaviour change programmes.
- Ensuring any behaviour change programme has integrated support for victims, so that their safety is considered and risks are managed throughout.

Sustainable rehabilitation

- Considering innovative practice to best meet the additional needs of domestic abuse perpetrators, for example in relation to mental health and substance misuse. Working together to determine how this best practice can be implemented effectively in Staffordshire, including consideration of the role of community in rehabilitation.
- Developing and promoting integrated pathways into support services ensuring those with additional needs such as mental health, substance misuse, counselling, financial or legal, can access the support they need.

Work together in partnership to deliver a co-ordinated community response to tackling domestic abuse

We will ensure that everyone plays their part in tackling domestic abuse, that systems facilitate effective joined-up working and that our shared approach centres the voices of people with lived experience of domestic abuse.

Our work to deliver this priority will include:

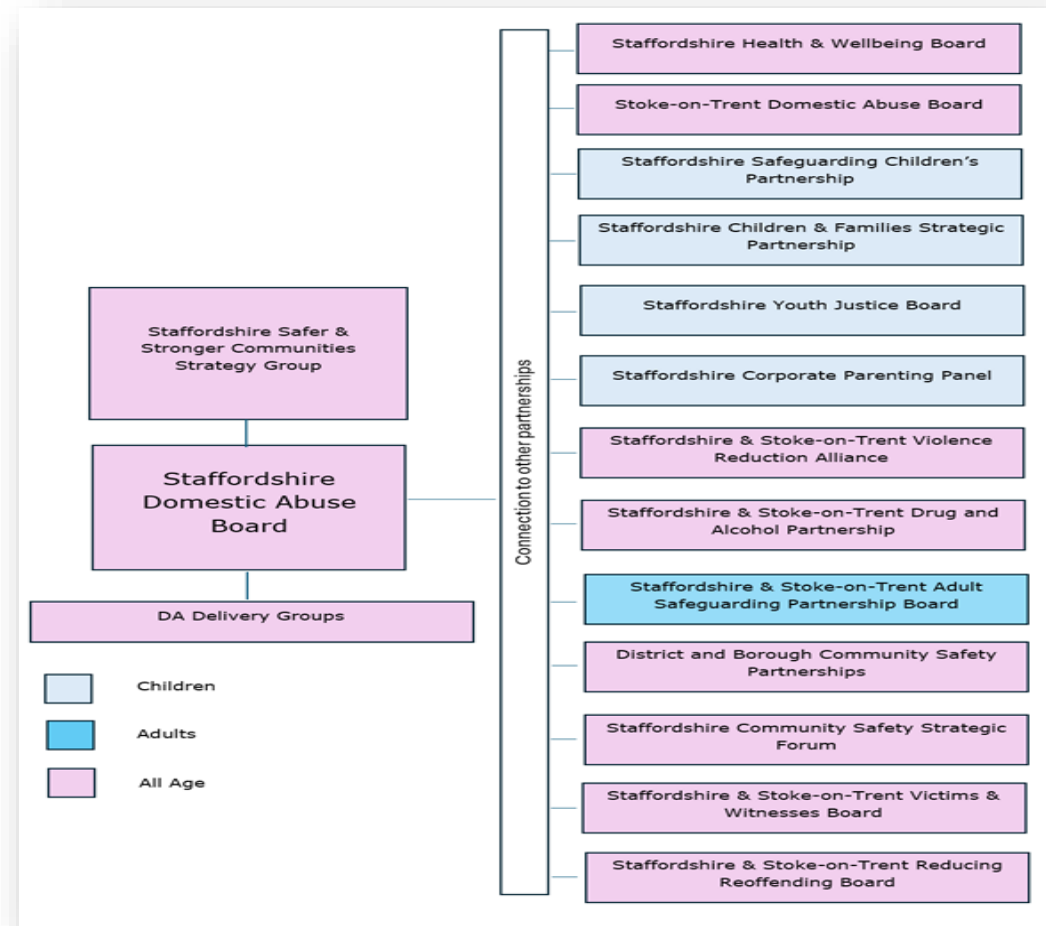
Representation and involvement

- Centring the voices of people with lived experience of domestic abuse in shaping and delivering the approach, ensuring that they are empowered to co-produce meaningful change.
- Ensuring that engagement and co-production is representative of all those affected by domestic abuse, including children and young

people, older people, inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities and ethnically diverse communities, people with disabilities, those who are rough sleeping and other potentially marginalised groups.

