

Sefton Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy

2019-2021

Approved June 2019

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1. Foreword



Cllr Trish Hardy
Chair of Sefton Safer Communities Partnership

Welcome to Sefton's 2019-2021 Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy. Tackling domestic abuse remains a clear priority for partners in Sefton and as the Chair of Sefton's Safer Communities Partnership I am committed to driving forward and building on the work we achieved in our last partnership strategy.

Both nationally and locally we have seen a greater recognition of domestic abuse and the impact this has on survivors and their families' every day. Information is more readily available than ever before for both professionals and members of the public. There are lots of measures in place to safeguard victims and children, and increasingly the light is being shone on the behaviour of perpetrators of domestic abuse. A new law on coercive control was introduced in 2015 which recognised the significance of non violent behaviour in cases of domestic abuse.

However, we must not get complacent as there is still so much to do. It is estimated 2 million adults in England and Wales experienced some form of domestic abuse in 2017/18. In Sefton, over 2,000 domestic abuse related crimes were recorded in 2017/18. Approximately 20% of women and 4% of men have experienced some sort of sexual assault, and yet only 15% of people report sexual violence to the police.

Whilst we have a range of support services in Sefton, we need to do more to ensure anyone, irrespective of their role, can recognise domestic abuse and knows where to find further support. We need to continue our work with children and young people to ensure they understand what a healthy relationship looks like. We need to offer more challenge to perpetrators, but also offer them opportunities to change their behaviour to reduce the cycle of abuse. We need to ensure victims of sexual violence and abuse have the support they need.

And we can only achieve this if we continue to work together and recognise that we all have a part to play in tackling domestic and sexual abuse – as partner agencies, as colleagues, as communities. I am really pleased with the commitment Sefton has given to this issue over the past three years and I will continue to champion for this to be developed further for the benefit of our communities.

2. Introduction

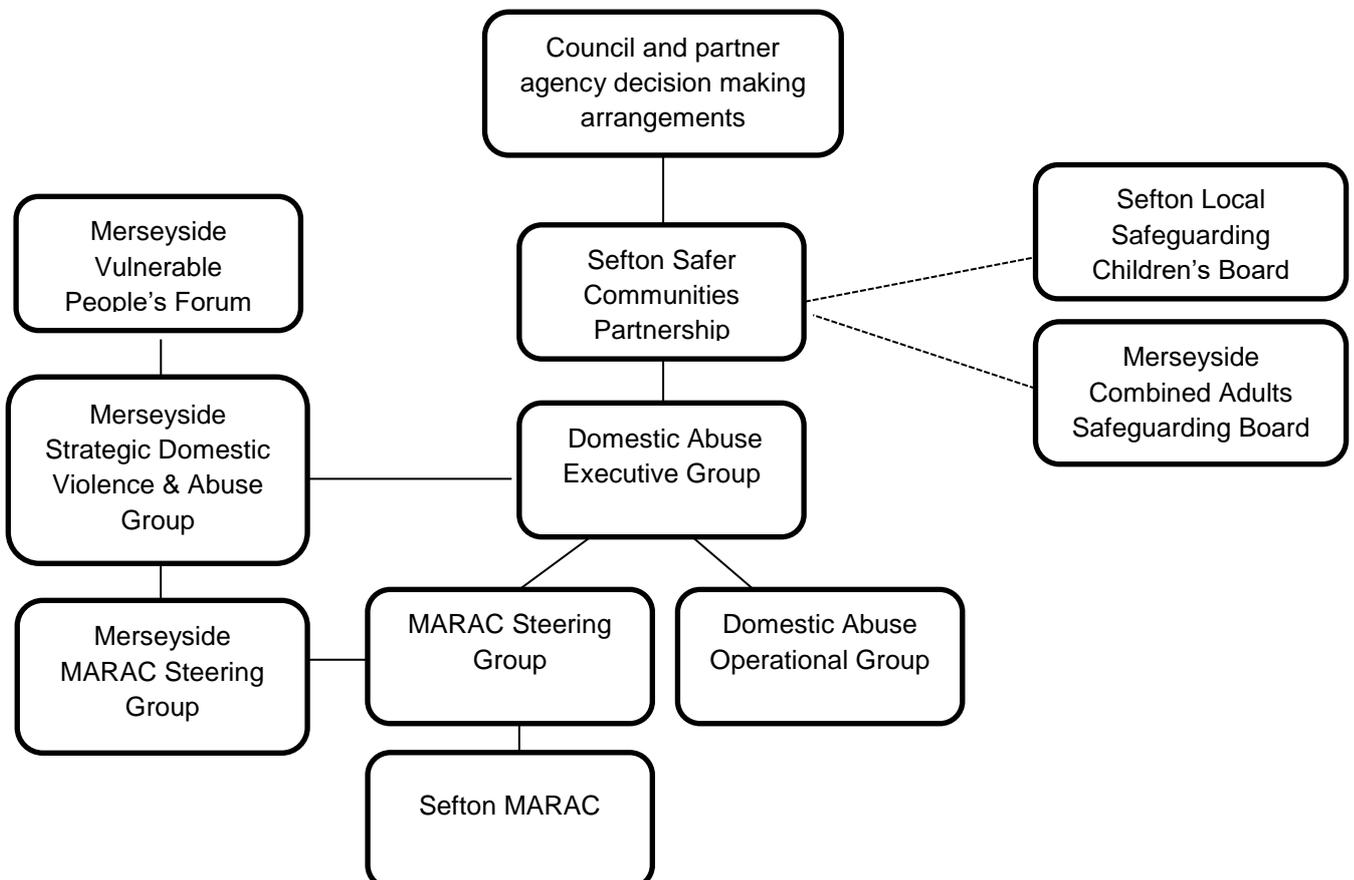
The Sefton Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2019-2021 is a partnership document developed by Sefton’s Domestic Abuse Executive Group on behalf of Sefton Safer Communities Partnership. It continues to reflect the commitment of partner agencies to work together to address domestic abuse.

