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Our partners that have contributed to the work of the strategy:



## 1. Foreword

Domestic abuse continues to have a damaging and lasting impact on the lives of both adults and children. It is prevalent in all communities but sadly, it continues to be a crime that people don't always feel they can report. Together, we must change this. We must talk about domestic abuse and look out for our neighbours and communities to reduce the tolerance for behaviour that has lifelong impacts on the health and wellbeing of all concerned. During the coronavirus pandemic, the restrictions of lockdown inevitably made life even more challenging for those subjected to domestic abuse and has made support for survivors even more important.

Domestic abuse also impacts upon future generations and their ability, capacity and attitude to relationships, parenting, self-esteem and mental health. We must do everything we can to prevent people from experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse in the future and we can do this identifying it early and educating our young people on positive, healthy relationships. Our strategy will support this approach and aims to raise the aspirations of those who have experienced domestic abuse and to support those who are experiencing it now.

Working together we can tackle domestic abuse - but we must tackle it effectively. There is much more work to be done to prevent domestic abuse, to support survivors and their families and to change the behaviours of perpetrators. Through this strategy and its clear commitments, we will work together to prevent domestic abuse, strengthen our service provision and ensure we learn from the latest research and understanding of what works best and the experience of survivors to continually improve our services and meet local needs.

This strategy is an important document which outlines what we will do to address domestic abuse in Bexley. Bexley's Community Safety Partnership is a strong collaboration that is committed to deliver the vision we have all signed up to and make a difference to the lives of those subjected to domestic abuse and their families. We are confident that the commitment and passion of our Partnership will help to drive and improve our collective response to domestic abuse and create lasting change which will make a real difference to survivors and their families.



**Councillor Sue Gower**  
Cabinet Member for Communities

## 2. Bexley Domestic Abuse Strategy Outline

### What is domestic abuse?

Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is domestic abuse if:

- ▶ the behaviour is abusive
- ▶ behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

“victim/survivor of domestic abuse” includes reference to

- (b) is related to A or B

A child is related to a person if:

- (a) the person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child, or
- (b) the child and the person are relatives.

“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

For the purposes of this Act, two people are if any of the following applies:

- (a) they are, or have been, married to each other
- (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other
- (c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- (d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- (e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- (f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2))
- (g) they are relatives

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1) (f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if:

- (a) the person is the parent of the child, or
- (b) the parent has parental responsibility for the child.

### The law

Domestic abuse is not a criminal offence; it is an aggravating factor for other types of crime. In December 2015 new laws came into effect under Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 which created the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship. In April 2021 the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 came into effect.

## Domestic abuse in Bexley

Reported incidents of domestic abuse are rising nationally, although the prevalence of reported incidents in Bexley remains below the London average. Demand for domestic abuse services is increasing year on year and cases are also becoming increasingly more complex.

## Our strategic priorities

Our strategy focuses on five strategic aims to help achieve our vision. We will ensure that our strategic priorities are embedded throughout the partnership and within our 5 year delivery plan to develop our local response to domestic abuse.

### Prevention

We support communities to prevent domestic abuse and intervene at the earliest stage to prevent escalation. We ensure that we are identifying domestic abuse at the earliest opportunity.

### Partnership

We bring together professionals from the specialist voluntary sector, health, housing, community safety, children's and adults' social care, education, public health, police, probation, substance misuse and other voluntary agencies to achieve shared goals and outcomes. Ensuring a coordinated community response to domestic abuse is embedded.

### Provision

We ensure the services provided by a wide range of agencies reach every community, and support victims, perpetrators and children, and that they deliver the appropriate outcomes in a sufficient and timely manner.

### Protection

We respond to risk, protecting vulnerable victims and families affected by domestic abuse.

### Progression

We improve our response, benefit from innovation and learn from experience both locally and nationally to continue to improve outcomes for victims, perpetrators and children and reduce the incidence of abuse.

## How will we measure success?

Our Delivery Plan will be refreshed annually and will provide partners with a framework through which to address domestic abuse. To support the Delivery Plan, Bexley will be implementing the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) domestic abuse guidance in relation to how health services, social care and the organisations they work with can respond effectively to those experiencing or perpetrating domestic violence and abuse. The delivery plan will be monitored within our Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board and report to statutory boards under the banner of the 5 strategic priorities of: Prevention & Early Help, Partnership, Provision, Protection and Progression.

### 3. Introduction

This refreshed strategy sets out our five-year ambitions for addressing and reducing domestic abuse in Bexley and the harmful impact it has on victims and families and the wider community. The strategy has been informed by national guidelines and policies, as well as by the Mayor of London's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy and the Bexley Community Safety Partnership Joint Strategic Assessment. It has also been informed by the Bexley Prevention Strategy, Start Well, Live Well, Age Well which is championed by the Health & Wellbeing Board. It has been developed in partnership with a wide range of statutory, voluntary and community organisations across Bexley, including an engagement exercise with survivors, service users and professionals.

This strategy represents a partnership commitment and is founded on the invaluable and pioneering role played by specialist support services in the voluntary sector. It provides a strategic perspective and policy framework to inform partnership working and contains specific objectives aligned to our key priorities aimed at reducing domestic abuse and the impact abuse has on victims, families and communities in Bexley.

Domestic abuse is an horrendous crime with substantial impact. 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will experience abuse at some point in their lifetime. 1 in 10 women will experience stalking and harassment and 2 women a week in the UK are killed by their ex-partner or current partner. There is a strong correlation which overlaps with other types of VAWG (violence against women and girls) and our approach to addressing harm caused by these other strands will also be informed by our domestic abuse approach and wider pan-London's VAWG Strategies.

#### Consultation

Through our Domestic Abuse Operational and Strategic Board we have developed and consulted with our partners to develop this strategy. We have consulted with victims/survivors of domestic abuse, held a webinar for members of the public and an open consultation process that ensured responses have been received from across the borough from residents. Furthermore, we have also had our strategy reviewed by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England & Wales.

The results of this consultation have been analysed and a final version of the Strategy has been developed.

