

2025 - 2028

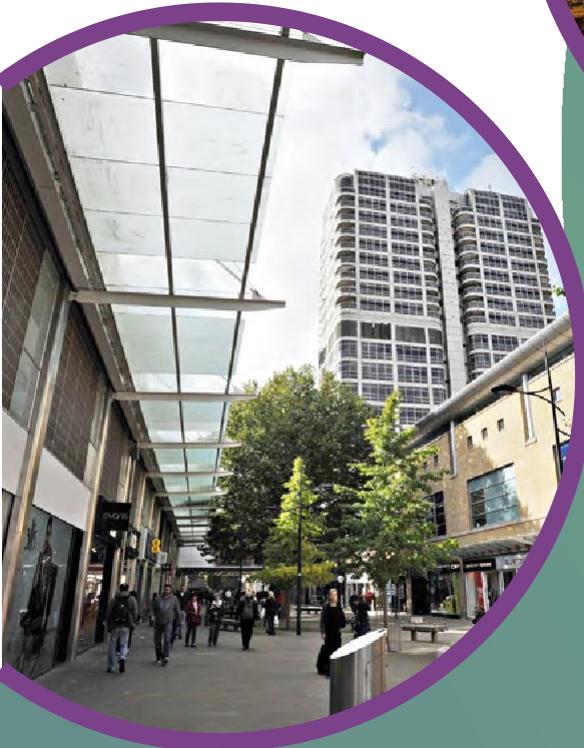


SWINDON

**COMMUNITY SAFETY
PARTNERSHIP**

A Safer Swindon For All

Swindon's Domestic Abuse Strategy





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Foreword from the Community Safety Partnership Executive

Domestic abuse and violence can happen to anyone irrespective of age, gender, race, religion or social background. The impact of domestic abuse does not begin and end with the victim, it can have a profound impact upon the whole family. The effects of domestic abuse often result in a range of lasting negative and harmful effects on health, wellbeing and outcomes in life.

Domestic abuse can only be tackled through a robust, multi-agency approach, with agencies working together to support victims and their families affected by domestic abuse.

Whilst we remain vigilant and robust in our response to Domestic Abuse, prevention is critical in safeguarding future victims. Through our focus on Clares Law, also known as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, we remain committed to providing our communities with the ability to make an application to the Police requesting information about a current or ex-partner through concerns around their historic abusive behaviours and the risk they may pose.

If you are in a relationship or have concerns about a person in a relationship, you have the right to ask for this potentially lifesaving information and our expertly trained Officers and Staff are ready to assess any disclosure requests and identify what, if any, information is to be shared to the requesting person.

The Domestic Abuse Bill received Royal Assent on 29th April 2021. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has been described as the most comprehensive package ever and

focuses on bringing the issue of Domestic Abuse to the forefront of society. The Act includes the first statutory government definition of "Domestic Abuse" which goes beyond physical violence and includes psychological and economic abuse.

This Domestic Abuse Strategy will set the direction for all involved, aligning to National Policy and Legislation, to tackle domestic abuse, with a clear perpetrator focus through both criminal and rehabilitative routes and by being truly victim centred and context led.



T/ACC Wiltshire Police and
ChairCommunity Safety
PartnershipExecutive Board
Liz Coles



Foreword from Councillor Jim Grant

As the new Administration for Swindon Borough Council, we are committed to reducing the harm caused to our residents due to domestic abuse (DA). To do this we need to work collectively with our partners across Swindon and ensure the services we provide are effective. We also need to listen to the voices of those people with lived experience of abuse, so we are sure that we are providing the best possible support at the time it is needed.

We want to make sure that everybody in Swindon feels safe in their homes and out in their communities; safe to travel on public transport for work or during their leisure time and to use our parks and recreational facilities and public spaces, without fear. We are committed to reducing sexual harassment and stalking, domestic abuse and sexual violence. We will work as a partnership to ensure this happens, and to reduce the harm caused by all forms of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse and acts of violence against women and girls are serious crimes that affect many Swindon residents, no matter what their personal circumstance or background. These crimes are often under reported or hidden, as victims fear reprisals from their abuser/s. Women and girls often suffer repeated abuse as they don't know where to report their abuse, fear they won't be believed, or they are in situations where they are unable to leave their abuser.

By working together we can reduce the impact of these crimes and bring those responsible to justice. To do this we need to identify those at risk earlier to prevent escalation to serious harm, raise awareness in our communities that these crimes are unacceptable and to teach our children and young people about healthy relationships and respect. This will help reduce the long term impact and consequences for people who have experienced abuse, such as mental health issues, drug & alcohol use and subsequently reduce the demand on public services.

This strategy outlines the key priorities for tackling domestic abuse and violence against women and girls over the next ten years. We will measure our progress to ensure we are successfully keeping Swindon residents safe.



Councillor Jim Grant
Communities and
Joint Working

Introduction

Every person has the right to lead their lives without fear of intimidation, harassment, bullying and violence. For many, this right is not respected, and domestic abuse and violence continues to be a problem in every part of the United Kingdom.

It is clear more needs to be done across all sectors of society to intervene earlier and protect those affected by domestic abuse. National prevalence ~~data~~ now shows that 1 in 4 women, and 1 in 6 men will be affected by domestic abuse during their lives.

Echoing the foreword by The Chair of our Community Safety Partnership and Councillor Grant we recognise that there needs to be a partnership approach in Swindon to prevent domestic abuse and protect those who experience domestic abuse and violence in their daily lives. This means the police, health services, the office of the police and crime commissioner (OPCC), the local authority, the voluntary, community and faith sectors, and the private sector are united to effect change.

This strategy has been developed using the shared common priorities and goals contained in the Swindon Community Safety Strategy (2025 - 2028) and the Swindon Statutory Housing Duty Strategy (2024 - 2027). It is also ~~part~~ to the Wiltshire and Swindon Serious Violence Strategy (2024-2029).

Copies of these documents can be accessed via the Swindon Community Safety Partnership website here: Swindon Community Safety Partnership (saferswindon.org.uk) (saferswindon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/110/2025/06/Community-Safety-Strategy-2025-2028-v7.pdf) ([Swindon Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy](#)) [Wiltshire and Swindon Serious Violence Strategy \(2024-2029\)](#)

Definitions

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 created a new statutory definition of domestic abuse:

Section 2: “Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if—

- (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
- (b) the behaviour is abusive.

