



Draft Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021- 2024

Taking a zero tolerance approach to domestic abuse - there's no excuse

Draft for discussions v1 10.9.21

Working together to
develop and improve
domestic abuse
services in
Buckinghamshire

Foreword 2

Being evidence based

- Survivors, children’s and professionals voices 3
- What the data tells us - the national context 4
- What the data tells us - the local context 5
- Emerging needs (needs assessment 2021) 6

Our Strategic Priorities

- Key priorities at a glance 8
- Strategic priorities and key commitments 9

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

- Accountability and governance - The Domestic Abuse Board 13

What's next?

- What success looks like 14
- Warmly welcomed by Buckinghamshire Partnership Chairs 15
- Contact details 16

If you are a victim of domestic abuse it is not your fault. You are not to blame and you are not alone. Help is available

In an emergency, always call 999

If you can’t speak, call 999 and **press 55**; please **stay on the line**, listen to the call handler and answer questions, either by pushing buttons or coughing; the call handler will do everything they can to determine your location so they can deploy officers to you; if you can say one thing, please say your address

If it’s a non-emergency, you can call 101 or [make a report online on the website](#)

If you don’t want to speak to the police, the [National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) is free and open 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247

Foreword

One in 20 adults are estimated to experience domestic abuse every year equating to almost 21,000 people a year in Buckinghamshire or 57 people every day. It is crime which disproportionately affects women, however it can happen to anyone anywhere irrespective of sexuality, religion, gender, ethnicity, income or age.

Often hidden from view, at home and out of sight, the impact of domestic abuse is far-reaching and long lasting, causing a ripple effect into all parts of a person's life. It can be devastating on physical and mental health with serious consequences for children witnessing domestic abuse. The pandemic has had an immeasurable impact with it being branded as an "epidemic beneath the pandemic".

In Buckinghamshire we are taking a zero tolerance approach and feel **ending domestic abuse is everyone's business**. Making people feel safe requires a thorough co-ordinated response from government, local authorities, partners and the public. Everyone's situation is different, and a one-size-fits-all approach does not work but if we can talk about it, we can start to make the change.

Understanding what domestic abuse is and how it impacts on individuals, families and communities, is crucial to ensuring that high-quality and cost-effective services are delivered.

We have a strong collaborative ethos across Buckinghamshire with many excellent statutory and voluntary sector services working well together, but we know we can do more. The Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Board, as part of Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership, is looking to strengthen and coordinate our responses across our services.

Recognising the high level of unreported abuse taking place and that people in different circumstances are impacted by domestic abuse in different ways, it is important that we work together. We need to strengthen our collective knowledge of unreported abuse and ensure services are accessible as early as possible and can meet individual needs.

We were pleased to see the Domestic Abuse Act received Royal Assent on the 29th April 2021; this gives more resources to tackle this critical issue. With the new duties we are now publishing our intentions to drive forward a three year strategy for victim support and safe accommodation. The Act and the introduction of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner is important to help raise awareness and ensure the advocacy continues.

We want Buckinghamshire to be a place where as few people as possible are affected by domestic abuse, but those who are can get help to end the abuse and go on to live the lives they want.

This strategy is about how we want to develop and improve domestic abuse services over the next 3 years. Underpinned by a SMART action plan, this document sets out our commitments which have been informed by a review of the effectiveness of current practice, the changing national context alongside qualitative and quantitative data from a range of contributors.

A key element is the voice of survivors, children and young people and professionals. Every voice counts and it is important we continue to listen, respond to feedback in order to make real progress.

None of us can do this alone, our partnership is vital. It is only by working together that we can hope to develop our understanding, approach and provision in such a way that we increase the safety and life chances of everyone in Buckinghamshire.



Cabinet Member
Communities
Steve Bowles



Deputy Cabinet Member
Community Safety
Arif Hussain



Cabinet Member Education
and Children's Services
Anita Cranmer



Deputy Leader,
Cabinet Member Health
and Wellbeing
Angela Macpherson

This strategy has been informed by listening to the voices of survivors of domestic abuse, children and young people as well as professionals.

