

Derby and Derbyshire Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse Strategy

2023 – 2026



Derby & Derbyshire
Safer Communities

FOREWORD

On behalf of the Derby and Derbyshire Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership Board, I am pleased to introduce the Derby and Derbyshire Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023 – 2026.

Domestic and Sexual Abuse has been a priority in Derby and Derbyshire for many years. We have been, and continue to be, ambitious in our aspiration to prevent domestic and sexual abuse and provide high quality support services to those who have experienced domestic and sexual abuse in order to help them cope and recover.

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We were pleased that, after long consultation, 2021 saw the enactment of the Domestic Abuse Act. The Act encompassed a range of criminal justice provisions and created a duty for local authorities to provide safe accommodation for domestic abuse victims, something which we have done in Derby and Derbyshire for a number of years. It created a statutory definition for the first time and refined who we understand as victims so that children are now regarded as victims in their own right. The duty has also emphasised, the importance of hearing the voices of those experiencing or recovering from domestic abuse. Whilst in Derbyshire we believe our response to domestic abuse has been reflective of the requirements of the Act in the past, the Act now underpins the strategy we present here.

2021 also saw the publication of the end-to-end rape review report which explores the decline in the number of charges and prosecutions for cases of rape and serious sexual assault and makes recommendations in order to address this. The vision that the system can and must do better is one we share locally. Much has already been done, but we know there is always more that can be done. This strategy sets out our partnership commitment to work collaboratively towards a shared ambition and objectives. We have already made good progress in previous strategies, but we need to build on this despite the challenges of rising incident numbers and the implication of reducing budgets.

In Derby and Derbyshire, we recognise that domestic abuse and sexual abuse are not acceptable and that prevention of these forms of abuse and the protection and support of those experiencing them is everyone's business. We stand together in our commitment to challenging abuse and supporting victims. We invite you to join us.

Christine Flinton

Chair: Derby and Derbyshire Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership Board

SCOPE OF THIS STRATEGY

This strategy is intended to guide the work of the Derby and Derbyshire Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership Board and provide a framework for all those individuals and partners working towards the vision set out within this document. Legislative changes have been implemented locally to support the strategic approach in this document. The Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership Board is one of a series of thematic boards accountable to the Derbyshire Criminal Justice Board, Derbyshire Safer Communities Board, and the Derby Safer Communities Board. The board will lead and oversee all work, support, and programmes of activity relating to domestic abuse and sexual abuse and the impact they have. With this focus we will collaborate with the other thematic boards who have linked agendas, such as the Violence Against Women and Girls and Serious Violence Boards, or those holding statutory responsibility for safeguarding survivors.

OUR VISION

Our vision for Derby and Derbyshire is that everyone can live safe lives, without the threat or experience of domestic or sexual abuse because it is not tolerated by our residents or our organisations.

OUR VALUES

We will collaborate as a multi-agency partnership to ensure adults, children and young people can live free from harm caused by sexual abuse and from domestic abuse, including coercion and controlling behaviour in their intimate and family relationships.

Significant progress has been made in terms of how local stakeholders work together to raise awareness and deliver support and prevention work in relation to domestic abuse; and there is ongoing commitment and determination to ensure that domestic and sexual abuse services continue to be reviewed and improved for all victims and survivors.

We have heard from survivors of abuse, and we have listened to their story to ensure that we have prioritised the things that matter to them. We are committed in this strategy to increase the influence people with experience of abuse have in shaping our services and ways of working into the future and have made this central to our strategy.

Our needs assessment has demonstrated that those affected by domestic and sexual abuse will have individual and varying needs and support must be tailored to the individual. To meet the needs of all victims, paying special attention and consideration to those who have protected characteristic(s) under the Equality Act 2010 or who have a vulnerability requiring additional support.

Learning from the needs assessment, we recognise that services need to be easier to access and we will identify and remove barriers, creating clear pathways to services for those seeking support.

Our understanding of need and response to Domestic and Sexual Abuse will be underpinned by:

- Listening to the voice of victims and survivors
- Believing victims and survivors and acting protectively
- Learning from local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews and serious incidents.
- Recognising and responding to the pernicious emotional harm on individuals and communities that can lead to homicide or self-harm.
- Empowering victims to make informed choices.
- Challenging abusive behaviours of those causing harm
- Collaborating between agencies and with victims and survivors
- Understanding the under representation of certain groups in domestic and sexual abuse
- Being transparent in our decision making
- Being accountable to our communities
- Analysing available data, evidence, service standards and intelligence to improve our response.
- Being creative in co-funding and co-commissioning general and specialist services to ensure delivery of quality services.
- Providing leadership to improve our co-operation, processes, maximising our resources and securing investment.

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DEFINITIONS

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is a cruel and complex crime which anyone can be affected by. The impact of it can last a lifetime, very often across generations. Tragically, it sometimes leads to the loss of life.

Domestic abuse remains high on the national agenda with the Domestic Abuse Act becoming law in April 2021. The Government is committed to raising awareness and understanding about the devastating and lasting impact of domestic abuse, further improving the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice, as well as strengthening the support for victims and survivors of abuse by statutory agencies.

For the first time, in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, a statutory definition of domestic abuse has been created, which is:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or 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.

This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological / emotional – e.g. victim-blaming, name-calling, belittling
- Physical – e.g. hurting or threatening to hurt physically
- Sexual – e.g. forced to take part in unwanted, unsafe, or degrading activity.
- Economic – e.g. restricting finances / access to work, getting a victim into debt
- Coercive control – e.g. isolating, monitoring, threats, humiliation

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The Act also recognises the impact of domestic abuse on those who are ‘personally connected’ and defines what is meant by this as:

“...intimate partners, ex-partners, family members or individuals who share parental responsibility for a child.”

There is no requirement for the victim and perpetrator to live in the same household.

Also, for the first time, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises that a child who sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, domestic abuse and is related to the person being abused or the perpetrator is also to be regarded as a victim of domestic abuse.

Sexual Abuse

In the context of this document, references to sexual abuse include rape and sexual violence. Examples of offences or circumstances where offences may occur include (but are not restricted to):

- Any unwanted sexual activity with someone without their consent or agreement. Or:
- Sexual acts involving a child, sexual harassment, forced marriage, honour-based violence, female genital mutilation, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and ritual abuse.

Sexual assault and abuse can happen to anyone; men, women, and children; at any age, and may be a one-off event or happen repeatedly. In some cases, it can involve the use of technology such as the internet or social media, which may be associated with grooming, online sexual harassment, and trolling. Sexual assault and abuse are two of the most serious and damaging crimes in our society.

NATIONAL AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVE AND PREVALENCE

The Crime Survey for England and Wales, year ending March 2022, estimated that 5.0% (2.4 million) of adults aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in that year and that 2.7% of adults aged 16 to 59 years had experienced sexual assault (including attempted offences).

We know that domestic and sexual abuse are under-reported to the police, nonetheless across England and Wales, the number of domestic abuse prosecutions in 2021-2022 was at a similar level

to that in the previous year, having dropped in the previous 3 years. The conviction rate remained stable at three-quarters (76%) of prosecutions.

Police recorded sexual offences rose by 32% to the highest annual figure recorded in England and Wales (194,683 offences). This included the highest recorded annual number of rape offences to date (70,330 offences), this may reflect a number of factors including the impact of high-profile cases and campaigns on victims' willingness to report incidents.

Applying the national estimated prevalence of domestic abuse to Derbyshire County's population, between 28,000 and over 30,000 residents were estimated to be victims of domestic abuse in the year ending March 2022. Of these, around 20,000 were estimated to be females. Whilst in Derby City between 8,600 and 9,500 residents were estimated to be victims of domestic abuse in the year ending March 2022. Of these, over 6,000 were estimated to be females.