(3) 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.

(4) “Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to—

- (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
- (b) obtain goods or services.

(5) For the purposes of this Act A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).

For the first time in law, the Act recognises children as victims of domestic abuse. This recognises the detrimental effects of children experiencing domestic abuse within the home and how they are classed as the “invisible victims.”

Coupled with the act, there has been a renewed focus on combatting and eliminating domestic abuse from communities in England, culminating in the publication of the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan in March 2022, which focuses on the need for prioritising prevention, supporting all survivors and pursuing perpetrators.

Background and Context

Prevalence of domestic abuse:

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone regardless of age, disability, gender identification, ethnicity, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, social background or geography.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) in the year to March 2023 estimated a total of 2.1 million people aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse equating to a prevalence rate of 4.4%. The latest prevalence estimates for all types of domestic abuse experienced in the last year for people aged 16 years and over were not significantly different compared with the year ending March 2022.¹

Evidence shows that domestic abuse is predominantly committed against women. However, there is still a high number of men affected by domestic abuse. 1.4 million women and 751,000 men aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse; a prevalence rate of approximately 5.7% of women and 3.2% of men. The police recorded 889,918 domestic abuse-related crimes (excluding Devon and Cornwall) in the year ending March 2023, a similar number to the previous year. There were 51,288 domestic abuse-related prosecutions in England and Wales for the year ending March 2023, compared with 53,207 in the year ending March 2022.

Data supplied from 28 police forces showed that the victim was female in 73.5% of domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police in the year ending March 2023, compared with 26.5% of domestic abuse-related crimes where the victim was male. This proportion was similar for most offence categories. However, for domestic abuse-related sexual offences, the proportion of female victims was 93.0%, compared with 7.0% for males (Figure 3). There is an acknowledgement that there may be under-reporting of male domestic abuse crimes due to shame, and that there is a higher proportion of domestic abuse in same sex male relationships, as opposed to heterosexual relationships. These findings follow trends seen over previous years.²

Domestic Abuse affects all aspects of community life including health and crime rates, ability to participate in the workforce, child development and family dynamics.

The NSPCC reports that around one in five children have been exposed to domestic abuse. The Adoption and Children Act 2002, Section 120 recognises that witnessing domestic abuse can have serious long-term implications for children. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 extends the rights of children who witness domestic abuse: Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children are recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right, if they see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse, and are related to the perpetrator of the abuse or the victim of the abuse. Abuse directed towards a child is defined as child abuse. Feletti et al (1998) reported domestic abuse as a key Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE). Other ACEs include living in a household with adults experiencing substance misuse, or a mental health condition.

¹The Crime Survey for England Wales (CSEW) statistics presented in this release for the year ending March 2023 are not badged as National Statistics. They are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates.

²Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

Children and young people who are exposed to violence in the home may experience emotional trauma, poor health and trouble learning at school. They are also vulnerable to engaging in risky behaviour, youth violence, and exploitation. Adverse childhood experiences can have a negative impact on health and wellbeing in adult life including substance misuse, mental ill-health, offending, self-harm and suicide.

National learning from Serious Case Reviews identifies domestic abuse, mental ill-health and drug and alcohol misuse as the most common negative issues relating to children's family life. Substance misuse and poor mental health can be both contributory and causal factors of domestic abuse. The Care Act 2014 acknowledges domestic abuse as a category of abuse that particularly affects adults with care and support needs.

Domestic Abuse and Suicide

In the domestic abuse victim population research evidences that of those accessing refuge, a quarter have felt suicidal (Aitken and Monroe 2018). Qualitative studies have found that victims who have expressed suicidal ideation feel that way due to the feelings of being trapped and that there was no escape or reprieve from the abuse they were suffering (NSPA ca2023). Dr Jane Monckton Smith has compiled an 8 Steps to Suicide timeline which encapsulates their sense of loss of control prior to the suicide of both victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. In stage 6 and 7 where suicidal ideation develops there has often been an escalation in abuse resulting in help seeking behaviour, but with this escalation in abusive behaviours comes intensifying feelings of hopelessness and entrapment for the victim. During the same period the perpetrators often experience escalating triggers such as financial issues and/ or separation/ childcare issues causing a sense of loss of power and control, often twinned with immense sense of shame. Stage 8 is described as the Suicide stage, this can be a complex stage as for perpetrators the suicide more often occurs during the relationship or around the time of separation, and for victims this has been shown to sometimes occur many years after the abuse has stopped- demonstrating the long-lasting impact of the trauma (Monckton et al.).

It is increasingly recognised that male perpetrators of domestic abuse are at increased risk of experiencing mental health illness (Oram et al. 2022). Within this same cohort of individuals, it is also understood that they are more likely to have experienced adverse childhood trauma (Fulu et al. 2017) and have multiple risk factors present prior to their suicide (Kent and Medway 2022). Of the cohort of individuals perpetrating domestic abuse, there is a group of people who are known to be perpetrating high risk domestic abuse (abuse which is likely/ is causing serious harm and risk of death). The DRIVE study looking at this cohort of individuals found they were in fact 23 times more likely to die by suicide than the general population (DRIVE 2023). Due to the complex nature of the perpetrator population risk factors, and the challenges they face in being able to meaningfully engage with services, there is evidence of an increasing need for them to be creatively supported by services.

Children as Victims

Research undertaken in 2020 shows a link between the experiences of domestic abuse in some children and young people, and their resultant engagement in criminality and

exploitation, and of becoming a perpetrator or victim of domestic abuse in adulthood³. There is no doubt that exposure to domestic abuse in childhood is one of the factors that causes complex trauma and a variety of other emotional, social and health problems, both during childhood, and into adulthood:

*'Children who witness domestic violence suffer emotional and psychological maltreatment. They tend to have low self-esteem and experience increased levels of anxiety, depression, anger and fear, aggressive and violent behaviours, including bullying, lack of conflict resolution skills, lack of empathy for others and poor peer relationships, poor school performance, anti-social behaviour, pregnancy, alcohol and substance misuse, self-blame, hopelessness, shame and apathy, post-traumatic stress disorder - symptoms such as hyper-vigilance, nightmares and intrusive thoughts, images of violence, insomnia, enuresis and over protectiveness of their mother and/or siblings'*⁴.

