



Hartlepool
Borough Council



Hartlepool Domestic Abuse Local Strategic Partnership

Domestic Abuse Strategy 2026 – 2029

www.hartlepool.gov.uk/domestic-abuse



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Foreword

I am proud to introduce our new Domestic Abuse Strategy for Hartlepool which sets out our commitment and ambition to work towards a reduction in domestic abuse and increase access and support.

Domestic abuse is a global, national and local issue. In Hartlepool, it is estimated that around 6,200 people aged 16 and over experienced domestic abuse in the last year. However, domestic abuse is often a hidden crime and remains significantly underreported. Each incident can have wide-ranging and lasting impacts on victims, their families, communities and local services, meaning the true scale of domestic abuse is likely to be much higher than current estimates suggest.

This strategy outlines how we will strengthen the support available to victims and survivors and how we can support those hidden from services, encourage early intervention, recovery and long-term safety. It identifies the work needed to recognise children as victims of domestic abuse, ensuring services are responsive to their needs. The strategy considers the lack of consistent accountability for perpetrators and how existing services may not be adequately effective in supporting behaviour change and reducing repeat offending.

This strategy will be implemented through the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and sets out our three-year plan to address domestic abuse within Hartlepool. It provides a framework for a whole-system approach, enabling local partners to collaborate effectively. The shared vision and defined priorities outline how public service leaders, local policymakers, commissioners, providers, businesses, the voluntary sector and, critically, the wider community can collectively work together to reduce domestic abuse and strengthen the support available to victims across Hartlepool.



Councillor Gary Allen

Chair of the Adult Services and
Public Health Committee



Introduction

The most recent needs assessment in Hartlepool was published in 2021, followed by Hartlepool's Domestic Abuse Strategy: Building a System Based on Lived Experience 2022-2025. In line with the Council's duty to review and refresh its domestic abuse needs assessment and associated strategy, a new strategic needs assessment has been carried out during 2025. The data and intelligence gathered as part of the needs assessment has informed this strategy for 2026 - 2029.

We would like to thank the Council departments and Partner Agencies that contributed data and information to help in the assessment of the level of need for domestic abuse services in Hartlepool and the development of this strategy. We would also like to thank the service users and survivors who contributed their lived experience, and feedback, which allows us to continue in our victim and survivor-led approach.



Duties and responsibilities

Under the **Domestic Abuse Act 2021**, several key duties have been placed on councils in England to improve support for victims of domestic abuse. These are primarily outlined in **Part 4 of the Act**, and include the following responsibilities:

Statutory Duties on Councils

1. Provision of Support in Safe Accommodation

Councils must ensure that victims of domestic abuse and their children have access to **safe accommodation** and **specialist support services**. This includes:

- Refuges and other forms of safe accommodation including sanctuary
- Support services such as counselling, advocacy, and advice on staying safe

2. Development of Local Strategies

Councils are required to:

- Conduct a needs assessment for victims in their area
- Develop and publish a local domestic abuse strategy
- Review and update this strategy regularly

3. Multi-Agency Collaboration

Councils must work closely and form a Domestic Abuse Partnership Board to ensure appropriate governance with:

- Police
- Health services
- Domestic abuse charities
- Other relevant partners to ensure a coordinated response

4. Monitoring and Reporting

Councils must report annually on:

- How they are meeting their duties
- The effectiveness of their strategies
- The outcomes for victims and children

5. Guidance Compliance

Councils must have **regard to statutory guidance** issued under the Act when exercising their functions. This includes ensuring that support is trauma-informed and accessible to all victims, including those with complex needs



How this strategy links to other local strategies

The needs assessment which has informed this strategy, also forms part of Hartlepool Council's wider Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). The Domestic Abuse Strategy is closely linked to the following JSNA topics:

- Housing
- Violent Crime
- Mental Health
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults
- Sexual Health
- Substance Misuse
- Youth Offending

The Domestic Abuse Strategy is also closely linked to the following local strategies:

- Housing Strategy
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Drug and Alcohol Strategy
- Community Safety Plan

Intersecting local initiatives:

- Making Every Contact Count (MECC)
- Whole Systems Approach
- Coordinated Community Response (CCR)
- Safe and Together
- High Risk Adults Panel (HRAP)

The Office for Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland has launched a Teeswide Tackling Domestic Abuse Perpetration Strategy for 2025 – 2035 which aligns with the strategic priorities in the Cleveland Police and Crime Plan.

The Tackling Domestic Abuse Perpetration Strategy identifies three key priorities:

- Prevent – by identifying, responding and referring concerns at the earliest opportunity.
- Protect – by identifying perpetrators and holding abuse behaviour to account.
- Pursue – by using protective measures to disrupt and prosecute perpetrators.



Governance

The Domestic Abuse Local Strategic Partnership (DALSP) has oversight and governance of the delivery of the strategy, and is made up of –

- Victims and survivors of domestic abuse
- Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) including community safety, public health, children's and adults social care and housing
- Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valley (TEWV) NHS Foundation Trust
- Cleveland Police
- Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland (OPCC)
- Probation Service
- Registered Housing Providers
- Voluntary and Community Sector
- Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB)
- Hartlepool and Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP)

The DALSP reports to the Safer Hartlepool Partnership (SHP).



The picture in Hartlepool

What have we learned?

Whilst the needs assessment shows that domestic abuse continues to be primarily a gender-based crime, perpetrated by men against women, this oversimplifies the situation somewhat. Demographic analysis of the services reviewed in the needs assessment shows that some groups are overrepresented in the client / referral data compared to other groups within that same demographic characteristic (e.g. age bracket) or compared to the local Hartlepool population. Additionally, whilst the numbers for some groups remain low, they are making up an increasingly significant proportion of service users.

Based on the evidence reviewed in this needs assessment, the following groups are overrepresented in the client data:

- Women – make up 79.8% of referrals to Harbour support services, 95% of homeless presentations due to domestic abuse and 71% of adult safeguarding referrals related to domestic abuse yet just 51.6% of the Hartlepool population
- People aged 19-44 – make up 66.9% of Harbour referrals yet just 30.9% of the Hartlepool population
- People living in social housing or private rented accommodation - make up 66.5% of Harbour referrals compared to 41% of the Hartlepool population
- People who are already homeless (particularly women and single households) – make up 42% of referrals to the Council's homelessness team

In terms of groups where total numbers remain low, but they are representing an increasing proportion of the demographic makeup of referrals:

- Ethnic minorities make up a small proportion of referrals to Harbour but this proportion is increasing and is slightly higher than the local population for all minority groups
 - Black, Caribbean or Black British - 1.2% of referrals / 0.5% local population
 - Asian or Asian British – 1.9% of referrals / 1.7% of local population
 - Mixed or multiple ethnicities – 1.1% of referrals / 0.7% of local population
 - Other ethnicity – 0.7% of referrals or 0.6% of local population
- Males make up an increasing proportion of Harbour referrals. They currently make up 20% of referrals (increased from 18.6%) compared to 48.4% of the local population

Particular groups also make up an increasing proportion of the Safe Accommodation referrals:

- People with complex needs who cannot be admitted into refuge accommodation (increased from 4.2% to 9.8%)
- Women who are pregnant at the time of referral (increased from 8% to 12%)
- People with a disability (increased from 4% to 15%)
- People with mental health issues (increased from 33% to 47%)



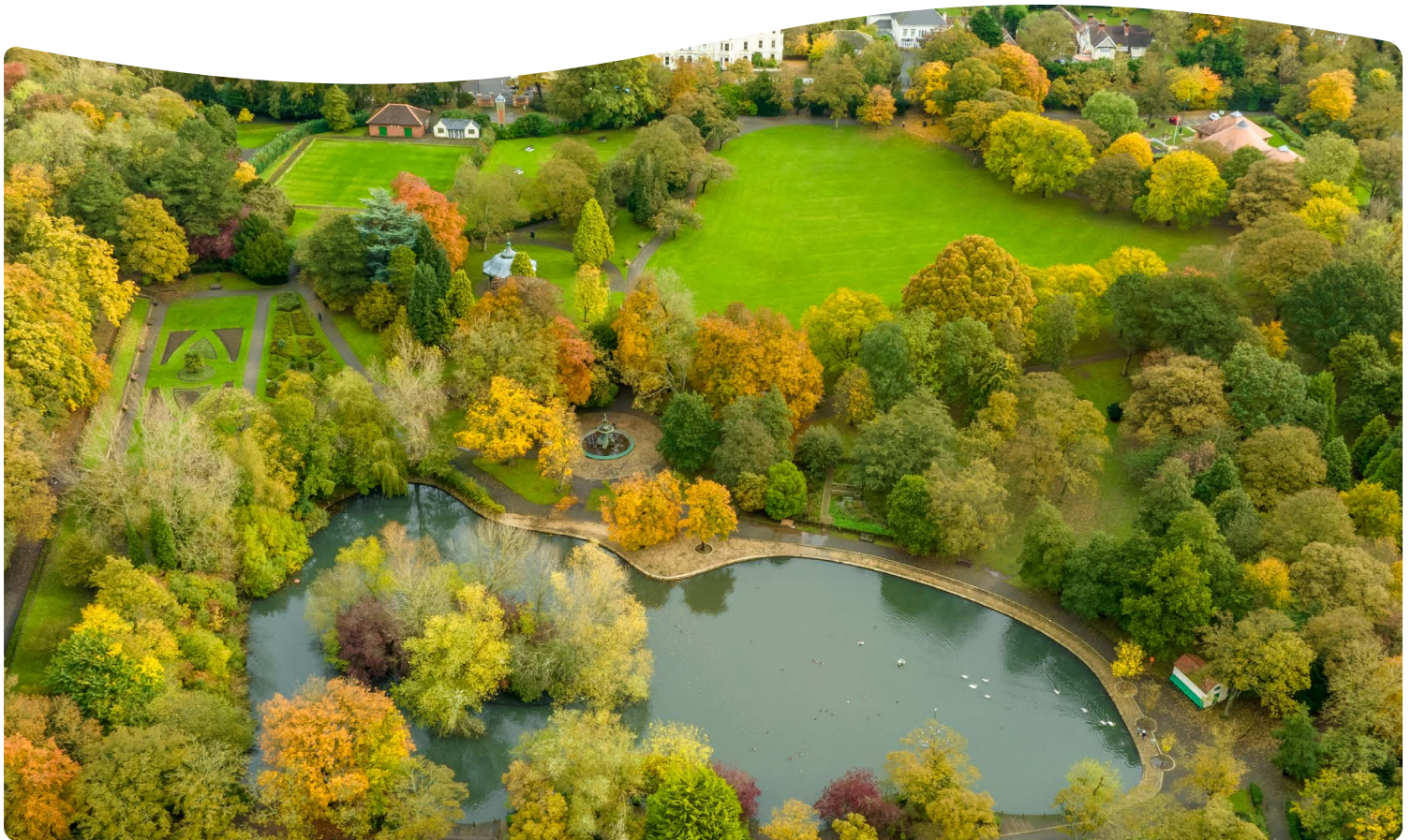
Future analysis will show if these trends continue over the longer term. However, in the meantime, consideration needs to be given to how the differing (and intersecting) needs of these groups can be accommodated by services.

Strategic Issues Arising from Consultation

People with disabilities are more likely to experience domestic abuse than the general population and Hartlepool has a higher rate of disability and ill health than the England rate. 59% of the survey respondents reported a limiting health condition or disability.

Services need to be visible and accessible. There needs to be further education and awareness raising to reduce the stigma of domestic abuse and break down barriers. Some respondents in the survey stated they “were not aware of anything locally” or were “managing the situation themselves”.

Services need to be trauma informed and use professional curiosity, including in cases where service users decline to engage. Training should be provided to multi-agency practitioners in recognising and responding to domestic abuse and ensure that practitioners are aware of the many forms of domestic abuse and the definition of ‘personally connected’ covering intimate partners and family members. One respondent highlighted “staff should have more appropriate training”.



What have we already achieved?

The key strategic priorities identified in Hartlepool's Domestic Abuse Strategy: Building a System Based on Lived Experience 2022-2025 were -

- Working with victims/ survivors (adults and children) for them to be true partners in our review and development of services;
- Focus on supporting as early as possible – develop a prevention/ early intervention offer;
- Re-commission support services based on lived experiences;
- Equip the workforce to ask the right questions and to support victims of domestic abuse;
- Develop more choice and options for safe accommodation; and
- Consider the needs of victims/survivors with multiple and complex issues using multi agency support in order to begin to address needs.

Key achievements against these strategic priorities include -

The voices of victims, survivors and children are represented by Harbour as the commissioned service provider but also by other specialist support agencies, including Halo, Hart Gables, A Way Out and ARCH. Services have service user panels and survivor groups that are utilised to influence change and development. Members of the partnership also identify as survivors of domestic abuse both as children and adults and contribute their lived experience. Survivor voice continues to be reflected in the refreshed Needs Assessment and Strategy.

The offer of domestic abuse services within Hartlepool has been updated and is reflected on the Hartlepool Borough Council website. The development of a new website is ongoing.

There have been numerous awareness raising campaigns including –

- Violence Against Women and Girls week of action led by Cleveland Police with support from specialist agencies,
- 'Ask for Angela' was launched by Community Safety in licensed premises across Hartlepool
- 'Ask for Ani' campaign has been reinforced with pharmacies.
- Harbour celebrated their 50th anniversary and hosted a 'Walk a Mile in their Shoes' event, bringing together survivors and the professionals that support them.

A full commissioning process was completed in 2022 for support and safe accommodation and therapeutic support for children Harbour being awarded both contracts commencing on the 1st October 2022 for three years. These are monitored with a robust performance framework with regular outcome monitoring.



Domestic abuse services have been complemented with funding from the Office for Police and Crime Commissioner that is aligned with commissioning arrangements, including hospital, court, mental health and Independent Domestic Violence Advocate's (IDVA) that operate within Hartlepool and a programme for perpetrators with complex needs. Other organisations have received funding from the OPCC, including ARCH Teesside that provide support to adults and children who are victims of sexual abuse and Halo who received funding from the OPCC to support with black and minority ethnic groups. Unfortunately, this funding is grant funded, time limited and subject to yearly funding allocations.

Reducing parental conflict work is led by Changing Futures North East.

The Safe and Together model continues to be implemented across the workforce which is strengthening our response to domestic abuse by partnering with survivors and intervening with perpetrators and keeping children safe and together with the non-offending parent. Additional training has been provided to Health Advocates within the local authority, including training on responding to disclosures of domestic abuse within the workplace. Training is delivered by Harbour and partners via workforce development and the HSSCP and TSAB.

TSAB updated the Team Around the Individual (TATI) process, now known as High Risk Adult Panel (HRAP) and offers another pathway to strengthen the response to individuals with multiple and complex issues, including victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. Strategic MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) continues to oversee the action plan recommended by Safe Lives.



How have we responded to the Safe Accommodation Duty?

Harbour is the commissioned service provider for an integrated response to victims and survivors, including children, and perpetrators of domestic abuse in Hartlepool. This includes the provision of safe accommodation comprising of –

- a 7-unit refuge for women and children, inclusive of one space for disabled people and one space to be used for emergency use for a maximum of 7 days,
- a 6-unit refuge for single women with complex needs
- Dispersed properties for all victims of domestic abuse.

At the time of writing, Harbour have secured additional dispersed properties across the North East, with the total number in Hartlepool being 6.

The provision of safe accommodation for women with complex needs is a unique model of delivery and has received regional and national recognition, with options being explored for co-commissioning and reciprocal arrangements with commissioners across the North East.

The number of units of safe accommodation available in Hartlepool has increased year on year since 2021. However, Hartlepool does not currently have any specialist or second stage (move-on) accommodation.

Hartlepool Home Search was launched as the new Choice Based Lettings System in Hartlepool and victims of domestic abuse are awarded a priority banding in line with the allocations policy, in partnership with the Housing Advice Team and Registered Social Landlords.

The Safe Accommodation Duty also includes the requirement to provide other support services such as counselling, support services and advocacy. Harbour also delivers a Sanctuary scheme to residents of Hartlepool in tandem with Crime Prevention Officers in Cleveland Police.

In addition to safe accommodation, Harbour are commissioned to deliver –

- outreach and assertive outreach in the community,
- empowerment programmes,
- counselling
- a dedicated children and young people therapeutic service
- a preventions service and programme for those who cause harm.
- Three specialist roles for the CHUB, safeguarding and assessment teams and early intervention.



Service users are also encouraged to access the recovery service once formal support has ended and contribute to the Service User Panel to inform strategic decisions.

Harbour offers services to the whole community, including –

- Women, men and trans people
- People from all ethnic groups and backgrounds
- People from the LGBTQ+ community
- Disabled people
- Children

Data returns have been submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), formerly Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) for the financial years 2021 – 2022, 2022 – 2023, 2023 – 2024 and 2024 – 2025.



What are the key issues in Hartlepool?

The needs assessment identified the following three key strategic issues:

1. There is an insufficient availability of support services for **victims and survivors** of domestic abuse, particularly for those who are hidden from services or have complex needs. This limits early intervention and identification of domestic abuse, recovery, and long-term safety.
2. Children affected by domestic abuse are not consistently recognised as victims in their own right, and current services are not always responsive to their needs—whether in the home, in their own relationships, or in cases of child/adolescent to parent violence and abuse (CAPVA).
1. There is a lack of consistent accountability for **perpetrators** of domestic abuse, and existing intervention services may not be sufficiently effective in changing behaviour or reducing repeat offending.



What are our priorities and what needs to be done to achieve them?

The strategic priorities have been identified from the needs assessment. Additionally, they align closely with the Government's Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan.

Priority 1: Supporting Victims

There is an insufficient availability of support services for victims and survivors of domestic abuse, particularly for those who are hidden from services or have complex needs. This limits early intervention and identification of domestic abuse, recovery, and long-term safety.

Why?

Domestic abuse has a devastating impact on both the victims and the wider community. Providing early intervention and prevention approaches are both lifesaving and will be cost effective in improving the health and wellbeing of the community. In view of the fact that disabled people are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse and individuals in Hartlepool are more likely to have a disability or report poor health, it is vital that we have accessible services and information.

What needs to be done?

- Early intervention and prevention. Awareness raising and promotion of services, especially with hidden victims (such as those with disabilities, from ethnic minority groups or different cultural backgrounds and male victims) and those with complex needs
- Utilise existing service user forums to ensure that victim and survivor voice informs the commissioning and delivery of services
- Ensure services are accessible, trauma-informed and use professional curiosity when individuals decline their service or do not engage
- Provide training to multi-agency practitioners in recognising and responding to domestic abuse and ensure that practitioners are aware of the many forms of domestic abuse and the definition of 'personally connected' covering intimate partners and family members
- Ensure pathways and information sharing is robust, including MARAC, MATAAC and HRAP
- Consider alternative safe accommodation options including specialist, by and for and move-on.
- Review the proportion of out of area referrals both in and out of Hartlepool.
- Consider a multi-agency dashboard to create consistency in the recording and reporting of data relating to domestic abuse
- Understand the effectiveness of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law).
- Continue to implement the Safe and Together model across multi-agency partners to standardise the response victims receive



Priority 2: Recognising Children as Victims

Children affected by domestic abuse are not consistently recognised as victims in their own right, and current services are not always responsive to their needs—whether in the home, in their own relationships, or in cases of child/adolescent to parent violence and abuse (CAPVA).

Why?

Children experience domestic abuse both in their family homes and in their own interpersonal relationships. This can have a lasting adverse impact through childhood and into adulthood.

What needs to be done?

- Focus on early intervention and prevention to ensure all children understand healthy relationships
- Ensure all services are recognising children as victims in their own right
- Ensure therapeutic support services are available for children
- Review the prevalence of CAPVA, the demand on services and ensure that the offer in place can meet the need of children and their parents.
- Understand the effectiveness of Operation Encompass
- Continue to implement the Safe and Together model across multi-agency partners to standardise the response children as victims receive

Priority 3: Pursuing Perpetrators

There is a lack of consistent accountability for perpetrators of domestic abuse, and existing intervention services may not be sufficiently effective in changing behaviour or reducing repeat offending.

Why?

Without addressing perpetrators behaviour, the cycle of abuse will continue.

What needs to be done?

- Support the OPCC Perpetration Strategy
- Review the criminal justice response to perpetrators within Hartlepool
- Monitor the effectiveness and engagement of perpetrator provision
- Reduce repeat offending and the number of repeat high risk MARAC cases

Continue to implement the Safe and Together model across multi-agency partners to standardise the response perpetrators receive



What are the challenges?

Gaps in the available data continues to be a significant challenge in understanding the level of need in Hartlepool. The needs assessment identified the following gaps:

- Detailed demographic data is patchy, with some services collecting more detailed data than others. Some key gaps in demographic information include:
 - Where survivors have a disability, more detailed information about the types and levels of disability experienced would enable a better understanding of the barriers that exist for people with disabilities.
 - Health data is patchy and, in some cases, unavailable. This is a significant gap in assessing the needs of victims and survivors, perpetrators and their children who access health services. In some cases, data is only available at NHS Trust level and cannot be broken down to find which patients were of Hartlepool residence. Additionally, the Cardiff Model data which was previously provided in 2021 is no longer available.
 - Cleveland Police provide Operation Encompass disclosures to schools but are unable to break this down into district area and were unable to provide any data relating to this. This continues to be a gap as highlighted in 2021.
 - Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, although approached, weren't able to provide data if they are not a commissioned service due to the level of pressure this places on already limited services.

Funding from central government is often allocated on a yearly basis and therefore it is difficult to make commitments when commissioning services. Due to this, teams can be small and staff turnover can also be high and can create instability in services. An example of this, is the hospital based IDVA's that have received grant funding since 2022 from the OPCC will come to an end in March 2026.

Support for victims of crime is precarious due to staffing pressures and funding cuts which has a significant impact on the delivery of crime prevention and target hardening as part of the sanctuary scheme offer.

The demand for services for children is increasing. There needs to be a focus on children being recognised as victims. Additionally, further work needs to be completed to understand the need of Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA). A standalone domestic abuse strategy for children should be considered.

Data has shown that perpetrators of domestic abuse are committing multiple crimes and repeating this pattern of behaviour. The current perpetrator provision has seen an increase in repeat referrals therefore the effectiveness of the provision needs to be considered. Additionally, the referrals into the Preventions Service from the Criminal Justice System (CJS) continues to be low. It is increasingly challenging to hold perpetrators accountable for their behaviour, without intervention from the CJS.



What does success look like?

For victims...

Victims and survivors will continue to be partners in the delivery of the strategy and action plan and continue to shape and support services

Victims who have accessed services will report –

- Feeling safer
- A reduction in all types of abuse (physical, sexual, harassment and stalking, jealous and controlling behaviour)
- Improved quality of life
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Improved relationships with their children
- Improved self-esteem and confidence
- Improved support networks

There will be a reduction in repeat victims.

Pathways for victims who do not access services or who have unplanned exits from services will be robust to ensure they receive support that is person-centred and trauma-informed to their individual need.

Services will be flexible and able to accommodate the need of different groups such as:

- Disabled people
- People from an ethnic minority or with cultural needs
- Male victims
- People with complex needs

The community will feel confident in knowing where they can access support and service providers will continue to raise awareness of support to both adults and children.

Practitioners will report that their skills and knowledge regarding domestic abuse have improved. Audits will show that practitioners have a developed understanding of domestic abuse and respond in line with the Safe and Together principles.

There will be an increase in the number of people able to access safe accommodation, including those with complex needs. The number of households who successfully move on from safe accommodation will increase.

There will be consideration of a multi-agency dashboard to create consistency in the recording and reporting of data relating to domestic abuse.

Strategic MARAC will have appropriate oversight and governance of the MARAC process. Information sharing process will be robust, including for MARAC, MATAC and HRAP.



The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law) will be effective in responding to disclosures.

For children...

Children who have accessed services will report –

- Feeling happier
- Feeling safer

There will be an increase in the number of children able to stay with the non-offending parent because of implementing Safe and Together.

Children will be recognised as victims in their own right and offered the appropriate support packages based on their needs, including therapeutic support.

Practitioners will be confident in recognising the difference between reducing parental conflict and domestic abuse. Parents will be able to access the appropriate support accordingly.

Children will receive the appropriate level of Relationships, Health and Sex Education (RHSE) to understand healthy relationships.

There will be a clear link with youth services, including youth offending to strengthen partnership working and ensure as many professionals as possible are trauma informed.

There will be improved professional understanding and a clear offer for families who experience Child to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA).

Operation Encompass will be effective in providing support to children experiencing domestic abuse. There will be a clear understanding of how this operates in Hartlepool, in line with statutory duties.



For perpetrators...

Practitioners will feel confident in intervening with perpetrators and holding them accountable for their behaviour, including within the criminal justice system.

There will be a clear understanding of the role of the criminal justice response to perpetrators of domestic abuse.

There will be a reduction in the number of perpetrators identified as repeating their pattern of behaviour, resulting in a reduction of repeat high risk MARAC cases.

When a perpetrator is identified within the MATAC cohort, there will be a clear reduction in risk that is sustained.

There will be an increase in the number of individuals referred to and accessing prevention interventions. There will be an increase in the number of individuals successfully completing behaviour change programmes.

There will be a robust offer of support for perpetrators, including accommodation in order to safely manage risk to victims and children.

The DALSP will support the priorities outlined in the Tees-wide Tackling Domestic Abuse Perpetration Strategy.




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.


For information and support in Hartlepool you can contact –

Harbour Support Services

Harbour works with families and individuals affected by abuse from a partner, former partner or family member and provides an integrated support service to residents of Hartlepool.

 03000 20 25 25 (24 hours)


 info@myharbour.org.uk

 www.myharbour.org.uk

Adult Safeguarding

If you are worried about an adult being abused or neglected please contact:
The Integrated Single Point of Access (iSPA), Monday Thursday 8:30am-5pm;
Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm

 01429 523390

 078336 72357

 ispa@hartlepool.gov.uk

If you need urgent help when our offices are closed, you can contact the **Emergency Duty Team** on **01642 524552**

Children's Safeguarding

The Children's Hub is the first point of contact for anyone who has a concern about the welfare or safety of a child or young person or thinks they may need extra help and support.

 01429 284284

 childrenshub@hartlepool.gov.uk

The service operates Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 5:00pm.

The Emergency Duty Team provides an out-of-hours response to emergency situations involving child protection, child care, mental health and other adult care service matters.

 01642 524552

Further information and support can be found at

 www.hartlepool.gov.uk/domesticabuse