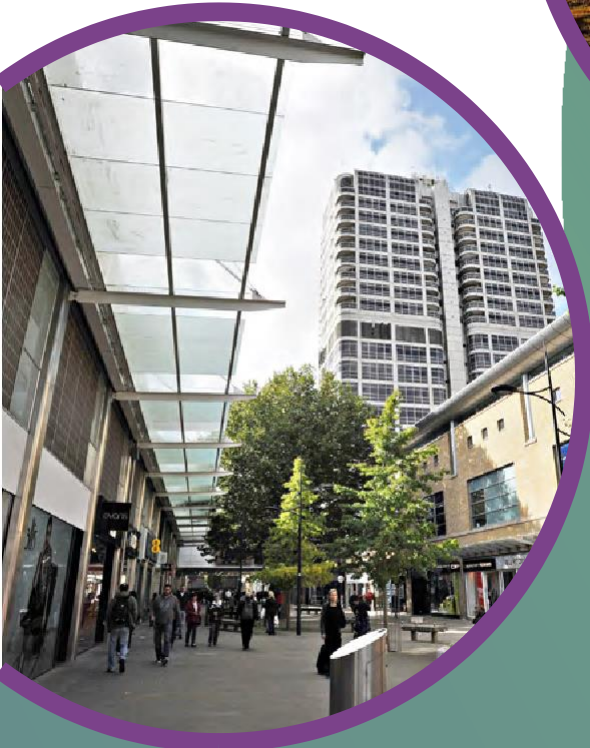




Keeping Everyone Safe

A Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy for Swindon





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Foreword from the Community Safety Partnership Executive

Domestic abuse and violence can happen to anyone irrespective of age, gender, race or social background. The impact of domestic abuse does not begin and end with the victim, it has an often-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.

This strategy will set the direction for all involved to tackle domestic abuse.

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 and by dealing with perpetrators through both criminal and rehabilitative routes.

As Chair of the Community Safety Partnership, I am committed to ensuring that we further strengthen our existing partnership approach and focus our responses so that those who experience domestic abuse in Swindon have the support and services they need.

Through strong leadership, commitment and engagement from all partners in Swindon, we will work together to create lasting change and make Swindon a safer place where domestic abuse is unacceptable.

ACC Mark Cooper



**ACC Wiltshire Police and Chair
Community Safety Partnership
Executive Board**
Mark Cooper



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) and violence against women and girls (VAWG). 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 and violence against women and girls.

Domestic abuse and violence against women and girls are serious crimes that affect many Swindon residents, no matter what their personal circumstance or background are. 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

Councillor Jim Grant

Introduction

Every person, and all women and girls have 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. High profile cases like the murder of Sarah Everard, and the murders of Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman, and Zara Aleena have led to widespread public anger across the country. It is clear more needs to be done across all sectors of society to intervene earlier and protect those affected by domestic abuse and violence against women and girls. National prevalence data now shows that 1 in 4 women, and 1 in 6 men will be affected by domestic abuse during the course of their lives.

Echoing the foreword by Councillor Grant we recognise that there needs to be a partnership approach in Swindon to prevent domestic abuse and violence against women and girls 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 (2022-2025) the Swindon Safer Accommodation Strategy and the Swindon Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Strategy (both forthcoming). It is also relevant 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) ([CSP Strategy](#)) ([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.

Violence against women and girls

Violence against women and girls is defined as:

“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.” (United Nations (UN) Declaration (1993) definition).

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is the umbrella term which brings together multiple forms of serious violence under one policy strand:

- Coercive and controlling behaviour
- Crimes committed in the name of ‘honour’
- Domestic abuse
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Forced marriage
- Harassment
- Sexual violence
- Stalking
- Trafficking for sexual exploitation
- Virginity testing (of girls and young women)
- Modern slavery and human trafficking

This strategy encompasses and responds to all forms of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls and it is important to note that the different forms of violence are not discrete strands and that victims often experience more than one form of violence at any given time, or during the experience of abuse. Some victims are affected by multiple forms of violence within intimate and / or family relationships including child to parent violence, whilst for others their experience of violence is perpetrated by the wider community. Some people will experience all and they are all unacceptable. We are determined to support as many of these survivors as possible.

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. 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 behaviours, 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.

