

# **Brighton & Hove City Council: Preventing and Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence**

## **Strategy and Action Plan for the years 2025-2028**

## Foreword

Violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWGDA SV) is a national and local priority, a criminal justice issue, and a violation of human rights that impacts individuals and families and harms communities, societies and economies.

VAWG, DA and SV is a national priority, with the current (2024) Government stating: "This initiative is part of an ambitious, unprecedented mission to reduce such violence by 50% (VAWG) within the next decade."

However, the devastating impacts of VAWG, DA and SV are felt most acutely at the local level, within homes, workplaces, public spaces, and communities. We cannot, and will not, tolerate violence in any form.

There are four priorities laid out in this Strategy: prioritising prevention; support for survivors; Building an accountable community and changing perpetrator behaviour; and stronger coordinated response. These have been developed using data, intelligence and research, alongside consultation with stakeholders and, critically, with feedback from victims/survivors.

We cannot achieve these ambitious goals alone. This strategy calls for collaboration between statutory services, the community and voluntary sectors, local businesses, and residents. Together, we will build a city where VAWG, DA and SV is not tolerated.

Brighton & Hove is a city that values inclusion, equality, and safety. By working together to implement this strategy, we can ensure that these values are extended to every resident, creating a future where violence is prevented, survivors are supported, and perpetrators are held accountable.

Together, we can create a safer, more supportive Brighton & Hove, where everyone can live free from violence and fear.

Councillor Emma Daniel

## Executive Summary:

Brighton & Hove City Council is dedicated to preventing and addressing Violence against women and girls (VAWG), Domestic Abuse (DA) and Sexual Violence (SV) through a comprehensive partnership led strategy. This strategy emphasizes the importance of collaboration across our community to support those affected and hold perpetrators accountable.

### **Vision and Mission:**

Our vision is to create a safe and supportive environment for all individuals, free from violence and abuse. Our mission is to implement a coordinated and effective response to VAWG, DA, and SV, ensuring the safety and well-being of survivors while holding perpetrators accountable.

### **Key Objectives:**

- 1) Strengthened Community Response
- 2) Prioritising Prevention
- 3) Supporting Survivors
- 4) Building and accountable community and changing perpetrator behaviour

These four themes recognise the different reasons for VAWG, DA and SV, the need to take action to prevent it, as well as to ensure the correct support is there for survivors.

### **Strategic Components**

- Coordinated Community Response (CCR) Model: This model serves as the framework for reviewing our partnerships and ensuring a unified approach to addressing VAWG, DA, and SV ( see page 21 to 23).
- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC): An actionable meeting that brings together key agencies to coordinate responses for high-risk individuals, ensuring comprehensive safety plans and support.
- VAWG, DA, and SV Oversight Board: Another actionable meeting that oversees the delivery of the action plan, monitors progress and addresses emerging challenges. The board ensures alignment with strategic goals and effective implementation of the strategy.

### **Stakeholder and partnerships**

This strategy involves collaboration with local organisations, networks, and residents. Key stakeholders include the police, health services, housing, social care, and specialist VAWG, DA, and SV services. By working together, we aim to provide a robust and coordinated response to violence and abuse.

### **Action Plan:**

The strategy will be implemented through a series of targeted actions and initiatives. Task and Finish Groups will address specific areas such as community coordination,

prevention, survivor support, and perpetrator behaviour change.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The newly created VAWG, DA, and SV Oversight Board will monitor the implementation of the strategy, ensuring that the accompanying action plan objectives are aligned with strategic goals and adjusting approaches as needed. Regular reviews and feedback from stakeholders will help maintain the effectiveness and responsiveness of the strategy.

## **Understanding Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), Domestic Abuse (DA) and Sexual Violence (SV):**

Within the term VAWG, DA and SV a range of forms of violence are recognised. These include gender-based violence (GBV); intimate partner violence (IPV); domestic violence and abuse (DVA) sexual violence and abuse (SVA); coercive control; forced marriage; child marriage; so called honour-based abuse (HBA); female genital mutilation (FGM); human trafficking; sexual harassment; cyber harassment, and adolescent dating violence (ADV). Many of these terms are used as umbrella terms and are not mutually exclusive.

In defining VAWG, DA and SV, we at Brighton & Hove City Council use the United Nations' (UN) globally recognised definition:

*“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.”*

This definition underscores the many forms of abuse and their contexts, emphasising that VAWG, DA and SV encompasses acts of violence within the home and across public spaces. Recognising VAWG, DA and SV as a multifaceted issue allows us to address it more effectively within Brighton & Hove, ensuring no form of harm is overlooked, and highlighting the city's commitment to reducing such violence.

### **Intersectionality**

This strategy recognises that VAWG disproportionately impacts women and girls, it also acknowledges the intersecting factors of race, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and immigration status which can heighten vulnerability. Brighton & Hove City Council is committed to ensuring that all services are inclusive, addressing the specific needs of individuals with intersecting identities and challenges.

Additionally, while within this strategy we understand that VAWG, DA and SV disproportionately impacts women and girls, it also acknowledges that boys and men, both as children and adults, are also affected by violence and abuse.

### **Equal access to rights and entitlements:**

Experiences of violence and abuse and access to support, safety and justice, will be different for different groups of women and individuals. Their experiences will differ according to the factors which define their participation in society including background, work and access to resource among others. Whilst all women are affected by patriarchy, inequality and discrimination, some women will be affected disproportionately due to their race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, disability, age, class, immigration status, caste, nationality,

indigeneity, linguistic minority, and faith.

An example of the need to understand how experiences differ is the work that the **Harmful a sexual behaviour group** a subgroup of the Children's Safeguarding Board has identified including consideration of the adultification and hyper-sexualisation of young black girls in schools. Adultification leads to unfair treatment and harsher disciplinary actions, while hyper-sexualisation results in stigmatisation and victim-blaming.

## Our Approach

The Council is committed to tackling and preventing VAWG/DA/SV and will continue to work with partners to improve both its own response to VAWG/DA/SV and with its partners to improve the local coordinated response to VAWG/DA/SV.

## Strategic Aims

Our primary aim is to support the reduction of VAWG, DA and SV incidents by 50% within the next decade, a target that aligns with the national agenda. We recognise that addressing VAWG, DA and SV is essential for achieving equality, justice, and a safe environment for everyone in Brighton & Hove.

Our strategy is built around four key strategic aims that guide our approach to addressing VAWG, DA and SV

1. **Strengthening the co-ordinated response** to all forms of VAWG, DA and SV irrespective of whether the incident occurs in private or public space, we will join up council and partner services and address gaps in provision.
2. **Prioritising prevention** to end VAWG, DA and SV through a collaborative approach to awareness raising, data and information sharing, education and communication campaigns.
3. **Supporting survivors** to ensure anyone affected by VAWG, DA and SV has access to high quality trauma-informed support. Working across public, private and third sector partners, with specialist and community providers, we will identify and support victims at an earlier stage.
4. **Building an accountable community and changing perpetrator behaviour** by shifting the focus away from the victim's behaviour to the perpetrator's, strengthening the criminal justice response and supporting behaviour change.

## VAWG, DA and SV: A shared responsibility

This strategy is designed to address the deeply distressing and pervasive crimes encompassed by VAWG, DA and SV. In line with the National Statement of Expectations for VAWG services (2022)<sup>1</sup>, our strategy aims to provide a collaborative, multi-agency approach to offer accessible support for victims and survivors, whilst holding perpetrators to account.

