

Our Manchester

MANCHESTER COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024–26



Foreword

Welcome to this update of our Domestic Abuse Strategy, which details the progress we have made since 2021 and sets out our plans for 2025 and 2026. It is our intention to then produce and publish a longer-term strategy that will redefine our aims and priorities for the rest of the decade. In this update we also detail the work we are doing to tackle the wider issue of violence against women and girls (VAWG), in line with the Council's stated commitment 'to do everything in its power to build a city free from misogyny and violence against women and girls'.

Domestic abuse remains a serious and damaging issue in our city. It has no boundaries, affecting people from every community, every age range and every economic position. It has devastating consequences and a long-lasting impact on the safety, health and wider life chances of victims, their children and families. The issue is inextricably linked to wider social and health determinants such as homelessness, financial insecurity and mental ill health.

Our drive and focus as a Partnership is to improve outcomes for victims and survivors, continually evolving and improving our approach to protecting and supporting them. We also know that we must continue to challenge and try to change the behaviours of those who promote and cause harm, and to educate and inform about safe, healthy relationships so we can prevent that harm from occurring and risk escalating.

Fundamental to the continued delivery of our objectives is a joined-up and co-ordinated response. Domestic abuse and VAWG are complex issues, and many facets are best tackled together, partners and providers sharing their knowledge and expertise and taking collective action. We will tell you in this update about how some of this is already happening, and where we aim to do more of it over the next two years.

This update has been produced at a time of significant national change. We will closely monitor what those changes mean for national policy direction and for how our response to domestic abuse is shaped and funded. We will continue to represent the citizens of Manchester and influence national decision-making as strongly as we can, in order to make sure our response is the best it can be.

We all have a responsibility to do all we can to put an end to domestic abuse, and indeed all violence against women and girls. I would like to thank all those whose experiences, views and suggestions have informed this update, as well as those who continue to help in shaping our response. I share their commitment to ensuring that our citizens are free from fear, insecurity and harm, and that they can lead safe, happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.



Councillor Joanna Midgley
Deputy Leader

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The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – discharging our Safe Accommodation Duty

The Safe Accommodation Duty places several requirements upon local authorities, including to:

- Provide support for victims and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation
- Appoint a multi-agency Partnership Board
- Conduct and produce a Needs Assessment
- Publish a strategy
- Ensure sufficient provision for minoritised groups, including disabled people, older people, male victims
- Report back to the Government on progress.



Some examples of ways in which we have responded to the Duty:

Duty	Our response
Provide support for victims and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation	<p>We have provided additional funding within our refuge provision for complex needs workers and children’s workers in all our refuge and our homelessness domestic abuse provision. This offer has been extended until 2025.</p> <p>We have worked with our Registered Housing Providers, Housing Solutions, a project involving establishment of a sanctuary and target hardening scheme. We have also developed a process whereby work can be done with victims and children to keep them in their own homes, while maintaining the priority banding that would usually entitle them to a swift move into social housing.</p>
Adopt a multi-agency Partnership Board	Our Domestic Abuse Partnership Board has been in place since August 2021. It meets quarterly and drives our work on the Duty and on the wider domestic abuse agenda.
Conduct and produce a Needs Assessment	We have produced an initial assessment and two subsequent updates. We have also gone a step further, by making the document one that covers all aspects of the domestic abuse agenda.
Publish a strategy	Our strategy for dealing with the Safe Accommodation Duty is incorporated within our Domestic Abuse Strategy.
Ensure sufficient provision for minoritised groups, including disabled people, older people, male victims	<p>We utilised New Burdens funding to allocate grants to a range of agencies, some of which we were supporting for the first time. Recipients included Wai Yin, Vesta CIC, Saheli, LGBT Foundation, The River, Olive Pathway, SafeSpots, Manchester Deaf Centre, CAHN, The Dimobi Trust, Revive CIO and the Women’s Homelessness Involvement Group.</p> <p>We contributed towards the establishment and opening of the first male victims’ refuge in Greater Manchester, where the first year’s referrals have been such that demand has outstripped the supply of bed spaces.</p>
Report back to the Government on progress	We regularly provide returns for Government as directed on the work we have been doing and services we have been providing in support of our response to the Duty.

However, we know that:

- The burden is still placed too much on the victim to move away from home, and some temporary accommodation is not appropriate and does not feel safe.
- Victims who are co-owners of properties face additional barriers to fleeing to alternative accommodation if their name is still on their property.
- Women with no recourse to public funds also face additional challenges in fleeing a home they share with an abuser.
- Front line workers need equipping with sufficient knowledge of services they may be seeking to steer victims towards, so they are not ‘mis-sold’ such services and know what they can expect from them.
- As with other aspects of domestic abuse, certain areas of the city are overrepresented in the figures.
- The city deals with a significant proportion of presentations from people from outside of the city and beyond Greater Manchester.
- People with protected characteristics represent a notable and increasing proportion of the total number of people being supported in safe accommodation.

