



No **Race**



No **Gender**

No **Sexuality**



No **Excuse**

**There's no  
excuse for  
Domestic  
Abuse**



Physical, sexual or psychological abuse is never OK and never the victim's fault. There is help available.

**Buckinghamshire Domestic Violence  
and Abuse Strategy 2015-2018**

## **DVA Strategy 2015-2018**

### **What is Domestic Violence and Abuse?**

The cross-government definition of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) is:

any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

Home Office, March 2013

*(For this definition, family members are mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter and grandparents, whether directly related, step-family or in-laws.)*

### **Foreword –**

Martin Philips –Cabinet Member for Community Engagement

Domestic Violence and Abuse affects all sorts of people irrelevant of age, gender, sexuality, class or background. It is important that all agencies collaborate, communicate and deliver as part of a joined up, multi-agency approach to tackle this problem. There truly is no excuse for domestic abuse and communication and early intervention towards the older and younger generations is key to limiting the severity of these cases. This strategy is a multi-agency partnership document and has involved consultation with service users and partners to ensure we have a maximised co-ordinated approach. The aim of the strategy is to encompass areas of focus in one document so they are actioned and targets achieved to benefit victims and assist with reforming perpetrators. We all have a duty of care to the residents of Buckinghamshire and we continue to take seriously our duty.

Phil Dart – Service Director, Communities

Physical, sexual or psychological abuse is never ok and never the victim's fault. Ourselves and partners are committed to achieving the best results in order to safeguard, support and empower those who are victims of Domestic Abuse in Buckinghamshire as well as support perpetrators to make positive changes to their behaviour. The limitations in funding mean that resources are stretched. However our priority remains with Domestic Abuse and that services and support is on offer for our residents, we are able to build on the successes derived from the last strategy and

further develop our models of approach for the foreseeable future.

## **Buckinghamshire Vision**

Within Buckinghamshire we want a **zero tolerance approach** towards Domestic Violence and Abuse and **coordinated** response to people at **risk** of it within Buckinghamshire, ensuring that those who are affected are **identified, supported, protected** and **empowered**.

## **Underlying Principles**

- Domestic Violence and Abuse cannot be tackled in isolation and a coordinated partnership approach is essential. It is imperative that Domestic Violence and Abuse is recognised as a strategic priority within all individual agencies and resourced appropriately; both maintaining and developing the current level of provision.
- Working together to prevent, intervene and reduce the impact of Domestic Violence and Abuse, increasing the safety and reducing the risk posed to those who experience it within Buckinghamshire.
- To provide support to women and men in Buckinghamshire through a county wide IDVA service.
- To ensure that victims are identified by services/ agencies and are supported through their journey to ensure that they are empowered to make their own decisions.
- As individuals and agencies we give a clear message that Domestic Violence and Abuse will not be tolerated and that perpetrators will be held to account for their behaviour.
- As agencies, we think long term and ensure putting in place provision so that we are creating, supporting and encouraging healthy relationships.

## **Key National Statistics**

- 1:4 women are affected by an abusive relationship at some time in their lives after the age of 16<sup>1</sup>.
- Domestic homicides account for approximately one third of all homicides in England and Wales with an average of 2 women killed every week by a current or former partner<sup>2</sup>.
- DVA accounts for the highest number of repeat victims of all violent crime<sup>3</sup>
- DVA often starts or intensifies during pregnancy<sup>4</sup>.
- 750,000 children a year witness DVA<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Numerous research, including Council of Europe 2002

<sup>2</sup> Povey, 2005, 2005; Home Office, 1999; Department of Health, 2005

<sup>3</sup> British Crime Survey Self-Completion Module 2010/2011

<sup>4</sup> Bewley et al in Violence Against Women (1997)

<sup>5</sup> Department of Health, 2002

<sup>6</sup> Department of Health, 2002, Farmer and Owen, 1995

- 75% of children on local ‘at risk’ registers live in households where DVA occurs<sup>6</sup>.