Survivors voices:

- Accessible information about services (languages and formats)
- Targeted communications
- Effective signposting
- Simplified referral pathways for the whole family
- Refuges that meet specific cultural needs
- Increased support in finding safe alternative accommodation

Children and young people identified they need:

- To be safe and feel safe
- To feel heard
- Range of tailored support
- Peer support - For children to be able to talk to others their age who are going through the same thing

Professionals voices:

- Increase in therapeutic services
- Tailored services
- A “one stop shop”
- Wider promotion of what is available
- Development of pathways and rapid response services
- Regular training for frontline staff
- Support to recognise an abusive relationship
- Safe space to disclose
- Improved offer of housing solutions
- Post abuse support
- Accessible perpetrator programmes that bring meaningful change

Particular thanks go to:

- Thames Valley Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) Project for focus group discussions
- Children's services colleagues for support on hearing children and young people's voices
- Sue Moulder and Heather Darker for interview 76 professionals including health, police, probation, education, adult and children's social care and housing
- Dr Jane O'Grady Buckinghamshire Council's Director of Public Health for her Annual Report 2021 and recommendations along with Public Health team for the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)
- Business Insight and Intelligence team for supporting refresh of the needs assessment
- All members of the Shadow Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Board for their insight and ideas in shaping our work towards the new duties

National context

Domestic abuse includes different forms of abuse and may not include physical violence. Other forms include sexual, psychological, economic abuse and coercive control. Each form is committed against someone to exert power and control over them. It can be committed by a current or former partner or family member.

- On average, 2 women per week are killed in England and Wales (ONS 2019)
- 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men experience domestic abuse in their lifetime

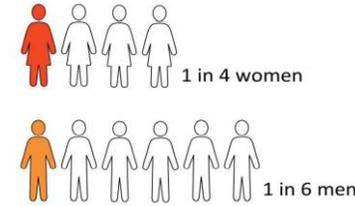
Domestic abuse is often a 'hidden' issue which presents challenges to understanding the full extent of the issue. It is widespread and chronically under-reported. Although statistics are helpful in giving an indication of how far reaching domestic abuse is, reported statistics will be much lower than actual abuse levels, and estimates may mask under-reporting within groups across populations.

Although the Office for National Statistics (ONS) recorded that only 1 in 5 incidents of domestic abuse were reported to the police in 2017, there were still 4240 women and 1778 men who reported incidents to the police in the period 1.4.2020 to 31.3.2021.

To try and understand the full extent of domestic abuse, the ONS conducts a Crime Survey which covers many crimes that are not reported to the police. Domestic abuse measured by the crime survey combines non-sexual abuse, sexual abuse and stalking where it is carried out by a partner (including a former partner) and / or a family member.

Understanding the prevalence and recognising the devastation domestic abuse can cause on both an individual, their family and for the economy, the government have responded with publishing a new Domestic Abuse Bill and appointing a Domestic Abuse Commissioner.

Other legislation includes [Clare's Law](#) is the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme. This is named after Clare Wood, who was murdered in 2009 by her ex-boyfriend who had a history of violence against women. The scheme gives members of the public a formal mechanism to make enquires about the information the police hold on a person in relation to domestic abuse offences and convictions.



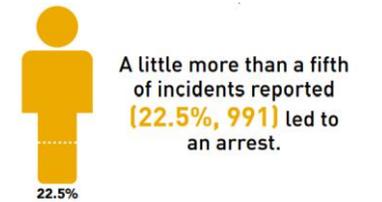
Thames Valley Police recorded

10,635 incidents

of domestic abuse

from April 2020 to March 2021 in Buckinghamshire

In almost **50%** of domestic abuse crimes the perpetrator was an ex-partner



 Broken Rainbow (UK) National LGBT Domestic Violence Service state Domestic Abuse affects up to 80% trans people

1 in 7 disabled people experienced domestic abuse in last 12 months (ONS) compared with 1 in 20 non-disabled people

Local context

Domestic abuse is prevalent in all communities and all areas of our county, approximately **21,000 adults in Buckinghamshire will experience domestic abuse each year. or 57 people every day.**

Police data for Buckinghamshire in 2020 to 2021 showed that around 6,132 victims of abuse were recorded. This reflects a known pattern of under-reporting. In this period there were over 10,500 occurrences relating to domestic abuse, 5047 of which recorded children bring present.