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 Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy published by the Home Office in 2021⁷ aims to improve the response to violence with guiding principles to:

- Increase support for victims and survivors
- Increase in reporting to the police
- Increase the number of perpetrators brought to justice (including for rape and other sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, and ‘honour’-based abuse including female genital mutilation and forced marriage)
- Prioritising prevention - reduce the prevalence of violence against women and girls

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 Victim and Prisoners Bill (2023) is reaching the final stages in the Lords before it is given Royal Assent. The Bill is introducing 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 Bill 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)

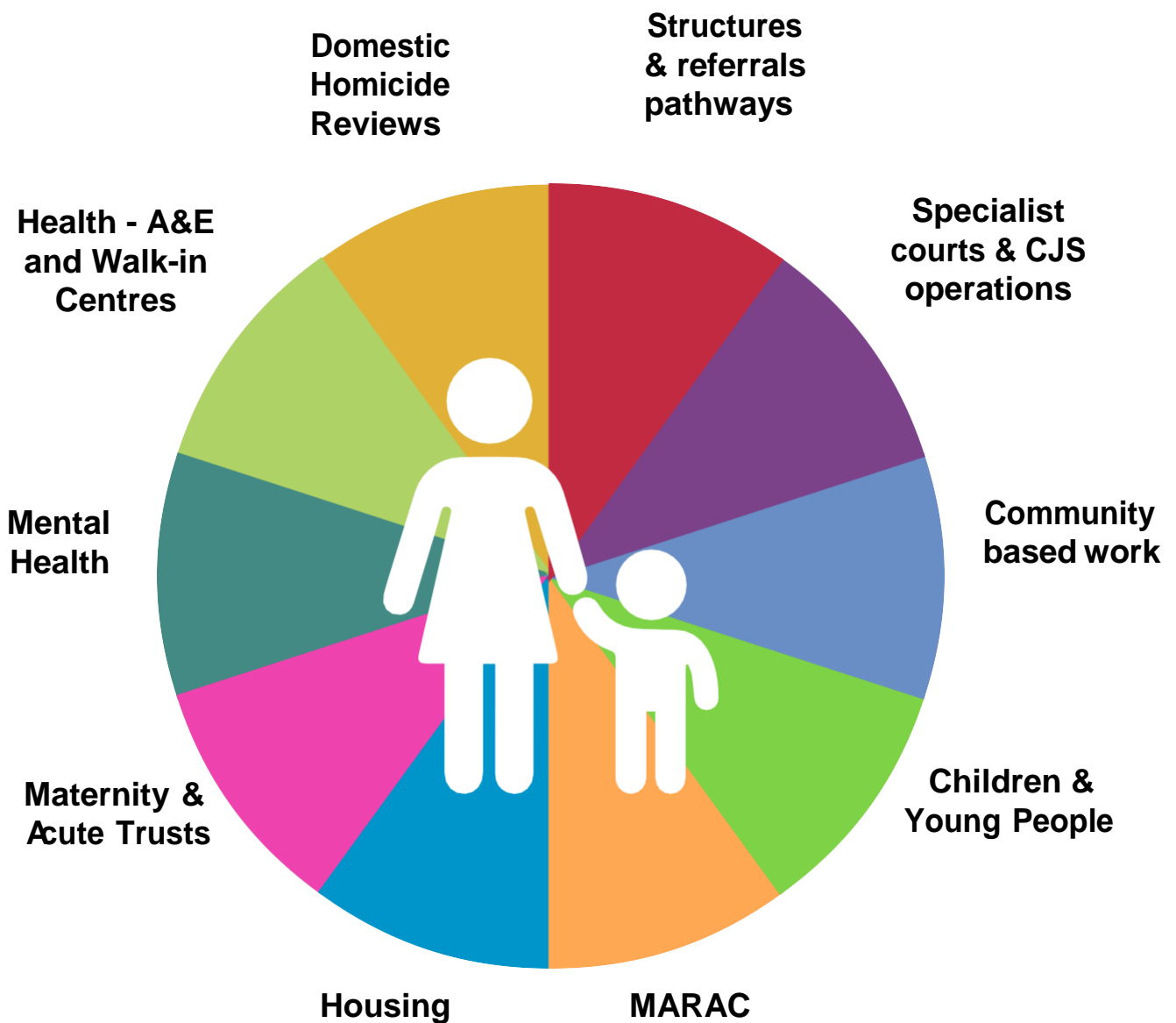
⁶Barter et al (2009) Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships, London NSPCC ResearchGate

⁷Home Office Government. Tackling Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy>

Coordinated Community Response

This strategy is based upon the principles of a Coordinated Community Response (CCR) to domestic abuse and violence against women and girls. 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



Strategy Aims

The aims for this strategy are to:

Continue to provide a coordinated and partnership approach to domestic abuse and violence against women and girls in Swindon, where agencies will share responsibility, working to reduce barriers for victims to engage;

Intervene at the earliest opportunity, and ensure children and young people are educated about healthy relationships;

Align best practice and work together to prevent domestic abuse, and keep survivors and their families safe;

Support victims, and move away from the 'failure to protect' narrative, to ensure all survivors are supported and believed;

Ensure that all services working with victims of DA and VAWG align with a trauma-informed approach and are provided with the right support at the right time and continue to educate and challenge any existing narrative that exists around "why didn't they leave?"

Support recovery for children, through active safety planning, therapeutic input and support – services will recognise and keep in mind the damage and the impact of domestic abuse on children, and ensure they are able to recover from these experiences, and repair relationships that are important to them;

To ensure that young girls have access to early intervention which is therapeutic and holistic;

Ensure children under 16 who are displaying abusive behaviours are supported to prevent escalation;

Support recovery for all adults, so all victims/survivors are able to keep safe, move away from their abuser, and rebuild their lives, free from abuse.

Swindon Context

Since May 2024, Swindon has had a new political administration, and with that goes a renewed focus on addressing inequality within the borough. This strategy is very much a part of this. We 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 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

In their last PEEL inspection, completed in 2021/2022 Wiltshire police were found to be inadequate in their response to vulnerable people. This specifically included DA and VAWG in terms of ineffective assessment of risk where there are repeat incidents of DA, the effectiveness of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), and the sometimes limited use of Domestic Violence Prevention Orders to protect victims/survivors. Wiltshire police have invested in the 'Safe Lives Domestic Abuse Matters Change Programme', which included training that has been rolled out to 1650 officers and staff, and will support the force in adopting a positive culture to spot early signs of domestic abuse and understand

the tactics used by perpetrators. Alongside the training, further improvement activity has been undertaken. The policy for domestic abuse has been redeveloped to extend occasions whereby information is shared with partnership agencies (PPN submissions). Training in relation to protective orders (including Domestic Violence Protection Notice / Orders) have been rolled out to frontline investigators, and guidance documents produced. To assess the quality of investigations, there is an extensive audit programme in place where investigations are reviewed by a member of the Crime Command Leadership Teams to enable early identification of themes as well as the opportunity for feedback to officers and supervisors. The Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), has committed to the provision of additional support around ancillary orders, and are recruiting additional legal staff to facilitate this. The Police Force and OPCC are committed to utilising the 'victims voice,' to drive improvements, with a survey completed in April 2023 and subsequent hosting of a 'Listening Circle' of victims to understand their experiences of police action. Whilst investment in this area has been made, Wiltshire Police has not yet sought to sign off the areas as complete in recognition of the need to further embed improvements and demonstrate a sustained level of enhanced performance.⁹



⁹6a PCP - PEEL Update.pdf (wiltshire.gov.uk)

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 Violence against women and girls prevalence

If the national annual prevalence rate for women (5.7%) is applied to the Swindon population, this means we would predict 5,405 women aged 16 years and over in Swindon to have experienced DA in 2023. Below the focus is on a sub-set of these occurrences which have distinctive manifestations, in particular so-called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA) which can include forced marriage (FM), and female genital mutilation (FGM). Modern day slavery and sexual and criminal exploitation are also covered in this sub-set.

It is problematic and difficult to estimate with any precision, even broadly at a national level, the number of cases of these types of VAWG. Women and girls who experience these forms of DA may understandably be reluctant to report them to a statutory body, which means that figures will be under-estimates; on the other hand, improved awareness of the issues are resulting in an apparent increase in numbers over the years. The following section presents national and local data where these are available.

10.5 'Honour-based' abuse, forced marriage, female genital mutilation

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.

Of the 2,905 offences, 2.9% were FGM offences and 5.9% were forced marriage. Small increases in numbers of both FM and FGM were seen between 2020 and 2023, which may be attributable in part due to improvements in HBA identification and crime recording, more victims coming forward to report offences, as well as an increase in the number of the offences.

The term 'female genital mutilation' refers to all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for cultural reasons. FGM is practiced most commonly in countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, and on young girls between infancy and age 15.¹¹ Women who have undergone FGM may need specialist support in the form of mental health services, uro-gynaecological services, as well as infertility treatment.¹² In England, the NHS digital FGM enhanced dataset was opened in 2015 and provides a repository for individual-level data collected by healthcare providers across the country. For the purposes of data collection, FGM is categorised into four types and includes cosmetic surgery as well as cosmetic piercing.¹³

In England in 2022/23, there were 5,870 individual women and girls where FGM was identified at a healthcare service attendance. The majority of these attendances were at midwifery and obstetrics (88%). In 98% of cases FGM occurred at least 10 years ago. Nationally, in 2022/23, only 58% of individual women and girls had a known FGM type recorded¹⁴. This proportion was 45% for the South West but higher for Swindon at 66%.¹⁵ The Great Western Hospital (GWH) - serving Swindon and the surrounding area - recorded FGM being identified in 21 patients in 2022/23, of which only 19% had FGM type recorded. When planning services to meet the needs of women with FGM and assessing whether there is a need for child protection for their children, it is important to recognise the diversity of this group of women and to assess their needs at an individual level. Better identification and recording of FGM type at GWH might be helpful in determining the population groups most at risk in Swindon.

10.6 Trafficking for sexual exploitation and modern slavery

While men can be victims of trafficking, most people who are trafficked for sexual exploitation are women. Trafficking for sexual exploitation is considered a form of VAWG. As with some other forms of VAWG, it is difficult to monitor the occurrences and make firm statistical conclusions about them. There is little systematic collection of this data within the UK, in relation to either victims or perpetrators, although the 'National Referral Mechanism' (NRM) of the National Crime Agency collects data on people who have come to the attention of the authorities. Local authorities have responsibilities to support child victims of modern slavery under existing statutory child protection arrangements.

¹¹World Health Organisation: Female genital mutilation - Key Facts. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>

¹²Gov.uk: FGM migrant health guide, published 2021. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-migrant-health-guide#prevalence-of-fgm>

¹³NHS: female genital mutilation (FGM). Available from: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/>

¹⁴NHS Digital: Female Genital Mutilation Annual Report, supporting (England and South West) and Additional Data (Local Authority), April 2022 to March 2023 (experimental statistics report), published August 2023. Available from: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/female-genital-mutilation/april-2022-to-march-2023>

¹⁵NHS Digital: Female Genital Mutilation Annual Report, supporting (England and South West) and Additional Data (Local Authority), April 2022 to March 2023 (experimental statistics report), published August 2023. Available from <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/female-genital-mutilation/april-2022-to-march-2023>

Trends in human trafficking to the UK are difficult to determine and it is not known whether the problem is truly increasing or decreasing. It is known that victims of trafficking into the UK have a wide range of nationalities, particularly Eastern European, Asian, African and South American. Victims may also be EU nationals and enter the UK through both legal and illegal routes. Victims are found in a variety of employment sectors, as demand for cheap labour is a common reason for trafficking. Coercion and deception are used to control and exploit victims, and victims are found in a wide variety of geographical areas in the UK.¹⁶

The National Referral Mechanism is the process for identifying victims of human trafficking or modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support. The most recent available data shows that in 2022, there were 16,938 potential victims of modern slavery referred to the Home Office in the UK, representing a 33% increase compared to the previous year (12,706) and the highest number of claimants since the NRM began in 2009. This increase has been attributed to referrals from government first agency responders, linked to an increase in detections at the border as well as a large increase in 'small boats arrivals.'¹⁷ Of these, 78% (13,290) were male and 21% (3,634) were female, the remainder were unknown (13) and referrals for potential male victims were the highest since the NRM began. In all, 7,019 (41%) were referred for exploitation as minors. 11 were referred from Swindon (1 adult and 10 children under 17). In 2022, among potential adult victims, the most common exploitation type was labour exploitation (39%) followed by criminal exploitation (17%). Among potential child victims, the single most common identified exploitation type was labour exploitation (43%).

In 2020, there was a rapid increase in the identification of 'county lines' which partially drove the increase in referrals for children in 2021 and 2022. More details can be found in the Community Safety Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on the JSNA website.

10.7 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>

10.8 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.



10.9 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 LGBTQ+ 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, LGBTQ+ 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 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.

10.10 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 and VAWG 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.

Sex-working women are a group of the most vulnerable women/high-risk in our community. Women engaging in street prostitution are 12 to 18 times more likely to be murdered than other women of the same age in the UK²⁵. 152 sex workers were murdered from 1990 to 2015 and a review of 122 homicides found 46 murders of prostitutes, of which 32 victims had worked for under 12 months in the area in which they were killed (several murdered by clients or pimps)²⁶ Research done on the Nelson Trust Sex Worker Outreach Project (SWOP)²⁷ showed that of 273 SWOP clients 68% were experiencing domestic abuse, and 63% had experienced violence and intimidation. Many of these women were experiencing domestic abuse from their partners who were also controlling and profiting from their sex working.

10.11 People with lived experience of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls

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 and VAWG. 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 and VAWG earlier on in the timeline of their experience. Furthermore, the experience of reporting DA and VAWG 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 and VAWG are able access to 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 co-ordinating 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 the Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Board. In addition, the local authority also commissions DA services from the voluntary and community sector, for instance the Swindon Domestic Abuse Support Service (SDASS) from Swindon Women's Aid. NHS England funds the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). From October 2024, SBC will be commissioning The Yew Trust to deliver DA services in Swindon.

Safer Accommodation is provided by SWA, Nelson Trust and Stonewater.

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 and VAWG 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 and VAWG Board and key stakeholders of this strategy and the Statutory Housing Duty Strategy include:

- Swindon Borough Council
- Swindon Safeguarding Partnership
- Wiltshire Police
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
- Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire ICB
- Swindon Domestic Abuse Support Services (SDASS)
- Great Western Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- National Probation Service (NPS)
- Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue
- Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Service (HMCTS)
- Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
- Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Trust
- Swindon and Wiltshire Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)
- Change Grow Live
- Nelson Trust
- Stonewater Housing Association
- First Light
- NSPCC

The board members will oversee the implementation of this strategy. The DA and VAWG board meets quarterly, and is chaired by the Corporate Director of Children's Services.

Areas for development and improvement

As part of the development of this strategy we have undertaken a service provision mapping exercise, with the DA and VAWG 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 data set across the different agencies working with people affected by domestic abuse. 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 and VAWG board is robust.

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

Our priorities 2024-2034

These priorities for the next ten years have been developed collaboratively with the DA and VAWG 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. Due to the longer than usual timescale for the strategy, we will review our delivery against the priorities after three years, to identify the need to make changes to them in relation to a changing national, local and strategic landscape.



Partnership

1. Ensure the strategic partnership board is stronger and more accountable, and strategic oversight of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls is more effective.

By whom – operational leads	Outcomes (success criteria)	Key Measures/ evidence – How will we know we are making a difference	Timescale/ Progress
All members	<p>Ensure the right people are attending the Board who have strategic influence. We will see increase in awareness of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls (DA and VAWG).</p> <p>Better alignment of commissioning across service areas.</p> <p>Safe spaces and havens will be well used.</p> <p>We will have a good stock of accommodation to support victims and Children when needed.</p> <p>We will have good quality data that leads our service plan and resource delivery.</p>	<p>Increase in referrals for support across the borough</p> <p>Staff across our services will report they have good skills and knowledge in this work</p> <p>Women will feedback support has been of high quality</p>	2027

2. Share the commitment to drastically reduce domestic abuse and violence against women and girls in Swindon across organisations so that everyone feels safe in the public sphere and in their own homes.

Ensure everyone is confident that action will be taken when reporting abuse DA and VAWG.

All members and Community Safety Partnership	<p>Better understanding and awareness across communities in Swindon. Less stigma for Victims/survivors</p> <p>Police are able to pursue offenders</p>	<p>Increased reporting and increased use of sanctions</p> <p>(No of reports increased by 10%</p> <p>Increased use of sanctions by 10%</p> <p>No of successful prosecutions increased by 10%</p>	Review by 2027
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3. Ensure we are able as a partnership to produce an integrated data set, decide outcomes and measure evidence of impact for strategic priorities and service delivery, and develop performance measures and evidence to measure progress.