Commitments made	Our response
Continue to listen to victims' experiences of these services to help us further improve and develop our support and services	Commissioned the Empowered Voices Panel, to engage with victims with lived experience of domestic abuse from different backgrounds, to understand the gaps within the current service provision and gather feedback to help improve service delivery.
Continue to challenge and change perpetrator behaviour through provision of an appropriate range of perpetrator programmes	Introduced the MATAC (Multi-agency Tasking and Co-ordination) model for police and partners to collectively challenge and address the behaviour of high-risk, high-harm perpetrators of abuse. Continued to fund and commission a range of programmes for those who recognise the need to address and change their behaviours.
Expand the Safe and Together model within Children's Services, promote a similar 'whole picture' approach across partner agencies, and work to develop similar training that is appropriate for households without children	Launched the Thriving Families initiative across the city, where domestic abuse services are co-located with those from children's services, parenting, housing, substance misuse and mental health sectors, to provide a whole-family, whole-system approach to providing support and interventions.
Work to clarify the pathways into support and services for victims of domestic abuse across the city, and to raise awareness of them among agencies, so that staff can have informed conversations with victims and ensure that services address their needs	Worked with our colleagues in Libraries and Parks to promote them as 'safe spaces' for women and girls, where staff have received training in basic recognition and response, and have information on local services and support if people visiting them have cause to disclose that they feel unsafe or are being abused.
Ensure that, through our approach to training and development among staff across all our agencies, we promote a culture of continued improvement in our response to domestic abuse, with the aim of reducing the level of risk and harm it causes across the city	<p>Provided over 4,400 staff from agencies and services across the city with training in trauma-informed practice, supported with a range of resources and materials.</p> <p>Provided frontline police colleagues with a comprehensive programme of domestic abuse matters training, to help them improve their response to victims when attending incidents and following up on crimes.</p>
Continue to work with communities and services to ensure that support and advice are appropriate to their individual needs and acknowledge the barriers some groups of survivors face	<p>Based on the views and experiences of victims and survivors, and those working with them, updated and improved the presentation of our information on the Council's website about support and services available.</p> <p>Contributed to launch of Greater Manchester's first refuge specifically for male victims, which provides safe accommodation and a range of tailored support services.</p>

Commitments made	Our response
<p>Fulfil the Council commitment to ‘do everything in its power to build a city free from misogyny and violence against women and girls’</p>	<p>Signed up over 450 venues and organisations that operate in the city at night to our Women’s Safety Charter, providing more than 1,400 venue operators and staff with sexual harassment, violence and Active Bystander training, and resources to help them fulfil their Charter Pledge.</p> <p>Launched our WalkSafe App, a digital resource to help people to make safe journeys in and around the city at any time of day or night, enabling the sharing of locations with family and friends and automatic alerts if they fail to reach their intended destination.</p>
<p>Work with the DA Commissioner to influence wider national discussion on the domestic abuse agenda, including promotion of long-term funding arrangements and support for migrant women and those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)</p>	<p>Signed up to a national network of over 110 CSPs engaged in work to conduct Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) and promote learning arising from them, and participated in a national pilot of new models of oversight of the DHR process and outcomes.</p>
<p>Enhance our understanding of the impact of domestic abuse on children, to help us design, deliver and commission appropriate trauma-informed services</p>	<p>Commissioned through our delivery partners a range of counselling and therapeutic services that have provided support and interventions for over 280 children and young people during 2023/24, of which 121 were in safe accommodation.</p>
<p>Review how we commission and deliver our services to ensure that they are accessible and appropriate for anyone who needs them.</p>	<p>Reviewed and updated our Commissioning Strategy, following consultation with those with lived experience, and with services and organisations that work with them.</p>

Consultation 2024 – what we have learned

We sought to inform this strategy refresh as much as possible by consulting with those in our city with lived experience of domestic abuse, and with those who work closest with them. We conducted a series of focus groups, meetings and informal interviews and also carried out a survey of local professionals and service providers. We have sought to supplement the findings from these exercises with those from other recent and relevant consultations and reports at Greater Manchester and national levels.

From these consultations and reports we have learned that:

- Children who are victims of domestic abuse in their household experience loneliness and isolation when they have to move area, change school and make new friends. They feel that they are the only ones it's happening to.
- Many children see school as a safe place to disclose and seek support, but the staff they talk to (teachers, Designated Safeguarding Leads) need specialist input to help them better fulfil their 'trusted adult' roles.
- We need to strengthen work with businesses and employers, to better equip them to support their employees and signpost them to services.
- People from different communities have different preferred ways of accessing information about support and services, and often experience communication barriers when disclosing abuse or seeking support.
- While the range of information and support available to different communities has improved, there is still more to do, for example for Polish and other Eastern European communities.
- Training and education for leaders in Black African communities would help them to safely and appropriately educate and inform people about safe and healthy relationships.
- Our range of information aimed at frontline professionals needs to improve and be more visible in more varied ways.