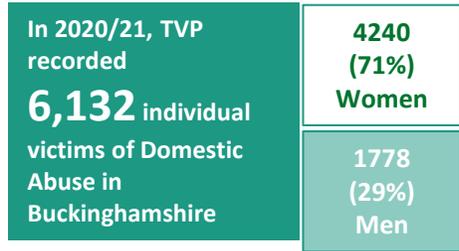
There are more female victims (71%) than male (29%) with over half (56%) aged between 18 and 40 years of age. Domestic abuse can sometimes, extremely tragically, end in death, between 2011 and 2020, there were 15 domestic homicides in Buckinghamshire and 39 across the Thames Valley area.

It is estimated that the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT+) community may experience partner abuse 1.6 times more frequently than the general population.

In Buckinghamshire it is estimated that 21,800 children and young people may be living with a perpetrator of domestic abuse. There were 2443 referrals to Children’s Social Care with Domestic Abuse as a factor and 1446 Early Help Family Support referrals. Whilst the above data example does not reflect actual numbers of children and young people impacted, it illustrates a significant shortfall in specialist support provision currently available for children and young people outside of Refuge accommodation

It is vital that we understand more about perpetrators if we are to understand how to prevent abuse and change their behaviour. In Buckinghamshire between 2020-21 there were 3,212 domestic abuse perpetrators. This is a 13% increase (2,839) on the same period the previous year. 72% of perpetrators of known gender were male. 64% of perpetrators of known age were 40 years old or under. Perpetrators can be children as well as adults. Research and local professionals tell us that teen-to-parent and teen-to-teen domestic abuse occurs locally.

We recognise that every single person is a unique individual with their own needs and that many people face intersectionality's of multiple needs, issues and barriers to accessing support.



Some victim records do not have a gender recorded

In 2020/21 **69** women and **89** children lived in **refuge** in Buckinghamshire. In 2019/20 there were 278 referrals, 96 referrals were accommodated including **255 children**



5047 DVA flagged incidents recorded as involving children in Buckinghamshire 2020/21



531 new referrals to Women’s Aid **1079** clients received IDVA safety planning support in 2020/21

1 DHR completed during 2020/21
15 DHRs since 2011 in Buckinghamshire



25% repeat perpetrator rate in Buckinghamshire in 2020/21



87 Clare’s Law applications in Buckinghamshire 2020/21

1496 Early Help Family Support referrals Buckinghamshire 2020/21, related to domestic abuse

Emerging needs

Buckinghamshire has a history of collaboration across all its sectors with a range of services and responses in place to support victims, their children and reduce harm. We have a strong foundation to build on.

This strategy takes evidence from:

- a refreshed needs assessment
- the recommendations within Director of Public Health annual report
- lessons learnt from over 15 domestic homicide reviews
- Feedback from engagement sessions
- National and local data
- Best practice examples

We have identified several emerging needs in Buckinghamshire

- Overly complicated referral pathways
- Inconsistency or misdirection of referrals
- A lack of appropriate provision for LGBTQ+ people, male victims and people from non-white British cultures
- Need for accessible and effective perpetrator programmes
- Capacity of safe accommodation

Domestic abuse is multifaceted and will require a multidimensional approach to tackle it. Addressing these gaps will be of particular focus within our action plans. We also need to consider the complexity of domestic abuse, understanding our approaches to violence against women and girls, the different types of abuse including coercive control, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and so-called honour based violence.

The Domestic Abuse Bill was signed into law on 29 April 2021 and is set to provide further protections to the millions of people who experience domestic abuse, as well as strengthen measures to tackle perpetrators. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government secured £125 million to cover the cost of new duties placed upon local authorities.

Buckinghamshire has received £850,000 from the government for specific elements of the statutory duties, this along with the Police and Crime Commissioner's commitment, provides an opportunity to accelerate our domestic abuse work. It enables us to reset of our work plans and commissioning activity to focus on new innovated collaboration which puts us as best in class.

Listening to the barriers

"Being passed from agency to agency, having to retell my story again and again, it was so frustrating I almost gave up."

"I kept thinking something really bad had to happen before anyone would help."

"I didn't think I would be believed"

"I thought I was alone and just blamed myself"

"I felt I was trapped because of finances and there was no way I could living independently"

"Because you don't know what support is available you don't know how to ask for it"

Who is at greater risk of suffering domestic abuse?

