Northumberland's

# Domestic Abuse Strategy

2024-2027



## **Contents**

- Foreword 3
- Introduction
- Context
- Northumberland Domestic 7 Abuse Strategy 2021-24 -Overview of Achievements
- Northumberland Domestic 9 Abuse Needs Assessment 2024
- Strategic Priorities 2024-27 10
- 12 Commissioning Domestic Abuse **Services 2024-27**
- Appendix 1: Duties on Local 14 **Authorities**
- Appendix 2: Glossary 16



### **Foreword**

Our vision outlines the commitment we have to having a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and sexual violence. And it is a privilege as Chair of the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board, to ensure we are doing all we can, together, as a Board to meet our vision.

This strategy brings together all the work we are doing, across Northumberland to respond effectively to domestic abuse, and I am thankful to all those on the Board and those across our partnerships who are working together to make this happen.



Chair Audrey Kingham

If we want to make change in Northumberland and end domestic abuse and sexual violence, we must not only lead the way, but we must also outline how our organisations and communities can play a vital role in helping us achieve our goals.

Ending domestic abuse and sexual violence is everyone's business. By working together with partners and those who live and work within Northumberland's communities we can make a difference.

We need people in our organisations and communities to stand behind us and call out abusive and sexist behaviour among friends, colleagues, and communities to promote a culture of equality and respect.

Our vision has focus and I believe by working together we can end domestic abuse and sexual violence in our county.



Lead Cllr Member Cllr Wendy Pattison

# Our vision is:

Northumberland is a county committed to having a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse and sexual violence.

- Everyone matters and for that reason our vision is to make it everyone's business to help prevent and put a stop to domestic abuse and sexual violence in the county.
- We will listen and learn from victims, survivors and their children.
- We will be proactive, provide support and raise awareness in our communities.
- We will seek to change culture.
- Our vision is a vision for all and by working together we can make a difference.

# Introduction

The Northumberland Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board has a duty to refresh its Domestic Abuse Strategy every three years, this refreshed strategy for 2024-2027 outlines the progress made during the last three years and how the Board will implement the recommendations of the refreshed Domestic Abuse needs assessment.

- The Strategy will be supported by an annual action plan with four key priorities:
  - 1. Prioritising prevention
  - 2. Supporting victims
  - 3. Pursing perpetrators
  - 4. A whole system
- → The Domestic Abuse Strategy has been developed by the Northumberland Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (DALPB, referred to as the Board).

### The membership of the Board is as follows:

- Northumberland County Council Executive Director of Children, Young People and Education (Chair)
- Northumberland County Council Public Health Team
- Northumberland County Council Children's Social Care
- Northumberland County Council Adult Social Care
- Northumberland County Council Housing
- Northumberland County Council Commissioning Team
- Northumberland County Council Education Service
- Northumbria Police
- National Probation Service
- Northumbria Healthcare Trust
- Harrogate 0-19 service
- Cumbria, Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust
- Northumberland Integrated Commissioning Board
- Harbour Domestic Abuse Support Service Northumberland (Provider and rep for adult survivors)
- Acorns (Provider and rep for children and young people)
- Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Lead
- The Office of the PCC is being represented on the Board by the Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit's Domestic Abuse Specialist

The Board is responsible for supporting Northumberland County Council in meeting its duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

- The Board will work together to support, advise, and work in partnership with Northumberland County Council:
  - to ensure victims of domestic abuse have access to adequate and appropriate support within safe accommodation services.
  - to improve outcomes for victims of domestic abuse, including their children, through a strategic approach to identifying and addressing gaps in support within safe accommodation services.
- The Board from April 2024 has:
  - Undertaken a refresh of the Northumberland Domestic Abuse needs assessment to inform this refreshed Domestic Abuse Strategy.
- The implementation of the Domestic Abuse Strategy will be led by the Board supported by the following sub-groups:
  - Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Providers group
     supported by service user forum sub-groups
  - Data performance and quality assurance group
  - Domestic Abuse Housing Sub-group
  - Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) steering group
  - Child to Parent Violence and Abuse (CPVA) steering group

The Board will oversee the development and delivery of an annual multi-agency action plan, agreeing key performance indicators to monitor impact.

The Board will receive quarterly performance data in the format of a multi-agency domestic abuse dashboard with a supporting analysis report to ensure it can monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Domestic Abuse Strategy.

The Domestic Abuse needs assessment will be refreshed on an annual basis.

### **Context**

### The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Domestic Abuse Act was passed into law in April 2021.

#### The Act aims to:

- "Raise awareness and understanding about the devastating impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families.
- Further improve the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice.
- Strengthen the support for victims of abuse by statutory agencies."

Domestic abuse is an abhorrent crime perpetrated on victims and their families by those who should love and care for them. This landmark Bill will help transform the response to domestic abuse, helping to prevent offending, protect victims and ensure they have the support they need."

Victoria Atkins MP, Minister for Safeguarding

### Additionally, the new legislation:

- Creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, coercive or controlling, and economic abuse.
- Establishes in law the office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner and sets out the Commissioner's functions and powers.
- Provides for a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order.
- Creates a statutory presumption that victims of domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal, civil and family courts.
- 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.
- Creates a new statutory guidance.
- Recognises children as victims in their own right.

# Statutory Definition of Domestic Abuse under Section 1 of Domestic Abuse Act 2021

- Behaviour of a person ("A") towards another person ("B") is "domestic abuse" if:
   (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
   (b) the behaviour is abusive.
- This includes physical, emotional, economic, sexual abuse and controlling and coercive behaviour.
- **'Personally connected'** means: intimate partners, ex-partners, family members or individuals who share parental responsibility for a child.



# Northumberland Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24 overview of achievements

The previous domestic abuse strategy was a partnership commitment to tackling domestic abuse across Northumberland. A detailed action plan has been in place with several subgroups in place over the 3-year period to deliver against the key priorities. Some notable achievements were:



### **Prevention**

- Northumberland County Council achieved White Ribbon status and has over 85 White Ribbon Ambassadors and Champions.
- A dedicated DA safeguarding practitioner within Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.
- Piloted 'Ask me' programme and learning embedded in further projects, including the Findaway service.
- Operation Encompass embedded in schools across Northumberland.
- Established a multi-agency training strategy to ensure the workforce is equipped to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and act accordingly.



### **Provision**

In April 2022 a new integrated domestic abuse support service was commissioned to provide support for victims, survivors, children and those causing risk and harm:

### Northumberland Integrated Domestic Abuse Support service

- Domestic Abuse Support Service Northumberland: to provide an assessment hub, refuge, dispersed properties, resettlement, IDVA, sanctuary scheme, outreach, assertive outreach, groupwork and facilitate a service user forum. For both male and female victims of domestic abuse over the age of 16.
- Children's Counselling and Therapeutic and Outreach Support to support children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse. The key elements of this provision are to provide an initial response, counselling and outreach support and facilitate a youth panel.
- Changing Behaviour Service to work with both males and females (aged 18 and over) and operate as a single point of entry for referrals and subsequent delivery for residents who agree to engage and take responsibility and wish to change their abusive behaviour. The service focuses on increasing the safety of partners, children and family members to reduce the incidents of domestic abuse within these relationships.
- Adult Counselling Service to work with both males and females (aged 18 and over) to support those who have experienced domestic abuse, to allow victims to explore how they feel and discuss experiences in a safe non-judgemental environment.

# Partnership Working

- Improved data collection, sharing and analysis across the partnership.
- The OPCC have utilised a range of funding streams (MoJ and Home Office) to help build capacity and address gaps in existing responses for adult victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence, sexual exploitation and stalking.
- Joint priorities with the Northumberland Children and Adults Safeguarding Partnership to improve responses to domestic abuse in older people and young people.
- The ongoing development of the service user forum and youth panel.
- Forums for local service providers to network and support working in partnership.

# Justice Outcomes and Risk Reduction

- Respect accredited changing behaviour service.
- Hampton Trust DARE training funded by the Violence Reduction Unit to deliver 13 courses for staff. Staff trained have increased skills and confidence to open up a conversation with someone they are concerned might be harming a partner/ex-partner.
- Domestic homicide reviews have informed learning locally.

The domestic abuse partnership has worked effectively to deliver the previous strategy and associated action plan. Many of the strategic actions are ongoing with partners committed to continuing to improve outcomes for all victims.



# **Northumberland Domestic Abuse**

## Needs Assessment 2024

During 2024 Northumberland County Council undertook a refresh of the Domestic Abuse needs assessment, the full document can be accessed via our webpage click here

The recommendations and actions that have informed this refresh of the Strategy are set out below:

#### Recommendations

- 1. Data and Reporting continue to improve the accuracy and consistency of domestic data
- 2. Align Northumberland's four priorities with the four national priorities:

Prioritising Prevention:

"reduce the amount of domestic abuse, domestic homicide, and suicides linked to domestic abuse, by stopping people from becoming perpetrators and victims to begin with."

#### **Supporting Victims:**

"help all victims and survivors who have escaped from domestic abuse feel that they can get back to life as normal, with support for their health, emotional, economic, and social needs."

### **Pursuing Perpetrators:**

"reduce the amount of people who are repeat offenders and make sure that those who commit this crime feel the full force of the law."

#### A Stronger System:

"improve the systems and processes that underpin the co-ordinated community response to domestic abuse across society

- 3. Rural continue to increase awareness and reporting
- 4. Changing Demographic understand the demographic challenges
- 5. Safe accommodation duty and the residents increase the availability of safe accommodation in Northumberland.

The annual multi-agency action plan will set out how the Board will deliver on its four key priorities and monitor progress on the five recommendations.

# **Strategic Priorities** 2024-2027

**1. Prioritising Prevention:** reduce the amount of domestic abuse, domestic homicide, and suicides linked to domestic abuse, by stopping people from becoming perpetrators and victims to begin with.



### **Key actions:**

- Research and promote quality assured resources for primary prevention with men and boys and to raise awareness of healthy and respectful relationships.
- Continue to develop and promote the Domestic Abuse marketing toolkit.
- Incorporate learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews into all actions to ensure learning is captured and used by all agencies to prevent domestic abuse and fatal domestic abuse.
- Continue to review and develop the Child to Parent Violence and Abuse (CPVA) model,
- Develop a response to teenage relationships that are harmful.
- **2. Supporting Victims:** help all adult and child victims and survivors who have escaped from domestic abuse feel that they can get back to life as normal, with support for their health, emotional, economic, and social needs.



### **Key actions:**

- Continue to utilise the safe accommodation section of the domestic abuse dashboard to review safe accommodation provision and demand and its accessibility at a local, regional and national level.
- Review the current provision of domestic abuse services for victims/survivors and their children and recommission services to ensure they meet the needs identified across the County, for those living in both the rural and urban areas.
- Continue to develop the DA dashboard to understand the demographic changes across the County to inform service provision.



**3. Pursuing Perpetrators:** reduce the amount of people who are repeat offenders, ensure that agencies work together to target, disrupt and engage those causing risk and harm, and provide support to those who want to change their behaviour.

# → Key actions:

- Continue to raise awareness of the local offer and referral pathways, utilising the DA&SV Champions network, multi-agency partnerships, campaigns and training.
- Support staff to have the confidence to engage with those individuals causing risk and harm and support engagement with specialist services.
- Prioritise prevention including a focus on repeat offenders through behaviour change programmes.
- Review commissioning and provision of domestic abuse services for those causing risk and harm.
- **4. A Stronger System:** improve the systems and processes that underpin the co-ordinated community response to domestic abuse across society

# → Key actions:

- Continue to develop the DA dashboard and analysis to inform strategic priorities and service provision.
- Continue to develop and improve consultation mechanisms ensuring the adult and child victim/survivor voice is heard.
- Continue to prioritise a multi-agency partnership response to domestic abuse.
- Incorporate the learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews into all actions to ensure learning is captured and used by all agencies to prevent domestic abuse and fatal domestic abuse.
- Continue to develop the domestic abuse training offer to ensure multi agency staff have the skills and knowledge to respond to victims, children and those causing risk and harm.
- Prepare for the duty to co-operate under the Victim and Prisoners Act 2024 by bringing together strategic VAWG commissioning leads and DA/SV leads from across Northumbria to help improve effective co-ordination, collaboration, and joint commissioning between local authority, OPCC and ICB/health partners.

# **Next Steps:** Commissioning Domestic Abuse Services 2024-27

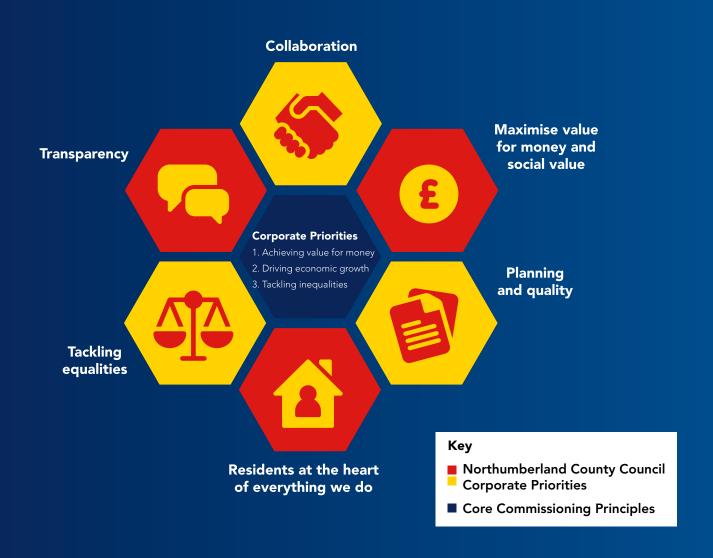
### What is Commissioning?

