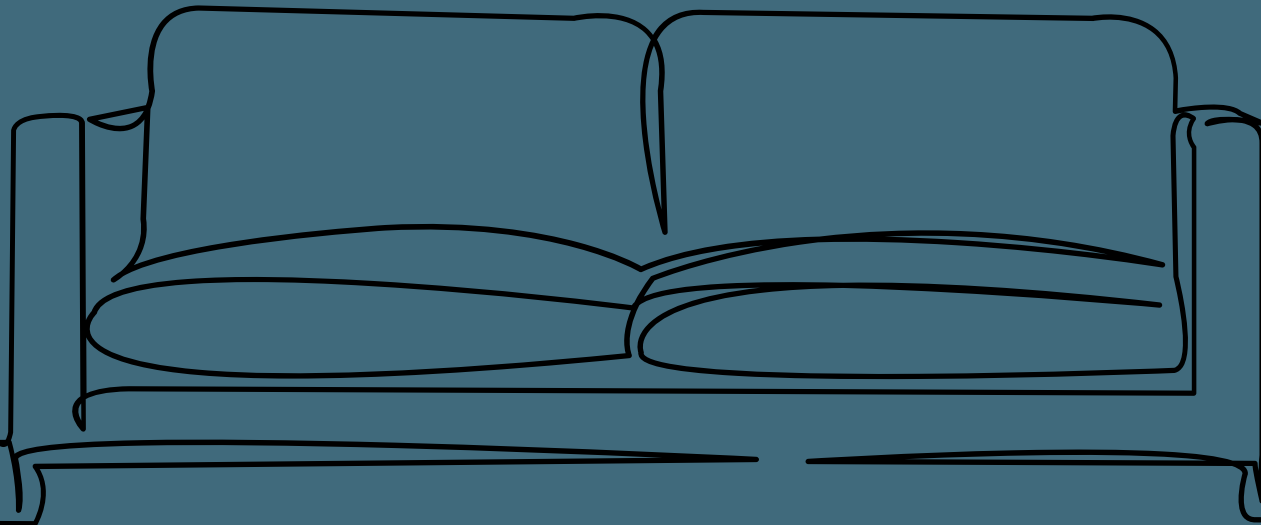


Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership

Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2024 – 2027



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Foreword

We are pleased to present Bristol's Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence strategy 2024 – 2027, on behalf of all the partners across the city working to protect and support those affected by it. This strategy was developed in collaboration with those impacted by domestic abuse and with partners across Bristol. This strategy is supported by a sound evidence base, but more importantly, the views and experiences of people with lived experience of domestic abuse and who have used local services directly.

Domestic abuse and sexual violence: A public health issue



Domestic abuse and sexual violence (DASV) are significant public health concerns and a violation of human rights. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of characteristics such as gender, age, sexual orientation and ethnicity. DASV has a hugely detrimental effect on children who witness or live with it. The issues of domestic abuse are closely linked to the wider issues relating to culture.

We want to prevent domestic abuse and sexual violence by tackling the root causes. This means we need to continue to address wider system issues such as parenting, poverty, unemployment, education, housing and homelessness.

Many of the factors that affect individuals' risk of violence arise through their circumstances and experiences in early life. A life course approach to understanding and tackling DASV is needed and this is why Bristol City Council takes a public health approach to tackling DASV.

Through the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act, children are recognised as victims in their own right and this is echoed through this strategy and reflected in work already taking place in Bristol. The impact on children who have experienced or witnessed abuse is unique to each individual and can include a huge range of consequences both in the short term and the long term.

The strategy sets out our strong multi agency approach to enabling the culture change required to influence the behaviours of future generations as well as organisations. Through the launch of the new Bristol Ideal Healthy Schools award we aim to support schools to work across a number of these areas in their settings, whilst ensuring staff know where children and their families can access the support they need. Educational programmes focusing on healthy relationships, and challenging gender inequality, sexual stereotyping, and DASV are a key part of this approach.

This strategy sets out the framework through which partners will work together with individuals and communities across Bristol to overcome barriers and ensure survivors of all backgrounds and identities can access support that is right for them.

Christina Gray

Director of Public Health and Communities, Bristol City Council

Domestic abuse and sexual violence is everybody's business

In our One City Plan, we set out a clear goal for Bristol: that by 2050 “Bristol will be a city free from domestic abuse and gender inequality.”



In 2021, the Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse published its report, which set out key recommendations to address domestic abuse and sexual violence. We are pleased to have made considerable progress towards meeting these but there is still some way to go with some of the recommendations relating to our wider society in Bristol, reaching further into the world of employment, economy and place. This strategy continues the legacy of the Mayoral Commission Report, further embedding a system wide

approach to tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence, taking a ‘zero-tolerance’ approach and making it everybody’s business.

We know there is a correlation between poverty and the likelihood of experiencing domestic abuse, and that in some of our neighbourhoods there is a lack of reporting and it can remain well hidden. Women in poverty are particularly likely to experience the most extensive violence and abuse in their lives, and domestic abuse can impact children’s safety, behaviour and mental health. Domestic abuse may take several forms within particular communities, and survivors may be deterred from accessing support due to specific family pressures and from fears about the response from support services.

Disabled people in England are both more likely to experience domestic and sexual abuse, and they are more likely to experience barriers in accessing services. Older people are often overlooked in campaigns and are less likely to speak openly about past and present experiences of abuse. LGBTQ+ people have specific experiences of domestic abuse which differ from other survivors, such as the threat of having their sexuality or gender identity used against them by their abuser. Those who do not speak English (or for whom English is an additional language) can find it difficult to disclose that they are experiencing abuse.

Unless we work proactively and reach out to those experiencing abuse in different communities and contexts in Bristol, we will not succeed in ending domestic and sexual abuse in our city. Our Bristol strategy builds on past achievements and propels us towards a stronger, more comprehensive approach to ultimately eradicate domestic abuse and sexual violence.

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of this strategy.

Councillor Stephen Williams

Chair of the Public Health and Communities Committee

1 | Overview



Introduction

The Bristol Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2024-27 builds on the work that has already taken place in the city to tackle these key issues. It continues to prioritise domestic abuse and sexual violence (DASV), taking forward the multiagency response that has been led by Public Health since 2019.

The development of this strategy follows on from the work already undertaken in the last three years including the [Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse Report](#), public engagement and consultation on recommissioning activities, and the [Domestic Abuse](#) and Sexual Violence needs assessments that were carried out.

The scope of this strategy will consider domestic abuse for victim-survivors aged 16 and over and the wider areas of abuse that are included under the statutory definition of domestic abuse, as outlined in the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act¹.

According to the Domestic Abuse Act, behaviour by a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected and the behaviour is abusive. Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse.

¹ Domestic Abuse Act 2021 legislation.gov.uk

The wider areas of abuse that also are in scope include:

- Harmful practices including so-called honour-based violence (HBV), Forced Marriage (FM) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Child to parent abuse
- Stalking (both within and outside the context of DA)
- Non-intimate partner abuse

This strategy will highlight the importance of understanding domestic abuse, in particular other types of abuse that may occur in different types of relationships.

The strategy will use the 2021 Rape Crisis definition of sexual violence to cover what is in scope:

“Sexual violence is the general term we use to describe any kind of unwanted sexual act or activity, including rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, and many others.”²

It must also be recognised that domestic abuse and sexual violence are gendered crimes. Whilst both men and women may experience incidents of inter-personal violence and abuse, women are considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of abuse and sexual violence. We do however ensure our local response is accessible to all regardless of gender and other protected characteristics.

LGBT+ survivors experience similar forms of domestic abuse as their heterosexual cisgender peers and disclose abuse from both intimate partners and family members. However, experiences differ across and between groups within the LGBT+ community; LGBT+

² Rape Crisis 2021

people’s experiences of abuse are frequently linked to their sexual orientation and gender identity. LGBT+ survivors experience and disclose domestic abuse from both intimate partners and family members, however their experiences of domestic abuse can differ as they are frequently linked to their sexual orientation and gender identity. Because of this, LGBTQ+ survivors can face additional barriers to accessing support.

The terms “victim” and “survivor” are both used throughout this strategy, and at times may also be combined to form ‘victim-survivor’ depending on the context. “Survivor” is, however, preferred as it emphasises an active, resourceful and creative response to the abuse³. However, when discussing particular resources or findings, “victim” may be used if primarily used by other researchers or agencies (e.g. Government documents such as the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 or police). The terms “service user” and “person and/or people who have experienced/are experiencing domestic abuse” may also be used interchangeably instead of “survivor” or “victim”.

This strategy has been produced by the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership (KBSP) Multiagency Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (MADASV) Delivery Group. All agencies represented on the group had input into the co-production of the strategy. It has also been informed by recommendations made in the [Mayoral Commission Report on Domestic Abuse](#)⁴

³ Women’s Aid (2009) [The Survivor’s Handbook: Print version 2009](#)

⁴ Bristol City Council (2021) [Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse: Report and Recommendations](#)

the [Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment 2022](#)⁵ and the Sexual Violence Needs Assessment⁶. The development has also been informed by the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Survivors Forum, the voice of young people and community engagement activities.

The Multi-agency Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (MADASV) Delivery Group is a partnership group responsible for supporting Bristol City Council in meeting its duty under [Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act](#)⁷ that was established in 2021. The role of the MADASV Delivery Group is to oversee all activity in relation to the development, implementation and review of the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy for Bristol. For governance processes the MADASV Delivery Group reports into the KBSP Executive Board and also links to the Health and Wellbeing Board and Keeping Communities Safe, Keeping Adults Safe and Keeping Children Safe Delivery groups.

This strategy does not cover domestic abuse support within safe accommodation as; this is addressed through the [Bristol Safe Accommodation Strategy](#).

Delivering the strategy

To accompany this strategy, a delivery plan will be developed by the MADASV Delivery Group, supporting the implementation of our vision, priority themes, and outcomes.

⁵ [Bristol City Council \(2022\) Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment](#)

⁶ Lime Culture (2021), Needs Assessment for Sexual Abuse and Assault (SAAS) Therapeutic Pathways in the South West

⁷ [Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities \(2021\) Delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation services](#)

Co-Production and the voice of lived experience

The voice of lived experience has played a crucial role in shaping this strategy. Through extensive consultation and meaningful engagement, victims and survivors have actively contributed to every stage of its

development. This collaborative approach ensures that the strategy is co-produced in partnership with those who have lived experiences of domestic abuse and sexual violence. Additionally, input from children and young people has been sought to ensure their perspectives are also represented and valued within the strategy.



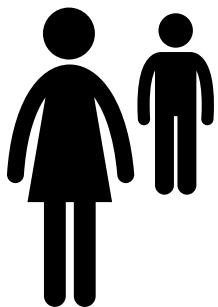
What the data tells us

Sexual violence and harassment

Bristol

1,400+ sexual offences were committed in the year ending March 2022 (16yrs+)²
= 3.6 per 1,000 residents England average 3.0

1/3 of Bristol residents are concerned about sexual harassment³

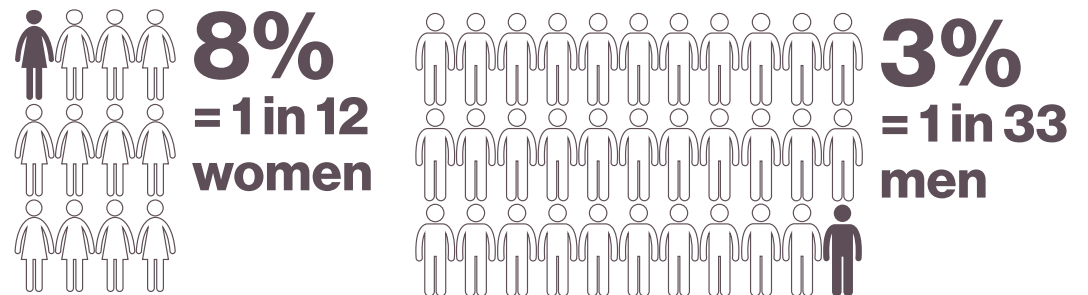


Sexual offences in England and Wales in the year ending March 2022, women were nearly **x3** times more likely to be the victim of a sexual offence than men (16yrs+)⁴
= 1 in 30 women and 1 in 80 men

England and Wales

Experiences of sexual harassment

In the year to March 2023, the estimated % of the population (16yrs+) experiencing sexual harassment was¹



67% experienced sexual harassment **in-person**

29% experienced sexual harassment **online**

26% of sexual harassment was in the **workplace**

¹ Experiences of harassment in England and Wales – Office for National Statistics ons.gov.uk

² JSNA 2022.23 – Sexual Violence and Harassment bristol.gov.uk

³ Quality of life Survey in Bristol

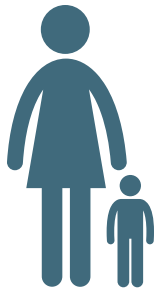
⁴ Sexual offences prevalence and victim characteristics, England and Wales – Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

Domestic abuse: why it's everybody's business

Bristol

We estimate that **80,000** of Bristol residents have experienced domestic abuse in their lifetime.

