

SECTION 3: DOMESTIC ABUSE

Our vision is that all agencies work together to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse, to provide a co-ordinated community response which includes preventative, support and protection service and deals with perpetrators.

The Darlington Community Safety Partnership (CSP) recognises that domestic abuse is a serious crime, it cuts across all social, geographical and cultural groups. Domestic abuse is largely a hidden crime that has major, long lasting impact on victims, witnesses, children, young people, families and the wider community.

Domestic abuse can be experienced by any person although the majority of victims in Darlington are women, many with children. Domestic abuse occurs in heterosexual, same sex and bisexual relationships. Men and women, including those in trans communities experience domestic abuse.

The Darlington CSP has adopted the definition of domestic abuse as:

'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who 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*
- *physical*
- *sexual*
- *financial*
- *emotional'*

This definition also includes so called 'honour' based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). Section 11 audits completed by partner organisations and reported to the Darlington Safeguarding Children's Board (DCSB), is one mechanism to demonstrate partners are working together effectively to address FGM.

Throughout 2016/17 work was developed to agree how each key partnership i.e. the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), the Darlington Safer Adults Board (DSAB), the CSP and the Health and Wellbeing Board would have oversight and assurance that there was knowledge of, and interventions in place to address common areas of concern, including domestic abuse. The Boards agreed that it would strengthen governance if the chairs of each Board met on a regular basis to share areas of common concern and key actions.

The Darlington CSP recognises that people have a right to live their lives free from violence and abuse. Safeguarding children and adults is a shared responsibility and high priority for all agencies in Darlington. All services must ensure they follow safeguarding procedures for children and adults, which includes monitoring, reviewing and assessment of their safeguarding processes.

National Context

There is a range of national policy and guidance e.g.

- **Home Office policies** including Domestic Homicides, guidance Clare's Law etc
- **Her Majesty Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC)** reviews and Services Crime Bill, legal remedies for victim of domestic violence and abuse
- **Laws** on forced marriage and modern slavery, sexualized messaging etc
- **Crime Prosecution Service** Protection Orders and Prevention Orders
- **Department of Health**, extent and impact of violence on health guidance
- **National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE)** Guidance/Standard Domestic Violence and Abuse (2016). The quality standard covers domestic violence and abuse in adults and young people aged 16 years and over. The Guidance includes children and young people under 16 years of age who are affected by domestic violence and abuse that is not directly perpetrated by them.
- **Joint Inspections** of the response to children living with domestic abuse (Ofsted, CQC, HMIC, Probation, 2016).
- **National Institute for Health and Care Excellence**, multi-agency guidelines.
- **Public Health England: Domestic Abuse and Disability** (2015) report.

Local Context, Governance and Performance

'**One Darlington: Perfectly Placed 2008-2026** (revised in 2014) is the local overarching Sustainable Community Strategy. The strategy has commitment across sectors i.e. statutory, community, voluntary, education and business sectors. One Darlington : Perfectly Placed is also the Darlington Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The strategy identifies clear priorities in relation to domestic abuse and sexual violence. These are specifically referenced in the outcomes; **‘Children with the best start in life’ and ‘A safe and caring community’**.

The County Durham and Darlington Police Crime and Victim Commissioner (PCVC) has clear objectives to support victims, these include delivering the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, (VAWG), and tackling domestic abuse.

There is alignment between the PCVC objectives and the priorities in *‘One Darlington : Perfectly Safe’ Community Safety Plan 2015-2020*. The section on ‘Vulnerability’ which relates to domestic abuse, sexual violence and hate crime’ describes the multi-agency key interventions.

A review of the Community Safety Plan in September 2017, concluded that tackling domestic abuse remained a key priority and confirmed the structures in place to support plans.