Commissioning is the process of identifying the needs of the organisation and local community and using the available resources to design and deliver services to meet those needs. It is a strategic process that involves setting priorities, defining outcomes, allocating resources and can include procuring services or goods, to achieve those outcomes.

This applies to all services, whether they are provided by the local department or by the Local Authority, other public agencies or by the private or voluntary sectors.

The Council have introduced 'commissioning principles' which are a set of guiding values or practices that are used to inform the commissioning process. They set out, at a high level, the approach to commissioning across all levels of the Council and they provide a golden thread that ensures our approach and any initiatives developed at the Council contribute to delivering high-quality outcomes, value for money and improved efficiency.

The Council's six core commissioning principles are outlined below, which flow down from the three priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan.



By having the set of core commissioning principles, enables the Council to take a consistent approach to commissioning across all service areas, facilitating improved collaboration and sharing of knowledge and expertise, as well as greater consistency. The Council also uses the Commissioning Cycle (below), using these two approaches will support and inform decision making, giving the Council the confidence that they are operating in ways that achieve the best outcomes for its resident



### **Domestic Abuse Services**

In financial year 2025/26, the five commissioned services will enter their current final year of their existing contracts.

The Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner also provides additional funding to the services commissioned by the Authority. Provision is constantly reviewed to ensure it addresses local need and fulfils the statutory requirements of the Act.

During 2025, Northumberland County Council will commence the commissioning cycle and will analyse need, to support decision making on what is required both now and in the future for domestic abuse services. The first phase is 'Plan', which is agreeing priorities and planning the execution of the commissioning activity including, what resource is required to meet the needs identified through the 'Analyse' phase in an efficient, effective and sustainable way that delivers value for money.

This will be followed by 'Securing Services' to deliver the identified priorities and outcomes in readiness for 1 April 2026.

During the life of the contract, the final phase of the commissioning cycle 'Review' is commenced. This will look at the performance and impact of the services secured to ensure they are delivering contractual and legal obligations, as well as assessing their effectiveness to deliver the original objectives and how well they are meeting needs to inform future planning.

# **Appendix 1:**

# **Duties on Local Authorities**

Under this new legislation there are new statutory duties placed on Local Authorities. These are:

- Creation of a new Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board which must contain representation of the following as a minimum:
  - A representative of the relevant Local Authority.
  - At least one person appearing to the authority to represent the interests of Local Authorities for areas within its area.
  - At least one person appearing to the authority to represent the interests of victims of domestic abuse.
  - At least one person appearing to the authority to represent the interests of children of domestic abuse victims.
  - At least one person appearing to the authority to represent the interests of charities and other voluntary organisations that work with victims of domestic abuse in its area.
  - At least one person appearing to the authority to represent the interests of persons who provide, or have functions relating to, health care services in its area.
  - At least one person appearing to the authority to represent the interests of persons with functions relating to policing or criminal justice in its area.
- To provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation. The new duty covers the following kinds of safe accommodation:
  - Refuge accommodation.
  - Specialist safe accommodation.
  - Dispersed accommodation.
  - Sanctuary schemes.
  - Move on or second stage accommodation.

- To assess the need for domestic abuse support in the area, this includes:
  - Advocacy support- development of personal safety plans, liaison with other services (for example, GPs and social workers, welfare benefit providers).
  - Domestic abuse-prevention advice- support to assist victims to recognise the signs of abusive relationships, to help them remain safe (including online) and to prevent re-victimisation.
  - Specialist support for victims with protected characteristics and/or complex needs for example interpreters, faith services, mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support, and immigration advice.
  - ► Children's support including play therapy and child advocacy.
  - Housing-related support as discussed above.
  - Counselling and therapy for both adults and children.
- To work to ensure that all existing policies and new policies are written and carried in such a way as to be inclusive of the new statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, coercive or controlling and economic abuse.

# **Appendix 2:**

# Glossary

	d	۶	۹	١
1	ı			
	ı	ı	-	

Child to Parent Violence and Abuse - CPVA

#### D

Domestic Abuse - DA

Domestic Abuse Support Service Northumberland – DASSN

Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board – DALPB

Domestic Abuse Related Deaths - DARDs

Domestic Homeside Reviews - DHR's

#### I

Independent Domestic Violence Advisor – IDVA

#### M

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference - MARAC

#### Ν

Northumberland Children's & Adults Safeguarding Board - NCASP

Northumberland Domestic Abuse Service - NDAS

Northumbria Police Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit – NP VRU

#### 0

Office of the Police Crime Commissioner - OPCC

#### R

Registered Social Landlords – RSLs

#### S

Safeguarding Adults Board – SAB

Sexual Violence - SV















