

Southend



DOMESTIC ABUSE
PARTNERSHIP

Southend Domestic Abuse Strategy

2023 – 2026

DRAFT

Foreword

[To be confirmed who will sign this? Needs to be partnership – an Exec Member, Safeguarding Partnership and Chair of DA Board jointly?]

On behalf of *[all Southend Domestic Abuse Partnership Board members]*, I am proud to present the Southend Domestic Abuse Strategy 2023-26.

The Strategy is anchored in our shared belief that domestic abuse is unacceptable in all its forms. It is everyone's duty to help preventing people experiencing it.

As a Board, we are listening to those who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse. We are clear that our learning from people with experience of domestic abuse will drive what we do, how we do it and how we measure success. With this strategy we are committing to a coproduced approach to all we do.

With this first of its kind strategy for Southend, the Board decided to go beyond the statutory ask and consider all impacting aspects of domestic abuse. By working together in partnership and joining our collective aims and priorities we will deliver a holistic local response for our city and effectively target Domestic Abuse.

This Strategy forms part of our wider work to tackle violence against women and girls in collaboration with the Community Safety Partnership Board.

Sarah Lander, Chair of Southend Domestic Abuse Partnership Board

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The impact of domestic abuse can result in a range of negative and harmful effects on health, wellbeing and outcomes in life. Domestic abuse impacts upon future generations and their ability, capacity and attitude towards relationships, parenting, self-esteem and mental health. Domestic abuse affects individuals, families and communities, and both prevention and responses must recognise both the immediate impacts which domestic abuse may have on an individual or family, and also its long-term consequences.

No person should experience domestic abuse, and through this strategy and its clear commitments, we will work together as a system and with those who have experienced abuse to prevent abuse from happening, to strengthen our service provision and to make sure we are learning from the latest research and understanding of what works best to continually improve the effectiveness of how our services tackle domestic abuse across Southend.

Southend's vision is to reduce the harm caused by domestic abuse by tackling the root causes. We want to help and support victims but we also want to change the behaviour of those who inflict the abuse and reduce the likelihood of further incidents, either within an existing relationship or with a new partner.

Councillor James Moyies, Cabinet member for Public Health, Adult Social Care & Constitutional Affairs

[Insert signature]

“The thing I have felt most challenging about accessing services is how disjointed they all are. For example, I have had to deal with the police, family court, criminal court, CPS, housing, local authorities, charities etc and have had to retell my story so many times to multiple people from each organisation. It is exhausting and makes you want to give up. It would be useful for services to work together more effectively”.

- Victim/survivor in Southend

Introduction

About this strategy

Domestic abuse has an impact on many residents in our city, yet it is often one of the most under reported crimes. The impact of domestic abuse on victims and survivors¹, including children can be traumatic and the consequences are long-lasting, far-reaching, and often misunderstood.

On average victims at high risk of serious harm or murder live with domestic abuse for 2-3 years before getting help², though many victims suffer from abuse for much longer. Children and unborn babies living in households of domestic abuse are at increased risk of short, medium and long-term impacts including poor health outcomes and increased vulnerability. Young people under 16³ can experience abuse within their own relationships, and we are committed to delivering an all-age approach. This also means ensuring older people who experience abuse are supported. We know that in 2021-22 41% of the domestic abuse related enquiries to adult social care were in relation to adults aged 65 and over.

To tackle these complex issues, the Southend Domestic Abuse Partnership Board was formed in 2022 to bring together partners from the City Council, police, NHS, housing groups and voluntary community groups. Through this wide-ranging membership, all aspects of domestic abuse can be holistically addressed.

With this strategy, the partnership incorporates and goes beyond its statutory duty under the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) to deliver support within safe accommodation to victims and survivors, including children. With the ambition to make a lasting positive change, the Southend Domestic Abuse Partnership is also committed to a clear approach to hold those who use harmful and abusive behaviours to account and to change their behaviour.

Because domestic abuse disproportionately affects women and girls our approach strongly reflects the [Government's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy](#). However, we recognise that men can also be victims and the approach set out in this strategy will benefit all victims and survivors.

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) has stipulated that children living in households of domestic abuse are direct victims in their own right. As such we are referring to both, adult and child victims, when using the term 'victim'.

¹ A note on terminology: throughout this strategy we use the terms victim, survivor and people that have experienced domestic abuse interchangeably to recognise that there is no consensus on which term individuals who have experienced it identify with.

² SafeLives (2015), Insights Idva National Dataset 2013-14. Bristol: SafeLives.

³ The statutory definition of domestic abuse applied to those aged 16 and over. Although this is the definition we refer to in this strategy, we recognise abuse can happen to younger people too. Our strategy is an all-age strategy and includes young people who may experience abuse within their own dating relationships.

Defining domestic abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) characterises domestic abuse as coercive, controlling, threatening, or violent behaviours, including physical, psychological, financial, emotional, and sexual abuse that occur in marriages, civil partnerships, personal relationships, and in parental relationships.

Our vision

Domestic abuse is unacceptable and too often remains hidden. Only by mobilising all parts of our communities and working together in recognising, understanding, and responding, can we make fundamental changes to end domestic abuse. Tackling domestic abuse is everybody's responsibility.

Our partnership vision is:

To come together without judgement to prevent domestic abuse from happening and where it does, to support victims as all Southend's people deserve to flourish in a safe environment without fear and where they are free from harm.

We estimate that every year in Southend-on-Sea there will be **7,690** victims, this is much higher than what we see reported across services.

For example:

745 male victims living in Southend-on-Sea reported domestic abuse to Essex Police in **2021-22**. This is **38%** of the estimated prevalence of DA reported to police.

1,842 female victims living in Southend-on-Sea reported domestic abuse to Essex Police in **2021-22**. This is **40%** of the estimated prevalence of DA reported to police.

778 clients being supported though Safe Steps outreach in **21/22**.

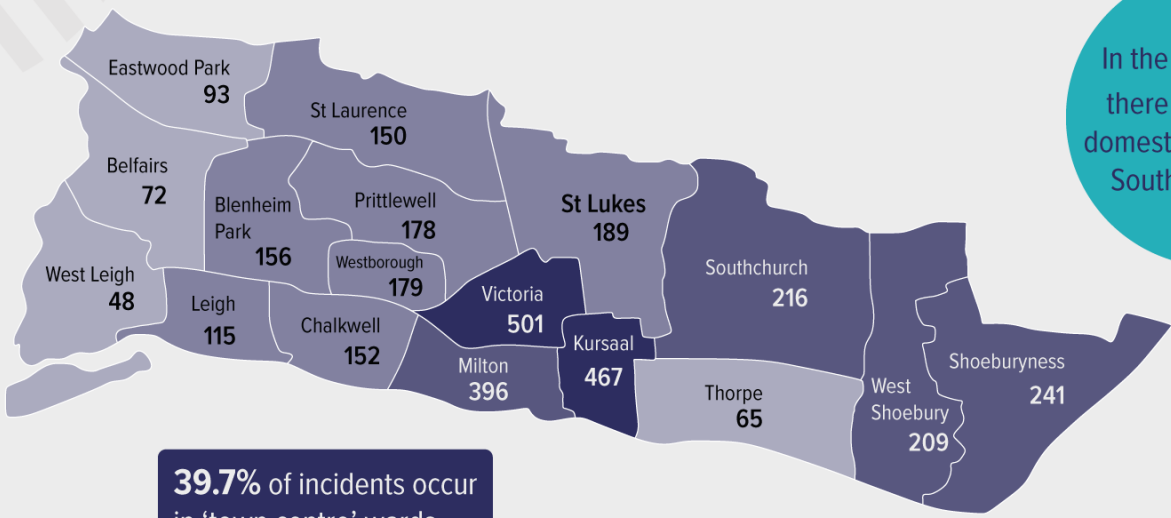
Safe Steps Break the Cycle received **101** referrals for young people experiencing DA.

21% of victims who accessed Safe Steps outreach identified as BAME.

14% of clients referred to Safe Steps outreach experienced mental health difficulties. The most common single need.

7% of referrals to Safe Steps outreach were for **LGBT** residents.

Number of DA incidents by ward in Southend-on-Sea.

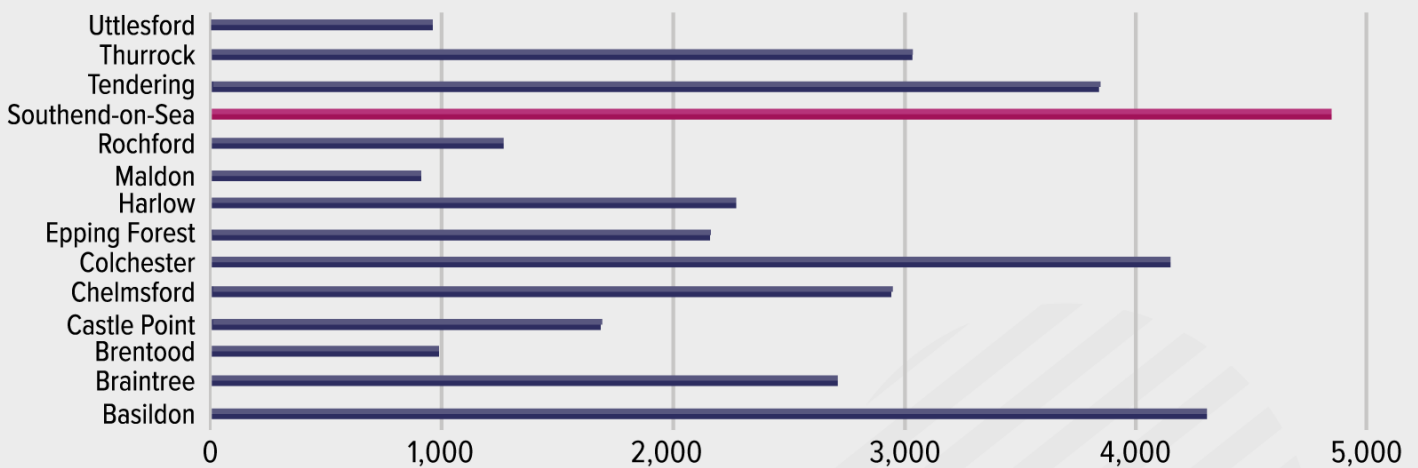


In the last **10** years there have been **7** domestic homicides in Southend-on-sea.

39.7% of incidents occur in 'town centre' wards.

Neighbourhoods in these wards are between **10-30%** most deprived across England.

Number of DA reports to police by location in 2021 - 2022



Southend's approach to tackling domestic abuse

To make our vision for Southend a reality, we will focus on four priority areas. To realise long-lasting changes, we recognise that **what we deliver is equally as important as how we deliver it**. For this reason, all work will be underpinned by the same principles to offer a response bespoke for Southend.

Principles

To deliver this strategy effectively our work needs to be responsive to the circumstances and requirements of victims, survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse in Southend.

To achieve this our work will be:

• Evidence based

Using knowledge from local, national and international research and reviews about Domestic Abuse and about methods to successfully tackle domestic abuse. We will also ensure we utilise the evidence base to ensure our response is fit for all communities including those described as 'hidden'. This learning will inform the development of solutions for Southend.

• Trauma informed

Domestic Abuse can leave victims and their families traumatised. Recognising the impact of trauma is vital to ensure our responses are empathetic to the needs of victims and their families.

• Gender-based

The strategy recognises that domestic abuse disproportionately affects females. Our holistic approach will respond to this fact while not excluding male victims. The strategy supports Southend's Community Safety Partnership's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) priority.

• Needs led & intersectional.

Different people experience domestic abuse in different ways. Further, domestic abuse is seldom an isolated issue. Additional factors and/or multiple forms of violence, abuse, and other forms of oppression may increase vulnerability to abuse and further isolate victims. In a holistic approach, factors like substance misuse, mental health homelessness, coercion and control, etc. may need addressing at the same time to achieve positive outcomes.

Our strategy recognises that victims and survivors don't live single issue lives and therefore focuses on offering help and support for victims and survivors with unmet needs including specific needs across all communities including those described as 'hidden'. Services must be accessible to all residents, recognising their individual experiences.

Priorities

Our priorities work across the spectrum of prevention focussing on how we can stop abuse happening in the first place (primary prevention), through to immediate support (secondary prevention) and long-term recovery (tertiary prevention).

Our priorities, as will be presented in the following sections, are:

Priority 1: Coproduction

Empowering people with experience of domestic abuse to shape and inspire our response, keeping them at the heart of everything we do.

Priority 2: Prevention and partnerships

Galvanise all people and communities to prevent domestic abuse by changing cultures that condone or are conducive to abuse.

Priority 3: Victim support, including children

Collaborate across all agencies to ensure those experiencing abuse can access the right support, at the right time.

Priority 4: Perpetrators

Hold those using harmful behaviour accountable for changing their behaviour.

Priority 1: Coproduction

Empowering people with experience of domestic abuse to shape and inspire our response, keeping them at the heart of everything we do.

What this means

This priority centres around **coproduction**, a vital approach that places individuals with experience of domestic abuse in positions of influence to inform decision-making.

What is coproduction?

Co-production gives people an opportunity to influence, co-plan, co-design, develop and help to shape services that are truly fit for purpose. Co-production brings people together, to explore lived and living experience, to share those experiences, knowledge and understanding. It's about working together, for residents and professionals to work in equal partnership for equal benefit, to create better outcomes for people. Listening the experts by experience, from different backgrounds allows us all to understand and appreciate any challenges or barriers people face.

We firmly believe that those who have personally encountered the challenges and traumas associated with domestic abuse possess invaluable insights that can inform and shape our response to this pervasive issue. By actively involving survivors in the implementation of our strategy and everything we do, we aim to not only honour their resilience but also create a more empathetic and effective support system. Coproduction ensures that the voices, needs, and ideas of survivors remain at the forefront of our efforts, guiding us towards comprehensive solutions that truly make a difference in their lives. This priority underscores our commitment to fostering a survivor-centered approach and recognising the expertise that only those with experience of domestic abuse can provide.

What we know

That coproduction activity is currently limited with victims of domestic abuse.

What we want to achieve

Our objectives:

1. **Develop a coproduction board:** Ensure the Southend Domestic Abuse Partnership structure incorporates mechanisms for the voice of victims and survivors and children to be heard across the structure.
2. **Embed the voices of those who have experienced domestic abuse across design and commissioning of services:** The commissioning and provision of services will be informed by the views of those who have been affected by domestic abuse or are at significant risk of it. This will include developing approaches to involve people with experience in monitoring.
3. **Integrate the voices of those with experience of domestic abuse in raising awareness and training:** Actively involve individuals with experience of domestic abuse in raising awareness and delivering training programs. This objective aims to

ensure that the voices and perspectives of survivors and those affected by domestic abuse are integrated into awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and training programs. By incorporating their insights and stories, we can enhance the impact and relevance of these initiatives, fostering a deeper understanding and empathy within the wider community.

Priority 2: Prevention and Partnerships

Galvanise all people and communities to prevent domestic abuse by changing cultures that condone or are conducive to abuse.

What this means

Prevention in domestic abuse refers to a multifaceted approach aimed at stopping abusive behaviours and violence before they occur. It involves proactive measures at various levels **to address root causes and risk factors, with the goal of preventing domestic abuse from happening in the first place.** Prevention encompasses a tiered framework, including primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. At each level, **changing attitudes is a central feature, challenging societal norms and promoting healthy relationships, gender equality, and non-violence.** By working across these tiers and fostering a culture of respect, education, and awareness, we strive to create environments where domestic abuse is no longer tolerated, thus ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals and communities.

Creating lasting change in attitudes throughout the system and community is instrumental in preventing domestic abuse. It starts with transforming organisational responses to domestic abuse, driving a cultural shift that empowers individuals and promotes healthy relationships. As victims have bravely shared, until it became physical, they felt that no one understood or could help:

“Until it became physical no one said they were able to help. If someone had told me the financial control and verbal assaults counted and could offer me support and a way out, it wouldn’t have become physical”.

- Victim/survivor in Southend

By breaking the silence and challenging preconceived notions, we can dismantle the barriers that victims face when seeking support. These first-hand experiences underscore the urgency to redefine what is socially acceptable and establish a safe space where victims can disclose their abuse with confidence, knowing they will be supported. **Early identification and intervention form the bedrock of prevention efforts.** By strengthening our initial responses throughout organisations, training all workers to identify domestic abuse, and establishing effective support pathways, we can intervene at the earliest opportunity. These proactive measures empower 'Trusted Professionals' to foster open dialogue, encouraging individuals to share their experiences and identify abuse early on. The powerful quotes from victims serve as a reminder of the complexities and the need for a coordinated approach across agencies to ensure a comprehensive response:

“I felt like other people made me feel like I wasn't intelligent because I had got myself into that situation, and as a woman it is my responsibility to not get into that situation with a man. I also felt there was a sense of social status around Domestic abuse, like I must be from a poor background or rough background or lower status background because this sort of thing doesn't happen to people who are not 'working class' or live on a council estate for example”.

- Victim/survivor in Southend

Equally important is educating children from an early age, as victims have highlighted the lack of understanding they faced Domestic Abuse due to societal misconceptions. **By fostering a culture of equality and respect, we equip young people with the tools to recognise the signs of abuse,** reject harmful social media content, and effectively address cyberbullying. The quotes from victims poignantly emphasize the need to eradicate stereotypes and social

status associations tied to domestic abuse. This means raising awareness among the broader community, enabling individuals experiencing abuse to understand their situation and access the necessary help and support.

“They didn’t understand why I would stay with that person and didn’t understand the complexities. Some friends stopped talking to me for a while because they didn’t understand why I’d “put up with” that behaviour”.

- Victim/survivor in Southend

With this strategy **we will actively challenge these harmful narratives and strive to create a community that prioritizes respect, equality, and support for all individuals.** Through education, awareness, and early intervention, we can dismantle the foundations that allow domestic abuse to persist, creating a safer and more nurturing environment for everyone.

What we know

1. **Domestic abuse in Southend is under-reported with residents describing multiple barriers that we need to address to increase their confidence in the system.** Overall, we estimate around 7,690 residents experience domestic abuse every year, however there were only 2,587 victims who reported abuse to the police between January and December 2022. Our survey found that only 6% of victims reported all incidents of abuse to the police and overall, 34% never disclosed to any professional about their experience.
2. **Agencies in Southend may not identify domestic abuse effectively.** Only 60% of professionals who responded to our survey said they had received domestic abuse training and only 33% felt that there is enough awareness raising of what professionals should do if they identify someone experiencing domestic abuse.

What we want to achieve

Our objectives:

- 4) **Promote societal change and community engagement:** We will challenge societal attitudes that condone domestic abuse and foster a culture where domestic abuse is not tolerated. To do so we will **develop awareness raising campaigns** to increase understanding, across agencies, services, and local communities. We will **work closely with the community and voluntary sector** collaborating with community leaders, organisations, and social hubs to engage diverse groups effectively.
- 5) **Promote healthy relationships in education:** Ensure that a comprehensive curriculum-based program on domestic abuse awareness and healthy relationships is available in all schools and educational settings. Collaborate with schools to address gender inequality, sexual stereotyping, and the normalisation of domestic abuse where it exists.
- 6) **Establish effective collaborative frameworks:** Develop policies, working procedures, and guidance that facilitate effective partnership working among organisations to ensure a coordinated community response to domestic abuse.
- 7) **Incorporate learning from research and reviews:** Identify and embed the insights gained from Domestic Homicide Reviews, Safeguarding Adults Reviews, and Child Practice Reviews that are relevant to domestic abuse, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and informed practice.

Use learning and research on Adverse Childhood Experiences to further understand the impact of domestic abuse on young people, and how to minimise harm experienced to build resilience.

- 8) **Support employees experiencing domestic abuse:** Implement supportive processes within organisations to assist and provide resources for staff members who disclose domestic abuse. Work with businesses to ensure they have access to information on supporting employees facing domestic abuse.

Priority 3: Victim support, including children

Collaborate across all agencies to ensure those experiencing abuse can access the right support, at the right time.

What this means

Effective safety and support means ensuring women who experience domestic abuse, and their children are safe and protected from harm and have access to the right **support** at the right time. Collaborating across all agencies is crucial to ensure that individuals experiencing domestic abuse can access the necessary support when they need it most. We know that getting the right support can be lifechanging:

“I spoke to a friend, and she explained I had and was experiencing domestic abuse and suggested Dove. They were wonderful. Non-judgmental, helpful, wise, and understanding. And they referred me to Fledglings who were equally fantastic. I feel so much stronger”.

- Victim/survivor in Southend

It is essential to recognise that the needs of victims are diverse and multifaceted, requiring a comprehensive and tailored approach. The support provided must go beyond a one-size-fits-all solution, acknowledging the unique circumstances and challenges faced by everyone. We will specifically consider how our services and responses are fit for purpose for all communities including those from ethnically minoritized communities and wider cohorts where additional barriers to help seeking may exist including LGBT, older people and male victims. This includes offering a range of options that cater to different needs, ensuring we have a range of provision including:

- community-based support (including outreach, high risk services and therapeutic support)
- accommodation based support (including refuge and wider safe accommodation)
- support for children, young people, and whole families

In ensuring victims can access the right support at the right time, we will collaborate across the partnership to deliver the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and a whole housing approach. The latter is necessary to address the housing needs of victims, ensuring that accommodation-based support is readily available:

“From when I first made contact with Safe Steps I felt supported and believed 100%. My experience since being in refuge I have been supported in anything I needed to do”.

- Victim/survivor in Southend

Through a whole housing approach, we will recognise that whilst some survivors need to flee their home for safety, this is far from ideal and in some instance survivors would prefer the option to remain safe within their own home:

43% of victims wanted help and support to stay safe in their own home.

- **Southend victim and survivor survey**

By working collaboratively and adopting a victim-centred approach, we can ensure that all victims of domestic abuse receive the right support at the right time, empowering them to rebuild their lives and be free from abusive and harmful behaviour.

What we know

1. **There is a high complexity of need and risk for people experiencing domestic abuse in Southend.** This was evidenced in our professional's survey in which mental health was the highest perceived need of victims with 62% of professionals stating this was what they saw most commonly. This was mirrored by feedback from victims as 80% stated this was their biggest need.
2. **Victims note that their practical needs were often the most important to them.** Aside from mental health related support as noted above, victims most needed practical support which highlights the need for joining up with more universal and community-based services. In total 47% needed legal support and advice and 43% wanted something to help them to be physically safe within their own home through implementing physical safety measures such as alarms (for example).

What we want to achieve

- 9) **Collaborate across all agencies to ensure victims are not passed from pillar to post:** We will work to ensure all agencies sign up to our strategy and collaborate with partners who recognise their role in tackling these issues holistically and create a system whereby people can at any point seek help safely and without fear, shame, or judgement. We know that in some instances victims with additional vulnerabilities such as mental health or substance use needs find it difficult to access the right support at the right time. Every organisation in Southend on Sea has a role to play in combatting this, and we want to be clear that working together means working collaboratively and creatively to achieve the best outcomes for residents. As part of this we will aspire to deliver a coordinated community response in line with the [In Search of Excellence \(2021\) guidance](#) from Standing Together.
- 10) **Enhance accessibility and availability of community-based support services for all victims and survivors to ensure there is no wrong door for everyone:** Collaborate across agencies to ensure that individuals experiencing domestic abuse have access to a comprehensive range of community-based support services, including outreach, high-risk services, and therapeutic support when they need it, including long term support to recover from the impact of harm.
- 11) **Increase accommodation based and housing options for people experiencing abuse:** Develop and implement a **whole housing approach** that addresses the housing needs of victims and ensures the availability of safe accommodation options. This will include options for people who need to leave the City for their own safety to ensure they have access to support to return should they want to.
- 12) **Provide comprehensive support for children and young people:** Collaborate with agencies to ensure that children, young people, and whole families affected by domestic abuse receive tailored and holistic support.
- 13) **Work to safeguard victims at the highest risk of harm through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) processes:** Enhance the effectiveness and impact of MARAC, a multi-agency risk management meeting, to ensure timely and coordinated responses to high-risk cases of domestic abuse.

14) Evidence and needs based development of services: Partners will work collectively to bring together accurate and consistent data to improve our understanding of gaps, to inform service development and service delivery, and to ensure an effective quality monitoring of commissioned services. An agreed multiagency and joint commissioning approach will be developed and utilised to inform the commissioning and decommissioning of domestic abuse services.

We will continue to learn from latest research and best practice examples to effectively address harmful, violent, and abusive behaviour within different contexts.

Priority 4: Perpetrators

Hold those using harmful behaviour accountable for changing their behaviour.

What this means

We acknowledge that to effectively combat domestic abuse; it is necessary to balance punitive measures within the criminal justice system with a comprehensive approach that supports individuals who are motivated to change their behaviour. By centring on the principles of the Duluth Model, we aim to challenge the patterns of power and control that underpin abusive behaviour and create a culture of non-violence and respect. Holding **perpetrators** accountable requires a multifaceted approach that includes both, consequences for their actions as well as opportunities for intervention, rehabilitation, and support. Through this approach, we strive to foster behavioural change, creating safer communities for everyone involved.

Our feedback from victims and survivors in Southend to date has highlighted their desire for more focus to be held on holding those using harmful behaviour towards them:

“The police had been disappointing. My abusive ex breeches a non-molestation order over 7 times”.

- Victim/survivor in Southend

“[police] let him be bailed to our family home. I was then left homeless with the children as he refused to leave”.

- Victim/survivor in Southend

By offering support and interventions for individuals motivated to change their behaviour, we can break the patterns of violence and control, ultimately preventing future instances of domestic abuse. This comprehensive approach balances the need for accountability through the criminal justice system with the recognition that support is an essential component for long-term behavioural change.

What we know

1. **There are limited current support services for people using harmful behaviour in the city.** From our survey with professionals the biggest barriers they found in meeting the needs of perpetrators they worked with was a lack of an appropriate offer of support, including lack of behaviour change programmes and mental health support. Victims and survivors also told us they would like to see more support for those using harmful behaviour with 31% noting they would like healthy relationships support to make their relationships safer.
2. **Very few cases reported to Police result in a charge or summons.** There was a total of 3,718 recorded domestic abuse investigations in Southend in the 12 months between January and December 2022. Only 10% of all cases with recorded outcomes in 2022 were solved, with only 2% of all crimes with a recorded outcome in 2022 resulting in a charge or summons.

What we want to achieve

Our objectives:

- 15) Increase our offer of support services for people using harmful behaviour:** We will enhance the support services available for individuals who have engaged in harmful behaviour. By commissioning and developing comprehensive programs, we strive to address the underlying issues contributing to domestic abuse and promote sustainable behaviour change. This objective emphasises the importance of providing effective support to perpetrators to prevent future abuse.
- 16) Develop a preventative approach to the identification, risk assessment and risk management** of perpetrators to ensure we work proactively. This should include exploration of emerging research on using data linkages⁴ to identify those who are or may cause harm.
- 17) Enhance accountability and intervention through the Criminal Justice System:** By promoting timely and appropriate legal action, as well as implementing effective intervention programs, we aim to disrupt patterns of power and control and deter reoffending.

⁴ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(23\)00126-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(23)00126-3/fulltext)

Developing and implementing our strategy.

How we informed our strategy

The development of this partnership strategy is a culmination of efforts across Southend agencies. A number of methods were used to learn from peoples' experience, collate relevant evidence and by this inform this strategy:

- **Domestic abuse needs assessment (2023):** The needs assessment is a collation and analysis of data from across all agencies in Southend, including statutory safe accommodation needs assessment elements and a review of published and ongoing Domestic Homicide Reviews. This was conducted for the purpose of understanding the needs and support requirements for victims and survivors. Through the needs assessment we identified some of the unique challenges that victims and survivors in Southend face including a complexity of need including wider vulnerabilities such as mental health and substance use needs.
- **Domestic abuse discovery exercise:** Jointly with the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB) we commissioned TONIC to complete an in-depth research project to understand the pathways that exist across the greater Essex footprint. TONIC engaged with over 320 people, including those with experience of domestic abuse and stakeholders, through an online survey, workshops, and in-depth interviews.
- **An online survey for professionals across Southend:** In addition to the broader discovery exercise, we developed our own survey to hear specifically from our stakeholders and residents. We heard from 58 professionals from agencies across Southend who told us about their experience of working with domestic abuse. This included exploration of the level of knowledge and awareness of domestic abuse to inform our learning and development elements of the strategy.
- **Hearing from Southend victims and survivors:** This included a focus group and survey with people who had experienced domestic abuse. Overall, we had 97 responses from victims and survivors who told us about their needs and what they think a good service should look like
- **Workshop with stakeholders:** We facilitated a workshop with stakeholders from across all agencies in Southend. At this workshop we presented the draft survey for consultation.
- **Online consultation survey:** Following the development of the draft strategy we launched our 'You Said, We Heard' survey for anyone working or living in Southend. We sought their feedback on our proposed strategy.

Southend Domestic Abuse Partnership extend their gratitude to every individual that has contributed to the development of this strategy. The feedback from those with victims and survivors, residents and people who work in partner agencies across Southend has been invaluable and we hope their views are sufficiently reflected in this document.

Our commitment to multi-agency collaboration

In Southend, all local agencies have a vital part to play in delivering this strategy. Many of these agencies are already undertaking significant and valuable work to promote safety and provide effective interventions; however, we know there is still much more for us to do.

The Domestic Abuse Strategy has been produced to assist partnerships and agencies in delivering appropriate responses to those affected by domestic abuse across Southend, assisting people to live free from abuse. It takes account of the legal framework for protecting vulnerable children whereby children who witness abuse will be considered within a child protection framework as reflected in the [Working Together guidance](#). We will continue to work across Boards including the Children Safeguarding Partnership to ensure robust responses for children and families experiencing domestic abuse.

This Strategy is underpinned by commitment to partnership working so that agencies will be able to maximise the utilisation of existing resources and, where possible, seek to draw upon additional resources, to improve the response to domestic abuse across Southend. It is a call to action for us all over the next three years to work together to achieve our shared vision for Southend and send out a clear message that domestic abuse will not be tolerated.

Governance

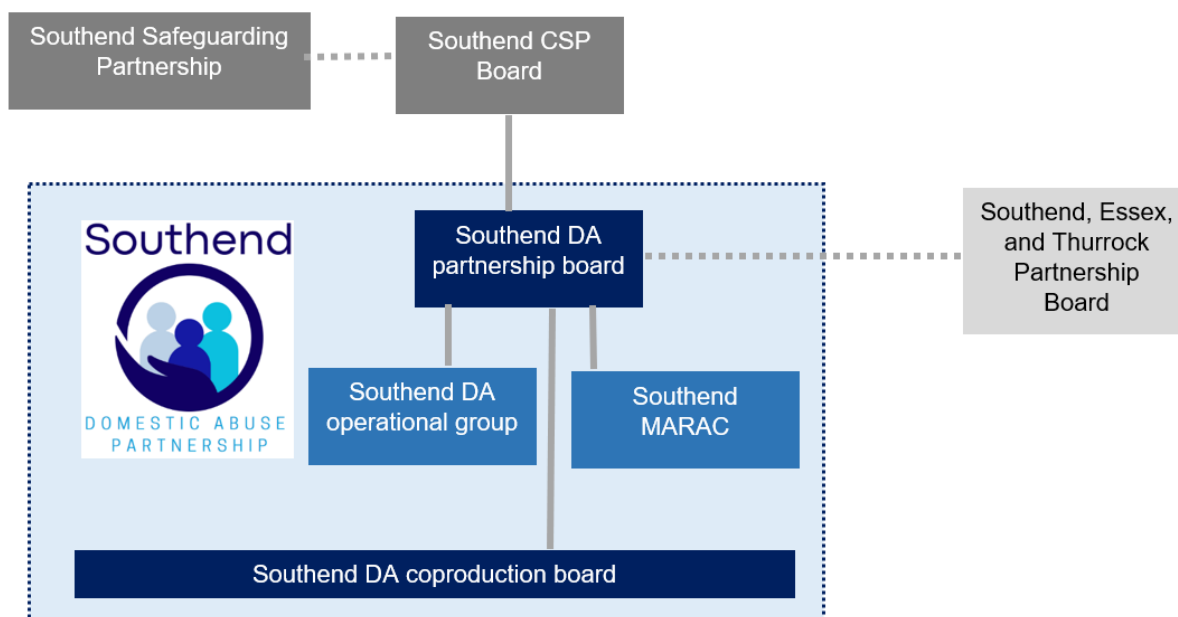
The Southend Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (DAPB) is a partnership group formed in line with requirements of Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The Board will support Southend City Council in meeting its duty to improve outcomes for victims of domestic abuse, including their children, by setting a strategic approach for all partners.

The Southend DAPB will hold responsibility for delivering this strategy, including monitoring progress.

Members of the Board will work together to support, advise, and co-operate with Southend City Council to ensure victims of domestic abuse have access to adequate and appropriate support within relevant safe accommodation services.

The Board will establish an equitable partnership that reflects the needs of those impacted by domestic abuse in the local area and works to ensure victims of domestic abuse have access to appropriate and specialist support within appropriate safe accommodation services. The Board will ensure the membership adheres to the statutory regulations and includes a broad representation of statutory, community and voluntary sector partners and that can participate and actively contribute across the partnership structures.

In year one of our strategy, we will develop our governance mechanisms through the development of an operational group and a coproduction Board. The full governance for the DA partnership is illustrated below:



Working across the Greater Essex footprint

Effectively tackling domestic abuse requires a multi-agency response. As such our response models need to be aligned as far as possible across relevant local authority boundaries. We will work alongside colleagues in the Greater Essex area, through the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB) to ensure responses are coordinated and aligned. The current SETDAB strategy includes five outcomes, of which all link seamlessly with our local approach:

Southend's strategic priorities	Links to the SETDAB outcomes
<p>Priority 1 Coproduction: Empowering people with experience of domestic abuse to shape and inspire our response, keeping them at the heart of everything we do.</p>	<p>There is no specific SETDAB outcome for this, however there is a range of projects across Greater Essex which we will collaborate with.</p>
<p>Priority 2 Prevention and partnerships: Galvanise all people and communities to prevent domestic abuse by changing cultures that condone or are conducive to abuse.</p>	<p>Outcome 1: Children and young people can recognise and form healthy relationships.</p>
	<p>Outcome 5: Communities, professionals and employers are able to recognise domestic abuse at the earliest opportunity and have the confidence to take action.</p>
<p>Priority 3 Victims and survivors: Collaborate across all agencies to ensure those experiencing abuse can access the right support, at the right time.</p>	<p>Outcome 2: People experiencing and at risk of experiencing domestic abuse are supported to be and feel safe.</p>
	<p>Outcome 3: Everyone can rebuild their lives and live free from domestic abuse.</p>

Priority 4 Perpetrators: Hold those using harmful behaviour accountable for changing their behaviour.	Outcome 4: Supporting and disrupting perpetrators to change their behaviour and break the cycle of domestic abuse.
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Monitoring and evaluation

This strategy will be supplemented by:

- a) A delivery plan
- b) An evaluation plan

The timeframe for the development of the coproduced delivery plan will be by 25 November 2023 in line for the strategy launch events on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (IDEVAW) and subsequent 16 days of action. The delivery plan will be reviewed each quarter by the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board.

The Board reports into the Community Safety Partnership on a quarterly basis. This will include an overview of activity in line with the delivery plan. Each year an annual report will be compiled in line with the evaluation plan. A full evaluation (alongside the needs assessment) in the final year will contribute to the development of future strategies.

Resources, budget, and funding

Southend City Council have committed an annual budget envelope of £255,078 over the course of this strategy to deliver domestic abuse services. This is in addition to the new burdens funding allocations from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) up to 2025 and future allocations which will form part of the Local Authority settlement.

Council Department	Annual funding	Description
Public Health	£25,000	Contribution to Essex-wide IDVA service.
Communities (via Supporting People)	£255,078	Commissioning of Community support and refuge accommodation
Children Services	£120,863	MARAT including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MARAC social worker post 2. 2 MARAT administrator posts (jointly funded with PFCC) 3. MARAT manager post (jointly funded with PFCC and ICB)
External Source	Annual Funding	Description
Department for Levelling Up,	£380,583 (variable ⁵)	An annual allocation to support Local Authorities to meet our duties under the DA Act (2021) around

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Housing and Communities (DLUHC)		support within safe accommodation only in line with the Act's definitions.
Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board	£22,983	Funding towards the Southend MARAT manager post.
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex	£49,103	Funding towards the Southend MARAT manager and 2 administrator posts.

We will work together to avoid duplication, consolidate evidence, analyse how best outcomes are achieved, share information and evidence early and thus ensure value for money and the best use of available resources across the partnership including Greater Essex through SETDAB.

The partnership will continuously work to identify wider courses of funding to support the delivery of the strategy.

Our commitment:

- We will work together to seek and access external funding opportunities, working collectively to identify areas of need where funding can make the most impact.
- Identify options or pooling resources amongst agencies to deliver the best services for victims.

[1] This annual fund has been varied (although a similar amount) year on year since we started to receive it in 2021/22. This is our 2023/24 allocation; our 2024/5 allocation increases slightly to £387,764.

Appendix A: Hearing from victims and survivors

As well as understanding the prevalence of domestic abuse, it is vital we understand what abuse looks like for people living in Southend. We conducted a survey to hear from residents in Southend about their experience of domestic abuse and getting support. Overall, we **received 97 responses** from members of the public. The below table highlights what we found:

Theme	What we found	Voices of survivors in Southend
Types of abuse	<p>Based on our online survey of victims in Southend the most commonly experienced forms of non-physical abuse were;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shouting: 97% of the respondents had experienced a perpetrator shouting at them, and it was also the most frequently experienced form of abuse with 90% experiencing this behaviour more than 10 times. ● Humiliation: 85% of respondents experienced being humiliated by their perpetrator, with 58% stating this happened more than 10 times. ● Keep track of where they went: 83% of respondents stated their perpetrator kept track of where they went or how they spent time. This can make seeking support particularly difficult. <p>Many survivors also experienced physical and sexual abuse too with the most common being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grabbing (86%) ● Pushing (84%) <p>In addition to this there was a high prevalence of perpetrators hitting, punching, or slapping victims with 71% experiencing it and 21% frequently experiencing it more than 10 times. Worryingly, almost half the respondents experienced being choked or strangled (both actual and attempted). Strangling is often a significant predictor of future lethal violence.</p>	<p><i>“I have only recently started to tell people. After 14 years of an abusive marriage, I have left. I continue to be abused and controlled”.</i></p> <p><i>“The police took the financial abuse seriously enough to arrest my ex-husband, but the judge threw the case out because I was married and was told it was a matter for the divorce court to deal with”.</i></p>
Experiences of help seeking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 34% of victims in Southend never told any professionals about their experience of abuse. ● 51% of victims responding reported the abuse to the police however most did not report all the incidents. In fact, only 6% reported all the incidents. ● Survivors told us the three most common organisations they might disclose to were GPs (28%), Children’s 	<p><i>“My GP offered to help me run away to a hostel, but I was too afraid to leave”.</i></p> <p><i>“My school was able to leave a picture of my ex-partner in the office so if they were to ever turn up on site staff members would know what they look like”.</i></p>

	<p>social care (22%) and/or their employer (20%).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victims in Southend were most likely to seek help within the community, with the majority telling a friend about the abuse they were experiencing (63%). They also sought support from family members (45%). Almost as many sought supports from a colleague (18%). 	<p><i>“I didn’t feel many of them took it seriously, I felt they judged me for telling them, like somehow, I was responsible for what had happened to me, or that I caused it”.</i></p>
Needs of victims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most common factors that were important to victims in Southend from a support service were confidentiality (98%), a flexible service (79%) and/or a 24-hour service (66%). The most common support need by a considerable margin was the need for mental health related support with 80% stating this was what they needed. Aside from this the next most common needs were; support for their children’s wellbeing (49%), legal support/advice (47%) and/or something to help them to be physically safe within their own home such as ‘target hardening’⁶ (43%) 	<p><i>“Good support would be flexible as in phone calls, home visits and also availability at the weekends and after school hours”.</i></p> <p><i>“Not having to wait. Getting immediate advice”.</i></p> <p><i>“Unfortunately, opportunities to escape in these types of relationships only arise by chance. Having a point of contact with someone who you know will answer no matter the time, is extremely imperative”.</i></p>
Gaps and barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The three biggest barriers victims and survivors in Southend experienced in seeking support were fear of what the perpetrator would do if they found out (45%), feeling too embarrassed or ashamed (43%) and/or fearing they would not be believed (40%). 	<p><i>“Police were unsupportive, didn’t believe me when I called stating he was breaking restraining order”.</i></p>

⁶ This is a criminal justice term referring to the target being the home, and hardening access to the home to keep victims safe through mechanisms such as alarms, fireproof letterboxes etc.