Not all children who live in households with lived experience will grow up to be perpetrators or victims of domestic abuse. However, the research also details the importance of resilience, and the recovery of children who have experienced domestic abuse through therapeutic support, and other trauma informed interventions.

There is now formal recognition of children as victims in the Domestic Abuse Act, as well as existing guidance such as; Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023). With what we know about the effect of witnessing domestic abuse and violence against women and girls as a child or young person, we are clear that we need to commission more targeted support for children and young people, in the Prevention and Protection spheres. The national Domestic Abuse Commissioner in her 2022- 2023 annual report⁵ states that only 29 per cent of victims

³OVC-Literature-review-2020-1.pdf (cloud-platform-e218f50a4812967ba1215eaecede923f.s3.amazonaws.com)

⁴LSCB, 2016. Safeguarding children affected by domestic abuse and violence. In: London Child Protection Procedures. London. Available at: http://www.londoncp.co.uk/chapters/sg_ch_dom_abuse.html#introduction.

⁵Annual Report of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

and survivors who wanted support for their children were able to access it, and if we look at service provisions in Swindon that deliver interventions for children, there is a definite gap in the number of children we know are affected by domestic abuse, and the capacity of services to support them.

Research from the NSPCC⁶ shows that significant numbers of teenagers and young adults are experiencing violence in their relationship – 25% of girls, and 18% of boys. We recognise that children and young people who experience domestic abuse in their relationships may need specific preventative and supportive interventions where this is the case.

National and local context

The national Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan published in March 2022, focuses on the need for prioritising prevention, supporting all survivors and pursuing people who use abuse in their relationships. Funding from central government is focusing on the provision of safe accommodation for survivors of DA and VAWG.

The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 introduced a joint statutory duty on Police and Crime Commissioners, Integrated Care Boards and local authorities to work together when commissioning support services for victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence, so that services can be strategically coordinated and targeted where victims need them. The Act is also requiring that statutory guidance is published for the roles of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), to increase awareness and consistency of these positions.

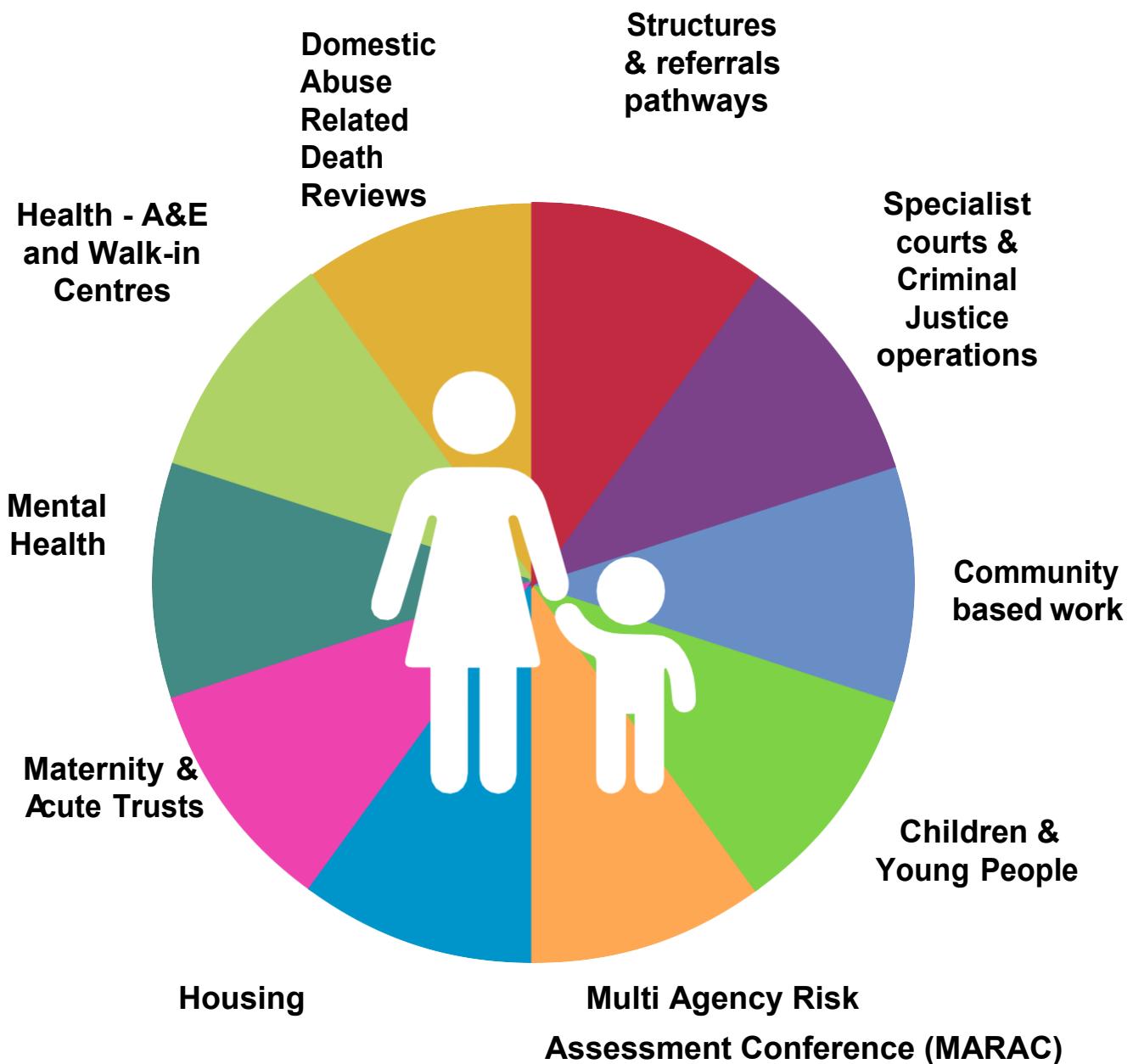
⁴LSCB, 2016. Safeguarding children affected by domestic abuse and violence. In: London Child Protection Procedures. London. Available at: http://www.londoncp.co.uk/chapters/sg_ch_dom_abuse.html#introduction.