Community Safety Partnership (CSP)	We have greater knowledge and understanding of the prevalence of DA and VAWG, and what works in Prevention, Protection and Pursuance.	Collective data will allow us on one score card to assess progress. New analyst in post by April 2024.	Review March 2025
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4. Develop a multi-agency commissioning intentions document, based on the Domestic Abuse and VAWG Needs Assessment 2024 and those with lived experience to improve both mainstream and specialist support for those at risk - victims, survivors (including children and young people) and people who display abusive behaviour - that also align with the requirements of the Statutory Housing Duty and the Victims and Prisoners Bill (forthcoming)

DA and VAWG Board CSP lead Perpetrator sub group	<p>We will be able to provide support for prevention and protection of people affected by DA and VAWG including Safe Accommodation. Joined up planning and delivery is in place with a wide range of people across the borough which reflects the diversity of the population.</p> <p>We will be able to hold perpetrators to account for their abusive behaviour via access to specialist holistic support services.</p>	<p>Document created to ensure we are clear what we need to deliver and where it will be sourced/paid for.</p> <p>New commissioner in post.</p>	Review March 2026
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5. Develop a communications strategy to ensure organisations, systems and strategies are aligned to Prevent and Protect victims and survivors in Swindon.

DA and VAWG board members	Awareness has risen across all partner agencies and public access points	<p>Communications strategy developed</p> <p>Survey of general public on community safety shows increased awareness. Domestic abuse communications group meets and produces yearly strategy</p>	March 2025
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6. Engage with by and for organisations in communities and include them in commissioning and planning so they are able to support victims of DA and VAWG.

All	Joined up planning and delivery is in place with a wide range of people across the borough which reflects the diversity of the population	Identify and support organisations and mentor them so they can take on role of capacity building across communities	Update Feb 2024 one organisation identified in SE Asian community Ongoing
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7. Ensure that the lived experiences of survivors and perpetrators of DA and VAWG are regularly collected and used to inform service planning, evaluation and delivery.

All CSP Lead Perpetrator subgroup	Service design and provision reflects what people with lived experience tell us they need including design of service for those who display abusive behaviours.	Reference group regularly feeds into service design and delivery - report back to DA&VAWG board on a reg basis	Review yearly and report back to DA and VAWG Board
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Prevention

1. Strengthen prevention and early interventions to identify children and young people at risk of domestic abuse and implement effective programmes to reduce the impact of domestic abuse and VAWG on children and young people in order to break the cycle

By whom – operational leads	Outcomes (success criteria)	Key Measures/ evidence – How will we know we are making a difference	Timescale/ Progress
Early Intervention Youth and Communities Board	No wrong door approach will ensure support for DA and VAWG is there at the right time for children	Increased number of children/ young people affected by DA and VAWG receiving services, including therapeutic services. We need to establish baseline numbers to quantify	Review March 2025

2. Develop DA and VAWG pathways through Contact Swindon and the Early Intervention locality panels and commissioned service provision to ensure preventative support is easily accessible.

<p>DA and VAWG Board Swindon Safeguarding Partnership</p>	<p>No wrong door approach will ensure support for DA and VAWG is there at the right time for everyone</p>	<p>Increase the numbers of victims/ survivors accessing preventative support services; We need to establish baseline figure to quantify the numbers.</p> <p>Ensure equalities monitoring in place to capture numbers of different groups accessing services</p>	<p>Review March 2025</p>
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3. Increase educational interventions in schools and youth settings to educate children and young people around Domestic abuse and violence against women and girls, consent, healthy relationships, with specific interventions and programmes for boys and young men.

<p>Education partners Early Intervention Youth and Communities Board Public Health</p>	<p>All schools have PSHE lessons which teach children about healthy relationships, consent, DA and VAWG.</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative data to be produced to show impact. Deep dive to be done to quality assure the provision children and young people are receiving (Public Health)</p>	<p>March 2026</p>
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4. Develop clear and agreed referral pathways between partners to ensure that safe, timely, effective and appropriate services are offered to victims, survivors and perpetrators.

<p>DA and VAWG Board CSP Lead Perpetrator sub group</p>	<p>No wrong door</p>	<p>Increase the numbers of victims/ survivors accessing support services; Ensure equalities monitoring in place to capture numbers of different groups accessing services.</p> <p>Increase numbers of perpetrators identified as accessing support</p>	<p>March 2025</p>
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services
Need baseline figures

5. Investigate whether specific preventative services for older people should be developed.

DA and VAWG Board Adult Social Care CSP	Improved training in place to identify DA and VAWG Improved sign posting Older people, and people with disabilities are able to access services to prevent and protect them from DA and VAWG.	Ensure newly commissioned services include these groups in services specifications	March 2025
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6. Increase training across statutory and voluntary sectors to ensure early warning signs of DA including coercive control, and stalking are identified.