VAWG, DA and SV affects individuals of all genders, ages, and backgrounds, though it disproportionately impacts women and girls. Our approach acknowledges that while each

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1 [Violence against women and girls national statement of expectations \(accessible\) - GOV.UK](#)

crime type may differ in nature and context, a coordinated response involving the council, local partners, and community stakeholders is essential to support victims, raise awareness, and improve life outcomes. This strategy aligns with national priorities while tailoring our response to meet the unique needs of Brighton & Hove.

## **Partnership and Community Approach**

A partnership-led approach is central to our VAWG, DA and SV strategy. This approach reflects our understanding that preventing and tackling violence and supporting those affected, requires a collaborative effort across our community. Brighton & Hove City Council works closely with local organisations, networks, and residents to build a robust and coordinated response to VAWG.

To support this approach, we are establishing the new VAWGDASV Oversight Board. The purpose of this board is to provide collaborative oversight, ensuring the effective progression and delivery of the VAWGDASV strategy and action plan. The Oversight Board will also align the scrutiny of performance with our strategic aims, ensuring that all actions are effectively monitored and evaluated.

### **MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference)**

The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a cornerstone of Brighton & Hove's partnership-led approach to tackling VAWG.

MARAC brings together key agencies, including the police, health services, housing, social care, and specialist VAWG, DA and SV services, to coordinate responses for individuals at the highest risk of domestic abuse. By sharing information and expertise, MARAC ensures a comprehensive and effective safety plan is developed for each case, reducing the risk of harm and enabling victims and their families to access the support they need.

MARAC exemplifies best practice in partnership working, with its collaborative approach serving as a national model for addressing domestic abuse. In Brighton & Hove, MARAC operates on a weekly basis to provide timely interventions for high-risk cases, directly contributing to the prevention of serious harm and saving lives. The conference demonstrates how a united response from multiple agencies can significantly reduce risks, strengthen community safety, and deliver tangible outcomes for victim-survivors.

The council's active role in MARAC highlights its commitment to fostering strong partnerships and prioritising the safety of those most vulnerable to VAWG, DA and SV. By continually reviewing MARAC processes and incorporating feedback from stakeholders, Brighton & Hove ensures that the initiative remains effective, innovative, and responsive to emerging challenges.

Table 1.

**1 Jan-31 Dec 2022 vs 1 Jan-31 Dec 2023  
(From Safelives)**

	BH 2022	Sussex 2022	BH 2023	Sussex 2023
Number of MARACs	1	8	1	9
Number of meetings held	50	218	49	225
Number of cases discussed	759	3025 (25% BH)	828	3504 (24% BH)
Number of repeat cases	44.50%	33.00%	39.30%	33.50%
Number of children in households	896	3902 (23% BH)	836	4053 (21% BH)
Cases with children %	n/a	n/a	10.90%	9.90%
Recommended number of admin/s for MARAC cases	2	7.6	2.2	8.8



**MARAC- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (Jan – Dec 2022 vs Jan to Dec 2023)**

## Other key Partnership Activities

To ensure a comprehensive and effective approach, the council is actively involved in a range of local and Pan Sussex groups, boards, and initiatives that address various aspects of VAWG, DA and SV. These activities enable us to collaborate, share best practices, and implement coordinated actions.

### Quarterly Activities:

- **Commissioning and Contract Monitoring:** Oversight of nine BHCC-commissioned services and one Pan Sussex service to ensure quality and alignment with strategic priorities.
- **Pan Sussex Boards and Groups:**
  - Domestic Abuse Board
  - Sexual Violence Board
  - Harmful Practice Group
  - Perpetrator Group
  - Victim and Witness Group
  - No Recourse to Public Funds Working Group
  - Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews Group
  - Housing Reciprocal Task and Finish Group

- **Local Partnership Groups:**
  - Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Children Board (Learning and Development Group)
  - Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Adults Board (Learning and Development and Quality Assurance Groups)
  - Brighton & Hove Community Safety Partnership Board
  - MATAC (Multi Agency Tasking and Collaboration)
  - Harmful Sexual Behaviour Group
  
- **VAWG, DA and SV- Specific Activities:**
  - Facilitation of the VAWG, DA and SV Network for partnership collaboration
  - Coordination of Brighton & Hove Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews
  - Development and delivery of VAWG, DA and SV training
  - Management of the BH Domestic Abuse Act Operational Housing Group
  - Management of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Steering Group

**Weekly Activities:**

- **MARAC:** Weekly multi agency risk assessment conferences to develop support plans to decrease the risk of harm to high-risk victims of domestic abuse through multi-agency interventions.

**Six-Monthly Activities:**

- **No Recourse to Public Funds Network:** Collaborative discussions to address barriers and support for individuals affected by VAWG, DA and SV who have restricted access to public resources.

## **The Coordinated Community Response (CCR) Model**

Brighton & Hove City Council is committed to an integrated, multi-agency Coordinated Community Response (CCR). This model unites services to ensure local systems keep survivors safe, hold abusers accountable, and prevent VAWG, DA and SV

No single agency is solely responsible for tackling and preventing VAWG, DA and SV. However, by collaborating with various agencies and communities, we can provide safe and effective responses to reduce harm.

VAWG, DA and SV is a complex social issue that affects individuals, communities, and services across our society, including health, housing, social care, and the Criminal Justice System. Agencies and organisations often address different aspects of the issue or approach the same problem from various angles.



These agencies also have their own, sometimes conflicting, processes, responsibilities, and measures of success. The CCR enables a holistic response to individuals, shifting the responsibility for safety from survivors to the community and services designed to support them. Every agency involved in dealing with survivors, their children, and/or perpetrators must work effectively within their own organization and in collaboration with other agencies to ensure the safety of survivors and their children and to hold perpetrators accountable.

### **Good Practice Example**

The following case study highlights a practical example of how Brighton & Hove City Council is implementing the CCR model.

#### ***Case Study 1: Strengthening Partnerships through Quarterly VAWG, DA and SV Service Meetings and VAWG, DA and SV Network Events***

Initiated following multi-agency feedback regular, in-person meetings among VAWG, DA and SV services in Brighton & Hove—both commissioned and non-commissioned—reflect the CCR model's emphasis on collaborative partnership. These quarterly meetings enable VAWG, DA and SV professionals across Brighton & Hove to share insights, address service gaps, and align on common challenges.

The VAWG Network provides a platform for professionals to learn more about different forms of VAWG often through an intersectional lens to upskill practitioners.

## **One Council Approach**

Alongside the Coordinated Community Response, the council is committed to a One Council approach to tackling VAWG, DA and SV. This ensures that all council services and teams across the organisation play an active role in preventing and tackling VAWG, DA and SV. by embedding these as priorities across every service area within the council

### **Good Practise Example**

The follow example highlights a practical example of how internally the council is working collaboratively with different departments to actively support domestic abuse survivors in housing services.

#### **Case Study 2: Enhancing Support for Domestic Abuse Survivors in Housing Services**

Brighton & Hove City Council has prioritised the voices of victim-survivors and stakeholders in shaping its response to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, demonstrating a commitment to delivering services that are inclusive, effective, and survivor-centred.