Domestic Abuse can happen to anyone, anywhere, any time but we also know that some people are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse. Tools such as the DASH risk checklist (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour Based Violence) help trained health and social care professionals and the Police to assess the risk level of domestic abuse victims.

The checklist identifies vulnerabilities such as mental ill health, financial dependency and disability. High and medium risk victims receive support from independent domestic violence advisors (IDVA), and may be referred to a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC).

Disability

Around 14% disabled adults experienced domestic abuse, compared with 5% adults without disabilities in 2018 to 2019. Disabled men are twice as likely to experience domestic abuse compared to non-disabled men. Disabled women are more than twice as likely compared to non-disabled women (17% and 7%). National and local data suggest that either disability is not recorded by services, or that disabled victims are not accessing them.

Learning disability

National data suggest that 1 in 5 (19%) people with a learning disability experienced any domestic abuse in the last year (2019 to 2020).

Mental ill health

Domestic abuse and mental ill-health are commonly associated. Research suggests that women with mental health problems are 3 times more likely to experience domestic abuse, and women experiencing domestic abuse are 3 times more likely to develop mental health problems.

Older people

Older people are affected by domestic abuse. Police data for Buckinghamshire in 2019 to 2020 showed that 9% of victims of known age were 61 years or older. However this age group only made up 4.5% of IDVA service users in the same year. Older people may be more vulnerable to coercive control (including economic abuse) given their dependence on family and carers as they age. They may be unwilling or unable to disclose, recognise or leave abusive relationships due to age-related conditions such as dementia.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is not well recorded in relation to domestic abuse. Recent Police data shows that in Buckinghamshire, in 70% of cases the victim's ethnicity was not recorded. Domestic abuse is also commonly under-reported in ethnic minorities. Although domestic abuse is experienced by people from all ethnic origins, cultural values and norms can affect people's perceptions of and responses to domestic abuse. For people from some ethnic minority backgrounds, these may include fear (of not being believed, of being exposed, of the criminal justice system), victim-blaming culture, and failure to recognise abuse. Honour and shame are highly important concepts in certain cultures, and the consequences of dishonouring family or community by disclosing abuse are significant.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

There are limited data around domestic abuse in the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. However, as in other communities, community members and workers have noted domestic abuse as a serious and long-standing problem. The domestic abuse charity One Voice 4 Travellers estimated as many as 3 in 4 women from these communities experience domestic abuse at some point in their lives.

Sexual orientation and gender identity

National statistics do not report domestic abuse by sexual orientation or gender identity. However, studies suggest that between 25 and 40% of lesbian, gay and bisexual people report one or more domestic abuse incidents in their lifetime. This rises to between 28% and 80% for trans people.

An NSPCC survey in UK schools suggested that 44% of teenagers with same-sex partners had experienced some form of physical partner violence, increased from 20% for those in heterosexual relationships.

Domestic abuse victims with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or another definition of their gender and sexuality identity are known to present with higher levels of risk and complex needs compared to non-LGBT+ people, such as mental health problems, self-harm and drug and alcohol misuse. They also face unique issues such as being victim to threats of 'outing' about sexual orientation and gender identity; and 'identity abuse' which may include withholding of medication or clothing relating to their identity.

Strategy at a glance

In Buckinghamshire we take a zero tolerance approach.

Our overall aim is to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse. We want to make sure that the right help and support is available so that fewer victims and their children reach crisis point, and the harm caused is reduced or avoided altogether.

If we are to realise this vision, domestic abuse must become everyone's business. This strategy is a call to action for us all over the next three years to work together to make Buckinghamshire a safe place.

The purpose of this strategy is to set out our partnership approach to ending domestic abuse in Buckinghamshire. It has been developed, and its delivery will be overseen, by the Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Board. It is underpinned by a SMART action plan.

It proposes 4 priorities, whilst also recognising a strategy must be a living document, flexing to respond to new opportunities and challenges.

These priorities and their commitments are for all people irrespective of gender, sex, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion, recognising intersectionality of these characteristics. This will be reflected within our equalities impact assessments and our action plan.





