

## HARTLEPOOL DOMESTIC ABUSE LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY 2021 - 2025:

BUILDING A SYSTEM BASED ON LIVED EXPERIENCE



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

We are pleased to present the Hartlepool Domestic Abuse Strategy that has been developed by the Domestic Abuse Local Strategic Partnership whilst also incorporating the voice of the victim and ensuring our approach was, and continues to be, victim and survivor led.

### **A foreword from Councillor Amy Prince –**

I am honoured to support the Domestic Abuse strategy developed by Hartlepool Borough Council and partners. As a survivor of domestic abuse I know how vital it is to offer appropriate, swift and empathetic support. I feel it is important we as a group raise awareness around this subject as it affects so many lives, in such a profound way. I myself had no idea that I was in an abusive relationship for a long time, because the abuse was gradual and insidious. Unfortunately abusers are good at what they do, and abuse can build up over time; it can start with small things to test boundaries, such as not wearing a certain outfit, or not seeing a particular friend. An abuser makes you feel uncomfortable, or makes you do things you would not normally do. This can lead to the abuse escalating; it is worth noting that Domestic Abuse can include not only physical violence but financial abuse, or coercive control. An abuser can convince the victim that it is their fault and that helps to keep the victim in those situations.

By supporting this strategy I hope that we raise awareness of the less commonly known forms of abuse and help victims to know that help is available, whilst making sure perpetrators know that we are helping less people to fall victim to them.

We recognise that domestic abuse impacts on everyone despite their age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, race or disability and hope that by raising awareness and supporting all victims, there will be less places for perpetrators to hide and they will be held to account.

There is support available if you, or someone you know is experiencing domestic abuse –

Always call 999 in an emergency, you are able to use silent solutions and press ‘55’ if you are unable to speak

Harbour 03000202525

Halo 01642683045

## **2. GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

**Coercive Control**

An act or pattern of controlling behaviours that can be threatening and humiliating used to hurt or inflict fear and have power and control.

**CSEW**

Crime Survey for England and Wales

**DA**

Domestic Abuse

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

A procedure where the female's genitals are deliberately cut, injured or changed for non-medical reasons

**Forced Marriage**

A marriage where one or both of the parties do not or cannot consent to the marriage and are forced into this arrangement by pressure or abuse

**Honour Based Violence**

An act or violence or abuse carried out to protect perceived cultural or religious beliefs in the name of 'honour'.

**HSSCP**

Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership

**Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)**

A meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between key agencies to develop a safety plan to safeguard the victim

**Non-Fatal Strangulation**

An act of strangulation or suffocation that does not cause death, as opposed to Fatal Strangulation

**ONS**

Office for National Statistics

**Perpetrator**

An individual that has committed a crime or act of domestic abuse

**Revenge Porn**

Sharing or threatening to share sexually explicit images or videos of a person on the internet without consent to cause fear, distress and embarrassment

**VAP Offences**

Violence Against the Person Offences

### 3. DEFINING DOMESTIC ABUSE

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse based on the existing cross-government definition which states that:

*Domestic abuse, or domestic violence, is defined across Government as any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality.*

‘Abusive behaviour’ is defined in the act as any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour, this includes neglect [e.g. withholding food etc]
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse

For the definition to apply, both parties must be aged 16 or over and ‘personally connected’. ‘Personally connected’ is defined in the Act as parties who:

- are married to each other
- are civil partners of each other
- have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other

- have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- are relatives

Men, women and children can all be victims of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse occurs amongst people of all ethnicities, sexualities, ages, disabilities, immigration status, religions or beliefs, and socio-economic backgrounds. It is recognised that domestic abuse differs in severity between incidents, and more often than not, will increase in frequency and seriousness, having a cumulative impact on the victim. The definition also includes what is known as 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group

For the first time the Act recognises Economic Abuse:

Economic abuse involves behaviours that interfere with an individual's ability to acquire, use and maintain economic resources such as money, transportation and utilities. It can be controlling or coercive. It can make the individual economically dependent on the abuser, thereby limiting their ability to escape and access safety.

Examples of economic abuse include:

- having sole control of the family income;
- preventing a victim from claiming welfare benefits;
- interfering with a victim's education, training, or employment;
- not allowing or controlling a victim's access to mobile phone/transport/utilities/food;
- damage to a victim's property.

## 4. NATIONAL POLICY AND CONTEXT

3.1 The **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** was given Royal Assent in April 2021. The Act brings in a new set of measures and strengthens certain existing provisions to tackle domestic abuse. Most specifically, the Act enshrines the definition of domestic abuse for the first time, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, coercive or controlling, and economic abuse. As part of this definition, children will be explicitly recognised as victims if they see, hear or otherwise experience the effects of abuse.

The Act creates a new offence of non-fatal strangulation and extends the coercive and controlling behaviour offence to include post-separation abuse. It also extends the “revenge porn” offence to include the *threat* to disclose intimate images with the intention of causing distress and has banned the “rough sex gone wrong” defence that allowed perpetrators to claim that the victim consented to violence. It also creates a statutory presumption for the Courts that victims of domestic abuse are eligible for special protective measures in the criminal, civil and family courts, for example through giving evidence by video link; and prohibit perpetrators from cross-examining their victims in person in the family and civil courts.

The Act lays down a series of statutory duties on local authorities in England to:

- Carry out a needs assessment of the need for accommodation-based support in its area; and use this needs assessment to inform a domestic abuse strategy
- Appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Partnership Board to advise the local authority on the exercise of its functions. The board must include at least one representative for domestic abuse victims and one for children of domestic abuse victims.
- Present an annual report about its provision of domestic abuse support to the Secretary of State
- Provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation
- Provide that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have ‘priority need’ for homelessness assistance



- Ensure that when local authorities rehouse victims of domestic abuse, they do not lose a secure lifetime or assured tenancy

3.2 Government Statutory Guidance is expected to be published shortly (draft guidance is currently dated 2021) along with a refreshed National Statement of Expectations which is aimed to support commissioners to ensure that services support victims and survivors. The government have said that men and boys are also affected by these crimes and published the first men and boys position paper in 2019; a new position paper is expected shortly.

3.3 **National Strategy - Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls** has recently been published (July 2021) which can be found online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy#forewords> . There are elements of this strategy that overlap with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 therefore it is important to be aware of the content of this strategy and how it interacts with the priorities contained within Hartlepool's Domestic Abuse Strategy.

3.4 A range of other legal duties are in place with reference to Domestic Abuse and must be considered. These include, but are not limited to The Children Act 1989, The Care Act 2014, The Mental Capacity Act 2015, Housing Act 1996, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

3.4 The impact of Covid 19 and lockdown restrictions on households has highlighted significant issues faced by victims of domestic abuse and their families. Nationally domestic abuse organisations reported an increase in household tension and abusive behaviours due to forced coexistence compounded by financial stress. Increased isolation created environments where those living with an abusive partner or family member were less likely or able to ask for help. Covid also curtailed access to support services for some survivors. The extent of the impact of Covid 19 on domestic abuse in Hartlepool is not yet fully understood.

## 5. WHAT DO WE KNOW?

### The Hartlepool Context

Hartlepool's has a population of approximately 93,663 people with 51% being female and 49% male. There are approximately 40,434 households with 28% renting their home; 11% have dependent children. The average age in Hartlepool is 40 with years with 7% of the population aged 55-69. By far the largest ethnic group is White British (98%). Low educational attainment, high unemployment and poor physical health place Hartlepool in a deprived status and amongst the top 10% in England (ONS, 2021).

We know that domestic abuse is under reported however according to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) ending March 2020 an estimated 5.5% (2.3 million) adults experienced domestic abuse in the last year equating to a rate of 5 in every 100 adults. The position was similar in 2019.

Using data from the Hartlepool Community Safety Team, CSEW and ONS the following comparative data has been compiled:

**Table 1:**

<b>Metric</b>	<b>National data</b>	<b>Hartlepool data</b>
Proportion of adults aged 16-74 who experienced domestic abuse in the past 12 months	5.5% (2.3m)	2.1% (1,392)
Proportion of females aged 16-74 who experienced domestic abuse in the past 12 months as a percentage of female population aged 16-74	4.7% (1.6m)	3.1% (1,050)
Proportion of males aged 16-74 who experienced domestic abuse in the past 12 months as a percentage of male population aged 16-74	2.3% (757,000)	1.0% (342)
<b>Violence against the person (VAP) offences</b>		
Proportion of VAP offences flagged as domestic abuse-related	35%	32%
Proportion of VAP offences with a female victim which were flagged as domestic abuse-related	53%	48%
Proportion of VAP offences with a male victim which were flagged as domestic abuse-related	23%	21%
<b>Sexual offences</b>		

Proportion of sexual offences flagged as domestic abuse-related	16%	16%
Domestic abuse crimes		
Total number of domestic abuse incidents and crimes	1,288,018	3,370
Proportion of domestic abuse incidents <b>not</b> subsequently recorded as a crime	41%	38%
Proportion of domestic abuse incidents recorded as a crime	59%	62%
Proportion of domestic abuse incidents recorded as a crime – percentage change from 2018/19 to 2019/20	+9%	-1%

The table above shows that for most of these metrics the Hartlepool data aligns closely to the national data. However, the proportion of the population who have experienced domestic abuse is lower for the local data. This can be attributed to the fact that the national data is taken from the CSEW which includes crimes which are not reported to the police; whereas the local data is purely based on police reports. We know under reporting may be a concerning issue for Hartlepool when we look at the following further data.

Rates of domestic abuse per head of population are difficult to calculate due to factors such as under-reporting and frequent changes in how this data is recorded and classified over time. However, Public Health England has produced a crude rate based on the number of recorded domestic abuse incidents and crimes per 1,000 population as indicated in the table below.

**Table 2:**

Quintiles: Low    High Not applicable

Indicator	Period	England	North East region	County Durham	Darlington	Gateshead	Hartlepool	Middlesbrough	Newcastle upon Tyne	North Tyneside	Northumberland	Redcar and Cleveland	South Tyneside	Stockton-on-Tees	Sunderland
Domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes	2019/20	28.0	42.3	61.3*	61.3*	34.9*	40.0*	40.0*	34.9*	34.9*	34.9*	40.0*	34.9*	40.0*	34.9*

This gives Hartlepool a rate of 40 domestic abuse incidents and crimes per 1,000 population in 2019/20. This is considerably higher than the rate of 28 per 1,000 population for England as a whole, but lower than the average for the North East region (42 per 1,000).

### High Risk Domestic Abuse Cases (MARAC)

The highest risk domestic abuse cases are referred to a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC). This is a regular local meeting to discuss how to help victims at high risk of homicide or serious harm. The latest available data from Cleveland MARAC covers the 10 month period June 2020 to March 2021. During this time period, there were 168 Hartlepool cases referred to Cleveland MARAC. This is the second lowest number in the Cleveland force area after Redcar and Cleveland.

Of these 168 cases, 44 (26%) were declined at the screening phase. Reasons for a case to be declined include:

- All safeguarding and information had already been shared
- The case was already being managed in a different forum (Team Around The Individual, Multi Agency Tasking And Co-ordination Protocol, Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements)
- The victim had moved out of the Cleveland area.

Table 3 shows the total numbers of MARAC referrals for the period June 2020 to March 2021 for Hartlepool and the other three Cleveland force areas. For all the metrics shown, Hartlepool had the second lowest number of cases referred to MARAC after Redcar and Cleveland and around half the number of Middlesbrough cases referred.

**Table 3**

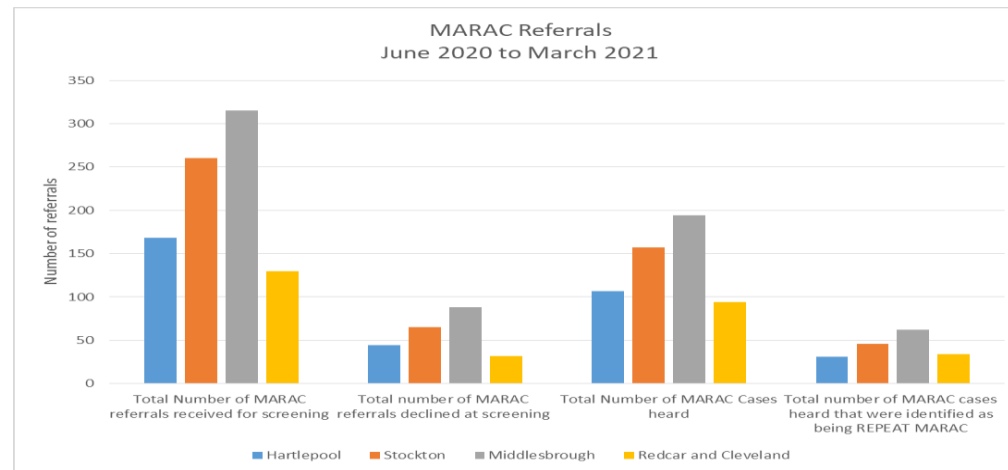
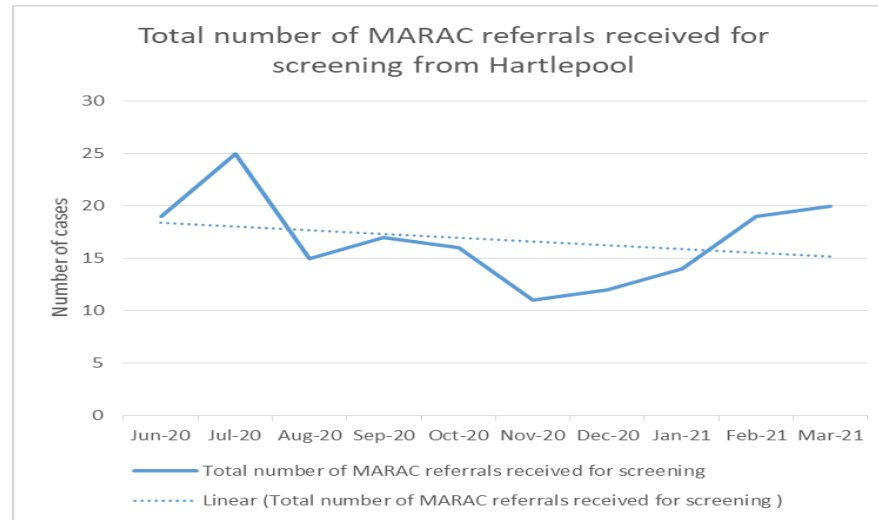


Table 2 shows that despite an increase in the number of cases being referred to MARAC from November 2020 to March 2021, the overall trend for MARAC referrals in Hartlepool is reducing over the reporting period June 2020 to March 2021. However, the number of cases being declined has also reduced over the same period. This means that the number of Hartlepool cases progressing to being heard at MARAC has actually increased (Table 4).

**Table 4**



**Table 5**

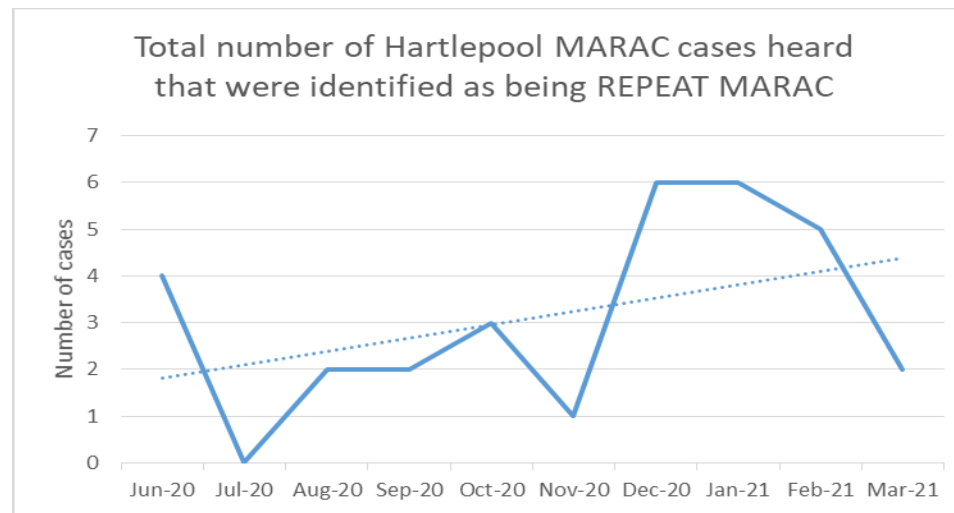


Table 5 indicates that despite a degree of fluctuation, the trend for cases from Hartlepool to be heard at MARAC more than once has also increased over the reporting period – although care should be exercised in drawing conclusions from this as the numbers are very low.

### **Safe Lives Insights: Harbour Client Data**

Safe Lives operates an 'Insights system' that provides the largest dataset on domestic abuse in the UK. They gather data from services working with victims, survivors and their children, to build a picture of the experiences of survivors, and the support they receive. Using available data from their Insight Report for Hartlepool's Harbour Support Services during the six month period October 2020 to March 2021 we see that there was an intake of 165 clients.

Of these:

- 92% were female and 86% were White British
- 39% were aged 21-30 and 31% were aged 31-40
- 63% had children and 6 were individual clients were pregnant.

Clients reported complicating factors including 59% being unemployed, 5% having significant financial problems and 11% having at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) recorded. 59% of clients advised they needed support with their mental health, 42% required help with their children and parenting and 40% needed help with their housing.

28% of the clients in this period were deemed high risk by their caseworkers. Of the intake, 64% reported jealous and controlling behaviour, 56% physical abuse, 52% harassment and stalking and 19% sexual abuse. 75% of the perpetrators were ex-partners and the average length of time abuse had occurred before they accessed help was 3 years.

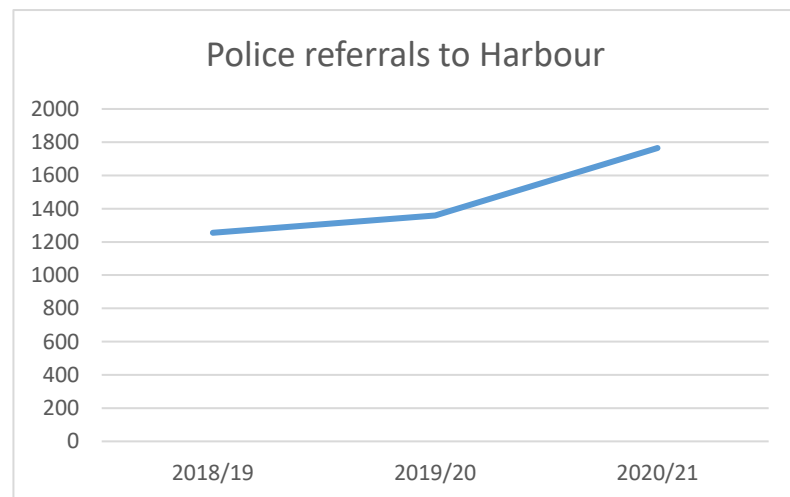
92% of the perpetrators were male and of these 39% had mental health needs, 31% had alcohol misuse issues and 41% had substance misuse issues.

Looking at trends from 2018/19 and over the past three years we know that there has been a 14% increase in referrals for Harbour services, a 36% increase in victims aged over 55 years accessing their services and a 55% increase in referrals for Refuge support.

### Local trends: Harbour data

Using data from Harbour it is clear that the reporting of domestic abuse incidents is on the increase. Police referrals to Harbour have increased by 41% since 2018/19 as indicated in Table 6 below.

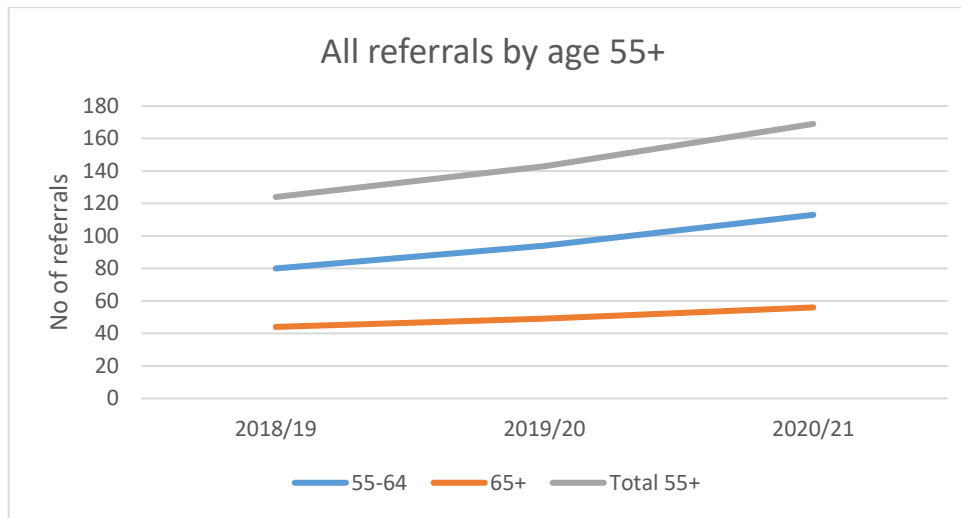
**Table 6**



Whilst national data tells us that the prevalence of domestic abuse is experienced by those aged 21 – 40 local data from Harbour shows an increase in the number of older people reporting abuse and requesting support. Harbour report a 36% increase in referrals from those aged over 55 years since 2018/19 as indicated in Chart 6 below.



**Table 7**



Harbour's refuge accommodation has experienced a significant rise in requests for safe accommodation with an increase of 55% in referrals to the refuge since 2018/19; a concerning 6% were unable to be considered for refuge as their needs were assessed as too complex.

#### Safe Accommodation in Hartlepool

##### **What are our new duties?**

We must ensure suitable safe accommodation options are available for victims and survivors of domestic abuse including their children. This can include –

- Refuge
- Specialist
- Dispersed
- Sanctuary
- Move on

### **What does this mean in practice?**

Victims - we need to be confident that accommodation options and appropriate support is in place for all those that need it.

Survivors – we need to be confident that move on opportunities are available with on going support for all those that need it.

Perpetrators – we need to ensure that appropriate accommodation options are available for perpetrators in order to avoid them –

- sofa surfing / sharing accommodation with others that may lead to tenancy issues, anti-social behaviour and further domestic abuse;
- sleeping rough – either temporarily or regularly
- becoming homeless.

### **What do we have in place?**

Our Domestic Abuse commissioned service by Harbour includes a Refuge with space for families and children. Typically referrals are made direct to the refuge by agencies and Harbour decides if they can accommodate.

Harbour Dispersed Properties - Harbour has a number of dispersed properties which they use as move on accommodation or as direct lets to those that need longer term support.

Registered Provider (i.e. a social landlord) - domestic abuse is seen as a priority category for social housing). Similarly, when a victim flees their social housing tenancy due to domestic abuse, the social landlord is encouraged to secure their tenant an alternative property within the social landlords stock.

## **6. WHAT DO VICTIMS/ SURVIVORS TELL US?**

Consultation took place during September and December 2021. This included:

1. Hartlepool Borough Council's online consultation – professionals and public responses
2. In depth discussion with a survivor of domestic abuse.
3. Harbour service user feedback
4. Harbour children and young people feedback

## 5. HSSCP Engine Room Domestic Abuse Multi Agency Audit Report

The results of this can be found below.

### **A survivor's story**

In 2021, Jane (not her real name) spent time talking through her experience of domestic abuse with us. Jane wanted to ensure that her experience made a difference in some way to the way domestic abuse is addressed in Hartlepool. This is Jane's story.

Jane's marriage had come to end in 2016 and she and her two children lived alone at their home; the children visited dad often. Jane felt lonely and her daughter suggested she find a new boyfriend and that she deserved some happiness. Jane had never used social media before however she met Allan quite quickly and before she knew it, she had rented out her family home and moved in with him. The children came with her although continued to spend time with their dad whenever they wanted to.

Jane and Allan both worked during the day and soon began to spend a lot of time together drinking on an evening. This led to arguments and quite quickly Allan started using violence against Jane. Jane had never experienced this before and was shocked. Within the first couple of months of being together Allan had head butted Jane breaking her nose and lip. Her son saw this happen, the police were called and social services advised Jane that her son couldn't stay with her while Allan was around. As Jane now rented a house with Allan and her own home was rented out, she felt she had no choice but to arrange for her son to permanently live with his dad. Her daughter left home as she was old enough to find her own place. This left Jane isolated and she missed seeing the children regularly.

After the first incident, the police told Jane about 'Claire's Law' and so she asked for a disclosure. They told Jane about occasions when they had been called out to incidents in which Allan had been violent to his previous partner but that he had not been cautioned or charged with any offences. She didn't tell Allan about this.

Over the coming months Jane experienced what she now knows was controlling behaviour. Allan would grab her mobile phone and question who she had been talking to. He smashed up several phones. He would get angry and say that she was cheating on him. Within a month of the first violent assault they got into another argument resulting in Jane being kicked in the abdomen, punched in the face, scratched with keys, bitten and threatened with a knife. Jane called 999 and Allan had fled by the time an ambulance arrived. Jane's physical and mental health were compromised and she lost her job. Her mum and dad were around but she kept this all from them.

Over the following two years Jane and Allan's relationship was on and off. He was bailed for assault however he was constantly drawn back to Jane and she felt sorry for him. He regularly threatened to kill himself. Five further serious assaults took place involving strangulation, punches to the head and being stamped on. As well as this Allan would come into the house (despite a restraining order being in place) and her car was found smashed up more than once. Jane lived in fear that he was watching her and had to change her mobile phone many times as he kept finding her number and messaging her, especially late in the night. Despite being in court for battery the case was dismissed.

Jane was trapped; she still owned her own home but had fallen back badly on mortgage payments and there was a tenant living in it. She had not paid the rent on the home she had been sharing with Alan and the landlord was seeking possession. She was certain Allan was sometimes hiding in the garden or in the garage during the night and was frightened. She had a short period at a refuge but didn't feel that they understood her. Jane went to CAB to try to get her housing problems sorted and to get advice on rising levels of debt. They helped her arrange a Debt Relief Order. She moved out of the home she had shared with Allan and into one of her own. Jane's financial hardship meant that she asked for help on many occasions with paying her rent, with food and other household essentials. Sometimes Jane was helped and sometimes she was told that she wasn't eligible. Jane found this very hard not least because she felt everyone should understand how badly she was suffering.

The last violent incident was in September 2017 when Jane was assaulted by Allan whilst out walking her dog. She has not seen him since and has cut off all communication with him. Throughout her experience Jane has kept a diary and she is using this to help with her recovery. Jane wants to make sure her story is shared so that others do not go through what she has experienced. Jane feels strongly that lots of professionals knew that she was in and out of a violent abusive relationship but didn't maintain their intervention. Jane feels that the professionals that were around her felt that she had 'made her own choices'. Looking back Jane doesn't feel she had any choice and desperately wanted someone to take her out of the situation she found herself in.

### **Resident feedback through online consultation**

"I am a resident of Hartlepool in my forties and I experienced domestic abuse in my childhood (between my parents and towards myself at times) from around the age of four until I left home at age 18. I am telling this story as children living in these situations need more help and even if the help is there, they need to be able to access it. I lost count of the number of times I called Childline and it was engaged, I never did get through. Phoning the police was too scary ....I was a very withdrawn child ....My parents are still together and seem happy to continue with their way of life. For me, I never wanted to be in that situation and living through this

has continued to impact me to this day. I struggle with relationships, lack confidence and haven't got as far in my career as I feel I would have if I hadn't had this trauma. I manage through anxiety and depression and I feel more needs to be done to help historical victims of abuse. I have been in and out of counselling as an adult and will be on anti-depressants indefinitely. Whilst what has happened is in the past, it will always be there in my memories no matter how hard I try to forget and sometimes it would be good to talk to people about it with others with similar experiences."

*"I was let down by everyone and now police still let us down....[I] feel like [I am] not believed." Anonymous, Dec 2021.*

### **Key themes:**

**Timely action** of referrals – when referrals are made by agencies such as Police into social services they need to be actioned as quickly as possible so that interventions can take place.

**Thresholds** – when referrals are received by social care close attention to thresholds needs to happen so that interventions take place. A robust understanding and knowledge of previous incidents and cumulative issues must be considered.

**Language barriers and cultural 'norms'** – need to be confident that suitably trained interpreters are used via an appropriate professional agency (do not rely on family, friends, neighbours or children) to talk to victims and perpetrators. Need to be firm but sensitive around how to manage 'cultural norms' – this must not be used as a defence nor to undermine laws around tackling domestic abuse.

The need for **multi agency information sharing** – victims report additional trauma suffered when telling their story to multiple professionals; robust and appropriate information sharing needs to ensure that not only the right action takes place but that those that have suffered abuse do not have to repeat their story again and again.

**Disguised compliance** – need to be mindful that this can occur in order to allay concerns and stop professional involvement. Disguised compliance can be particularly harmful in that it delays intervention and in the case of children leads to trauma, neglect and serious risk of harm. We must also remember that this may be as a result of coercive control.

**The child's voice** – need to be clear that decisions in the best interests of a child or young person are done so because the child has been listened to. An absence of the child's voice can be detrimental to their welfare.

What to do about **non engagement** – in the case of adults with children, persistent non-engagement is a form of abuse and must be explored in order to understand if it is the capacity of the victim due to their current circumstances or trauma which they have/ are experiencing. However, it may be due to ambivalence, avoidance, non-compliance or disguised compliance and fundamentally may be rooted in mistrust of professionals. This applies to victims and perpetrators.

**Professional handovers** – this relates also to information sharing and not having to re-tell the story repeatedly. Where a case passes from one professional to another robust arrangements need to be in place to ensure important information is shared.

**Complex cases** where domestic abuse is one factor amongst many – there is a risk that cases that have multiple areas of concern (eg physical and mental health, substance misuse, housing/ homelessness, financial issues and destitution, crime) risk losing focus. A robust multi agency plan is needed.

**Prevention rather than intervention** – the need for children and young people to recognise domestic abuse is important together with who to talk to for help. Education amongst children and young people around appropriate relationships and behaviours together with sensitively challenging acceptable ‘norms’ is needed.

**Safe and suitable accommodation** – a range of options are needed, not just refuge space. It needs to be led by circumstances so that the most suitable accommodation is secured both for the victim and their family and the perpetrator. This might be to remain in their own home, to use refuge space or to move to an alternative location.

What can we do with **perpetrators** – help and support is needed to ensure perpetrators recognise the seriousness of their behaviours and take responsibility. This is important so that they understand the impact of their behaviours so they can look to change and go on to have positive future relationships.

## 7. WHAT DO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TELL US?

During October 2021 Harbour Support Services, on behalf of the Local Authority, undertook an engagement exercise with children and young people with lived experience of domestic abuse. The purpose of the event was to gain a deeper understanding of the impact domestic abuse has on children and young people and what their experience was of local services.

The children and young people who were invited to the sessions had previously accessed support through Harbour Support Services. The children and young people were asked how they felt before they had received support and they told us:

*I was sad when my dad used to live with us because he was always nasty to my mam and it would make me cry – Girl age 8*

*I use to get really angry and I don't know why – Boy age 9*

*I couldn't have any friends but now I can – Girl age 11*

*My daddy scared me – Girl age 5*

When the children and young people were asked how they felt after they had received support they told us:

*I feel so much happier now, I enjoyed coming to the group with other kids and talking about things – Boy age 10*

*I feel happy now I live in a new house – Girl age 8*

*I have never been able to talk to anyone before and feel better for talking about things – Girl age 16*

*I can see my cousin's now – Boy age 8*

*I feel safe – Girl age 11*

The following art work is a collage produced by the children and young people illustrating the children's journey and capturing the voice of the child.



Harbour Support Services ©

## 8. WHAT ARE OUR KEY PRINCIPLES?

- Everything that we develop must be based on an understanding of lived experiences
- Victims have a right to choice in their relationships - support will always be provided
- Our services are accessible and Every Contact Counts
- We are respectful of every individuals' situation – we are person/ child centred
- We will provide evidenced based interventions
- We will have a skilled workforce
- We will support at the earliest possible time
- All workers will understand the impact of Domestic Abuse on children and will respond effectively



- We will work in collaboration with all services to provide a person centred approach
- We will respond to the specific needs of the those within the full range of protected characteristics
- We will have a clear focus on perpetrators in order to keep the victim (and any other victims) safe
- We will raise awareness throughout our communities working collaboratively to design and deliver local solutions.

## 8. WHAT ARE OUR GAPS?

Consultation and the development of our needs assessment have highlighted the following gaps:

- We don't know enough – we are relying on people coming forward to tell us their experiences but we know that many people (from all communities) do not feel able to reach out
- People find it difficult to access support
- Professional attitudes towards victims is sometimes wrong and unhelpful
- There is a lack of choice for accommodation
- There is a lack of a consistent multi agency response based on an individual's needs
- There are multiple definitions of high risk domestic abuse (different thresholds)
- There is not a consistent understanding of the impact of DA on children and young people
- Perpetrators are not regularly being held accountable
- We need to offer support to all victims and to reach out to those that may go unnoticed.

Based on our findings we want to initially focus on the following as priorities and will use these to develop an annual action plan:

1. Working with victims/ survivors (adults and children) for them to be true partners in our review and development of services

2. Focus on supporting as early as possible – develop a prevention/ early intervention offer
3. Provide high quality education for children and young people promoting positive, respectful and healthy relationships in a climate of equality and respect for one another
4. Recommission support services based on lived experiences
5. Equip the workforce to ask the right questions and to support victims of Domestic Abuse; offer training that is up to date and fit for purpose
6. Develop more choice and options for safe accommodation; this includes perpetrators (enabling families to stay in their home and not have to move)
7. Consider the needs of victims/survivors with multiple and complex issues using multi agency support in order to begin to address needs.

## **9. HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL?**

- Victims/ survivors will be partners in the delivery of this strategy
- Increase in prevention interventions
- Increased number of people accessing support
- Increased number of perpetrators held to account
- Victims report that their lives have been improved because of the support they have had
- Reduction repeat referrals from victims asking for support (indicating that support was right for them)
- Reduce repeat MARAC referrals
- Staff report that their skills and knowledge regarding domestic abuse has improved
- Increased offer of safe accommodation

## 10. Help and Support

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 999 and ask for the police. If you can't speak, you can ring 999 then press 55 when prompted: this is called the Silent Solution System.

Freephone 24 hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline run by Refuge: 0808 2000 247 or visit [www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk).

Respect helpline, if you are worried about your own behaviour: 0808 802 0321.

Samaritans: whatever you are going through, call free any time, from any phone: 116 123 or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org).

Women's Aid: check out their website for more information: [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk).

Harbour: 03000 202525

There are a range of free to download mobile apps providing support and information for anyone that may be in an abusive relationship including Hollie Guard (<https://hollieguard.com>) and the Brightsky app.