

Bexley Domestic Abuse Partnership Domestic Abuse Strategy

2021-2026

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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

1. Foreword

Councillor Alex Sawyer
Cabinet Member for Communities

Domestic abuse remains a priority for London Borough of Bexley and this strategy will commit us to working together to seek to prevent and address all forms of domestic abuse and sexual violence. It also gives a clear direction of how all our partners can work most collaboratively to reduce the devastating impact of domestic abuse on victims, their families and communities.

We want victims to be more confident to seek support and advice earlier and by ensuring that 'domestic abuse is everyone's business' we will aim to more effectively offer support to some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. We believe that no one should have to live in fear of violence or abuse, no one should think it is acceptable to perpetrate violence against anyone, and no child should grow up in a home where violence or abuse is an everyday occurrence.

List of senior partners involved in promoting and delivering strategy – with signatures. To include:

Cabinet Member

Chief Executive, London Borough of Bexley

Community Safety Partnership

Shield Board

Adults' safeguarding Board

Health and Well-Being Board

Senior police lead

National Probation service

CRC

CCG

Domestic Abuse commissioned service (Solace)

Bexley Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021 - 2026

What is domestic abuse?

The Home Office definition of domestic abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

psychological – physical – sexual – financial - emotional

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. **Controlling behaviour** is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and / or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

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 commitment

Alongside our commissioned specialist service provider, Solace, and together with our partners agencies we will:

- Put victims and families 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 safeguard individuals at every opportunity
- Raise awareness of the issue of domestic abuse and involve, engage and empower communities to understand and challenge domestic abuse
- Improving joint working between agencies, including information sharing, to enable a co-ordinated community approach to addressing domestic abuse
- Provide on-going accessible training
- Develop a Bexley Coordinated Community Response

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 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.

2. Introduction to the Bexley Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021 – 2026

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 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.

THE PURPOSE OF A STRATEGY

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:

- Develop a common shared statement for all partners in Bexley
- To 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:

- To make domestic abuse 'everybody's business'
- Strategic partners to have a clear understanding of our agreed priorities and recommendations for the next four years and to embed these within their own organisations / agencies strategic plans
- Bexley residents to feel able to contribute towards making Bexley a safer place
- victims, children and families to feel supported and able to seek high quality and timely support at the earliest possible stage
- perpetrators to know that their behaviour will not be tolerated.
- 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.

5. What is domestic abuse?

The Home Office definition of domestic abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

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

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

Domestic abuse also includes **controlling behaviour** and **coercive behaviour**:

- **Controlling behaviour** is defined as a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and / or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
- **Coercive behaviour** is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

The definition includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

Domestic Abuse Bill 2020

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 by introducing a new and landmark Bill. 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:

- 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 Bill has been through Parliament in 2020 and is waiting a date to be passed through the House of Lords before receiving Royal Assent and will be created in the spring 2021.

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

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy 2018-2021

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 co-ordinated 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

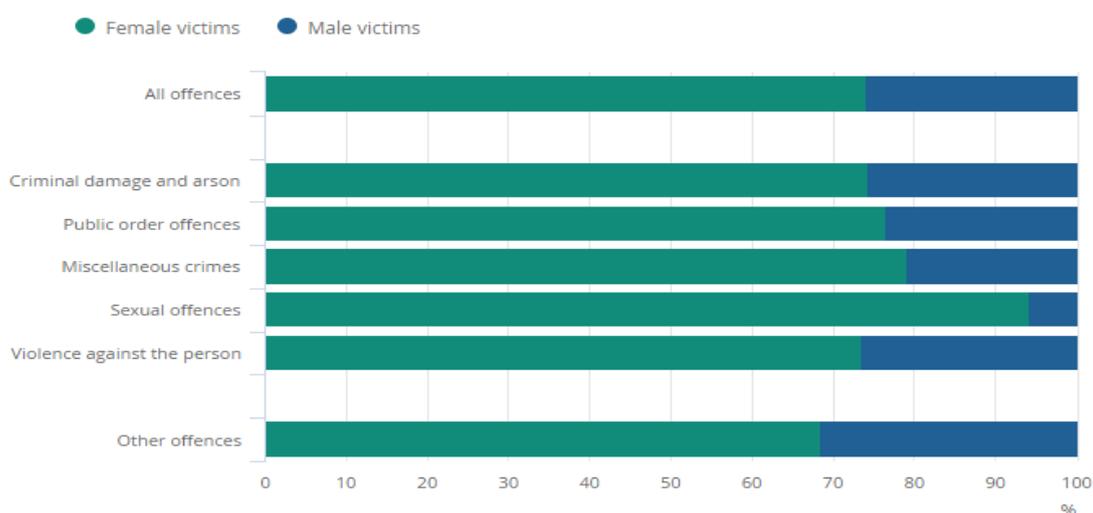
Protection and prosecution: taking action to reduce the risk to victims of these crimes and ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable, brought to justice and provided with opportunities for change in a way that maximises safety.