17,500 of Bristol residents will have experienced domestic abuse in the last year.¹



Women were **2.5x** more likely to be victims of a domestic abuse related crime than men **in Bristol** during the latest year.²

In Bristol in September 2024 there were **10 ongoing domestic homicide reviews*** and there have been **19 published domestic homicide reviews** since 2014.³

*Domestic Homicide Reviews include murders, death by suicide or another related death where domestic abuse could be a factor

¹ Bristol City Council (2022) Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment

² Bristol City Council JSNA Section on Domestic Abuse

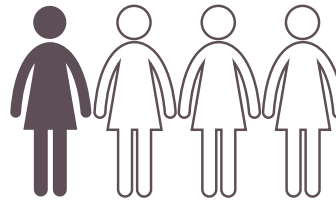
³ KBSP Domestic Homicide Reviews

⁴ Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales – Office for National Statistics. ons.gov.uk

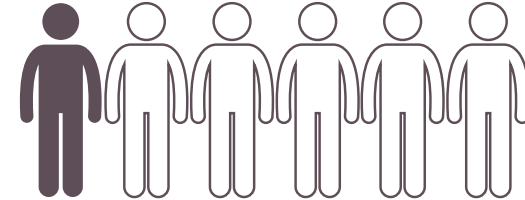
England and Wales

1 in 5 people will experience domestic abuse during their lifetime. This will be:

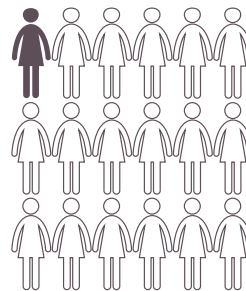
1 in 4 women



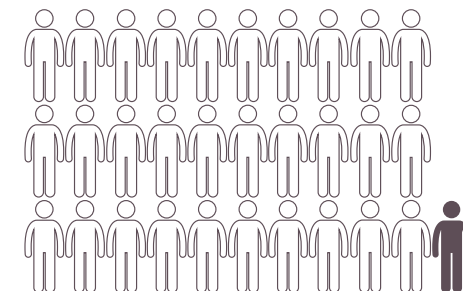
1 in 6 men



1 in 18 women



1 in 31 men



have experienced domestic abuse during the last year.⁴

Since 2013, an average of **92 women and 34 men were murdered each year** as a result of a '**domestic homicide***' in England and Wales. An average of 85 murders per year were committed by partners or ex-partners.⁴

There were **100 domestic homicides** in the year ending March 2023; **70 of these were women**

*A domestic homicide happens when someone aged 16 or over is killed by someone they have or had a close relationship with.

Domestic abuse is a crime

Bristol

9,841

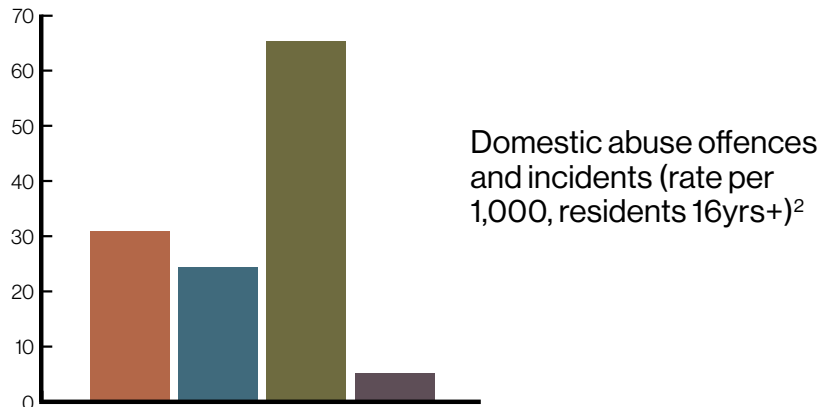
During the year ending March 2023 there were 9,841 domestic abuse offences and incidents.¹

30.8 = England average

24.4 = Bristol average

65.3 = Hartcliffe and Withywood

5.2 = Westbury-on-Trym



In Bristol, **41%** of all domestic abuse related crimes were a **repeat offence***

*Repeat offences are defined as multiple offences committed against the same victim within 12 months of the latest offence

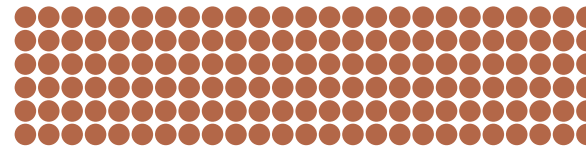


England and Wales

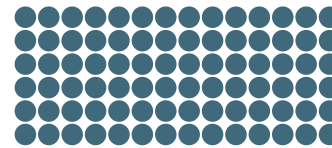
On average the police receive an emergency call relating to domestic abuse every

30 seconds

1.5 million incidents reported



900,000 crimes



50,000 prosecutions



40,000 convictions



Domestic abuse related crime in England and Wales year ending March 2023³

¹Bristol City Council JSNA Section on Domestic Abuse

²Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics ons.gov.uk

³Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics ons.gov.uk

Children and young people in Bristol

Bristol

6,000+ young people

are estimated to be the direct victims of domestic abuse in Bristol each year (16 – 24yrs)¹

The Bristol Pupil Voice in 2022 tells us...

1 in 5 secondary school pupils had experienced **sexual comments, jokes, gestures** at least sometimes in the previous month.

1 in 10 had **'been touched in a sexual way that they didn't want'** at least sometimes in that time.²

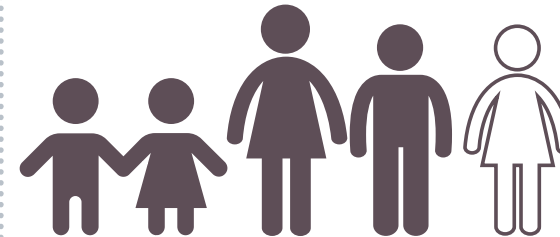
21% of secondary school pupils had witnessed **'shouting/arguing at home'** in the month prior to the survey.

8% had **witnessed violence in the home** in that time.²

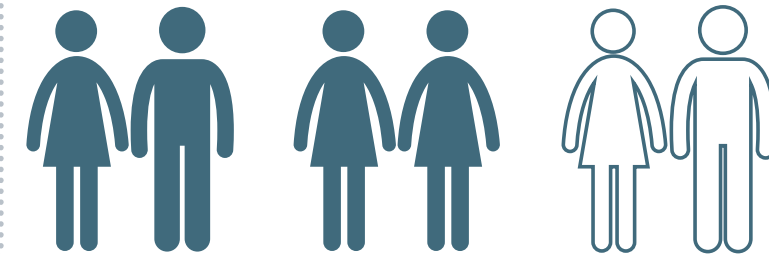
England and Wales

Nationally it is estimated that...

1 in 5 children witness domestic abuse.³



1 in 3 cases of partner abuse involve children living in the household.⁴



¹ Bristol City Council (2022) Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment

² Every Child Matters in Bristol

³ Child abuse and neglect in the UK today | NSPCC Learning

⁴ Partner abuse in detail, England and Wales – Office for National Statistics ons.gov.uk

2 | Our strategy



Bristol's vision for domestic abuse and sexual violence

Our Vision

We will work to eradicate domestic abuse and sexual violence in all areas of our city, supporting all victim-survivors, challenging unacceptable behaviour, and holding perpetrators to account, now and for generations to come.

Our Principles



Our principles will serve as the guiding thread at the core of the strategy's delivery, ensuring their consistent consideration in the pursuit of our outcomes and ambitions.

Experience

We are committed to making every contact meaningful and constructive, whether individuals are disclosing for the first time, being supported through a specialist

service, or in the process of recovery and accessing services to rebuild their lives and prosper.

We will work in a trauma informed way and ensure this is embedded in our work; this will be more than just words and will be modelled in how we will work. We will ensure victim-survivors do not have to re-tell their stories, time and again.

Our approach will be person-centred, acknowledging that a single approach does not fit all individuals. We will work holistically, considering all aspects of people's lives impacted by domestic abuse and sexual violence, consistently recognising the whole person. Above all, we will prioritise the safety of all victims, both adults and children.

Evidence

We will implement learning and be led by the evidence, ensuring a public health approach. Active learning will be integrated throughout the delivery of this strategy, with the implementation of recommendations from domestic homicide reviews (DHRs) and serious case reviews (SCRs). Additionally, we will use data strategically to focus our efforts and enhance the effectiveness of our initiatives.

Engagement

We are guided and informed by lived experience and will continue to be. Co-production has been pivotal in shaping the development of this strategy and will remain central to its ongoing delivery.

The process of system change has commenced in Bristol and will continue as we collaborate. Partners will possess a comprehensive understanding of the entire system and how we should effectively work together.

Equalities

Our approach will be inclusive, extending beyond domestic abuse and sexual violence, considering intersectionality. To provide truly accessible and inclusive support that meets individual needs, we will embed practices enabling staff to understand and respond effectively to victim-survivors' intersectional needs and experiences.

Intersectionality recognises that victim-survivors' experiences of domestic abuse are in part defined by their race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and other intersecting needs and characteristics. Victim-survivors of domestic abuse will experience overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantaged based on the combination of these identities and experiences, which presents significant barriers to accessing support. (*Standing Together, Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation, 2022*⁸).

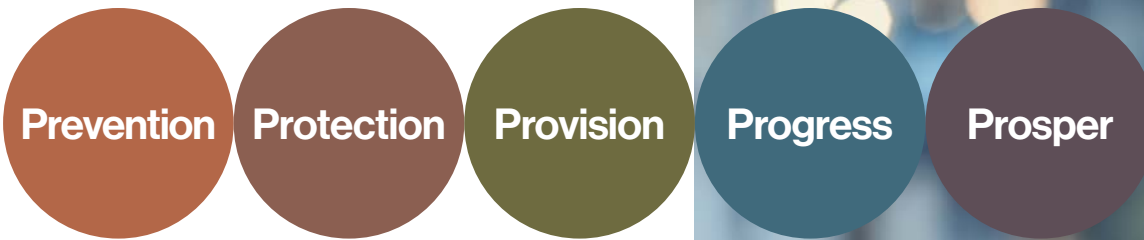
We will ensure victims receive culturally appropriate services and support from a workforce that reflects their cultural needs on their journeys.

We acknowledge the contributions of all organisations, from our smaller partners delivering 'by and for' services to the larger services collaborating on this agenda.

The oversight and delivery of this strategy is held by the Keeping Bristol Safe Multiagency Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Delivery Group.

⁸ Standing Together (2022), Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation Portfolio

Our priorities



The priority themes for Bristol have been developed collaboratively through the Multiagency Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Delivery Group and with the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Survivor Forum. These priorities are informed by the Mayoral Commission Report on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and the findings of the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence needs assessments.

Bristol's priorities have been shaped by the voices of those with lived experience and the broader community. Victim/survivors are at the core of our service delivery, and the inclusion of their voices will remain integral throughout the implementation and actions associated with this strategy.



Priority theme 1 Prevention

To tackle domestic abuse and sexual violence in Bristol we recognise we need to take a population-based approach. This means understanding and addressing the underlying causes and identifying factors that may elevate the risk and how these might be modified. We want to tackle the underlying causes before they escalate and stopping the potential damaging outcomes that domestic abuse and sexual violence bring. In addition, we want to ensure our communities are strengthened to support those experiencing domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Our intended outcome – 1A

Residents of Bristol will be well informed about domestic abuse and sexual violence through co-ordinated communications and campaigns.

Our ambitions

- i) Bristol to have a clear communications and campaigns plan that raises awareness of healthy relationship behaviours, the support available and the role of everyone in recognising and responding to domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- ii) There will be a focus on 'Tackling Sexual Violence' with a dedicated part of the communications and campaigns plan to highlight how sexual violence occurs

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is an umbrella term used to cover a wide variety of abuses against women and girls, including: domestic homicide, domestic abuse, sexual violence, 'so called' honour-based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).

inside and outside of relationships, addressing issues like sexual harassment and other unwanted sexual behaviours. This approach will be grounded in national and evidence-based strategies to prevent **Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)**.

iii) Develop prevention and early intervention initiatives in collaboration with communities to instigate a cultural shift in attitudes toward domestic abuse and sexual violence. Addressing the stigma associated with reporting for victims and their families, empower individuals and communities to actively challenge unacceptable behaviour.