Partnership working

- Increasing the recognition and awareness of domestic abuse as a partnership priority across the system and working collaboratively to deliver solutions and effective commissioning arrangements.
- Ensuring that all partners are represented in governance arrangements to encourage greater shared ownership of decision-making and delivery of our priorities.
- Ensuring alignment with other strategic priorities across the system to maximise opportunities for greater collaboration to achieve shared goals and to ensure that domestic abuse is reflected in other key strategies and commissioning arrangements. For example, violence reduction, child exploitation, alcohol strategy, suicide prevention, mental health strategy etc.
- Continuing to develop robust systems which facilitate effective multi-agency working and identifying and addressing barriers which make it more difficult for people to work together.
- Engaging Staffordshire employers and businesses as key partners, encouraging them to embed domestic abuse awareness and support within their corporate social responsibility commitments, and providing opportunities to take practical action to protect and assist employees affected by abuse.
- Actively seek and create opportunities to work in partnership with Stoke-on-Trent, recognising that collaboration across local authority boundaries strengthens our ability to prevent domestic abuse, support victims and survivors, and hold perpetrators to account.



Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership Arrangements

Data, information sharing and performance management

- Strengthening collaboration between key partners such as the police, social care, and commissioned providers to support real time data capture and ensure that we are working from a shared evidence base and measuring ourselves against a shared performance framework.
- Continuing to develop robust and consistent data sharing and cross-referral mechanisms across the partnership system.
- Ensuring that all partners contribute to the continued development of a performance framework which reflects relevant data from across the system and supports the partnership to measure impact, hold each other to account and achieve continuous improvement.

- Improving the collection, recording and analysis of protected characteristic data to allow us to understand the impact of our activity on diverse groups.

Continuous learning and improvement

- Ensuring continuous learning and improvement by embedding reflection, evidence-based practice, and stakeholder feedback, taking into account findings from Domestic Abuse-Related Death Reviews (DARDRs) and safeguarding reviews, to ensure our approach remains responsive, effective, and aligned with best practice.

How we will work: our approach

We will take a public health approach, by recognising that domestic abuse is not just a criminal justice issue, but a preventable health and societal problem that affects individuals, families and communities.

Our approach to tackling domestic abuse will be:

Evidence based

Use available data, information and best practice to identify and understand the root causes of domestic abuse, develop our response and measure our impact.

Tailored to meet diverse needs

Recognise that factors such as gender, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion and belief, pregnancy, culture, health and care needs, experience of trauma and other vulnerabilities and characteristics affect experiences of domestic abuse. They may also present additional barriers to accessing support.

Centered on the voices of victims and survivors

Informed at every stage by the voices of those with lived experience of domestic abuse to shape the approach and to co-produce meaningful change. meaningful change.

Whole Family

Recognise the impact of domestic abuse on the whole family. We will ensure that children are recognised as victims in their own right, that all victims get the support they need and that perpetrators are held to account and given opportunities to change their behaviour.

Innovative and solution focused

Ensure creative, coordinated and solution-focused responses that address multiple needs and reduce barriers to safety and support.

Focused on prevention, early intervention and recovery	Recognise and promote the value of prevention and early intervention, while ensuring that targeted support is available to meet acute need, that victims and survivors are supported to recover and that perpetrators are held accountable for their behaviour and supported to change. It is recognised that whilst the focus is on prevention and early intervention, there is also a requirement for appropriate enforcement action to be taken to hold perpetrators to account. For example, where they do not engage with behaviour change.
Innovative and solution focussed	Ensure creative, coordinated and solution-focused responses that address multiple needs and reduce barriers to safety and support.
Whole system	Work in a holistic, co-ordinated, multi-agency way, recognising the inter-dependencies across different parts of the system.
Committed to continuous learning and improvement	Embed lessons from practice reviews, research, and lived experience to strengthen our response and deliver better outcomes for victims, survivors, and communities.

How we will know we've made a difference: measuring impact

We are keen to ensure that our domestic abuse strategy delivers meaningful change.

We are committed to continuously developing and improving our understanding of domestic abuse, including risk factors, the impact of interventions and how we measure success. We will continue to refine how we collect, share and use information.

We recognise that the collection of data is not just a technical process but is a vital part of how we measure outcomes. We will work together to review and improve our existing performance framework which we will use to measure the impact of our partnership activities and our progress in delivering the strategic priorities within this strategy.

We will proactively identify and monitor risks that could hinder delivery of this strategy, such as funding reductions, service capacity challenges, or operational blockages, and implement mitigation measures to maintain progress and resilience.

We will incorporate the voices of those with lived experience of domestic abuse into our evaluation of impact, ensuring their views on progress shape the continuous development and improvement of our activities. We will provide feedback to victims and survivors and actively involve them in the development and delivery of our approach, recognising their expertise as central to creating meaningful change.

We will develop a detailed action plan that outlines the specific actions, responsibilities and timescales required to deliver our domestic abuse strategy, which will be measured through our performance framework.

We have strong and established partnership arrangements in Staffordshire, which will facilitate robust challenge and support of the delivery of our strategic priorities.

The Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership Board will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the strategy and

action plan, monitoring performance and holding all partners to account for their part in delivering it.

The Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership Board report into the Staffordshire Safer and Stronger Communities Strategy Group, which is the statutory community safety partnership for the county.

Appendix 1

Engagement with Victims and Survivors

Feedback to inform development of strategy

The voices of victims and survivors affected by domestic abuse informed the development of this strategy and the identification of our priorities.

In Staffordshire, the four commissioned domestic abuse providers (Glow (part of Honeycomb Group), New Era (a trading name of Victim Support), Pathway Project and Staffordshire Women's Aid engaged with their service users to identify those who would like to participate in supporting the development of the needs assessment. The voices of children and young people were gathered sensitively and carefully by domestic abuse specialists.

"I want to be involved because we are faceless – we are just a statistic – but I am real I am here and I want people to know my story so I can stop anyone else experiencing the same as me." (Domestic Abuse Survivor)



Adult victims and survivors told us:

- They reached out for help to a range of agencies, most frequently by calling the Police, but also seeking help from health professionals, social care and specialist domestic abuse specialist support providers.
- There are barriers to disclosing domestic abuse, which included feeling overwhelmed, not recognising their own experiences of domestic abuse and the perpetrator always being present which hampered their ability to reach out for support.
- They were positive about their experience of local domestic abuse support services, particularly in relation to the advocacy provided by their individual case worker. The non-judgemental victim-led approach to support, with safety and risk planning at its centre, was highly valued.
- They felt that domestic abuse support services, MARAC and Police response were commonly the most positive aspects of

available support (although there were mixed views about the Police response to domestic abuse).

- The Criminal Justice system was most frequently cited as what did not work well. Victims gave examples of poor communication, Crown Prosecution Service delays and lack of access to Legal Aid.
- The lack of access to Legal Aid was cited as a particular challenge for victims who had accessed support in safe accommodation.
- There are significant gaps around mental health support. This included lack of availability of mental health services or delays in access, as well as the shortage of bespoke emotional wellbeing services for domestic abuse victims.
- They felt that professionals would benefit from further training, to ensure that they have a better understanding of domestic abuse in all its forms.
- Those who had been supported in safe accommodation told us about the challenges of moving on from refuge / safe accommodation and into their own homes. They also said that there was a need to support victims to stay safe in their own homes and not have to leave everything behind and move into refuge.



Child victims and survivors told us:

- Most of the children responded positively when asked how they were feeling, although a number said that they were feeling 'up and down' due to everything that they had experienced or were still experiencing.
- A range of professionals had listened to them and helped them, including specialist domestic abuse support service providers, schools and teachers, social workers, non-abusive parents, foster carers, other relatives and friends.
- It was important for them to have space to talk and someone to talk to.
- Activities such as drawing and craft were cited as providing help.
- They liked both group work and one-to-one support approaches.
- They were generally happy with the support they were receiving from domestic abuse support services, schools and teachers, and social workers.
- Children engaged with the behaviour change services said that the provision had helped them to feel less angry and they were better able to talk about their feelings.

- Children who had been supported in safe accommodation told us that they had been particularly nervous about moving into the refuge. They began to feel safer and happier with the support of specialist workers. They said that they found the refuge calm, quiet, relaxed and friendly.

Feedback on the draft Domestic Abuse Strategy

We also asked victims and survivors their views on the priorities developed as a response to their feedback and contained within this strategy. We asked whether they felt anything was missing and their opinions on the actions listed under each priority.



They told us:

- They agreed with the priorities that had been developed but stressed that what matters most is seeing real action. Survivors were clear that delivery, not promises, is essential and that the partnership must be fully held to account for making these priorities happen. They want to see evidence of partnership progress against the priorities in their lived experience.
- Agencies need to listen to, hear and understand survivors' views. They need to work together to understand the full picture of what is happening and avoid survivors having to repeat their stories numerous times to different practitioners.
- Agencies need to take a joined-up approach to support survivors and families to keep everyone safe. Information sharing and confidential communication between organisations needs improvement.
- Victims and survivors emphasised the importance of knowing what they were entitled to and where to go to get help and support.
- They would welcome more healthy relationships education in schools and were also keen to see community education for adults, including parents.
- Training for professionals is essential so that they recognise and understand the complexities of domestic abuse and to ensure that victims feel safe and believed when reporting.
- They welcome the focus on perpetrators but felt that there needed to be greater consequences for perpetrators who breach protective orders.

- They would like to see closer working with family courts and recognition that these can provide further opportunities for the perpetrator to exercise power and control over their victim. Victims said that family courts should ensure a focus on holding the perpetrator accountable and taking into account past as well as current abusive behaviours.
- There needs to be a focus on long term recovery and that support needs to remain available, recognising that recovery is not always linear.

While the summary above highlights the main themes from the engagement work, the full and detailed feedback from victims and survivors will directly shape the development and delivery of our partnership action plan. Their insights will inform not only what we prioritise, but how we design and deliver activity across the system. This ensures the action plan is grounded in real lived experience and responds to what survivors have told us they most need from services.

Many victims and survivors also expressed a willingness to stay involved in shaping our partnership's approach going forward, using their own experiences to help protect others and prevent further abuse. In response, we will establish ongoing mechanisms for survivor engagement to ensure that their voices remain central as the work evolves. This continuing involvement will help us refine our activities over time, test whether actions are making a difference, and hold the partnership to account for meaningful, sustained improvement.

Appendix 2

Legislative and Policy Framework

This strategy is underpinned by the following key legislation and policy:

- Freedom from Violence and Abuse: A cross-Government strategy to build a safer society for women and girls 2025
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Victims and Prisoners Act 2024
- Supporting Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023
- Children Act 1989 and 2024
- Housing Act 1996 (as amended)
- Crime and Security Act 2010
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Stalking Prevention Act 2019
- Care Act 2014
- Police Reform Act 2002
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (updated June 2025)
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Social Housing Regulation Act 2023

Appendix 3

Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Board Membership

This strategy is owned by the Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Board and has been developed collaboratively with partner organisations. The Board provides strategic oversight, and all partners play a key role in delivering the priorities and actions set out within this strategy.

Partner organisations represented on the Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Board are listed below.

- Cannock Chase District Council
- East Staffordshire Borough Council
- Glow (a trading name of Honeycomb Charitable Services Ltd)
- Housing Plus Group
- Lichfield District Council
- Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
- Newcastle Under Lyme Borough Council
- New Era, Victim Support
- North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust
- Pathway Project
- Probation Service
- South Staffordshire District Council
- Stafford Borough Council
- Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent Integrated Care Board (clustered with Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care Board)
- Staffordshire Commissioner's Office for Police, Fire & Rescue and Crime
- Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS) including the Pan-Staffordshire PSHE Education Service
- Staffordshire County Council
- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
- Staffordshire Police
- Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Staffordshire Women's Aid
- Tamworth Borough Council
- Trent & Dove Housing
- University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust