

# Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent **Domestic Abuse Strategy** **2017-2020**

## Breaking the Cycle

The delivery of this strategy will be supported by partner agencies and organisations across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.



# FOREWORD

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Across the UK, domestic abuse has a devastating effect on the lives of individuals, families and communities. Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent are no different meaning it is more important than ever that public agencies work smarter and more effectively together so we can meet growing and increasingly complex demands.

This joint Domestic Abuse Strategy is different to what's gone before. It reinforces the commitment of the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council as well as District and Borough Councils, police and others to combine our collective efforts to prevent and tackle domestic abuse more effectively.

The new approach means services will remain focused on the needs of each local area but will also ensure consistency so that people get the tailored support they need no matter where they live.

Buying and managing the services together, rather than each agency doing it in isolation, will mean they are more effective at what they are designed to do with a larger proportion of the money available going towards front end service delivery.

The Strategy prioritises trying to stop domestic abuse and harm before it happens by making sure the warning signs, whatever those might be, are identified sooner. It is also about all public agencies recognising the potential for harm and understanding what needs to happen to prevent it or stop it if it's already happening.

Often, people and families living with abuse experience other difficulties and challenges in their lives. The new approach will also work better alongside other strategies such as Hidden Harm, Homelessness and Child Sexual Exploitation.

The practical governance and oversight to make sure this works will be through a newly established Domestic Abuse Commissioning and Development Board. It is supported by local organisations and experts and will not only ensure effective delivery of services but will also drive future development and strong accountability.

Whilst progress has been made in recent years, there is still much more to do to tackle domestic abuse. Every man, woman and child, regardless of their gender, ethnicity or beliefs has a right to a life free from abuse.

We would love to think it is possible to eradicate this life changing, family destroying abuse but in the real world that is sadly, probably impractical. This new approach will help prevent abuse in the first place, identify it sooner where it does happen, ensure more agencies, public and otherwise, recognise the warning signs and if abuse does happen help all involved get their lives back on track.

This is a unique opportunity for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and all the partners involved to redefine what effectively joined up services look like and what those services can achieve for our communities.

# INTRODUCTION

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The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Domestic Abuse Strategy sets out our joint vision, approach and aims for addressing domestic abuse and the outcomes we expect to see as a result. It provides a framework for local action.

## Definition

For the purpose of this document, the government's definition will be adopted:



### Domestic Abuse

“any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse”.



### Controlling Behaviour

“a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and / or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour”.



### Coercive Behaviour

“an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim”.

Whilst the government definition applies to individuals aged 16 and above, it is critical to note that domestic abuse can impact on children and young people under 16 who are often caught up in the abuse carried out within the home or within their own relationships. Therefore, our definitions extend to incorporate all age groups.

These definitions equally apply to those married, cohabiting and partners not living together. The definition is broad in scope and includes issues such as Female Genital Mutilation, honour based violence, child on parent or sibling violence and elder abuse.

Potential victims / victims can be either children and young people or adults as can potential perpetrators / perpetrators. It is also acknowledged that, on occasion, some victims can also be drawn into offending behaviour.

# NATIONAL CONTEXT



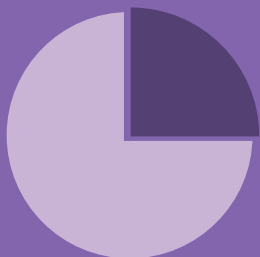
**Domestic abuse can affect anybody,** regardless of gender or sexual orientation and it occurs across all of society regardless of age, race, religion, wealth or geography;

Data from the Crime Survey of England and Wales 2015 found that almost



were victims of any Domestic Abuse in the last year

**Women** are much more likely than men to be the victims of high risk or severe domestic abuse<sup>1</sup>



National domestic abuse support charities suggest that around **1 in 4** of those from the LGBT community experience abuse, however less than a **quarter** of those will report it

The evidence for improving the response to domestic abuse is overwhelming.