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

6. 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.

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):-

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*

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.

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

7. 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 these 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.

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.

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 Commissioning Manager 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'

Bexley's Domestic Abuse Partnership Board

Bexley's Domestic Abuse Operational & Strategic Partnership (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 and has strategic oversight of multi-agency responses to domestic abuse within Bexley.

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>

Domestic homicide / Serious Case Reviews – Multi Agency Learning Forum

All agencies will ensure they participate in the Domestic Homicide Review process, and it will also ensure that learning from this, Serious Case Reviews and Safeguarding Practice Reviews are proactively shared with the wider workforce. We will work together involving community-based support, social hubs and community leaders, to engage people across diverse and minority groups. We will work together to gather accurate and consistent data on areas such as commissioning, provision and data gaps. This information-sharing will work to strengthen considerations around under-reporting and ensuring we learn lessons and draw out the right narratives from the evidence provided.

In 2020 a **Multi Agency Learning Forum** was created to ensure that statutory reviews are linked together and to ensure that lessons learnt from reviews are shared. This provision will also ensure a greater joint up approach for Shield Children’s Partnership Board, Safeguarding Adults Board and The Community Safety Partnership.

Agencies, staff and volunteers will have a strong understanding of appropriate responses and pathways including referrals. Agencies will ensure that they are aware of the links to each different area of support or business such as Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), Adult Safeguarding and the Care Act, Children’s Safeguarding, Integrated Offender Management (IOM), Local Criminal Justice Board, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and other partnership bodies so that they can work cohesively. We will work together to pursue and access funding opportunities, working together to identify needs and gaps within services.

Our Aims

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

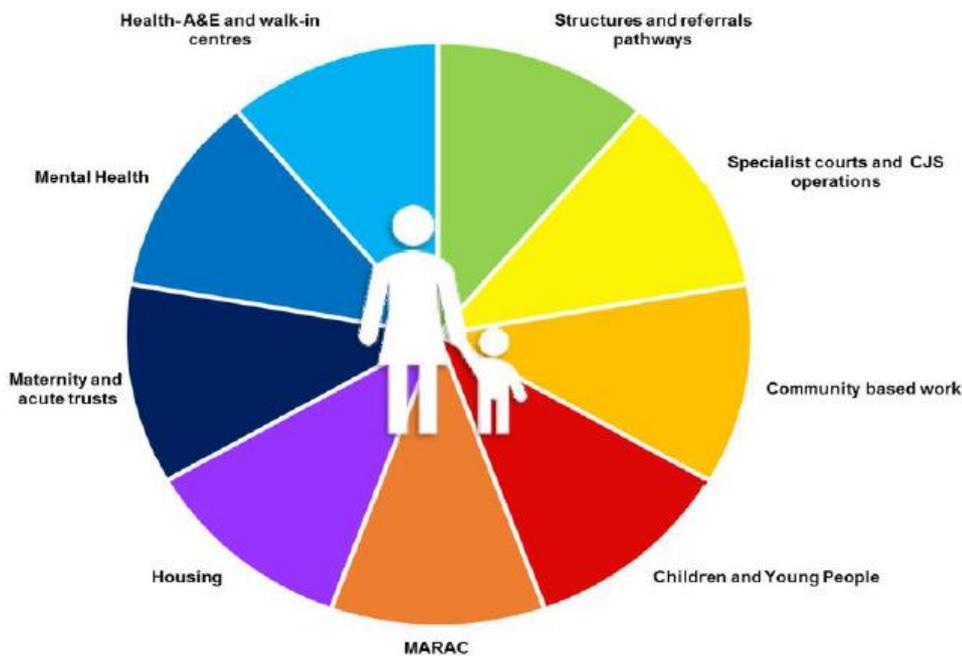
- be locally led and safeguarding individuals at every opportunity
- raise local awareness of the issue of domestic abuse and involve, engage and empower communities to understand domestic abuse
- improve joint working between agencies, including information sharing, to enable a co-ordinated approach 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.

