



*Although a formal committee of Brighton & Hove City Council, the Health & Wellbeing Board has a remit which includes matters relating to the NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB) the Local Safeguarding Board for Children and Adults and Healthwatch.*

Title: Preventing and Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy and Action Plan

Date of Meeting: 16 December 2025

Report of: Corporate Director, Families, Children & Wellbeing

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Wards Affected:

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

### **Executive Summary**

This report presents the council's Preventing and Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy and the action plan to implement the strategy to the Board for information, discussion and comment. The strategy, which runs from 2025 to 2028, was agreed by Cabinet in January 2025.

## **1. Decisions, recommendations and any options**

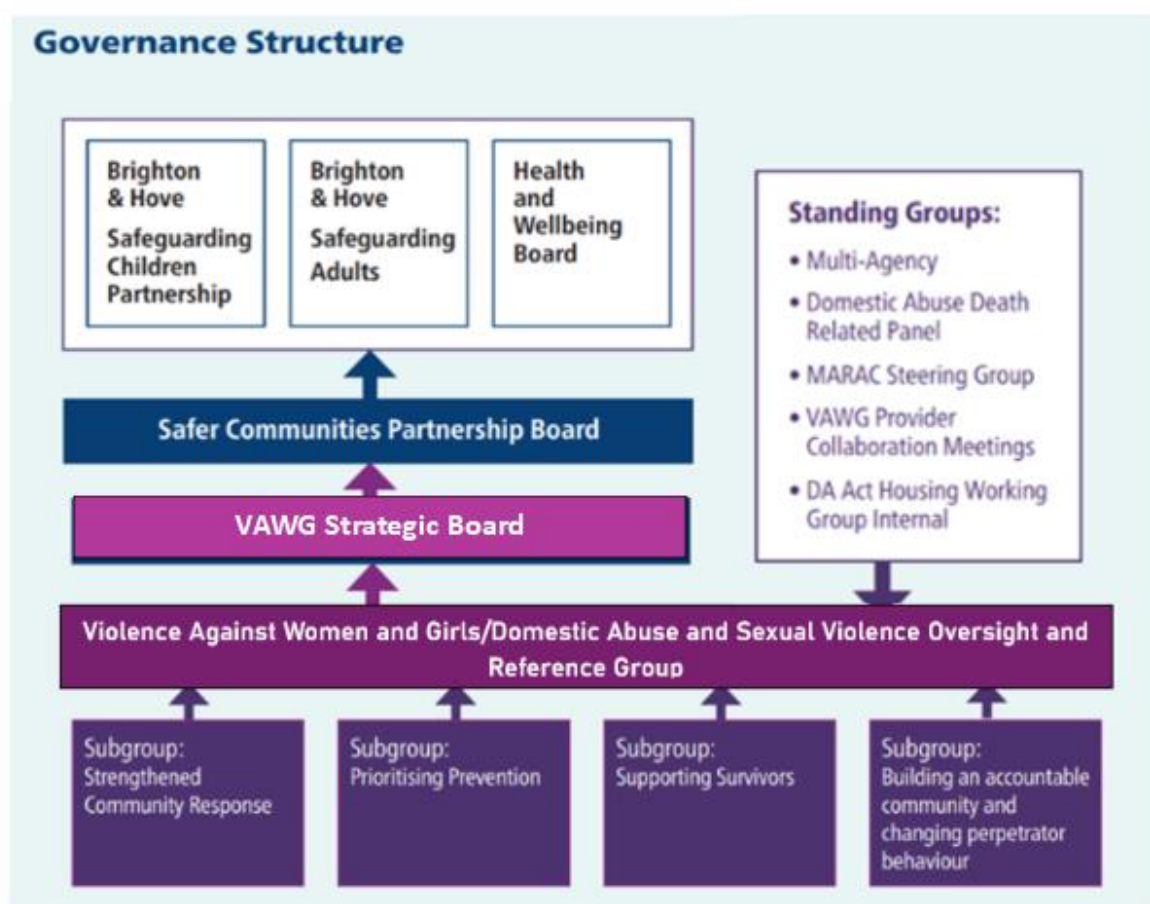
- 1.1 That the Board notes the Preventing and Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2025–28, and progress in delivering the action plan for its implementation.
- 1.2 That the Board supports the proposed role for health partners in supporting delivery of the strategy, as set out in section 2.8 of this report.

## **2. Relevant information**

- 2.1 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is the umbrella term used to describe a range of abusive and violent behaviours and acts, which are predominantly, but not exclusively, experienced by women and girls. This term and its definition adopted by the United Nations is used to describe the forms of abuse against all genders but acknowledges the disproportionate impact of abuse and violence on women and girls.
- 2.2 The Council recognises that VAWG/DA/SV affects all sectors of the community regardless of age, gender, race, disability, or sex. It includes but is not limited to:
  - Domestic abuse
  - Sexual violence/rape
  - Sexual Harassment
  - Sexual exploitation
  - Stalking
  - Crimes committed in the name of “honour”
  - Forced marriage
  - Female genital mutilation/cutting
  - Faith based abuse
  - Violence against women in public spaces
  - Forced Prostitution and human trafficking
  - Digitally enabled Abuse
  - Economic Abuse
- 2.3 The current (2024) UK government has identified the prevalence of VAWG/DA/SV as a national threat. The Governments mission is to “reduce such violence by 50% (VAWG) within the next decade”.