LGBTQ+ inclusive approaches shouldn't be seen as conflicting with efforts to address gender-based violence, violence against women and girls, or initiatives involving men and boys. Domestic abuse experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals is often influenced by patriarchy, gender inequality, and entrenched social norms that discriminate against women and girls, affecting everyone in different communities, including men and boys.

What we have done so far

- Domestic abuse and Sexual Violence campaigns including annual 16 Days of Activism and Sexual Violence Awareness week.
- Campaigns that target specific events for example the 'Bristol and South Glos United against domestic abuse' football campaign during the 2024 Euros.
- New multiagency approach to tackling Harmful Cultural Practices including Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation with establishment of a new working group with broader scope.
- Quality of Life Survey questions to track attitudes to Domestic Abuse and experience of unwanted sexual behaviour.

Our intended outcome – 1B

To ensure those working with children and young people are well resourced to provide education and interventions that promote healthy relationship behaviours and the delivery of messages that prevent the normalisation of abuse and of sexual violence.

Our ambitions

- i) Bristol schools will take a 'whole school approach' to domestic abuse and sexual violence through completion of the [Bristol Ideal Award](#) which includes implementation of the [VAWG framework](#).
- ii) The impact of the Children Affected by Domestic Abuse (CADA) interventions will be evaluated and the learning from this and the Home Office Evaluation of the [Healthy Relationships Schools](#) work will be implemented.

iii) Schools will be supported to deliver good quality Relationship, Sex and Health Education lessons on DASV including signposting and referral to local support services. Teachers will be suitably trained to deliver them and ensure approaches are adapted and effective for children with special educational needs and disabilities. This will also include a better understanding of **harmful practices** including so called honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

iv) To tackle sexual violence, schools will be supported to implement **bystander approaches**, mobilise boys and young men as allies, and tackle gender inequality and misogyny, working with local specialist services.

Case Study **Bristol Ideal Award**

The **Bristol Ideal Award** is a set of standards and guidance for educational provisions to follow to improve their approach to important issues such as domestic abuse, sexual violence, and healthy relationships. The award represents a commitment to safeguarding pupils and staff, with an aim of preventing unhealthy behaviours in the next generation. There is an emphasis on participation, and the latest version of the award was co-designed with children and young people's participation groups in Bristol. In addition, we want children and young people to take a leading role in delivering the Bristol Ideal Award in their settings.

The **VAWG framework** The framework has been developed to set out an accessible framework which we hope educational providers will feel able to sign up to. The aim is to embed VAWG and the consideration of the prevention of VAWG in a similar way to the ways in which safeguarding is considered through the adoption of the right mechanisms and policies. Providers who sign up to say they have the seven measures place will be able to publicise that they have met these standards and will be part of a network which will meet at regular intervals to share good practice and discuss challenges.

Harmful practices are persistent practices and behaviours that are grounded on discrimination on the basis of **sex, gender, age** and other grounds as well as multiple and/or intersecting forms of discrimination that often involve **violence** and **cause physical and/or psychological harm or suffering**. Harmful practices include 'so called' honour-based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Bystander approaches Bystander training can help people become confident at intervening in potentially harmful situations. When someone intervenes well the wrongdoer receives a message that their behaviour is not okay. This stops the harm in progress and can prevent them doing it again. It also tells others that this behaviour is not acceptable, which can help change group norms.

What we have done so far

- Redesign and relaunch of the [Bristol Ideal Award](#)
- Successful bid by Next Link and partners for Home Office Funding for the [Children Affected by Domestic Abuse \(CADA\) Fund](#), increasing the offer of support to Children and Young People in the City. Part of this funding supports the [Healthy Relationships work](#) in schools.
- The [Healthy Schools' Pupil Voice Survey](#) provided valuable insights into young people's experiences and encounters, including their engagement with Relationships, Sex, and Health Education, as well as their experiences of family conflict and unwanted sexual attention from peers.
- Many of the specialist services in Bristol have been supporting schools to improve their response to domestic abuse, sexual violence and VAWG.



Our intended outcome – 1C

Enhance awareness and understanding of the impact of domestic abuse and sexual violence among Bristol employers, including those in the night-time economy, and promote appropriate responses.

Our ambitions

- i) Employers will be supported to access training to help improve responses to DASV disclosures in the workplace. Support will be available to organisations to develop and improve policies that help safeguard staff and help survivors recover. Abusive behaviours will be challenged in workplaces including sexual harassment and other unwanted sexual behaviour, underpinning a 'zero tolerance' approach from employers to tackling DASV in the city.
- ii) Continue to encourage businesses in the night-time economy to sign up to the Women's Safety Charter, and support nightlife teams in improving the feeling of safety in venues. Bristol Nights will continue to support businesses in training night workers to embed zero-tolerance practices into licenced spaces across the city.
- iii) An action group supported by the City Office will be set up to take forward the One City Goals and strategic recommendations relating to business and employers and DASV.

Case Study **Women's Safety Charter**

Launched in 2022, [Bristol's Women's Safety Charter](#) is a call to action for all organisations, large or small, to join us in making Bristol a fair and inclusive city, where everyone can fully and comfortably exist. Our goal is to build a friendly community of businesses who come together to support the belief that harassment should never be tolerated in the night-time economy. We want to enable night-time businesses to adopt a zero-tolerance approach towards all types of harassment, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. We will achieve this through a network of night safety champions, providing training, and sharing best practices.



Priority theme 2 Protection

To disrupt the cycle of domestic abuse and bring about enduring change for victims, it is crucial to address and hold perpetrators accountable for their behaviour. Providing support for individuals to develop healthy relationship behaviours is essential, acknowledging the broader impact of perpetrator behaviours on families. There is still a big gap in working with sexual violence perpetrators and this needs to be explored to help build an evidence base. It is also important to understand other types of abuse that may occur in different types of relationships.

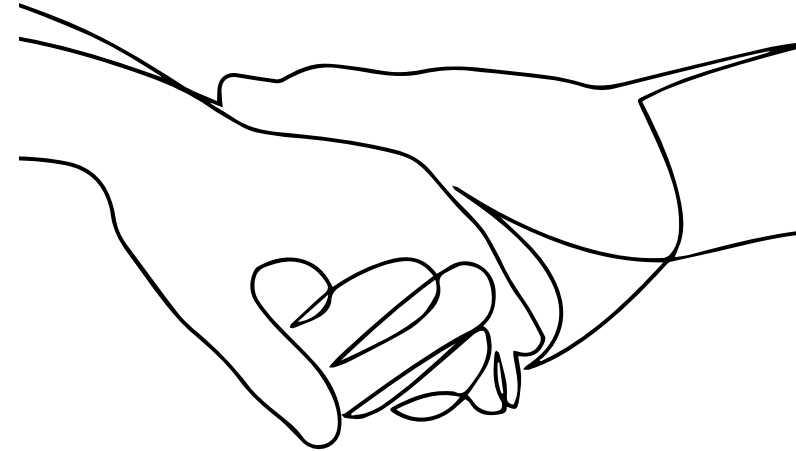
Our intended outcome – 2a

To ensure the development and delivery of local specialist support for perpetrators of domestic abuse, other harmful relationship behaviours and sexual violence that addresses these behaviours and creates lasting positive change; stopping the perpetration of abuse and making victims safer.

Our ambitions

- i) Establish clear pathways for signposting and referring perpetrators, ensuring that workers, survivors, and those responsible are aware of available resources and support services throughout the system.
- ii) Explore and research opportunities to address harmful behaviours within interfamilial relationships. Additionally, investigate commissioning possibilities to enhance intervention and support strategies in these contexts.

- iii) Maintain a suite of evidence-based options for perpetrators to address their perpetrating behaviour such as DRIVE, ensuring effectiveness of interventions is evaluated and reviewed.



Case Study **DRIVE**

Drive is a multi-agency response to high-risk perpetrators of domestic abuse. The approach aims to increase victim safety and reduce the perpetration of domestic abuse by combining disruption, support and behaviour change interventions alongside protective support work with victims. At the end of June 2024 the DRIVE project in Bristol had 40 open cases.

What we have done so far

- Commissioned the [DRIVE programme](#) across BNSSG in partnership with neighbouring authorities and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- Worked with partners to understand and reduce parental conflict.

Our intended outcome – 2b

To ensure a system wide joined up approach to addressing perpetrator behaviour that enables all agencies to identify perpetrators and respond appropriately and challenge the system to develop a robust criminal justice response that brings perpetrators to justice.

Our ambitions

- i) Clear information sharing protocols between agencies regarding perpetrators and victims will continue to be developed and implemented to help identify perpetrators either through their own actions or through their victims to help support a co-ordinated response. Opportunities for intervention and to prevent escalation will be identified.
- ii) Learning and recommendations from [domestic homicide reviews](#) regarding perpetrators will be implemented and other areas of development will be identified and acted upon to improve the system wide response. This will include examining how departments currently work together and collaborate to restrict the impact of perpetrators on their victims.

A **Domestic Homicide Review** (DHR) is a review into the circumstances around a death following domestic abuse. The purpose is to establish what can be learned from the death regarding the way in which local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard victims.

- iii) Enhance staff knowledge of perpetrators and their behaviours through comprehensive training and policy development. Emphasize the nuanced complexity of perpetrator actions, including the potential 'grooming' of staff and exploitation of systems to perpetuate abuse. Focus on understanding coercion, control, and manipulation post-separation, and examine the use of children to enable continued abuse, while addressing the impact on both workers and victims.
- iv) Sustain ongoing advocacy efforts to enhance support for victims within the criminal, civic and family justice system, with a specific focus on family courts. Seek to improve understanding among legal professionals about the impact and implications for victims within the current legal process. Implement insights derived from the 'court up' service to inform and enhance support mechanisms.
- v) Establish and maintain a connection between ongoing initiatives addressing sexual violence and the [Child Sexual Abuse pathway](#), fostering a cohesive approach to support and intervention.
- vi) Victims will be provided with an enhanced level of support throughout the criminal justice process; thus leading to a reduction in attrition rate and improved conviction rate in cases of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

What we have done so far

- Avon and Somerset was the pilot force for [Project Bluestone](#), a collaboration with academics which involved 'deep dive' research into data and cases in order to provide recommendations on how to increase charge rates and improve support and engagement with victims of rape and sexual assault.
- The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Survivor Forum has been working with representatives of the judiciary system to improve the experience of survivors navigating the family court system.

Our intended outcome – 2c

Domestic violence case conferencing arrangements (such as MARAC) will be effective in highlighting and providing the right levels of support to protect potential victims of serious harm.

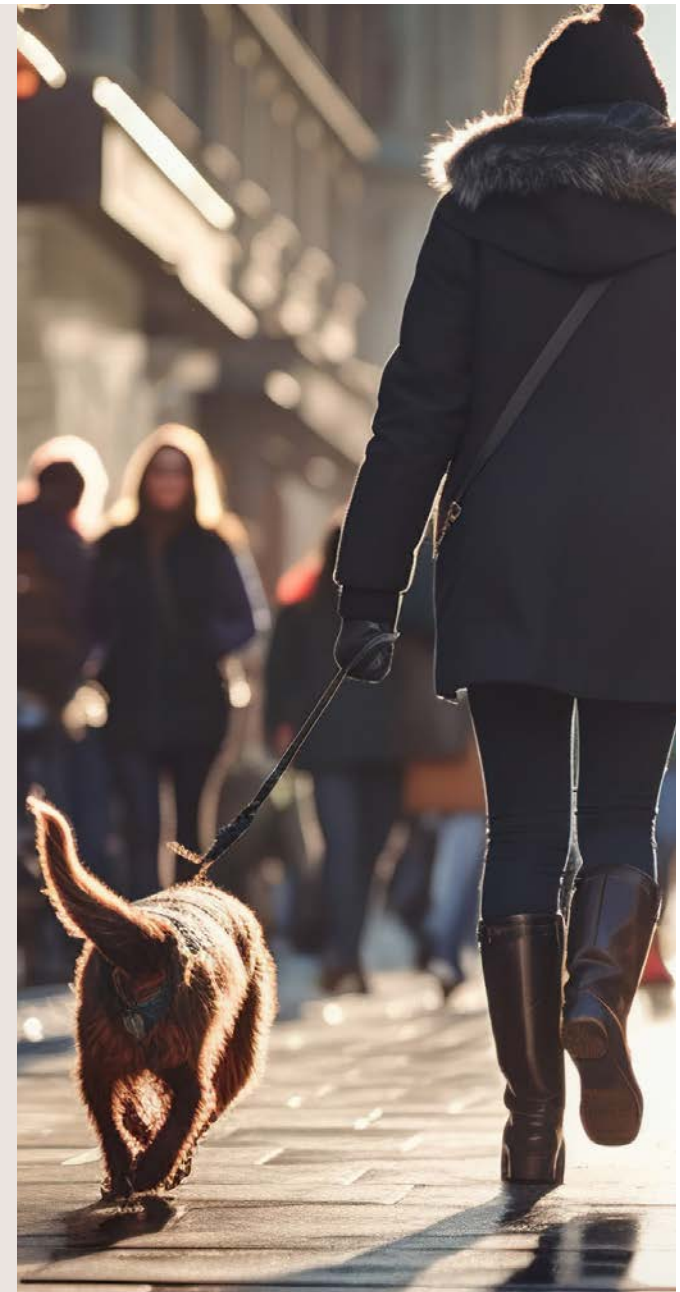
Our ambitions

- i) MARAC will be adequately resourced by statutory partners including a commitment to regular training, attendance, monitoring and review. Partners will contribute financial resource towards the co-ordination functions.
- ii) Learning and recommendations from relevant domestic homicide review (DHR) recommendations will be implemented. This commitment extends to recommendations addressing sexual violence, ensuring their application throughout the sexual violence support sector.
- iii) Case discussion process for repeat victims of sexual violence to be further developed.