#### **Developing a Strategic Response**

The Council contributed to the Pan Sussex Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021–2024, which provided key recommendations to improve services for survivors. These recommendations guided the commissioning of a range of new services funded through the New Burdens allocation. (See Appendix 1)

Additionally, the Council commissioned Stonewater to produce the *Safehaven by the Sea* report, which involved extensive consultation with victim-survivors, stakeholders, and a review of national developments in domestic abuse and housing. Published in the summer of 2024, the report actionable recommendations that have directly informed service improvements. (See Appendix 1)

### **Improving Housing Pathways for Domestic Abuse Survivors**

In line with the findings and the One Council Approach, Brighton & Hove City Council's Housing Management Services, in collaboration with the internal VAWG, DA and SV team, has undertaken a comprehensive review of its policies and procedures to align with the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act.

A working group has been established to improve housing pathways for domestic abuse survivors. This group, led by the Homelessness and Housing Options teams, has introduced the role of Refuge Champions, staff members dedicated to ensuring smoother transitions from refuges to independent housing. Refuge Champions work closely with refuge staff, facilitating clear and accessible pathways for survivors ready to leave Brighton & Hove's refuges.

This initiative exemplifies the Council's commitment to improving coordination across services and enhancing survivors' experiences as they move toward independence. By prioritising collaborative approaches, the Council is making housing services more accessible and responsive to survivors needs.

### **Embedding Intersectional Support and Training**

To further strengthen support, staff from **RISE** and **Switchboard** are now co-located with the Homelessness and Housing Options team, providing integrated and immediate expertise for those accessing services. Furthermore, the Council has partnered with **Stonewater**, **RISE**, **Switchboard**, and **Cranstoun** to deliver extensive training to housing staff. This training focuses on the intersectional nature of domestic abuse, equipping staff with skills and knowledge needed to support survivors from diverse backgrounds effectively.

By embedding these changes, Brighton & Hove City Council demonstrates its dedication to enhancing the safety and well-being of domestic abuse survivors and ensuring their journey to secure and independent housing is as supportive and seamless as possible.

## That Causes Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), Domestic Abuse (DA) And Sexual Violence (SV)?

VAWG, DA and SV can be looked at through a “ecological framework” which is an evidence-based approach on the complex interplay of factors that contribute to VAWG.<sup>2</sup> This model shows how individual, relationship, community, and societal factors interact to influence the risk and experience of violence. By understanding these interconnected levels, we can take comprehensive actions at each level to support and reinforce efforts to prevent violence.

1. At the **individual level**, personal history and biological factors influence how individuals behave and increase their likelihood of becoming a victim or a perpetrator of violence. Among these factors are being a victim of child maltreatment, psychological or personality disorders, alcohol and/or substance abuse and a history of behaving aggressively or having experienced abuse.
2. Personal **relationships** such as family, friends, intimate partners and peers may influence the risks of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence. For example, having violent friends may influence whether a young person engages in or becomes a victim of violence.
3. **Community** contexts in which social relationships occur, such as schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces, also influence violence. Risk factors here may include the level of unemployment, population density, mobility and the existence of a local drug or gun trade.
4. **Societal** factors influence whether violence is encouraged or inhibited. These include economic and social policies that maintain socioeconomic inequalities between people, the availability of weapons, and social and cultural norms such as those around male dominance over women, parental dominance over children and cultural norms that endorse violence as an acceptable method to resolve conflicts.

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<sup>2</sup> [The Ecological Framework](#)

## The Many Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

VAWG, DA and SV covers a range of unacceptable and deeply distressing crimes, including gender-based violence (GBV); intimate partner violence (IPV); domestic violence and abuse (DVA) sexual violence and abuse (SVA); coercive control; forced marriage; child marriage; so called honour-based abuse (HBA); female genital mutilation (FGM); human trafficking; sexual harassment; cyber harassment, and adolescent dating violence (ADV). Many of these terms are used as umbrella terms and are not mutually exclusive.

In Brighton & Hove, we recognise that VAWG, DA and SV is not limited to one type of violence or experience.

The table below defines some of the most prevalent forms of VAWG, DA and SV. However, this is not an exhaustive list, as VAWG, DA and SV manifests in diverse and complex ways. Each form may differ in nature, setting, and impact, affecting individuals and communities uniquely.

Term	Definition	Legislation
Domestic Abuse (Including Coercive Control)	Domestic abuse refers to incidents or a pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading, and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, committed by a partner, ex-partner, or family member, regardless of gender or sexuality. Abuse can be physical, emotional, economic, psychological, and/or sexual. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also recognises children as victims if they see, hear, or are otherwise affected by the abuse.	<a href="#">Domestic Abuse Act 2021</a>
Rape and Sexual Violence	Rape is defined as non-consensual penetration of the vagina, anus, or mouth with a penis. Consent must be given freely, and there must be the capacity to make that choice. Sexual violence includes acts committed without the victim's consent, encompassing both physical force and psychological pressure.	<a href="#">Sexual Offences Act 2003</a>
Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)	Female Genital Mutilation is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.	<a href="#">Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003</a>

So-Called "Honour"-Based Abuse	An incident or crime involving violence, threats of violence, intimidation coercion or abuse (including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse) which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of an individual, family and/ or community for alleged or perceived breaches of the family and/or community's code of behaviour	<a href="#">Crown Prosecution Service definition</a>
Sexual Harassment	Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature that violates a person's dignity, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.	<a href="#">Equality Act 2010</a>
Stalking	Stalking involves a pattern of persistent and unwanted behaviour or attention that causes the victim to feel scared, harassed, or anxious.	<a href="#">Protection from Harassment Act 1997</a>
Modern Slavery	Modern slavery is a term that encompasses human trafficking, forced labour, and servitude. It involves the exploitation of a person through force, coercion, or deception, for another's gain.	<a href="#">Modern Slavery Act 2015</a>
Economic Abuse	Economic abuse involves controlling a person's ability to acquire, use, and maintain economic resources, effectively limiting their independence. It may include withholding money, preventing access to employment, or controlling access to essentials.	<a href="#">Domestic Abuse Act 2021</a>
Digital or Digitally Enabled Abuse	Abuse that occurs or is facilitated through digital platforms harassment, revenge porn, and coercive control through monitoring and surveillance of digital devices.	<a href="#">Domestic Abuse Act 2021</a> (in cases of coercive control) and the <a href="#">Online Safety Act 2024</a>
Forced Prostitution and Human Trafficking	Forced prostitution involves coercing someone into commercial sex acts against their will. Human trafficking is the recruitment, transport, or harbouring of individuals for exploitation.	<a href="#">Modern Slavery Act 2015</a> and <a href="#">Sexual Offences Act 2003</a> .

## **Understanding VAWG, DA and SV and public spaces:**

Creating safe public spaces is a critical component of the partnership's strategy to address VAWG, DA and SV. Research consistently shows that women and girls disproportionately face harassment and violence in public places, limiting their freedom and sense of safety. The Safer Streets Programme has been a key initiative in addressing these concerns, focusing on practical interventions such as street lighting, installation of CCTV, and enhanced police patrols in identified high-risk areas. These measures, alongside public awareness campaigns, are designed to deter perpetrators and create environments where women and girls feel empowered and protected.

However, safety in public spaces is not only about physical infrastructure. The strategy also emphasises the importance of community-based approaches, including bystander intervention training, and partnerships with local businesses and transport providers to ensure a collective response to VAWG, DA and SV. Insights from local surveys and consultations have informed targeted actions, resources are directed to areas where women report feeling unsafe.

Through collaboration with national funding programs, such as Safer Streets, and local organisations, we aim to create a city where every resident can navigate public spaces without fear. This commitment is underpinned by the understanding that tackling VAWG, DA and SV requires addressing not just the symptoms of violence but the cultural and societal norms that enable it, ensuring Brighton & Hove remains inclusive and secure for all.