⁵Annual Report of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) ⁶Barter et al (2009) Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships, London NSPCC ResearchGate

Coordinated Community Response

This strategy is based upon the principles of a Coordinated Community Response (CCR) to domestic abuse. These principles ensure that we take a whole system approach to tackling and decreasing domestic abuse in Swindon. The CCR brings services, including health, housing, social care, education, criminal justice and communities, together to ensure local systems keep survivors safe, hold abusers to account, and prevent domestic abuse. It addresses prevention, early intervention, crisis, and long-term recovery and safety, working with a wide range of services, pathways, and systems. This is a national model of good practice and relates to our strategic priorities. Our previous Domestic Abuse Strategy was also instrumental in prioritising this approach.

A Coordinated Community Response



Swindon Context

The Community Safety Partnership are committed to providing services and support to people affected by domestic abuse and violence against women and girls. We acknowledge that tackling domestic abuse and VAWG needs to take a whole system approach, encompassing multi-agency working, with children's services the police, probation, health, housing and the voluntary sector collaborating to identify, support and protect all people affected, including children and young people.

8.1 Children's services improvement

The Ofsted inspection of Swindon Borough Council's Children's Social Care in July 2023 stated:

'Recognition of the impact of domestic abuse is variable. The resulting plans for children are often weak. This leads to concerns not being properly addressed and a pattern of re-referrals.'

The Ofsted Improvement Plan is monitored through the independently chaired Ofsted Improvement Board, and contains several actions relating to the identification and support given to children and families in Swindon affected by domestic abuse. Some of these actions are shared priorities with the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership, and there is a read across to the priority actions of this strategy. We are concentrating on improving our response to children and families experiencing domestic abuse at an earlier stage. Our newly implemented integrated 'front door' to services, '**Contact children and families Swindon**' will ensure that families receive help in their communities to prevent an escalation of domestic abuse. We aim to provide a 'no wrong door' approach, to ensure support can be given to families with children as soon as they ask for it, and without the need to repeat their story to a number of different professionals. We are also working in partnership with other agencies such as the police and probation to ensure children are protected and can safely remain with their families.

8.2 Wiltshire Police

Wiltshire Police's improvements were recognised by the 2024 Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) report from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

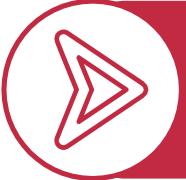
Wiltshire Police were found to listen and respond to what matters to its communities with good management of offenders and suspects and also ensuring that arrests are made swiftly and victims are safeguarded at the earliest opportunity. The report noted that there is effective use of THRIVE risk assessments by the Crime and Communications Centre staff, ensuring that vulnerability and victims of repeat domestic abuse are identified at the earliest opportunity.

Wiltshire Police has delivered improvements in how they address domestic abuse, including the roll out of Domestic Abuse Matters training to 1,650 officers and staff, increased arrest rates and the introduction of Listening Circles for people affected so that feedback from people's experiences can be understood, inform learning and future support.

Wiltshire PEEL Assessment 2023-2025 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

9. Data on prevalence in Swindon

In 2022/2023

-  5895 incidents of domestic abuse were reported to Wiltshire Police of these: 3114 (53%) were crimes. This is an increase from the number of incidents in 2020/2021 when there were 5,540 incidents, reported, 2854 of which were crimes.
-  2567 were incidents
-  33% of Violence against the Person (VAP) incidents were domestic abuse related.
-  Number of people/children who accessed refuges/safe accommodation was: 67 people and 180 children
-  Number of people declined access to refuge accommodation due to no capacity was 21. There were an additional 10 who were declined because the Refuge could not meet their needs.
-  473 referrals to MARAC – 845 children living in those households – this is a decrease in terms of adult referrals from 2020/2021 when there were 488 cases, but more children were affected in this year.

*(NB. Some victims would have been heard at MARAC more than once)

What is apparent from these figures is the high number of children present at these incidents of domestic abuse. We also need to be mindful that these were the domestic abuse incidents that were actually reported to the police. It is likely that there is a high proportion of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls that is unreported.¹⁰

¹⁰How common is domestic abuse? - Women's Aid (womensaid.org.uk)

Swindon Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment 2024

The following information is taken from the recently published Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment:

10.1 Prevalence of domestic abuse: number of people

We would predict a population of Swindon Unitary Authority (UA) size (in 2023) to have an annual prevalence of 4.4% for DA, with 8,235 people aged 16 years and over experiencing DA within one year. Women are almost twice as likely as men to experience domestic abuse. Men do experience DA, often in the context of their partner rather than their wider family. One person can experience multiple incidents of DA.

10.2 Incidence of domestic abuse: number of incidents and crimes

Wiltshire Police recorded 5,895 DA incidents in Swindon in 2022/23. Of these, 3,114 (53%) were considered to be crimes. This shows a steady increase in the number of incidents and crimes over a five year period from April 2018 to March 2023. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) follows a convention implying that this means that 71.6% of DA (5,895/8,235) has been recorded by the police, but this approach is closer to a measure of those persons experiencing DA who have been identified by the police.

In the same year 2022/23, Wiltshire Police recorded 209 people in Swindon as charged or summonsed for DA crimes. This is a minority of DA crimes (about 7%). A large proportion of DA crimes could not be brought to a charge stage because of problems with accumulating sufficient evidence, or because the victim did not support a charge taking place.

In 2022/23 there were 512 prosecutions for DA in the Wiltshire Police area (Wiltshire and Swindon). Of these 417 (81%) resulted in convictions.

In England and Wales, it is estimated that 27.0% of women and 13.9% of men (20.5% of persons) have reported some form of DA to the police in their adult lifetime. In terms of the Swindon UA population this would equate to 25,601 women and 12,834 men, approximately 38,366 persons.