Key multi-agency groups that support operational services or oversee the delivery of the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Action Plan include :

- **DASAN** (Darlington Domestic and Sexual Abuse Network), local, frontline, operational network with wide representation and rich in local knowledge and service user views and experience.
- **DASVEG** (County Durham and Darlington Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group), multi-agency strategic group, monitors the domestic abuse plans, considers performance reports and acts as thematic group for both Safer Durham Partnership and the Darlington Community Safety Partnership.

DASVEG through a consultation process and review of progress to date identified three key priority objectives for 2017-2019 :

- (i) **Objective 1** – Reduce repeat victims and serial perpetrators of domestic abuse
 - (ii) **Objective 2** – Domestic abuse is prevented through early intervention
 - (iii) **Objective 3** – More ‘invisible’ victims are identified and offered support.
- **Darlington Community Safety Partnership** – The statutory partnership where Domestic Abuse is a standing agenda item, issues are escalated and areas of common concern or strength are shared. There is a link and mechanism to share information between the two Safeguarding Boards and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

DASVEG considers a quarterly performance report on a range of indicators. Key issues from DASVEG are escalated to the Darlington CSP Board as appropriate. A key action commenced in 2017/18 is to strengthen the indicator set and improve the analysis of the multi-agency data.

There are a number of equality and diversity implications. These are in relation to age, ethnicity, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation and gender (including trans gender, pregnancy and maternity).

The Darlington Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) references domestic abuse as a key issue. The links and impact of alcohol and domestic abuse is highlighted and a recognition that the presence of alcohol has implications for the severity of an attack.

An association between mental health problems, alcohol/drugs and domestic abuse is well established and the responsibility lies with all partners to recognise the impact of this 'toxic trio'.

Current Services

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA)

MARAC provides a consistent approach to risk assessment which identifies those people who are at most risk of serious harm. Multi-agency meetings are held where intelligence is shared and interventions are enacted as appropriate.

The IDVA role is an element of the Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC) and provides specialist support and advice to victims of domestic abuse whilst they are involved in the criminal justice system. Feedback from service users is a key element in the IDVA process and informs service reviews and monitoring.

Specialist Domestic Violence Court is a term describing the specialised way of dealing with domestic violence cases in the magistrates court. The aim of the SDVC's is

- To provide a coordinated judicial response to criminal proceedings involving domestic violence incidents.
- To develop and co-ordinate the provision of victim/witness services within the criminal justice system.
- To encourage the victims of domestic violence incidents to come forward and report cases and to remain engaged with the criminal justice system throughout the process.
- To improve the experience of victims and witnesses.
- To increase the confidence of the public and victims in the criminal justice system to deal justly with offences.
- To increase the number of perpetrators brought to justice

Refuge and Outreach

A Women's Refuge provides eight units of accommodation for women and their children. Family Help offers sanctuary for up to six months and supports women to find alternative accommodation. The refuge is continually fully occupied and service providers have noted significant increase in complexity of service users.

There is an additional accommodation offer for families with males over 16 years of age and support during a staged transition into independent living.

Domestic abuse outreach services in Darlington provide services within the community for adult victims and children who witness and experience domestic abuse. Services include individual support, counselling, emotional support and assurance, training for agencies, and awareness raising about domestic abuse. Harbour Support services work with individual women to help them gain skills to live independently.

Perpetrator Programme

A high volume perpetrator intervention 'The Accountability Intervention' is a Home Office funded project across County Durham and Darlington, the funding is available 2017-2020. The programme consists of specialist perpetrator provision (Barnardos is the provider) and victims and children safety work (Harbour Support services is the provider). The third element is an academic partner led evaluation of both elements of the programme. The Accountability Intervention project group includes children's services leads from both Local Authorities.

The Checkpoint and Domestic Abuse project builds on the established practice of the Checkpoint project which aims to offer an alternative to prosecution by addressing the underlying needs of the offender whilst supporting and safeguarding the victim. Durham Constabulary started a 'testable' treatment of offenders in incidents of domestic abuse using the Checkpoint Model from April 2017.