CSP	All agencies to have up to date and appropriate training which enables them to identify DA and VAWG, and know where to signpost people to.	Collect data from all statutory and Voluntary agencies around training. Send out a questionnaire to all agencies including Swindon Safeguarding Partnership.	March 2025
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7. Continue to develop public awareness campaigns in Swindon to prevent domestic abuse, harassment, stalking and sexual violence in private and public spaces, to include targeted age appropriate messages, and messages specifically targeting people who display abusive behaviours.

<p>DA and VAWG Board Pan Wiltshire communications group CSP</p>	<p>Public awareness in Swindon will grow, and there will be less stigma around reporting DA and VAWG</p>	<p>DA and VAWG to be included in the SBC communications strategy</p> <p>Increase in the number of reports of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls to police and third party agencies;</p> <p>Increased number of sanctions to protect victims/survivors applied for</p> <p>Increased prosecution rates for Domestic Abuse/VAWG crimes; All by 10%</p>	<p>March 2026</p>
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8. Continue to identify and assess the adults who display or pose a risk of displaying harmful behaviours across all agencies through specialist monitoring.

<p>Perpetrator Subgroup CSP Lead CSP Partners</p>	<p>Perpetrators will be identified proactively by all agencies and monitored effectively via multiagency meetings such as MARAC/MATAC to reduce serial behaviour, number of victims and number of repeat victims.</p> <p>See Perpetrator strategy</p>	<p>Increase in number of perpetrators engaged in specialist support programmes.</p> <p>Decrease in number of times perpetrator is listed in MARAC with multiple victims.</p> <p>Baseline figures needed</p>	<p>March 2026</p>
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Protection

1. Children and young people who are victims of domestic abuse to be provided with trauma informed and therapeutic support, and develop services that respond to young people who are experiencing DA in their own relationships.

By whom – operational leads	Outcomes (success criteria)	Key Measures/ evidence – How will we know we are making a difference	Timescale/ Progress
DA and VAWG Board CSC and Early Intervention Youth and Communities Statutory Housing Duty provision LA/ICB/OPCC	Children who are victims report better emotional wellbeing and are able to experience healthy relationships.	Establish baseline data to show levels of service provision and Increase the numbers of victims/ survivors accessing support services; Ensure equalities monitoring in place to capture numbers of different groups accessing services Quantitative and qualitative data shows effective provision	In progress, September 2024

2. Develop trauma informed and therapeutic services for adults who are victims/survivors of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.

DA and VAWG Board LA/ICB/OPCC	Adult victims report better emotional wellbeing and are able to experience healthy relationships	Establish baseline data to show levels of service provision and Increase the numbers of victims/ survivors accessing support services; Ensure equalities monitoring in place to capture numbers of different groups accessing services Quantitative and qualitative data shows effective provision	
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3. Increase the amount of safe accommodation to ensure all people affected by DA can be housed, no matter the complexity of their needs.

Swindon Borough Council (SBC) Housing	Victims/survivors are able to access safe accommodation whenever they need it, no matter what their circumstances are. Victims/survivors feel supported	Increase in number of units available Fewer victims in B and B accommodation	December 2024
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4. Increase access to move on options, so people can move on from safer accommodation.

SBC Housing	Develop a step down house from the complex needs supported accommodation	Reduce the time from ready to move on to actual move on When victims tell us they moved on from supported accommodation at the right time	December 2024
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5. Ensure Families with No Recourse to Public Funds are able to access support in Swindon when affected by domestic abuse, ensuring there are clear referral pathways and guidance on eligibility.

SBC DA and VAWG board	All people affected by DA and VAWG are able to move away from their abuser		September 2024
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6. Ensure services take in to consideration and develop strategies to address domestic abuse and violence towards men.

DA and VAWG Board	Raise awareness amongst men who experience DA so they are aware of services, can access support and be protected from DA Ensure more male victims have access to safer accommodation Training package developed	Increase in the number of men who report DA to Police and third party agencies Increase by 20%	March 2025
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7. Increase confidence of those reporting abuse, DA & VAWG that action will be taken by having clear information and referral pathways across all agencies and organisations, and the response they receive is consistent regardless of where they report domestic abuse and VAWG to.

<p>DA and VAWG board CSP</p>	<p>Everyone who experiences DA and VAWG feels confident in reporting it, are aware of services, can access support and be protected from DA.</p>	<p>Increase in the number of reports of domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls to police and third party agencies;</p> <p>Increased number of sanctions to protect victims/survivors applied for.</p> <p>Increased prosecution rates for Domestic Abuse/VAWG crimes;</p>	<p>March 2025</p>
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8. Develop safe, alternative and innovative DA and VAWG reporting systems for service users, including the use of digital technology, to increase service accessibility and improve support.

