

WOKINGHAM DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY



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Foreword

I am delighted to introduce the 2025 - 2028 Wokingham Domestic Abuse Strategy on behalf of the Council and our partners. The Strategy details our understanding of domestic abuse in the borough and how we will achieve our long-term objectives to reduce the harm caused by this issue. This is by supporting victim-survivors and children, working to prevent abuse and holding those who abuse accountable.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021, put in place a statutory definition and makes it clear that anyone can be affected by this issue, regardless of age, disability, gender identity, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. The definition clearly recognises the long-term impact for children living with domestic abuse, classing them as direct victim-survivors of the harm undertaken.

We are committed to a survivor-centred approach that recognises the diverse experiences of those affected by domestic abuse. Our commitment is to ensure that every survivor in Wokingham Borough – regardless of their background and circumstances – feels heard, supported and empowered to start rebuilding their lives.

Over the past 3 years we have made significant progress through achieving Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation for our response to domestic abuse, embedding domestic abuse specialists within our organisation and improving help options and support for our residents.

This strategy builds on the progress made over the past 3 years, actively listening to those who have experienced domestic abuse as well as services supporting them. It is not just a document; it is a call to action for every individual and organisation in Wokingham Borough. We are proud to have a strong network of partner agencies who work together to support all those affected by domestic abuse and to continually improve understanding and support. Local agencies have committed to delivering this strategy through the Wokingham Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and Domestic Abuse Networking Group with progress reported to the Community Safety Partnership.

Together, we will continue to strengthen our response, challenge the root causes of abuse, and create a safer, more supportive Wokingham for everyone.

Councillor Louise Timlin
Executive Member for Community Safety and Public Protection
May 2025



Executive Summary

This Wokingham Domestic Abuse Strategy outlines a comprehensive plan to address domestic abuse in the borough. It aligns with national and local priorities, including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and emphasises early intervention and prevention; support for victim-survivors, including children; holding perpetrators to account and how we will deliver support in 'safe' accommodation.

The Strategy is a collaborative effort led by Wokingham Domestic Abuse Networking Group and Wokingham Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and, most importantly, those with lived experience. We recognise the nuances of domestic abuse and that each person's experience will be unique. We further recognise and reflect the links to serious violence, safeguarding and wellbeing and that it happens to people of all genders, sexualities, economic circumstances, culture and disabilities.

This Strategy includes information on our understanding of domestic abuse in the borough; the work agencies have done so far and the priority areas of focus for the next three-years. It will be accompanied by a detailed partnership action plan, with progress monitored through the Community Safety Partnership Board.

The priority areas for 2025 – 2028 are:

Early intervention and prevention

Support for victim-survivors, including children

Hold perpetrators to account

Deliver support in 'safe' accommodation

What does good look like?



Additional 'Safe Accommodation'



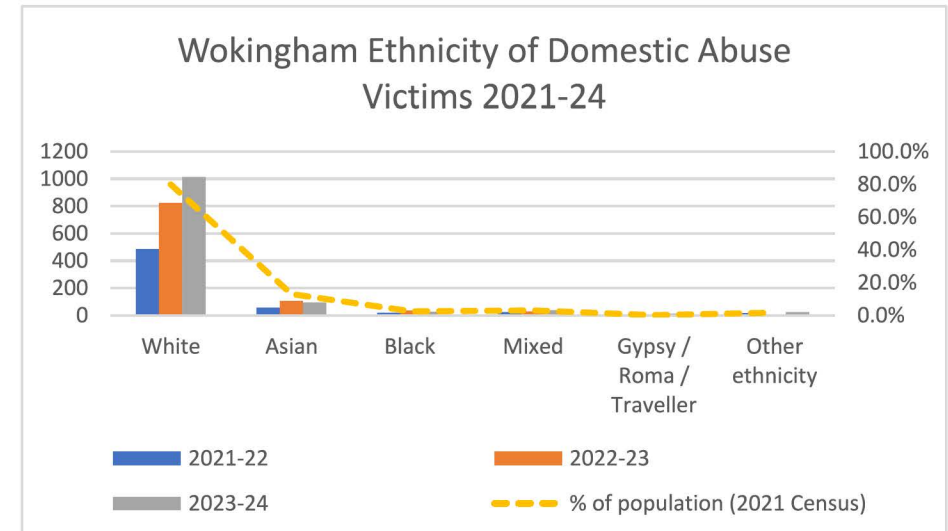
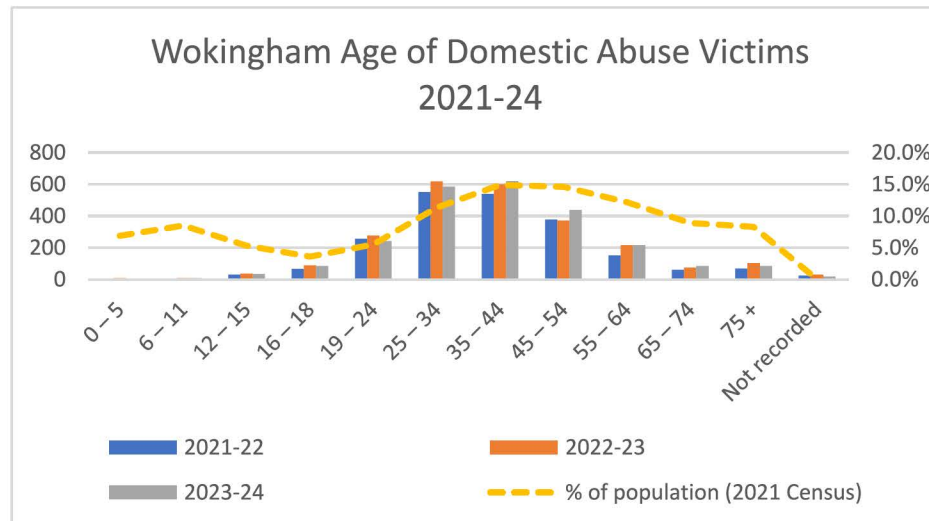
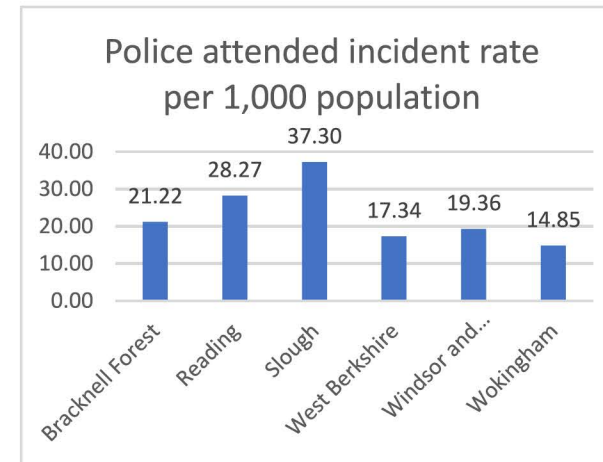
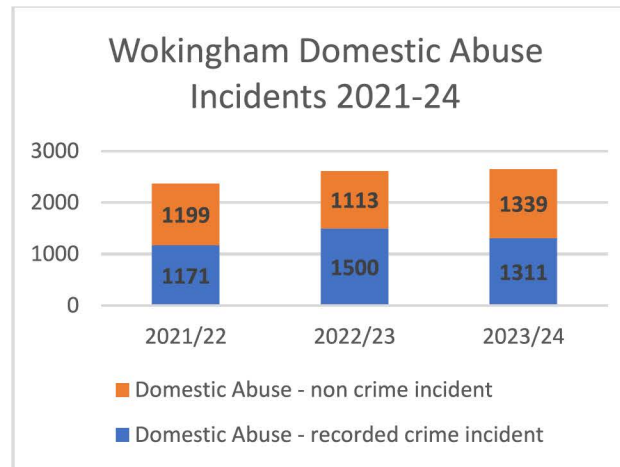
Increase in support available through domestic abuse services



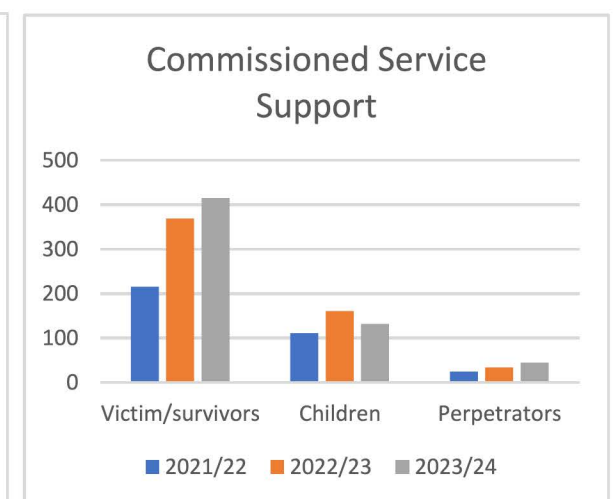
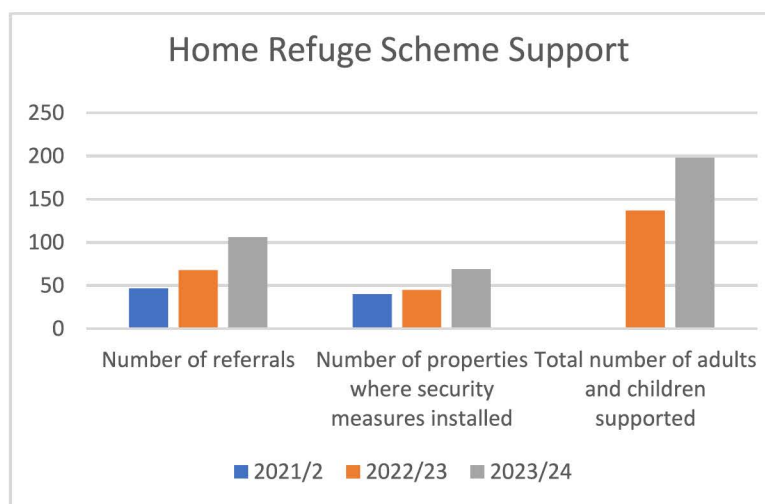
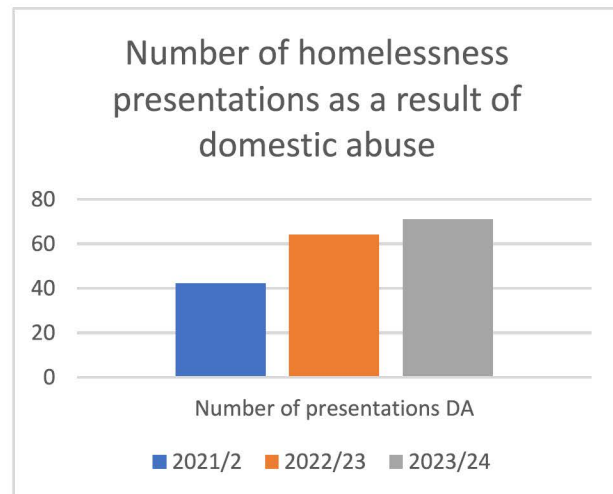
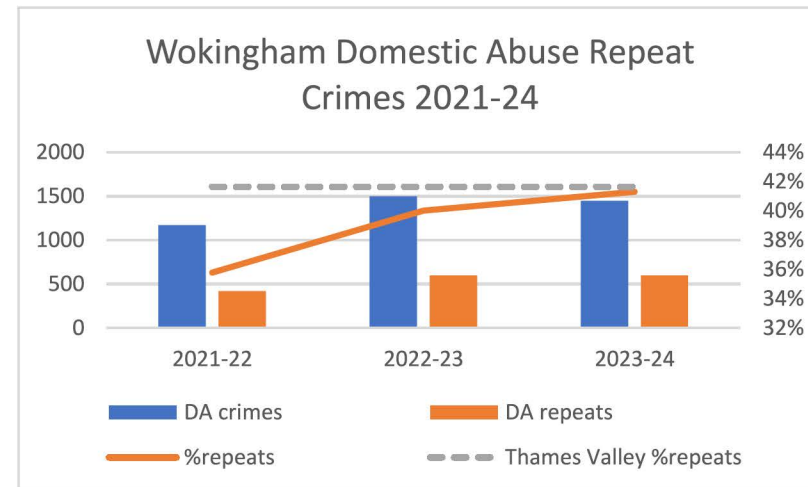
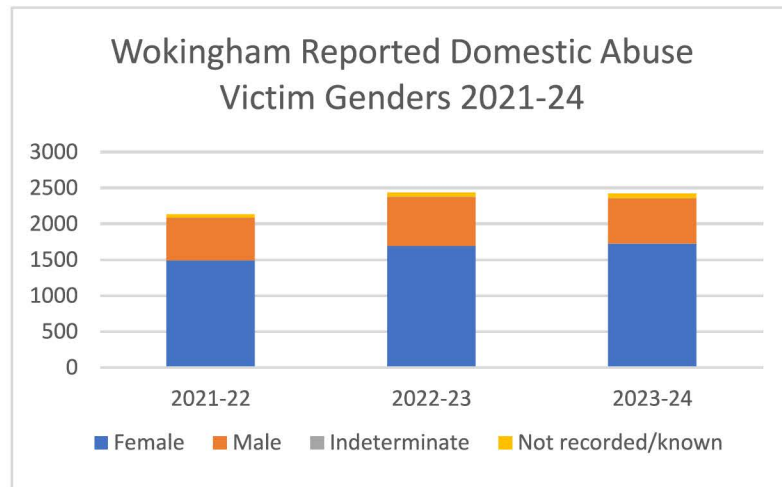
Campaigns and activities to raise awareness for all