What we have done so far

- In 2023 MARAC chair training was delivered and representatives from a number of organisations attended and committed to support the rotating chair model.
- MARAC oversight is now held by the Multiagency Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Delivery group where it is also a standing agenda item to be discussed monthly.
- The MARAC steering group has been reestablished to support the delivery of MARAC.

MARAC stands for Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference. It is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between local agencies.



Priority theme 3 Provision

Delivering high-quality domestic abuse and sexual violence services is a cornerstone of any local response to support victims and their families. These services must be easily accessible to all victims, providing timely assistance for immediate safety and fostering long-term recovery from abuse. Informed by the voices of service users, these services should empower individuals to seek support.

Our intended outcome – 3a

To ensure whole system commissioning of services for survivors, perpetrators and families which focuses on prevention of domestic abuse and sexual violence, effective support, protection and response, and long-term recovery, rehabilitation and support, including development of support networks for survivors.

Our ambitions

- i) Services and stakeholders will maintain ongoing monitoring of service access across protected characteristics including consideration of suitability of services for older and disabled victims. Other groups that experience inequalities such as children in care and care leavers should also be included. They will actively identify and pursue opportunities to engage with underrepresented groups, collaborating with organisations and community groups that advocate for those victims and survivors.
- ii) Knowledge sharing will be facilitated across the system through service user feedback. Services and stakeholders will be engaged in a collaborative, co-productive approach with survivors and individuals motivated to change their abusive behaviours,

prioritising survivor voices. Ensure support and provision are effective and informed by those who utilise and deliver the services. Emphasise particular attention to 'under-served' communities, ensuring their voices are heard.

- iii) Children and young people will have a meaningful voice in Bristol's response to domestic abuse and sexual violence, including harmful practices. They will be involved in the design and review of services to ensure the needs of children who are experiencing domestic abuse and sexual violence are met. Attention will be paid to specific groups including children in care and those with special educational needs and disabilities who may need a bespoke approach.
- iv) Support services to focus on holistic longer-term support and engagement from victims and families to prevent early closure and re-referral into services, and support organisations in being flexible and creative to continue engaging with those with the greatest need.



- v) There will be a commitment to work with smaller organisations and build capacity in the domestic abuse and sexual violence sector, particularly supporting organisations representing minoritised groups and those 'by and for.' This includes providing assistance and forming partnerships when funding opportunities arise, ensuring timely engagement to avoid exclusion due to tight deadlines. Additionally, these organisations will be consulted at the earliest opportunity regarding upcoming funding bids.

vi) Explore the sustainability of CADA interventions before [Home Office funding](#) finishes.

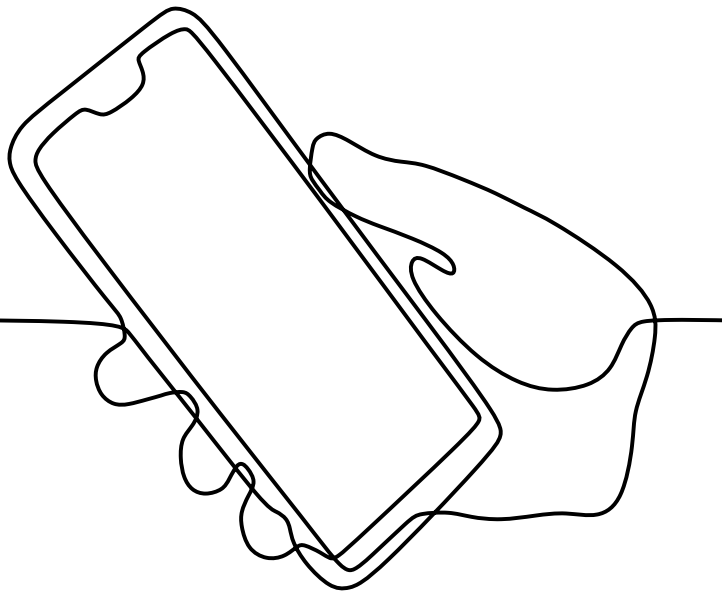
vii) Explore opportunities for funding Adolescent to Parent Violence (APV) programmes. Maintain a suite of evidence-based options for perpetrators to address their perpetrating behaviour such as DRIVE, ensuring effectiveness of interventions is evaluated and reviewed.

Case Study **Co-location of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Services**

The DASV roles that are co-located or embedded within other teams and organisations outside of specialist services in Bristol have been a success and this is something that has been expanded in the last few years. Being part of a wider team improves multi-agency working. It increases the knowledge of those teams as well as helping staff engage with families and individuals who may not have come into contact with a service before. Currently in Bristol there is the IRIS programme in doctors' surgeries and IRIS ADViSE in the sexual health services. Independent Domestic Violence Advisors are also based in the Accident and Emergency departments of hospitals, as well as the maternity ward, Families in Focus teams and Housing Department of Bristol City Council. There is also an IDVA based at Bridewell Police Station's Lighthouse Safeguarding unit.

What we have done so far

- Re-commissioning of Domestic Abuse Services in 2022. As lead provider, Next Link has been joined by Nilaari, Off the Record, Bristol Drugs Project, 1625 Independent People, St Mungo's, Victim Support and the deaf health charity Sign Health to form Next Link Plus, a new partnership that offers more specialist tailored support to adult and child survivors of domestic abuse in Bristol.
- Therapeutic sexual violence services were commissioned jointly by Bristol City Council, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Integrated Care Board and NHS England as lead commissioner. The Service began in April 2023 and is provided by an alliance of providers led by SARSAS and including Kinergy, The Greenhouse, Womankind and The Southmead Project (along with other non-funded partners) who each bring a wealth of experience and unique expertise.
- Public Health and the Housing Options team collaborated to secure initial funding for the Respite Rooms pilot through a joint bid. This project continues to be co-commissioned by the two departments.



Our intended outcome – 3b

Ensure the establishment and integration of clear pathways between all agencies and domestic abuse/sexual violence services, fostering a consistent approach for victims and their families. Develop and articulate joint working arrangements for agencies across Bristol to enhance collaborative efforts in addressing domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Our ambitions

- i) Establish inclusive pathways, addressing barriers for diverse communities, and ensure effective communication of pathways for both domestic abuse and sexual violence. Understand and address additional barriers to accessing any pathway and challenges related to disclosure, fostering accessibility and inclusivity for all.
- ii) Interventions and support services that are community based will be developed and strengthened including those that address harmful practices. Effective training and support will be delivered in partnership with community organisations across the city's diverse communities ensuring services and their staff work in a way that is culturally competent, building on the **Bristol Model**.

The **Bristol Model** was a multi-agency approach to safeguarding and protecting women and girls from Female Genital Mutilation, working closely with communities to co-produce resources and ensure they were fully involved in partnership working.

iii) Workers across Bristol will be trained to work confidently and with cultural sensitivity, recognising the barriers that people face in disclosing and in the different ways abuse may manifest across different communities in the city, this will include the judgement and stigma victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence can experience.

iv) Support Family Hubs in effectively addressing domestic abuse and sexual violence by providing tailored training, tools, and guidance. Foster a collaborative approach, ensuring [Family Hubs](#) have the necessary resources to identify, support, and respond to domestic abuse within their communities.

What we have done so far

- During the engagement and consultation process for the recommissioning of domestic abuse services, both service users and professionals highlighted the need for a single point of contact for accessing support services and this implemented.
- Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership developed a new training program in collaboration with victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence, offering it for free to partners citywide.
- Workshops were delivered on Harmful Practices, aimed at enhancing coordination in this area and refining pathways for better outcomes.
- The KBSP Domestic Abuse Covid Response cell was established at the beginning of the COVID19 Pandemic to provide an opportunity for agencies working on the DA agenda to report on the challenges they were experiencing, find creative solutions, share learning, create collaborations and promote mutual support. These multiagency meetings increased communication between agencies, and after the pandemic this cell became the Domestic Abuse Operational Group and continues to meet monthly.
- The Survivor Pathway is an online resource for anyone wanting to know more about specialist sexual violence support services in the Southwest. The resource makes it easier to access relevant support give survivors more informed choices about

Our intended outcome – 3c

Contribute to the creation of a comprehensive city-wide approach for individuals experiencing multiple disadvantages, with a focus on considering issues related to domestic abuse and sexual violence victims and perpetrators in ongoing developments. Strengthen connections with mental health and substance use agendas to ensure individuals affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence receive holistic support for all their needs.

Our ambitions

- i) Partners will incorporate insights from the [Changing Futures](#) Programme and other systems research, implementing relevant recommendations to drive systemic change for those facing domestic abuse and multiple disadvantages. Evaluate potential gaps and overlaps for victims of sexual violence to enhance their experiences
- ii) Enhance responses to victims experiencing multiple disadvantages through targeted improvements in support services, tailored interventions, and increased collaboration among stakeholders. Prioritise comprehensive, individualised approaches (e.g., [Team Around Me](#)) to address the unique challenges faced by these individuals.

My [Team Around Me](#) (MTAM) is an approach for working with people experiencing multiple disadvantage who need multi-agency support. The approach is strengths-based and provides the client with a dedicated collaborative team to support their needs.

iii) Implement a holistic and trauma-informed approach for individuals facing multiple disadvantages, acknowledging the intersecting challenges of sexual violence and other inequalities. Address additional barriers, including health inequalities, and combat

judgment and stigma, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the whole person. This approach aims to minimize trauma and provide tailored support for survivors – victims experiencing complex forms of disadvantage.

Case Study **Respite Rooms**

The Respite Rooms provide female only, short stay accommodation for up to ten victims of Domestic Abuse and Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) experiencing, or at risk of, street homelessness. It provides women experiencing multiple disadvantage with intensive, trauma informed support and helps them make choices and decisions around next steps for recovery. In Bristol, the Respite Rooms were jointly commissioned between the Housing Options Team and the Public Health Team. The service has been primarily designed and managed by specialist homeless organisation St Mungos and specialist domestic abuse organisation Next Link as a joint partnership.

What we have done so far

- [Changing Futures](#) is a government funded programme, dedicated to improving local services for adults and young people who face multiple disadvantage. They work as city-wide multi-agency partnership bringing together organisations from the health, social care, voluntary and community, criminal justice, local government, employment and housing sectors. Together, they are testing new ways of working in partnership and recording and sharing the learning generated.
- The Respite Rooms pilot was extended after 18 months and is now part of the wider offer for domestic abuse and homelessness support.
- The Multiple Disadvantage Commissioning group was set up to join up working, commissioning and prevent working in silo.
- Drug and Alcohol services are represented at MARAC panels, Domestic Homicide Review Panels and the Domestic Abuse Operational Group.
- An Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advisor (IDSVA) has been funded to work with street sex workers

Priority theme 4 Progress

It's crucial to recognise that the concept of 'recovery' varies significantly among survivors. The journey after leaving an abusive relationship or experiencing sexual violence can range from returning to a sense of 'normality' to simply managing basic day-to-day tasks. Each person's experience is distinctive, and progress may involve taking small steps before considering longer-term plans. While these small steps may seem modest, they are equally challenging and significant in the recovery process. Navigating systems can be difficult for those still managing trauma and trying to avoid being re-triggered. Various types of support is needed for survivors, dependent on where they are in their recovery. Survivors also want support to help them avoid abusive relationships and break patterns in their own behaviour and unhealthy choices they might make.

'How things work, how things are, how they could be'

Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Survivor Forum, 2023

Our intended outcome – 4a

To support survivors in building self-resilience, ensuring improved overall wellbeing, development of coping mechanisms and building core life skills to support them to break cycles and move forward with positive relationships if they choose.

