

# Appendix 3a

Blackpool Domestic Abuse Partnership

## Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2026

January 2022



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# Foreword from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Domestic Abuse is an insidious, pervasive and invasive crime that damages and destroys lives across Blackpool. It leaves physical and emotional scars on victims that can last for years, and that never fully heal. Sadly, victims of domestic abuse lose their lives every day in the UK, and in Blackpool families have experienced losses that can never be recovered. Our commitment to tackling the tolerance of any abuse within relationships, behind closed doors, on the streets, in schools and workplaces is unrelenting. [#Itstopshere](#).

There are more instances of Domestic Abuse in Blackpool than in other, comparable authorities. More children are judged to require support and intervention from statutory services and targeted early help in Blackpool because they are living in households where Domestic Abuse happens. The outcome that this strategy is designed to achieve is that we see this come down. The objective is simple and all of our efforts are focussed on its delivery. **There will be fewer victims of Domestic Abuse in Blackpool, and there will be less harm.**

In 2021 the Government enacted new legislation to tackle Domestic Abuse. This strategy reflects the new duties in this legislation alongside the ambitions held by the whole partnership. Nobody in Blackpool should have to experience or witness domestic abuse.

We know that we have work to do to improve our services so that people in Blackpool who are at risk of, or are being abused receive the support they require. We want to encourage people to ask for help and report abuse at the earliest opportunity before it escalates and causes more harm.

We will increase our safe housing and wrap around support for victims and their children in line with the Domestic Abuse Act. This approach in housing will be flexible to support a range of needs, not just traditional Refuge safe accommodation

though this remains a valuable and appropriate tool to effectively support many people who have experienced harm.

Tackling perpetrators of abuse is critical; we will challenge each other across the partnership to ensure that everyone is using the increased legislative powers in the Act to utilise protection orders, deliver justice, and support perpetrators to rehabilitate through a comprehensive programme of behaviour change.

We will work together to development of a comprehensive set of performance measures in order to understand and improve our service delivery based on sound knowledge.

We know that we need to change the culture and attitudes that tolerate abuse in the home and in relationships. We will extend our education programmes in schools and colleges, train our staff to recognise and respond to early signs of harm and challenge poor attitudes that can allow abuse to continue.

Most importantly, individuals who have been and continue to be affected by domestic abuse must be at the heart of everything we do. Our strategy, our values and our priorities are informed by their expert knowledge and our development of effective interventions shaped by their experience.

This four-year strategy will be reported on every twelve months to demonstrate our progress. The priorities for year one reflect our commitment to drive change, support victims, address perpetrator behaviour and deliver preventative work to stop abuse happening in the first place.



**Councillor Jo Farrell**

*Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health*

# Introduction

This strategy has been co-produced by the members of Blackpool Domestic Abuse Partnership Board. It sets out our partnership approach to domestic abuse and identifies Blackpool's priorities for the next four years.

The evidence is consistent in its message, the prevalence and scope of domestic abuse in Blackpool requires a joined up and coordinated approach to protect victims and work with perpetrators to prevent future or further abuse.

In April 2021 the Domestic Abuse Act (the Act) received royal assent and was signed into law. The act brought in a wide-ranging legal definition of domestic abuse, which is fully adopted by the Domestic Abuse Partnership, incorporating a range of abuse beyond physical violence, including emotional, coercive, or controlling behaviour and economic abuse.

Part 4 of the Act places a new duty on Blackpool Council to provide safe accommodation and support for victims of Domestic Abuse and their children. Statutory guidance sets out the functions and operational aspects required to meet the duty; this strategy documents how, as a partnership, we will meet them using interventions which we have learned as a partnership work most effectively for victims in Blackpool.

The strategy is accompanied by a comprehensive needs assessment and a joint annual partnership action plan which is currently in development and will be available following the final publication of this strategy. The assessment will bring our data together in one place and helps us understand what is working and what needs to be improved. We will use the data sets we agree as a partnership to plan our actions every year and monitor and report on the real and measurable impact of our work on the lives of people in Blackpool.

The action plan is overseen by the Domestic Abuse Partnership who have the responsibility of ensuring progress and outcomes. The plan is a 'live' document which will be monitored and updated regularly.

# What we know about Domestic Abuse in Blackpool

We know that domestic abuse can happen to anybody from any background, in any relationship; it is the systematic abuse of power and control. Both women and men experience domestic abuse however, the majority of abuse is perpetrated by men against women and is rooted in the wider inequality women experience in society. Financial insecurity also plays a part in the balance of power in relationships and in Blackpool, the most deprived local authority in England, we know that people may feel trapped in abusive relationships because they feel they have limited choices due to economic ties. Understanding inequalities should inform how we tackle domestic abuse, coproduce plans and interventions and ensure support is inclusive.