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Domestic Abuse Data 2021- 2024 at a glance



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1. Introduction

This strategy outlines Wokingham's approach to **tackling domestic abuse, which** we see as an unacceptable issue which affects the lives of thousands of Wokingham residents. Our priority is **the safety of all victim-survivors of domestic abuse, regardless of age, disability, gender identity, gender status, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation or financial means.**

Wokingham Borough has seen an increased population of 15% in the past 10 years and it is predicted this will continue to rise. This means that there will be increasing numbers of people including children, who need help. Support needs to be from a wide range of specialist domestic abuse services, safe accommodation providers, voluntary and statutory services and the wider community.

From research undertaken by the Office of National Statistics, we calculate that **statistically** 10,145 men and 20,511 women¹ in the Wokingham borough will have been a victim of domestic abuse since the age of 16, with 2,335 men and 4,330 women² having experienced domestic abuse in the past year. Approximately 2,424 **children and young people** in Wokingham borough will be exposed to domestic abuse during their childhood³. In 2017, it was estimated that the **costs of domestic abuse** in England and Wales were approximately £66 billion⁴.

Building on the 2021-2024 Wokingham Domestic Abuse Strategy, we have **undertaken a local area needs assessment** to decide our priorities for the next three years.

This has included:

- Collection of data⁵
- Undertaking in-depth **interviews** with local people and agencies to listen to their voices and impacts⁶. This has included understanding the impact of our 2021-2024 strategy which is detailed below.
- Conducting a **public consultation**⁷ to hear from our residents what they would like us to focus on (see Appendix)

¹ Based on adult population of 138,840 (Census 2021) and 27% of women and 13.9% of men (ONS prevalence data)

² Based on ONS prevalence estimates of 5.7% of 75970 adult female population and 3.2% of 73990 adult male population.

³ Children's Commissioner for England report 2021 estimate of 1 in 5 children. 1 in 5 of 12120 (Census 2021) under 18 year olds.

⁴ [The economic and social costs of domestic abuse](#)

⁵ Wokingham Domestic Abuse Annual Review 1 4/2023 – 31/3/2024

⁶ Three Sixty Degree Marketing Consultancy 2024

⁷ Community Safety Consultation July 2024

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- Commissioned **research** to understand more about the needs of male and LGBTQIA+ victim-survivors of domestic abuse in safe accommodation⁸
- **Considered** national research findings, **statutory guidance and legislation**.

Progress from 2021 Strategy to date

The Wokingham Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and Wokingham Domestic Abuse Networking Group have led on actions to progress the key priorities of:

- 1) Awareness and early intervention, including awareness of safe accommodation choices
- 2) Support for victim-survivors, survivors and children, including providing an inclusive range of safe accommodation options; delivery of support within safe accommodation and supporting individuals to begin rebuilding their lives
- 3) Minimising harm through holding perpetrators to account and providing support for those who acknowledge the impact on their behaviour and want to change
- 4) Supporting individuals to seek protection through the criminal, civil and family court processes
- 5) Strengthening partnership work to improve outcomes by working together
- 6) Delivering the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 new legal duty for local authorities by supporting those in safe accommodation.

In 2021 victim-survivors, those representing the views of children, and agencies advised us what they wanted.

Victim-Survivors wanted:	What we've done:
To be safe – in all its forms; for information to be provided in accessible ways; understanding that victim-survivors don't always know what support to ask for or may be confused by the system.	Updated website information; achieved DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation; trained multi-agency practitioners; commissioned specialist support. Embedded learning from Domestic Abuse Homicide Reviews and Serious Case reviews.
To feel acknowledged and heard regardless of gender or other issues	Delivered multi agency training to ensure barriers to help are understood more fully and ensured policies and procedures are inclusive.
For organisations to be more trauma informed; understand how to explain things in a very straightforward way; understand the reality and cycle of abuse and avoid victim blaming language.	Ensured staff across agencies understand the meaning of being trauma informed and the need to avoid victim blaming language, embedding this in their work. Dip sampling of case records undertaken to monitor impact.

⁸ University of West London 2023 and 2024

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For organisations to understand the impact of economic, emotional, psychological, sexual, physical, coercive and controlling behaviour, so called 'honour' based abuse and forced marriage.	Worked with specialist organisations, heard from those with lived experience and used research findings and serious case reviews to improve agency understanding.
For officers to understand suitable safe accommodation options; the need for accommodation to be more than 'just a shell'; for a welcome pack to be provided to include information about local support; options available for help such as references and rent deposits; for help with life and budgeting skills and; for options for perpetrators to ensure victim-survivors can remain in their own homes where it is safe to do so.	Worked with homelessness, housing and other teams to increase awareness; achieved DAHA accreditation (see below) to demonstrate awareness and offer of suitable options (see below); introduced a new role of domestic abuse specialist housing officer to coordinate responses.

Children wanted:	What we've done:
To be safe in all its forms	Provide information for schools, including to help support delivery of RSE and PHSE healthy relationship sessions; support delivery of Op Encompass whereby police advise schools where there has been a domestic incident and; encourage take up of Kaleidoscopic's Educate2Eradicate healthy relationships offer
To feel acknowledged and heard	Created a multi-agency scrutiny panel to look for evidence of the 'voice of the child' in case notes
For organisations to be more trauma informed – understanding the confusion of how to process the dilemma of protecting their parent from the abuse	Delivered training and looked for evidence of this approach being embedded. Embedded learning from serious case reviews and case scrutiny.
For front line officers to understand the need for safe accommodation to be near schools and friends	Delivered training to increase understanding of the impact of domestic abuse, including coercive controlling behaviours and post separation abuse Worked with homelessness officers and school transport leads to help when families need to move to another area
For support / therapy to be tailored to their individual circumstances	Multi agency training to increase awareness of the impact of domestic abuse on children Networking group meetings to ensure services know of each other for most relevant support to be put in place
For effective signposting and a coordinated response	Developed the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and Domestic Abuse Networking Group and achieved DAHA Accreditation
For peer support	Funded Kaleidoscopic Freedom for Children/ Teens programmes

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National changes since the 2021-2024 strategy



The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has come into effect. The Act recognises **children under the age of 18** who see, or hear, or experience the effects of the abuse, as a **victim of domestic abuse** if they are related or have a parental relationship to the adult victim or perpetrator of the abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales's Vision is that 'all babies, children and young people who are subjected to domestic abuse should receive an **integrated and comprehensive response**, rooted in understanding parent, effective intervention and long-term support'.



In 2024 the Government strengthened guidance about when a Domestic Abuse Related Death Review should be carried out. This widens the previous guidance to include all deaths which have, or appear to have, resulted from domestic abuse. Reviews ensure that lessons are learnt from fatal domestic abuse cases including death by suicide and neglect.

Between 2013 and 2024, there have been 7 identified domestic abuse related deaths in Wokingham borough. Findings regarding the way in which local professionals and organisations worked individually and together resulted in recommendations and actions. These findings have informed this strategy as well as actions for individual agency and collective learning.



The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed a legal duty on Local Authorities to provide support in 'safe accommodation'. This has led to a full review of the housing options available to resident who need help because of domestic abuse as well as for those who need to flee to our area because of the domestic abuse.

To drive improvements to our approaches and meet best practice standards, Wokingham Borough Council has worked to achieve DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation.

Emerging Trends



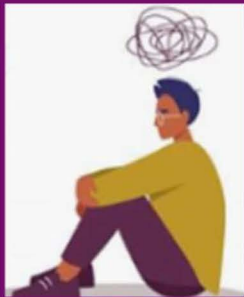
Increased understanding of the impact of economic abuse

- 16% of adults in the UK (8.7 million) report having experienced economic abuse (Refuge 2020). Women who can't find £100 at short notice are 3.5x more likely to experience domestic abuse (Surviving Economic Abuse) with 25% of women who have suffered economic abuse reporting this has continued after leaving the abuser.
- 60% of victim-survivors have been coerced into taking out debt which can take many years to repay and impacts credit ratings. This can particularly affect residents perceived to be 'affluent'.



Increased understanding of technology risks

The use of technology to undertake domestic abuse has risen with the increase in use of smart phones, tablets and internet connected home devices. Those using abusive behaviours use these tools to further harm people who are experiencing the abuse by monitoring, stalking, harassment and impersonation. The UK has been found to have the highest rates in Europe of 'stalkerware' software found on mobile devices¹. More understanding of **rapidly changing technologies** and how this is used to undertake domestic abuse is needed to prevent escalation and reduce the risk.



Increased understanding of the links between Domestic Abuse and Suicide

The Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme: Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides 2020–2023-year 3 report¹ found:

- Of 93 victim-survivors of Suspected Suicide Domestic abuse, 91% (85) had a history of domestic abuse perpetrated against them (exclusively) by a current or ex-intimate partner
- In 4% (4) of cases, victim-survivors had a history of abuse perpetrated by one or more family members
- 3% had a recorded history of domestic abuse by both intimate partner and family member (s).

"If you leave, you're going to be killed and if you stay, you're going to be killed. I can actually take one bit of control back. And I planned my suicide" (Male victim)

Legal and Policy Framework

The **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** works to increase awareness of domestic abuse, to improve the effectiveness of the criminal justice system and to strengthen support for people who have experienced abuse. **Statutory Guidance** provides a framework for how areas should approach the issue of domestic abuse and created a **new legal duty** for Local Authorities to provide support for victim-survivors of domestic abuse and their children in 'safe accommodation'.

To fulfil the Council's legal duties under the Act, a **Domestic Abuse Partnership Board** was established in 2021.

In addition to legal duties, Wokingham Borough Council and partner organisations recognise the importance of providing community-based services; raising awareness of domestic abuse and holding those who are causing the abuse to account.

A Wokingham **Domestic Abuse Networking Group** consisting of over 40 partner agencies, including statutory and voluntary sector, work together to deliver the strategy.

Key relevant national legislation and guidance includes:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance⁹
- Delivery of support in safe accommodation statutory guidance¹⁰
- Annual progress report Support in Safe Accommodation¹¹
- Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy¹²
- Victim and Prisoner's Act 2024¹³

The national best practice framework of a Coordinated Community Response¹⁴ (CCR) and ensuring a 'whole' family approach has been used to inform this strategy.

⁹ [Domestic Abuse: statutory guidance \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/domestic-abuse-statutory-guidance)

¹⁰ [Delivery of support to victim-survivors of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/delivery-of-support-to-victim-survivors-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services)

¹¹ [Annual progress report from the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation National Expert Steering Group 2021-22 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/annual-progress-report-from-the-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-national-expert-steering-group-2021-22)

¹² [Tackling violence against women and girls strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy)

¹³ [Victim-survivors and Prisoners Act 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2024/12/section-1)

¹⁴ <https://www.standingtogether.org.uk/what-is-ccr>

Approach of this strategy

The following actions were undertaken to gain an insight into the diverse needs of those accessing support and opportunities for earlier intervention:



Collection of data to understand the number and demographics of people accessing services and interventions, including those who need to flee to or from Wokingham to access safe accommodation. This data collection has shown a significant increase in the number of people accessing support in our borough.