### **Public Safety Consultation on VAWG conducted in 2022:**

The survey revealed that the most prevalent form of VAWG experienced was sexual harassment. A significant 45% of respondents reported having experienced sexual harassment, while 21% had witnessed someone else being sexually harassed.

When it comes to perceptions of safety in the city, there is a stark contrast between day and night. While 65% of respondents felt safe during the day, a concerning 77% felt unsafe at night.

General concerns about safety when out in public were also highlighted, with 44% of respondents stating they were worried and 21% being very worried while walking.

The responses regarding safety on public transport were mixed. Overall, 59% of respondents felt safe on the bus, but 39% were worried about safety when using the train, and 33% were not concerned.

Licensed premises and nightclubs were identified as risk areas by respondents. Specifically, 36% felt that licensed premises posed a risk, and a higher 57% felt that nightclubs were risky.

# Snapshot of National Data – Year Ending 2024

## Domestic Abuse

- **Police-Flagged Incidents:** Police recorded 830,926 domestic abuse-related offences in the year ending June 2024, showing an 8% decrease from in the year ending June 2023 (906,708 recorded offences).
- Changes in crime recording practices may influence this decrease, potentially resulting in underreported figures.

Office for National Statistics (2024). Crime in England and Wales: year ending September 2023. [Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

## CPS Referrals and Prosecutions:

- Police referred 69,589 domestic abuse cases to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in 2023, a slight increase from the prior year but still well below pre-pandemic levels (86,665 referrals in 2019). Domestic abuse prosecutions (51,323) and convictions (39,033) have similarly dropped from 2019 levels, when they were 85,702 and 53,648, respectively.

Crown Prosecution Service (2024). CPS data summary Quarter 2 2023-2024. [CPS data summary Quarter 2 2023-2024 | The Crown Prosecution Service](#)

## Prevalence of Domestic Abuse

- **Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW):** For June 2024, CSEW estimates indicate that 4.6% of people aged 16 and over experienced domestic abuse, in the previous year according to the survey in the year ending (YE) June 2024.

Office for National Statistics (2024). Crime in England and Wales: year ending September 2023. [Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

## Rape and Sexual Violence

- **Police-Recorded Offences:** Police recorded 191,186 sexual offences in the year ending September 2023, a 3% reduction from the previous year six victims report rape to the police, meaning official figures may underrepresent the full scope of sexual violence.

Office for National Statistics (2024). Crime in England and Wales: year ending September 2023. [Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

- **Convictions and Court Backlog:** Despite 67,938 rape offences recorded by police in 2023, only 2,008 convictions were secured, highlighting a significant gap in outcomes for survivors. The backlog of sexual offense cases in the Crown Court has reached a record high, with 10,141 cases awaiting trial—an increase of 21% from 2022 and a 196% rise compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

Rape Crisis England & Wales, *Breaking Point Report*, 2023: [Breaking Point | Rape Crisis England & Wales](#)

## Image-Based Sexual Abuse and Harassment

- **Revenge Porn Helpline:** In 2023, the helpline reported that they supported over 9,000 cases related to image-based abuse, with calls to the helpline more than tripling between 2021 and 2022. This rise highlights growing concerns over digital abuse.

Revenge Porn Helpline, *Annual Report*, 2022: [Revenge Porn Helpline 2022 Annual Report | SWGfL](#)

- **Harassment Among Young Women:** Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reveals that nearly one in four women aged 16-24 experienced sexual harassment in 2023, with younger women particularly affected.

ONS. [Experiences of harassment in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

### Public Sexual Harassment of Mixed-Race Girls

- **Plan International UK’s Report, “Everything is Racialised on Top”:** This report found that 88% of mixed-race girls reported experiencing public sexual harassment, compared to 75% of white girls. The report sheds light on the intersectional challenges faced by young girls, especially those from diverse backgrounds.

Sundaram, V., Jessop, N., Bell, B. & Jackson, E. (2022) <https://plan-uk.org/file/everything-is-racialised-reportpdf/download?token=bVe1kW6-> Plan International UK.

### So-Called “Honour-Based” Abuse, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and Forced Marriage

- **Police-Reported Incidents:** In the year ending March 2024, police recorded 2,755 offences related to “honour-based” abuse (HBA), representing an 8% decrease from the previous year. Of these, 111 were FGM cases, and 201 involved forced marriage. Additionally, 20% of these incidents involved controlling or coercive behaviour, pointing to the prevalence of psychological abuse.

[Statistics on so called 'honour-based' abuse offences, England and Wales, year ending March 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

## Brighton & Hove VAWG-Related Crime Data Snapshot – 2023/24

### Total Recorded Crime

- Total crimes reported in 2023/2024: 29,078

Source: *Sussex Police / B&H Community Safety Partnership*

### Domestic Abuse

- **Domestic Abuse Crimes:** 3,206, making up 11% of all recorded crime in Brighton & Hove for 2023/24.
- **Domestic Abuse Incidents:** 1,924 in 2023/24, down from 2,306 in 2019/20, mirroring a national trend of reported incidents decreasing slightly.
  - *Note:* A crime is recorded because it meets the requirements of the Home Office Counting Rules. Not all crimes are detected, a suspect identified and subsequently charged.

Source: *Sussex Police / B&H Community Safety Partnership*

### Sexual Offences

- **Total Sexual Offences:** 1,209 offences were recorded in 2023/24.
- **Serious Sexual Offences:** 1,009 of these incidents were classified as *Serious Sexual Offences*.

Source: *Sussex Police / B&H Community Safety Partnership*

### Stalking

- **Stalking Offences:** 460 stalking incidents were recorded in 2023/24.



*(Source: Sussex Police / B&H Community Safety Partnership)*

### **So-Called “Honour-Based” Violence (HBV)**

- **HBV Crimes and Incidents:** 8 recorded cases in 2023/24.

*Source: Sussex Police Special Reports*

### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

- **Newly Recorded FGM Patients:** 15 new patients with Brighton & Hove postcodes were identified in 2023/24.

*Source: NHS Digital; numbers rounded for confidentiality*

## **Demographic Data:**

Due to recent reporting changes from Sussex Police, current demographic data (2023-2024) regarding victims or perpetrators is unavailable for inclusion in this report. We anticipate this data will be accessible **in the near future**.

However, it should be noted that VAWG can be experienced by anyone. We understand that a survivor’s experience often intersects with other experiences linked to protected characteristics.

This can introduce additional risks and make it harder for people to seek support. While men and boys also suffer from many of these forms of abuse, they disproportionately affect women and more so women with intersecting characteristics.

National statistics highlight that BME women suffer domestic abuse 1.5 times longer than their white counterparts (Safelives, 2020). Data also indicates that BME people are less likely to report VAWG.

Brighton & Hove City Council has commissioned a BME Domestic Abuse Capacity Building Service to work at the grassroots level to further improve understanding of and access to support for BME survivors. Our strategic approach will fully recognise intersectionality. This includes the experiences of the city’s LGBTQ+ community, which report high levels of VAWG.

The council will continue to work closely with partners to ensure a continued focus on intersectionality.

## Development Process:

The development of the strategic aims and this strategy was informed by a review of key documents, including national guidance to support victims and survivors of VAWG, DA and SV existing council strategies and engagement events between November 2023 and Jan 2024 and more:

**1. Public Consultation:** The council carried out a public consultation on the initial draft strategic aims. The feedback demonstrated strong support for our four key priorities.