As acknowledged in the Domestic Abuse Act, children are victims of domestic abuse as well and in the County the number of dependent children in families equates to 65% of the number of families. On this basis, it is estimated that between 18,000 and 20,000 children were affected by domestic abuse in 2021-2022. Whilst in the City the number of dependent children in families equates to 79% of the number of families. On this basis, it is estimated that between 6,800 and 7,500 children were affected by domestic abuse in 2021-2022.

The Derby City and Derbyshire County, statistical needs analysis, refreshed 2022/2023, identified that domestic abuse is more prevalent for those:

- Under 24 years of age
- With a disability
- Who are sick or ill on a long term or temporary basis, those who are unemployed, and those who are not yet retired.
- Who are single, separated or divorced.
- Who are social housing tenants
- In the County, also those who are single parents.

The volume of domestic abuse crimes has continued to rise and reflects a steady rise in the reporting of abuse. The under-reporting of domestic abuse, however, remains a concern.

There was a small reduction in the number of referrals identified as high risk of serious harm or homicide in 2021-2022 compared to 2020-2021. The higher proportion of victims seen more than once in the past two years has continued. The increase in the number of cases involving disabled clients, those from the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans. + (LGBT+) communities, and male clients has also continued.

There is a disparity between the proportion of high-risk Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) clients who have experienced family abuse and domestic homicides by family members. This

may indicate the need for better identification of all those in all circumstances at risk of serious harm or homicide.

The conviction rate for domestic abuse offences in Derbyshire is higher than that for the region and nationally. In contrast with the overall continuing fall in convictions across the country, the volume of convictions in Derbyshire increased last year from the lower level in 2019-2020 to a similar level to that in the previous 2 years.

The volume of domestic abuse Public Protection Notices (PPNs) completed in 2021-2022 was slightly higher than that for 2020-2021. The slight shift towards medium risk cases has continued. A quarter of the PPNs relate to male subjects, slightly higher than the pre-pandemic level. The proportion of PPNs that relate to family abuse, after rising during the first year of lockdown, has fallen back to the pre-pandemic level.

Crimes of 'engaging in controlling / coercive behaviour in an intimate / family relationship' increased by a fifth in 2021-2022, continuing the trend in the previous year. These higher levels of reporting are expected to continue as this form of abuse continues to be better recognised.

Overall, around a third of domestic abuse crimes consist of stalking and harassment offences. This form of domestic abuse often takes place after an abusive intimate relationship has ended. Domestic abuse related stalking and harassment offences increased by 13% in 2021-2022 compared to 2020-2021.

Over 90% of clients engaged with the support services are females who have experienced partner abuse. Male victims and those experiencing family abuse are far less likely to engage. Clients from rural areas continue to be less likely to report abuse to the Police, or to seek support. In Derbyshire the increase in direct referrals to the Derbyshire Domestic Abuse Helpline seen since the start of the pandemic has continued. In particular, self-referrals nearly doubled and now make up 40% of all referrals. Victims aged between 25 and 34 years continue to be far more likely to engage with the IDVA services, as do those from the ethnic minority communities in the city.

The volume of referrals for accommodation support received in 2021-2022 was higher than in 2020-2021 but remains lower than pre-pandemic. Fewer referrals were accepted, mainly due to more clients staying for a longer period than in the past. There has been a slight shift towards younger clients engaging with accommodation support and the vast majority of support in accommodation is for female clients, most of whom have experienced partner abuse. There is an increase in the proportion of clients with one or two dependent children, with half of the children being under 5 years old.

The higher volume of referrals for community support since the start of the pandemic has continued. The increased level of referrals for community support in the Derbyshire County Council area seen since the start of the pandemic has continued remaining for referrals at 29% higher than the pre-pandemic year, largely driven by the increase in self-referrals which make up 40% of referrals to the Derbyshire Domestic Abuse Helpline.