The strategy aims to address domestic abuse in the following contexts: intimate relationships, abuse which continues after a relationship has formerly ended, abuse against or by carers, forced marriage, so-called 'honour-based violence', female genital mutilation, inter-familial violence and parental abuse. It responds to the needs of,

- All adults experiencing abuse or survivors of abuse
- Children and young people who are experiencing domestic abuse
- Children who are exposed to or witness domestic abuse at home
- Those who are perpetrating domestic abuse.

Domestic Abuse is a cross cutting issue that affects individuals, families, children and young people, workplaces, schools and communities. It impacts on physical and mental health and limits the wider wellbeing and life chances of people who experience abuse; it also drives wider crises such as homelessness, addiction, statutory interventions in families, financial hardship, exclusion and social isolation.

Everyone in Blackpool has the right to have respectful relationships where they are safe from harm. It is key to supporting this right that every agency should understand the fundamental nature of domestic abuse, coercive and controlling behaviours and how to respond effectively and with kindness at whatever level abuse occurs.

As a Partnership we want to make sure the right help and support is available so that fewer victims and their children reach crisis point, and the harm caused by abuse is reduced or avoided completely. Domestic Abuse will only be fully addressed if all services play their part recognising that domestic abuse is everybody's business.

We know that reporting incidents and accessing support can be difficult for some because too often victims have to suffer repeated and sustained abuse before they ask for help, if they ever feel able to. We cannot protect victims and reduce harm if we do not get clear and sustained messages in to our community that mean wherever someone turns for help, it is there. We aim to identify victims and offenders at the earliest possible opportunity and work together to provide support for victims, along with interventions that address offending behaviours.

Data to support the partnership understanding of the impact of Domestic Abuse in Blackpool will be used to support the development of a strategic needs assessment. This data will be updated annually for the board and used to both support the measurement the impact of the action plan and inform the actions for the coming year.

# The Partnership commitment

Domestic Abuse is a serious crime. As a Partnership our commitment is to prevent and reduce abuse. The way we use our collective resources well to respond to abuse is a reflection of our values and our commitment to the town. In developing this strategy partnership members worked together, including statutory agencies, support providers and people with lived experience to outline the values that will drive our ambitions and outcomes.

Exposure to violence and abuse in childhood can have lifelong consequences. As a partnership we are committed to early intervention, supporting victims, and helping young people to understand and build healthy relationships to prevent future abuse. We are committed to creating a community where people can safely intervene when they see signs of harm, and where victims can access support whenever they need it.

All members of the Domestic Abuse Partnership commit to this strategy and its intentions.

As a Partnership we are sending a clear message that:

- We will not tolerate domestic abuse in any form
- We will rigorously advocate for the focus of every statutory agency on victims- helping them to live a life free from abuse and the fear of abuse
- Victims are not at fault. No abuse should ever be excused because of something a victim said or did
- We will take robust action against those that perpetrate abuse
- We will drive the significant culture change required to influence the behaviours of organisations and future generations to eradicate domestic abuse

- All our work will be informed by the voices and experiences of those who have experienced abuse and those who have been perpetrators to learn and shape interventions to stop domestic abuse, keep people safe and reduce the long term impact on health and wellbeing
- Our services will be inclusive, ensuring all victims including those with protected characteristics are fully able access the support they need.

In order to prioritise the work needed in Blackpool to effectively deliver on this commitment and deliver better outcomes in the future we have reflected on the information available to us and listened to victims, statutory partners, voluntary and community organisations.

The action plan that will underpin this strategy sets out what we will do for each of the next four years to prevent future abuse, support victims and effectively work with those that perpetrate abuse.

In Blackpool, we know from our consultation that there are some people who have complex needs that must be addressed alongside domestic abuse for any support to be effective. Some individuals and communities can experience additional barriers to accessing services which those services need to remove or reduce. We want to ensure that everyone in Blackpool is able to get the help and support they require when and where they need it.

## Values when working with domestic abuse

- Across the partnership, our work with victims and perpetrators will be guided by these values at all times, and we will challenge partnership members to demonstrate how their actions are aligned with them.
- Victims of domestic abuse will be heard, believed and supported. They will not be judged. Practitioners working with people affected by domestic abuse will do so using a Trauma Informed approach.