- A Strengthened Coordinated Response: 75% of respondents strongly agreed, and 19% agreed.
- Prioritising Prevention: 79% strongly agreed, and 14% agreed.
- Support for Survivors: 88% strongly agreed, and 7% agreed.
- Building an Accountable Community and Changing Perpetrator Behaviour: 79% strongly agreed, and 13% agreed.

The consultation findings highlighted a number of themes for inclusion in future workplans, including:

- A focus on prevention
- The role of education and training
- Addressing perpetrator behaviour both by strengthening criminal justice response and behaviour change programmes
- Community-based services for children and young people, including working with them to raise awareness and educate them about VAWG, DA and SV
- Enshrining intersectionality in the response to VAWG, DA and SV, to ensure support for all survivors across all risk levels, including those with protected characteristics
- Improving safety in public spaces and promotion of Safety Apps
- Support for survivors who have no recourse to public funds/refugee status

**2. Four sector specific events:** Alongside the public consultation, we also organised workshops with local stakeholders and community members to discuss the four strategic priorities in detail, ensuring diverse perspectives were considered and securing active partner involvement.

- VAWG strategy consultation – A stronger coordinated community response (Thursday, December 7, 2023)
- VAWG strategy consultation- Prioritising Prevention (Tuesday, December 12, 2023)
- VAWG strategy consultation- Support for Survivors (Friday, December 15, 2023)
- VAWG strategy consultation- Accountable community and perpetrator behaviour (Wednesday, December 6, 2023)

**3. Evidence-Based Analysis:** We also utilised a range of data sources to inform our strategy, including:

- a. **Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment (2021):** Conducted across Sussex to understand the needs of victims requiring safe accommodation.
- b. **Quarterly Performance Monitoring:** Ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of commissioned services and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs).
- c. **Public Survey on Safety in Brighton & Hove (2022):** Gathered public perceptions of safety across the city.

- d. **Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment Workshop (2022):** Shaped key strategic priorities.
- e. **Housing Consultations (Feb-Mar 2023):** Three workshop consultations with internal housing services officers.
- f. **Reimagine Brighton Event (Jan 2024):** Workshop sessions that contributed to the strategy's development and sense checked the strategic aims.
- g. **BHCC Leadership VAWG, DA and SV Summit (Sep 2024):** Brought together internal council leaders to council-wide align and strengthen strategy delivery.

**4. Alignment with internal council strategic priorities:** We also ensured that this strategy is aligned with internal core plans and strategies, taking a whole-council approach to reducing VAWG, DA and SV. The intersecting documents include:

- Brighton & Hove Council Plan 2023-2027<sup>3</sup>
- Community Safety and Crime Reduction Strategy 2023-2026.<sup>4</sup>
- Anti-Racism Strategy 2023-2028<sup>5</sup>
- Housing Strategy 2024-2029<sup>6</sup>

**5. Regional Collaboration:** Brighton & Hove City Council is dedicated to working alongside East and West Sussex County Councils to deliver a cohesive regional response. This includes our contribution to the Pan Sussex Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation Strategy (2021-2024), which enhances our regional efforts through collaboration.

**6. Legislative Framework:** The strategy is also underpinned by a robust legal framework. We regularly review and adapt to national legislation to ensure our practices remain effective and compliant. Key laws shaping our approach include:

- **Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003):** Criminalises the act of FGM, including aiding or taking a child abroad for the procedure.
- **Sexual Offences Act (2003):** Sets out a framework for addressing sexual offences, focusing on consent and protection.
- **Forced Marriage Act (2007):** Enables courts to issue Forced Marriage Protection Orders.
- **Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014):** Provides measures to combat forced marriage and protect victims.
- **Coercive and Controlling Behaviour (2015):** Recognises non-physical abuse as a serious criminal offence.
- **Modern Slavery Act (2015):** Establishes stringent penalties for traffickers and support mechanisms for victims.
- **Stalking Protection Act 2019:** Introduces protective measures for victims of stalking.
- **Domestic Abuse Act 2021:** Expands protections, recognising children as victims when they witness abuse.
- **Non-Fatal Strangulation (2021):** Creates a specific offence under the Domestic Abuse Act, with severe penalties.
- **Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022:** Raises the minimum legal

<sup>3</sup> [Brighton & Hove City Council plan 2023 to 2027 \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-plans-and-strategies/council-plan-2023-to-2027)

<sup>4</sup> [Community safety and crime reduction strategy 2023 to 2026 \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-plans-and-strategies/community-safety-and-crime-reduction-strategy-2023-to-2026)

<sup>5</sup> [Anti-Racism Strategy 2023 to 2028 \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-plans-and-strategies/anti-racism-strategy-2023-to-2028)

<sup>6</sup> [New city housing strategy approved](https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-plans-and-strategies/new-city-housing-strategy-approved)

age for marriage to 18.

- **Online Safety Act 2023:** Requires social media platforms to prevent harmful content, including digital abuse.
- **Victims and Prisoners Bill 2023:** Enhances rights and support for victims of crime. Protection against various forms of discrimination, including gender-based violence.

**7. Lessons from Safeguarding Reviews:** Lessons learned from safeguarding children reviews nationally often highlight the presence of VAWG, DA and SV-related crimes. In 2021, the Brighton & Hove Adult Safeguarding Board (SAB) commissioned a thematic review into the deaths of three women with multiple compound needs. These women experienced various forms of VAWG, DA and SV including homelessness, substance misuse, offending, and physical and mental health issues. All were repeat cases at the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) across Sussex. The review's recommendations are being implemented, including changes to the local MARAC operating protocol to improve joint working.

**8. Domestic Homicide Reviews:** Since 2011, Community Safety Partnerships have been statutorily required to conduct Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) to examine the circumstances and partnership responses before and after domestic abuse murders. These reviews highlight how partnerships respond to domestic abuse and enable local partnerships to learn lessons to improve future practice. The council has completed six reviews since 2011, with another fatality review commissioned in 2024. A government consultation on the DHR process is underway, considering firmer guidance for DHRs in cases of death by suicide with a significant history of domestic abuse. A 2021 national audit of 124 DHRs identified 10 key themes, including the need for greater agency contact with victims and recognition of perpetrators' control over victims' agency interactions.

**9. Review of 'A Patchwork of Provision – How to Meet the Needs of Victims and Survivors Across England and Wales:** A comprehensive analysis of this report allowed us to align our local priorities with its recommendations. By systematically examining the report's findings, we identified critical areas for improvement, such as the need for increased and sustained funding, enhanced awareness and outreach, and better coordination among agencies. This alignment ensures our strategic aims are data-driven, inclusive, and focused on delivering holistic and equitable support to all victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

## Strategy into operation

The VAWG, DA and SV Strategy will move from planning to operation through a Coordinated Community Response, involving all partners across statutory services, voluntary sectors, and community stakeholders to play a part in ending VAWG, DA and SV across Brighton & Hove. To ensure effective implementation, accountability, and alignment with strategic objectives, a structured governance model will guide the delivery and tracking of actions.