A multi-agency project board (County Durham and Darlington) monitors the project, it identified extensive eligibility criteria and has identified initial gaps and improvements in the support provided.

Children and Young People

Children and young people rely on agencies being aware of the link between domestic abuse and the harm done to them when seeing or being part of the violence.

'The majority of children witness the violence that is occurring and in 90% of cases they are in the same or next room' (Hughes, 1992)

The impact of these experiences are carried into adulthood. Early intervention to mitigate these adverse childhood experiences can make long term improvements for the individual and wider community.

Operation Encompass is a multi-agency scheme to address the need to share information early, with schools, i.e. notify them of domestic incidents that have occurred before the school day.

This helps schools to be prepared to provide emotional and practical support, where required for affected children and young people. 100% of Darlington school have opted to participate in Operation Encompass with over 60 (January 2018) notifications made since it was launched in January 2017.

Teesside University is leading a process evaluation of the project, the Operation Encompass project board are monitoring the project.

Training and curriculum support on healthy relationships is offered to schools by the Relationship Education and Sexual Health (RESH) lead. A strong emphasis on healthy appropriate friendships and relationships is crucial in tackling inappropriate attitudes towards domestic abuse for children, young people and adults.

Students participating in the annual Health Related Behaviour Survey (Healthy Lifestyle Survey) may respond to questions about their view of coercive, controlling or abusive behaviour

In addition to their role as facilitators of learning about healthy relationships, schools have an opportunity to identify early signs of children as witnesses and, or, victims of domestic abuse and to take supportive action.

An aspect of domestic abuse which needs to be acknowledged is where a child may be/is a perpetrator of domestic abuse. Lessons from the '**Domestic Homicide Review for Sarah in Northumberland**' (2018) will be considered as part of the further development of the Local Action Plan.

The Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)

The Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), 'The Meadows' provides a forensic service to residents of Darlington and County Durham who have experienced rape or sexual assault. The lead commissioners are NHS England and the Police Crime and Victim Commissioner with support from both Local Authorities and NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups. The Health and Justice Partnership Board (NHS England and PCVC led) is the governance body for the SARC.

Partners

A range of Darlington Borough Council services contribute to tackling domestic abuse. These include significant input from specialist staff in both Children and Adults Services, Housing support services, Communications and Engagement service, Public Health, 0-19 years Healthy Child service, Legal services, Education services and the Commissioning and Performance team.

The Darlington Community Safety Partnership values and recognises the contribution voluntary and community sector partners make in supporting vulnerable people, providing therapeutic services, training and awareness raising.

A 'Big Conversation' – June 2018

Tackling Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Darlington

In June 2018, the Chairs of the Health and Well Being Board, Community Safety Partnership, Adult Safeguarding Board and the Children Safeguarding Board held a shared planning session in recognition that domestic abuse and sexual violence are areas of common concern across all partners.

An outcome from the discussion was the addition of a fourth objective for the Domestic Abuse Plan with a focus on education, training and awareness raising. The Plan is structured around four key objectives :

- **Prevention through early identification and intervention**
- **Education training and awareness raising**
- **More 'invisible' victims are identified and offered support**
- **Reduce repeat victims and serial perpetrators of domestic abuse**

A second key outcome of the planning session was the recognition that Darlington should have a separate plan to address sexual violence. The emphasis of work via DASAN and DASVEG has been on domestic abuse and while efforts must be maintained to prevent and tackle domestic abuse it is recognised that the damage at an individual and community level of sexual violence may not be part of a domestic abuse incident or history.

The Community Safety Partnership will take the lead in developing a local plan to tackle sexual violence which will sit alongside, but separate to the Domestic Abuse Plan. Both plans will be aligned to PCVC priorities support to victims. The Responsible Authorities all have a role in developing and delivering local plans to tackle domestic abuse and sexual violence alongside partners from other sectors.