<p>DA and VAWG Board Police OPCC</p>	<p>Everyone who experiences DA and VAWG feels confident in reporting it, are aware of services, can access support and be protected from DA</p> <p>New support service to develop different methods to report DA and VAWG</p>	<p>Increase in the number of reports of domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls to police and third party agencies;</p> <p>Equalities monitoring and annual reports completed by all agencies to monitor service take-up and outcomes.</p>	<p>March 2025</p>
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9. Further develop an intersectionality approach to service planning and delivery to ensure that high risk and vulnerable groups, including people from BME groups, LGBTQ+ people, people with learning disabilities, males and older adults, have access to specific and tailored services by upskilled and trained staff.

DA VAWG Board	Everyone who experiences DA and VAWG feels confident in reporting it, are aware of services, can access support and be protected from DA and VAWG	Equalities monitoring and annual reports completed by all agencies to monitor service take-up and outcomes.	March 2025
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10. The risk of harm to children is reduced through the early identification and assessment of adults who pose a risk of harm due to domestic abuse.

Perpetrator subgroup Police Children's Social Care	Victim/survivors are supported in managing their relationships and perpetrators are held to account, through appropriate and targeted interventions by all practitioners.	Increase in success data from perpetrator services. Holistic, trauma informed services are able to effectively support victim/survivors.	March 2026
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11. The needs of the child, adult victims and the perpetrator are met at an early stage through timely access to effective help and intervention.

All	Early intervention for all victims, children and perpetrators through further recognition of harmful behaviours Services place less onus on the victim to safeguard themselves against abusive behaviours and further onus is placed on the perpetrator.	Increase in referrals to perpetrator services, victims feel less responsible for the actions of the perpetrator,	March 2026
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Prosecution/pursuance

1. Develop processes and pathways to help identify and disrupt serial perpetrators to bring them to justice.

By whom – operational leads	Outcomes (success criteria)	Key Measures/ evidence – How will we know we are making a difference	Timescale/ Progress
Police and Probation Subgroup of DA and VAWG Board PCC SWA (Open2change DVPP) Early Intervention Respect	Serial perpetrators do not reoffend Women are confident to report VAWG knowing that offenders will be prosecuted See actions in the Perpetrator strategy	Reduce the number of repeat incidents by ensuring that action is taken to protect victims and bringing perpetrators to justice Decrease in re-offending Police and MARAC to monitor New support service to record repeat victims	March 2025

2. Develop trauma informed and therapeutic services for adults who are victims/survivors of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.

<p>Victims, witnesses and most vulnerable group (subgroup of criminal justice group) CPS OPCC Tri-force Gold Group?</p>	<p>New Victims and Prisoners Bill</p> <p>We are able to ensure that victims/survivors are protected</p>	<p>Increase in the number of reports of domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls to police and third party agencies;</p> <p>Increased number of sanctions to protect victims/survivors applied for</p> <p>Increased prosecution rates for Domestic Abuse/VAWG crimes;</p>	<p>March 2025</p>
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3. All agencies to be prepared to prioritise preventative orders and legal protections when working with victims/survivors.

<p>DA and VAWG Board</p>	<p>We are able to ensure that victims/survivors are protected</p>	<p>Increase in the number of reports of domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls to police and third party agencies;</p> <p>Increased number of sanctions to protect victims/survivors applied for</p> <p>Increased prosecution rates for Domestic Abuse/VAWG crimes;</p>	<p>March 2025</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, we would like to see a 10% increase in DA and VAWG reporting.

- Increase in the number of reports of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls to police and third party agencies
- Increased number of sanctions to protect victims/survivors applied for;
- Increased prosecution rates for domestic abuse/VAWG 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 and VAWG 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 <https://www.saferswindon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/110/2023/10/CSP-Strategy-Booklet.pdf>

Swindon Safe Accommodation Strategy (forthcoming) <https://www.saferswindon.org.uk/>

Swindon Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Strategy (forthcoming) <https://www.saferswindon.org.uk/>

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](https://www.wiltshire-pcc.gov.uk/policy-and-strategy/2022-2025)
([wiltshire-pcc.gov.uk](https://www.wiltshire-pcc.gov.uk))