### VAWG, DA and SV Oversight Board

A dedicated VAWG, DA and SV Oversight Board will oversee the delivery of the action plan and progress towards the strategy's goals. Reporting to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), the board will monitor actions, address emerging challenges, and adjust strategies as needed. Key elements include:

- Task and Finish Groups: Focused groups addressing specific areas like community coordination, prevention, survivor support, and perpetrator behaviour change. These groups will involve various agencies, organisations, and the community to ensure a collaborative approach.
- MARAC Steering Group: This group will focus on high-risk survivors of domestic abuse, ensuring they receive coordinated and targeted support through a multi-agency response.
- Domestic Abuse Related Death Review Oversight Board

### Operational Groups

These groups will focus on specific areas to address VAWG, DA and SV issues:

- Housing: Integrating housing-related support, including compliance with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- Early Intervention & Prevention Working Group: Coordinating services and early interventions.
- Multiple Compound Needs: Developing responses for vulnerable groups with complex needs, including sexual exploitation and cuckooing.
- Equalities & Inclusion: Addressing harmful practices and supporting minority ethnic communities, LGBTQ+ individuals, trafficking for sexual exploitation, elder abuse survivors, digital enabled abuse, Children Under age and those with disabilities.
- Perpetrator: Developing the response to perpetrators from early intervention to relentless pursuit of perpetrators.

### Additional Operational Priorities

- Early Intervention: Focusing on education, family hubs, health services, public spaces, transport, and licensing.
- Digitally Enabled Abuse: Developing best practices to mitigate digital abuse impacts.
- Children Under Age: Ensuring the safety, well-being, and development of children under 18 through targeted protection, education, health services, safe environments, family support, and legal frameworks.
- White Ribbon Steering Group: Driving awareness and preventative action across communities.

- Voices of Lived Experience Group: Ensuring survivor perspectives are integrated into the strategy.

### **Statutory and Community Partnerships**

To support the strategic aims, the governance structure includes partnerships with:

- Statutory Boards: Including the Safeguarding Executive Adult Board, Local Safeguarding Children Partnership, Community Safety Board, Health & Wellbeing Board, Sussex Health and Care Assembly, and Youthwise.
- Feedback Loops: Integration with groups such as the Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDR) Oversight Panel and Risk and Review Groups (incorporating MARAC, MATAAC, and court-related oversight) to maintain accountability and respond to risk.

### **Governance Structure (For Design Team)**

VAWG Board: Positioned at the top of the diagram with dotted lines to Community Safety Partnership Board, and Health and Wellbeing Board.

### **Standing Groups:**

- Multi-Agency:
- Domestic Abuse Death Related Panel
- MARAC Steering Group
- VAWG Provider Collaboration Meetings
- Perpetrator
- Multiple Disadvantage
- DA Act Housing Working Group Internal
- Equalities: To consider the response and resources

### **Time-Limited:**

- Housing Operational Group: Focus on operational matters in Housing, Reciprocal Arrangements, and potential DAHA Accreditation
- Health and VAWG
- Task and Finish Groups as required

## **Our Actions**

To ensure clear and targeted delivery, we have embedded the action plan directly under each strategic priority within this strategy document. For each priority, we have outlined specific actions to be taken and their intended outcomes, providing a focused approach that aligns with our commitment to transparency and accountability. This structure allows partners and stakeholders to clearly understand the desired impact of each action, supporting a coordinated effort towards achieving our overarching goals.

## **Priority one: A strengthened Community Coordinated Response**

No	Action	Intended Outcome
1.1	Develop a revised governance and subgroup structure to deliver the VAWG, DA and SV Strategy, with quarterly reporting to the VAWG, DA and SV Oversight Board.	Establish a revised governance and subgroup structure to support the effective delivery of the Strategy, with quarterly progress reports provided to the VAWG, DA, and SV Oversight Board to ensure accountability and strategic alignment.
1.2	Disseminate Learning from Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDR) to improve future service delivery and risk management	Share insights from Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDR) across relevant services to enhance future service delivery and strengthen risk management practices, promoting a more informed and preventative approach to domestic abuse cases.
1.3	Institute mandatory VAWG, DA and SV Awareness training as part of induction for all Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) staff, ensuring that all employees are equipped to recognise, respond to, and signpost disclosures of VAWG, DA and SV	Implement mandatory VAWG, DA, and SV Awareness training as part of the induction process for all Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) staff, equipping employees with the knowledge to recognise, respond to, and appropriately signpost disclosures of violence against women and girls, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.
1.4	Expand action focused on improving safety in Public Spaces, with special focus on public transport, schools and libraries	Enhance safety measures in public spaces, prioritising public transport, schools, and libraries, to create secure environments where residents feel protected and supported, with targeted actions to prevent VAWG, DA and SV and respond to potential risks effectively.
1.5	Work with highways and planning to continually improve street lighting and ensure VAWG, DA and SV considerations are included in the City Plan, planning applications to build environment and public spaces.	Partner with highways and planning teams to enhance street lighting and incorporate VAWG, DA, and SV considerations into planning applications, ensuring that public spaces and the built environment are designed to prioritise safety and prevent violence.
1.6	Continue to support Operation Limelight Activity, aimed at raising awareness of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and other harmful practises	Maintain support for Operation Limelight activities to raise awareness of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and other harmful practices, enhancing public knowledge and preventative efforts within the community.

## Priority two: Prioritising Prevention

No	Action	Intended Outcome
2.1	Develop links with young ambassadors and advisory groups to co-produce events and campaigns aimed at raising	Improved engagement with young people in decision-making processes related to VAWG, DA AND SV campaigns and events.

	VAWG, DA and SV awareness among young people.	
2.2	<p>Encourage venues in Brighton &amp; Hove to adopt a commitment to VAWG, DA and SV prevention in the new Brighton &amp; Hove licensing policy.</p> <p>This will include action on spiking, VAWG, DA and SV training for staff around identifying and acting on inappropriate sexualised behaviour and offending with regular reviews being undertaken</p>	Promote the adoption of a VAWG, DA, and SV prevention commitment within Brighton & Hove's licensing policy for local venues, including measures to address spiking, staff training on identifying and responding to inappropriate sexualised behaviour, and regular policy reviews to ensure ongoing compliance and effectiveness.
2.3	Explore joint working initiatives with the ICB (Integrated Care Board) and /Public Health team to prevent VAWG, DA and SV in maternity services, sexual health services and community services and GPs	Explore collaborative initiatives with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Public Health team to prevent VAWG, DA, and SV within maternity services, sexual health services, community services, and GP practices, fostering a coordinated approach to early intervention and support across healthcare settings.
2.4	Strengthen interventions for individuals with multiple disadvantages, including children in care, who are at greater risk of experiencing violence against women and girls VAWG, DA and SV by identifying gaps, reducing duplication of efforts, and fostering interagency collaboration.	Strengthened, coordinated interventions for clients with multiple compound needs through collaborative, innovative approaches and improved resource allocation. The approach aims to provide earlier and more effective support to prevent VAWG, DA, and SV among vulnerable groups by addressing gaps and reducing duplication across agencies.
2.5	Strengthen the offer to education sector to raise awareness of VAWG, DA and SV amongst young people, using a "whole school approach" and the work of the Harmful Sexual Practises Group. Include considerations of the adultification of young black girls and link VAWG, DA and SV awareness to anti-bullying work.	<p>Improved pathways to support for young people by integrating VAWG, DA and SV into school environment.</p> <p>Delivery of VAWG, DA and SV related education programmes, ensuring young people are educated on the impact and prevention of VAWG, DA and SV.</p>
2.6	Support the Family Hubs to share information on VAWG, DA and SV and provide a consistent process for disclosing information to protect those at risk of harm.	Increased safety for individuals at risk of VAWG, DA and SV through better information sharing and consistent processes for disclosure in Family Hubs.