### How much Domestic Violence and Abuse is there in Buckinghamshire?

- **7,357** incidents reported to the police in 2013/14.<sup>7</sup>
- **3,153** repeat incidents reported to the police in 2013/14.<sup>8</sup>
- **16,738** women and girls have been victims of Domestic Violence and Abuse in 2013 (more than 2 times police reports)<sup>9</sup>.
- **0** domestic homicides in Buckinghamshire between April 2013 and March 2014.
- **1,041** victims supported in 2012/13<sup>10</sup>.
- **1,500** children supported through Women’s Aid in 2012/13<sup>11</sup>.
- Children involved/in the house in **3,461** of the incidents to which police were called in 2013/14 <sup>12</sup>.

### Buckinghamshire Broad Strategic Aims

In February 2015, partnership representatives gathered to conclude the 2012-2015 DVA Strategy and also collectively discussed and compiled the strategic aims and priorities for the 2015-2018 strategy. There was an opportunity for agencies that were unable to attend the workshop to feed in to the draft strategy and put forward suggestions and amendments. Focus groups were also held in the autumn of 2014 to enable service users to make suggestions.

The Buckinghamshire Domestic Violence and Abuse strategy will be delivered through an implementation plan that will be based on 4 strategic priorities.

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| <b>Coordinated Community Response</b>     | To continue to support, develop and implement the Coordinated Community Response   |
| <b>Safety, Support and Harm Reduction</b> | To improve the victim journey by identifying gaps, areas of good practice and improve the victim experience with our partnership services  |
| <b>Prevention and Early Intervention</b>  | To support the safeguarding agenda and continue to enhance the current training and awareness raising to ensure that professionals and the public are well informed.<br><br>To support, encourage and provide information to children, young people and families around healthy relationships and to provide services to those who |

<sup>7</sup> Strategic Assessment – TVP data

<sup>8</sup> Strategic Assessment – TVP data

<sup>9</sup> Home Office VAWG Ready Reckoner tool – based on 2013 population of approximately 515,000

<sup>10</sup> Women’s Aid Annual Statistics

<sup>11</sup> Women’s Aid Annual Statistics

<sup>12</sup> TVP data

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|                          | <p>have experienced Domestic Violence and Abuse. To ensure that those who are vulnerable are supported appropriately.</p> <p><b>This priority has three sections:</b></p> <p><b>A) Training of Professionals</b><br/> <b>B) Children and Young adults</b><br/> <b>C) Adults</b></p> |
| <b>Local Communities</b> | <p>To engage with communities at a local level, including those who are harder to reach to ensure they are getting the services they need and that communities are equipped to help</p>   |

## Expectations

### Every adult survivor/victim, women or men, can expect:

- To have their dignity upheld by local statutory and voluntary agencies
- To be believed (unless evidence shows otherwise) when they seek help against violence and abuse.
- That their life choices be respected and supported provided they cause no harm to others.
- Not to be exploited or abused due to their identity or circumstances, including gender, age, disability, vulnerability, immigration status, imposition of concepts of community or family honour, sexual orientation, substance misuse or being sexually exploited.
- To have their needs and risk of violence assessed effectively and be offered support or be sign-posted to appropriate and welcoming sources of support and protection.
- That they and their families, friends, neighbourhoods, work colleagues and statutory and voluntary service providers be given consistent, clear and repeated messages that violence and abuse against women, girls and male victims is unacceptable, regardless of their personal circumstances or life choices.

### Every child and young person can expect:

- To receive culturally sensitive and educational information/messages that violence and abuse against women, girls, men and boys is unacceptable, in language which is appropriate and clear for children and young people.
- To be supported and protected, whether as children and young people affected by violence against their parents or carers, or as young people abused by partners, friends, or acquaintances.
- Not to be exploited or abused due to their age, vulnerability or gender.

**Every perpetrator of violence against women, girls, men and boys can expect:**

- To be held accountable through the criminal justice system for crimes of violence and abuse, including threats, psychological violence, or control of the victim through threats and/or violence against friends and/or family, pets, criminal damage, stalking or harassment.
- To have access to the voluntary perpetrator programme and receive support and help to change their behaviour if they seek to engage.