As such, there are themes emerging from the public consultation which have now shaped the proposed strategy. The new strategy responds to the following themes that were raised by the public and partners during the consultation:

#### **Theme 1 – Targeted work to increase access and uptake of DA services to those who have protected characteristics.**

The public and partners did not feel that the Draft Strategy sufficiently detailed this work. The proposed strategy sets out more explicitly what we are doing and will do as partners to address this important point. A recent OSC sub group discussion has helped the partnership explore this theme further in terms of ethnicity as a protected characteristic. We plan to further explore access to services for people with disabilities and for people from LGBTQ communities.

#### **Theme 2 – There was overwhelming support from the public and partners for the need for a campaign to increase knowledge and understanding around coercive control.**

Again, this was already proposed in the strategy – but the public response has reiterated the importance of this and so it will more clearly prioritised throughout the action plan and

subsequently partners have jointly committed to resourcing a large campaign – across all statutory agencies and some VCS partners.

### **Theme 3 – Partner Engagement and Networks**

The public and partner consultation response shared with us suggestions of local groups and faith groups that could support in the delivery of the strategies key themes - Prevention, Protection, Provision, Partnership and Progression. We will work to develop our partnership network to expand community knowledge and awareness of DA.

### **Theme 4 – Healthy Relationships and Young People**

The public and partners very strongly supported work to prevent domestic abuse. It was felt that educational programmes for young people, like the DAY programme and theatre in education projects were needed to challenge rigid and stereotypical gender roles and the subsequent impacts that this can have on relationships. Direct advocacy, like our Children's IDVA will also support with this prevention outcome.

Psychological  
Psychological  
abuse

## 4. Purpose

Our interim domestic abuse strategy was developed in 2017. With the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Bill 2020 we began collaborating with partners during 2020 to ensure we had a robust strategy that has been written to help partnerships and agencies across Bexley to deliver appropriate responses to people affected by domestic abuse. It will promote the maximisation of limited resources through close collaborative, multi-agency working, and will seek to enable us to:

- ▶ Develop a common shared statement for all partners in Bexley
- ▶ Provide support and guidance to statutory bodies in relation to reviews
- ▶ Support external funding providers with the achievements and aims of Bexley.

In addition to this, it will:

- ▶ Make domestic abuse 'everybody's business'
- ▶ Enable strategic partners to have a clear understanding of our agreed priorities and recommendations for the next five years and to embed these within their own organisations / agencies strategic plans
- ▶ Enable Bexley residents to feel able to contribute towards making Bexley a safer place
- ▶ Help victims, children and families to feel supported and able to seek high quality and timely support at the earliest possible stage
- ▶ Let perpetrators know that their behaviour will not be tolerated.
- ▶ Lead to greater support for the LGBTQ community, people with disabilities, those who have no recourse to public funding, those who identify as BAME and those from the diverse range of communities within the borough.
- ▶ Identify further opportunities for people with protected characteristics to confidently disclose domestic abuse and ensure that we are provided an effective response.

Controlling  
behaviour

## 5. Definition of domestic abuse

Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is domestic abuse if:

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For the purposes of this Act, two people are if any of the following applies:

- (a) they are, or have been, married to each other
  - (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other
  - (c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
  - (d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
  - (e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
  - (f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2))
  - (g) they are relatives
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1) (f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if:
- (a) the person is the parent of the child, or
  - (b) the parent has parental responsibility for the child.

Monitoring

## 6. Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Domestic abuse is a cruel and complex crime that can affect anyone, leaving physical and emotional scars that can last a lifetime. While there has been a welcome gradual fall in the incidence of domestic abuse in recent years, there are still some 2.4 million victims a year (aged 16 to 74), the majority of whom are women. Far too many individuals have their lives destroyed by abuse. We need to build a society that has zero tolerance towards domestic abuse and actively empowers victims, communities and professionals to confront and challenge it and to provide victims with the support they deserve.

There is a national commitment to transforming the response to this terrible crime, including the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which came into force on 29th April 2021. The prevention of abuse and the protection of victims lies at the heart of the Bill and the wider programme of work.

The measures in the Bill seek to put in place statutory duties, new legislation, create new criminal offences, increase protection for victims and their children and hold perpetrators to account. The full Act can be accessed via the link below and the following are some of the themes:

- ▶ promote awareness - to put abuse at the top of everyone's agenda, including by legislating for the first time for a statutory definition of domestic abuse
- ▶ protect and support victims, including by introducing a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Order
- ▶ transform the justice response, including by helping victims to give their best evidence in the criminal courts through the use of video evidence, screens and other special measures, and ensuring that victims of abuse do not suffer further trauma in family court proceedings by being cross-examined by their abuser

- ▶ improve performance – the new Domestic Abuse Commissioner will help drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas and agencies.
- ▶ The Bill will create, for the first time, a cross-government statutory definition of domestic abuse, to ensure that domestic abuse is properly understood, considered unacceptable and actively challenged across statutory agencies and in public attitudes
- ▶ The Bill also recognises that domestic abuse can impact on a child who sees or hears or experiences the effects of the abuse and it treats such children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right where they are related to either the abuser or the abused introducing a new duty on local authorities in England to provide support for victims and their children in domestic abuse safe accommodation.
- ▶ Under the Duty, local authorities will be required to assess the need for, and commission support to, victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation services in their areas, and report back to central government that they have met these obligations.
- ▶ The guidance will be aimed at statutory and non-statutory bodies working with victims and perpetrators and commissioning services, including the police, local authorities and the NHS to increase awareness and inform their response to domestic abuse. It will also be aimed at support organisations working with victims

**The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 29th April 2021. For a breakdown of the timescales at which the Act is implemented and the statutory guidance, please refer to:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets>

## 7. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

In March 2018, the Mayor of London published his refreshed VAWG strategy 2018 – 2021 “A safer city for women and girls” The strategy was informed by a major consultation exercise that included survivors, one to one interviews and an online survey. London Borough of Bexley’s strategic priorities will align with the VAWG strategy to ensure that we are responding effectively to domestic abuse.

### Preventing violence and abuse

*Prevention and earlier intervention:* preventing violence against women and girls from happening by challenging the attitudes and behaviours which foster it and intervening early where possible to prevent its recurrence.

### Provision of services

*Provision of immediate and ongoing support:* providing high quality support for survivors where violence does occur and ensuring services prioritise the safety of survivors and their children as their first and overriding priority.

### Partnership working

*Partnership working:* deliver coordinated action across all services and partnerships, informed by consistent and coordinated policies, systems and leadership, to obtain the best outcome for victims and their families.

### Pursuing perpetrators

*Protection and prosecution:* taking action to reduce the risk to victims of these crimes and ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable, brought to justice and provided with opportunities for change in a way that maximises safety.

<https://www.london.gov.uk/mopac-publications/mayors-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy-2018-2021>

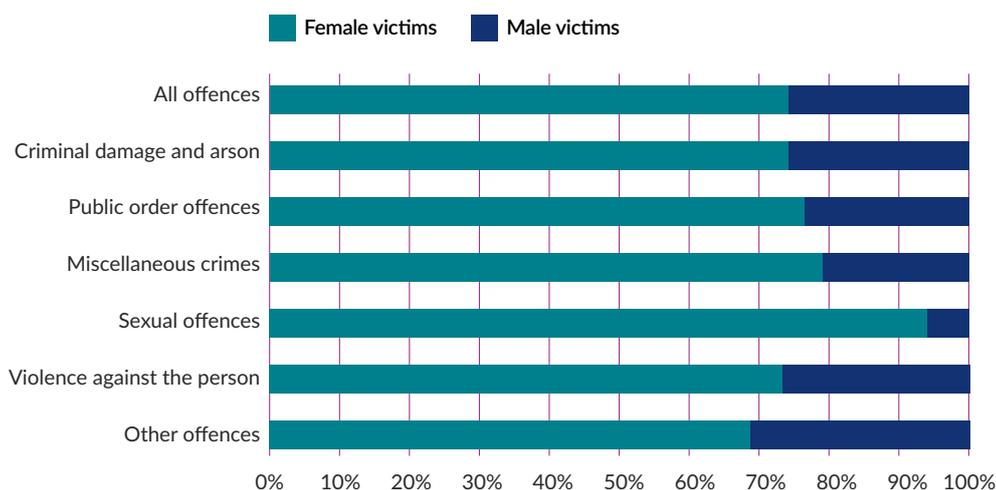
At the time of preparing the Bexley Strategy, the consultation was taking place for the next Mayors Strategy and once published this will be integrated to the Bexley DA strategy and delivery plan.

Economic abuse

## 8. The National Picture

According to the Office of National Statistics “Domestic Abuse in England and Wales (overview report): in the year ending March 2020 the Crime Survey for England and Wales (2019) estimated 2.3 million adults aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse in the last year. There were more female than male victims (1.6 million women and 757,000 men).

Percentage of domestic abuse related crimes recorded by the police by sex of the victim and selected offence groups (29 forces), England and Wales, year ending March 2020



Data source: Office for National Statistics / Home Office Data Hub – police recorded crime

Some of the main points from 2020 Crime Survey for England and Wales include:

- ▶ women aged 16 to 19 years were more likely to be victims of any domestic abuse in the last year than women aged 25 years and over
- ▶ adults who were separated or divorced were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse compared with those who were married or civil partnered, cohabiting, single or widowed
- ▶ adults who lived in urban areas were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse in the last year (6.0%) than those who lived in rural areas (4.2%)
- ▶ in 74% of the domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police in the year ending March 2019, the victim was female, and
- ▶ according to data from the Home Office Homicide Index for the year ending March 2017 to the year ending March 2019, 77% (or 274) victims of domestic homicide were female out of a total of 356 recorded. In the majority of cases, 96% (263) the suspect was male. The average age of female victims was 45 years, and the average age of male domestic homicide victims was 48 years.

In addition, there was a 9% increase in the number of police recorded domestic abuse related crimes in the year ending March 2020. Referrals to the Crown Prosecution Service for a charging decision fell from the previous year 19%, from 98,470 to 79,965.

## 9. The cost of domestic abuse

According to a Home Office research report (January 2019) into the economic and social costs of domestic abuse it is estimated that domestic abuse has cost over £66 billion in England and Wales (overall in the year ending 31/03/2017). This figure represents the most comprehensive estimate and the Home Office report ...”reinforces the need to tackle domestic abuse, ideally through preventative efforts that stop the abuse from happening in the first place. The biggest component of the estimated cost is the physical and emotional harms incurred by victims (£47m), particularly the emotional harms (the fear, anxiety and depression experienced by victims as a result of domestic abuse), which account for the overwhelming majority of overall costs”.

The following tables shows the costs in anticipation (expenditure on protective and preventative measures), consequence (property damage, physical and emotional harms, lost output, health and victim services) and response (police and criminal justice system):-

According to the Office for National Statistics (2017a data) the estimated number of domestic abuse victims (year ending 31/03/2017) there were 1,946,000. This equates to an estimated cost for a single victim of domestic abuse of £34,015.

### Total costs of domestic abuse in England & Wales for 2016/18 (£millions)

COSTS IN ANTICIPATION	COSTS AS A CONSEQUENCE				COSTS IN RESPONSE				TOTAL
	Physical & emotional harm	Lost output	Health services	Victim services	Police costs	Criminal legal	Civil legal	Other	
£6m	£47,287m	£14.098m	£2,333m	£724m	£1,257m	£336m	£140m	£11m	£66,192m

Source: The economic and social costs of domestic abuse research report 107 Rhys Oliver, Barnaby Alexander, Stephen Roe and Miriam Wlasny January 2019

### Recorded incidents Bexley compared to London (calendar year 2018 and 2019)

Year	Area	Count	Rate	Population
2018	Bexley	3,267	13.5	243,831
2018	London	140,902	15.7	8,956,600
2019	Bexley	3,836	15.6	245,655
2019	London	144,590	16.0	9,056,800

### Recorded offences Bexley compared to London (calendar year 2018 and 2019)

Year	Area	Count	Rate	Population
2018	Bexley	2,026	8.1	243,835
2018	London	85,458	9.5	8,956,600
2019	Bexley	2,607	10.7	245,655
2019	London	89,103	9.8	9,056,800

## 10. Domestic abuse in Bexley

Domestic abuse reported incidents / offences are rising in the borough, although the prevalence of reported incidents in Bexley remains below the London average. Demand for domestic abuse services is increasing year on year and cases are also becoming increasingly more complex.

According to the Mayor of London Policing and Crime (MOPAC) domestic and sexual violence

dashboard for the calendar years 2019 and 2020 there has been an increase in domestic abuse related incidents (8%) and offences (6%) in London, whilst Bexley has seen an increase between the two periods of 7% and 2% respectively. This increase in victims willing to come forward may be due to a better awareness of the services available to help them.

### Recorded incidents Bexley compared to London (calendar year 2019 and 2020)

Year	Area	Count	Rate per 1,000 population	Population
2019	Bexley	3,835	15.6	245,655
2019	London	144,138	15.9	9,056,800
2020	Bexley	4085	16.5	247,444
2020	London	156,193	16.8	9,304,000

### Recorded offences Bexley compared to London (calendar year 2019 and 2020)

Year	Area	Count	Rate	Population
2019	Bexley	2625	10.7	245,655
2019	London	89,451	9.9	9,056,800
2020	Bexley	2684	10.8	247,444
2020	London	94,479	10.2	9,304,000

During the Covid-19 period (March 2020 to December 2020) Bexley saw an increase in Domestic Abuse. On average Bexley saw an increase of 9% in the number of police reported incidents from March to December 2020 compared with the same period in 2019. In addition, Bexley also saw a significant increase of 39% in DA MARAC (multi agency risk assessment conference) referrals when comparing 2020 to the corresponding period in the previous year.

Domestic abuse continues to be a key factor for those children receiving support from Children's Social Care and Family Wellbeing. In 2019/20,

the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) received 13,293 contacts, of which 17.3% (2,294) cited domestic abuse as the presenting reason. The outcome from these contacts saw 23% (527) referred to Children's Social Care and 8% (186) to Family Wellbeing with the remainder of contacts receiving information and advice and MASH checks.

At the end of 2019/20, Children's Social Care completed 3,023 assessments for 2,661 children and young people. From the assessments completed, 32.5% (983) identified domestic abuse as a factor during the assessment. For those assessments that have domestic abuse selected, 37% (364)

had neglect, physical, emotional or sexual abuse identified as an additional factor.

During the 2019/20 year, 218 children and young people became subject to a Child Protection Plan. These children had a total of 283 assessments completed in the year with 57.2% (162) of these assessments having domestic abuse identified as a factor. This highlights that there is an overlap between domestic abuse and direct harm of children.

Bexley's Family Wellbeing Service supports children and families based on seven presenting issues with parental domestic abuse being one of these issues. In 2019/20, 1,314 episodes were started in the Family Wellbeing Service with 34.1% (448) of these having parental domestic abuse cited as a presenting issue.

## 11. Our approach

All residents feel safe and no one in Bexley should live in fear of domestic abuse. We will have communities where victims and their families can access high quality and timely support at the earliest possible stage and that it is delivered by well-trained and supportive people from across the partnership who can provide early intervention and targeted services to reduce the impact on victims, families and children.

## 12. Governance Structure

Following a review of service provision in 2019, London Borough of Bexley aligned responsibility for domestic abuse services into one area, managed by a Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy Manager & Commissioner, within the Community Safety Team. This was to ensure there were clear lines of communication, reporting and contract management between the Council and our current commissioned domestic abuse providers, Solace Women's Aid. Our governance structure chart is at Appendix 'A'



## 13. Bexley's Domestic Abuse Partnership Board

Bexley's Domestic Abuse Operational & Strategic Partnership Board (BDAP) has representation from across the council that includes Bexley Community Safety, adults and children's social care, housing, public health and education. Members also include Oxleas, National Health Service, Victim Support, Solace Women's Aid, National Probation Service and Criminal Rehabilitation Company and Bexley Voluntary Services Council. BDAP reports to Bexley Community Safety Partnership Board and has strategic oversight of multi-agency responses to domestic abuse within Bexley.

The Bexley Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board will have a statutory duty to comply with the GLA on adhering to their duties and to comply with any requests from the DA Commissioner, England & Wales.

Tackling domestic abuse is a cross-cutting issue demanding varied responses from across all sectors and requires recognition and commitment to partnership working. BDAP recognises that no single agency can effectively address domestic abuse by working in isolation. Working in partnership will promote multi-agency management of domestic abuse, with a victim focussed, efficient and effective operating model. The Operational Group will also be responsible for oversight of this Strategy's Delivery Plan.

### **Domestic Abuse Health Sub-Group 'Best practice being common practice'**

In 2020, the Council and Bexley's Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) developed the Domestic Abuse Health Sub Group. This group's function is to oversee and manage the health response to domestic abuse, ensuring the all health services in Bexley are responding effectively to domestic abuse.

This Health group was formed in response to the Pathfinder, which is a detailed report on how the

health sector should be approaching domestic abuse. Developed by Standing Together and its partners, it is built on the existing good practice of health partners from acute health, mental health and primary care with local domestic abuse specialist services. This promotes the use of governance and policies, coordination, data collection, specialist interventions and training to build the capacity of local health systems to respond to survivors of domestic abuse and will be developed for Bexley

<https://www.standingtogether.org.uk/pathfinder>



## 15. Our commitment

In December 2016 the Home Office published the National Statement of Expectations (NSE) which sets out what local areas need to put in place to ensure their response to domestic abuse is collaborative, robust and effective, to ensure that all victims and survivors can get the help they need regardless of gender, race or ethnicity. Alongside our commissioned specialist service, Solace Women's Aid, and together with our partnership we will:-

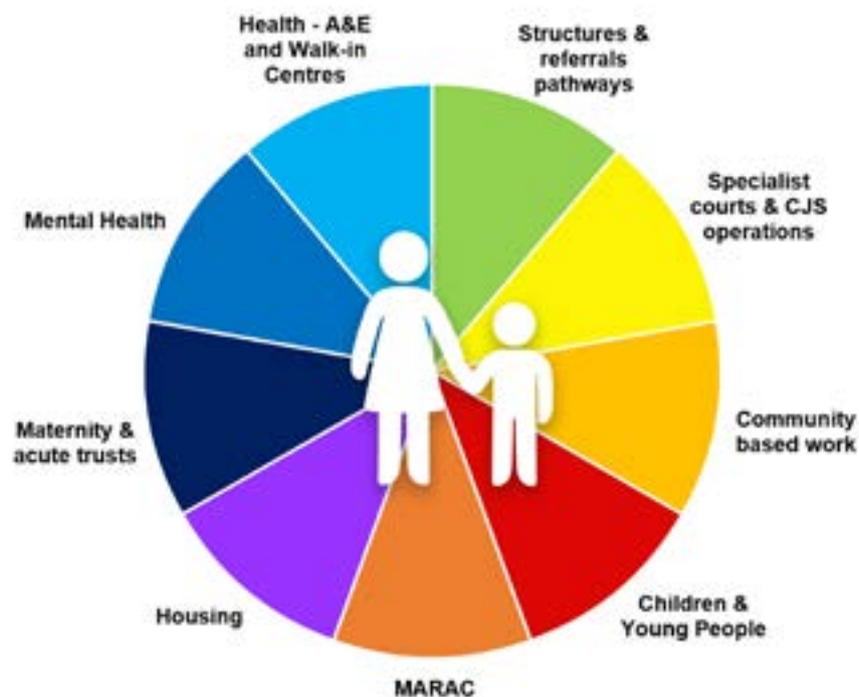
- ▶ put the victim at the centre of service delivery
- ▶ have a clear focus on perpetrators in order to keep victims safe
- ▶ take a strategic, system wide approach to commissioning
- ▶ be locally led and safeguarding individuals at every opportunity
- ▶ raise local awareness of the issue of domestic abuse and involve, engage and empower communities to understand domestic abuse

- ▶ improve joint working between agencies, including information sharing, to enable a co-ordinated approach to addressing domestic abuse.

**We will:**

### **Develop a Community Co-ordinated Response (CCR) for Bexley**

London Borough of Bexley is working to develop a CCR model to improve the whole system response to domestic abuse and its ability to support sustained recovery and outcomes. Every agency which has a responsibility for dealing with survivors, their children and/or perpetrators, must work effectively within their own agency and with all other agencies who also have that responsibility, to secure the safety of the survivor and their children and hold perpetrators to account. The process by which this work is integrated and managed is known as the CCR.



The above diagram is taken from Standing Together's Coordinated Community Response and the In search of Excellence Report 2020 <https://www.standingtogether.org.uk>

As the graphic on page 19 demonstrates, the CCR encompasses the broadest possible response to domestic abuse addressing prevention, early intervention, dealing with crisis, risk fluctuation, and long-term recovery and safety, working with a wide range of services, pathways, agencies and systems.

The CCR to domestic abuse acknowledges that, while each agency maintains its independence, all agencies involved must work in an integrated and co-ordinated way with each other in order to achieve:-

- ▶ an increase in the safety of domestic abuse survivors
- ▶ an increase in the safety of children who live with domestic violence
- ▶ holding abusers accountable for their actions
- ▶ effective prevention strategies
- ▶ a system where the onus of holding abusers accountable lies with service provider, and the wider community, rather than the survivor.

Our aim is to make domestic abuse 'everybody's business' and we will work closely with our partners and our commissioned domestic abuse specialist provider, Solace Women's Aid, to achieve this.

## Develop the Bexley Domestic Abuse Champions Network and Train the Trainer Programme

The recently developed Bexley Domestic Abuse Champions Network and Train the Trainers Programme currently has 200 professionals across the statutory and voluntary sector. We aim to develop this network and increase the capacity of all our partners agencies to respond to victims of domestic abuse. The aim is to have at least two dedicated professionals within each partnership and agency who can act as Champions around domestic abuse, offering support and signposting to other professionals. A continued programme of training will be delivered to support the Champions in their role which will include developing Community Champions.

Below is feedback from one of our Senior Social Workers:

*"... so thankful that I have been trained as a domestic abuse champion and had the knowledge to complete the DASH tool as without this, [this lady] would continue to be at risk and we would never have known. It's very easy to make blanket statements such as 'carers stress', when we took the time to ask the right questions we uncovered so much to this lady's life we could have missed."*

Intimidation

## Training approach

Working in a multi-agency partnership is the most effective way to embed training at both an operational and strategic level. Initial and ongoing training and organisational support is also needed. The guidance is for health and social care commissioners, specialist domestic abuse staff and others whose work may bring them into contact with people who experience or perpetrate domestic violence and abuse.

### ● NICE guidance

London Borough of Bexley have developed a training prospectus in line with NICE Guidance which aims to help identify, prevent and reduce domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse is a complex issue that needs sensitive handling by a range of professionals. The cost, in both human and economic terms, is so significant that even marginally effective interventions are cost effective.

Working in a multi-agency partnership is the most effective way to approach the issue at both an operational and strategic level. Initial and ongoing training and organisational support is also needed.

### ● Levels of training

Training to provide a **universal response** should give staff a basic understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse and its links to mental health and alcohol and drug misuse, along with their legal duties. In addition, it should cover the concept of shame that is associated with 'honour'-based violence and an awareness of diversity and equality issues. It should also ensure staff know what to do next:

**Level 1** Staff should be trained to respond to a [disclosure](#) of domestic abuse sensitively and in a way that ensures people's safety. They should also be able to direct people to specialist services. This level of training is for: physiotherapists, speech therapists, dentists, youth workers, care assistants, receptionists, interpreters and non-specialist voluntary and community sector workers.

**Level 2** Staff should be trained to ask about domestic abuse in a way that makes it easier for people to disclose it. This involves an understanding of the epidemiology of domestic violence and abuse, how it affects people's lives and the role of professionals in intervening safely. Staff should also be able to

respond with empathy and understanding, assess someone's immediate safety and offer referral to specialist services. Typically this level of training is for: nurses, accident and emergency doctors, adult social care staff, ambulance staff, children's centre staff, children and family social care staff, GPs, mental health professionals, midwives, health visitors, paediatricians, health and social care professionals in education (including school nurses), prison staff and alcohol and drug misuse workers. In some cases, it will also be relevant for youth workers.

Training to provide a **specialist response** should equip staff with a more detailed understanding of domestic abuse and more specialist skills:

**Level 3** Staff should be trained to provide an initial response that includes [risk identification and assessment](#), safety planning and continued liaison with specialist support services. Typically this is for: child safeguarding social workers, safeguarding nurses, midwives and health visitors with additional domestic abuse training, [multi-agency risk assessment conference](#) representatives and adult safeguarding staff.

**Level 4** Staff should be trained to give expert advice and support to people experiencing domestic abuse. This is for specialists in domestic abuse. For example, social workers, domestic violence advocates or support workers, [independent domestic violence advisers](#) or independent sexual violence advisers, refuge staff, domestic abuse and sexual violence counsellors and therapists, and children's workers.

Other training to raise awareness of, and address misconceptions about, domestic abuse issues and the skills, specialist services and training needed to provide people with effective support.

To access our training please visit

[www.bexleydomesticabuseservices.org.uk](http://www.bexleydomesticabuseservices.org.uk)

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph50/chapter/Introduction>

Honour based abuse

## Domestic Homicide Reviews

The requirement to undertake domestic homicide reviews (DHRs) was established on a statutory basis on 13th April 2011 under Section 9 of the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act (2004). Under Section 9(1) of the Act, local areas are required to conduct a multi-agency review if the death meets the following criteria:

*If the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom they were related or with whom they were, or had been, in an intimate personal relationship, or a member of the same household as themselves OR were a victim took their own life (suicide) and the circumstances give rise to concern, for example it emerges that there was coercive controlling behaviour in the relationship, even if a suspect is not charged with an offence or they are tried and acquitted.*

For Bexley, overall responsibility for establishing a review rests with Bexley Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) which is made up of representatives from the 'responsible authorities' (Local Authority, police, fire and rescue, probation services and health) who work together to protect their local communities from crime and help people feel safer.

A DHR should seek to establish the lessons to be learned about how local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard victims. Reviews are not about who is culpable. It aims to identify clear lessons, apply those lessons in timely actions, appropriately amend practice and change policies and procedures. The overall aim is to prevent domestic violence and abuse homicide and improve responses to those affected.

Bexley have developed the Bexley DHR Toolkit for professionals to understand when a review should be considered and the process. As per statutory guidance from the Home Office Bexley publish all DHR's on the BCSP website.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/domestic-homicide-review>

[Domestic Homicide Review Toolkit \(bexley.gov.uk\)](#)

To see Bexley's published domestic homicide reviews please visit:

<https://www.bexley.gov.uk/services/community-safety-and-environment/bexley-community-safety-partnership/about-bcsp#:~:text=About%20Bexley%20Community%20Safety%20Partnership>



## 16. What have we achieved so far?

This strategy builds on a number of recommendations and existing work that has been undertaken across the borough by a range of partnerships to further improve our response to people affected by domestic abuse. Highlights of this work includes:

- ▶ Introduction of Safe Lives One Front Door approach to domestic abuse. Bexley's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) operates a One Front Door model which has established a one place for all domestic abuse referrals, whether they relate to a child or adult. This means that risk can be collaboratively identified earlier and achieve an integrated pathway of support for the whole family. This has involved co-locating specialist staff into the MASH from housing, Solace, education, health and police to ensure effective information sharing.
- ▶ Establishment of the Bexley Domestic Abuse Partnership Strategic Group which has representation from across the council and members from partner organisations and agencies. The group provides a strategic oversight of multi-agency responses to domestic abuse within Bexley.
- ▶ Establishment of the Bexley Domestic Abuse Operational Group whose function it is to undertake, oversee and manage the delivery of the objectives, initiatives and plans of the Strategic Group. This is to ensure that our domestic abuse services are well co-ordinated, consistent and are of outstanding quality for everyone that needs to use them. This includes Tasking and Finishing Groups to target individual areas of work relating to domestic abuse.
- ▶ Introduction of the Bexley Domestic Abuse Health Sub Group to ensure that all health settings are responding effectively to domestic abuse.
- ▶ Development of a dedicated domestic abuse website for victims, perpetrators, young people and professionals, to access information and support in relation to domestic abuse.
- ▶ A review of our provision and services for domestic abuse was completed which included an assessment of need within the borough to ensure that we were providing an effective service based on best practice
- ▶ The introduction of a Domestic Homicide Review Toolkit (DHR) to ensure that agencies are aware of the statutory duties around DHR's and can engage within the process.
- ▶ The local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) was reviewed in 2018 and restructured as a result of this review. The MARAC now meets fortnightly due to increasing numbers of high risk referrals and is attended by a good representation of partners, both statutory and voluntary.
- ▶ Introduction of a training prospectus to ensure professionals working in Bexley have access to appropriate training around domestic abuse. Training is open to any professional who works in statutory or voluntary organisations, including faith and community groups within Bexley.
- ▶ Our Train the Trainer Programme and Domestic Abuse Champions Network was developed and this includes the introduction of a quarterly newsletter for professionals and regular domestic abuse and VAWG training.



**BEXLEY  
DOMESTIC  
ABUSE SERVICES**

- ▶ A local proactive domestic abuse campaign and a multi-agency website was launched to provide information and raise awareness of the services available in the borough for victims / families / friends of survivors and perpetrators and to provide resources for professionals.
- ▶ Annual awareness and publicity campaigns, which includes holding events and workshops to raise the profile of domestic abuse, were organised.
- ▶ In April 2019 Solace were commissioned by London Borough of Bexley to deliver A 5 year specialist domestic abuse service that provides safe and suitable refuge accommodation, a One Stop Shop, independent domestic violence advocacy service for high risk cases of domestic

abuse, an outreach service for medium risk cases and resilience building group programmes. Solace operates a responsive service model that takes a holistic approach to ensure that all components of addressing a domestic and sexual violence and abuse incident are covered seamlessly. The services provided are person centred, needs led and trauma informed. Solace maximise safety and reduction of risk and ensure their work is based on recovery from trauma, recognising that this is central to their service users and their children moving into independent lives. Solace's model includes 1-2-1 work, group work, peer support and ambassador and service user involvement schemes.