Our ambitions

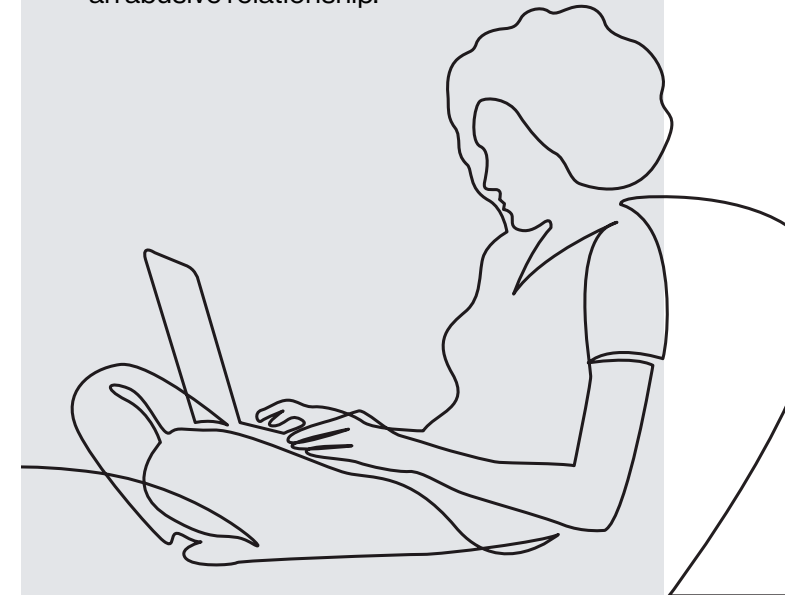
i) Conduct a thorough assessment of existing projects, programs, and courses for survivors and victims. Focus on diversifying options, including life skills, personal development, and relationship courses. Develop strategies for improved accessibility, eliminate barriers, identify gaps, and collaborate with local stakeholders to address unmet needs.

ii) Enhance access to mental health support for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence by developing a streamlined system that simplifies navigation. Implement strategies to improve awareness among victims and services ensuring they have comprehensive information on the mental health resources accessible to them.

iii) Collaborate with service providers to evaluate current courses and groups focusing on leaving abusive relationships. Improve accessibility to additional programs dedicated to 'Breaking the cycle' and behaviour pattern change, promoting a holistic approach to support survivors on their path to healing and empowerment

What we have done so far

- Survivors in Bristol have access to the [Freedom Programme](#) and Recovery Toolkit.
- Next Link host a number of peer support groups that survivors can access as do partners of SARSAS.
- Work has begun with female community members in Hartcliffe to identify projects which would encourage and enable women who are recovering from being in an abusive relationship.



Our intended outcome – 4b

Ensure the availability of accessible networks, community groups, and support systems to facilitate the recovery of survivors.

Our ambitions

- i) Diverse Peer support networks will be supported that cater to the varying needs and backgrounds of survivors. Establish and maintain regular peer support group meetings, providing consistent opportunities for survivors to connect, share, and support one another.
- ii) Collaboration with local Community Organisations to expand the reach and impact of support services but also to increase survivor participation in community engagement. Actively engage survivors in community-led initiatives that contribute to their recovery, fostering empowerment and a sense of community ownership.



Our intended outcome – 4c

To facilitate the recovery of victims and families from the impact of domestic abuse and sexual violence by exploring innovative approaches and alternative routes to support their healing journey.

Our ambitions

- i) Conduct a comprehensive review of drug and alcohol service models, examining how elements of the recovery pathway can be adapted to support survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence. Collaborate with survivors to identify implementable strategies within different system components, fostering a transfer of effective practices and valuable learnings.
- ii) Establish a specialised support initiative where organisations designate highly trained staff with in-depth knowledge and understanding of domestic abuse to provide additional assistance for service users. These designated staff members will offer support in navigating systems, such as making phone calls, booking appointments, and managing finances.
- iii) Explore innovative approaches for post-abuse support to children, including children in care. Improve support structures ensuring safe spaces for communication and address the unique needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- iv) Develop links between specialist services and social prescribers/navigators.

What we have done so far

- The successful Children Affected by Domestic Abuse (CADA) bid for funding from the Home Office meant that Next Link were able to develop a new community service for child victims of Domestic Abuse who live in Bristol.
- The Domestic Abuse Act funding ensured that services for children in safe accommodation could be expanded.

Priority theme 5 Prosper

The focus of our priority theme 'Prosper' is on empowering recovery, changing narratives, and building emotional strength. Through positive initiatives, societal views are shifting and survival is celebrated. Additionally, survivors are empowered to set and achieve personal goals, with tailored support for long-term success.

Our intended outcome – 5a

Ensure that children and young people affected by domestic abuse experience a comprehensive and trauma-informed recovery process, fostering emotional strength resilience and well-being.

Our ambitions

- i) Train relevant professionals, including educational staff and social workers, to recognise and respond to trauma in a sensitive manner. There is a need for supportive adults to help children manage their emotions and trauma.
- ii) Create safe spaces within schools and youth services where children and young people can access counselling services and express their feelings in a secure environment. Look at alternative and innovative ways that children can use to express their trauma in a safe and protected way.
- iii) Promote the empowerment and resilience of children and young people post-domestic abuse, emphasising their development into individuals capable of navigating challenges.

Our intended outcome – 5b

Transform societal narratives surrounding domestic abuse by implementing initiatives that promote 'positive propaganda, change stigmatising perceptions stop 'victim blaming', and actively celebrate the survival and recovery of individuals affected, fostering a culture of empowerment and emotional strength.

Our ambitions

- i) Launch impactful communication campaigns to challenge negative stereotypes, change public perceptions, and highlight stories of survival and recovery, thereby preventing shame mentality and reducing societal stigma surrounding domestic abuse and sexual violence. Amplify the voices of survivors from groups who are often underrepresented. Create an environment that encourages open dialogue and understanding.
- ii) Maintain ongoing investment and support for the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Survivors Forum. Explore avenues for forum members to actively engage in additional relevant projects, fostering independence and contributing to the sustainability of the forum.

Case Study Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Survivors Forum

Established in 2021, the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Survivors Forum is instrumental in advocating for and addressing issues related to DASV. Achievements have included being actively involved in creating public and professional awareness through the release of a video campaign titled '[SOS](#)', alongside collaboratively developing the KBSP Domestic Abuse training package. The Forum have played a significant role in shaping strategy, providing valuable insights and feedback through dedicated workshops. Further engagement with Next Link Plus as well as stakeholders across children's social care and education has led to useful conversations on enhancing support systems, and fostering better co-ordination among agencies. They have also been visited by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales.

Our intended outcome – 5c

Empower survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence to set and achieve personal goals, fostering aspirations for a more hopeful and sustainable future through tailored support, volunteering opportunities, education, resources, and employment opportunities, with a focus on maintaining long-term employment.

Our ambitions

- i) Enhance access to employment support for survivors of domestic abuse by ensuring organisations understand barriers and triggers unique to individual survivors. Implement workplace adjustments, provide advice for employers to prevent discrimination, ensure workplace safety, and uphold the rights of survivors, fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment. Advocate for employers to implement policies that support survivors, such as flexible working hours and remote work options.
- ii) Strengthen survivors' access to education, training and volunteering by guiding them on educational pathways, vocational training, and career development including through supported referrals to local community learning courses. Cultivate partnerships with educational institutions and online platforms, secure funding or scholarships to ease financial barriers, and establish mentorship programs for personalised guidance and support in their pursuits.
- iii) Improve work readiness for survivors by working with partners to offer workshops on CV building, personal development goals, interview skills, and job search strategies to enhance survivors' job readiness. Provide training on workplace communication, conflict resolution, and stress management to help support sustainable employment.



3 | Our approach



Taking a public health approach to domestic abuse and sexual violence

Addressing domestic abuse and sexual violence (DASV) is not a single-agency issue, as it is the culmination of many different factors. Only through a strategic, coordinated response involving multiple agencies, including partnerships between our statutory and voluntary organizations, can we effectively address DASV.

The World Health Organisation (W.H.O.) (2017⁹) defines a public health approach to reducing violence as one that: *'Seeks to improve the health and safety of all individuals by addressing underlying risk factors that increase the likelihood that an individual will become a victim or a perpetrator of violence'*.

Public health approaches can be identified by the following characteristics:

- defining and monitoring the problem
- identifying causes of the problem, the factors that increase or decrease the risk of violence, and the factors that could be modified through interventions
- designing, implementing and evaluating interventions to find out what works
- implementing effective and promising interventions on a wider scale, while continuing to monitor their effects, impact and cost-effectiveness (W.H.O. 2017)

The World Health Organisation (W.H.O.) have summarised this approach in the diagram below.



Source W.H.O., 2017





A public health approach provides a framework to understand the root causes of domestic abuse and sexual violence. It responds with interventions aimed at preventing or reducing DASV at the population level. Public health approaches involve thorough research and analysis to identify risk and protective factors associated with violence.



⁹World Health Organization, 2017. Violence Prevention Alliance: The public health approach. Available at: www.who.int/groups/violence-prevention-alliance/approach

A whole picture approach to ending domestic abuse, for good

Building on the public health approach, Bristol supports SafeLives' 'The Whole Picture – our strategy to end Domestic Abuse for good.' While specific to domestic abuse, elements of the framework are also relevant to addressing sexual violence. The framework sets out the comprehensive and enduring whole picture approach that needs to be in place for domestic abuse to be ended for good.

	<p><i>The whole person: domestic abuse is never all of someone's experiences or situation.</i></p>	<p>Whole person Seeing and responding to the whole person, not addressing a series of issues.</p> 	<p>Whole family Adult victims, survivors, those who harm, individuals connected to the victim/perpetrator including extended family.</p> 	<p>Whole community All communities of geography, identity and online spaces.</p> 	<p>Whole society The general public and those who influence them: the media, politicians, employers, key opinion, and commentators.</p> 
<p>1</p> <p>Act before someone harms or is harmed</p>	<p>People are treated as just that – people, and not issues. The complexity of domestic abuse and links to other adverse experiences are understood.¹</p>	<p>Protective factors are put in place for those at risk of abusing or being abused – people and services sufficiently understand domestic abuse and what makes it more or less likely to happen.</p>	<p>Communities² of geography identity and online spaces are equipped to identify and act on early risk factors and warning signs of abusive situations.</p>	<p>Gender stereotypes are challenged and deconstructed – particularly those of masculinity – supporting boys and men to break these norms. Societal shifts see a reduction in the motivation and opportunity for different types of power to be abused.</p>	
<p>2</p> <p>Identify and stop harmful behaviours</p>	<p>Harmful behaviour is addressed by proactively identifying all motivating factors and consequences, such as other violence, abuse and criminality.</p>	<p>Individuals who abuse any family member are appropriately assessed for the risk they pose to all family members – and themselves.</p>	<p>Community members know they are more than passive bystanders – there is low tolerance and high urgency about identifying and holding to account those who abuse.</p>		
<p>3</p> <p>Increase safety for those at risk</p>	<p>The protection offered to people means proactively checking that all risks posed have been addressed, not just the initial presenting issue.</p>	<p>The safety and wellbeing of all non-abusive family member - physical, mental and emotional – is defended from those who pose a risk to them.</p>	<p>Communities of geography, identity, online spaces and employers/ businesses understand the risks posed by those who abuse and their role in protecting the safety and wellbeing of those at risk.</p>		
<p>4</p> <p>Support people to live the lives they want after harm occurs</p>	<p>People are responded to as people, not an issue or series of issues. Both crisis and longer term responses to people who have experienced abuse are sensitive to their possible vulnerability to future adverse experiences.</p>	<p>When an immediate experience of abuse is over, all family members' safety and wellbeing – physical, mental and emotional – are (re)built. People are supported to live the lives they want, drawing strength from each other.</p>	<p>People who speak about their experience of abuse are believed. Communities and society validate their experience and support their process of creating safety, wellbeing and resilience so they can live the lives they want. The voices, strengths and needs of survivors are paramount, and survivors draw further strength from one another.</p>		

¹ Such as child abuse, child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation, sexual violence, trauma, mental ill health, substance use, or economic disadvantage.

² Individuals might form an identifiable community; we work on the basis that within that community will also be a range of views, backgrounds and experiences.

The voice of children and young people

Domestic abuse always has a profound impact on children. Exposure to domestic abuse in childhood is considered a form of child abuse. Children and young people may experience the effects of domestic abuse both directly and indirectly. Young people can also experience domestic abuse in their own relationships.