As the graphic below 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.



6

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/>

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 150 professionals across the statutory and voluntary sector. We aim to develop this network and increase the capacity of all our partner 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."

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 violence and 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 violence and abuse.

Domestic violence and 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 violence and 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 violence and 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 violence and 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 violence and 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 violence and 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 violence and abuse. This is for specialists in domestic violence and abuse. For example, social workers, domestic violence advocates or support workers, independent domestic violence advisers or independent sexual violence advisers, refuge staff, domestic violence and abuse and sexual violence counsellors and therapists, and children's workers.

Other training to raise awareness of, and address misconceptions about, domestic violence and 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

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

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.

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

[Domestic Homicide Review Toolkit \(bexley.gov.uk\)](https://www.bexley.gov.uk/domestic-homicide-review-toolkit)

14. 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
- 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 and restructured and now meets twice a month due to increasing numbers of high risk referrals.
- 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
- 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.

13. What we will achieve next - Our Delivery Plan

A delivery plan supports this strategy. 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 provide reports into the Bexley Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board and across statutory boards annually

Our Delivery Plan for 2020/2024 is currently being developed – a draft overview is as follows: When completed, it will form a stand-alone, annual document.

BEXLEY DELIVERY PLAN

Outcomes by 2024	Success will mean that in 2024 we will have seen:	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.	Debee Simpson, Solace and LBB Comms Team.	By March 2022
Quarterly monitoring of Solace and updates to Proactis.	Debee Simpson, Solace and LBB Comms Team. Commissioning Board in 2022 (Tollgate 4)	Ongoing
Campaign around coercive control tied in with national campaign.	Using partner channels to echo national campaign. Anything additional would require external funding.	November 2021
Agencies to ensure they have DA Champions who are trained in DASH.	Domestic Abuse Operational Group	Ongoing
Health Practitioners are trained to use routine enquiry to identify victims of Domestic Abuse.	Domestic Abuse Operational Group	February, March, April 2021 On going programme

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Debee 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
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"> • Commissioning plans in place to address unmet service needs • Appropriate referrals are being made to services • Our services are accessible and appropriate for people with protected characteristics • Ongoing review of current pathway identifies success – feedback from users 	
Part 2: Perpetrators have access to appropriate services which respond to risk and address their behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services in place which meet identified needs • Clarity of service provision and available interventions • Effective pathways are in place including with CJS interventions • Feedback from users and their partners/ ex-partners evidences positive impact on behaviour change • Support opportunities are available to partners/ex-partners of perpetrators 	
Year 1	Lead	Key Date
Domestic abuse audits are in placed to identify best practice and areas of recommendation Quarterly Contract management identifies inappropriate referrals with feedback to source referral Identify opportunities for a perpetrator programme for Bexley with victim support and identify external funding opportunities	Domestic abuse operational group, Debee Simpson, MARAC & Shield Domestic abuse operational group and Solace Debee Simpson and Solace	April 2021 March 2021 April 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved victim experience of the CJS 	

against perpetrators and are fully supported through the criminal justice process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
<p>Work with MPS to identify best practice in increasing referrals to Solace for medium risk victims</p> <p>Survivors report increase of safety and are offered security to feel safe</p> <p>Record and monitor the increase in accessing CJS in relation to protection orders</p>	<p>MPS, Debee Simpson, Solace</p> <p>Domestic abuse operational group and Solace</p> <p>Domestic abuse operational group</p>	<p>April 2021</p> <p>May 2021</p> <p>May 2021</p>
<p>Overarching Theme E: Progression</p> <p>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</p>		
Part 1: Effective monitoring, reporting, lessons learned and scrutiny to be in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dashboard is implemented and in frequent use • Effective governance structure in place which challenges and holds commissioners 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
<p>Partners are providing quarterly data to the operational board to provide a wider picture of domestic abuse in Bexley, to include domestic abuse protection orders (DAPO), domestic abuse disclosure scheme, health data, MARAC, Solace</p> <p>To identify opportunities for external funding</p>	<p>Domestic abuse operational group</p> <p>Debee Simpson and Solace</p>	<p>May 2021</p> <p>On going</p>

How we will measure effectiveness?