1 Early Intervention and Prevention

Sadly, domestic abuse continues to be a crime that people do not feel they can report. Individuals and families may live with domestic abuse for a significant period of time before asking for help and suffer a number of incidents.

Together, we must change this. We must talk about domestic abuse and look out for our neighbours and communities to support victims and reduce the tolerance for behaviour that has lifelong impacts on health and wellbeing.

This priority focuses on prevention and enabling appropriate interventions as early as possible as well as proactively raising awareness and promoting services.

Commitments under this priority are:

- We will be **proactive in communications**
 - Deliver a programme of public-facing campaigns and culturally-relevant communications, which raise awareness of abuse in all its forms, how it is everyone business and educate on how to get support from local and national services. This will be driven by data to focus on specific locations and populations.
 - White ribbon seasonal campaigns, Ask Ani codeword schemes and heightened coverage around key sporting events. Information will be in a range of formats and languages. Use of digital platforms, community and universal settings to offer help or point to specialist services.
 - We want anyone affected by domestic abuse to know that it is ok to talk about it and where to access support - *we will listen, we will give you choices, we will support you to be in control.*
 - Enable friends, family and neighbours to be aware of what domestic abuse is and are confident to reach out to those experiencing it safely and know what services are available locally. Engaging audiences in bystander training.
- We want to **increase numbers of people disclosing** domestic abuse to services (including demographics we believe are most underrepresented). Professionals need to be aware of services available and referral pathways to support quicker access to help that is needed.
- Ensure a **wide range of support is available at the earliest opportunity which can be tailored to individual needs**. This will also include during and post abuse support offer to help rebuild lives through multi agency working. Learning from the innovative pilot in adult social care which sees a multi agency front door.
- **Working proactively with schools** as prevention starts with changing attitudes. We will develop a toolkit for primary and secondary schools and deliver targeted work with children from a young age in order to raise their awareness, understand healthy relationships and to not tolerate unhealthy behaviour.
- Develop a **comprehensive service map to maintain a clear overview of service provision**, to ensure that the development of provision meets changing needs within the community and that we are able to quickly identify any gaps.
- Survivors value peer support groups and programmes however they are not widely available. Empowering victims means **ensuring a range of support networks** are available for victims and children to access as part of their journey to move forward and recover from domestic abuse.
- Employers have a duty of care and a legal responsibility to provide a safe and effective work environment. Preventing and tackling domestic abuse is an integral part of this. **We will work with businesses to ensure that they have access employer toolkits** and information on how to support staff members who may disclose abuse. All partner organisations on the Domestic Abuse Board will be 'best in class' as an exemplar employer helping lead the way and ensuring upskilling all of the workforce.

2

Effective services that meet the needs of victims and their families

Domestic abuse has a devastating effect on families, children and our local communities. Recent government research shows that domestic abuse costs society £66 billion a year. We have a commitment to continue to work together, across all agencies and sectors to tackling domestic abuse.

This priority focuses on making sure services across Buckinghamshire are responsive and are meeting the individual needs of victims and their families.

Commitments under this priority are:

- All agencies will **review service provision** and support to survivors from those at greatest risk, focusing on understanding and reducing barriers to reporting, how best to reach and engage with minority groups and ensure that support meets need.
- The **commissioning** and provision of services will be informed by the views of those who have been affected by domestic abuse or are at significant risk of it.
- Through our community boards we will be vocal about the issue of domestic abuse. Give families, friends and colleagues the information and skills they need to support people when they are concerned about them, know where they can get specialist help if needed and feel supported to prevent harm. We welcome working with the community to **strengthen community enabling and community capacity** to support those who have experienced domestic abuse.
- **Take a 'whole family' approach** – families do not operate in silos so neither should we. Engaging with the whole family means more opportunity to make people safer sooner and creating long term changes not short term fixes. Where there are signs of abuse including adolescent to parent abuse, we want to ensure that families are supported to address this behaviour through access to programmes. Support programmes for pregnant or postpartum women.
- It was clear from speaking to survivors that recovery from abuse is a long and difficult journey, both emotionally and practically. We will continue to develop **longer term support** mechanisms using the voice of those affected to shape provision. Support services will also look at health, welfare and legal options for the whole family as well as being trauma informed.

- **Understand the needs of those who need access to safe accommodation** and ensure a wide range of safe accommodation options are available for victims, survivors and their children, both those within Buckinghamshire and whose original residence was located out of county.