The vast majority of support in accommodation provided in the County, is delivered to female clients (and their children), most of whom have experienced partner abuse. There may be a lower awareness that services are available to victims of family abuse and that accommodation for male victims is available in the County. Derby has yet to commission provision for male victims, with the current accommodation offer only being for women and their children.

An increase in engagement with services for children and young people is also evident in those accessing the County community support services. This is partly due to the increased proportion of adults who engaged with the service and have a child or children.

Disabled victims continue to be less likely to engage either at the point of seeking advice or proceeding to support services, which may be due to lower levels of reporting abuse when the abuser is their carer, or that the risk assessment process is resulting in disabled victims at a greater risk of harm not being identified as high-risk cases.

The demand for domestic abuse support is likely to increase as the cost-of-living crisis may lead to economic abuse being a more prominent feature in already abusive relationships. The additional resources provided for the County support services to meet the increased demand for community support during the pandemic and its aftermath are likely to be required for the foreseeable future as the pandemic impact is replaced by that of the cost-of-living situation.

Sexual Violence Summary

- The higher levels of sexual offence reporting since March 2021 have continued. A monthly average of 287 offences were reported in 2021-2022, representing a 34% increase compared to last year and a 24% increase compared to the pre-pandemic year.
- Offences of rape of a female aged 16 years or over account for nearly a quarter of sexual offences, and sexual assaults of a female account for a further fifth. In 2021-2022, females made up 84% of the victims. Just over half of the victims were under the age of 18 years.
- The conviction rate for rape in Derbyshire remains below that nationally and for the region, with the number of both prosecutions and convictions falling. The number of Derbyshire prosecutions and convictions for other sexual offences also fell, although the Derbyshire conviction rate remains above that nationally and for the region.
- Sexual violence victims aged under 26 are more likely to seek immediate support from the sexual assault referral centre than victims in older age groups. Clients seeking ongoing support are more evenly spread across the age groups.
- The level of new service users engaging with ongoing support services continues to rise and is much higher than pre-pandemic level. Historic offences reported continued to make up a third of the cases.

- The impact of any sexual assault or abuse is largely hidden and often not fully understood but are characterised by serious trauma and often compound trauma. Feelings of profound fear, terror and anxiety have been described by victims and survivors, with safety and trust being significant factors in the recovery process.
- It can take many years for an individual to disclose sexual assault or abuse, particularly those people who have been abused or assaulted as a child, or those with a disability.
- Some factors can make particular groups of people more at risk of sexual assault and abuse. These include people who:
 - Have a history of previous sexual abuse or who have experienced other forms of abuse.
 - Have a disability.
 - Are in care or who have a disrupted home life.
 - Live without adequate supervision or who are isolated.

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS

Across the partnership in both city and county, there are a range of services which are commissioned, grant funded and voluntary, that offer advice and support for victims and survivors of Domestic and Sexual Abuse alongside refuge provision, housing support, advocacy, and a range of therapeutic interventions. We have consulted a wide range of people and organisations, carried out our own assessments, alongside external reports, which tell us that we need to focus on addressing the following:

Prevention

Prevent domestic and sexual abuse by challenging the attitudes and behaviours that foster it, promoting understanding and wider awareness of its impact and support available. We will:

- Listen to the voices of victims, survivors, and perpetrators to inform the development of effective interventions.
- Integrate and expand the current training offer to enable agencies to swiftly identify the signs of Domestic Abuse.
- Raise awareness of these crimes and the sexual and domestic abuse services that are available and build effective pathways to support.
- Deliver community awareness campaigns.
- Raise professionals understanding and professional curiosity of the needs of our diverse communities and specific groups, e.g. LGBTQ+, men and older people.

- Embed a learning culture from available review processes, emerging research and the experiences of victims and survivors to enable a robust response to abuse.
- Work with education settings to influence and change behaviours and attitudes – e.g. support children into healthy relationships, dealing with anger and emotion, challenge relationships amongst peers.
- Commission a victims and survivors voice service provider.
- Increase work around prevention and early identification of issues before abusive situations develop.
- Build on existing strengths related to information sharing that supports victims through their journey to recovery.