### Priority Three: Support for Survivors

No	Action	Intended Outcome
3.1	Monitor the impact of key criminal justice system changes on VAWG, DA and SV including the early release of prisoners, the introduction of specialist Domestic Abuse (DA) courts in Sussex, developments from Operation Soteria (focusing on rape and sexual offences), and the ongoing work of the Stalking Clinic.	Local VAWG, DA and SV response is continually informed by the latest criminal justice developments and evaluation of service providers and partners are fully informed on criminal justice system trends and policy changes, allowing for more responsive and adaptive services.
3.2	Hold twice yearly workshops with individuals who have lived experience of VAWG, DA and SV to consult on key issues, gather feedback on local services, and ensure that a wide range of victim experiences are represented.	Organise workshops with individuals who have lived experience of VAWG, DA, and SV to consult on key issues, collect feedback on local services, and incorporate diverse victim perspectives, ensuring that service improvements and strategies are responsive to the needs of those affected.
3.3	Develop a comprehensive VAWG , DA and SV Information Pack specifically for the Housing Team, providing victims with clear knowledge of their housing options and available support.	Victims/Survivors are better informed of their housing and safety options, allowing them to make informed decisions and access appropriate support.
3.4	Monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Stonewater Safehaven by the Sea Report	Establish a monitoring framework to oversee the implementation of recommendations from the "Safe Haven by the Sea" report, ensuring that actions are effectively executed and contribute to enhancing support services for domestic abuse survivors in Brighton & Hove
3.5	Collaborate with the Business Community to improve access to support for survivors Including employees and members of the public.	Partner with the business community to improve access to support for survivors of VAWG, DA, and SV, ensuring that both employees and members of the public are aware of available resources and support services, and fostering safer workplaces and community spaces.
3.6	Review gaps in provision related to disability due to evidence from data which highlights high levels of victim survivors with disabilities and VAWG, DA and SV intersect	Conduct a review of service provision gaps for survivors with disabilities, using data insights that indicate high levels of VAWG, DA, and SV within this group. This review will inform targeted improvements to ensure accessible, inclusive support for survivors with disabilities, addressing the specific challenges where disability intersects with experiences of violence and abuse.
3.7	Ensure that VAWG, DA and SV is referenced and integrated into the Violence Reduction workplan to meet legal obligations and ensure VAWG, DA and SV is a core focus in broader violence reduction strategies	Integrate VAWG, DA, and SV into the Violence Reduction workplan, ensuring that these areas are prioritised and aligned with legal obligations. This will make VAWG, DA, and SV a core focus within broader violence reduction strategies, fostering a comprehensive and inclusive approach to community safety.
3,8	Continue to support the	Work with Housing and partners across Sussex to

	development of Reciprocal Housing Arrangements	develop Reciprocal Housing Arrangements to support survivors to maintain tenancy status in line with Domestic Abuse Act 2021
3,9	Review the support offer and gaps in provision to children and families who have experienced VAWG and in particular children in care and care leavers, to ensure there is robust support and adequate understanding on the impact of VAWG on children and young adults.	Increase referrals of care leavers and children in care to the children and young peoples DA case worker.

## Priority four: Building an accountable community and changing perpetrator behaviour

No	Action	Intended Outcome
4.1	Work with communities via forums and public events to change the culture and beliefs that underpin VAWG, DA and SV using education and awareness to shift attitudes	Improved understanding of VAWG, DA and SV within communities, with a shift in cultural norms and beliefs that contribute to VAWG, DA and SV
4.2	Support Sussex Police to offer behaviour change interventions at the Custody Suite, ensuring earlier stage interventions to address abusive behaviour	Perpetrators are offered an intervention to change behaviour at an earlier stage, reducing risk of future harm.
4.3	Work with Children's Services to collaborate and develop policies and processes in place for assessing and working with perpetrators of domestic abuse and other forms of VAWG, DA and SV when safeguarding children and the non-abusing parent.	Improved practitioner response to safeguarding risks and better understanding of abusive or neglectful parenting in VAWG, DA and SV contexts.  Dissemination of information to change the beliefs that underpin VAWG, DA and SV.
4.4	Scope and develop a Men in Sheds initiative locally at Jubilee Library to educate men on perpetrator behaviour and increase awareness of support services for male victims.	More male victims of VAWG, DA AND SV can come forward to be supported.
4.5	Continue to fund behaviour change programmes including adults, young people, and LGBTQ+ perpetrators, ensuring long-term support for behaviour change.	Behaviour change programmes are accessible for all perpetrators, with a focus on sustainability and addressing diverse needs, including LGBTQ+ perpetrators.
4.6	Support the forthcoming Safer Streets programme	The Government has confirmed that the Safer Streets programme will be the funding for their delivery of their mission to halve VAWG, DA and SV in 10 years. Details to be announced but previous funding has linked to safety in public spaces and limiting perpetrator's ability to act in public spaces



## **Conclusion**

This strategy sets out the role we can all play in responding to and ending Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. We welcome professionals, residents, and survivors to join us in achieving our four objectives.

Together, we can work to make our boroughs safer for anyone who is living, studying, working, visiting, and travelling in Brighton & Hove.

## **Appendix 1. The recommendations for the partnership from the “Safehaven by the Sea: a report on housing challenges and solutions for domestic abuse survivors in Brighton & Hove”**

A number of recommendations were made based on feedback from survivors, professionals and models that are working well nationally, and are presented below under the agency which would be best placed to address them.

### **Brighton & Hove City Council VAWG Unit**

It is acknowledged that the recommendations below align with the six strategic priorities captured within the Pan-Sussex Strategy for Domestic abuse Accommodation and Support 2021-2024, and as such encourage regional joint working/resourcing where appropriate.

- Form a domestic abuse and housing providers working group to develop co-ordinated responses across the range of providers.
- Continue commissioning of a dedicated refuge for female identifying survivors, consideration of increasing licence agreement period given the multiple complex needs of survivors.
- Consider dedicated LGBTQ+ safe accommodation in the needs assessment linked to pan-Sussex priorities in the refresh of the Pan-Sussex Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation Strategy.
- Consider domestic abuse support for those aged 55+ who have experienced abuse, ensuring this is linked to pan-Sussex priorities in the refresh of the Pan-Sussex Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation Strategy.
- Raise awareness of the No Recourse Fund and the Destitution Domestic Violence Concessions (DDVC) for those with an insecure immigration status to support with costs of safe accommodation.
- Ensure survivors in emergency accommodation are provided with a comprehensive support package which includes information on options and guidance around next steps – e.g. civil orders, flexible funds, refuges etc. This resource should be developed by the council’s VAWG Unit, updated regularly, and communicated to welfare officers and specialist services.
- Review the impact of the Enhanced DA Housing Pathway funded by the New Burdens Allocation.
- Continue to support joint working practices between the housing first model for rough sleepers and domestic abuse specialist agencies to ensure the right support is received at the right time.
- Develop training that is accessible to staff working in supported housing settings and the rented sector (e.g. landlords) to improve the response to disclosures and support with domestic abuse informed practice, including where intersecting needs are present.
- Consider creating a Children’s Advocacy Worker role to provide short term support to children who have been subjected to domestic abuse and are residing in safe accommodation, ensuring that their educational, social and wellbeing needs are being met.

- Consider creating a Domestic Abuse Safety Worker role who will support survivors in obtaining non-molestation orders and act as a McKenzie friend for those who are unable to obtain legal representation.
- Consider and explore a small-scale pilot project for housing perpetrators.