MHCLG define Relevant and Safe Accommodation as:

- Refuge accommodation
 - Specialist safe accommodation for BAME, LGBTQ+, and disabled victims and their children
 - Dispersed Accommodation
 - Sanctuary Schemes
 - Move-on and second stage accommodation
 - Other forms of domestic abuse emergency accommodation
- Complete a **comprehensive needs analysis of housing** (refreshed at least every 3 years) which includes a focus on economic abuse and housing – where research has highlighted specific examples relating to mortgages and other debts secured to private owned property.
 - All Victims of domestic abuse will be prioritised as high risk. Using the **Whole Housing Approach** component parts explore which were currently available in Buckinghamshire and where there are gaps.
 - Collaboration with registered providers to help **facilitate urgent moves** within Buckinghamshire and out of area.

3

Tackling perpetrators to reduce reoffending

This priority focuses on minimising harm, making sure that services are accessible and meet the needs of everyone, recognising barriers to reporting.

While much focus is on prevention and subsequent support for victims, it is important to highlight work with perpetrators.

Without a focus on the perpetrators we will not be able to prevent domestic abuse or effectively maintain safety for victims.

There is limited evidence for this area of work however best practice will be sought from both criminal justice agencies, research and academic evaluation.

Commitments under this priority are:

- Develop a **multi-agency (risk management) approach to working with perpetrators** to reduce and prevent repeat domestic abuse, including increasing the number of cases that progress through the criminal justice system.
- Develop an improved approach to dealing with perpetrators which includes **equipping frontline professionals with the skills** to engage and work with them.
- Increase perpetrators from different cultures, communities and circumstances **engaging with programmes** and services designed to meet their needs.
- Review and **increase the use of protection orders**, including Domestic Violence Protection Orders, FGM Protection Orders and Forced Marriage Protection Orders, as an effective tool for limiting a perpetrators space for action
- **Promote and increase the use of the Domestic Violence Disclosure** scheme (Clare's Law)
- Explore ways to **improve the criminal justice pathway and court room experience including family court** in line with the new Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and New Witness Charter.
- Work with all services that have regular contact with victim-survivors of domestic abuse to ensure that they are **systematically assessing risk** and are using the preferred risk assessment tool: DASH RIC. We will ensure that services take up appropriate training in risk assessment and have a good understanding of how to respond. We will ensure the referral pathway takes into consideration the need for information sharing to minimise further risk.
- Undertake work to ensure **compliance with the Safe Lives national quality assurance** framework for MARACs with the aim of developing a more systematic approach to the identification of who is at risk, what risks they face and from whom, and how the risk can be reduced.
- Explore options to address the needs of women offenders with a history of DA. This will include the consideration of **community-based alternatives to a custodial sentence** to divert vulnerable women away from crime and tackle the root causes of their offending

4

Supporting professionals to make a difference

This priority focuses on strengthening collaboration and improving the way we work together. This includes front line professionals work together well to safeguard both children and adults.

The relationship between domestic abuse and substance misuse is a complex one. It will be important to understand the links with drug and alcohol use and poor mental health and take steps to address these.

We will promote a more cohesive approach to tackling domestic abuse, working together to achieve our collective aims. It is important that we proactively approach integrated working across all services and sectors.

Commitments under this priority are:

- All agencies to reaffirm their commitment to working **together** to provide co-leadership, pool resources, take a more strategic and effective response in meeting our collective aims.
- Senior leaders across the sectors will become **Domestic Abuse Champions** signalling their intent and help convey the aspirations within this document back to their organisations. We will also increase the diversity within the champions scheme.
- Agencies and professionals need to feel equipped to handle disclosures of domestic abuse sensitively to minimise the risk to the victim. We will be **committed to training** to enable domestic abuse to be identified and responded too swiftly. We will work together to have multi agency workshops as well as cross agency scenario-based training that challenges harmful attitudes, language and behaviour. We will promote both online and evidenced based training for key stakeholders and frontline workers to better equip front line professionals with the skills required. We will work with DWP and other agencies to provide training and information on financial abuse and how to identify and support those at risk.
- Tackle the root causes of domestic abuse to **break the cycle**. Victims, perpetrators and their children need to be identified early and provided with the appropriate level of support to break cycles of domestic abuse and overcome the impact it has on their lives. We will focus on prevention and early intervention to decrease demand on crisis services (and in the short term maximise rapid response services that are available)
- **Improving systems** – Every contact counts and we will make sure that when requests come in about keeping children or adults safe they get shared with the right people as early as possible. We will improve coordination particularly on high-risk cases and cases with multiple incidents.
- Continue **streamlining victim pathways** which are fully understood by all frontline staff and can support all victims without prejudice including reducing the number of times a someone has to tell there story. This will mean effective triaging and help ensure timely responsive delivery of services.
- Both children's social care and adults social care highlight the prevalence of domestic abuse in the referrals they receives. We will **work with social workers to understand missed opportunities**.
- Give staff in all key agencies **better tools, advice and understanding** to do effective safety planning, risk management (DASH assessment tool) and support work with the families they are already involved with and ensuring people understand when it is right to refer on or to work together and empower families to be resilient and independent.
- Survivors have advised us of barriers preventing access to services that we need to respond to. We will collectively act on the gaps in service provision from the needs assessment with a focus on those with protective characteristics. We will also continue to **capture survivors voices and constantly learn from their experiences**.

Domestic Abuse Act

Domestic Abuse Bill includes statutory definition of domestic abuse, raising awareness and monitoring local responses to domestic abuse

Under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 all councils are required to convene a Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, assess the need for, prepare and publish strategies and commission support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation services in our area.

The newly established Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Board will oversee plans for compliance with the new duty and look to strengthen work linked to wider support for all those affected by domestic abuse in Buckinghamshire.

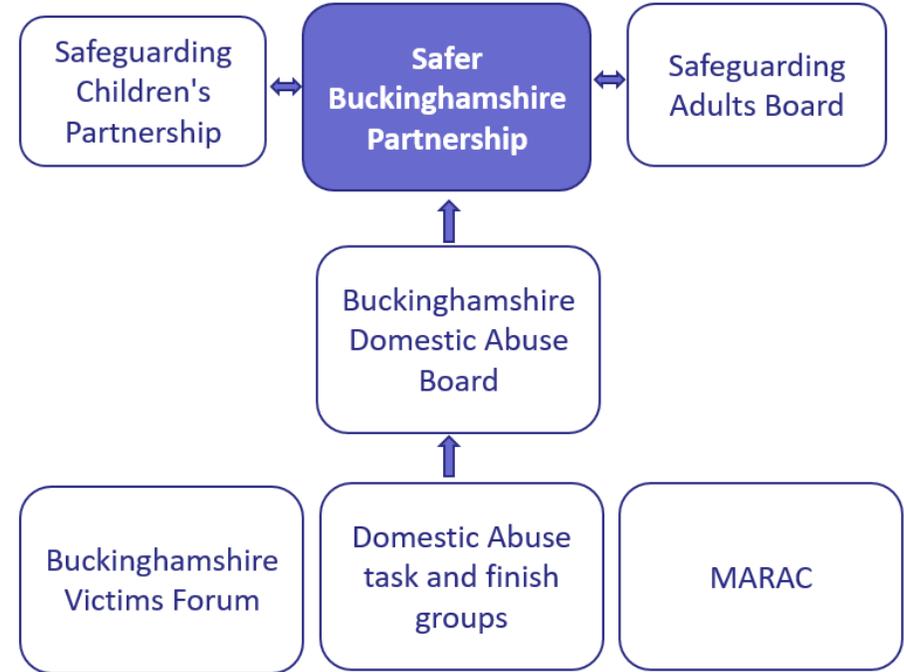
The Board will help drive forward the strategic priorities through programmes of work that addresses gaps highlighted within the needs assessment and learn from domestic homicide reviews so tragedies in future can be prevented.

An operational subgroup will be established to lead key deliverables. Progress will regularly be reported to the Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Board who in turn will keep the Safer Buckinghamshire Board updated on outcomes and escalations.

