

Milton Keynes

Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2020 – 2025



Foreword

Domestic abuse continues to have a damaging and lasting impact on the lives of adults and children across Milton Keynes. It is prevalent in all communities and all areas of our City, the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment 2018-20 estimated that approximately 12,000 adults in Milton Keynes will experience domestic abuse each year. However, despite the increase in information the number of people contacting police and support services remains low. Sadly, domestic abuse continues to be a crime that people don't feel they can report.

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

In the face of the coronavirus pandemic and measures to limit its spread, life has become even more challenging for victims. Survivors will be reminded of restrictions previously imposed by perpetrators while perpetrators currently in the home will have opportunity to further control and limit their victim's freedom. It is vital that we enable victims to reach local services and that professionals take every opportunity to provide such facilities.

We are proud to have protected and maintained a consistent level of funding for local specialist domestic abuse services. The partnership will be able to bid collectively for funding, and have already been successful in a bid to MHCLG for £86k towards a dispersed housing scheme that will provide support to vulnerable people who are unable to access the Refuge.

I am delighted that the voice of the survivor has been a key element in informing our strategic priorities. It is important we continue to listen and respond to their feedback and recommendations to make real progress.

We must do everything we can to prevent people from experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse in the future, we do this by identifying it early and educating our young people on positive, healthy relationships. This strategy will do that as well as raising aspirations of those who have experienced it and supporting those who are suffering now.

Working together we can tackle domestic abuse, we must tackle it and, I believe, with this strategy and the continuous work to deliver it, we will.

Councillor Hannah O'Neill,
Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

Kelly Gardner,
Deputy Commander Thames Valley Police Milton Keynes

Survivor's Voice

“When you are at the refuge it is too late, the damage is done. More needs to be done earlier on to make sure we do not get to this stage.

We need to prevent domestic abuse by raising awareness, protecting victims and ensuring access to services.”

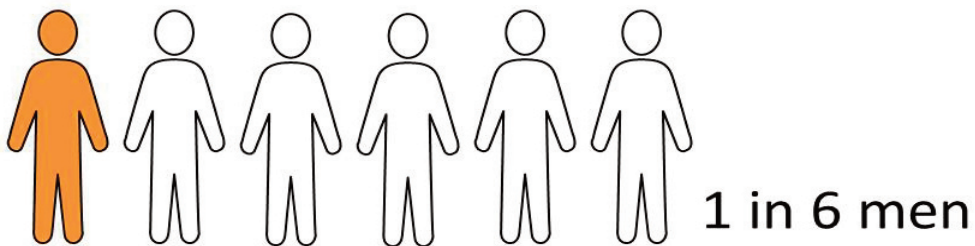
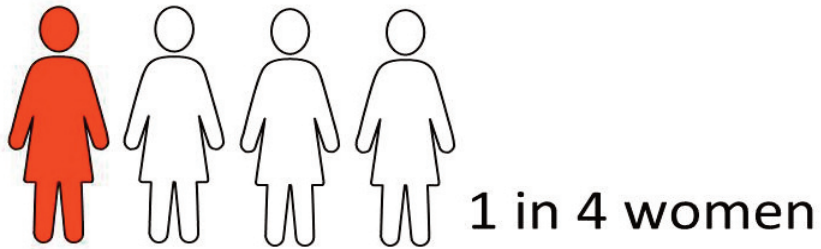
Defining domestic abuse and its impact

What is it?

Domestic abuse includes different forms of abuse and may not include physical violence. Other forms include sexual, psychological and economic abuse.

Each form is committed against someone to exert power and control over them. It can be committed by a current or former partner or family member.

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



It is crime which disproportionately affects women, however it can happen to anyone irrespective of sexuality, religion, gender, ethnicity, income or age.

Examples include:

- Families forcing their children to marry someone
- Carer making their elderly relative feel like a burden
- Teenager shouting at, pushing or slapping their parent
- Being prevented from seeing friends and family by a partner
- Being forced to take out credit cards and loans against your will
- Being criticised, humiliated, your feelings being ignored or your confidence being affected
- Being forced to take part in unwanted, unsafe or degrading sexual activity

What is the impact?