National statistics show that there were

**1.35 million female victims of domestic abuse** and



**two women killed** every week by their partner in 2015/16

Domestic abuse has a high cost to society and a significant impact on public resources such as Police, health care and social services;

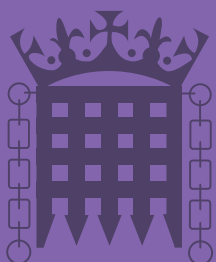
On average, high-risk victims live with domestic abuse for **2-3 years** before getting help



**85% of victims** sought help **five times** on average from professionals in the year before they got effective help to stop the abuse<sup>2</sup>



Both **men and women with disabilities** are at increased risk of being victims of Domestic Abuse<sup>3</sup>



The Government's **Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy 2016-2020** references the need to make **tackling violence against women and girls everybody's business**

<sup>1</sup>Safe Lives website [www.SafeLives.org.uk](http://www.SafeLives.org.uk)

<sup>2</sup>Safe Lives website [www.SafeLives.org.uk](http://www.SafeLives.org.uk)

<sup>3</sup>"Disability and Domestic Abuse: Risk, Impacts and Response" Public Health England Nov 2015

# LOCAL CONTEXT

In 2015-16 there were approximately

# 22,000

domestic crimes and incidents recorded by Staffordshire Police with 13,217 in Staffordshire and 8,501 in Stoke-on-Trent

Very few male victims currently access support.



Men have a greater representation of

**1 in 4** amongst the victims of crime

than the **1 in 24** amongst service users

Victims can be any age or gender but are predominantly

# young women



The majority of victims of domestic crimes and incidents are female (75%)



The number of domestic abuse cases visible to services is **rising and unlikely to fall**. This is considered to be due to improved Police recording practices, greater awareness of domestic abuse, a change to crime classifications and recording of malicious cyber-communication



Around four in five service users have needs relating to their emotional and mental well-being



Just over one in four service users have needs in relation to Drugs, Alcohol and/or Mental Health

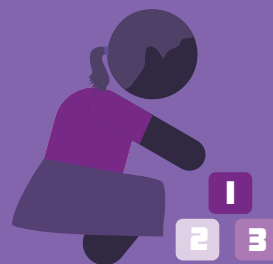


Almost 1 in 3 people accessing services refer themselves.

**31%** of those who access support across Staffordshire self-refer

**25%** referred by the Police and

**14%** by Social Services/Social Care



Most victims have children who also need support.

Around three in four victims accessing services have children living with them, and half of these have more than one child living in the home

# OUR APPROACH

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We will:

- Work jointly at every opportunity; this will include adopting a joint vision and strategy supported by overarching shared, strong governance and partnership arrangements, together with joint commissioning, aligned budgets and resources and service delivery;
- Provide effective strategic leadership to ensure a consistent and integrated approach to the prevention of domestic abuse and the responses to it, clearly identifying and ensuring that relevant partners are involved and accountable for their contribution to the overall vision;
- Jointly commission a range of consistent domestic abuse services from committed providers in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, flexed to meet local needs;
- Ensure clear referral processes / integrated pathways between universal and specialist services; a whole service system / approach;
- Develop and maintain an integrated community model that includes prevention, early intervention, targeted support, specialist provision, recovery and enforcement activities / services;
- Utilise the expertise of professionals within the voluntary and community sector, public agencies and private business;
- Take an individual or family-based approach, where appropriate to address a range of needs including those of potential victims / victims, potential perpetrators / perpetrators (children, young people, adults, families) with the aim of empowering individuals and building resilience;
- Ensure that the views, opinions and experiences of our communities, service users and providers are sought and used in developing and delivering continuous service improvement;
- Understand and address the root-causes of domestic abuse;
- Break the cycle of domestic abuse within families;
- Communicate effectively with all strategic partners and regional colleagues on issues spanning shared agendas and geographical boundaries;
- Implement consistent and robust workforce development and community development in respect of domestic abuse and associated matters such as the Hidden Harm agenda (children and young people experiencing a level of harm because of the presence of parental substance misuse, poor mental health and/or domestic abuse within the family);
- Ensure that professionals, individuals and communities have the appropriate knowledge and skills to identify and support those affected by domestic abuse and encourage training where gaps exist;
- Adopt an evidence-based, outcome-focussed approach to the development and provision of services. This will include identification of any gaps in service and learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews;
- Adopt a robust performance management framework to ensure that we are continually working to achieve the aims within this strategy;
- Ensure synergies with other related strategies and services;
- Ensure fair and equitable access to services for all.