# solace

Sexual  
abuse

## 17. What we will achieve next - Our Delivery Plan

# Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan 2021/2026

A delivery plan supports this strategy and is monitored by the Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Strategy Manager & Commissioner. It will be refreshed annually and will provide partners with a framework through which to undertake actions, in partnership, to address domestic abuse. The delivery plan will be a priority for the Domestic Abuse Operational Group and reports into the Bexley Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board and across statutory boards annually.

Our Delivery Plan for 2021/2026 is currently being developed – a draft overview is as follows: When completed, it will form a stand-alone, annual document.

## Bexley Delivery Plan

### Overarching Theme A: Prevention & Early Help

Communities recognise and do not tolerate domestic abuse. They know how to support victims, children and perpetrators appropriately

**Part 1: Victims, children and perpetrators are identified early and referred appropriately by a wide range of frontline practitioners and partner agencies**

- Increased referrals for support from public/ voluntary sector
- Improved advice and guidance is available at an earlier stage to victims, children and perpetrators
- Champions network includes members from identified organisations
- Communications and media campaigns are far-reaching using a combination of generic and targeted campaigns as appropriate.
- Victims, children and perpetrators feel better supported
- Commissioned service evaluated to ensure correct support and continued service improvement
- Services meet the needs of the majority of victims and children of domestic abuse
- A reduction in number of children subject to CiN or CP due to domestic abuse
- Victims are supported to recover, build resilience and not tolerate domestic abuse in the future
- Appropriate use of stepdown and rehabilitation services

**Part 2: Young people understand the dynamics of healthy relationships and do not tolerate abuse**

- Increased information shared
- Feedback from schools
- Increase in reporting from young people
- Increase in referrals from schools and higher education settings into commissioned provider and MARAC

Year 1	Lead	Key Date
Ongoing communications including regular campaigns and an Annual Partnership Conference.	Deborah Simpson, Solace and LBB Comms Team.	By March 2022
Quarterly monitoring of Solace and updates to Operational and Strategic Boards	Deborah Simpson, Solace and LBB Comms Team. Commissioning Board in 2022 (Tollgate 4)	Ongoing
Campaign around coercive control tied in with national campaign using a multitude of avenues such as social media, posters, conferences and the introduction of a QR code to gain further knowledge and direct support for victims	DA Operational Group	November 2021
Using partner channels to echo national campaign. Anything additional would require external funding	DA Operational Group	Ongoing
Agencies to ensure they have DA Champions who are trained in DASH.	Domestic Abuse Operational & Strategic Board	February, March, April 2021 On going programme
Health Practitioners are trained to use routine enquiry to identify victims of Domestic Abuse.	Deborah Simpson, DA Health Sub Group.	October 2021
DAY Programme for healthy relationships embedded into borough	Deborah Simpson & Shield	October 2021
Continued awareness raising and development of the routine 'safe' enquiry model for all Bexley practitioners.	Domestic Abuse Operational Group	December 2021
All partners have professional trained in Level 3 Domestic Abuse Dynamics including DASH risk assessment to ensure that every agency is responding to domestic abuse.	DA Strategic Partnership Board	December 2021

## Overarching Theme B: Partnership

We bring together professionals from health, housing, community safety, children's and adults' social care, education, police, probation, substance misuse and other agencies to achieve shared goals and outcomes.

**Part 1: Organisations understand their role and responsibilities in identifying and responding to domestic abuse**

- A robust partnership structure is in place which is accountable and effectively delivers against identified priorities and objectives
- Access hubs (eg safeguarding adults, MARAC, children's services) evidence an increase in appropriate reporting
- Enhanced understanding of domestic abuse as a 'whole family' issue among partner agencies
- Improved and effective information sharing is taking place
- Multi agency training is in place for agencies to gain further understanding around the dynamics of domestic abuse
- LBB Housing together with housing providers will be encouraged to be accredited with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) to ensure a consistency approach to victims of domestic abuse in line with the statutory duty.

**Part 2: Professionals build relationships across agency boundaries, have a common understanding of domestic abuse, access the information they need and share and act on it appropriately**

- Access/ referral rates for medium risk services
- Clear and transparent pathways exist between all relevant services
- A multi-agency Information Sharing Protocol is in place that is fully supported and employed by agencies

**Part 3: Agencies work in partnership to respond to the needs of the local population and have the right resources available to do so**

- Comprehensive service user consultation in place and in use to inform service planning
- Increased use of existing services
- Service user feedback included as part of continuous improvement
- Continuous monitoring and reporting of agencies missing from relevant boards (MARAC)

Year 1	Lead	Key Date
Domestic abuse training programme is in place and regularly shared within the partnership	Domestic abuse operational group alongside Deborah Simpson (trainer) Shield (admin)	March 2021
Further offer of specialist so called honour based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation training is developed alongside our pan London partners	Domestic abuse operational group, IKWRO and FORWARD	February 2021 and on going
Ensuring partnership is aware of domestic abuse pathways in relation to Solace and MARAC	Domestic abuse operation group	on going
Encourage LBB Housing and housing providers are supported to become accredited with the DAHA	Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board	September 2021

Domestic Abuse Operational Group to ensure that organisations such as faith leaders, disability, LGBT+ are represented.	Domestic Abuse Operational Group	September 2021
Arrange a further meeting with faith organisations to develop our understanding and need for supporting those residents from ethnic minorities	Domestic Abuse Operational Group	December 2021

## Overarching Theme C: Provision

We ensure the services provided by a wide range of agencies for victims, perpetrators and children deliver the appropriate outcomes and that the response is sufficient and provided in a timely manner.