**Communities and residents can expect:**

- To live free from the impact on communities of violence, abuse and sexual violence against women, girls, boys and men.

**Priority 1**

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| <b>Coordinated Response</b> | <b>Community</b> | To continue to support, develop and implement the Coordinated Community Response Model |
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- Link in with partners to ensure effective processes and policies are in place to effectively respond to DVA locally.
- To monitor/scope demand for DVA services, identify funding streams and ensure subsequent effectiveness of delivery.
- To continue to maintain the existing MARAC and seek to ensure that it is working to good practice levels with a focus on increasing referrals and incorporating referrals from all sections of the community.
- To scope a localised mini MARAC for standard and medium risk victims
- To work towards an integrated commissioning strategy for DVA services to ensure a holistic approach is taken that considers the impact of decisions on different groups.
- To formulate a co-ordinated response plan to substance misuse, mental health and DVA across services including strengthening links across the Thames Valley region.
- To respond effectively to DVA priorities using demand management, analysis processes and apportioning resources efficiently.
- To continue to analyse existing programmes which operate in Buckinghamshire to enable an evidence led approach and effective use of resources.

## Priority 2

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| <b>Safety, Support and Harm Reduction</b> | To improve the victim journey by identifying gaps, areas of good practice and improve the victim experience with our partnership services. |
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- To maintain IDVA provision across the county.
- To encourage our multi agency partnership to support and actively promote schemes and legislation that is available to protect current and future victims of abuse.
- To periodically organise victim focus groups, so as to get the views of victims and their children to help with the development of services and campaign work.
- To continue with the Sanctuary Scheme, across all tenures of housing so survivors can continue their lives in their existing/new homes.
- Explore the support needed for victims of all ages who may be experiencing extended abuse via new technologies and how the effects can be reduced.
- To engage with Registered Providers (Housing Associations) to ensure their DVA policies are fit for purpose.
- To continue to raise awareness to victims of DVA and local support available, seeking to ensure this is replicated across all areas of the county.
- To identify those perpetrators who move from one victim to another and to encourage perpetrators in accessing information and support in relation to their abusive behaviour. For agencies to ensure that they are including perpetrators in assessments in relation to the victim and their children.

## Priority 3

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| <b>Prevention and Early Intervention:</b><br>a) Training of Professionals<br>b) Children & Young People<br>b) Adults | Support the safeguarding agenda and continue and enhance the current training and awareness raising to ensure that professionals and the public are well informed |
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### **A) Training of professionals & increased partnership working:**

- To train, develop and sustain a competent DVA Champion's network across a multiplicity of agencies in Buckinghamshire who can help with early intervention of victims, faster identification of perpetrators and professional guidance of colleagues.
- To develop a DVA training strategy that would align professional competency levels to completed training.
- To engage with professionals who due to the composition of their work may be harder to reach (such as GPs, Paramedics etc) and are vital in terms of partnership working, early intervention and referral into services and MARAC.

- To train professionals from a range of agencies to positively identify and signpost victims of abuse. If confidence in departments/agencies is low in respect to DVA to tackle this appropriately with training.

**B) Children and young people:**

- To continue to develop services for children and young people who experience DVA, including those who are still living in a violent home.
- To scope the need for interventions for perpetrators who are below 18 years of age. To encourage and provide provision to support them to change their behaviour.
- To increase awareness among children, young people and professionals working within universal educative settings of healthy relationships and the support available. This also includes accessing other settings young people use to inform them of what healthy relationships are e.g.-youth clubs.
- To analyse and review the pilot DVA Youth Worker role in Wycombe, Chiltern and South Bucks and seek to extend the DVA Youth Worker role to Aylesbury Vale as appropriate.

**C) Adults**

- To provide support and raise awareness for adults who are vulnerable, experiencing DVA and are harder to reach.
- To review options of support for adults that experience adolescent to parent abuse.
- To research and scope funding, partnership options and viability of refuge/support of adult victims with complex needs.
- To seek to expand existing services to other localities in Buckinghamshire so there is increased consistency in the services offered to victims across the county.