Protection

Ensure that victims of domestic abuse are protected from harm and supported to recover. Intervene early to prevent harm and reduce the impact of domestic and sexual abuse on victims and families. We will:

- Recognise that domestic abuse is a safeguarding issue for both children and adults. Domestic abuse is harmful to children whether they are subjected to domestic abuse or witness domestic abuse and it can have a profound short- and long-term effect. Where there is evidence of domestic abuse the implications for any children in the household should be considered, including the possibility that the children may themselves be subject to abuse or be harmed by witnessing or overhearing the abuse of another. Adults already in need of care and support have compounded vulnerabilities in abusive situations.
- Promote the use of professional curiosity in those working with adults and children.
- Promote the use of professional curiosity in those working with adults and children to identify abusive situations, ask difficult questions and respond effectively and follow safeguarding procedures to intervene. Guidance can be found on the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership website ¹ in the Derby City and Derbyshire Threshold Document² and on the Derbyshire Safeguarding Adults Board and Derby Safeguarding Adults

¹ <https://www.ddscp.org.uk/>

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https://www.proceduresonline.com/derbyshire/scbs/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/Threshold%20Document%20FINAL%20December%202019.pdf

Board websites³ in the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Adults Boards Practice Guidance document⁴

- Review and develop a whole system response to domestic and sexual abuse including a collaborative approach to risk assessments.
- Listen to the voices of victims and survivors to develop the most effective support interventions.
- Work with our diverse communities and specific groups, to provide appropriate support for victims and survivors.
- Provide the appropriate support for those who need it, such as safe accommodation for domestic abuse victims fleeing their abuser.
- Provide safe forensic examination facilities for victims of sexual abuse.
- Recognise and respond to the geographically diverse nature of the county and significantly ethnically diverse nature of the city.
- Provide effective support in the community for adults and children affected by domestic abuse.
- Provide independent advocacy services.

Pursuing Perpetrators and Reducing Reoffending

Hold perpetrators of violence and abuse to account, offer programs to change behaviour and target support to reduce future risk. We will:

- Listen to the voices of victims, survivors, and perpetrators to develop the most effective interventions:
 - Review and develop high-quality, safe perpetrator programmes for all levels of risk.
 - Perpetrator Panels
 - Behaviour Change Interventions
- Disrupt those intent on causing physical and mental harm by their actions and bringing them to justice. Improve the tools and processes used to do this, including assessment of risk and evidence gathering.

³ <https://www.derbyshiresab.org.uk> <http://www.derbysab.org.uk/>

⁴ [derbyshire-and-derby-safeguarding-adults-boards-practice-guidance.pdf \(derbysab.org.uk\)](#)

- Strengthen the use of powers within the justice system for the benefit of victims and survivors.
 - Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme
 - Protective Notices and Orders
 - Victim's Right to Review Scheme
 - Best Practice Framework for Courts

GOVERNANCE

The Derby and Derbyshire Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership Board will establish standing subgroups and structures to drive the work of the board forward and will establish task and finish groups as required.

Standing Subgroups and Structures

- Perpetrators
- DA Best Practice
- DHR Action Plan Group
- Sexual Abuse Operational Group
- Domestic Abuse and Rape Scrutiny Panels
- Victims and Survivors Voice
- Communications and Awareness Raising

Partners of the DSA Partnership Board

- Charities in the Voluntary Sector representing the interests of victims and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, including children.
- Crown Prosecution Service
- Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Derby and Derbyshire NHS Integrated Care Board (DDICB)
- Derby City Council
- Derbyshire Constabulary
- Derbyshire County Council
- Derbyshire District and Borough Councils Representatives
- Fire and Rescue Service
- Healthcare Representatives from Provider Services
- Housing Authorities
- National Probation Service
- NHS England
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)