Part 1: Victims and children have access to quality, dedicated and appropriate services (from universal to specialist) which respond to risk and address their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Commissioning plans in place to address unmet service needs</li> <li>● Appropriate referrals are being made to services</li> <li>● Our services are accessible and appropriate for people with protected characteristics</li> <li>● Ongoing review of current pathway identifies success – feedback from users</li> </ul>
Part 2: Perpetrators have access to appropriate services which respond to risk and address their behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Services in place which meet identified needs</li> <li>● Clarity of service provision and available interventions</li> <li>● Effective pathways are in place including with CJS interventions</li> <li>● Feedback from users and their partners/ ex-partners evidences positive impact on behaviour change</li> <li>● Support opportunities are available to partners/ex-partners of perpetrators</li> </ul>

Year 1	Lead	Key Date
Domestic abuse audits are in place to identify best practice and areas of recommendation	Domestic abuse operational group, Deborah Simpson, MARAC & Shield	April 2021
Quarterly Contract management identifies inappropriate referrals with feedback to source referral	Domestic abuse operational group and Solace	March 2021
Identify opportunities for a perpetrator programme for Bexley with victim support and identify external funding opportunities	Deborah Simpson and Solace	April 2021
A new perpetrator programme and 1:1 support programme will start in October 2021	Deborah Simpson and Solace	October 2021

## Overarching Theme D: Protection

We respond to risk, protecting vulnerable victims and families affected by domestic abuse.

**Part 1: Perpetrators are held accountable and supported to change their behaviour**

- We work closely with criminal justice agencies to secure successful prosecutions
- Frontline workers have increased understanding of coercive behaviours of perpetrators
- 'Whole family' approach can be demonstrated and evidenced across a range of services
- Services are being accessed and referred to appropriately
- Feedback from users and their partners/ex-partners evidences positive impact on behaviour change

**Part 2: Victims are made safer to reduce and stop repeat abuse.**

- Victims report feeling safer
- Victims experience less severe and repeated abuse or a cessation in abusive behaviours
- A range of safety options and measures are available to victims
- Feedback in experience of services

**Part 3: Victims are supported in options for criminal proceedings against perpetrators and are fully supported through the criminal justice process**

- Improved victim experience of the CJS
- Increasing applications to Courts for non-molestation orders, restraining orders etc
- Increase in positive outcomes at Court
- Appropriate and consistent use of Special Measures where

**Year 1**

**Lead**

**Key Date**

**Work with MPS to identify best practice in increasing referrals to Solace for medium risk victims**

MPS, Deborah Simpson, Solace

April 2021

**Survivors report increase of safety and are offered security to feel safe**

Domestic abuse operational group and Solace

May 2021

**Record and monitor the increase in accessing CJS in relation to protections orders pan London**

Domestic abuse operational group

May 2021

**LBB to ensure that GLA are prioritising the need for sanctuary schemes within the safe accommodation duty for pan London.**

Domestic abuse strategic partnership board

November 2021

## Overarching Theme E: Progression

We improve our response, benefit from innovation and learn from experience to continue to improve outcomes for victims, perpetrators and children and reduce the incidence of abuse

**Part 1: Effective monitoring, reporting, lessons learned and scrutiny to be in place**

- Dashboard is implemented and in frequent use
- Effective governance structure in place which challenges and holds commissioners and partners to account
- The Champions network is in place with members from a wide range of partner agencies
- The Champions are effectively engaging in the network and the opportunities this offers
- Increase in appropriate referrals
- Referrals are made in a timely manner and to the right service

**Part 2: Outcomes for victims, children and perpetrators improve over time as a result of a suite of quality services.**

- New services are commissioned according to identified need
- Increased use of existing services
- Service user feedback evidences positive outcomes
- Continuous improvement is applied to all commissioned services
- Effective and robust contract management is in place for all commissioned services
- Opportunities explored for additional grants to bolster the core service

Year 1	Lead	Key Date
Partners to provide quarterly data to the operational board to provide a wider picture of domestic abuse in Bexley, to include domestic abuse protection orders, domestic abuse disclosure scheme, health data, MARAC, Solace. This will also include protected characteristics to ensure we are supporting a diverse range of victims.	Domestic abuse operational group	May 2021
Identified in the Needs Assessment 2021: Review data collection systems, processes, and practices to improve data quality, ensuring Equality data is being accurately collected and recorded (Public Sector Equality Duty, s149 EA2010) and is in line with GSS guidance on data harmonisation.	DA Strategic Partnership Board	December 2021
To identify opportunities for external funding	Deborah Simpson and Solace	On going
Our Delivery Plan to support the DA Strategy will be published on an annual basis on the LBB website	DA Operational group	Yearly

## 18. How we will measure effectiveness?

The outcome for all services and partnerships is for local residents and communities to be free from domestic abuse by:

- ▶ increasing survivor safety
- ▶ holding perpetrators to account
- ▶ decreasing social tolerance and acceptance
- ▶ increasing people' ability to have safe, equal, abuse-free relationships
- ▶ Completing a yearly needs assessment to ensure that we are delivering the appropriate services for our residents and to identify any gaps in service delivery

## REFERENCES

[https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help?gclid=EAlalQobChMlx9e50bGv7QIVzd\\_tCh0oaALZEAAYASAAEgLJv\\_D\\_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help?gclid=EAlalQobChMlx9e50bGv7QIVzd_tCh0oaALZEAAYASAAEgLJv_D_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets>

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<https://www.bexley.gov.uk/services/health-and-social-care/bexleys-public-health-strategies/our-plans>

[Source: The economic and social costs of domestic abuse research report 107 Rhys Oliver, Barnaby Alexander, Stephen Roe and Miriam Wlasny January 2019](#)

<https://www.standingtogether.org.uk/pathfinder>

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<https://safelives.org.uk/one-front-door>

<https://safelives.org.uk/practice-support/resources-marac-meetings>

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

DA	domestic abuse
IDVA	independent domestic abuse advisors
MARAC	multi agency risk assessment conference
MAPPA	multi agency public protection arrangements
VAWG	violence against women and girls
LGBTQ	lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans & questioning
BAME	Black, Asian & minority ethnic
MOPAC	Mayor of London Policing and Crime
MASH	multi agency safeguarding hub
BDAP	Bexley domestic abuse partnership board
CSP	community safety partnership
CCG	clinical commissioning group
DHR	domestic homicide review
CCR	co-ordinated community response
Victim	the person who is experiencing abuse, regardless of gender
Perpetrator	the person who is abusing, regardless of gender

# APPENDIX A

## Bexley Governance Structure





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