10.3 Severity of domestic abuse and level of risk

There were differences between results for women and men within the National Crime Survey for England and Wales 2022/23 in terms of the proportions whose DA experience in the previous year could be described as 'physical' or 'threatening'. DA that was 'Physical/Threatening' was reported by 68.4% of women and 62.5% of men.

There were differences between women and men within the Crime Survey results in terms of context. Non-sexual abuse from a family member was reported by 40.6% of men (who reported

any DA) and 33.3% of women (who reported any DA); sexual abuse was also less frequent amongst men (who reported any DA) at 3.1% compared to women (who reported any DA), 8.8%. Non-sexual partner abuse was reported by 59.6% of women (who reported any DA) and 56.3% of men (who reported any DA).

473 cases were referred to the Swindon MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) in 2022/23 because the people concerned were considered by professionals to be at high risk of harm, and these cases were associated with 845 children (a person could be referred a number of times and so be counted as more than one case. In a similar manner, children could be counted more than once.) It is clear that in high risk cases, it is common for children to be part of households in which DA is happening.

Men were a small but increasing minority of DA cases referred to the MARAC. In 2020/21 men were 2.3% of the referrals, in 2021/22 4.5% of referrals and in 2022/23 6.1% of referrals.

In 2022/23 there were 180 referrals made to Swindon Adult Safeguarding where it was indicated on the referral form that DA was suspected. 143 people (79%) were female, 35 (19%) were male, and 2 (1%) were recorded as 'other'. Data recording for 2021/22 is incomplete due to system changes, therefore it is not possible to examine any trends in the number of safeguarding referrals made.

10.4 'Honour-based' abuse

In 2022/23, there was a total of 4,923 honour-based abuse (HBA) related offences and incidents in England and Wales with great variation in the number of HBA-related incidents or offences recorded by 43 Police Force Areas. Wiltshire police force area reported eight HBA-related incidents in 2022/23 and fewer than five offences. From this it can be anticipated that numbers for Swindon are small. However, it should be noted that these crime figures only cover those offences that were reported to the police and are therefore likely to only represent a small proportion of the actual HBA offences committed during this period.

10.5 Children exposed to domestic abuse between adults

The police recorded 816 DA crimes as having a child present at the time of the incident, although this may include children as members of the household who, by extension, were possibly at risk. As households might sometimes have more than one child, the true number witnessing or at risk from domestic abuse in one year would probably be higher. We also know from the MARAC figures (page 12) that in 22/23 there were 473 referrals to MARAC – 845 children living in those households.

Of the 16,351 contacts made to the Children's Services Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in 2022/23, 4,591 (28%) were diverted to the Early Help Hub. Of those, 593 (13%) had DA recorded as one of the reasons for contact. The remaining 11,760 contacts (72%) were processed through MASH. Of these 2,018 (17%) were recorded as being as a result of domestic abuse. Not all of those children will have been supported through Children's Social Care, some will have been referred to our level 3 Early Help services, or universal services, but this is still an indication of the high numbers of children who come to the attention of statutory services because of domestic abuse.

¹⁶Dowling, S., Moreton, K., Wright. L. Trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation: a literature review. (Home Office Online Report, October 2007)

¹⁷Gov.uk: Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify statistics UK, end of year summary 2022. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2022/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2022>

10.6 Male victims/survivors

What was once considered a crime solely perpetrated by men towards women is now recognised as also being perpetrated by women towards men and by those in same sex relationships. Studies have identified a wide range of abuse experienced by men as physical, psychological, coercive, sexual, financial, legal aggression, manipulation of parent-child relationship and false allegation. Men who identify as gay, bisexual and transgender refer to other types of abusive behaviours, highlighting the need to focus on different experiences and a new body of research.

Drawing on national prevalence it is possible to estimate that there were 2,955 cases of Domestic abuse of men in Swindon per annum, compared with an imputed number of 5,405 women. Drawing on the data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales we concluded that the DA reported by men was more likely to originate with their partner, (as distinct from family related abuse) similar to women, however was less likely to have an element of physical violence or of a threat, than was the case with women. Data from the Swindon MARAC and MARACs in general also support the interpretation that the DA reported by men is, on average, less likely to be physical and does not usually escalate in severity.

In general, however, there is a lack of data available for DA experienced by men in Swindon. 'Respect' is a national charity offering support and advice through separate phone helplines, one for perpetrators and one for male victims of abuse. Over a three year period, between April 2020 and March 2023, 'Respect' received a total of 45 calls on its national helpline that were recorded as coming from Swindon. Of these, 27 calls (60%) were from males, of which 26 were victims, suggesting that confidential phone lines and web chat support is an important source of help for male victims. Only one of these calls was from a perpetrator. The majority of victims were aged 45-54 years, heterosexual (80%) and from a White ethnic group (57%). A further 16% were from an Asian ethnic group and 13% were from a Black ethnic group. Seven cases were from a frontline worker (16%). However, caller characteristics were not recorded for approximately 40% of calls received.

10.7 People with learning disabilities, Black, Asian and other ethnic minority groups and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or have other sexual identities (LGBTQ+)

There is a large gap in research on the issue of domestic violence in people with learning disabilities, Black, Asian and other ethnic minority groups, and those from LGBTQ+ groups. Most of the studies were conducted internationally, but recently organisations in England are beginning to identify the problem and some important evidence has come out.

A Women's Aid report in 2015 "(Gill Hague, 2015)¹⁸ describes how women with disabilities are twice as likely to experience gender based violence, and how their disability made their abuse worse and limited their capacity to escape. They experienced different types abuse, from physical, financial and sexual abuse, and sometimes the perpetrator was also disabled.

Galop, a UK LGBT+ charity, conducted various studies to understand the type of abuse and mapping services available to LGBTQ+²⁰ people. Their work showed that despite the high level of domestic abuse and high demand of support, LGBT+ people are unlikely able to access to help due to lack of specialist services, causing under reporting of cases.