Review of Wokingham population data to understand the population in terms of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, income, home ownership and faith to compare with the number of individuals 'visible' to services.



Review of safe accommodation options currently available and demographics.



In depth interviews with people who have lived experience of domestic abuse; those who understand the needs of children and young people and local organisations. Also, undertaken 'Customer Journey Mapping' exercise to understand processes.



Public Consultation



Analysis of gaps in provision, including understanding if those who own their own homes are seeking help

2. Identification of Key Strategic Priorities

Our ambition is to address stigma; encourage all victim-survivors, including children to seek support and offer counter narratives to normalisation of abuse. We seek to break the cycle of re-offending and re-victimisation, taking the responsibility for dealing with the impact of domestic abuse away from victim-survivors and putting the onus firmly on those who are using abusive behaviours.

Our strategy is built on key principles that form the basis to **our approach** to tackling domestic abuse in Wokingham borough. This builds on our shared Community Vision, approach to equality and diversity and our work to become a 'Marmot' borough¹⁵.

These principles guide all our actions and decisions.

- 1) Recognising that **no form of domestic abuse is ever acceptable**. This means residents in our borough can feel confident in reporting abuse and help seeking.
- 2) Putting the needs, wishes and safety of **victim-survivors at the centre of everything we do**, recognising that domestic abuse is a traumatic experience that can have long-lasting effects on a person's mental and physical health.
- 3) Recognising that **domestic abuse can affect anyone** and that factors like gender identity, race, sexual orientation, disability and economic status interact and impact on a person's experience of abuse. This includes challenging stereotypes about who can be a victim or perpetrator of abuse.
- 4) Ensuring that the **onus is put on those causing the harm to take responsibility** for the impact of their behaviours. This ensures that victim-survivors are supported, and perpetrators of the abuse are held to account.
- 5) **Using evidence** to check our approaches are effective and, if not, make changes. This ensures that we can be adaptable to new issues, continually striving to improve outcomes for individuals and ensuring value for money and resources.

Wokingham Borough has an increasing population which is leading to more police and other statutory services involvement as well as need for specialist domestic abuse support.

Public consultations have shown the need for people to understand what domestic abuse is and this starts with children and young people, through to older people and those from diverse backgrounds. By recognising the signs of an unhealthy relationship, there

¹⁵ [Marmot Places - IHE \(instituteofhealthequity.org\)](https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/)

are opportunities for people to step in to stop the abuse getting worse over time and reduce the longer-term impact on adults and children.

In depth interviews have shown the importance of having the right support in place at the right time and for as long as this is needed. We have detailed the key domestic abuse services and accommodation support provided, to check that there are no demographic groups who are currently unable to access these services.

To protect victim-survivors and prevent future harm, those who are causing this harm need to be held accountable for their actions. This can include criminal and civil court actions as well as a community based behavioural change programme.

The Government has recognised the need for victim-survivors and children to have a safe place to stay with support in place to start rebuilding their lives. They need to have a secure place where they are protected from their abuser, giving time and space to start healing from the emotional and physical impact of domestic abuse, without the immediate stress of danger. We recognise the need to increase the safe accommodation options in Wokingham borough to meet current and future need.

Effective prevention needs to include **early intervention** to attempt to influence values in childhood and adolescence as well as seeking to shift social norms to become less accepting of violence and abuse. Awareness raising campaigns are important to address stigma and encourage victim-survivors and survivors to seek support.

Using this shared understanding, evaluation of data and trends, and discussions with individuals and agencies about what is working well and what needs more focus, we have identified the following **key priorities** for the 3-year period of this Strategy:

- a) Early intervention and prevention so people understand where a relationship is unhealthy
- b) Support victim-survivors, including children at the earliest stage to reduce re-victimisation and safeguard
- c) Hold perpetrators (those who harm others) to account by way of court interventions or long-term behaviour changes
- d) Deliver support in Safe Accommodation so victim-survivors and children can start rebuilding their lives

a) Early Intervention and Prevention

Focus	Actions
Public awareness	Public awareness campaigns about domestic abuse, including promoting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme ('Clare's Law'). Utilising public buildings to let people know how to get help and support.

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	<p>Working across agencies to advise of support available.</p> <p>Information for friends, family members, colleagues and neighbours.</p> <p>Encouraging employers to put in place Domestic Abuse Workplace support.</p> <p>Supporting schools and colleges to deliver relationship education.</p>
Responding at earliest opportunity	<p>Ensuring support services are in place for those who need them and prevent escalation.</p> <p>Ensuring appropriate information sharing and clear, smooth referral pathways are in place.</p> <p>Ensuring helpline and drop-in sessions are in place.</p> <p>Risk assessment and risk management to identify and respond to those at imminent or significant risk of harm.</p>
Agencies working together	<p>Maximise opportunities through the Wokingham Domestic Abuse Networking Group and Partnership Board.</p> <p>Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) to respond to victim-survivors identified at high risk of harm; Multi-Agency Task and Finish (MATAC) and Drive to manage those undertaking high harm, high risk behaviours; Compulsive, Obsessive, Behaviour Intervention (COBI) for people who are undertaking stalking and harassing behaviours.</p> <p>Collaboration with neighbouring areas, including on shared projects such as achieving Specialist Domestic Abuse Court standards and Berkshire and Thames Valley wide services and groups.</p> <p>'Whole community' involvement in addressing domestic abuse.</p> <p>Shared vision and understanding of each other's remits.</p> <p>Sharing of agency data and outcomes.</p> <p>Sharing of best practice and upcoming initiatives, legislation and support options.</p>
Empowerment	<p>Provision of advice on housing, legal, finance and benefits, adult education.</p> <p>Access to long term group-based support.</p> <p>Provision of interventions for those who have been undertaking harmful behaviours.</p>

b) Support for Victim-Survivors, including children

Focus	Actions
All	<p>Tailored support to meet individual needs.</p> <p>Reduce risk through shared assessment tools, responses and case management.</p> <p>Strengthen services and ensure practitioners are aware of support options and referral pathways.</p> <p>Provide timely safeguarding responses.</p>

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	Deliver multi-agency training programme.
Children	Continually learn and work together to improve responses across all statutory and voluntary based services, including nurseries, schools and colleges; police; and courts. Raise awareness of the support available through community and voluntary sector organisations – both immediate and longer-term support.
Adults	Continually learn and work together to improve understanding and responses. Raise awareness of support options through community and voluntary sector organisations for both immediate and longer-term support. Increase understanding of legal protection available including the criminal and civil court systems. Support and signpost to practical and emotional support options delivered by different organisations such as foodbanks, provision of 'welcome packs', sensory needs team, tenancy support, legal, practical and emotional support.
Diverse needs	Provide information and resources to respond to the needs of individuals in a variety of different formats. Deliver training and learning opportunities to support organisations responding to people who have diverse needs. Appendix 5 details the issues we have considered in this strategy, including for those with complex needs and intersectionalities.

c) Hold perpetrators to account

Focus	Actions
Criminal proceedings	Work with law enforcement agencies to support victim-survivors through court processes. Work with Thames Valley partner organisations to maintain Specialist Domestic Abuse Court standards.
Civil proceedings	Work with Thames Valley partner organisations to meet best practice standards for courts, including implementation of recommendation from research. Promote awareness to information about legal protection options and access to specialist legal advice, including eligibility for legal aid. Support victim-survivors through court proceedings.

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Interventions	Promote and encourage access to Wokingham borough behavioural change programmes, which include Cranstoun Men & Masculinities Programme; 1:1 support for females, LGBTQIA perpetrators and those with communication needs. Also, Thames Valley wide Drive and COBI interventions. Deliver multi-agency training on how to work with perpetrators, encouraging them to access behavioural change programmes.
Child to parent abuse	Recognise and support those undertaking these behaviours into behavioural change programmes (including adult children). Deliver training to ensure practitioners are aware how to respond to these issues.

d) Deliver support in 'Safe Accommodation'

Focus	Action
Seek additional safe accommodation options in Wokingham borough	Work with Wokingham Borough Council Strategic Housing, Housing Associations and other departments to identify potential options. These include additional refuge spaces, dispersed, designated domestic abuse emergency and temporary accommodation as well within sheltered and other schemes.
Support in safe accommodation	Ensure welcome packs are available for those needing to access safe accommodation, to include information on local services, domestic abuse services, debt and benefits support, essential home equipment, food supplies, bedding and school uniforms.
Move on and secure housing	Homelessness team to seek and secure longer term accommodation and support families during the move to new accommodation.
Delivery of single and multi-agency training programme	Development and delivery of training to ensure staff have the necessary skills to respond to individuals who have accommodation related needs, including support to settle in a new area or home.
Ensure support in place for those with complex or diverse needs	Support for those with intersectional, diverse and / or complex needs (to include those who share a protected characteristic; have large families; teenage boys; male victim-survivors; those with no recourse to public funding; ex-offenders; those who have substance misuse issues).

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How we will work together

This strategy is not a single agency document, but a **collective wider community response**, recognising the active involvement needed of local organisations, businesses and residents to support individuals, including children; reduce re-victimisation and hold those who use abusive behaviours to account.

	Groups include
Wokingham borough	Wokingham Domestic Abuse Partnership Board Wokingham Domestic Abuse Networking Group
Berkshire wide	MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) steering group Berkshire Suicide Prevention Board
Thames Valley wide	Victim and Witnesses Group
Nationally	Call to Action on Perpetrators Domestic Abuse Commissioners office
Third sector organisations	Voluntary sector meetings

The Wokingham Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and Wokingham Domestic Abuse Networking Group support and endorse this Strategy, committing to working together across and within services at all levels.

3. Needs Assessment Undertaken to Inform this Strategy

Wokingham is in the Thames Valley Police area. According to the Census 2021, the **population** is 177,500 made up of 138,474 adults and 40,562 children.

Of the population:

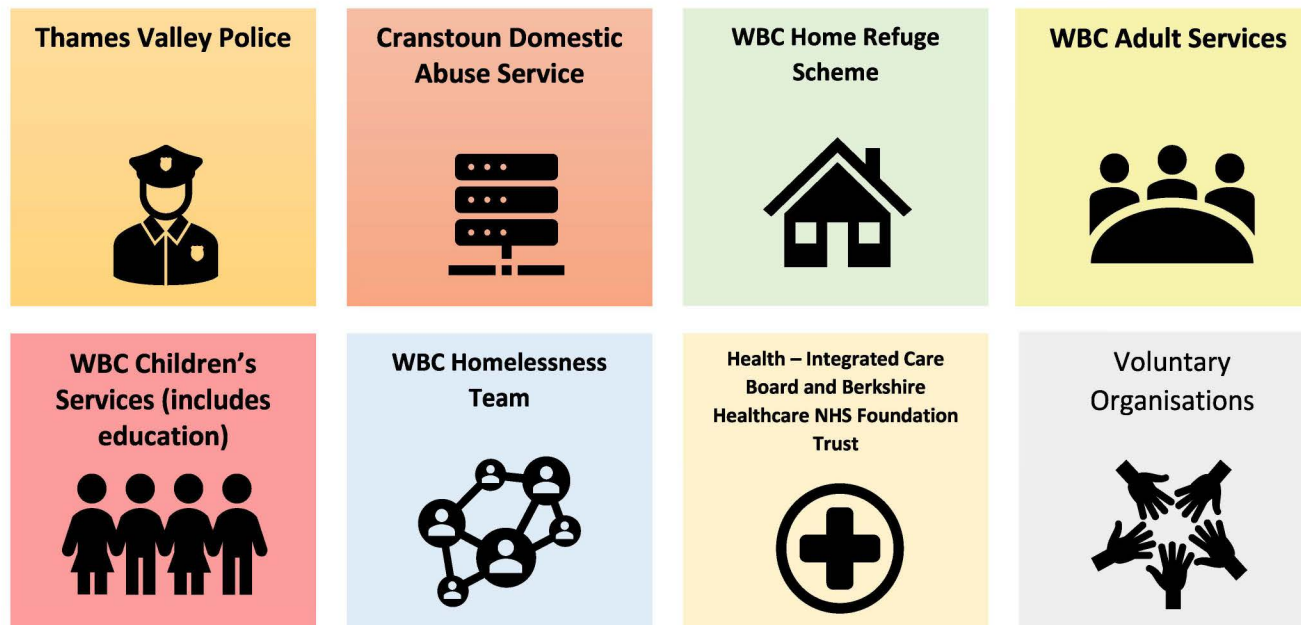
- 90,281 are female and 87,221 males
- **The population increased by 15%** between 2011 and 2021 and is **predicted to grow** to 191,867 by 2043
- 12.9% described their ethnicity as Asian / Asian British; 2.4% as Black / Black British; 3.1% as Mixed; 79.9% as White and 1.6% as other

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- 62.2% were employed; 2.2% unemployed, and 21.2% retired
- 13% of people had a disability
- 7.7% of people lived in properties in the social rented sector; 14.1% were privately renting and 76% were house owners.

Collection of Data from Organisations

Data was collected from a wide range of organisations, including the following:



Wokingham borough data for reported incidents during the period 1/4/2023 – 31/3/2024:

- Thames Valley Police responded to **2650¹⁶** incidents of domestic abuse (**73% women / 27% men**), with 1311 crimes identified. **This was an increase of 29% from 2021.**

¹⁶ Data Source: Thames Valley Police Custody Recording System and Crime Recording System (Niche) – data extracted 17th May 2021

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- **113¹⁷** Wokingham victim-survivors of domestic abuse were identified as being at high risk of serious harm or homicide, with **94** children living in these households. This was a change from 136 cases with 165 children from 2021 although figures change each year.
- The commissioned domestic abuse service supported **415** victim-survivors, **132** children and young people and **45** people who sought help to address their abusive behaviour. **This was an increase of 42% from 2021 of victim-survivors;**
- Hot spot mapping¹⁸ based on practitioner subjective information identified Norreys and Winnersh areas as having the highest rates of domestic abuse, with the Fields area having the highest level of police attendance.

A survey¹⁹ undertaken with Wokingham children found:

- **103** of 709 responses from children said a **parent or other adult in the household had hit, beaten, kicked or physically tried to hurt them** in their life: 24 said this had been in the past; 24 in the last 12 months.
- **122** of 710 responses said a **parent or other adult in the household had sworn at them, insulted them, humiliated, threatened or made them feel unwanted;** 75 said this had happened in the last 12 months.
- **38** said they had **seen or heard one of their parents / carers** being slapped, kicked, punched, beaten or deliberately hurt by a partner or ex: 8 in the last 12 months.
- **45** of 705 responses said they had been a **victim of abuse from a friend / another young person / boyfriend / girlfriend.**
- **377** of 2049 responses said they **had hurt themselves** deliberately in the last year.

Housing related Data Findings (1/4/2023- 31/3/2024)

- **71 families** contacted Wokingham Borough Council to say they were homeless because of domestic abuse. This was an increase of 92% from 2021.
- Of those presenting as homeless, **6 were males; 64 female** and 1 'other'.
- **12 people presenting as homeless** because of domestic abuse **had a disability**
- 70% were White; 15% Asian or Asian British; 7% Black or Black British; 6% of mixed ethnicity and 1% from the Gypsy, Roma or Travellers community.
- Within those seeking help 61% were adults with children; 4% were pregnant and 35% had no accompanying children.

¹⁷ Safelives Marac data

¹⁸ University of Birmingham research

¹⁹ Oxwell Research 2023

- **198 adults and children** were supported to remain in their own homes with the provision of security measures installed through the Wokingham **Home Refuge (Sanctuary) scheme**. This is a significant increase from 2021 when 44 families were supported through the scheme.

A three-bedroom **refuge** supports those who need to flee from other areas to access safe accommodation. Of the **31 people who were known to have come to our area because of fleeing domestic abuse**, 19 were from the Reading area; 5 from Bracknell; 3 from Slough; 2 from High Wycombe and 11 from other areas.

As well as the domestic abuse refuge, Wokingham Borough Council operates a **Home Refuge (Sanctuary) scheme**. This enables victim-survivors to remain in their own homes where it is safe to do so after additional security measures have been put in place.

There is currently no designated domestic abuse dispersed, temporary or emergency accommodation. (See Appendix 7 for a full breakdown of safe accommodation types, current status and gaps identified). **Addressing these gaps is a priority for this Strategy** as we look to deliver the duty of support in safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and their children.

Meeting the needs of those who share Protected Characteristics²⁰

We recognise that every person will have their **own needs and experiences** (also known as **intersectionalities**) and that having **multiple complex needs**, no recourse to public funds²¹ or protected characteristics can make it more difficult to access help and support.

Our analysis of data, and detailed interviews, has identified where victim-survivors are not currently 'visible' to domestic abuse services. We have set out in Appendix 5 how we will work to reduce and remove barriers to help so that ALL those affected by domestic abuse feel able to get help and support regardless of **age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, and where they have multiple complex needs**.

²⁰ Details of Protected Characteristics are included in Appendix 5 of this document

²¹ [Domestic Abuse Commissioner: Safety Before Status: The Solutions \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91241/Domestic_Abuse_Commissioner_Safety_Before_Status_The_Solutions.pdf)

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We have identified that people who share the characteristics are currently under-represented in services and / or need specialist targeted interventions and support:



Male
Victim-
survivors



Those who identify
as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-
sexual, Transgender,
Queer, Questioning,
Intersex, Asexual +



Older
People



Younger
People
(16–19-
year-olds)



People with
Health needs
or disabilities



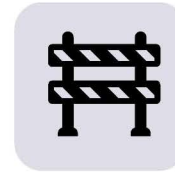
Those who need
to flee from
another area
because of
Domestic abuse



People with
complex needs
or facing
multiple forms
of abuse



Those for whom
there are limited
safe
accommodation
options



Those experiencing
cultural, religious,
language or
immigration status
barriers.



People who are
Neurodivergent

Data to the end of March is gathered each year to understand how many people from the above groups are accessing support. This information is compared to the Census 2021 information to monitor what progress is being made and the shaping of services, including ease of access to services.

Findings from in-depth interviews with Victim-Survivors²²:

Victim – survivors have told us they want:

- To feel safe – when talking to those who support them and for them to ‘understand’ the impact of conversations on their lives and their families
- To feel acknowledged and ‘heard’ regardless of gender identity or transgender status, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity or disability (mental or physical).
- For people not to make wrong assumptions about who can suffer from domestic abuse and for support to be tailored to their circumstances using trauma informed practices, addressing mental and wellbeing needs as well as practical issues.
- For legal and social services to understand the impact domestic abuse has on them and how to be more supportive and ‘hear’ their concerns.
- Front line officers to be aware of the types of domestic abuse (economic, emotional, psychological, sexual as well as physical abuse; coercive and controlling behaviour, ‘honour’ based abuse, parental alienation and post separation abuse)
- Effective signposting and a coordinated response across the borough in partnership with voluntary services as well as commissioned and council-based services

Frontline staff told us they want:

- More face-to-face training and support to help them support victim-survivors in more trauma informed ways and to deal with vicarious trauma.
- More training in schools and colleges to understand what ‘red flags’ are for children impacted by domestic abuse and what they can do to help, alongside being more trauma informed.
- More support options for children so they can be supported as soon as they need this help, for it to be for as long as the children need and for it to be effective.

Findings from Public Consultation

A public consultation was held in July 2024 for a period of four weeks (Appendix 4).

²² Victim Voice undertaken by independent organisation, Three Sixty Degree Marketing

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- 261 responses were received with a wide range of age, genders, sexualities, ethnicities represented as well as those with a disability
- 78 respondents agreed to provide more in-depth responses relating to domestic abuse
- 9.3% had experienced domestic abuse in their adult relationships
- 7.4% had grown up with domestic abuse
- 8.9% had a family member or friend who had experienced domestic abuse and a further 2.7% had a neighbour or colleague who had been affected.
- Only 63% knew where to look for information about domestic abuse

Key information which has informed this Strategy, and our priorities includes:

- The need to **raise awareness** of domestic abuse in all its forms and how perpetrators undertake this abuse
- Making **information** available, including 'frequently asked questions';
- **Ensuring that residents are aware this support is available to all**, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation or other protected characteristics (only 47% aware of this).
- Ensuring **equality of service** when providing support, both for those who 'don't tick specialist boxes' as well as those who may have additional support needs.
- Recognising the **impact of coercive control** including financial dependency and isolation
- Recognising the **additional barriers to accessing services** faced including by male victim-survivors; those who identify as LGBTQIA+; those identifying as non-binary; older people; those with a disability (including those with neurodiverse needs); and children.
- Ensuring **support is in place** and working to **break the cycle of abuse** through **education**, including in schools and college, developing respectful and healthy relationships regardless of an individual's background.
- Recognising the importance of **prioritising the needs of children** who are, or have lived with domestic abuse
- The importance of having **safe accommodation options in the local area** as well as options for out of borough accommodation.
- Consideration of **provision for pets**
- Providing **additional support for children who may need to move schools**
- Looking at pooling resources with neighbouring areas to make the most of available resources

Wokingham Borough Community Based Support Options

The **commissioned Wokingham Domestic Abuse Support Service** is delivered by Cranstoun, as part of a contract which commenced in July 2021. It is subject to quarterly reviews and review of impact.

The service comprises of:

- **Helpline**
- Outreach and IDVA (Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate) for **adult victim-survivors** of domestic abuse
- Support for **children and young people** affected by domestic abuse
- **Support groups**
- Support for those who recognise the impact of their abusive and controlling behaviour and **want to get help to make long term changes**
- Multi-agency **training**.

Between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024, support was provided to:

- 415 adult victim-survivors
- 132 children and young people
- 45 perpetrators

Support in Wokingham's **domestic abuse refuge** is commissioned from BWA (Berkshire Women's Aid) and is a 3-room refuge for female victim-survivors.

Other services have been commissioned as a result of central government funding to enable Local Authorities to provide support for victims of domestic abuse and their children in 'safe' accommodation. This has included:

- **Hourglass** specialist support for those aged 60 and over, which has resulted in an increase in older people accessing support when they are affected by domestic abuse
- **Kaleidoscopic UK** peer support groups for children and young people which reached 137 children in 2023/24, reducing isolation
- **Alana House** Hospital to Safe Accommodation project to support people attending hospital as a result of domestic abuse who feel unsafe in returning to their homes

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- Domestic abuse **specialist post** within the Wokingham Borough Council Homelessness team whose role has enabled a full review of the responses to those presenting as homeless as a result of domestic abuse, including those who need to flee domestic abuse to our area. Following the role being implemented, housing policies have been aligned to create a Domestic Abuse Housing policy and procedure, as well as the achievement of best practice standards, as assessed and accredited by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance
- Domestic abuse **specialist post** within Children's Social Care, enabling an early intervention for families being referred for safeguarding because of domestic abuse. The role provides an opportunity to identify at an early stage, safe accommodation needs and a smooth referral into the commissioned domestic abuse support service.

In addition to services which are commissioned or grant funded by Wokingham Borough Council, there are many **local organisations** who are delivering support for those affected by domestic abuse.

These include:

- **'By and for'** organisation **Project Salama** who support **diverse communities**, including those affected by 'honour' based abuse, forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation
- Flag DV! who support victim-survivors of domestic abuse who are going through **family law proceedings**
- **Victim's First** support commissioned by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner who provide support for 'standard risk' victim-survivors
- **Counselling and therapeutic services** ARC Counselling and BRAVE, Specialist NHS Domestic Abuse Mental Health Service
- **PACT** support for families affected by domestic abuse, including BB4K and Alana House projects
- Specialist **sexual abuse** service Trust House
- Freedom Project and Lifeline (formerly Paws Protect) who offer **pet fostering** services for survivors of domestic abuse
- **Wider support** for those affected by domestic abuse including the Samaritans, Citizens Advice, The Cowshed; Wokingham Recovery College; Wokingham Adult Education service, police, health and many more.
- Support for **perpetrators** through Thames Valley wide Drive Project for high harm perpetrators and COBI stalking behavioural change programme alongside community-based support through Cranstoun and court mandated support through the Probation Service.

For a full list of local support services who are helping those affected by domestic abuse see <http://directory.workingham.gov.uk/domestic-abuse>

4. Implementation, delivery and funding

Implementation of this Strategy

The effective implementation of this Strategy relies on a co-ordinated and cohesive response. A three-year action plan is being developed in line with our priorities to ensure effective implementation and delivery through a partnership approach, with named lead agencies assigned to each action.

The Wokingham Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, Wokingham Domestic Abuse Networking Group and Community Safety Partnership will continually review and monitor progress on delivery of this strategy. This will include an annual action plan which will be realistic, sustainable, achievable as well as being ambitious and enabling flexibility to respond to emerging issues, research findings and best practice.

Delivery:

Delivery of this strategy is through two multi-agency groups:

- a) The **Wokingham Domestic Abuse Partnership Board**.
- b) The **Wokingham Domestic Abuse Networking Group**

Training

Across our networks, we recognise the importance of domestic abuse training to promote stronger understanding of abuse. Our aim is that staff feel confident and empowered to respond to disclosures from people with a diverse range of needs.

Individual agencies undertake training for their staff based on their roles. This is supplemented by a domestic abuse multi-agency training programme which is available to all Wokingham Borough Council employees as well as partner agencies and accessed through the Wokingham Council My Learning platform. Training includes deeper understanding of risk identification and responses; barriers to accessing support and reflects learning from listening to those with lived experience.

We recognise the impact of supporting those affected by domestic abuse on staff through vicarious trauma, burnout, overload and compassion fatigue and raise awareness of these issues and the support available.

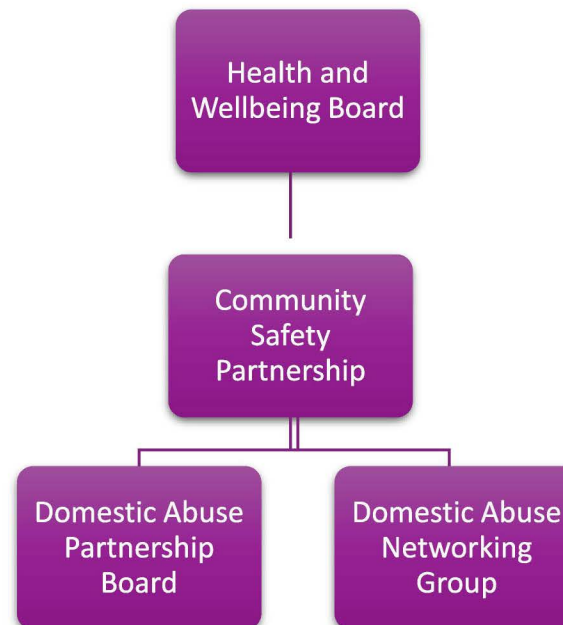
Wokingham Borough Council Funding

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 created specific funding to support victim-survivors and children who access safe accommodation. Wokingham Borough Council was allocated £257,796 for the year 2024/25 and this was used to fund gaps identified through the previous strategy relating to support in safe accommodation.

At the time this strategy was written, ongoing funding has been agreed for 2025/26.

Alongside allocated funding linked to the new duty, in 2021 Wokingham Borough Council committed to investing funding for the next seven years to commission specialist community based domestic abuse support.

5. Governance Structure



6. How we will monitor activities and measure success

This strategy sets out a framework for delivery of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Part 4 legal duty 4, alongside our wider commitment to improving the lives of those affected by domestic abuse.

Local delivery of the action plans which underpin this strategy will be overseen and driven by the Partnership Board in respect of the Part 4 new duty, with the Networking Group overseeing the wider domestic abuse action plan.

We will use a range of data and input through listening to the voices of those with lived experiences to find out whether victim-survivors are able to access the support they need and the reduction in barriers faced. This will help us to understand how local decisions and actions impact the needs assessments and victim-survivor journeys within our area.

Key Performance Indicators have been agreed to drive the actions and outcomes of the Domestic Abuse Partnership and Networking Group (see Appendix)

7. Links to Other Strategies

This strategy has been informed at national level by the:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Domestic abuse Statutory Guidance²³
- Domestic Abuse Action Plan
- Delivery of support in safe accommodation statutory guidance²⁴
- Annual progress report Support in Safe Accommodation²⁵
- Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy²⁶
- Victim and Prisoner's Act 2024²⁷
- Online Safety Act 2023

²³ [Domestic Abuse: statutory guidance \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statutory-guidance/domestic-abuse-statutory-guidance)

²⁴ [Delivery of support to victim-survivors of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statutory-guidance/delivery-of-support-to-victim-survivors-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services)

²⁵ [Annual progress report from the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation National Expert Steering Group 2021-22 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statutory-guidance/annual-progress-report-from-the-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-national-expert-steering-group-2021-22)

²⁶ [Tackling violence against women and girls strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statutory-guidance/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy)

²⁷ [Victim-survivors and Prisoners Act 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2024/11/section-1)

- The Police, Crime and Sentencing Courts Act 2022 (including the Serious Violence Duty)

Statutory requirements include (but are not limited to) those set out in the Equalities Act 2010; Human Rights Act 1998; Children's Act 2004; Housing Act 1996; Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Wokingham Borough Council Strategies include those for Community Safety; Health and Wellbeing; Violence Against Women and Girls; Rough Sleeping; Domestic Abuse Housing Policy and Procedures; Children and Young People's Plan; Poverty; and Drug, Alcohol, Tobacco Strategy (in progress and development). These all contribute towards the Community Vision, Council Plan and work towards the Marmot Principles in Tackling Health Inequalities.

Berkshire Strategies and Procedures include those of the Berkshire West Safeguarding Adults Board; Berkshire West Safeguarding Children's Board; and Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy.

Thames Valley strategies include the Thames Valley Police & Crime Plan 2024-28 and Thames Valley Police Domestic Abuse Strategy and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

8. Equality Impact Assessment

To ensure the Public Sector Equalities Duty under the Equality Act 2010²⁸, has been met, an Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the Domestic Abuse Strategy has due regard to:

- The elimination of unlawful discrimination
- The advancement of equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't
- Foster or encourage good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected characteristics are defined as age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

²⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

9. Process for Organisations and Individuals to Raise Concerns Linked to this Strategy

Any organisation or individual who have concerns regarding this strategy can contact the Wokingham Domestic Abuse Coordinator, karen.evans@wokingham.gov.uk; CommunitySafetyTeam@wokingham.gov.uk or call 0118 974 6000. In addition, concerns can be raised using Wokingham Borough Council's complaints procedure which can be found at <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/contact-us/complaints>

10. Review Period

The strategy is designed to be flexible and to adapt to changing needs and national guidance with annual action plans developed to monitor progress and direct funding commitments.

Any revisions to this strategy (excluding insubstantial revisions) will only be made following consultation with the Wokingham Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and Networking Group members; following circulation of the up-to-date version of the strategy; and allowing enough time for organisations to review and feedback. Unless there are circumstances which need a quick response, a period of at least one month will be provided for agency representatives to consult and agree any changes.

The strategy will be reviewed in full every three years, with an annual refresh.

The next annual review will take place in March 2026, with the full review due to be completed by December 2028.

Strategy Format

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact karen.evans@wokingham.gov.uk or CommunitySafetyTeam@wokingham.gov.uk

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Appendix 1: Notes On Language

Victim-Survivor	Terms used interchangeably to refer to someone who has or is currently living with domestic abuse. Since the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children are recognised as victim-survivors 'in their own right'.
Survivor focused approach	Ensuring survivor's voices and experiences guide policy development, service design and implementation
Survivor voice / lived or living experience	Someone who has shared their expertise and knowledge based on their first-hand experience of domestic abuse.
Subjected to domestic abuse	Someone who has lived with or is living with domestic abuse
Person using abusive behaviours	Someone whose behaviours are impacting negatively on others within an intimate or family environment. A perpetrator of domestic abuse.
Intersectionality	Considering how factors like gender, race, sexual orientation, disability and economic status interact and impact a person's experience of abuse, how they communicate and the way they perceive the world.
Specialist domestic abuse service	Services which specifically understand the needs of those affected by domestic abuse and provide safety planning advice, emotional and practical support.
'By and for'	Specialist services that are led, designed and delivered by and for the users and communities they aim to serve (for example victim-survivors from ethnic minority background, those with a disability, male victim-survivors, LGBTQIA+ victim-survivors)
Protected characteristics	Age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; sex (gender); sexual orientation; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership. (Equalities Act 2020)
Reciprocal agreements	Different geographical areas, who do the same thing, working together to help each other
Safe Accommodation	Accommodation defined by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance
Technology-enabled abuse	Includes online harassment, digital coercive control and image-based abuse.
Trauma-informed systems	An approach which recognises the impact of trauma on victim-survivors and aims to avoid re-traumatisation.
Whole System Approach	Integrating relevant local strategies and agency public health approaches to prevent and reduce domestic abuse.
Building Blocks of Health and Wellbeing	These are the things that contribute to health and wellbeing across a person's life and include: stable jobs, fair pay, quality housing and good education (Marmot principles)

Appendix 2: Wokingham Domestic Abuse Strategy on a Page

Our Vision:

That Wokingham will be a borough where all those affected and at risk of domestic abuse feel safe and supported and know how to get help.

Our Mission:

To reduce domestic abuse through prevention, effective victim-survivor support and holding those who harm to account through partnership efforts and survivor-led services.

Our Core Values and Principles:

- Recognise no form of domestic abuse is ever acceptable: Residents can feel confident in reporting abuse and seeking help.
- Putting victim-survivors, including children, at the centre of everything we do: Our priority is safety and support for victim-survivors, seeing each person as having their own needs as well as those of the wider family and community
- Inclusion: Recognising domestic abuse can affect anyone
- Holding those who harm to account: Ensuring interventions and support services are effective
- Using evidence to check our approaches are effective: Ensuring flexibility of approach as to what works best
- Working in partnership: Ensuring a joined-up approach, maximising impact and providing holistic support for individuals
- Considering how the building blocks of health and wellbeing impact individuals

Our Priorities and Focus for Action 2025-2028:

- Early intervention and prevention: Raise public awareness; respond at the earliest opportunity; ensure coordinated approach
- Protection and support in place for victim-survivors, including children which meets individual needs
- Hold perpetrators to account: Robust interventions in place alongside support for victim-survivors through court proceedings,
- Deliver support in safe accommodation: Seek additional accommodation units; support based on individual needs

How We Will Measure Success:

- Reduction in repeat victimisation
- Increased referrals to, and use of domestic abuse services
- Positive feedback from service users, including effectiveness of services and interventions
- Longer term behaviour changes and victim-survivors, including children feeling able to safely move forward with their lives

Appendix 3: Domestic Abuse Definitions

Domestic Abuse Definition

Domestic abuse is defined²⁹ as any single **incident, course of conduct, or pattern** of abusive **behaviour** between individuals **aged 16 or over** who are “**personally connected**” to each other. This personal connection is defined as being or having been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender identity or sexuality. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to either of the parties are also considered victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional, or other abuse.

For the full legal definition of domestic abuse, see [Part 1 of the Domestic Abuse Act](#) or the [Home Office's Domestic Abuse easy-read leaflet](#).

Some Examples of Abusive Behaviours:

- **Physical:** hitting; punching; brain injury and threatening to harm
- **Emotional:** name-calling; put downs and undermining confidence
- **Psychological:** playing mind games (also known as ‘gaslighting’) and making someone think they are ‘going mad’
- **Economic:** controlling finances; persuading to take on debts and affecting ability to work
- **Sexual:** making someone do things of a sexual nature which they are uncomfortable with and withholding sex as a ‘punishment’
- **Coercive and controlling behaviour:** making all the decisions and there being consequences if ‘rules’ are not followed
- **Stalking and Harassment:** following; checking up on you, where you are and having unwanted contact.

²⁹ Full definition is contained in Appendix 1 of this document

Appendix 4: Facts and Figures

National Domestic Abuse Facts and Figures

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) undertakes a Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). This research looks at people's experiences of domestic abuse, regardless of whether they have reported what has happened to the police or not.

