

**THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD (RBWM)  
DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY  
2022-24**



**It's Your Borough**  
Help us make it a safer place to live

## Accessing support

This is a strategy document about how we in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) want to develop and improve our local domestic abuse services.

If you need local support now this can be accessed by contacting The Dash (Domestic Abuse Stops Here) Charity on 01753 549865 (supports all genders) or visiting [www.thedashcharity.org.uk](http://www.thedashcharity.org.uk) or visit our local authority webpages which can be found [here](#).

If you are in immediate danger, please call 999, or in a non-emergency contact Thames Valley Police on 101.

Alternatively, you can contact the freephone 24-hour National Domestic Violence helpline run by Refuge on 0808 2000 247, the Men's Advice Line on 0808 801 0327 or Galop's LGBT+ domestic abuse helpline on 0800 999 5428.

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## Foreword


Welcome to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-24. This strategy outlines our wider partnership response to domestic abuse in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM).

Domestic abuse is a serious and widespread issue with 2.3 million people in England and Wales<sup>1</sup> having experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2020 and two women every week being killed by a current or former partner. Whilst the majority of victims of domestic abuse are women, domestic abuse is about power and control and it can happen to anyone regardless of age, disability, gender identity, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

The impact of domestic abuse can be devastating and long lasting for both individuals and families. It can have a detrimental effect on wellbeing and mental health; lead to physical and emotional harm; have negative employment, educational and financial impacts; lead to homelessness and can have a negative impact on children and families. At its extreme, domestic abuse can result in death either through homicide or suicide. As well as the impact on individuals, the impact on society is huge with the total costs of domestic abuse in England and Wales 2016/17 being over £66bn<sup>2</sup>.

Domestic abuse has long been a priority for the RBWM Community Safety Partnership (CSP) but there is more work to be done and due to the complexities of domestic abuse, tackling the issue must be the responsibility of all agencies and services working across RBWM who support families and individuals affected by domestic abuse.

No one should experience domestic abuse or the threat of it. This strategy brings together our existing work, and sets out our joint vision, priorities in responding to domestic abuse in RBWM over the next three years.



Lin Ferguson  
Chair of the RBWM Domestic Abuse Executive Group (DAEG)

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<sup>1</sup> [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

<sup>2</sup> [The economic and social costs of domestic abuse \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

## 1. Introduction

The RBWM Domestic Abuse Executive Group (DAEG) exists to provide a strategic multi-agency response to domestic abuse in the borough. The group brings together senior managers from statutory and voluntary agencies including RBWM, Optalis, Achieving for Children (AfC), Army Welfare, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (BHFT), Frimley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust, National Probation Service, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS), Thames Valley Police and The Dash (Domestic Abuse Stops Here) Charity.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a duty on the Local Authority to appoint a multi-agency domestic abuse Local Partnership Board (LPB) which will consult as it performs certain specified functions. The RBWM Domestic Abuse Executive Group (DAEG) has been reviewed and expanded so that it complies with this statutory duty.

The RBWM Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-24 builds on the work of our previous Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017-20 which was continued during the Covid-19 pandemic and renews our commitment to build on our achievements, maintain good practice and continue to work together to develop our services for anyone in RBWM affected by domestic abuse.

This strategy has been developed alongside the [RBWM Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-24](#).

This strategy is accompanied by an action plan which is updated regularly to reflect the work being undertaken across the partnership which supports improvement and development of our domestic abuse services in RBWM.

## 2. Definition of domestic abuse

This strategy adopts the Government's legal definition of domestic abuse introduced by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021<sup>3</sup>:

Behaviour of a person towards another person if they are aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and the behaviour is abusive.

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; and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

"Economic abuse" means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on the victim's ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods or services.

"Personally connected" to each other includes if they are, or have been, married to each other; they are, or have been, civil partners of each other; they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated); they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated); they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other; they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child; they are relatives.

The Act also recognises that children can be victims of domestic abuse where they see or hear, or experience the effects of, the abuse, and are related to the perpetrator or victim.

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<sup>3</sup> [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

### 3. Our strategy at a glance

RBWM and its partners are committed to delivering an effective domestic abuse strategy for those living and working in RBWM. We want RBWM to be a place where everyone can live safe lives without the threat or experience of domestic abuse. For those who are experiencing domestic abuse, we want to ensure they can get help, as early as possible, to end the abuse and live safer lives.

The key priority groups intended to benefit from this strategy are:

- Adults, children and young people experiencing domestic abuse
- Children and young people who see, hear or experience domestic abuse
- Those who perpetrate domestic abuse

This strategy responds to domestic abuse in the context of abuse predominantly within intimate relationships, but also taking into account familial domestic abuse.

The Government's [Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan](#), published in March 2022, sets out national priorities. To deliver our vision in RBWM, we will work in line with the national framework with clear objectives that reflect the local need in RBWM. Through this domestic abuse strategy and our action plan, we commit to work together to tackle domestic abuse through these four main strategic priorities:

#### **1. Prevention and early intervention**

Effective preventive educational programmes, a skilled and resourced workforce, promotion of a culture of prevention and earlier intervention, challenging attitudes and behaviours which foster domestic abuse.

#### **2. Provision of services**

Responsive, effective, joined up support for victims at risk of, or subjected to domestic abuse and its reoccurrence.

#### **3. Pursuing perpetrators**

Reducing the risk to victims by holding perpetrators to account and supporting them to change their behaviour.

#### **4. Working in partnership**

Recognising the adverse impact of domestic abuse and the need to promote change through joint commitment, leadership and partnership working.

These strategic priorities are for all people, regardless of gender, sex, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion.

### 4. What do we know?

#### **National picture**

Domestic abuse remains a largely under reported crime. Data from agencies can be helpful in giving us an indication of what is known, but it must be acknowledged that reported domestic abuse will be much lower than the true picture. We also know that victims of domestic abuse will often live with abuse for a significant amount of time before seeking help, so their first disclosure (whether that be to agencies or friends/family/colleagues) is rarely the first time they have suffered abuse. It is important that we work together to improve confidence for individuals to seek early help, strengthen and improve our data collection to ensure we gain a fuller picture of the true extent of domestic abuse in RBWM.

#### **National research shows:**

- An estimated 2.3 million adults aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse in the last year (1.6 million women and 757,000 men)<sup>4</sup>.
- In the year ending March 2020, police recorded crime data showed that almost half (46%) of adult female homicide victims in England and Wales (81 women) were killed in a domestic homicide<sup>5</sup>.
- On average, high risk victims live with domestic abuse for 2.3 years and medium risk victims for 3 years before getting help<sup>6</sup>.
- One in 6-7 men and one in 4 women will be a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime<sup>7</sup>.
- Victims aged 60+ are much more likely to experience abuse from an adult family member or current intimate partners than those 60 and under<sup>8</sup>.
- LGBT+ victims/survivors present with higher levels of risk and complex needs by the time they access support<sup>9</sup>.
- Disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic abuse as non-disabled women, and typically experience abuse for a longer period before accessing support<sup>10</sup>.
- Nationally, 7.4% of white women report being victims of domestic abuse compared with 4.4% of ethnic minority women<sup>11</sup>.
- Over half (52%) of domestic abuse victims need support to help them stay in their own home or move to new accommodation<sup>12</sup>.

## RBWM picture

Under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act, RBWM have carried out a domestic abuse needs assessment to gain a greater understanding of the incidence of domestic abuse and the people affected by domestic abuse in the local authority area.

Data was collected from a range of partners including Thames Valley Police, MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference), The Dash Charity, RBWM Housing Service, Resilience Drug and Alcohol Service, Optalis (Adult Social Care) and Achieving for children (Children's Services) and Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (BHFT). A variety of methods were used to collect the data including data collection, focus groups, over the phone interviews and email feedback. The needs assessment required RBWM and partners to collect and consider data regarding victims and their children such as age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, sexual identity, disability, socio-economic status, employment status and employment.

Findings from the needs assessment helped inform the [RBWM Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-24](#) which describes how safe accommodation for domestic abuse victims and their children will be provided in RBWM. The strategy outlines six priority areas for action.

### Domestic Abuse in RBWM 2021-22:

- There were 2,585 reports of domestic abuse to Thames Valley Police with 1,486 (57%) recorded as a crime.
- RBWM Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) discussed 141 high risk domestic abuse cases with a repeat rate (rolling 12 months) of 49%.
- The Dash (Domestic Abuse Stops Here) Charity supported 416 clients through the IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy) and Outreach service. A further 513 adults were signposted to other services. 124 children/young people were supported through the Children's Programme.
- There were 108 presentations to RBWM Housing where the reason for approach/loss of accommodation was due to domestic abuse, equating to 6% of all presentations.

<sup>4</sup> [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [The lasting impact of violence against women and girls - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> SafeLives (2015), Insights IDVA National Dataset 2013-14, Bristol: SafeLives

<sup>7</sup> [Statistics on Male Victims of Domestic Abuse - \(mankind.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [SafeLives \(2016\) Safe Later Lives: Older people and domestic abuse](#)

<sup>9</sup> [SafeLives \(2018\) Free To Be Safe: LGBT+ people experiencing domestic abuse](#)

<sup>10</sup> [SafeLives \(2017\) Disabled survivors too: Disabled people and domestic abuse](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Equalities and Human Rights Commission, Race Report Statistics](#)

<sup>12</sup> [SafeLives \(2018\) Safe at Home: Homelessness and domestic abuse](#)

- Single Point of Access (SPA) had 1275 contacts due to domestic abuse, equating to 12% of all contacts. Of these, 45% were referred to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for information and advice, 28% were referred to Children’s Social Care, 14% were referred to MASH for an Enquiry, and 10% were closed with information and advice being given. Other outcomes included referrals to Early Help and referrals to other agencies.
- There were 85 victim referrals into the Achieving for Children (AfC) domestic abuse support service. Of these, 79% of referrals were progressed.
- There were 61 referrals into the Promoting Positive Relationships Programme (PPRP) group work for perpetrators, delivered by Achieving for Children (AfC). Of these, 54% of men referred engaged with the programme.

## 5. National policy and legal context

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) received Royal Assent on 29 April 2021. The key objectives of the Act are to:

- **Promote awareness** – to put domestic abuse at the top of everybody’s agenda, including introducing a statutory definition of domestic abuse and recognising children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right.
- **Protect and support victims** – to enhance the safety of victims and the support they receive, including establishing in law the office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, introducing a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order, and placing a new duty on local authorities to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation.
- **Tackle perpetrators** – to provide an effective response to perpetrators to end the cycle of abuse, including extending existing offences such as the coercive controlling behaviour offence to cover post-separation abuse, and creating new offences including such as non-fatal strangulation or suffocation.
- **Transform the justice response** – to provide support to victims throughout the justice process, including helping victims give evidence in court.
- **Improve performance** – to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse.

Commitments relating to the Government’s response to domestic abuse and the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 were published in the [National Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan](#) in March 2022 which is closely aligned to the Government’s [Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy](#), published in July 2021. The Plan has an overall ambition to have ‘a system which drives down domestic abuse and domestic homicide cases, while ensuring that victims and survivors get the support they need’<sup>13</sup> and includes four main areas of focus:

1. **Prioritising Prevention:** Reduce the amount of domestic abuse, domestic homicide, and suicides linked to domestic abuse, by stopping people from becoming perpetrators and victims to begin with.
2. **Supporting Victims:** Help all victims and survivors who have escaped from domestic abuse feel that they can get back to life as normal, with support for their health, emotional, economic, and social needs.
3. **Pursuing Perpetrators:** Reduce the amount of people who are repeat offenders and make sure that those who commit this crime feel the full force of the law.
4. **A Stronger System:** Improve the systems and processes that underpin the response to domestic abuse across society.

The responsibility to respond to domestic abuse is held by all statutory agencies with a responsibility for safeguarding and protecting both adults and children. Wider legislation includes:

<sup>13</sup> [Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)



- The [Children Act 2004](#) which reinforces that all people and organisations working with children have a responsibility to help safeguard children and promote their welfare. This includes cases of domestic abuse. Children and young people are now recognised as victims of domestic abuse under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- The [Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004](#) which extends provisions to combat domestic abuse and creates a new offence of ‘causing or allowing the death of a child or vulnerable adult’.
- The [Forced Marriage \(Civil Protection\) Act 2007](#) which aims to protect victims of forced marriage including empowering the courts to make Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPOs).
- The [Protection of Freedoms Act 2012](#) which makes stalking a criminal offence.
- The [Care Act 2014](#) which sets out how the Health and Social Care system should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect. Within the Act it specifies that freedom from abuse (and neglect) is key to a person’s wellbeing.
- The [Housing Act 1996](#) which outlines duties for the local authority where a person is threatened with homelessness as a result of domestic abuse or is homeless after fleeing domestic abuse. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has amended the Housing Act to say that a person who is homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse will automatically be in “priority need”.
- The [Serious Crime Act 2015](#) which introduced the offence of coercive or controlling behaviour against an intimate partner or family member and holds a maximum penalty of five years in prison.

## Local

This strategy links to other key local and regional strategies and actions plans relevant to the domestic abuse agenda:

- [Thames Valley Police & Criminal Justice Plan 2021-2025](#) (Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner - OPCC)
- Thames Valley Police Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2022-2023
- RBWM Community Safety Plan 2021-24
- RBWM Safeguarding Partnership Strategy 2022-25
- [RBWM Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-24](#)
- [Thames Valley Police Strategic Plan 2021-2022](#)
- Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy 2021-2026

The RBWM Safeguarding Partnership publishes [Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews \(CSPR\)](#) for children and young people, and [Safeguarding Adult Reviews \(SAR\)](#) from across the region which provides access to details of learning.

## 6. Strategic priorities

This strategy is based on four key strategic priorities which are designed to contribute to the overall vision of the RBWM Domestic Abuse Executive Group (DAEG). These priorities will form our key areas or work over the next two years:

<b>Aim:</b> <i>to prevent and reduce the impact of domestic abuse across our communities and ensure that when people do experience abuse, they can access the help and services they need.</i>	
<b>1. Prevention and early intervention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upskilling the workplace to support early identification and effective responses</li> <li>• Ensuring schools are aware where children may have witnessed domestic abuse</li> <li>• Challenging negative attitudes in the community and across agencies through public awareness campaigns</li> </ul>
<b>2. Provision of services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring we commission responsive and high-quality services which meet need quickly for victims and their children</li> <li>• Developing services with those who have experienced domestic abuse</li> <li>• Mapping current provision and identifying gaps</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening our safe accommodation support</li> <li>• Working to understand the experience of victims of domestic abuse from all social groups to ensure their voices are heard.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Pursuing perpetrators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with partners to identify domestic abuse offending at the earliest opportunity, providing interventions to bring individuals to justice or divert their offending.</li> <li>• Prioritising the safety of victims and children by making best use of powers available (both criminal and civil) to protect victims of domestic abuse and manage and disrupt perpetrators.</li> <li>• Offering help to perpetrators to help change their behaviour through effective interventions.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Working in partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting change by working together</li> <li>• Ensuring joint commitment, leadership and partnership working</li> </ul>

## 7. Governance and accountability

Domestic abuse is one of the 5 RBWM CSP themes under the Serious Violence priority. The DAEG also reports to and ensures information shared both ways with the Overview & Scrutiny Panel and the RBWM Safeguarding Partnership when required. There are also a number of operational subgroups that feed in to the RBWM Domestic Abuse Executive Group, namely the RBWM Domestic Abuse Forum, the MATAC (Multi Agency Tasking And Coordination) and MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference).

Accountability for delivery of this strategy sits with the RBWM Domestic Abuse Executive Group (DAEG). This group will also oversee work related to duties within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

This strategy is supported by an action plan which will be updated quarterly and be reviewed by the RBWM Domestic Abuse Executive Group (DAEG).

Feedback from those who use our domestic abuse services and interventions in RBWM is key in commissioning of services as well as monitoring procedures. We will work to ensure that lived experience of abuse informs and improves our local provision.