- Although the new housing duties support victims of Domestic Abuse to access safe accommodation when they need it away from their home, victims should not be forced to move to safeguard themselves if other measures can be used to help them stay in their home. We will work with victims to understand what support and safety mechanisms need to be in place to make their home safe and work together to deliver them wherever possible.
- We support the principle of the “Three Me’s”. This approach advocates understanding and responding in a person centred way to everyone who is impacted by abuse. The Adult Victim, any children who are victims by virtue of witnessing abuse (parental abuse of children is child abuse) and the perpetrator. Our services will be person-centred and family oriented, working alongside individuals and families to help them plan the future they want, providing the right level of support for as long as needed, and recognising that the end of a relationship should not be the end of support.
- Our support for anybody who has experienced domestic abuse will not be generic. We recognise that each individual using our services are more than a victim, survivor or perpetrator and services will be flexible to respond to all family members in a holistic person-centred way to support long term change. Victims will not be labelled as “non-compliant” if they are not able, at that time, to work with services and feel safe.
- Professionals will work together to support people exposed to domestic abuse with kindness and respect. They will work using a “lead professional” approach to ensure that people are not signposted from service to service around a system without clear and purposeful navigation.
- Everyone working in our frontline services will be sensitive, professionally curious and alert to the early signs of abuse. People will be given every opportunity to disclose or report abuse including people who are themselves perpetrating the abuse.
- When we develop or review interventions, services and training across the Partnership focussed on Domestic Abuse, we will coproduce this with people who have lived experience in a respectful way which minimises the risk of further trauma.
- We will use all the tools available to us as a partnership to ensure that people who use coercive, controlling, harmful, unhealthy behaviours are held to account through the justice system and supported to change wherever possible. We will offer rehabilitation to those who use abusive behaviour using proven interventions that demonstrate lasting change.
- We recognise that though never justifiable, trauma can have an impact on an individual’s behaviour and to successfully change behaviour previous trauma of the perpetrator must be addressed.
- Work with perpetrators should always increase the safety of victims and children; any support should not exacerbate or create additional risk or harm.
- In families where young people are perpetrating abuse towards their parents this abuse is likely to be minimised or denied by parents, as they can feel ashamed or humiliated and blame themselves for the situation. When it’s difficult for parents to accept the behaviour as abusive they are less likely to seek support and the abuse can escalate; practitioners must be mindful of this and be creative in the support they provide.
- Professionals understand both the presenting and underlying needs of families struggling with unhealthy or abusive relationships, recognise that domestic abuse is everybody’s business and understand what they need to do to help each member of the family effected.
- People who use coercive, controlling, harmful, unhealthy behaviours are held to account through the justice system and supported to change wherever possible.

# The Legal context

## Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Act creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse based on the existing cross-government definition.

'Abusive behaviour' is defined as any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse including 'so called' honour based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

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.

## Abuse directed at a person under 16 is dealt with as child abuse not domestic abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 is designed to strengthen protections for victims and survivors; it establishes in law the role and statutory powers of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and places a duty on local areas to monitor and report on

domestic abuse. It recognises children as victims in their own right where they have seen, heard or experienced domestic abuse.

The act places a duty on local authorities in England to provide accommodation based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation

The Act creates new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPN) and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPO) which will replace the former Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Domestic Violence Protection Orders with an increased scope and power. It also puts the guidance for the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (known as Clare's Law) on a statutory footing. This was introduced in 2012, giving any member of the public 'the right to ask' which enables someone to ask the Police about a partner's previous history of domestic violence or violent acts, and gives the Police powers to disclose information through 'the right to know'.

The act:

- creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, controlling or coercive, and economic abuse
- establishes in law the office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner and set out the Commissioner's functions and powers
- provides for a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order
- places a duty on local authorities in England to provide accommodation based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation
- prohibits perpetrators of abuse from cross-examining their victims in person in the civil and family courts in England and Wales

- creates a statutory presumption that victims of domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal, civil and family courts
- clarifies the circumstances in which a court may make a barring order under section 91(14) of the Children Act 1989 to prevent family proceedings that can further traumatise victims
- extends the controlling or coercive behaviour offence to cover post-separation abuse.
- extends the offence of disclosing private sexual photographs and films with intent to cause distress (known as the “revenge porn” offence) to cover threats to disclose such material
- creates a new offence of non-fatal strangulation or suffocation of another person.
- clarifies by restating in statute law the general proposition that a person may not consent to the infliction of serious harm and, by extension, is unable to consent to their own death
- extends the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the criminal courts in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to further violent and sexual offences
- provides for a statutory domestic abuse perpetrator strategy
- enables domestic abuse offenders to be subject to polygraph testing as a condition of their licence following their release from custody
- places the guidance supporting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (“Clare’s law”) on a statutory footing
- Provides that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have ‘priority need’ for homelessness assistance
- ensures that where a local authority, for reasons connected with domestic abuse, grants a new secure tenancy to a social tenant who had or has a secure lifetime or assured tenancy (other than an assured shorthold tenancy) this must be a secure lifetime tenancy
- prohibits GPs and other health professionals in general practice from charging a victim of domestic abuse for a letter to support an application for legal aid

- provides for a statutory code of practice relating to the processing of domestic abuse data for immigration purposes.

Further details of the measures contained within the Act and factsheets can be found at:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets)

### **Care Act 2014**

The Care Act 2014 sets out the legal framework for how Health and Social Care systems should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect, protecting their rights to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. Freedom from abuse is a key aspect of a person’s wellbeing. There is an overlap between those who are adults at risk as defined by the Care Act and a people who require support because they are experiencing domestic abuse.

### **Mental Capacity Act 2005**

Some victims of domestic abuse may lack the capacity to make decisions for themselves and they will require additional support to empower them within a legal framework. The purpose of the Act is to protect a person’s right to make their own decisions; a range of safeguarding and legal approaches are available to support people experiencing domestic abuse who need help to make decisions about their lives and future.

### **The Adoption and Children Act 2002**

The Adoption and Children Act 2002’s definition of harm includes ‘impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another’ and requires that children who witness abuse to be considered in need of help and protection, the new DA Act now recognises children as victims in their own right.

## **Coercive Control offence 2015**

Controlling or coercive behaviour was written into law under section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015. Controlling behaviour is that which makes people dependent by isolating them from friends and family and other sources of support, taking control of resources and depriving them of their independence. Coercive behaviour includes acts of assault, threat, humiliation or intimidation that are used to harm, punish or frighten another person.

## **Stalking Protections Orders 2020**

In January 2020 Stalking Protection Orders (SPOs) were introduced to protect from stalking, harassment and other unwanted contact from perpetrators. These orders enable early police intervention, pre-conviction, to address stalking behaviours before they become deep-rooted or escalate.

## **Anti-Social Behaviour Crime & Policing Act 2014**

We will use both Police and Local Authority powers within the Act to protect vulnerable victims of domestic abuse.

## **Housing Act 1996 – summary of the changes to homelessness legislation**

In respect of allocations, the new duties prescribe that local authority tenancies, where granted for reasons connected with domestic abuse, should always be secure tenancies. This reflects the powers introduced to local authorities through the Localism Act to introduce Fixed Term tenancies if they chose to do so. In Blackpool the decision was made not to introduce Fixed Term tenancies, and so no changes are needed here.

# Strategic context

## **Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment 2021**

The Act requires local domestic abuse partnerships to produce a needs assessment to help understand the scale of the issue locally and to identify gaps in services / provision. We have data available to us through our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which is published on the local authority website. In year one of this strategy, we will undertake a partnership wide needs assessment and review what further information we need to regularly gather and review to ensure our understanding of need, the impact of provision and any gaps so that this can be acted on quickly and informs the plan.

## **Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Strategy**

The Domestic Abuse Act introduces a new statutory duty on the Secretary of State to publish a perpetrator strategy for the prosecution and management of domestic abuse offenders. The Home Office has indicated that this will be published as part of a wider domestic abuse strategy within a year of the Domestic Abuse Bill having received Royal Assent.

## **Requirement for Local Authorities to provide safe accommodation and support**

The Act places a new duty on Local Authorities to assess the need for, and commission, safe accommodation for victims and their children. The duty also covers the provision of support in safe accommodation including, advocacy, domestic abuse safety advice, specialist support for people with protected characteristics, housing support, immigration advice, play therapy and counselling.

## **Housing providers and secure tenancies**

The Domestic Abuse Act provides a clear steer to social housing providers to adopt practices which recognise, identify and address domestic abuse in all its forms as set out in the guidance. Housing providers should consider updating allocation policies, policies for addressing anti-social behaviour and tenancy terms and conditions to reflect the Act.

## **Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (CSAP)**

Blackpool is part of the Pan Lancashire Safeguarding Assurance Partnership which covers the unitary authority areas of Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen, and the county council of Lancashire. The CSAP has three priorities, and Domestic Abuse, because of the impact on family stability, the safety and welfare of children and impact on their life chances, is one of these priorities. The CSAP has been instrumental in the review of the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) which is seeking to ensure that the resources of all statutory partners are used well collectively to support those victims most at risk of significant harm.

## **Blackpool Domestic Abuse Partnership Board**

It is a requirement of the Act that every local authority has a partnership board made up of, but not limited to, the police, health, local authority, local voluntary organisations, and to make provision for the voices of victims/survivors and their children. Blackpool's local Domestic Abuse Partnership is established with full participation and provides the strategic direction, oversight and leadership for all domestic abuse work.

# Local governance arrangements

The Domestic Abuse Partnership is responsible for setting the local priorities based on the needs assessment and the requirements of the Act. The group oversees the commissioning and delivery services against the annual multi-agency action plan. It is the responsibility of the Partnership to monitor the progress and delivery of all domestic abuse services, driving continual improvement.

The Domestic Abuse Partnership is a sub-group of, and accountable to, the Community Safety Partnership for delivery of work on domestic abuse. It also has links to the Children's Safeguarding Partnership and the Safeguarding Adults Board in relation to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults from domestic abuse.

# Partnership Priorities and Key Actions

## Lead and drive positive and impactful change

We will work together as a partnership to lead work that will support community wide awareness of the lifelong negative impact of domestic abuse. Strengthening our governance arrangements, leadership, accountability, improving our knowledge and data collection, whilst collectively and rigorously challenging progress and impact are all key to achieving this priority.

We will:

- Create and keep under regular review a comprehensive needs assessment to improve our understanding of all aspects of domestic abuse;
- Ensure that agencies working with victims of domestic abuse understand what their role is in supporting and protecting from harm, and what other agencies can offer to support holistic safety planning;
- Develop a consistent and inclusive collection and analysis of key domestic abuse data across the partnership to inform our strategic direction and action plan;
- Track and monitor progress against set actions in the detailed action plan to demonstrate improvement or highlight any gaps in effectiveness;
- Seek to evidence the impact of support and services invested in by the partnership and make sure that we use this information in commissioning decisions;
- Systematically use and implement the learning from Domestic Homicide reviews and serious case reviews, along with victims lived experience to inform and continually improve services and responses from key agencies;

- Horizon scan for new developments, evidence based research and funding opportunities with regard to all aspects of domestic abuse;
- Ensure that domestic abuse is referenced in all relevant strategies held by partnership agencies.

## Prevent abuse and offer support at the earliest point

We will promote respectful relationships through the curriculum and work with schools and young people to challenge gender inequality and stereotypes. A clear focus on early recognition of the signs of abuse will help to prevent escalation and minimise harm caused. A skilled, confident and collaborative workforce are key to achieving this priority, through promotion of healthy relationships, sharing of professional skills and knowledge.

- Provide high quality primary and secondary education for all children and young people promoting positive, respectful healthy relationships and a climate of equality and respect for one another;
- Deliver Green Dot training across our school community;
- Practitioners will be trained in trauma<sup>1</sup> informed practice and understand the additional complexities of those people who may be more vulnerable to abuse or to perpetrating abuse;
- Review training to ensure that it is encouraging staff to be professionally curious, recognise early signs of abuse, coercive and controlling behaviours, and how to respond sensitively so that victims feel supported, listened to and able to get the help they need;

<sup>1</sup> Blackpool is part of the Lancashire and South Cumbria Health and Social Care System which has pledged to become Trauma Informed. A unified and supportive approach to recognising and addressing the impact of trauma will be supported across the organisations that work with people across the footprint.

- Develop clear and accessible pathways for victims as soon as they are identified and before risk is escalated. Training, awareness and tools will be delivered across the partnership to provide staff with the skills and resources to work with people who do not require support from more specialist teams;
- Deliver a local communication plan that reaches out to all communities to let them know what services are available to them and how to get the help they need.

### **Provide support for those who experience abuse that is accessible, responsive and persistent**

Complex and multiple funding arrangements have historically funded domestic abuse provision. The new duty on partnerships to deliver and monitor support services for victims and their children offers the opportunity to review and align our service delivery model. We will establish clear pathways into and between support services, including voluntary community-based provision through to safeguarding and statutory protection services.

#### What we will do

- Review the current delivery of all support services and the pathways between them so victims are not passed between services and don't have to keep telling their story;
- Deliver the new Multi-Agency Risk Reduction & Assessment Conference (MARRAC) process and review when it is embedded to ensure it is fit for purpose and supporting those victims at highest risk of death or serious harm, and reduces repeat victimisation and repeat offending;
- Recognise the complex safeguarding issues for young people who are exposed to or are perpetrating abuse and ensure that services are meeting need and addressing harmful behaviour;

- Proactively seek out funding opportunities to provide for a sustainable Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector supporting victims, perpetrators and survivors;
- Develop a system of Domestic Abuse Champions within all partnership agencies and cascade up to date information on service availability and pathways to those champions.

### **Changing the risk posed by perpetrators of Domestic Abuse**

The Domestic Abuse Act provides additional protection measures enshrined in law for victims and new legislative measures to tackle perpetrators of abuse. We will use a combination of interventions to pursue and rehabilitate perpetrators, be that through the criminal justice system, civil outcomes, rehabilitation and behaviour change programmes, or working with families who wish to stay together. In 2021, a pan Lancashire review of perpetrator interventions was undertaken which makes a number of recommendations.

#### What we will do

- Ensure that training is available to practitioners on all aspects of the new Domestic Abuse Act, for example the offences of controlling and coercive behaviour post-separation and revenge porn, so that services are able to better advise and support victims and challenge perpetrators;
- Review the recommendations from the Pan Lancashire review and determine the response from the Blackpool Partnership and incorporate these in to the plan overseen by the board;
- Review and assess the local response to the national Perpetrator Strategy when it is published;
- Work with the Police and Crime Commissioner, Probation and other Local Authorities in Lancashire to agree a Lancashire wide perpetrator strategy;

- The Domestic Abuse Act strengthens the legislation around protection orders; we will monitor as part of the board work how orders are used to protect victims and help them move on with their lives;
- Where families wish to stay together we will provide support and challenge, ensuring that any plan includes both victim(s) and perpetrator, and does not wholly focus on one party to provide safeguarding or make change.

**Work as a whole partnership to fulfil the new Housing Duties introduced by the Act in the way that benefits Blackpool residents**

Although the statutory duty for meeting the Housing Duty sits with the local authority we know that we will only make a genuine and lasting impact on the safety and wellbeing of victims if we work together as a whole partnership.

Presentations at housing options by victims who have been made homeless because of abuse at home are high. The team are already working to the new standards required by the act to support victims.

Refuge beds in safe, specialist accommodation are hugely valued and valuable, and the strong links our refuge providers have with the Police, Health and Housing teams mean that for many victims they can receive the support they need to feel safe, access the tools available to them to address the risk posed by the perpetrator and be able to return to their home or find a new home where they can live safely. However, this support is not always able to meet the needs of those victims with multiple needs. During the life of the previous strategy a gap in support was identified for victims with complex and multiple needs – specifically mental health needs and drug and/or alcohol misuse. It was often difficult for refuges to admit individuals with complex needs, and, as many support services are based within the refuges, this meant that often domestic abuse victims with the most complex needs had the least access to support. A pilot was developed aimed at breaking the cycle of domestic

abuse often observed for individuals with complex needs, address their drug, alcohol and/or mental health needs, and also help them in other areas of their lives such as tenancy and employment.

A pilot project began in 2017. The pilot provided a wrap-around, person-centred service for victims of domestic abuse with complex needs from a dedicated multidisciplinary team led and supported by a specialist third sector provider. An evaluation of the pilot, undertaken in 2018, found that clients who were referred benefited from all services, and that benefits were sometimes life-changing. After making minor changes as a result of the evaluation, the pilot work continued and was again evaluated in 2020.

There were many examples of positive outcomes for clients. Particular highlights of the positive outcomes observed are as follows:

- Improved mental and/or emotional wellbeing
- reduced alcohol consumption
- reduced drug use
- participants successful in securing their own property
- participants entering employment and/ or engaged with volunteering
- participants engaged with education/courses
- children being safer - children returned to parental care after a period in foster care and children removed from the “at risk” category of children’s social care.

As commissioners we learned from this work that in supporting victims of Domestic Abuse who have complex needs we can be more effective with this multi-disciplinary, flexible approach to supporting safe accommodation. A key part of our Safe Accommodation offer recognises that risk does not evaporate as victims move from refuge accommodation.

We know that the refuge provision we have for Blackpool is the pivotal resource for the provision of skilled outreach to support individuals facing multiple disadvantage. We also know that availability of accommodation is not a barrier in Blackpool but the standard of that accommodation can be an issue.

We will-

- Ensure that victims are well supported by Housing Options and monitor and measure presentations and outcomes where Domestic Abuse is a factor in homelessness;
- Continue to work across the partnership to deliver Safe Accommodation provision in Blackpool that includes the Complex Needs Service;
- Utilise a range of suitable temporary accommodation options that meet the safe accommodation principles to provide an initial safe place. These include, Refuge, Council provision, and the wider supported housing provider network. In an emergency appropriate alternative temporary accommodation will be provided in line with the local authorities statutory housing duties. In all circumstances the wrap around support can be put in place immediately and move with the person;
- Help victims to move on to the most appropriate type of accommodation to meet the individuals or family's needs with an assured tenancy;
- Work with Changing Futures to ensure that the needs of women and men facing multiple disadvantage are recognised and met;
- Make sure that information about the support available and the pathways to access support are clear and accessible.

# Strong Foundations

## **Our last Domestic Abuse Strategy for the partnership was developed in 2016.**

In that strategy the partnership in Blackpool outlined the following ambitions. We have made progress in the life of the strategy on all of these ambitions, but there is still much work to do.

We said we would-

- *Take a strategic, system wide approach to commissioning*

Commissions and service designs across the local authority including public health, the clinical commissioning group and developing integrated care system and the police are now far more coordinated. In addition, there is work with neighbouring authorities and the Police and Crime Commissioner's office to ensure that we work together to ensure that the resources we have available to meet the needs of victims and address the behaviours of perpetrators effectively.

We have more work to do to ensure that as a partnership we have a full understanding of the services that are available, how they are meeting need and have a plan to address any identified gaps. This will be done as part of the comprehensive needs assessment and identified gaps and options for addressing these will be presented to the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board.

- *Develop local services that put the victim at the centre*

We have seen some valued services and interventions developed across Blackpool over the life of the strategy. Our third sector providers work across Blackpool with victims of Domestic Abuse providing support, advocacy and championing the voices of those with lived experiences in influencing the work of services. In Blackpool we have fostered

services that are able to support victims of all types of abuse and that work closely together, and with public services. There are specialist services for women, men and children available in Blackpool, examples of which can be found in the "places to find help" section of this document.

We have developed support and services for victims of abuse that are respectful of other complexities in their lives that sometimes exclude them from more traditional services and will see this continue in to the life of this strategy.

- • *Safeguard individuals throughout and improving health and wellbeing of families; and*
- • *Adopt a family focused approach*

We have some transformative services that work together to address the risk and impact of domestic abuse in families. Too many children are living in families where domestic abuse is part of their lives and we have much more to do to ensure families are able to live safely and without fear. Early Help and Social Care professionals have worked with Children and Families to coproduce the "Blackpool Families Rock" way of working which recognises and supports strengths and helps families to understand and reduce the risk of harm.

The Multi-Agency Risk Reduction Assessment and Co-ordination (MARRAC) is designed to support agencies working together effectively to support those victims at highest risk of harm. A review of the process has been ongoing since October 2018 and the new way of working developed as an outcome will be implemented in year one of the action plan.

MARRAC is described as:



*“A team of co-created and co-located safeguarding partners, with access to their agency’s electronic data, who use a whole family approach in order to assess risk in Domestic Abuse cases and co-ordinate action plans in order to reduce the risk of serious harm. The integrated team are responsible for determining which multi-agency pathways should be utilised in order to reduce risk and determine appropriate information sharing in relation to safeguarding children and young people and vulnerable adults”.*

The new MARRAC model aims to deliver timely, high quality decisions through the sharing of multi-agency information on a case-by-case basis, enabling the effective identification of needs, and direction to the right services for families.

- *Raise local awareness of the issues and involve, engage and empower communities to seek, design and deliver solutions*

Relationship and Sex Education is now a mandatory part of the school curriculum. We have worked together with schools to ensure a consistent evidence based approach to its implementation, ensuring key messages and learning are embedded throughout the school curriculum. This will be further developed through the implementation of Bystander Green Dot, a programme to go beyond merely raising awareness of a healthy relationship, to give the skills and tools necessary for young people to intervene safely when they see inappropriate behaviour in the their peers.

We have seen the impact of greater recognition of the impact of Domestic Abuse on the development of babies and children and BetterStart have been instrumental in supporting the development and delivery with the community of programmes to tackle behaviours and support parental change, with the Caring Dads programme and “for Baby’s Sake” as key examples.

We have a programme of trauma awareness in place across agencies, to assist frontline staff to recognise the impact of trauma on how people engage with services and interventions, to improve outcomes. Training in the recognition of and response to domestic abuse is in place across key services and will be reviewed in year one of the action plan to ensure that it reflects the law as it currently stands, and advocates the application of our strategic values.

- *All statutory and voluntary partners across Blackpool work in partnership to prevent and tackle domestic abuse and interpersonal violence*

We can see from the engagement with the partnership and the breadth of services and support offered by both public and third sector agencies across Blackpool that there is meaningful and impactful commitment to tackling abuse and reducing harm. The partnership board has a high level of commitment from all partner agencies.

Blackpool Council is proud to hold White Ribbon accreditation which demonstrates the commitment to embedding culture change, raising awareness of abuse, creating healthier workplaces and safer communities. We are working with partners to increase the organisations in Blackpool who have White Ribbon accreditation.

## Next steps

Details about how each of the priorities will be met in line with our values, along with the measures that will demonstrate achievement, can be found in the accompanying joint partnership action plan that is currently in development and will be available once this strategy is published in full. The action plan is a live document which is updated at least annually and regularly monitored by the partnership to ensure we continue to deliver against this strategy over the next four years. At the end of each year we will prepare a report to Government setting out how we have progressed and our key achievements in accordance with section 59 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

All members of the partnership are committed to working together to take forward this strategy and the deliver the actions required to meet our aims, in order to achieve a more positive future for all those effected by domestic abuse.

# Places to find help and support

**If you or someone else is in immediate danger, please ring 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: <https://policeconduct.gov.uk/news/national-campaign-raise-awareness-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)

**National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline:**  
0800 999 5428

**Men's Advice Line:** 0808 801 0327

**Respect helpline, for anyone worried about their own behaviour:** 0808 802 0321

**Paladin National Stalking Helpline**  
[www.stalkinghelpline.org](http://www.stalkinghelpline.org)  
Tel. 0808 802 0300

**Samaritans**  
whatever you're going through, call free any time, from any phone, on 116 123.  
Email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)  
Response time: 24 hours

**Women's Aid website provides information, victim support and a live chat facility**  
[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

## Local Support Services

### Connect with Respect

Hosted by Fylde Coast Womens Aid this project is funded by BBC Children in Need for children and young people aged 9-18 years across Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre. Connect with Respect promotes positive messages for healthy relationships. It aims to raise children and young people's expectations, so they can recognise harmful and risk taking behaviour and develop strategies for coping.

[Connect with Respect- Fylde Coast Women's Aid- FCWA](#)

### Independent Advocacy

The role of an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) is 'to address the safety of victims at high risk of harm from partners, ex-partners or other family members to secure their safety and the safety of their children'.

Services can provide advocacy in relation to reporting to police, participating in the family court, housing and health. Usually support is available face-to-face, over the telephone or email

There is provision for specialist support for:

- Older adults
- Women
- Men
- Children
- Sexual violence
- Stalking & harassment
- Immigration and cultural issues
- Honour-based violence
- Female genital mutilation

A range of providers offer independent advocacy, some of which will be on a referral basis from professionals who are working with Victims, with many also available directly for self-referrals.  
[IDVA \(Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor\)- Fylde Coast Women's Aid- FCWA](#)

### **The Den**

The Children's IDVA service offers specialist emotional and practical support to children and young people affected by domestic abuse. This can be through witnessing domestic abuse within the family or direct experience (young people in their own relationships).

At The DEN we believe that all children and young people should be given the best opportunity to thrive in life, regardless of their experiences.

<https://empowermentcharity.org.uk/the-den/>

### **Male IDVA**

Are you a man suffering from domestic abuse? Or do you know someone who is? A relative, friend or work colleague? FCWA male domestic violence advisor can offer support. Please call FCWA helpline on 01253 596699.

### **Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA)**

Blackpool Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, NHS- England North West and Lancashire Police Crime Commissioner have funded specialist support workers in hospitals to support victims of sexual violence and rape. Support is available for both staff and patients.

You can self-refer by contacting the Health Independent Sexual Violence Advisor directly  
Email: [bfwh.idva.isva@nhs.net](mailto:bfwh.idva.isva@nhs.net)  
Tel: 01253 955148

### **High Risk IDVA service**

Our Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) support those who have been assessed to be at high risk of harm. IDVA's have to complete an accredited training programme to give them the right skills to support you and any dependents to minimise risk and stay safe from further harm. They understand what it is like to be in an abusive relationship and will listen to you and believe you. They will help you to explore your options, and encourage you to make your own choices and decisions. They will support you with whatever decisions you make, ensuring your safety is paramount and take action to help you keep safe. This includes liaising with the police and other agencies on your behalf; access to housing, benefits, and debt advice; information on civil and legal remedies; support at court.

### **Lancashire Victim Support**

0300 323 0085