The Domestic Abuse Board membership:

- (Chair) Deputy Chief Executive Buckinghamshire Council and Chair Safer Buckinghamshire Board
- Member lead, Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities
- Representatives from the local authority including children's, adults, public health, housing and community safety.
- Survivors of domestic abuse (adult and children)
- Charity and voluntary sector organisations
- Health care services
- Policing and criminal justice

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL



What success looks like

The purpose of the strategy is to set out our partnership approach to ending domestic abuse in Buckinghamshire. Our strategy is ambitious, and rightly so, as we seek long term safety in homes, relationships, community and society. We have strong foundations to build on and none of us can do it alone, our partnership is vital. Survivor-centered outcomes will be central to our action plan.

The Domestic Abuse Board will meet quarterly monitoring progress against a detailed action plan. The strategy will be reviewed in full every three years. As well as being complaint with all statutory duties we would like to see:

A domestic abuse preventative model is adopted across the partnership	Domestic abuse and understanding healthy relationships is an integral part of education in schools, colleges and universities	More preparators programmes. Increased monitoring of perpetrator	Work places taking a proactive approach with employer toolkits, training and communications	Safe accommodation – more refuges places	All services take responsibility and understands the role they play in relation to improving responses in relation to domestic abuse, and have a common understanding of risk and deliver improved outcomes for both victims, children and perpetrators
Better informed professionals and accessible information about domestic abuse across all services	Increase in the number of people engaging with services beyond the initial referral	More successful Domestic Abuse prosecutions and increased use of the disclosure scheme (Clare's law)	A mapped and utilised pathway in to support for victims engaging with the Criminal Justice System		
Utilising a wide range of distribution models to have a consistent communications plan signalling zero tolerance	Reduction in repeat victimisation to prevent further abuse for victims and families	Pathways that considers the whole family in referrals, triage and support			

Accountability and governance

This strategy is designed to be flexible in order to adapt to changing needs and national guidance.

The Domestic Abuse Board is responsible for the implementation of this strategy. It will oversee its effectiveness, action plans, monitor progress and direct funding commitments deploying working groups as needed.

The strategy is underpinned by an action plan which will be championed by each partner within the Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Board. Actions developed will be directly linked to our identified outcomes and commitments. Each agency will ensure that they have effective mechanisms in place that contribute to its delivery.

Feedback from those who use interventions and services will form a vital part of service development, our commissioning and our monitoring procedures. We will work to ensure that the voice of survivors, of families affected by domestic abuse and of perpetrators who have interacted with our services informs and continually improves our provision.

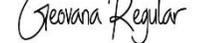
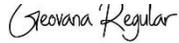
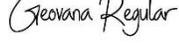
The Domestic Abuse Board will provide annual monitoring reports to the Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership, the Police and Crime Commissioners Office, and Safeguarding Boards setting out progress against our vision and identified outcomes.

This strategy is warmly welcomed by the Partnership “Joint Chairs” group which brings together Chief Officers and Chairs of Buckinghamshire’s statutory partnerships:

- Safer Buckinghamshire Community Safety Partnership Board
- Children’s Partnership
- Adult Safeguarding Board
- Health and Wellbeing Board

Across each board, there are several shared priorities which relate to safeguarding communities and improving health and wellbeing. However, domestic abuse is one common theme.

This is a critical time with the introduction of the landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and this strategy highlights the dedication to victims within Buckinghamshire and those coming from out of county are safe, protected, and empowered to rebuild their lives. Together we can achieve real, sustainable progress to tackle domestic abuse.

 Rachael Shimmin, Chief Executive Buckinghamshire Council	 Sir Francis Habgood Chair, Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board	 Sarah Ashmead Deputy Chief Executive Buckinghamshire Council Chair, Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership
 Angela Macpherson Deputy Leader Cabinet Member Health and Wellbeing Chair, Health and Wellbeing Board	 Gill Quinton Corporate Director of Health and Adult Social Care, Buckinghamshire Council	 Richard Nash Corporate Director of Children’s Services Buckinghamshire Council
 Dr James Kent Executive Lead for Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System and Accountable Officer for Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group	 Neil Macdonald Chief Executive Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust	 Mike Loebenberg Chief Superintendent, Thames Valley Police Vice Chair Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership

Holding place to be confirmed

For more information about Buckinghamshire's Domestic Abuse board or any information in this strategy please email the project team: domesticabuseprojectteam@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

In partnership with and supported by

The final strategy will have Domestic Abuse Board membership logo's included here