## **Brighton & Hove City Council – Housing Department**

- Consider a review of risk assessments in ensuring suitability of temporary accommodation for survivors in partnership with specialist domestic abuse organisation.
- Raise awareness of the work of the Private Rented Team amongst local agencies, following feedback that pathways to private renting are unclear.
- Consult upon and share reviewed allocation policy amongst stakeholders.
- Consider a commitment to a service level agreement with Stonewater's refuge for the Temporary Accommodation Scheme.
- Consider gaining DAHA Accreditation, to ensure safe and effective responses to domestic abuse.
- Review efficacy and adherence of Emergency Accommodation Charter and consider the introduction of a Temporary Accommodation Charter to improve the quality of accommodation and accountability of landlords – with a domestic abuse lens.
- Consider the introduction of a Domestic Abuse Housing Officer role with responsibilities to include management of all domestic abuse cases including refuge cases and applications of civil orders for those wishing to remain in their homes.
- Introduce feedback model for domestic abuse survivors who are accessing the council's housing pathway to ensure that service improvement is ongoing.

## **Voluntary sector**

- Continue horizon scanning for funding opportunities and consider Shared Lives Plus and Women in Safe Homes funding for survivors of domestic abuse. Consider joint/consortia funding bids.

## **Registered housing providers in Brighton and Hove**

- Introduce reciprocal arrangements amongst registered providers across Sussex for households fleeing domestic abuse, with a co-ordination role resourced by registered providers or the council.
- Capture data around domestic abuse to allow understanding around scale of the issue.
- Map registered and supported housing providers within Brighton and Hove and develop coalitions to share approaches to identifying and responding to domestic abuse.
- Introduce a domestic abuse code of practice which reflects the newly introduced housing consumer standards, with a requirement to hold a domestic abuse specific policy, provide regular colleague training, seek DAHA membership/accreditation, and attend the South East DAHA Regional Group.
- Work with Stonewater to replicate the Southdown refuge move on pathway where viable.

## **Appendix 2. Glossary**

<b>AE</b>	<b>Accident and Emergency</b>
<b>A/perp</b>	<b>Alleged perpetrator</b>
<b>ASB</b>	<b>Anti-Social Behaviour</b>
<b>BHCC</b>	<b>Brighton &amp; Hove City Council</b>
<b>BME</b>	<b>Black Minority Ethnic</b>
<b>CAG</b>	<b>Citizens Advisory Group</b>
<b>CCR</b>	<b>Coordinated Community Response</b>
<b>COE</b>	<b>Council of Europe</b>
<b>CSA</b>	<b>Child Sexual Abuse</b>
<b>DA</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse</b>
<b>DARA</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment</b>
<b>DASH</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment, Honour Based Violence</b>
<b>DLUHC</b>	<b>Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities</b>
<b>DVDS</b>	<b>Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme</b>
<b>DHR</b>	<b>Domestic Homicide Review</b>
<b>HBV</b>	<b>Honour Based Violence</b>
<b>HIDVA</b>	<b>Health Independent Domestic Violence Advocate</b>
<b>HP</b>	<b>Harmful Practices</b>
<b>ICB</b>	<b>Integrated Care Board</b>
<b>IDVA</b>	<b>Independent Domestic Violence Advocate</b>
<b>LGBTQ+</b>	<b>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Questioning</b>
<b>MARAC</b>	<b>Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference</b>
<b>MATAC</b>	<b>Multi Agency Tasking and Coordination</b>
<b>MOP</b>	<b>MARAC Operating Protocol</b>
<b>PP</b>	<b>Perpetrator Programme</b>
<b>SAB</b>	<b>Safeguarding Adults Board</b>
<b>SAR</b>	<b>Safeguarding Adults Review</b>
<b>SDVC</b>	<b>Specialist Domestic Violence Court</b>
<b>RISE</b>	<b>Refuge, Information, Support and Education</b>
<b>RP</b>	<b>Registered Providers</b>
<b>VAWG</b>	<b>Violence Against Women and Girls</b>
<b>VS</b>	<b>Victim Support</b>
<b>VSS</b>	<b>Victim Specialist Service</b>
<b>WSW</b>	<b>Woman's Safety Worker</b>

## Appendix 3: Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 On 29 April 2021, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 ('the 2021 Act') received Royal Assent. The Act will:

- A. create a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, controlling or coercive, and economic abuse
- B. establish in law the office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner and set out the Commissioner's functions and powers
- C. provide for a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order d) place a duty on local authorities in England to provide accommodation-based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation
- D. prohibit perpetrators of abuse from cross-examining their victims in person in the civil and family courts in England and Wales
- E. create a statutory presumption that victims of domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal, civil and family courts
- F. clarify the circumstances in which a court may make a barring order under section 91(14) of the Children Act 1989 to prevent family proceedings that can further traumatise victims
- G. extend the controlling or coercive behaviour offence to cover post-separation abuse
- H. extend the offence of disclosing private sexual photographs and films with intent to cause distress (known as the "revenge porn" offence) to cover threats to disclose such material
- I. create a new offence of non-fatal strangulation or suffocation of another person
- J. clarify by restating in statute law the general proposition that a person may not consent to the infliction of serious harm and, by extension, is unable to consent to their own death
- K. extend the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the criminal courts in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to further violent and sexual offences
- L. provide for a statutory domestic abuse perpetrator strategy
- M. enable domestic abuse offenders to be subject to polygraph testing as a condition of their licence following their release from custody
- N. place the guidance supporting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme ("Clare's law") on a statutory footing



- O. Provide that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have 'priority need' for homelessness assistance
- P.
- Q. ensure that where a local authority, for reasons connected with domestic abuse, grants a new secure tenancy to a social tenant who had or has a secure lifetime or assured tenancy (other than an assured shorthold tenancy) this must be a secure lifetime tenancy
- R. prohibit GPs and other health professionals in general practice from charging a victim of domestic abuse for a letter to support an application for legal aid
- S. provide for a statutory code of practice relating to the processing of domestic abuse data for immigration purposes

## **Appendix 4: Istanbul Convention**

The Istanbul Convention is formally known as the '[Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#)'. It was adopted by the [Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on 7 April 2011](#) and opened for signature on 11 May 2011 at

a session in Istanbul. The convention entered into force on 1 August 2014. The UK signed the convention on 8 June 2012. On 17 May 2022, the Home Secretary Priti Patel announced the [UK's intention to ratify the convention](#).

Article 1 of the convention states that its purposes are to:

- Protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence.
- Contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women.
- Design a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence.
- Promote international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence.
- Provide support and assistance to organisations and law enforcement agencies to effectively co-operate to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence.

The [Istanbul Convention has four pillars](#). Countries which have ratified the convention are required to take a range of measures around the following issues:

- Prevention, including awareness-raising campaigns, promoting women's empowerment, and training of professionals.
- Protection, including regional and international complaints mechanisms, protection or restraining orders, and safe custody and visitation rights for children.
- Prosecution. Measures on law enforcement and judicial proceedings include dissuasive sanctions for perpetrators, consideration of aggravating circumstances and legislation criminalising violence against women. On victim's rights, measures include no victim-blaming, victims' right to information and support and victims' protection during investigation and judicial proceedings.
- Co-ordinated policies, including inter-agency co-operation, human rights-based policies and comprehensive legislation and gender-sensitive policies

Currently, [35 member states of the Council of Europe have ratified the Istanbul Convention](#).

There are 10 signatories which are yet to ratify the treaty (including the UK). Turkey withdrew from the treaty in July 2021. The Council of Europe has 46 member states

#### **UK ratification:**

The UK ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in July 2022.