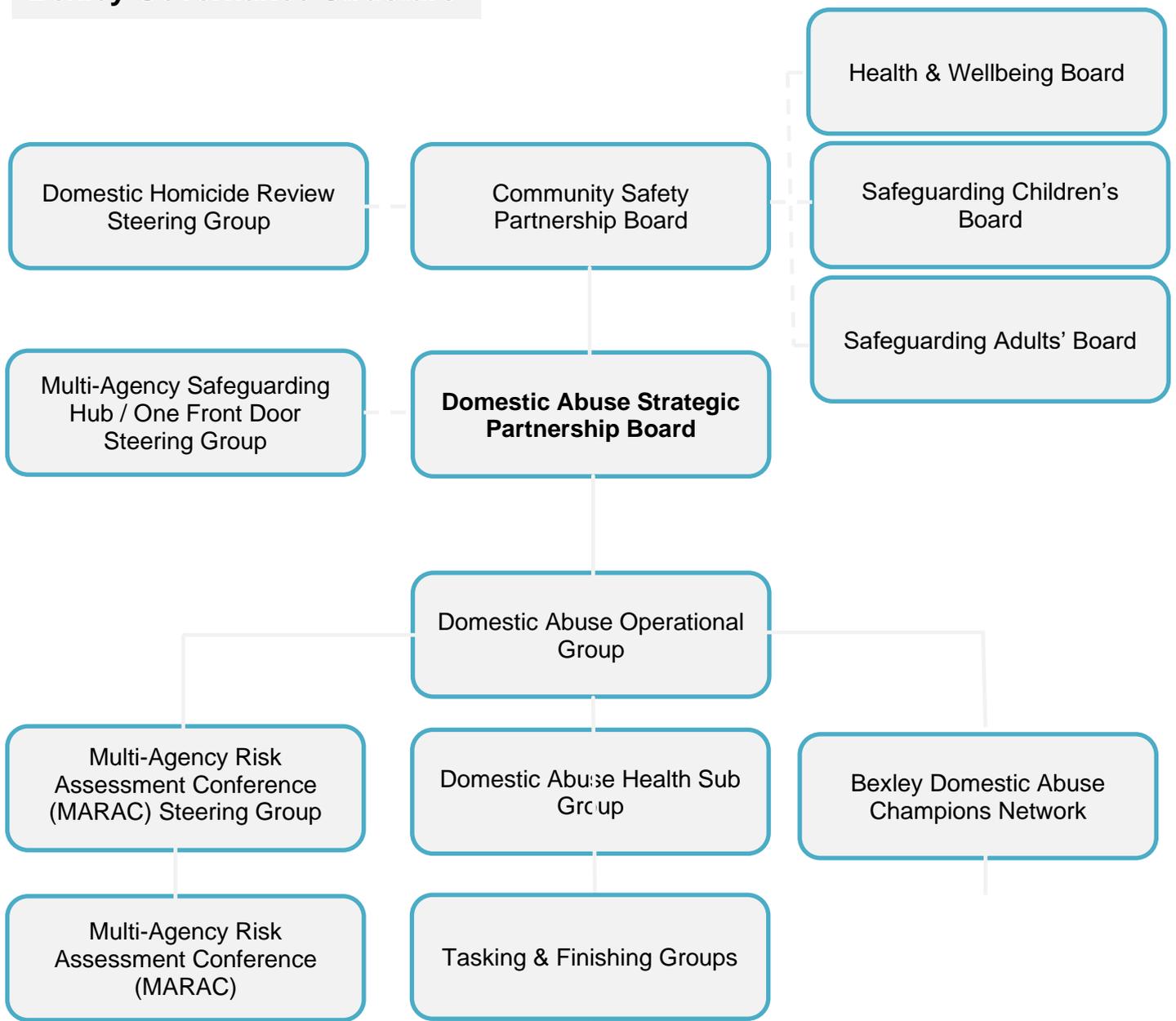
The outcome for all services and partnerships is for local residents and communities to be free from domestic abuse by:

- increasing survivor safety
- holding perpetrators to account
- decreasing social tolerance and acceptance
- increasing people' ability to have safe, equal, abuse-free relationships

APPENDIX A

Governance Structure for domestic abuse in Bexley

Bexley Governance Structure



REFERENCES

[https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIx9e50bGv7QIVzd_tCh0oaALZEAYASAAEgLJv_D_BwE&gclid=aw.ds)

[help?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIx9e50bGv7QIVzd_tCh0oaALZEAYASAAEgLJv_D_BwE&gclid=aw.ds](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIx9e50bGv7QIVzd_tCh0oaALZEAYASAAEgLJv_D_BwE&gclid=aw.ds)

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