Feature – Empowered Voices Panel

The Empowered Voices Panel was commissioned by Manchester City Council to engage with victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse from different backgrounds to understand the gaps within the current service provision and gather feedback to help improve service delivery.

The panel has become fully established and has held regular meetings focused on victims' experiences of different elements of the support offer and of the criminal justice system. The feedback from the panel has been an integral part of the refresh of this strategy.

Discussions with the panel throughout 2023 and into 2024 included police response, safe accommodation, awareness of support services, and experiences of the criminal justice system.

Representatives from the relevant partners, agencies and Council departments were present at all the panel meetings to listen to victims' experiences and concerns. Findings were taken back into each organisation and shared with colleagues to help improve service responses.

Our aims and ambitions

Our aims for the next two years will be to continue to:

- Prevent abuse and promote healthy relationships
- Identify abuse and intervene as early as possible
- Support the recovery of victims and survivors.

We will do this through:

Preventing abuse and promoting healthy relationships

We will:

- Continue to raise awareness and change attitudes through communication and engagement with communities, so that people better understand about positive and healthy relationships, about abuse and its different forms, and the help that is available.
- Target community engagement with groups currently underrepresented in reporting and services such as ethnic minority groups, LGBTQ+ communities, male victims, disabled people, and older people.
- Continue to work with communities and with support groups/agencies to ensure that support and advice responds to individual needs and that additional barriers faced by some groups are recognised and reduced.

- Continue to widen public awareness of particular aspects of domestic abuse, including forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM) and honour-based violence and abuse, building on our existing work with communities, VCS (voluntary and community sector) organisations and 'by and for' services.
- Work in partnership with schools, colleges and universities to educate young people on positive and healthy relationships, and gender-based violence; and to better equip young people to reject unacceptable attitudes, including the objectification of women.
- Ensure that, through our approach to training and development among staff across all our agencies, we promote a culture of continued improvement in our response to domestic abuse, with the aim of reducing the level of risk and harm it causes across the city.
- Continue to promote and amplify national and local campaigns aimed at ending violence against women and girls (VAWG), for example the national 'Enough' campaign and the Greater Manchester 'IsThisOk' campaign.
- Grow further the reach and sign-up to our Women's Safety Charter, engaging more businesses from different sectors and broadening our geographical reach across the city.
- Further expand our Women's Safety Training offer to include the Council's Neighbourhoods and Licensing staff, and Parking Enforcement Officers operating in the city.

Identifying abuse and intervening as early as possible

We will:

- Work to clarify the pathways into support and services for victims of domestic abuse across the city, and raise awareness of them among agencies, so that staff can have informed conversations with victims and ensure that services address the needs of victims.
- Improve and increase the accessibility of our services and support, so that they are available to everyone who needs them, when they need them and where they need them.
- Further develop the Thriving Families Model, embedding a whole-family, whole-system approach to tackling domestic abuse and the corrosive impact it can have on the lives and prospects of families across our city.
- Help victims (including children who are victims) remain in their own home by recommissioning our Safer at Home scheme.
- Build on the domestic abuse training already available to frontline staff, to ensure that they can recognise abuse, understand the diverse needs of victims and ensure that the first response to calls for help is both appropriate and effective.

- Continue to challenge and change perpetrator behaviour through continued operation of the MATAC process and through continued provision of a range of behaviour-change programmes commensurate with the level of risk and harm.
- Robustly monitor the impact of the Government’s Early Release Scheme, so that where there is evidence that any of those included in each tranche have been domestic abuse perpetrators, sufficient measures are in place to safeguard their victims and any children who could have been involved.
- Seek ways to better prepare and support victims through the Criminal Justice System and Family Law Courts, including promotion of initiatives such as Operation Soteria.
- Work with partners to improve the criminal justice response, implement the new Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs), and promote increased protection for victims through both criminal and civil legal proceedings.
- Work further with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC) to influence wider national discussion on the domestic abuse agenda, including the oversight of and guidance on the conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews.

Supporting Victims’ and Survivors’ Recovery

We will:

- Consider in our approach to recovery provision the long-lasting impact that intergenerational trauma can have on victims, children and whole families, and the time it may take for them to achieve lasting and sustained recovery.
- Recognise that mental ill health can be a consequence of the trauma of domestic abuse and work to improve access to mental health services for victims and survivors.
- Promote a whole-person, whole-family approach to recovery across partner agencies and services, to improve the chances of long-term, sustainable outcomes for victims and families impacted by domestic abuse.
- Seek to further develop support services to aid long-term recovery, such as therapeutic services, counselling, housing, financial and legal advice, support with employment and training.
- Continue to listen to victims’ experiences of these services to help us further improve and develop our support and services.
- Further enhance our understanding of the impact of domestic abuse on children, to help us design, deliver and commission appropriate, trauma-informed services.

If you would like more information about our policies Ensuring Equality, Monitoring Our Progress, Our Governance, or the Scale of the Issue, please email communitysafety@manchester.gov.uk and we can send them to you directly.