# OUR VISION

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The government's strategy / action plan, evidence based NICE Guidance and our local needs assessment have been used to inform the development of our strategy. Our shared vision is to work in active partnership across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent to:

**“Prevent domestic abuse from happening and respond appropriately and effectively to those vulnerable to, or affected by, domestic abuse to enable them to move forward safely and independently.”**

# PRIORITIES

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In order to deliver our approach, we will have four priority areas:

- **Preventing Violence and Abuse;**
- **Provision of Services;**
- **Partnership Working;**
- **Perpetrators.**

# 1. Preventing Violence and Abuse

Preventing domestic abuse from happening in the first place by challenging the attitudes and behaviours which foster it and intervening as early as possible.

We will achieve this by:

- Maximising all opportunities to work with children, young people and families before issues arise and when they do arise, responding in a swift and coordinated way;
- Delivering consistent Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) vulnerability education / prevention programmes, including domestic abuse awareness and healthy relationships, across all schools and other educational establishments;
- Developing and delivering targeted vulnerability education / prevention programmes, support and diversionary activities to those considered more vulnerable to domestic abuse-related issues;
- Ensuring all cohorts including parents, businesses, professionals and communities are knowledgeable about domestic abuse and related services (this includes all aspects of domestic abuse including coercive control and controlling behaviour);
- Supporting the development of peer mentoring and encouraging people who have previously accessed domestic abuse services to become mentors.

# 2. Provision of Services

Commissioning a range of effective, joined up domestic abuse related services able to meet the needs of potential victims, potential perpetrators, victims, perpetrators (for both children, young people, adults and their families), ensuring all public services are able to identify and respond to the signs of domestic abuse.

We will achieve this by:

- Understanding and responding to local needs;
- Ensuring everyone needing support and accommodation (all types including refuge) has access to timely and effective services;
- Ensuring that wherever people live in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent they have access to the same core level of service;
- Establishing integrated pathways and coordinated care between relevant services (including specialist advice and advocacy);
- Undertaking regular reviews of domestic abuse services;
- Ensuring the relevant agencies (including health / GPs and social care professionals) and their frontline workforce have the skills and confidence to encourage people to disclose / discuss domestic abuse;
- Ensuring those experiencing domestic abuse who have a mental health condition receive easily accessible, evidence based support / treatment;
- Ensuring those experiencing domestic abuse who have a substance misuse issue are offered easily accessible support and treatment.



## 3. Partnership Working

Fostering an agreed partnership approach across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent to deliver robust governance, accountability, planning, commissioning and service delivery.

We will achieve this by:

- Establishing a joint strategic approach to the planning and delivery of domestic abuse services to reduce duplication and streamline governance;
- Developing joint commissioning arrangements supported by aligned budgets;
- Championing the domestic abuse agenda;
- Ensuring that professionals are adequately trained;
- Promoting a whole-system approach to domestic abuse-related issues, developing integrated pathways between all domestic abuse services and between domestic abuse and more general support services;
- Jointly commissioning consistent, effective high quality and accessible services which meet the needs of potential victims, victims, potential perpetrators, perpetrators of domestic abuse, their children and families across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent;
- Working with a range of early intervention services to identify potential victims and perpetrators;
- Establishing consistent baseline domestic abuse provision across the whole of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, which is flexible and recognises and meets differing local needs;
- Managing high-level risk with effective accountability, for example by effective use of the Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process;
- Having information sharing agreements in place between relevant services;
- Engaging partners from the public, private, business and voluntary and community sectors to embed ownership and joint working arrangements in relation to domestic abuse issues and services, including promoting peer support.