- 2.4 VAWG/DA/SV is high in Brighton and Hove with domestic abuse making up 11% of all recorded crime in Brighton & Hove for 2023/2024. Police reports show that there were 1,209 sexual offences, with which 1,009 of these incidents were classified as serious sexual offences. In addition, there were 460 stalking incidents reported to the Police in Brighton & Hove in 2023/2024.
- 2.5 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), Domestic Abuse (DA), and Sexual Violence (SV) exacerbate health inequalities and contribute significantly to premature mortality among those affected. Between July 2024 and June 2025, 903 cases were referred to the Brighton & Hove MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) to reduce harm to high-risk victims. Of these, 39% (352 cases) involved individuals with a disability or mental health issue. The National Police Chiefs' Council has acknowledged that, since 2023, the number of suicide-related domestic abuse deaths has exceeded the number of domestic abuse homicides nationally. Currently, the Community Safety Partnership is managing six active Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews, including three suicide-related reviews in 2025.
- 2.6 The attached strategy is built around four key strategic priorities that guide our approach to addressing VAWG, DA and SV, these are below:
- 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.
  - Prioritising prevention to end VAWG, DA and SV through a collaborative approach to awareness raising, data and information sharing, education and communication campaigns.
  - 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.
  - 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.
- 2.6 To ensure a clear and targeted delivery, we have also developed an action plan directly under each strategic priority. For each priority, we have outlined a specific action to be taken and its intended outcome. This structure allows partners and stakeholders to clearly understand the desired impact of each action, supporting a coordinated effort toward achieving our overarching goals. The full list of actions can be found in appendix 2.
- 2.7 To ensure effective implementation, accountability and alignment with strategic objectives, a structured governance model will guide the delivery and tracking of actions. The new VAWG/DA/SV Oversight Board will report to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), the board will monitor actions, address emerging challenges, and adjust our response as needed.

The Board will include representatives from other senior Boards including the Adult Safeguarding Board, Children's Safeguarding Board, Community Safety Partnership Board and Health & Wellbeing Board. The Board will report directly to the Community Safety Partnership Board and report to the other senior Boards as required.



2.8 Health partners are asked to play a pivotal and proactive role in delivering this strategy by:

- Actively supporting multi-agency case management for individuals with complex and overlapping needs.
- Facilitating effective data sharing and engaging in joint training initiatives to strengthen partnership working.
- Leading on health-related prevention and early intervention activities, ensuring timely support for those at risk.

A particular area requiring enhanced collaboration is the support and management of cases where survivors and perpetrators present with multiple, intersecting needs—especially where mental health, domestic abuse, and substance misuse issues coincide. A stronger, integrated partnership approach is essential to address these challenges effectively and improve outcomes for those affected.

### 3. Important considerations and implications

Legal:

- 3.1 The VAWG Strategy and Action Plan contains specific and detailed reference to the relevant legislation which underpins the need for and implementation of the strategy, including notably the UK Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Lawyer consulted: Sandra O'Brien

Date: 5 December 2025

Finance:

- 3.2 There are no financial implications as associated with the recommendations of this report.

Finance Officer consulted: Jane Stockton

Date: 03/12/2025

Equalities:

- 3.3 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was produced to support the strategy. The main issues identified in the EIA are summarised below:

Public consultations revealed significant safety concerns, due to sexual harassment, particularly at night, and the need for improved support and respect for dignity for those with lived experiences of VAWG, alongside a balanced provision of services to meet the needs of a diverse city like Brighton & Hove. The EIA highlights the need for a co-ordinated community response to VAWG, DA, and SV, with the support of key statutory partners with a focus on prevention, support for survivors, and accountability for perpetrators.

It is important to address funding reduction implications for those impacted, particularly for joint commissioning, and recognise the disproportionate impact on women and girls, alongside gender normativity, inequality and intersectional impacts. Intersectional considerations and an inclusive approach are important so that we do not minimise how VAWG, DV and SV have an additional impact on top of age and gender when there are additional layers of impact being disabled, from a migrant or socio-economically vulnerable, Black and non-White-presenting Minoritised Ethnic background, and LGBTQIA+, especially Trans, Non-Binary, and Intersex people. The strategy and EIA outline several recommendations and mitigating actions,

including various statistics and layers of impacts for the cabinet to consider in provision of services

Sustainability:

3.4 None identified

Health, social care, children's services and public health:

- 3.5 VAWG is a major health issue and features in UK Health Security Agencies work to reduce harm across the wider detriments of health and address wider system issues such as homelessness, parenting, poverty, education and unemployment, [www.ukhsa.gov.uk](http://www.ukhsa.gov.uk). The link between VAWG and suicide has now been recognized with the inclusion of suicide in Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDR) formerly known as Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR). The strategy aligns with these workstreams and we will continue to work with Health to address health inequalities linked to Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

## Supporting documents and information

Appendix1: Preventing and Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls,  
Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2025-28