In England, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children as victims of domestic abuse if they “see, hear or otherwise experience the effects of abuse”. For the first time children are acknowledged as “victims in their own right”.

In January 2021, the Government launched its [Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy](#), which, alongside justice and prevention, included objectives to protect and safeguard children and young people, while supporting all victims and survivors of child sexual abuse (CSA).

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) is supporting improvements in the experiences of young people in relation to both the quality and access to the health and wellbeing services through ‘[You’re Welcome](#)’¹⁰; a self-assessment assurance process. The consistent application of the standards, enhanced by developing digital approaches and investing in an adolescent-competent workforce across health and social services, will improve young people’s access to services and reduce inequalities.

¹⁰ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (2023) ‘[You’re Welcome](#)’: establishing youth-friendly health and care services. Guidance



This was evident in sessions held with children and young people in Bristol, aimed at engaging them in the development of the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy.

Young people advised on how they would like services in Bristol to involve them in their care.

- Keep us informed of what's happening
- Look at ways of communicating without them having to attend
- Get information out to young people through schools
- Good personal, social and health education of what services can do
- Get to choose workers
- Build good relationships
- Let them know what has changed as a result of their feedback
- Go out to where young people are to get their views such as youth clubs and children in care
- Make engagement fun
- Use social media
- Make it easy for young people to get in touch with support
- Group activities as well as talking 1-2-1
- Put the needs of the child first
- Offer taster sessions

What does an ideal worker look like?

- Works imaginatively, thinking about how best to interact
- Enjoys their job
- Chatty

- Enthusiastic
- Fun
- Big smile
- Encouraging
- Positive
- Not too loud
- Doesn't stare or hold eye contact for too long
- Doesn't write everything down
- Makes you feel at ease
- Good memory and remembers what has been said before
- Confident
- Good listener

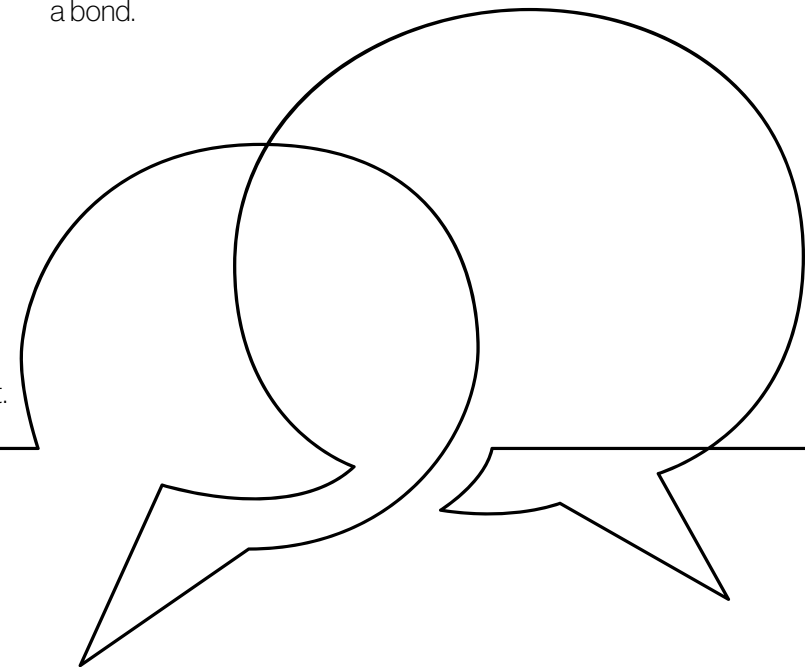
When meeting young people for the first time, come to meet them in a safe, comfortable space with privacy, but somewhere familiar like at school. A place where they can get to know the worker before the service starts support.

How can services make young people feel welcome?

- Food
- Choice
- Friendly staff
- Games
- Young people being nice
- Support to get there for example putting on transport.
- Build up trust – both ways between the adults and young people.
- Knowing you're not being judged
- Confidential

- Trust
- Don't have to worry what others think
- Checking with what people like and don't like
- Bit more like normal life
- Take things slow, don't rush
- Get to know us and our families
- Have young people friendly posters
- Open communal spaces like kitchens
- Do a video for the young person to watch before they attend
- Meet worker before joining any groups

The environment where young people are receiving support should be quiet, calming, soft and colourful. However, going 'out and about' is a great way to work with young people. Examples included chats while driving or doing something routine like shopping. A place where the two can get to know each other and build a bond.



4 | Commissioning and policy



Commissioning and services

The Bristol approach to commissioning domestic abuse support

In 2022, domestic abuse services in Bristol were recommissioned in two sections: 1. Support within safe accommodation and 2. Specialist domestic abuse services. This arrangement is for 4.5 years until March 2027 with a potential 2 year extension. Next Link Plus was chosen to deliver the two domestic abuse contracts.

As lead provider, Next Link is joined by Nilaari, Off the Record, Bristol Drugs Project, 1625 Independent People, St Mungo's, Victim Support and the deaf health charity Sign Health to form Next Link Plus, a new partnership that offers more specialist tailored support to adult and child survivors of domestic abuse in Bristol.

The service works with all genders and offers a single point of contact for Domestic Abuse Support in Bristol.

All components of the new service are also expected to fulfil the following criteria:

- The services should meet the appropriate 'industry' standards. For example, domestic abuse services should meet Safe Lives/Women's Aid standards. There are also standards for counselling and housing related support.

- Providers should demonstrate cultural competence and have a commitment to workforce diversity.
- Services should be trauma-informed and recognise the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences. The BNSSG Principles for trauma-informed practice should be embedded into all work (see [Principles for Trauma-Informed System \(bristolsafeguarding.org\)](https://www.bristolsafeguarding.org)).

Overall outcomes for the specialist domestic abuse services

The overarching objective is that the service will enable those affected by domestic abuse to cope and recover from their experiences. The outcomes fall into four domains:

Safety

Survivors are safer now and better resourced to remain safe. Survivors have increased access to justice. Survivors have strong and resilient support networks and believe they can live free from abuse.

Health

Survivors have improved mental, physical, emotional and sexual health and have resources to maintain good health.

Stability, resilience and autonomy

Survivors are working towards regularising their immigration status. Survivors have increased financial independence, more stable accommodation, increased access to education and employment support. Survivors have hope and goals for the future.

Children

Reduced exposure to domestic abuse for children and young people, with rights to safety and family life upheld. Children and young people are better educated around healthy relationships.

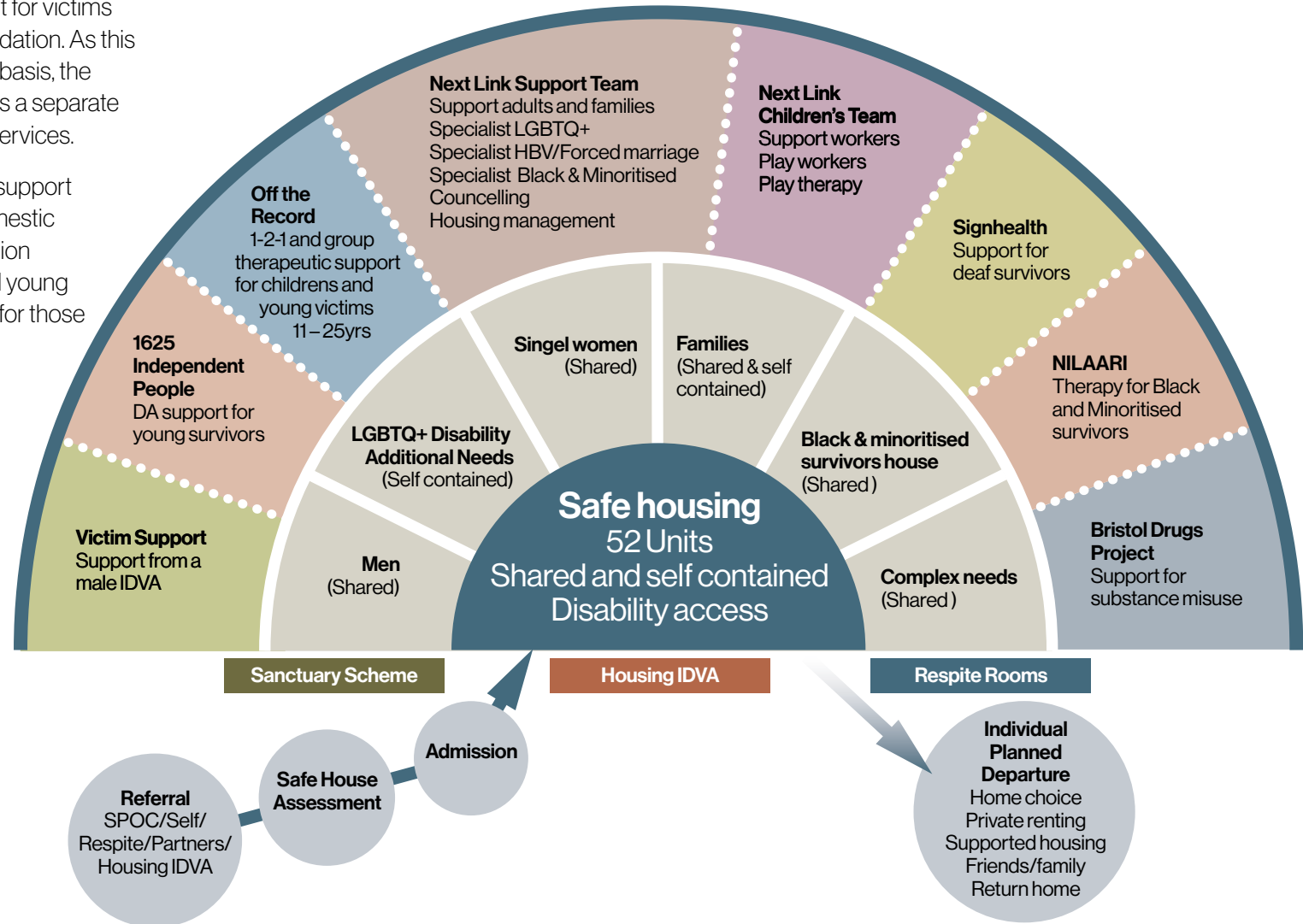


Lot 1: Safe accommodation based domestic abuse support services

Bristol City Council receives funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) known as ‘New Burden’s Funding’ to spend on facilitating and delivering specialist support for victims of domestic abuse living in safe accommodation. As this funding is currently awarded on an annual basis, the accommodation-based support element is a separate lot (contract) from other domestic abuse services.

Accommodation-based domestic abuse support includes support for those affected by domestic abuse within a range of safe accommodation and also includes services for children and young people, services for equalities groups and for those experiencing multiple disadvantage.

Figure 1 is a model of how support is delivered in the safe accommodation Next Link Provides.



Lot 2: Specialist domestic abuse support services

The second 'lot' focused on specialist domestic abuse services.

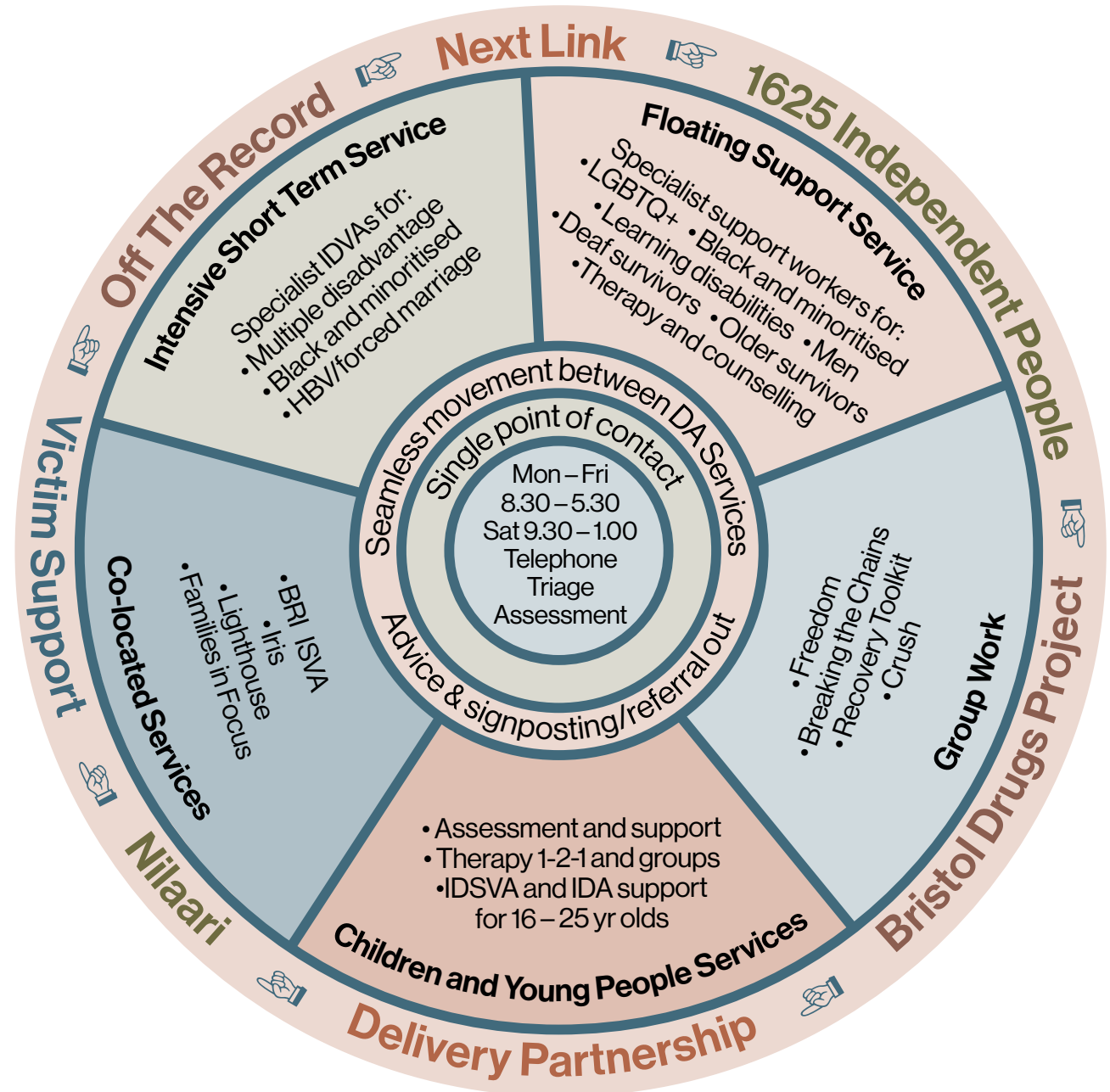
This strand includes:

- single point of contact and crisis service
- community outreach and support services
- specialist services for children and young people
- specialist support worker services for equalities groups
- support and delivery of group work
- services for those experiencing multiple disadvantage including street sex workers
- co-located services within statutory services, for example: GP Surgeries, the BRI Hospital, Bristol City Council Families In Focus Teams, and the Police Lighthouse Safeguarding Unit.

Figure 2 (right) is a model of how support is delivered by Next Link.

Contract variations

The main contracts have been varied to include additional services and projects. This includes Independent Domestic Violence Advisors funded by the Ministry of Justice; Maternity IDSVAs funded by NHS England and IRIS Advise jointly funded with South Gloucestershire Council.



Joint commissioning of sexual violence services in Bristol

Therapeutic sexual violence services in Bristol are commissioned as part of a wider service for Avon and Somerset which is funded jointly by the Office of The Police and Crime Commissioner, the Integrated Care Boards and NHS England who are the lead commissioner. The contract began in April 2023 and is for a minimum of four years.

The services are provided by an alliance of providers led by SARSAS and including Kinergy, The Greenhouse, Womankind and The Southmead Project (along with other non-funded partners) who each bring a wealth of experience and unique expertise.

The Alliance works across Avon and Somerset and offers trauma-informed, inclusive, accessible and free services for people of all ages and genders who have experienced sexual violence and abuse.



Policy context

Bristol's strategy on domestic abuse and sexual violence aligns with the objectives of various national and local strategies as well as national legislation. Taking a collaborative approach acknowledges interconnected issues and priorities, enhancing our ability to prevent domestic abuse and sexual violence with a more effective city-wide response.

National

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The draft Domestic Abuse Bill achieved Royal Assent in April 2021 and is now enshrined in law as the Domestic Abuse Act. The Act is intended to improve the response to domestic abuse as follows:

- **Protect and support victims** – to enhance the safety of victims and the support they receive.
- **Transform the justice process** – to provide support to victims throughout the justice process and an effective response to perpetrators to end the cycle of abuse.
- **Improve performance** – to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse.
- **Promote awareness** – put domestic abuse at the top of everybody's agenda.

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) also positions children as direct victims in their own right for the first time. That means any reference within the act to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, the abuse (and is related to the victim or perpetrator).

Tackling violence against women and girls 2021 – 2024

The [Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) strategy](#) for 2021 – 2024 centres on addressing various forms of violence and abuse disproportionately encountered by women and girls. These include domestic abuse, sexual violence/harassment, forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), honour-based violence, stalking, sex work, modern slavery and human trafficking, child sexual exploitation (CSE), and supporting female offenders. This strategy prioritises prevention, victim support, perpetrator intervention, and strengthening the overall system.

Modern slavery and human trafficking

Modern slavery is a multifaceted crime encompassing slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour, and human trafficking. Many victims of modern slavery also experience domestic abuse, with some being exploited or trafficked by intimate partners or family members. This is especially true for victims of domestic servitude and sexual exploitation, predominantly affecting women and girls. The [Modern Slavery Strategy](#) seeks to disrupt perpetrators, prevent exploitation, protect victims, and enhance systems to respond effectively.

The Avon and Somerset Anti-Slavery Partnership aims to find and support victims of human trafficking and modern slavery, disrupt criminal activity and prosecute those responsible. It's made up of people from the [Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership](#), [Avon and Somerset Police](#) and [Unseen](#).

The National Victims Strategy 2018

The [National Victims Strategy](#) focuses on improving the overall experience of victims, offering support regardless of whether victims report a crime, enhancing assistance after a crime is reported, ensuring better support throughout the court process, and improving victims' understanding of court decisions and their implications for both them and the offender.

Other relevant national policies and strategies can be found listed in the Bristol Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment

Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan 2022

The [Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan](#) sets out how the government will invest over £230 million to deliver many of the Domestic Abuse Act's provisions to bring about a response from all parts of society, to overcome domestic abuse.

The plan prioritises an increased emphasis on preventing abuse by improving the understanding of effective prevention measures. Education will be employed to address harmful attitudes and behaviours that may develop early and lead to abusive tendencies. Access to safe accommodation for victims, survivors, and their children will be ensured.

The response to domestic abuse perpetrators will be more robust and relentless, utilising methods such as electronic tagging, innovative behaviour change programs, and tougher sentences. Options for addressing the most harmful abusers, including the possibility of a register for domestic abuse offenders, will be explored.



Removing the burden from victims and survivors is crucial. The government will assess the effectiveness of the current statutory leave provision for employees in supporting those escaping domestic abuse.

Serious Violence Duty 2022

The [Serious Violence Duty](#) is a key part of the government's programme of work to collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence: taking a multi-agency approach to understand the causes and consequences of serious violence, focusing on prevention and early intervention, and informed by evidence.

Domestic Abuse Commissioner's strategic plan 2023

This lays out the [strategic plan](#) for the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, from September 2022 to September 2025. As required by Section 13 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

The plan encompasses several strategic priorities. Firstly, it emphasises standing with victims and survivors. Additionally, it aims to enhance support for the most marginalised victims and survivors who encounter significant barriers. Another priority is to improve the consistency of service provision and statutory services, addressing the 'patchwork of provision' observed across England and Wales. The plan seeks to bring together local partners and government departments to provide a holistic response to domestic abuse. Finally, accountability and transparency are prioritised, utilising data and research to enhance the overall response to domestic abuse.

Victim Funding Strategy 2022

The [Victims Funding Strategy](#) sets the vision for how to fund the victim support sector more sustainably and ensure victims and survivors are able to access the support they need.

Victims Code 2020

The [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#) (Victims' Code) sets out the services and a minimum standard for these services that must be provided to victims of crime by organisations in England and Wales.

Women's Health Strategy for England 2022

The ambition of the [Women's Health Strategy for England](#) in the next decade is to improve health outcomes for all women and girls while transforming the engagement and responsiveness of the health and care system. This will be achieved through a life course approach, emphasising women's health policy and services at every stage. Best practices such as hybrid and wrap-around services will be embedded, ensuring women's voices play a prominent role in policymaking and across the healthcare system. The strategy aims to unite all stakeholders in healthcare to catalyse long-term positive change. Building on the Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England, published in December 2021, it outlines ambitions for enhancing the health and wellbeing of women and girls in England through a comprehensive life course approach and reshaping the system's responsiveness to women.

Strategic direction for sexual assault and abuse services 2018

NHS England published a [strategic direction for sexual assault and abuse services](#) (SAAS Strategy) in April 2018. It provides a national vision to radically improve access to services for victims and survivors of sexual assault and abuse and support them to recover, heal and rebuild their lives. The SAAS Strategy includes the need to strengthen prevention, promote safeguarding and welfare of victims and survivors, involve victims and survivors, introduce quality standards, reduce fragmentation, and ensure an appropriately trained workforce. It also sets out commissioning responsibilities.

Home Office Commissioning Framework

The [Home Office Commissioning Framework](#) for support services for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in England (2019) was targeted at all commissioning bodies with responsibility for support services for victims and survivors of recent abuse (or assault experienced within the last 12 months) and non-recent CSA. The framework acknowledges that local authorities, NHS England, Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and Offices of Police and Crime Commissioners (OPCCs) all play a fundamental role in commissioning appropriate services, with each accountable for different elements of a system-wide response.

End to End Rape Review Report on Findings and Actions

The Government's [End-to-End Rape Review Report on Findings and Actions](#) was published in June 2021 with the ambition to ensure "Every victim has access

to the right therapeutic and clinical support, and the right emotional and practical support, such as an ISVA, where appropriate”.

Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy

In January 2021, the Government launched its [Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy](#), which, alongside justice and prevention, included objectives to protect and safeguard children and young people, while supporting all victims and survivors of child sexual abuse (CSA).

Local

[Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse Report](#)

In 2020, the Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse was formed, which included twenty-eight local and national organisations who took part in five themed workshops. These workshops produced the series of principles to help prevent domestic abuse. The report sets out Bristol's response to domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The report sets out seven overarching principles that will provide the framework for Bristol's response:

- 1) We will start with you, and what's right for you.
- 2) If you have children, we will work with you to support you.
- 3) It is your home... if you want the person who is hurting, scaring, or controlling you to be told to leave and not return, we will take action.
- 4) If staying in your home isn't right for you, or you need a safe home to go to, we will do everything we can to make that happen.

5) There are a range of support services available... There will always be a person available to talk to you and help.

6) In every corner of our city, we will work to eliminate sexual violence and abuse.

7) Domestic abuse and sexual violence are everybody's business.

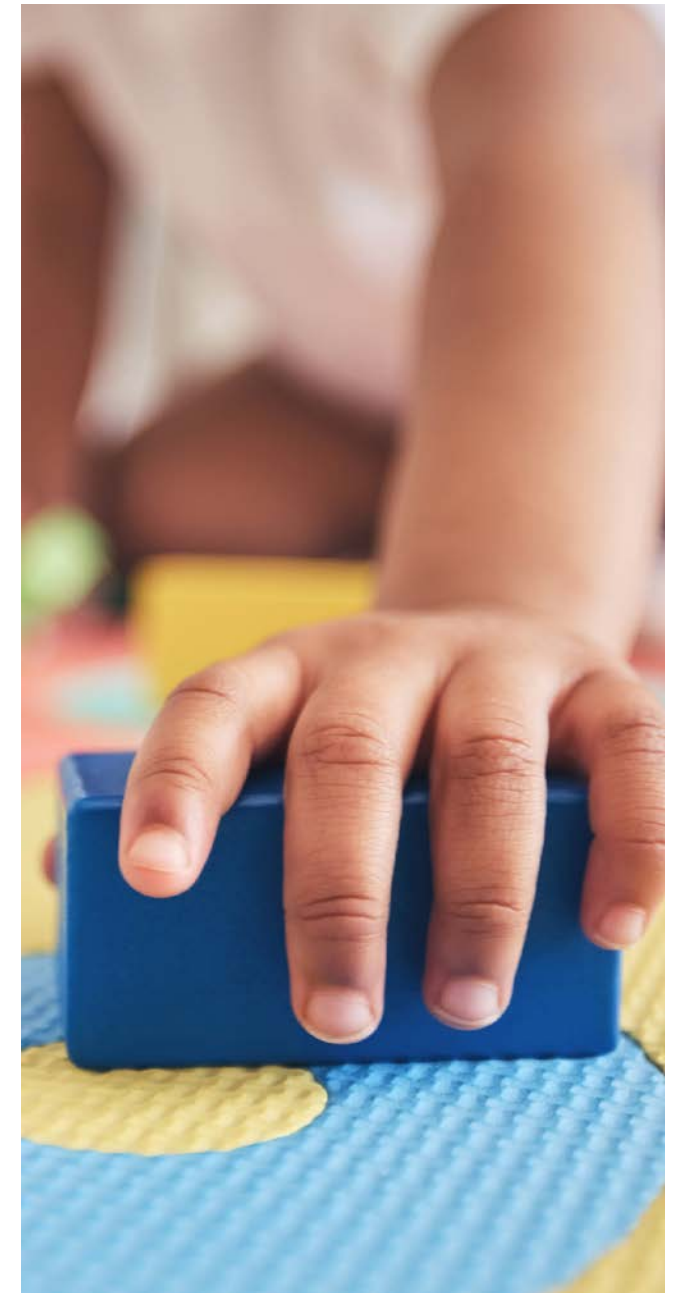
Under each principle sits a total of 35 key recommendations.

Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026

The Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership (KBSP) is a joined-up partnership providing oversight of the children and adult safeguarding as well as community safety functions. The KBSP has responsibility to deliver statutory duties to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children as required by Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018; to help and protect adults at risk of neglect and/or abuse by delivering the functions of a Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) as required by The Care Act 2014; and to protect local communities from crime and to help people feel safe by delivering the functions of a Community Safety Partnership Board (CSP) in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

In the [Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership Strategic Plan](#) six overarching principles have been developed, which are the building blocks to be considered in all the work the partnership delivers. These are:

- Learning and Workforce
- Systems and Procedures
- Working together



- Voice and Participation
- Equality and Inclusion
- Quality and Performance.

These principles will be adopted across the whole of the safeguarding system and embedded in workforce practice enabling the partnership to deliver against the safeguarding priorities highlighted in this plan. Within these principles, specific reference is made to addressing domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Bristol Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2022 – 2025

[The Bristol Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2022 to 2025 \(pdf, 506 KB\)](#) outlines how Bristol will provide safe accommodation and support for domestic abuse victims.

This strategy is held by Bristol City Council and was published in line with the requirements of the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(GOV.UK\)](#).

One City Plan

Bristol City Office is the creator and guardian of the [Bristol One City Plan](#), co-designed with hundreds of partners in different sectors, organisations and communities across Bristol. The One City Plan has six themed aims and supporting Boards, working together to deliver on projects that will improve Bristol, and the One City Approach encourages other organisations to take the lead in working collaboratively.

Taking an integrated approach to governance, the One City Approach recognises that collaboration across sectors and themes will help to reduce inequalities in society and have a long-term impact as we work on shared goals.

The One City Plan sets out a clear goal for Bristol: that by 2050 “Bristol will be a city free from domestic abuse and gender inequality.”

Women’s Health Needs assessment

In 2023, Bristol City Council carried out the [Women’s Health Needs assessment](#). A number of recommendations were made including ‘continue work to tackle violence against women and girls’. The reports highlighted there needed to be a continued focus on tackling violence against women and girls in Bristol, recognising the ongoing work around domestic abuse and sexual violence. More work around FGM and other issues relating to VAWG should also be considered.

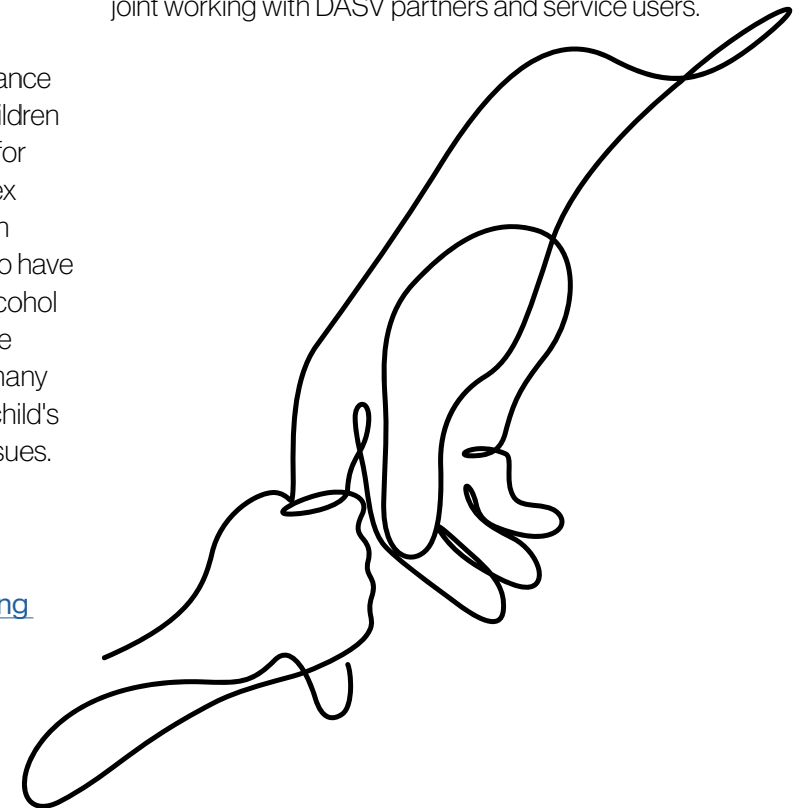
Think Family Approach

The Think Family Approach is a multiagency guidance document developed jointly between Keeping Children Safe and Keeping Adults Safe. It has been written for professionals working with parents whose complex needs impact on their ability to care for the children around them. For example, parents and carers who have mental health issues; disabilities; have drug and alcohol problems; affected by domestic abuse and/or have involvement with the Criminal Justice System. In many of the cases in which there are concerns about a child’s welfare, parents will be facing at least one these issues.

Bristol Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning Plan, 2024 – 2030

[Bristol Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning Plan, 2024 – 2030](#) This plan sets out a road map for the Council’s Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning Service.

It includes an analysis of The Bristol Challenges in relation to employment, skills and lifelong learning, drawing on local data and feedback from key stakeholders. A number of priorities for action are identified and detailed, including the need connecting the local system better to tackle employment inequality and poverty, achieving better career outcomes for young people and families being left behind; preparing local people for jobs of the future, including clean energy and digital jobs and helping employers recruit diverse talent and fill skills gaps in essential jobs roles. The ESL Service enables survivors of domestic abuse to increase their confidence, skills and employment pathways with opportunities to strengthen this access through closer joint working with DASV partners and service users.



Planned review of the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy

The Bristol Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy will be in place for three years (2024 – 2027). Our intention is to refresh the strategy in three years time to ensure it remains in line with expected publications and policy changes locally and nationally.

A delivery and action plan will be developed by the Multi Agency DASV Delivery Group, supporting the implementation of our vision, priority themes, and outcomes.

In March 2024, Bristol City Council collected feedback on the priority themes, outcomes and ambitions through an engagement survey. The majority of the responses agreed or strongly agreed with the approach of the strategy. Much of the feedback gathered went into detail of how people thought ambitions should be achieved and that will help inform the action planning.



Acknowledgements

For this strategy, the voice of the victim-survivor was essential in its development. As part of the re-commissioning of domestic and sexual violence services in 2021/2022, Bristol City Council asked people what they thought about the services for domestic and sexual violence. They did this by having events, consultation surveys, and talks with different groups and people who use the services. The majority of this feedback was used to help inform the commissioning of services and what couldn't be addressed through commissioning has been used to inform the strategy. Many of those people were those with lived experience, or who were closely connected to victim-survivors or worked for local support services.

Feedback was also collected for the Safe Accommodation Strategy in 2022, and again feedback that wasn't relevant for that strategy has been fed into this strategy.

We would like to thank all those that took part in those engagement events and consultations.

In particular, the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Survivor Forum has been integral in shaping the vision, challenging at times the views of professionals and placing their own experiences at the heart of their work and ensuring their experiences can be learned from. The forum has had input from the vision through to the ambitions, but in particular have shaped the 'progress' and 'prosper' sections; two sections that make this strategy very distinctive compared to other similar strategies.

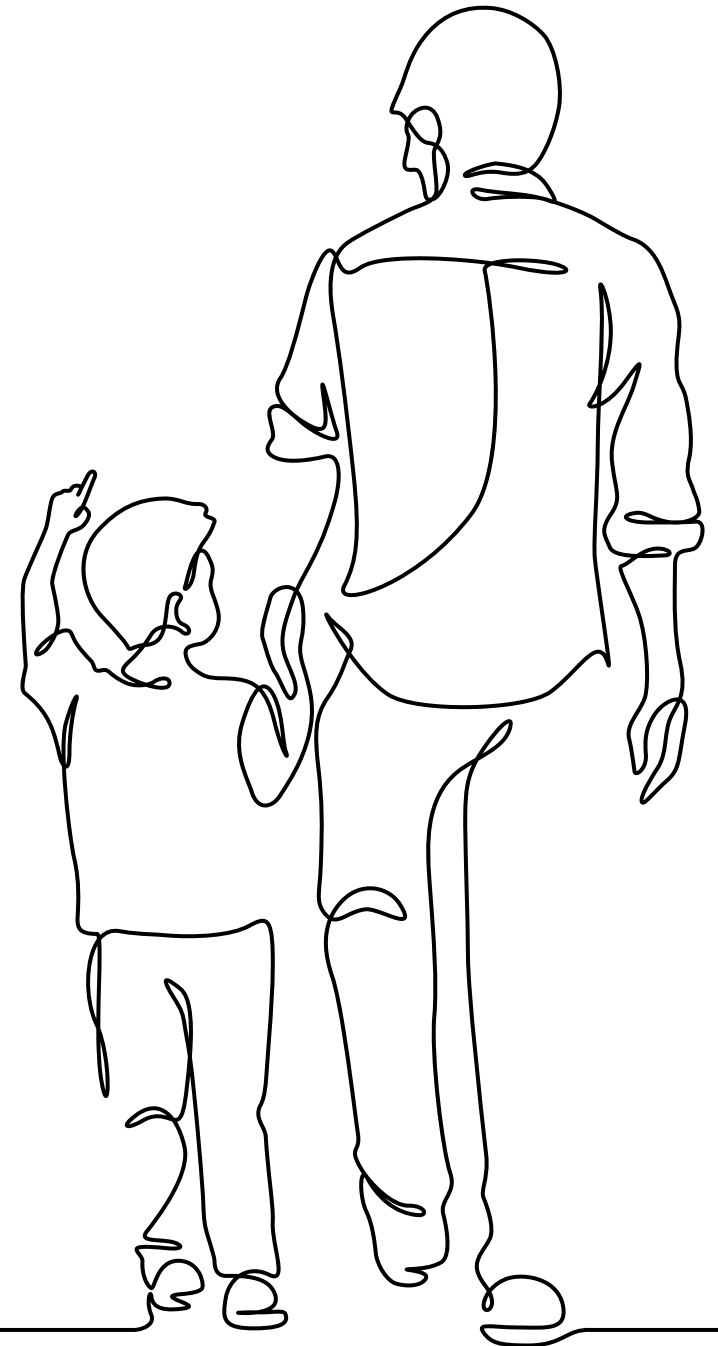
Three groups of young people participated to ensure the voices of young people will be considered when services work with children, young people and their families. A special thank you to the Bristol City Council Shadow Board, the Children in Care Council and the Bristol Drugs Project M32 Group who gave time to help shape the Voice of the Child and Young Person section.

Thank you to the team at Independent Futures who also supported in giving feedback from those with lived experience.

A special mention as well to Gloucestershire Council who produced a great Domestic Abuse Strategy and let us use this as a guiding template to develop ours.

Finally we are very grateful to Lizzie Henden who authored this strategy whilst working as a Senior Public Health Specialist at Bristol City Council.

If you would like more information on the strategy or need it in an alternative format, email PH.Businessbristol.gov.uk



Glossary

DA	Domestic Abuse
SV	Sexual Violence
DASV	Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation: All procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons
Honour based violence	So-called honour based violence is a crime or incident, which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community. Honour can be seen to be undermined by many things; including: a woman having a boyfriend; rejecting a forced marriage; pregnancy outside of marriage; interfaith relationships; seeking divorce, inappropriate dress or make-up and even kissing in a public place
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advisor
LGBTQ+	LGBTQ+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer (or Questioning) and Transgender (with a plus sign to include other aspects such as Genderqueer, Non-Binary etc.). Variations include LGBT+, and LGBTQIA+ to specifically include Intersex and Asexual people
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences
Misogyny	Misogyny is a dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women. This can include a disapproval of certain women's behaviour such as holding ambition or power, or rejecting men's sexual advances or ideas
Multiple disadvantage	An individual facing several challenges or barriers that negatively affect their well-being and quality of life
Protected characteristics	Protected characteristics are the nine characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010. They are Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, and Sexual Orientation
Trauma Informed	Understanding that trauma exposure can impact an individual's neurological, biological, psychological and social development
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls