

Domestic Abuse Strategy 2016 – 2020

Foreword

It is estimated that one in four women and one in six men will experience domestic abuse at some point in their lifetime. More victims in Central Bedfordshire are coming forward to report abuse and we also recognise the need to provide more services for perpetrators of abuse to stop the cycle of violence. We must also ensure that victims and their families are able to access the services that they need, when they need them at the earliest opportunity. We must also help young people to understand what a healthy relationship is and to re-think their views of controlling behaviour, violence, abuse and consent.

We have worked with SafeLives, a national charity, and our partners to develop our strategy and action plan. Since SafeLives were established 10 years ago they have led on transforming the response to domestic violence and abuse by providing practical, risk-led solutions. Multi agency partnership working and collaboration is vital to achieving the aims of this strategy and we look forward to continuing to work with our partners across Central Bedfordshire over the next four years to deliver the outcomes in the strategy.

We want women, children and men in Central Bedfordshire to be kept safe from domestic abuse and have the opportunity to lead healthy and happy lives. We want to achieve this by;

- Supporting communities to prevent domestic abuse and intervene at the earliest stage to prevent escalation and behaviours which foster it, and intervening early to prevent it.
- Bringing together professionals from health, housing, community safety, children's and adults' social care, education, police, probation, substance misuse and other agencies to achieve shared domestic abuse goals and outcomes
- Ensure the services provided by a wide range of agencies for victims, perpetrators and children deliver the appropriate outcomes and that the response is sufficient and provided in a timely manner
- Respond to risk, protecting vulnerable victims and families affected by domestic abuse.
- Improve our response, benefit from innovation and learn from experience to continue to improve outcomes for victims, perpetrators and children and reduce the incidence of abuse

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No agency has single statutory responsibility for domestic abuse and this strategy sets out what the Council, working together with our partners, want to achieve over the next four years.

Domestic abuse is a complex and challenging issue which can wreck lives, and devastate families. Our commitment, underpinned by this strategy, will help keep more women, girls, children and men safe and break the cycle of abuse.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Jamieson'.

James Jamieson
Leader of the Council



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Carr'.

Richard Carr
Chief Executive

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Overview

The context for this strategy is our prioritisation of domestic abuse at the highest levels of Central Bedfordshire Council and a renewed commitment from the Council and its partners to achieving our strategy. It covers the next four years (2016-2020) which is in line with the Council's five year plan published in 2015. This document provides the strategic context for change, our vision, our response and how we will implement change.

Strategic context

Overall in the UK, more than one in four women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime, often with years of psychological abuse. The UK government's strategy on domestic abuse is a critical part of its overarching ambition to end violence against women and girls. Domestic abuse is defined as 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse.

Factors associated with being a victim of domestic abuse include being female, long-term illness or disability, use of any recreational drug in the last year, marital status, age, substance misuse, pregnancy, being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. 'Honour' violence and forced marriage are examples of domestic violence that particularly affect black and minority ethnic groups in England.

Domestic abuse is central to many of the most intractable societal problems including drug and alcohol use, mental illness, homelessness and harm caused to children within the family. Its human and financial costs overwhelm the criminal justice and health services. SafeLives estimates that each year, 2.1 million people in the UK suffer some form of domestic abuse, including 1.4 million women (8.5% of the population) and 700,000 men (4.5% of the population). A further 62% of children living with domestic abuse are directly harmed by the perpetrator of the abuse, in addition to the harm caused by witnessing the abuse of others.

In Central Bedfordshire alone, in 2015 there were 3,238 police incidents of domestic abuse recorded - over eight incidents reported per day. An estimated 350 children live with high risk domestic abuse and a further 300 living with medium risk abuse that are currently visible to services. Research has demonstrated that a robust multi agency partnership response is the best way to effectively tackle domestic abuse.

What is our vision?

Our vision is for Central Bedfordshire to be a great place to live and work, in which residents can live free of fear, violence and abuse. This vision is echoed throughout our efforts to respond to domestic abuse.

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Our strategy focuses on five strategic aims which will support us to achieve our vision. We are confident our aims will improve outcomes for victims and their families. We will embed strong foundations to enable continuous year on year improvement as we continue to develop our local response.

	Strategic Aim	Current response 2015	Outcomes by 2020	Success will mean
1.	<p>Prevention and Early Help</p> <p>We support communities to prevent domestic abuse and intervene at the earliest stage to prevent escalation</p>	<p>Some voluntary sector organisations are aware of domestic abuse and are able to support citizens (eg Village Care).</p>	<p>Communities recognise and do not tolerate domestic abuse. They know how to support victims, children and perpetrators appropriately</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased referrals from public/voluntary sector Improved advice and guidance is available at an earlier stage to victims, children and perpetrators Champions network includes members from identified organisations Communications and media campaigns are far-reaching using a combination of generic and targeted campaigns as appropriate. Victims, children and perpetrators feel better supported
		<p>Provision exists to support victims, children and perpetrators but not at all levels of risk. Pathways do not exist for all levels of risk</p>	<p>Victims, children and perpetrators are identified early and referred appropriately by a wide range of frontline practitioners and partner agencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New services commissioned and the impact evaluated to support continued service improvement Increased and appropriate use of existing services once mapped Services meet the needs of the majority of victims, children and perpetrators of domestic abuse A reduction in repeat referrals to services A reduction in number of high

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	Strategic Aim	Current response 2015	Outcomes by 2020	Success will mean
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> risk victims A reduction in number of children subject to CiN or CP due to domestic abuse
		Current levels of stepdown and rehabilitation are unclear and need defining, given the high risk of repeat victimisation	Victims are supported to recover, build resilience and not tolerate domestic abuse in the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate use of stepdown and rehabilitation services A reduction in repeat referrals to services for victims, children and perpetrators
		(Understand current levels of provision)	Young people understand the dynamics of healthy relationships and do not tolerate abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased information shared via the feedback loop for Relay Feedback from schools via the PSHE Coordinators network Increase in reporting from young people Increase in referrals from schools and higher education settings
2.	<p>Partnership</p> <p>We bring together professionals from health, housing, community safety, children’s and adults’ social care, education, police, probation, substance misuse and other agencies to achieve shared goals and outcomes.</p>	Some strong relationships exist and need to be built on, as well as created at different levels	Organisations understand their role and responsibilities in identifying and responding to domestic abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A robust partnership structure is in place which is accountable and effectively delivers against identified priorities and objectives Access hubs (eg safeguarding adults, MARAC, children’s services) evidence an increase in appropriate reporting Enhanced understanding of domestic abuse as a ‘whole

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	Strategic Aim	Current response 2015	Outcomes by 2020	Success will mean
				family' issue among partner agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved and effective information sharing is taking place
		Professionals have a common understanding of high risk but not of other levels of risk. Information sharing could be improved.	Professionals build relationships across agency boundaries, have a common understanding of domestic abuse, access the information they need and share and act on it appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access/ referral rates to medium risk services once mapped and commissioned Clear and transparent pathways exist between all relevant services A multi-agency Information Sharing Protocol is in place that is fully supported and employed by agencies.
		Professionals do not fully understand the needs of the local population.	Agencies work in partnership to respond to the needs of the local population and have the right resources available to do so	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive service user consultation strategy in place and in use to inform service planning New services commissioned increased use of existing services once mapped Service user feedback included as part of continuous improvement
3.	Provision We ensure the services provided by a wide range of agencies for victims, perpetrators and children deliver the appropriate	Some provision exists, such as Relay and the IDVA service, but pathways need to be connected and	Victims and children have access to quality, dedicated and appropriate services (from universal to specialist) which respond to risk and address their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium risk services are mapped Commissioning plans in place to address unmet service needs Appropriate referrals are being

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	outcomes and that the response is sufficient and provided in a timely manner	clarified.	<p>Perpetrators have access to appropriate services which respond to risk and address their behaviour</p>	<p>made to services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our services are accessible and appropriate for people with protected characteristics • Review of current pathway identifies success – feedback from users • Services in place which meet identified needs • Clarity of service provision and available interventions • Effective pathways are in place including with CJS interventions • Feedback from users and their partners/ ex-partners evidences positive impact on behaviour change • Support opportunities are available to partners/ex-partners of perpetrators
4.	<p>Protection</p> <p>We respond to risk, protecting vulnerable victims and families affected by domestic abuse.</p>	Some protection exists for victims at high risk but not at other risk levels	Perpetrators are held accountable and supported to change their behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We work closely with criminal justice agencies to secure successful prosecutions • Perpetrators are effectively challenged by frontline workers e.g. Social Workers, Health Visitors • Frontline workers have increased understanding of coercive

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> behaviours of perpetrators 'Whole family' approach can be demonstrated and evidenced across a range of services Services are being accessed and referred to appropriately Feedback from users and their partners/ex-partners evidences positive impact on behaviour change
			Victims are made safer to reduce and stop repeat abuse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victims report feeling safer Victims experience less severe and repeated abuse or a cessation in abusive behaviours Reduction in repeat referrals A range of safety options and measures are available to victims Feedback in experience of services
			Victims are encouraged to support criminal proceedings against perpetrators and are fully supported through the criminal justice process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved victim experience of the CJS Increasing applications to Courts for non-molestation orders, restraining orders etc Increase in positive outcomes at Court Appropriate and consistent use of Special Measures where

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	Strategic Aim	Current response 2015	Outcomes by 2020	Success will mean
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requested and suitable • Referrals to the Witness Care Unit
5.	<p>Progression</p> <p>We improve our response, benefit from innovation and learn from experience to continue to improve outcomes for victims, perpetrators and children and reduce the incidence of abuse</p>	<p>Outcome measurement dashboard has been drafted. Feedback loops and the development of the champions network would improve practice</p>	<p>Effective monitoring, reporting, lessons learned and (independent) scrutiny to be in place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dashboard is implemented and in frequent use • Effective governance structure in place which challenges and holds commissioners to account • The Champions network is in place with members from a wide range of partner agencies as identified by research and service user consultation • The Champions are effectively engaging in the network and the opportunities this offers • Increase in appropriate referrals • Referrals are made in a timely manner and to the right service
		<p>Commissioners currently fund some innovative programmes (eg perpetrator programme)</p>	<p>Outcomes for victims, children and perpetrators improve over time as a result of a suite of quality services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New services are commissioned according to identified need • Increased use of existing services once mapped • Service user feedback evidences positive outcomes • Continuous improvement is applied to all commissioned services • Effective and robust contract management is in place for all

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	Strategic Aim	Current response 2015	Outcomes by 2020	Success will mean
				commissioned services

Implementation

This strategy is supported and prioritised by the Council's leadership and the Corporate Domestic Abuse Board is chaired by Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services. This strategy is embedded within the Council's overall vision and will be communicated across Central Bedfordshire to ensure that all delivery staff understand it and are able to act upon it. Domestic abuse is everybody's business. Links will be made to other relevant strategies such as those in place to prevent and respond to sexual violence and safeguard children. A governance structure is provided in the Appendix.

Measuring progress and success is vital for effective implementation. The Corporate Domestic Abuse Board will draw on our accompanying action plan and outcomes dashboard to monitor success and hold organisations accountable. It will also review performance annually to ensure overall improvements are being made and ensure that the voices of those living with abuse are heard as this strategy is implemented.

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APPENDIX: Governance structure

Central Bedfordshire’s Domestic Abuse Partnership is responsible for delivering a multi agency approach to tackle domestic abuse. The Council’s Corporate Domestic Abuse Board operates within the governance structure below ensuring the effective implementation of our strategy supports the wider Central Bedfordshire work to tackle abuse across statutory partnerships. A number of sub groups will support this work, with particular focus on effective practice and commissioning. The Champions Network will enable expertise and communication to flow across delivery levels through to frontline practitioners.