The strategic themes have been revised to reflect national learning and practice associated with tackling domestic abuse. The priority actions within these build upon the work delivered in the previous 2015-18 strategy and learning from local reviews.

The strategy sets out our vision and is based around three strategic themes:

- **Prevent** –Early intervention and prevention to reduce the cycle of abuse.
- **Protect** - Keeping victims and their families’ safe whilst challenging the behaviour of perpetrators.
- **Repair** - providing ongoing support beyond crisis intervention and developing resilience for the future.

3. Governance



4. Our Vision

That victims of domestic and/or sexual abuse and their families in Sefton feel safer in their communities, feel protected from harm, and able to move forward positively with their lives as a result of receiving the support and interventions they need, and that the behaviour of perpetrators is effectively challenged.

5. Objectives

- To prioritise a strategic partnership approach to the reduction of domestic and sexual abuse in our communities.
- To improve the early identification, response to and prevention of domestic and sexual abuse.
- To increase the reporting of domestic and sexual abuse through awareness raising and access to support services.
- To work with commissioners to ensure appropriate services are in place to support and protect victims of domestic and sexual abuse and their children.
- To hold perpetrators to account through appropriate criminal justice sanctions and effective early interventions that promote long term behaviour change.
- To safeguard children from the effects of living within a household experiencing domestic and/or sexual abuse.

6. Definition

The Home Office (March 2013) defines domestic abuse as:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or are or who have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.” *

This definition includes so called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group”.

Coercive or controlling behaviour within an intimate or family relationship was established as a criminal offence in the Serious Crime Act 2015 and came into force on 29 December 2015.

There is no one set definition of sexual violence or abuse; however, it is widely accepted as being any unwanted sexual act or activity. There are many different kinds of sexual violence and abuse, including but not restricted to: rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, rape within marriage/relationships, forced marriage, so-called honour based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), trafficking, sexual exploitation and ritual abuse. Sexual violence can be perpetrated by a stranger or by someone known.

7. Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that all key stakeholders in Sefton have a consistent understanding of the issues surrounding domestic and sexual abuse and their roles and responsibilities in addressing them. Domestic abuse cannot be tackled in isolation. It requires joint working across a wide range of departments, agencies, and partnerships, including those beyond the usual statutory and specialist organisations associated with domestic abuse.

This strategy sets out how we will do this in Sefton over the next three years. It outlines the key themes partners will focus on and identifies priorities which can be translated into practical areas for action and improvement.

Most elements of the domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Children (VAWG) agenda are included within this strategy. However, trafficking, child sexual exploitation (CSE), and gun and gang related activity, whilst linked, will be covered in more detail in other specific strategies to avoid duplication and potential dilution of actions.

8. National Context

The government’s new Domestic Abuse Bill will bring along a wide range of new requirements nationally. The SSCP supports the recognition domestic abuse is being given nationally by the government, and will ensure this strategy is reviewed to incorporate any new legislation, programmes, or practice as required.

There are a number of local and national strategies, examples of practice learning evidence, research and guidance that also tie into this strategy. Further details on how to access these and other relevant publications can be found in section 12: Further Information.

9. Local Context

Sefton's Domestic Abuse Executive Group is the multi-agency partnership responsible for actioning this strategy and reports to Sefton Safer Communities Partnership. This group ensures there is a joined up approach with other Sefton partnerships, including Sefton Local Safeguarding Children's Board, Sefton's Health and Wellbeing Board, and Merseyside Adults Safeguarding Board, as well as local programmes such as the Sefton Turnaround Families programme, to ensure activities developed around domestic abuse become embedded in mainstream processes and frontline practice.

The local approach is also linked into wider sub regional arrangements to ensure activities associated with joint priorities are complemented and not developed in isolation to each other. This includes Sefton representation on the Merseyside Strategic Domestic Violence and Abuse Group and links into the Liverpool city region Violence Against Women and Girls agenda.

There are also a number of local policies and strategies that have informed the strategy refresh. Details of these can be found in section 12: Further Information. This will be reviewed and updated as new documents are agreed to ensure cross thematic work associated with domestic and sexual abuse is interlinked.

10. Information and Data

National

Domestic and sexual abuse is a national issue that has an enormous impact on the lives of those it affects. Data does not accurately reflect the true scale of the issue and it is widely accepted that any figures will be an underrepresentation. However, they do provide some context on the extent and nature of the problem. Current statistics and research highlights include:

- It is estimated 2 million adults in England and Wales aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse in 2017/18. ¹
- Nationally, the police recorded 599,549 domestic abuse related crimes in 2017/18. This was an increase of 23% from the previous year. ²
- 12% of all recorded crimes by the police in England and Wales were classified as domestic abuse in 2017/18. ³

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- On average the police in England and Wales receive over 100 calls relating to domestic abuse every hour.⁴
- Women are twice as likely to have experienced domestic abuse than men. 7.9% of women (1.3 million) and 4.2% men (695,000) in England and Wales reported having experienced domestic abuse in 2017/18. ⁵
- Between April 2015 and March 2017 there have been 400 domestic homicides in England and Wales. 73% of these were female victims (293) and 27% were male victims. 72% of these homicides (286) were committed by a partner or ex-partner, 82% of which were female victims. ⁶
- 25% of lesbian and bi-sexual women and almost 50% of gay and bi-sexual men have experienced at least one incident of domestic abuse. ⁷
- Research indicates trans people are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse, with one report showing 80% had experienced some form of abuse from a partner or ex-partner. ⁸
- Individuals with a long term illness or disability are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse. ⁹
- Evidence shows non physical abuse is the most common type of domestic abuse. 73% of women and 57% of men aged 16-59 in England and Wales were subject to non physical abuse in 2017/18 ¹⁰. One study also found that 95 out of 100 domestic abuse survivors reported experiencing coercive control. ¹¹
- Around 1 in 5 children have been exposed to domestic abuse. ¹²
- Domestic abuse is a factor in over half of child serious case reviews. ¹³
- Victims experiencing or at risk of 'honour' based violence face additional risks and barriers to seeking help and are considered to be at higher risk of serious harm or murder. ¹⁴
- 20% of women (3.1 million) and 4% of men (631,000) have experienced some sort of sexual assault since the age of 16. ¹⁵
- Approximately 85,000 women and 12,000 men are raped on average in England and Wales every year. ¹⁶
- Only 15% of individuals who experience sexual violence report it to the police.¹⁷
- 1 in 6 children have been sexually abused by the time they are 16. ¹⁸
- Over 90% of sexually abused children were abused by someone they knew. ¹⁹
- Disabled children are over 3 times more likely to be abused than non-disabled children)

Local

- 27,426 domestic abuse related incidents and crimes were recorded in Merseyside in 2017/18, of which 2,706 were in Sefton. ²¹
- 12% of all recorded crimes in Merseyside were classified as domestic abuse related in 2017/18. ²²
- 80% (2,329) domestic abuse related prosecutions in Merseyside resulted in a conviction in 2017/18. ²³
- Analysis of Merseyside Police domestic abuse data found that 95% of coercive control victims were women and 74% of perpetrators were men. 76% of coercive control cases happened within an intimate partner context. The study found that common abusive behaviours used in coercive control included "...use of technology (such as phone trackers, controlling social media usage, barrage of text messages or monitoring phone usage), sexual coercion, monitoring behaviours, isolation, threats, financial abuse, deprivation (depriving access to support) and physical violence (63% of coercive control cases featured reports of physical violence)." ²⁴
- 318 children in Sefton were on a child protection plan in 2017/18 where domestic abuse was cited as a feature.
- 498 families in Sefton were supported in 2017/18 with an Early Help offer where domestic abuse was cited. ²⁶
- There were 540 cases heard at Sefton's MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) in 2017/18. 126 cases (24%) were repeat cases. 819 children were identified within MARAC cases. ²⁷
- Sefton's IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) team, which provides support to high risk victims of domestic abuse in Sefton, received 1,178 referrals in 2017/18. 1,100 of these were women, 78 were men. ²⁸
- Sefton Women's and Children's Aid (SWACA), which provides support to victims of domestic violence and their children in Sefton, received 1,606 referrals in 2017/18. ²⁹
- The Rape and Sexual Assault Centre (RASA) Merseyside, which provides support to victims of sexual violence and abuse, supported 616 individuals in Sefton in 2017/18. ³⁰
- 10% of Sefton clients supported by RASA reported sexual violence perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner, 19% reported abuse perpetrated by a family member. ³¹
- 277 Sefton clients supported by RASA waited more than 2 years before seeking support from the time of the assault. ³²

11. Strategic Themes

These are the overarching areas of work Sefton's Safer Communities Partnership and its wider partners will focus on over the next 3 years. These themes will form the basis of a partnership action plan which will detail how these priorities will be delivered.

1. Prevent

Early intervention provision, including improving public knowledge on domestic abuse to drive a cultural shift, intervening earlier to prevent and reduce the impact of longer term poor outcomes, and breaking the cycle of abuse across generations.

- Clear and consistent information is available to professionals and the public on domestic abuse, including practical tools, advice and the support services available.
- Promotional campaigns to reinforce both what constitutes domestic abuse and what support services are available and ensuring links are made to appropriate regional and national campaigns.
- Educational programmes for children and young people focusing on healthy relationships and developing resilience to help prevent future abusive behaviour.
- A quality assured offer of support for children and young people causing harm to help prevent this behaviour escalating.
- Domestic abuse is considered as a routine enquiry by a wide range of professionals across Sefton, including the use of an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) based approach.
- There are interventions available to perpetrators at the earliest opportunity to support positive behaviour change.
- Activities that focus on supporting positive mental wellbeing to help prevent self-harm and suicide.

2. Protect

Keeping victims of domestic and sexual abuse and their children safe in a consistent and coordinated way, providing safe and quality assured support services, and challenging the behaviour of perpetrators whilst also offering opportunities to change.

- Victims and their families have a consistent and effective response from agencies to disclosures of domestic abuse that protects them from further harm.
- Agencies are consistent and effective in recognising and identifying risks associated with domestic abuse; workers proactively use professional curiosity and take action.
- Organisations have clear and easily accessible policies on domestic abuse to support their employees.
- There are a range of quality assured, evidence based support services for victims and perpetrators to ensure work is delivered safely, responds to need, reduces risk and is in partnership with other agencies.
- There is a range of specific support available for children and young people affected by domestic abuse, which reduces risk.
- There is a whole family approach to keeping victims and their children safe and holding perpetrators to account.
- The behaviour of perpetrators is proactively challenged in a consistent and appropriate way and there are a range of interventions available to support behaviour change.
- There are effective and efficient multi agency risk management processes, including MARAC and MAPPA, that are regularly reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose.

3. Repair

Supporting the development of resilience for families and individuals to move on and deal with future life challenges, providing ongoing support beyond crisis intervention.

- Provision of a range of ongoing support for victims and children to reduce risk and impact of abuse, and recover from trauma.
- Provision of wider support opportunities for perpetrators of domestic abuse to sustain positive behaviour change long term.
- Criminal justice interventions achieve positive outcomes for victims to support them to move on with their lives.

- A wide range of organisations that can provide ongoing community based support for individuals and families based on their needs.

12. Outcomes

Based on the objectives outlined above, this strategy seeks to achieve the following outcomes:

- Service providers and front line staff are equipped to recognise and respond to domestic and sexual violence.
- Information about the support available for domestic and sexual violence victims is clear, consistent, and accessible.
- Our community is educated as to what domestic and sexual abuse is, and what services are available in Sefton.
- Sefton residents feel confident and able to report incidents of domestic abuse.
- Consistent processes and systems are in place to respond appropriately to domestic and sexual abuse.
- Victims and their children are offered person centred support to address their specific needs.
- Perpetrators of domestic and sexual abuse are dealt with appropriately.
- Repeat incidents of domestic abuse are reduced.

13. Monitoring and Measuring the Impact

Sefton Safer Communities Partnership will scrutinise progress of the strategy's objectives against the Strategy Implementation Plan on a quarterly basis.

The Partnership will also review the strategy on an annual basis and will consider:

- Progress made against the strategy's objectives.
- The overall impact and effectiveness of the strategy measured through the strategy outcomes

- New legislation or government directives for incorporation in the strategy.
- Local need and any other emerging priorities.

14. Further Information

Local policies and procedures

Sefton Safer Communities Partnership Plan 2019/20.

Sefton Multi Agency Domestic Abuse Protocol

https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/1484418/Domestic_Abuse_Protocol.pdf

Sefton LSCB Level of Need Guidance

https://seftonlscb.org.uk/assets/1/level_of_need_guidance_oct_2017.pdf

Sefton Children and Young People's Plan 2015-2020

<http://modgov.sefton.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s64194/Sefton%20Children%20Young%20Peoples%20Plan%202015%20-%202020.pdf>

Sefton Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2014 – 2020. Available at: <http://www.sefton.gov.uk/public-health/health-and-wellbeing-board.aspx>

Sefton Turnaround Programme Outcomes Plan 2018 to 2020

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/social-care/children-and-young-people/turnaround-programme-for-troubled-families.aspx>

Sefton's Homelessness Strategy 2018-21

<http://modgov.sefton.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s87175/Draft%20Homelessness%20Strategy%202018-23.pdf>

National polices, best practice, and guidance

Safe Lives: 'Spotlights' on Domestic Abuse / Sexual Violence

<http://www.safelives.org.uk/knowledge-hub/spotlights>

Women's Aid: Research Information on Domestic Abuse

www.womensaid.org.uk/research-and-publications/

Respect: Information on work with Perpetrators, Male Victims of Domestic Abuse, Young People's Violence in Close Relationships

<http://respect.uk.net/what-we-do/>

Refuge: Research Information on Domestic Abuse

www.refuge.org.uk/our-work/affecting-change/research-and-policy/

Office National Statistics: Domestic Abuse in England and Wales Year Ending March 2018
www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018

NHS: Help After Rape and Sexual Assault
www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/help-after-rape-and-sexual-assault/

Home Office: The Economic and Social Costs of Domestic Abuse – January 2019
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/772180/horr107.pdf

Home Office: Violence against Women and Girls and Male Position Factsheets (Home Office) – Government Perspective
<https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2019/03/07/violence-against-women-and-girls-and-male-position-factsheets/>

Stonewall: Supporting Trans Women in Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Report
www.stonewall.org.uk/news/stonewall-and-nfpsynergy-report-professional-experiences

HM Government: Working Together to Safeguard Children. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. July 2018
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf

HM Inspectorate of Probation: An inspection of North West Division, National Probation Service. February 2019
<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspections/nwnps/>

HM Inspectorate of Merseyside Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). September 2018
CRC inspection
<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspections/merseysidecrc/>

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- 4 HMIC 2015, on Women's Aid website
- 5 & 6 Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2018
- 7 Stonewall
- 8 The Scottish Transgender Alliance, on Stonewall website
- 9 Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2018
- 10 Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2018.
- 11 Kelly et al, 2014, on Women's Aid site
- 12 Radford, L et al (2011) on NSPCC website.
- 13 Sidebotham, P et al (2016) on NSPCC website
- 14 Safelives Spotlight Report #HiddenVictims
- 15 Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2017
- 16 Crime Survey for England and Wales, on Rape crisis website
- 17 Rape Crisis
- 18 NSPCC
- 19 Radford, L. et al (2011)
- 20 Jones, L. et al (2012)
- 21 Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2018 and Merseyside Police
- 22 & 23 Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2018

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24 Barlow et al, 2018 on Women's Aid website
25, 26, 27, 28 Sefton Council
29 Sefton Women's and Children's Aid
30, 31 & 32 Rape and Sexual Assault Centre (RASA) Merseyside