Based on ONS data for year ending 2024³⁰ :

- an estimated **2.3 million adults** aged 16 and over have experienced domestic abuse **within the last year**: 1.6 million women and 712,000 men
- **5% of adults**, aged over 16 experienced domestic violence and abuse in the past year
- **1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men** have experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16
- An estimated **1 in 5 children** will live in a household where there is domestic abuse during their childhood.
- In the year to March 2024 it is estimated there were 1.5million people aged over 16 who were the victim of stalking – 423,000 (28%) were victims of domestic stalking; with 21% (314,000) being stalked by a partner or ex-partner and 141,000 (9%) by a family member³¹.

Findings from UK Charity, Safelives³² Whole Lives report found that:

- Many individuals and families experiencing domestic abuse have **multiple needs** and many are 'hidden' from services
- 87% of survivors said they had told multiple people about their experience of abuse, yet only 31% had managed to reach specialist support; most commonly through referring themselves
- **85%** of victim-survivors of domestic abuse have to seek help **five times** on average before they get effective support
- 23% of young people exposed to domestic abuse also **demonstrate harmful behaviour**

³⁰ [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics](#)

³¹ ['I feel like I am living someone else's life': one in seven people a victim of stalking - Office for National Statistics](#)

³² https://safelives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SafeLives_Impact_Report_2022-23.pdf

- On average, older victim-survivors experience abuse for **twice as long** before accessing help as those aged under 61.

Children and Young People:

Parents and carers calling the NSPCC helpline reported that children experiencing domestic abuse had become **withdrawn, sad, timid, emotional** and in some cases displayed aggressive behaviour. Some parents and carers shared concerns that children were having suicidal thoughts or had attempted suicide³³.

Crime Survey for England and Wales data to March 2023 found that children were present in 32% of domestic abuse incidents and 15.4% of **children saw the abuse**.

The Charity, For Baby's Sake research found that **40% of parents** who experienced domestic abuse said it occurred during their baby's first 1001 days of life (from conception until age 2). They further detailed how domestic abuse can physically alter a baby's brain chemistry and affect cognitive, emotional and physical development.

The commissioned service, Cranstoun delivers 1:1 support to help children process their experiences and identifies ways to improve mental and physical wellbeing. Due to the number of children and young people needing support, discussions are held with the referral agency to ensure that their needs are assessed and support provided through the commission service, or through programmes delivered by partner agencies to best meet their needs.

Those who use abusive and / or controlling behaviours (perpetrators)

- **Fewer than 1% of perpetrators receive a specialist intervention** to challenge and change their abusive behaviour³⁴
- **Only 4.4% of domestic abuse recorded by police resulted in the suspect being convicted** (NPCC 2023)
- Just 7% of victim-survivors who wanted their associated perpetrator to receive support to change their behaviour were able to get it³⁵

³³ [Helplines briefing: The impact of domestic abuse on children and young people from the voices of parents and carers \(nspcc.org.uk\)](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/press/2021/02/21/children-domestic-abuse/)

³⁴ <http://driveproject.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Call-to-action.pdf>

³⁵ https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/DAC_Mapping-Abuse-Survivors_Long-Policy-Report_Nov2022_FA.pdf

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- The Drive Partnership: A Call for Further Action said “a full range of effective perpetrator responses available across all areas and designed for all communities is essential to reducing risk, increasing the safety of adult and child victim-survivors, and breaking the cycle of domestic’ abuse for good by tackling the root cause”³⁶

Teenage Relationships

Youth Endowment Foundation research³⁷ undertaken in 2024 with 10,000 **13 – 17-year-olds found that of the teenagers surveyed, 27% had been in a romantic relationship over the past year.**

Among these:

- **nearly half (49%) have experienced violent or controlling behaviour from their partner.** Controlling behaviours are the most common, reported by 46% of those in relationships, and include behaviours such as having their partner check who they’ve been talking to on their phones or social media accounts (30%). They also include being afraid to disagree with their partner (27%) or being afraid to break up with them (26%)
- **One in three (31%) children in relationships have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence.**
- **20% of children in relationships report being pressured or forced into sexual activities they did not consent to. 19% have experienced physical violence, such as being hit, kicked or shoved.**
- **17% have had explicit images or videos shared online** by a partner without their consent
- **Younger teens (aged 13-15) in relationships are significantly more likely to report violent or controlling experiences in their relationships (58%) than those aged 16-17 (42% of those in relationships).**
- **Boys in relationships are more likely to say they experience violent or controlling behaviours (57%) compared to girls (41%)**

Domestic Abuse Related Deaths

Nationally, a total of 242 domestic abuse related deaths were recorded between April 2022 to March 2023, including:

- 93 suspected victim suicides following domestic abuse (SVSDA)
- 80 intimate partner homicides (IPH)

³⁶ [A-Call-For-Further-Action-Strengthen-the-Response-to-Perpetrators-of-Domestic-Abuse-The-Drive-Partnership .pdf \(drivepartnership.org.uk\)](https://drivepartnership.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Call-for-Further-Action-Strengthen-the-Response-to-Perpetrators-of-Domestic-Abuse-The-Drive-Partnership.pdf)

³⁷ https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/CVV24_R3_Gender.pdf

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- 31 adult family homicides (AFH)
- 23 unexpected deaths
- 11 child deaths
- 4 'other' deaths (individuals living together who are not family members or intimate partners)³⁸

National briefing papers have been produced based on research³⁹ from shared domestic death related reviews, identifying reoccurring themes. These include:

- Lack of multi-agency working and information management
- Need for better assessment processes
- Need to increase professional curiosity and assertiveness, thinking holistically and systemically
- Training and development for staff
- Policy and process developments

In 2023/24 the number of suspected victim suicides following domestic abuse has overtaken intimate partner homicides for the first time ([Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme](#) (VKPP) in collaboration with the [College of Policing](#) Report)

In Wokingham borough there have been 7 deaths between 2013 and 2024 which have resulted in a Domestic Abuse Related Death Review (previously known as Domestic Homicide Review).

Of these, five Domestic Homicide Reviews have been published⁴⁰ to date, with context:

- DHR 1 – review into the death of a couple in their 80's who died in 2013: Murder / suicide - Impact of long-term caring
- DHR 2 – review into the death of a woman in her 80's who died in 2015: Murder - Impact on caring where there is Dementia
- DHR 3 - review into the death of a woman in her 50's who died in 2016: Murder – Perpetrator mental health
- DHR 4 – review into the death of a woman in her 40's who died in 2018: Murder – Victim leaving relationship
- DHR 5 – review into the death of a woman in her 40's who died in 2021: Suicide

A further 2 Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews are currently being completed and quality assured prior to publication.

³⁸ [Domestic Abuse Commissioner responds to new report revealing the scale of domestic homicide and suicide - Domestic Abuse Commissioner](#)

³⁹ [Domestic Homicide RESOURCES | Homicide Abuse Learning Together \(domestichomicide-halt.co.uk\)](#)

⁴⁰ [Domestic Homicide Review](#)

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The reviews established what can be learnt from the deaths about how local professionals and organisations worked individually and together to safeguard victims. The importance of multi-agency collaboration; early identification of risk factors and better support for victims and marginalised groups was highlighted.

Key findings included missed opportunities for intervention; limited perpetrator accountability; barriers to support for victims; the impact of mental health and substance abuse and nuances of domestic abuse.

As a result of these reviews, improvements to services and responses have included:

- Improved information sharing and collaboration between agencies
- Identification of warning signs at earliest opportunity and taking of proactive measures
- Improved training for professionals including assessing risk levels and appropriate interventions
- Better understanding of the cultural and personal circumstances of victims and perpetrators to ensure effective support
- Involvement of families in understanding the nuances of domestic abuse and informing learning processes and outcomes

Housing and Homelessness

Research⁴¹ exploring the **experiences of a small study 40 women** who have survived domestic abuse identified the reasons they had stayed with an abusive partner were:

Reason	Percentage
Love / feelings for partner	41.9%
Never considered leaving	26.6%
Presence of children	35.5%
Nowhere to go	28.2%
Partner stopped the abuse / behaviour	23.7%
Rely on partner for financial support	12.3%
Pressure from family to remain in relationship	7%
Fear of further abuse	4.9%
Other	7.3%

⁴¹ [Women who have survived domestic abuse and their experiences of temporary safe accommodation in England - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)F

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In depth research findings⁴² undertaken by the University of West London, with **male victim's where domestic abuse led to them being made homeless** found:

- Many experienced complete system failures and felt lost / trapped
- Many experienced unfair treatment which favoured the female abuser
- Many experienced a lack of support and access to male refuge spaces.

"I had about a decade of abuse of various forms of domestic abuse from her. And that was towards myself and my three children that culminated in me losing my home and a period of homelessness"

Research on 'Identifying and understanding the **needs of cisgendered** (gender identity is the same as the sex registered for them at birth), **heterosexual male and LGBTQIA+ survivors** of domestic violence and abuse within refuge provision found barriers included:

- Lack of awareness of victimhood
- Heteronormative assumptions
- Intersectionality issues
- Lack of specialist services and resources
- Negative experiences with services

Needs included:

- Locality
- Embracing diversity and intersectionality
- Security – for self and children

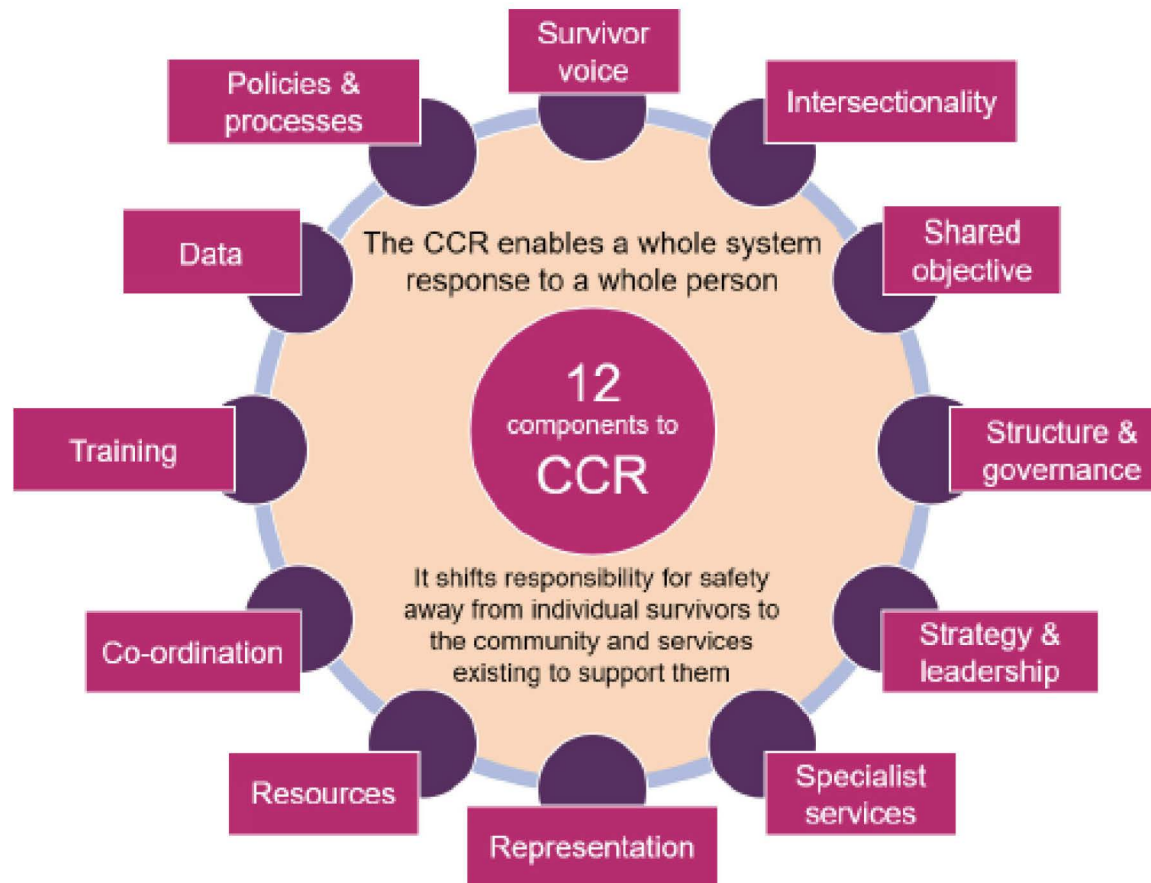
⁴² [Experiences and Needs of Men Made Homeless by Domestic Violence – Prof Ben Hine \(drbenhine.co.uk\)](https://drbenhine.co.uk)

Appendix 5: Policy Frameworks

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance



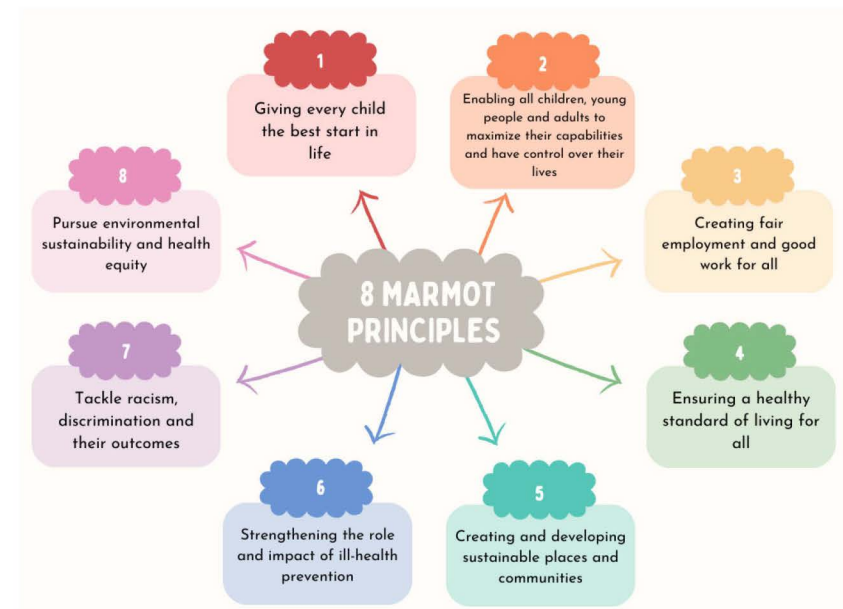
Coordinated Community Response



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The Marmot Approach: Recognising that to create a community where everybody can thrive, we need all the right building blocks of health and wellbeing in place.

Wokingham Borough Council is working with the support of the Institute of Health Equity at University College London to become a Marmot borough and reduce the unfair and preventable differences in health that exist in our communities (health inequalities). A [Marmot place](#) is one that recognises that our ability to thrive is shaped by the conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work and age, including our surroundings, stable jobs with fair pay, quality housing and good education. These are the [building blocks of our health and wellbeing](#). A Marmot place takes action to strengthen these building blocks and improve outcomes for everyone throughout life, but with a focus on those who have the greatest need and the worst outcomes.



APPENDIX 6: Consideration to potential barriers and needs of those who share a protected characteristic or barriers to support

The following details some of our plans to make available support services that meet the needs, and address barriers faced by victim-survivors with relevant protected characteristics. We recognise that each individual has their own unique needs and is likely to experience more than one of the different factors detailed below.

	Potential barriers and needs identified	Proposed action to address needs
Age: Younger (aged 16-19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increased occurrence of abuse compared to other age groups -Young people may not recognise the signs of domestic abuse, as it is often normalised in their friendship groups -Casual nature of relationships -Young people are more likely to go to friends to seek support about toxic relationships than adults or professionals -Young people may not access professionals due to a lack of trust, confidentiality and feeling they will not be believed -Reliance on technology -Poorly equipped to deal with practical problems faced when trying to escape the abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Literature and information written using terminology used by young people -Information and interventions in education settings -Practical and emotional support -Use of young people's risk assessment tools
Age: Older (65+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Isolation -Years of prolonged abuse -Health conditions or disabilities -Reliance on abuser for care, support or money -Abuse by family members, including adult children or grandchildren -Refuge accommodation may not be seen as practical or suitable for the unique living needs of older people -Public picture of domestic abuse -Generational ideas/attitudes of abuse -Digital exclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Training for practitioners -Increase safe accommodation option to think more widely than refuge accommodation -Support to respond to practical needs -Printed information available in community venues

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Disability: (Over 10% of adults with a disability experienced domestic abuse in the last year, compared to 4% of adults without a disability ⁴³)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Isolation -Increased vulnerability -Fear of not being believed -Concern services won't understand needs and be able to respond -Reliance on a perpetrator for support, including care, mediation, finances -Support networks may be used by both victim-survivor and perpetrator -Fear over child arrangements if deemed unable to cope alone -Loss of independence -Lack of information in accessible formats including awareness information in public locations -Concerns about who will care for the abuser -Communication needs -Concerns in raising an alert in an emergency -Specialised practical and emotional support needs -Focus on health-related needs rather than abuse -May be multiple perpetrators -Perception of nowhere to go 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tailor support needs to the individual -Identify a range of safe accommodation options depending on form of disability, sensory and other needs. -Production of information in accessible formats -Multi agency training on disability awareness and responses
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Physical barriers to accessing services - Accessible accommodation, transportation and equipment 	Accommodation which can accommodate physical needs, e.g. wheelchairs, ramps etc
Deaf / hard of hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Limited access to support services -Difficulty reporting abuse or accessing help in an emergency -Close knit community support groups, used by both victim-survivor and abuser -Misinterpretation of needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provide accessible communication -Educate service providers -Empower through technology -Promote community support

⁴³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesoverview/november2023>

<p>Visually impaired</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Not having warning of an attack -Need for specialised equipment, including fire alarms -Communication needs vary – can be assumptions that all can understand a specific communication (e.g. BSL) -Lack of access to interpreters -Reliance on their abuser for mobility, daily tasks and navigating unfamiliar environments -Essential accessibility tools such as canes, guide dogs, technology etc being withheld -Lack of accessible information -Challenges in using technology -Barriers to safe transportation -Using issues to gaslight or manipulate -Abuser making victim-survivor doubt if they could live independently -Difficulty in calling for help if phone hidden or moved -Communication needs vary – can be assumptions that all can understand a specific communication (e.g. Braille) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fire Service vibrating alarms and equipment -Ensure services are accessible and have information in Braille, large print (minimum 16 font size, Arial)and audio formats -Ensure websites are compatible with screen readers -Understand technological support for communication needs -Use of Sensory Needs team to help navigate routes and situations
<p>Neurodivergent (includes autism, ADHD, Dyslexia and other forms of neurological conditions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Challenges in expressing experiences, particularly if struggle with verbal communication or with social interaction – may come across as aggressive or angry when feeling overwhelmed. -May struggle to know why they feel / react the way they do, and not be aware they could be neurodivergent -Where there is no, or late diagnosis, can be difficult to tell the difference between abuse and experiencing overwhelm, burnout or shutdown -Sensory overwhelm may make it difficult to feel able to complete agreed actions (e.g. fill in forms) -Can experience environmental triggers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Safe accommodation modifications to reduce environmental trigger issues and potential sensory overload -Understand importance of having information to prepare in advance of moving to new accommodation (e.g. floor plans, information about access to property, people who may be encountered etc) -Ask about whether the person considers themselves to be neurodivergent when making assessments of needs. Asking

Learning disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -May have difficulty in forming or sustaining relationships -Reliance on abuser to manage sensory sensitivities or navigating the world -Dislike of routines being disrupted -Difficulty recognising subtle social cues or understanding when behaviours are abusive -May be more trusting or take things at face value -May experience executive functioning challenges (e.g. responding to e-mails, form filling) -May find verbal communication challenging and prefer written communication to allow additional processing time -Difficulty understanding what constitutes abuse, particularly where this is psychological or emotional -May completely trust their abuser, especially if they depend on them for daily support -Difficulty expressing experiences of abuse -Being misunderstood by services, leading to frustration and miscommunication -Reliance on the abuser for support - Economic abuse if not able to manage own finances or resources -Feelings of fear, confusion and low self esteem -Trauma may make existing mental health issues worse 	<p>direct questions such as whether they need support with filling in forms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Taking time to explain and check understanding, particularly with verbal communication. Written communication is often preferred to allow additional processing time. -Offer to help with completion of forms and / or contact to check they have been able to complete agreed actions -Provide information using clear language and in various formats (e.g. easy read, visual aids, audio based) -Support with navigation of criminal, civil justice systems and other services -Encourage self-advocacy by helping with skills to enable expression of needs -Offer referral systems in different formats
Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cultural expectations to remain in the relationship -Joint assets and lack of access to money or credit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Raise awareness of services who can provide advice on financial options
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increased vulnerability due to physical and emotional stress -Trigger for domestic abuse -Escalation in abuse -Pressure from the abuser regarding pregnancy decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work with health services to ensure signposting information available and practitioners aware of support services

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<p>Race, ethnicity, religion, or belief (people from minoritized ethnicities are less likely to disclose abuse and may suffer 1.5 times longer before seeking help)⁴⁴</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cultural and/ or spiritual stigma and fear of community exclusion -Normalising of abuse in some cultures -Risk of so called 'honour' based abuse and forced marriage -Distrust of police and other statutory agencies -Fear of rejection by religious or wider community -Concerns relating to immigration status -Language barriers -Intersectionality impact (where there may be many overlapping needs or experiences of discrimination) -Pressure to stay in abusive relationship due to religious beliefs -Victim-survivors from minoritised communities tend to experience domestic abuse for 1 ½ times longer than the white population (Safelives) -Insecure immigration / No Recourse to Public Funding (NRPF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop ethnically sensitive preventative work and awareness raising. -Specialist, ethnically sensitive training for practitioners -Workshops for community groups -Commissioning of 'by and for' services Interpretation services
<p>Sexual orientation or transgender status (bisexual adults were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse in the last year (15.2%) than gay or lesbian (8.4%) or</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -'Public picture' of domestic abuse -Abuse from family members -Fear of being 'outed' -Fear of discrimination and service responses to seeking help -Lack of awareness that LGBTQIA+ relationships can be abusive -Professionals may not recognise intimate nature of relationship -'Social 'acceptability' of violence between 2 men or 2 women - Higher rates of mental health needs, including self-worth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Campaigns to raise awareness of LGBTQIA+ domestic abuse -Promote LGBTQIA+ Domestic Abuse specialist service -Seek safe accommodation options -Training for professionals to use preferred name and pronouns

⁴⁴ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesoverview/november2023>

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heterosexual adults (5.2%)⁴⁵ Transgender status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -May not feel fit into 'women only' or 'men only' services -Not recognised as bi-sexual depending on gender of abuser -Medication needs -Lack of acceptable refuge accommodation provision: 1 in 5 LGBT and 1 in 4 trans people have experienced homelessness at some point in their lifetime (Stonewall 2018) -Concerns over discrimination and / or insensitivity in services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Speak to individual refuges to assess their policy -Seek the wishes of the person to see where they would feel most comfortable -Explore wider issues, including dispersed accommodation
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	Potential barriers and needs identified	Proposed action to address needs
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Trauma-informed responses -Long-term therapeutic support -Services for children who still live with, or have contact with the perpetrator -Young people displaying harmful behaviours -Education in schools -Difficulty regulating emotions -Long term mental health impact such as Post Traumatic Stress -Impact on physical and emotional wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Domestic abuse specialist in CSC -Focus on trauma informed responses -Training for professionals -Increase range of support options -Increase availability of long-term support

In addition, the following have been identified as facing additional barriers to accessing help and support:

	Potential barriers and needs identified	Proposed action to address needs
Male victim-survivors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Less likely to tell anyone they are a victim of domestic abuse (2 ½ times less likely than female victim-survivors – Brooks 2013) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ensure all information, leaflets, posters, web- based campaigns are inclusive -Work to provide refuge provision for men

⁴⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/624422988fa8f527785ed11c/E02735263_Tackling_Domestic_Abuse_CP_639_Elay_002_.pdf

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Men seeking support reported feeling scepticism, ridicule or made to feel responsible for the abuse (Bates 2020) -Dismissal of men's injuries -Women's abusive acts ignored / dismissed -Male victim-survivors treated as offenders -Fear of not being believed -Isolation -Lack of refuge provision, especially for men with children -Lack of awareness of support available -Fixed stereotypical thoughts implying men are strong and do not need help -Fear of not being believed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Commission services which will support male victim-survivors -Delivery of specialist training for agencies
Those with complex needs (for example an offending history, mental health issues, substance misuse, intersectionality's)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Additional needs obscure the abuse -Increased risk of violence -Unable to access refuge and other accommodation -Fear of being labelled as the abuser 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Joined up approach by agencies to address issues at the same time -Seek safe accommodation options and reciprocal agreements with other areas
Victim-survivors with insecure immigration status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reluctance to report abuse due to fear of deportation -Reliance on perpetrator for residency -Lack of recourse to public funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Raising awareness of fee waivers, changes of No Recourse to Public Funding conditions and the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession -Promote pathways to support based on individual situations
Those with limited English proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Communication barriers -Difficulties expressing abuse -Lack of accessible information -Isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Information in accessible formats -Interpreter support
Victim-survivors who need to move	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of local knowledge on support and services -Likely to be isolated from previous support network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work with other local authorities to put in place support which allows victim-survivors

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away from their local areas due to domestic abuse	-Need to register with local services and schools	easy movement from one area to another, whilst ensuring their safety. This will include funding for travel, 'warm' handovers to new area service providers -Information pack for those fleeing to Wokingham
Victim-survivors with adolescent male children	-Refuges may not take adolescent boys	-Seek alternative safe options
Victim-survivors with children, including large families and children who have a disability	-Refuge accommodation may not be available or practical -Child needs to continue with current treatments; home adaptations; specialist school provision	-Identify different safe accommodation options -Consider home refuge scheme (if appropriate)
Victim-survivors who have intersectionality issues	-Domestic abuse may not be recognised -May be reluctant to seek help from professionals	-Cultural understanding training for professionals
Victim-survivors who have pets	-Lack of safe accommodation options which will take pets -Victim-survivors reluctant to leave abusive relationship if they are unable to take their pets with them -Reluctance by some private and social landlords to accept pets	-Increase awareness of pet fostering services for victim-survivors of domestic abuse -Encourage landlords, where possible to consider allowing pets

Appendix 7: Delivery of support in 'Safe Accommodation'

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 created a duty for Local Authorities to provide support to victim-survivors of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation and includes:



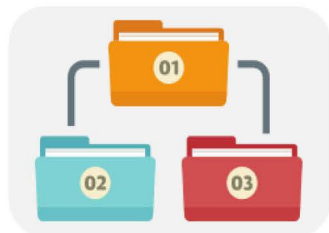
**Refuge
Accommodation**



**Specialist, safe
Accommodation**



**Dispersed
Accommodation**



**Sanctuary Schemes
(Wokingham: Home Refuge
Scheme)**



**Second-stage
Accommodation**

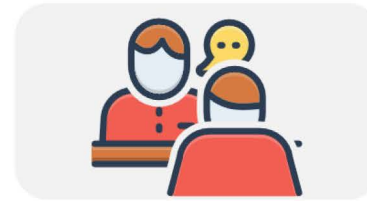


**Other Forms of Domestic
Abuse Emergency
Accommodation**

Support in safe accommodation can include:



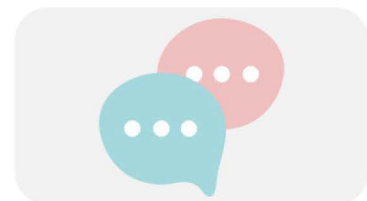
Advocacy support – development of personal safety plans, liaison with other services (for example, GPs and social workers, welfare benefit providers).



Domestic abuse-prevention advice – support to assist victim-survivors to recognise the signs of abusive relationships, to help them remain safe (including online) and to prevent re-victimisation.



Housing-related support – providing housing-related advice and support, for example, securing a permanent home and advice on how to live safely and independently.



Specialist support for victim-survivors with relevant protected characteristics and / or complex needs, for example, interpreters, faith services, mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support, and immigration advice.



Counselling and therapy - for both adults and children.



Children's support – including play therapy and child advocacy or a specialist children's worker.

‘Safe’ accommodation options in Wokingham

Type	Current Status	Gaps/ Needs	Guidance / information
Refuge	<p>A three-bedroom refuge is in Wokingham borough (1 room for 1 female adult plus 1 child, 1 female adult +2 children; 1 single female) Support in this refuge is delivered by BWA (Berkshire Women’s Aid). BWA provide safe housing for up to 38 women and children in 7 refuges in Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell.</p> <p>National picture – 37 refuges and safe houses for men (204 spaces of which 40 designated for men). 269 refuges (3649 spaces) for female victim-survivors.</p>	<p>There is currently no refuge provision in Wokingham Borough for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Larger families ➤ Men ➤ LGBTQIA+ ➤ Those with physical difficulties ➤ Culturally specific accommodation ➤ Accommodation that will accept pets <p>In addition, the following issues were identified as barriers to accessing the Wokingham refuge:</p> <p>No recourse to public funds; Complex needs unable to be met; No space or unsuitable room size; Complex mental health needs; Substance use needs; Complex disability needs; Not safe in area.</p>	<p>Council of Europe recommendation: 1 refuge space per 10, 000 population.</p> <p>Research: Understanding the Needs of Male and LGBTQIA+ Survivors in Seeking and Accessing safe accommodation⁴⁶ (April 2022)</p> <p>Exploring the experiences and needs of men made homeless because of domestic abuse (Sept 2024)⁴⁷</p> <p>Nowhere to turn; No Woman Turned Away (2024).⁴⁸</p> <p>Actions: -Continue discussions with other local authorities across Thames Valley to see if there is a cross-Thames Valley option in addressing the lack of provision for male victims. -Continue to seek additional refuge and dispersed accommodation options.</p>

⁴⁶ Prof. Benjamin Hine et al, University of West London

⁴⁷ Prof. Benjamin Hine et al, University of West London

⁴⁸ Womens Aid, No Woman Turned Away project

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Sanctuary Scheme where physical security measures have been put in place into a person's home	The Home Refuge scheme is delivered by Wokingham Borough Council, with a contract in place for Age UK to fit security measures.	No referrals received for male victim-survivors during 2023-2024. People in need may not be engaging with services.	Sanctuary scheme offered as part of a package of support with access to DA services for safety planning. Training to equip staff to undertake visual audits provided by Police CPI. Sanctuary Scheme National guidance. ⁴⁹
Dispersed accommodation which includes self-contained accommodation	Where it is identified that a self-contained or dispersed accommodation would be beneficial, options are explored to secure this.	No current dispersed accommodation designated for domestic abuse victim-survivors. Needed for larger families, those with teenage boys, single men, men with children, LGBTQIA+ victim-survivors, those with specific needs	Exploring options to secure designated domestic abuse dispersed accommodation.
Move on, or second stage accommodation (place to move to when intense support is no longer needed but a level of support is still beneficial)	<p>Refuge staff support those living in the Wokingham refuge to make homelessness applications.</p> <p>Monthly Housing Panel meetings held to discuss complex and urgent cases.</p> <p>Nomination rights in place with Registered Housing Providers</p>	<p>No move on accommodation in Wokingham borough which is designated only for domestic abuse victim-survivors.</p> <p>Lack of temporary accommodation in the Borough.</p>	Exploring designated dispersed accommodation options, including with Housing Associations.

⁴⁹ [The Empowerment Fund \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

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Social Housing	Wokingham Borough Council has a housing stock of 2735 properties. Housing Management support is in place alongside tenancy sustainment services.	Reciprocal agreements with other councils to enable victim-survivors of domestic abuse to flee to other areas more easily.	Wokingham Borough Council has been meeting with neighbouring areas to work towards having reciprocal (mutual) agreements in place.
Co-located Advocacy/ Mobile Advocacy	The Wokingham Domestic Abuse Support Service (delivered by Cranstoun) is co-located with the homelessness and children's services teams on a regular basis. Mobile advocacy is delivered through the Cranstoun outreach service. In addition, there is a generic Tenancy Sustainment Team to offer support to families facing homelessness as well as Transform who offer housing related support to assist people to retain their tenancies / homes.	Co-location of Cranstoun domestic abuse service for one day a month commenced August 2024 and will be evaluated after 6 months.	Mobile advocacy guidance. ⁵⁰

⁵⁰ https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/media/10655/9_-wha-mobile-advocacy.pdf

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Flexible Funding	<p>Designated flexible funding to support victim-survivors to retain or access secure, safe accommodation is in place. This is dispensed through the specialist domestic abuse housing officer at WBC. A small pot is held by Cranstoun DA service.</p> <p>Additional support through local organisations for food, clothing, household items, school uniform etc.</p>	<p>Accommodation does not always have furnishings.</p> <p>National fund for domestic abuse victim-survivors to access one off funding to help them flee domestic abuse is time limited.</p>	Home Office Flexible Fund information. ⁵¹
Managed Reciprocal Scheme	<p>Local Housing Provider Forum meet quarterly.</p> <p>All Registered Providers give Wokingham BC 100% Nomination rights on all new builds and 75% Nomination rights on re-lets.</p>	<p>Not enough temporary accommodation available.</p> <p>Survivors highlight the location for housing was not always suitable.</p>	Discussions ongoing for a reciprocal scheme with surrounding Local Authorities and housing providers to help survivors maintain social tenancies.

⁵¹ [Home-Office-Flexible-Fund-FAQs.pdf \(womensaid.org.uk\)](#)

Appendix 8: Public consultation responses

247 responses; 78 agreed to answer additional questions

When asked about priority areas for our action plan:

- 96.8% agreed with raising awareness and early intervention
- 98.4% with support for victim-survivors and their children
- 96.8% with breaking the cycle of abuse

We asked people how hard they thought it would be for certain 'groups' of people to access help and support with only 47% of respondents being aware that services in our borough were available to all regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation or other protected characteristics. Those it was felt more likely to experience difficulties in accessing support, included male victim-survivors; those who identify as LGBTQIA+; those identifying as non-binary; older people; those with a disability; and children.

Responders were broadly in agreement with our proposed focus on:

- Raising awareness and early intervention
- Support for victim-survivors of domestic abuse and their children
- Breaking the cycle of abuse
- Increase awareness of the options for victim-survivors of domestic abuse and their children to enable them to stay in their own homes if it is safe to do so
- Increase awareness of the options for victim-survivors when they need to flee their homes and move to another house / area
- Increase the range of housing options victim-survivors can access based on their individual needs
- Provide support for victim-survivors and children when they have moved to their new accommodation in the short, medium and longer term
- Work closely with other agencies to provide coordinated support
- Support individuals to begin rebuilding their lives

In addition, they advised they would like us to ensure we include:

- *“Assistance to women suffering coercive control over financial dependency and restrictions on visitors and whom they see”*

WOKINGHAM DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY 2025-2028

- *“Working alongside the All Age Autism Strategy”*
- *“Total equality on support given regardless of sexual orientation, race, religion, age etc”*
- *Not “overlook people who don’t tick specialist boxes. Older younger persons may need help not just based on colour, religious beliefs or sexuality”. “Whilst everyone deserves support, there is a huge contingent who deserve a higher proportion of action, rather than ‘oversupplying’ groups less affected (thankfully)”*
- *“Support for neurodiverse” people*
- *“Start early in schools with making sure everyone respects everyone else regardless of their background. Some cultures see women and female children as inferior beings”.*
- *“As a survivor of childhood abuse, I will always prioritise children's wellbeing over adults in these situations”*
- *“I think it is important to communicate around the different types of abuse and that forms other than physical abuse can be equally and/or more damaging. Reinforcing that it is appropriate to seek support and help in these instances”*
- *“You need to give attention to the role of social media - how perpetrators can get to victim-survivors through it”.*
- *“What it is and what to do – often we don’t know”*
- *“Information about if you need to sell your house- frequently asked questions”*
- *“Where you should go first”*
- *“Include relevant services you can access and how to access them”*

- *“Wherever possible help those suffering from abuse to remain safely and also financially secure in their own current home”*
- *“Provide housing in local area rather than other counties”*
- *“Please build enough for everyone”*
- *“Be of a distance that is not easily accessible to the offender”*
- *“More Government support for all councils”*
- *“Keep in proportion and target resources carefully. Pooling with neighbouring boroughs essential for all parties concerned”*
- *“Consider provision for pets”*
- *“Additional support given to make sure children get settled into school near emergency housing”*
- *“Understanding more of the needs of those younger and older whom are on the autistic spectrum”.*
- *“Quickly provide panic alarms or house alarms”.*
- *“Don’t be too narrow minded please”*
- *“Housing options for those fleeing abuse and support for children who have/are living in abusive households needs to take precedence.”*