A similar situation can be seen even in cases related to trans women²¹ who experience hate crime due to their gender identity. Experiences collected of trans women and service provision identified the need for more investment in trans inclusion and support for all service providers.²²

Ethnicity, language, culture and religion are considered risk factors of domestic violence and abuse and they are all elements that characterise Black Asian and ethnic minorities, explaining partially the high rate of domestic and sexual abuse within these communities.²³ Under reporting of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls has been identified due to different reasons such as fear (for insecure immigration status), language barriers, and cultural, religious and economic factors. Also, some members of these communities experience honour-based abuse, forced marriage, breast flattening and female genital mutilation.²⁴ In order to reflect the latest demographic changes in the Swindon population, it will be important for stakeholders to take intersectionality into account in order to ensure accessibility and specific services when needed.

¹⁸Gill Hague, Ravi Thiara, Pauline Magowan and Audrey Mullender. Making the links: Disabled women and domestic violence (2015)

¹⁹Nia. Double Oppression: Violence Against Disabled Women- a resource pack for practitioner

²⁰Terminology used by Galop, as opposed LGBTQ+

²¹Galop. Galop's statement on Women's Aid's position on the inclusion of trans women in single-sex services <https://galop.org.uk/news/galops-statement-on-womens-aids-position-on-the-inclusion-of-trans-women-in-single-sex-services/>

²²nfpSynergy, Stonewall. Supporting trans women in domestic and sexual violence services (2018), and Chaka L. Bachmann (Stonewall). LGBT in Brintai -Trans Report

²³Olabanji, O.A. Collaborative Approaches to Addressing Domestic and Sexual Violence among Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in Southampton: A Case Study of Yellow Door. Societies 2022, 12, 165. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc12060165>

²⁴Jyoti Belur (2008) Is policing domestic violence institutionally racist? A case study of south Asian Women, Policing and Society, 18:4, 426-444, DOI: 10.1080/10439460802349312, and Geetanjali Gangoli, Lis Bates & Marianne Hester (2020) What does justice mean to black and minority ethnic (BME) victims/survivors of gender-based violence?, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 46:15, 3119-3135, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2019.1650010, and Gill , A. K., & Walker, S. (2020). On honour, culture and violence against women in black and minority ethnic communities. In S. Walklate, K. Fitz-Gibbon, J. McCulloch, & J. Maher (Eds.), Emerald Handbook of Criminology, Feminism and Social Change. Emerald.

10.8 Other data

As well as the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment we are able to look at other data which can provide evidence on the prevalence of domestic abuse in Swindon.

In our children and young people who are working with our Youth Justice Service we know that in 2023-2024 65% have experienced domestic abuse - in the family home - 30 out of 46 young people.

For 43% domestic abuse has featured in own behaviour e.g. violence against parents/girlfriend/boyfriend, 21 out of 46 young people.

Statistics held in children's services relate to the reasons why children are placed on child protection plans, or become looked after by the local authority. Although there is a category of Abuse and Neglect, this does not necessarily mean domestic abuse, but is related to the child. We know there is a high prevalence of domestic abuse amongst the families where there is a child protection issue, but at present we are not able to define the exact number.

10.9 People with lived experience of domestic abuse

In order to capture the voices and experience of those people who have received support through the services provided, a survey was developed and disseminated across the partnership via providers, and through the council website and social media.

Survey responses suggest that societal stigma surrounding these issues persists, with the consequence that individuals remain in abusive situations for a long time, that they do not seek professional help following abuse or that, when they do come forward, they have a negative experience of reporting DA. Many survey respondents felt that greater awareness of what constitutes domestic abuse, as well as increased awareness of support services available, might enable more individuals to report incidence of DA earlier on in the timeline of their experience. Furthermore, the experience of reporting DA could be improved by developing alternative ways to report i.e. phone apps, by employing more dedicated staff and providing more staff training to better support individuals who come forward to seek help.

²⁶ Järvinen, J.A.K., Miller, I. (2008) Hard Knock Life. New Philanthropy Capital, London. Available at: www.thinknpc.org/publications/hard-knock-life/

²⁷ Dr Susie Balderston (2019) Advocacy & Social Policy Impact Research Evaluation:

The Nelson Trust Sex Worker Outreach Project (SWOP)

Final Report 2015 - 2018 Lancaster University

What we have done so far and the impact we have made

The previous multi-agency domestic abuse strategy for Swindon covered 2021-2024 and was based upon a domestic abuse needs analysis done in 2021 and consultation across the DA and VAWG partnerships.

The priorities for the strategy were:

Objective 1: Reduce the incidence of domestic abuse by improving early intervention and prevention by focussing on early help and specialist services for victims, families and perpetrators.

Demonstrable successes against this objective have been:

- Preventative education programmes in schools, and programmes that target children and adolescents who have been affected by domestic abuse.
- A much increased offer of safe accommodation (funded through national government)
- The development of a perpetrator subgroup and a perpetrator strategy

Objective 2: Improve the response to domestic abuse by promoting awareness and training to help communities, professionals and specialist services respond effectively and consistently.

Interventions that have been delivered under this priority include:

- Raised levels of awareness through campaigns and days of action throughout Swindon.
- The sharing of good practice for frontline agencies, through the Domestic Abuse Forum, to enhance support offered and align across agencies.
- Trauma informed resources for survivors.
- A comprehensive training offer accessed through the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership

Objective 3: Align joint commissioning activity across partner agencies to make the best use of resources to deliver high quality and responsive services for victims, survivors, children, young people and perpetrators that focus on risk reduction and recovery:

Successes have included:

- Some aligned commissioning alongside the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner accessed funding streams from the Ministry of Justice.
- Monitoring of the Multi Agency DA Strategy & the Statutory Housing Duty Strategy through the DA & VAWG Board.
- The 2023 Domestic Abuse Needs assessment has been created through a partnership approach.
- Although there has been a good level of achievements delivered and monitored through the strategy, there is an awareness that we need to continue on this trajectory, and improve the offer for all people affected by Domestic abuse.
- Of particular importance is listening to those people who are experts through experience, to ensure their perspective is fundamental to the design and delivery of services.

There also needs to be a widening of our community engagement to ensure organisations which are 'by and for' communities are listened to, and empowered to offer preventative strategies and pathways to support for people who may not feel they can access mainstream services.

It is clear that domestic abuse issues and homicides are not declining and we need to ensure that people affected by DA are able to access support at the right time, along with their children, and feel safe whilst accessing this support. We know there is a delay in responses to crisis intervention and this can further increase women's fears of engaging in this support due to poor experiences.



Our services and our approach

The local authority has a key coordinating and facilitating role and is responsible for the operation of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), the Swindon Borough Council (SBC) domestic abuse lead post and facilitates the Domestic Abuse Board. In addition, the local authority and the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner commission domestic abuse services from the voluntary and community sector, for instance the Swindon Paragon Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (SPIDAS), The Nelson Trust, and Stonewater as safe accommodation providers. NHS England, Wiltshire Police and the office of Police and Crime Commissioner fund the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC).

Where access to safer accommodation is not available, Swindon Borough Council Housing Options have a duty to house people affected by domestic abuse under statutory housing law.

Strategic oversight and governance

The DA Board is a local partnership board and a sub-group of the Community Safety Partnership, (saferswindon.org.uk) which is an alliance of authorities that have a statutory responsibility to reduce crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and re-offending. The partnership is made up of representatives from the police, local authorities, fire and rescue authorities, health services, and probation services (known as the 'responsible authorities'). Members of the DA Board and key stakeholders of this strategy and the Statutory Housing Duty Strategy include:

- Swindon Borough Council
- Swindon Community Safety Partnership (CSP)
- Wiltshire Police
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
- National Probation Service (NPS)
- Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue
- Avon and Wiltshire Partnership Mental Health Trust (AWP)

The board members will oversee the implementation of this strategy. The DA board meets quarterly and is chaired by a member of one of the agencies from the Community Safety Partnership.

Swindon is fortunate to have a wide charitable sector, who are key partners implementing this strategy and form a Partnership Working Group to ensure that the strategy is fit for purpose and accessible by those that it most effects.

Areas for development and improvement

As part of the development of this strategy we have undertaken a service provision mapping exercise, with the DA Board, our providers, and colleagues across early help, children's social care commissioning and operational teams, the voluntary and community sector, the police, health, probation and experts by experience.

We have identified gaps in our strategic oversight, organisation and commissioning, and gaps in services and provision.

14.1 Areas for strategic development

We need to produce an integrated shared data set across the different agencies working with people affected by domestic abuse, including our local Safeguarding Partnership. This will inform our needs assessments and future strategies in Swindon, so we are confident our services are reaching enough people, and that we can predict further changes needed in procurement, commissioning and service delivery where necessary. We will need to ratify a multi-agency data sharing protocol as part of this.

Improved monitoring, reviewing and performance reporting – we need to be smarter and more consistent in gathering performance data, to check performance and outcomes achieved through the provision of services. We need to be sure how the interventions can improve the safety of individuals and children and young people in Swindon. A key part of this is deciding the indicators, measures and evidence that show progress.

We need to develop a more formalised commissioning framework with the charity/voluntary organisation sector which evidences the areas for development. This should prioritise commissioning against strategic needs, be outcome focused and deliver on the priority actions.

We should increase collaboration, and co-production to improve and develop joint delivery with voluntary and charitable sector for services, most suited to enhancing the early intervention and preventative offer. We also need to improve our collaborative and co-design work, for the recommissioning of existing services and the development and commissioning of new services.

We will ensure that the MARAC is effectively supporting victims, and that the link between the DA board is robust.

We will consider the development of a DA operational board as well as a strategic board to ensure issues around service delivery and provision can be discussed and resolved.

Our priorities 2025-2028

These priorities for the next three years have been developed collaboratively with the DA Board, our providers, and colleagues across early help, children's social care commissioning and operational teams, the voluntary and community sector, the police, probation, the OPCC, public health and the Integrated Care Board and experts by experience.

CSP Strategy Priorities

This new CSP strategy builds on those achievements while sharpening our focus on prevention, inclusion, and impact. We recognise that a safer Swindon is one where early risks are identified and responded to swiftly, where young people are protected from harm and given positive alternatives, and where services work seamlessly to safeguard those most at risk.

Key to this strategy is a renewed emphasis on place-based working, community voice, and proactive responses to emerging harms—including online exploitation, youth-related violence, and intersectional vulnerabilities. We are also strengthening our commitment to equity, ensuring our responses reflect the diverse needs of Swindon's communities and address dis-proportionality wherever it arises.

Our priorities for the next three years are clear: prevent harm and reduce vulnerability; protect individuals and communities from violence and exploitation; and empower people and places to play an active role in their own safety. This strategy is not just a plan—it is a promise to act, listen, and lead.

ACC Liz Coles, Chair of Swindon CSP

Priority 1. Protecting Vulnerable People

- We will safeguard those most at risk, focusing on victims of exploitation, domestic abuse, substance misuse, and harm outside the home.

What We Will Do:

- **Tackle Domestic Abuse**
- Deliver early intervention services for victims and perpetrators.
- Raise awareness of reporting pathways and support services.

Overarching Key Performance Indicators

- Increase in domestic abuse reports and uptake of support services.
- Completion of domestic abuse training for 100+ frontline staff annually.
- Reduction in repeat victimisation rates over the strategy period.
- Baseline and subsequent growth in victims accessing early intervention services.

Domestic Abuse Strategy Priorities

- Priority 1: Accessible and suitable services for support
- Priority 2: Early Identification, intervention and prevention
- Priority 3: Safe and accessible places to live (including commissioning safe spaces)
- Priority 4: Increasing safety by responding to those that cause harm

Priority 1: Accessible and suitable services for support	Priority 2: Early Identification, intervention and prevention	Priority 3: Safe and accessible places to live (including commissioning)	Priority 4: Increasing safety by responding to those that cause harm
Partnership	Prevention	Protection	Pursuance
<p>Over the course of the three year strategy the Swindon Community Safety Partnership is committed to:</p>			
We will sustain community and accommodation services that support all those impacted by domestic abuse. Recognising the wider impact on children and how a coordinated community response will support more positive outcomes for all.	We will develop a better understanding and awareness across communities in Swindon. Creating a community that addresses domestic abuse and holds perpetrators to account for their behaviour.	We will commission appropriate and safe accommodation and services to ensure people affected by domestic abuse can be housed safely when they need it.	We will hold to account those that cause harm and support them to recognise and change their behaviour through a whole family approach.
<p>How will we achieve this:</p>			
We will continue to develop a lived experience platform so the voice of people that use the services is heard, understood and used to codesign services. We will compare data and narrative from the lived experience platform to understand barrier and challenges and look to address these. We will ask all agencies working with victim/survivors, children who have	Launch and measure awareness campaigns aligning with the Early Intervention Youth and Community Strategy 2023-2027 Develop clear and agreed referral pathways via a Service directory to ensure that information and referral pathways are accessible to all Develop information sharing processes that are more conducive to people receiving the right help at the right time	Understand impact by gathering the experience of those with lived experience, including children. Develop a joint dataset for commissioned partners to identify patterns and trends. Pool resources and shared aims to commission the most appropriate provision to ensure those in need can be housed safely when fleeing domestic abuse. Develop Domestic	We will pilot and embed a Multi Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) model to monitor and provide intervention to those known to be a harm in their personal and intimate relationships. We will asset map our behaviour change services and seek to sustain these as a collective partnership. Provide training to 100+ frontline staff on responding to those that cause harm.

<p>experienced domestic abuse, and those that cause harm to self-audit against the government definition of trauma-informed, and their agencies wider understanding of domestic abuse.</p> <p>We will establish baseline data for victims accessing support services.</p> <p>We will hold our MARAC panel to account for the effectiveness of the function and impact on those families heard.</p> <p>We will develop strategic or third sector agencies trauma responsive and therapeutic services for adults and children who are victims/survivors of domestic abuse.</p>	<p>Train 100+ frontline staff in domestic abuse awareness and intervention. Ensuring domestic abuse and suicide is understood as a priority.</p> <p>We will challenge our partners to ensure that all agencies apply a domestic abuse lens when reviewing safeguarding risks.</p> <p>We will work more closely with our education partners to provide support to young people experiencing domestic abuse, by way of information and resource sharing, providing training, and workshops.</p> <p>Ensure senior leaders from all agencies commit to critically evaluating the effectiveness of their agency in a bid to improve a whole system response to domestic abuse</p> <p>Develop specialist services that respond to young people who are experiencing DA in their own relationships.</p> <p>Strategically map support available for children, or those experienced DA within their relationships.</p>	<p>abuse digital offer - developing pathway 'what we will do' Family First agenda through Children and Families Contact Swindon, the Early Intervention and commissioned service provision.</p> <p>Commission further accommodation provision to complement existing refuge by developing a move on accommodation pathway for those housed in safe accommodation</p>	<p>Build an accessible resource bank to use as intervention tools when working with those that cause harm.</p> <p>Further develop a strengths based model for children's social care that holds perpetrators to account for their harmful behaviour when safety planning.</p>
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A detailed action plan will be developed to map the specific and achievable actions to our priority objectives, specifying what good outcomes look like and what measures and evidence we will use to track progress.

Performance measures - evidencing success. The action plan contains specific details of these measures - for example, over three years we would like to see a 10% increase in reporting.

- Increase in the number of reports of domestic abuse to police and third party agencies
- Increased number of sanctions to protect victims/survivors applied for;
- Increased prosecution rates for domestic abuse crimes;
- Reduce the number of repeat incidents by ensuring that action is taken to protect victims and bringing perpetrators to justice, and that victims/survivors can access safer accommodation
- All children and young people have access to good, quality assured healthy relationship awareness in schools;
- Increase the numbers of victims/survivors accessing support services;
- Increased number of Black, Asian and other ethnic minorities victims/survivors accessing support services;
- Increased number of LGBTQ+ victims/survivors accessing support services
- Increased number of other vulnerable groups such as people with learning disabilities and older people who are victims/survivors accessing support services;
- Increased number of children/young people affected by DA receiving services, including therapeutic services.

Appendix 1

Use of language in this strategy:

'Victim/survivor'

These terms are used interchangeably throughout this strategy to refer to people who have or are currently experiencing domestic abuse.

'People who display abusive behaviour'

This term is used throughout to refer to the person displaying abusive behaviours.

'Lived experience'

This term refers to individuals who have DA and VAWG experiences and are comfortable sharing their experiences to support others and will share their expertise and knowledge based on their first-hand experience of domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological or emotional and/or physical and sexual abuse.

'Specialist domestic abuse service'

This term refers to organisations/services independent from the state (i.e. third sector), whose core business is to support victim/survivors and/or perpetrators and/or children and young people impacted by domestic abuse and other forms of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) - including sexual violence, forced marriage, so called 'honour based' violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual exploitation.

'Safe Accommodation'

This defines accommodation where survivors move to escape the perpetrator of domestic abuse. In Swindon safe accommodation is provided through voluntary sector partners, commissioned by Swindon Borough Council. Further safe accommodation is funded through central government.

'Children's Social Care'

Specialist statutory social care services for children governed by legislation specifically, The Children's Act 1989, and government guidance such as Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023).

'Early Intervention'

Defines support which can be given through universal and targeted services in the community, delivered by statutory partners, such as health, schools, housing services, or the voluntary sector.

'Healthy Relationship'

The definition of a healthy relationship is one where there is mutual respect, trust, honesty, good communication and equality.

Appendix 2

Links to:

Community Safety Strategy [Community-Safety-Strategy-2025-2028-v7.pdf](#)

Swindon Safe Accommodation Strategy [Final Statutory Housing Duty Strategy 2024-2027 | Swindon Borough Council](#)

Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2022 [https://www.swindon.gov.uk/downloads/file/5264/health_and_wellbeing_strategy_2017-2022](#)

Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Needs Assessment 2024 [https://www.swindonjsna.co.uk/domestic-abuse-needs-assessment-2024/](#)

Wiltshire and Swindon Serious Violence Strategy 2024-2029 [https://www.wiltshire-pcc.gov.uk/SysSiteAssets/assets/2.-the-pccs-office/3.-policies-and-strategies/serious-violence-duty-2024/serious-violence-sna.pdf](#)

Victims' Guide Victims' Guide - [https://www.cps.gov.uk/victims-guide](#)

Wiltshire and Swindon Police and Crime Plan: [Police and Crime Plan 2022 - 2025 \(wiltshire-pcc.gov.uk\)](#)



