

Strategy Framework: Brighton and Hove and East Sussex Partnership Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse and VAWG Strategy 2019-2024

1. Our Vision for Brighton and Hove and East Sussex

There is a future where everyone can live safe lives, without the threat or experience of domestic and sexual violence and abuse (including stalking and harassment and harmful practices) because it is not tolerated by our communities or our organisations....

AND where, when someone becomes a victim they are believed, not blamed, treated with dignity and respect and supported to feel safe within their community, whilst seeing their offenders worked with to change their behaviour or brought to justice.

This MUST be our long term vision! And we are more likely to achieve this with another vision that we believe is achievable in the short to medium term:

Across Sussex, we work together, breaking down barriers between sectors and services, in neighbourhoods and communities, recognising that Domestic and Sexual Violence is everyone's business; and that responsibility for tackling the issue is truly shared.

2. Our Strategic Ambitions

- Prevent violence and abuse happening in the first place or from happening again by changing attitudes and challenging behaviours
- Promote a listening and believing approach: in what victims tell us; in what we share with each other as providers; that we will work with victims and each other to solve issues and challenge actions and behaviours that blame victims of abuse and violence
- Provide quality training and development for a multi-agency taskforce that includes our communities, dedicated to prevention and early help
- Provide the quality, accessible help that people want and need, including reactive intervention to keep people safe from harm perpetrated on them
- Enable recovery: Recognise the impact and outcomes of violence and abuse on **all** (children and adults) those affected and provide holistic, victim centred services

3. Defining and Understanding Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

The impact of domestic and sexual violence and abuse is personal to every victim, so in addition to the formal definitions provided later in this section, below are some very honest statements from recovering victims. Special thanks go to the DVA Survivor members of the RISE Recovery Group.

"...Emotional and physically trapped and unable to leave, so it continues.... Manipulative and really gets in your head."

"...Both emotionally and psychologically destabilising...."

"...I believed no one would listen to me or believe me so what's the point of doing anything about it? Put up and shut up...."

"... Being drained and sapped of everything- almost stripped naked and thrown out in to the street..."

Domestic Violence and Abuse

Domestic abuse is “an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour... in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer. It is very common, and in the vast majority of cases is experienced by women and is perpetrated by men. Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence)
- Psychological and/or emotional abuse
- Physical or sexual violence and abuse
- Economic Abuse
- Harassment and stalking
- Online or digital abuse” (Women’s Aid)
- Harmful cultural practices

Sexual Violence and Abuse

“Sexual violence and abuse is any behaviour (physical, verbal, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful, or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, ability/disability or sexual orientation) without their informed consent or understanding.

There are many different kinds, including: rape, sexual abuse (including in childhood), sexual assault, sexual harassment, forced marriage, so-called honour-based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual exploitation (including child sexual exploitation), and others.

Sexual violence and abuse can take place in the community or be carried out online by people who are either acquaintances or strangers to the victim as well as take place within family and partner relationships” (Survivor’s Network)

Violence Against Women and Girls

In its declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls, the UN states that the term "violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

It states that violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

“Violence against women is both a consequence of and a cause of inequality between men and women. As well as being a health problem of epidemic proportions, it's also a human rights problem of equal severity. Depending on the violation, it can deprive a woman of

- her right to health and physical and mental integrity
- her right to be free from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment
- her right to life” (Women’s Aid)

“Women are more likely than men to experience multiple incidents of abuse, different types of domestic abuse (intimate partner violence, sexual assault and stalking) and in particular sexual violence. Any woman can experience domestic abuse regardless of race, ethnic or religious group, sexuality, class, or disability, but some women who experience other forms of oppression and discrimination may face further barriers to disclosing abuse and finding help.”(Women’s Aid)

4. Responding to Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse and VAWG in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove: What we know...

Work is currently underway to finalise reviews and assessments for inclusion in the strategy document and will include:

- The current picture: what our data tells us
- Victim and Survivor Engagement
- Service Provider Engagement
- Perpetrator Profile
- Messages from Inspections and Reviews
- Links to other priority areas of need
- Our Previous Strategy: What did we do and how has it made a difference?
- National Development and Influences

5. Equality at the Heart of Our Response

Women and girls are without question, most likely to be victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. However, it is important to recognise that anyone, whatever their gender, age, ethnicity, capacity or sexual orientation can be a victim or perpetrator of domestic and sexual violence and abuse. The programme of services we provide should enable access for everyone. They should respond to differing needs both in terms of the support needed and how it is provided; whilst respecting the need for positive action when it is necessary to protect those at risk.

National and local data and research overwhelmingly identifies that the following groups in society are **most affected as victims**.

- Women and Girls
- Children and Young People: Differing forms of violence within the family unit
- Older People
- People with illness and disability, including mental illness

- People with multiple and complex needs

Perpetrators are most often adult males but in responding to the challenge of enabling behavioural change and effective prosecution we must also recognise that anyone can be a perpetrator.

Consideration must also be made to the geographical areas our strategy covers and in particular, the different challenges that present in urban and rural areas both in how we seek to prevent incidence, improve access to services, and our ability to meet the needs of those affected by violence and abuse.

6. Our Commitment to Partnership Working

What we believe in!

Collaboration across all sectors and with a wide variety of stakeholders: acknowledging the value of passion, interest, knowledge and ideas wherever they come from; co-production and co-design; and the benefits of sharing resources to respond more effectively. It is important to minimise competition between agencies to enhance victims' experience of support provided.

Taking responsibility both individually and collectively: the challenges and the risks are shared in a supportive no blame environment.

Mutual trust and respect: valuing different perspectives that provide better insights and lead to better, more robust solutions.

Fairness and openness: We keep each other informed of our work contexts and understand how we can accommodate and work through changes to collectively maintain and improve our response to domestic abuse and sexual violence.

How we intend to work together!

We will

- Always put those affected by domestic violence and abuse and sexual violence and wider experiences of violence against women and girls, and their voice at the centre of our work
- Be aware of the context in which domestic violence and abuse and sexual violence takes place, in line with safeguarding policy and frameworks for children and families, and adults
- Maintain a focus on equality, recognising that anyone can be affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence
- Prioritise effective dialogue and communication between services, and with those affected by violence and abuse
- Be brave in our innovation where evidence tells us to do things differently including how we respond to service demands and commission services.

7. Governance and Accountability

It is proposed that responsibility for delivery of the strategy and its associated delivery plan would lie with a new multi-agency formal partnership: the **Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership Board**. It is anticipated that the board will oversee a structure of partnership subgroups that enable continuous stakeholder engagement and fair influence on decision making, where focus remains on preventing/disrupting the perpetration of abuse and keeping the experience of the victim and those affected by violence and abuse central. The board terms of reference and membership will be developed by the Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy and Commissioning Partnership and this may influence the flow of upward

accountability, but we do know that this will include the Brighton and Hove and East Sussex Community Safety Partnerships. Challenge and scrutiny will be provided by the Adults Safeguarding Board and Local Safeguarding Children Board in each Local Authority Area.