## 4. Perpetrators

Holding perpetrators of domestic abuse to account and preventing future offences.

We will achieve this by:

- Provision of evidence based tailored perpetrator programmes and support;
- Ensuring perpetrators' victims and families are appropriately supported whilst perpetrators are participating in a programme;
- Using a range of available tools and powers (e.g. Clare's Law<sup>5</sup>, Domestic Violence Protection Notices<sup>6</sup>) to protect victims when domestic violence or abuse is perpetrated;
- Maximising all enforcement opportunities through effective partnership work across the Criminal Justice System and through Integrated Offender Management, prisons and probation;
- Implementing appropriate risk management procedures proportionate to the level of threat, including the identification of risk to individuals and families and taking proportionate and tailored action to address this risk.

<sup>5</sup> Since 2014, under the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, individuals have had the "right to ask" whether a new or existing partner has had a violent past and agencies have the "right to know" if they believe an individual is at risk of domestic violence from their partner. The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme is often referred to as Clare's Law.

<sup>6</sup> Domestic Violence Protection Notices are emergency non-molestation and eviction notices which can be issued by the Police, when attending to a domestic abuse incident, to a perpetrator.

## IMPLEMENTATION

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Priority areas 1, 2 and 4 will have a detailed delivery plan, phased over the life of the Strategy, clearly outlining timescales and lead organisations for actions. Priority area 3 will underpin all other work areas and will therefore not have a separate delivery plan.

It is recognised that some aspects of each priority area may also be pertinent in related strategies and work plans. In these instances, activities will be jointly delivered and not duplicated.

## OUR AMBITION

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- Parents, carers, partners, communities, businesses and professionals prevent and protect young people and adults from domestic abuse;
- Perpetrators of domestic abuse do not continue their abusive or violent behaviour;
- Victims of abuse are empowered to move on independently with their lives;
- Victims and their families feel more confident in reporting domestic abuse.

There will also be an associated Domestic Abuse Performance / Outcome Management Framework which will be reported on quarterly.

## LEVELS OF SUPPORT

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We are seeking to establish a joined-up approach to domestic abuse, recognising that service users may have a range of complex or multiple needs.

To address this we will ensure a range of services are in place and tailored, where possible, to meet individual need.

The model can be seen on the following page. There will be integrated pathways between the different tiers of intervention as well as robust links with generic and other specialist services.

## STRATEGY DELIVERY AND REVIEW

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This strategy will be owned by the Domestic Abuse Commissioning and Development Board, which will ensure its implementation.

The Board will be supported by delivery groups; all of which will have focused action plans (cross referenced with related work areas to ensure joined up action and avoid duplication).

The Board will receive regular update reports, challenging deficits in performance and helping to remove any blockages.

The Board will ensure the Strategy is subject to annual review.

## LINKS TO OTHER STRATEGIES

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This Strategy links to the following Strategies whose subject areas will be affected by or have an impact on domestic violence and abuse (this list is not exhaustive):

- Ending Violence Against Women and Girls 2016-2020
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016
- Safer Fairer United Communities for Staffordshire 2017-2020
- Staffordshire Policing Plan 2018-19
- Stoke-on-Trent Safer City Partnership Plan 2017-2020
- Staffordshire Community Safety Agreement 2017-2020
- Ending Gang and Youth Violence 2015 – 2018

There are also strong links into the Safeguarding Boards in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and key documents relating to homelessness, hidden harm, re-offending, neglect, child sexual exploitation and early help.

# THE MODEL

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