The impact can be long lasting, leaving both physical and mental scars that a survivor advised us “you live with forever”.

In addition, it often diminishes someone’s financial resources and ability to rebuild their lives and contributes towards poverty and homelessness.

Children are greatly impacted as it is deemed an Adverse Childhood Experience, which are known to have long-term impacts on health, wellbeing and development. It is not uncommon for children who have witnessed domestic abuse to learn to accept abuse as normal behaviour.

What do we know about domestic abuse in Milton Keynes?

As one of the fastest growing local authorities in the UK, it is anticipated that the demand for domestic abuse services will increase. The coronavirus crisis has introduced further pressures that may have lasting impacts on domestic abuse in Milton Keynes.

10% of calls in Milton Keynes to Thames Valley Police are initially classified as domestic abuse

70% of women in the refuge are from a BAMER group (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic or Refugee)

Since the Home Office introduced Domestic Homicide Reviews in 2011, 7 reviews have commenced in Milton Keynes

Domestic abuse is one of the top three reasons for court proceedings being issued to ensure the safety and protection of a child

In 2018-19 there were 7,869 domestic abuse incidents reported to police in Milton Keynes

In 2018-19 - 69 women and 79 children were supported through the refuge but each year over 100 families are turned away

Our vision and scope

Vision

Milton Keynes is a place where domestic abuse is not tolerated and where everyone can expect healthy and fulfilling relationships.

In Milton Keynes, local agencies are committed to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy to “stop all forms of abuse and exploitation, including domestic abuse” and Safer MK strategy to “Ensure effective partnership response to the tackling of Domestic Abuse.” The Domestic Abuse Partnership Board will address both strategies with a focus on preventing domestic abuse.

We want to make sure that the right help and support is available so that fewer victims and their children reach crisis point, and the harm caused is reduced or avoided altogether. If we are to realise this vision, domestic abuse must become **everyone’s business**.

Scope

This strategy responds to:

- Adults, children and young people who are experiencing domestic abuse,
- Children who are exposed to or witness domestic abuse at home,
- Perpetrators of domestic abuse.

In the context of:

- Abuse within intimate or family relationships, from the age of 16
- Abuse which continues after a relationship has ended
- So-called ‘honour’ based violence and forced marriage



Supporting legislation

Adoption and Children Act 2002 (s120) definition of harm to a child includes ‘impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another’

Care Act 2014 the Health and Social Care system’s role to protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect

Serious Crime Act 2015 controlling and coercive behaviour became criminal offence. Controlling behaviour is behaviour that makes people subordinate or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, taking control of their resources and depriving them of their independence. Coercive behaviour includes acts of assault, threat, humiliation or intimidation that are used to harm, punish or frighten another person.

Domestic Abuse Bill 2019 -21 including statutory definition of domestic abuse, raising awareness and monitoring local responses to domestic abuse.

How we will achieve our vision?

What we've done so far

Following a needs assessment in 2018, this strategy has been informed by an in-depth consultation process with professionals and agencies from the voluntary and statutory sectors, as well as speaking to people who have experienced different forms of domestic abuse. By capturing their voices, and making them central to our strategy, we hope to get the priorities for Milton Keynes right.

Focus groups and interviews were carried out in spring 2020 with people from a wide range of backgrounds including those in vulnerable and minority groups. These included women staying at a refuge receiving wraparound support and people who had been discharged from services. Although every situation was different, there were recurring themes which were identified and grouped together to shape this strategy. The feedback from survivors largely confirmed findings in the needs assessment and Domestic Homicide Review recommendations.

Service mapping as part of the consultation process was developed to map what is currently in place in Milton Keynes for domestic abuse and to undertake a gap analysis to help identify what more needs to be done.



Accountability and governance

The Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership will be responsible for the implementation of this strategy and deploy working groups as needed. The MK Together Assurance Board will oversee its effectiveness.

What we are going to do

What we set out to do to achieve our vision is outlined in the following priority pages which have received multi-agency input and will guide the development of an action plan.

1: Raising Expectations

Why do we need to raise expectations?

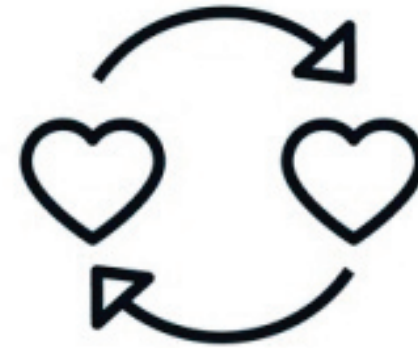
Prevention starts with changing attitudes by working with children from a young age to raise their awareness and educate them about equality and respect. There is evidence that educational programmes can help change the attitudes of young people towards domestic abuse and the announcement by government that Relationships and Sex Education will be made mandatory in schools is an important step.

While speaking to survivors, a majority had witnessed domestic abuse as children. One survivor advised, “my father was abusive to my mother and I just accepted it as normal behaviour.” A focus on the support for children and young people witnessing abuse is needed to address a cycle of abuse.

What do we mean by raising expectations?

Raising expectations means children and young people are informed of what a healthy relationship is and believe that it is something they should expect in their lives. This means that children and young people must not accept inequalities or norms that perpetrate abuse.

Education covering healthy relationships is prioritised in schools and local agencies support schools with this potentially long lasting impact on preventing domestic abuse.



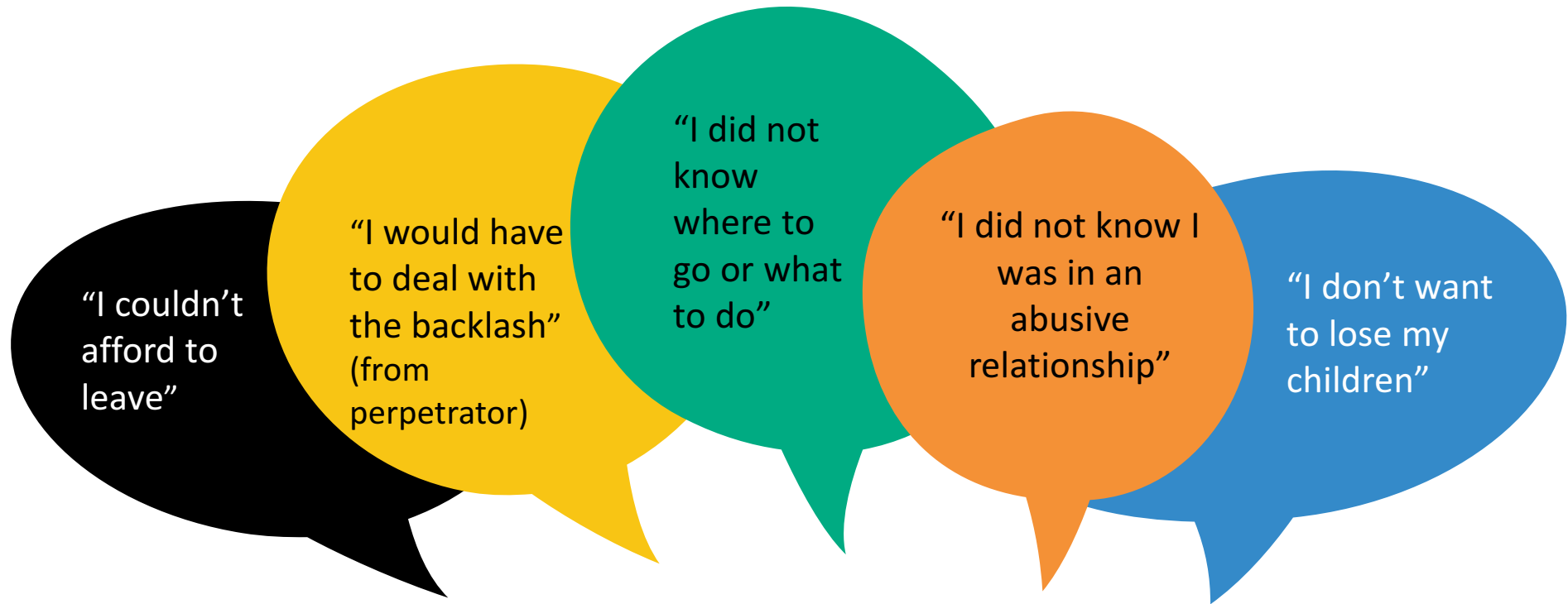
Support for children and young people as early as possible where domestic abuse has occurred in the home.

Where there are signs of abuse including adolescent to parent abuse, we want to ensure that families are supported to address this behaviour through access to programmes.

Successfully raising expectations means:

- Young people and children educated on healthy relationships and do not tolerate unhealthy behaviour
- Decrease in acceptance of domestic abuse from children and young people which continues in their adult lives

Barriers to access services, survivors are telling us



2: Inclusive Access

Why do we need inclusive access?

Survivors have advised us of barriers preventing access to services that we need to respond to.

When accessing services, survivors found it difficult to navigate, “I was passed from agency to agency, to retell my story again and again, it was so difficult I almost gave up.” Some survivors were referred into a service they were not eligible for because of the level of risk was not met, advising us that they felt “something bad had to happen before anyone would help.”

Disabled people experience higher rates of domestic abuse than non-disabled people; however, they do not appear to be accessing services along with people from the LGBTQ+ community or older people. When domestic abuse is left unchecked and without intervention, the scale and severity of abuse increases. The earlier agencies can engage the more chance there is of reducing harm.

What do we mean by inclusive access?

Victims, perpetrators and their children are identified early and provided with the appropriate level of support to break cycles of domestic abuse and overcome the impact it has on their lives.

Agencies and professionals are equipped to handle disclosures of domestic abuse sensitively to minimise the risk to the victim. Professionals and employers are aware of services available and referral pathways to support quicker access to help that is needed.

Where friends, family and neighbours are aware of what domestic abuse is and are confident to reach out to those experiencing it safely and know what services are available locally.



Engagement with groups of people not accessing services and providing targeted and clear information

Successful inclusive access means:

- Increase in accessing early help and advice services
- Increased numbers of people disclosing domestic abuse to services and workplaces (including demographics we believe are most underrepresented)
- Decrease in demand on crisis services
- Decrease in duration of abuse experienced by the victims (adults and children)

3: Empower Victims

Why do we need to empower victims?

The crisis response in Milton Keynes is strong and needs to be maintained to protect people from harm. Areas which were important for consulted survivors to move forward included access to legal advice, housing options, mental health support, financial independence and peer support programmes. However, access to these services when needed varied.

Survivors value peer support groups and programmes however they are not widely available.

Finances were a major limitation for survivors to move on as they were financially controlled that continues to impact their wellbeing. Victims found finances contributed towards anxiety about moving on, “big jump from refuge to living independently”, “I’m worried about finding a job, I will not manage, I have no hope”.

What do we mean by empower victims?

We want to empower victims to see themselves as survivors who are able to move forward and recover from domestic abuse and have healthy and fulfilling relationships in the future.

Empowering victims means ensuring a range of support networks are available for victims and children to access as part of their journey to move forward and recover from domestic abuse. This includes the option for victims to stay in their homes safely with the assistance of a sanctuary scheme.



This involves organisations and services working more closely together not just to respond to acute victims but also support them to recover to maximise what is available and offer new schemes that meet the needs of survivors when they need them.

Successful victim empowerment means:

- Increased wellbeing and satisfaction from those who have experienced domestic abuse
- Decrease in repeat victimisation

4: Perpetrator Accountability

Why do we need to increase perpetrator accountability?

Effective accountability is vital to hold perpetrators to account, to ensure recognition for victims and to deter future crimes.

Without a focus on the perpetrators we will not be able to prevent domestic abuse or effectively maintain safety for victims. A quarter of high-harm perpetrators are reoffenders.

When consulting with survivors about the perpetrator outcomes, none were satisfied with how perpetrators were managed. Perpetrator programmes were seen as a “tick box exercise” and there were no lasting positive behaviour changes.

What do we mean by increasing perpetrator accountability?

Opportunities that enable perpetrators to take responsibility for their actions, change their attitudes and behaviours and address any factors that may be amplifying their risk of abuse.

This must include opportunities for perpetrators from different cultures, communities and circumstances to engage with programmes and services designed to meet their needs.

The effectiveness of perpetrator programmes has been undergoing reviews across the country and we want to review our programmes and utilise the latest research on effectiveness to help determine what interventions have the greatest impact and address abusive behaviour.



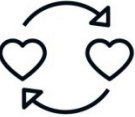



Each part of our perpetrator accountability system is part of the solution, including the police, courts, perpetrator and offender programmes and services, Childrens services and community services. This includes joint working opportunities to encourage taking formal action and bringing offenders to Justice.

Successful perpetrator accountability means

- Decrease in reoffending and offending
- Increase in prosecutions

Strategy Summary

Vision: Milton Keynes is a place where domestic abuse is not tolerated and where everyone can expect healthy and fulfilling relationships

Priority	Intervention	Outcomes
 <p>Raise expectations</p>	<p>Prevent domestic abuse from happening in the first place by targeting young people and children to raise their expectations for relationships and reject unhealthy relationships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people and children educated on healthy relationships and do not tolerate unhealthy behaviour • Decrease in acceptance of domestic abuse from children and young people which continues in their adult lives
 <p>Inclusive access</p>	<p>Addressing barriers to earlier intervention and addressing any missed opportunities with training and clear pathways</p> <p>Informing the public of what domestic abuse is and engaging with groups not accessing services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in accessing early help and advice services • Increased numbers of people disclosing domestic abuse to services and workplaces (including demographics we believe are most underrepresented) • Decrease in demand on crisis services • Decrease in duration of abuse experienced by the victims (adults and children)
 <p>Empower victims</p>	<p>Ensure that victims of domestic abuse are protected from harm and supported to recover and move forward with their lives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased wellbeing and satisfaction from those who have experienced domestic abuse • Decrease in repeat victimisation
 <p>Perpetrator accountability</p>	<p>Ensure that perpetrators or those at risk of becoming perpetrators change their behaviour while those who are unwilling to change are managed through the criminal justice system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in reoffending and offending • Increase in prosecutions

Appendix

Service provision map

Priority	Current provision (Summer 2020)	Gaps
Raise expectations	Play therapy for children in refuge SAFE! (Children and young people support Thames Valley) including child on parent abuse programme	Targeted support or pathway for children who have witnessed domestic abuse. Particularly for children under 5 years old Healthy relationships curriculum delayed programmes for children and young people coordination between MK Act and Childrens services
Inclusive access	Local provision offer support to victims of all genders MK Act supports anyone experiencing domestic abuse in Milton Keynes, including signposting to standard risk victims. National helplines and websites available	Clear and communicated pathways to services Availability of information in different forms or languages, training analysis and plan, workplace policies and champion schemes Engagement with underrepresented groups (LGBTQ+, older people and disabled in particular) Workplace guidance for managers/employers to identify victims' needs and support them Thames Valley BAMER project findings for continued engagement
Empower victims	MK Act peer support group Refuge and support services for residents MARAC Childrens Services peer support programmes MK Act crisis intervention Victims First hub (Thames Valley) SAFE! (Children and young people support Thames Valley) Aylesbury Vale & Milton Keynes Sexual Assault & Support Services Flag DV (free legal advice Thames Valley) Who's in Charge run by YOT with parents experiencing child on parent abuse	Sanctuary scheme (measures for victims homes to be secure) to stay in their own homes More pathways to access support Recovery support coordination between MK Act and Childrens services Raising awareness of offer and Thames valley wide services joined up approach to financial independence and employment support for child visitation at civil court
Perpetrator accountability	Thames Valley Positive Relationships Programme MK Act Fresh Start	Agreed partnership approach to perpetrator accountability including pathways, programmes and monitoring impact Consistent support for victims to bring offenders to justice

Milton Keynes Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board