**Priority 4**

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| <b>Local Communities</b> | To engage with communities at a local level, including those who are harder to reach to ensure they are getting the services they need and communities are equipped to help |
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- To equip community leaders, including Members, with information such as legislation change and for them to lead on the message of a zero tolerance approach of DVA within their communities.
- To identify groups where there are emerging issues and to put in place appropriate support.
- To scope and implement support for those in the Lesbian Gay Bi-sexual Transgendered communities, those with disabilities, BME, male, elderly etc.
- To target awareness of DVA in rural communities and scope funding for rural engagement of support services.

## **Implementation and Delivery**

This Strategy is the overarching document which sets out a common understanding and commitment from all partners to tackle DVA in Buckinghamshire. It will promote working together in a planned way that will drive positive outcomes for local people.

To accompany the DVA Strategy there will be a DVA Action Plan compiled each year for the duration of the 3 year strategy. Each annual action plan will detail how each of the strategic priorities will be achieved and apportions the agencies and individuals who will be leading on the actions required. The strategy has been developed taking into account existing resources and funding. If either the resource or funding changes there may be an impact on the ability to deliver the subsequent action plans.

The Safer Communities Team at Buckinghamshire County Council will have the responsibility for the coordination of the delivery of the Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy and Action Plan.

### **Who will oversee the Strategy?**

The DVA Strategy will be led by the Domestic and Community Violence Strategy Group, with overall governance coming from the Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board (SSBPB). The SSBPB brings together the Community Safety Partnership Chairs and the representatives from the responsible authorities in Buckinghamshire. Implementation and delivery of the strategy will be the responsibility of individual agencies through a joined-up approach.

DVA is a priority of the Partnership Board. The Partnership Board will be responsible for monitoring the performance and delivery of the desired outcomes.

### **How will we know we have made a difference?**

These will be monitored through the Domestic and Community Violence Strategy Group and will be reported on a quarterly basis:

- Increasing the numbers of victims that are seen by the MARAC.
- Evidenced reduction in risk of victims who engage with the IDVA.
- A reduction in the number of repeat victims of DVA.
- Increased first time reporting of DVA to the police.
- Maintain admissions to support programmes delivered by our commissioned services.
- Training to be delivered to more professionals so they have a better understanding of DVA.
- Increased membership to the DVA Champions Network in Bucks.
- Decrease in number of children subject to repeat referrals to CSC for DVA related issues
- That those children and young people that enter the refuge are allocated a school place within 15 days.

## **Diversity**

Whether or not a person is a victim or perpetrator of DVA does not depend on their age, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or social economic background, whether or not they are disabled or have undergone gender reassignment, or whether they live a travelling life. However, we recognise that, for some people, one or more of these aspects of their identity can make it more difficult for them to seek help. We also recognise that the vast majority of people who experience DVA are female and that the vast majority of perpetrators are male. If our services are to be effective, therefore, they need to take account of the diversity within our communities and flex to work with people's different experiences, values, attitudes, understanding, behaviour, ability to communicate and to change. We will work with our stakeholders to encourage them to also be committed to this approach so that all service users can expect to be treated fairly, with dignity and with respect.

## Glossary

**BME-** Black & Minority Ethnic

**DVA-**Domestic Violence and Abuse

**IDVA-** Independent Domestic Violence Advisor

**LGBT-**Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender

**MARAC-**Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference

**Sanctuary Scheme-** Offers extra security measures within properties

**Child Protection Plan-**A child protection plan is a plan drawn up by the local authority. It sets out how the child can be kept safe, how things can be made better for the family and what support they will need.

**DVA Champions Network-**Through the Champion's Network, we can develop valuable DVA knowledge amongst professionals in all agencies in a way that ensures that the information they possess is of quality, up to date and consistent across all members. The Champion is seen as the lead for domestic abuse issues within their agency or unit and acts as the contact in and out of that unit/agency