

Stoke-on-Trent Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025–2030

Executive Summary

Stoke-on-Trent City is committed to creating a safer, stronger City where all residents can live free from domestic abuse. This strategy outlines our approach to preventing and responding to domestic abuse, ensuring that survivors receive the support they need where perpetrators are held accountable and supported to change their abusive behaviour. It aligns with our broader City Missions, focusing on wellbeing, safety, and community resilience. This strategy has been informed by the Stoke-on-Trent Strategic Assessment and pan Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment with input from our partnership.

Foreword

As Chair, on behalf of the Domestic Abuse Partnership and those affected by domestic abuse across Stoke-on-Trent, it is my pleasure to introduce the 2025-30 Stoke-on-Trent Domestic Abuse Strategy.

Domestic abuse affects individuals, families, and communities across all backgrounds. It is a pervasive issue that not only causes immense harm to survivors but undermines the fabric of society. Domestic abuse has a huge impact on the economy, health services and the criminal/ civil justice system. The scale of the challenge is recognised at the highest level and the Government is seeking to provide better protection to survivors and bring more perpetrators of these crimes to justice. This strategy sets out our approach to preventing domestic abuse, supporting survivors, and holding perpetrators to account in Stoke-on-Trent.

We are committed eradicating domestic abuse in our City by fostering a community where everyone can live safely and with dignity, free from the threat of abuse. Successful delivery of this strategy requires strong leadership, commitment, and engagement from all partners by working together focusing on challenging societal norms, and those most at risk we can create lasting change that will make our communities safer places to live.

Cllr Lynn Watkins – Chair of the Stoke on Trent Domestic Abuse Partnership [[DN: as a video introduction](#)] - See Barnsley - [Domestic Abuse Strategy](#)

What is Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 statutory definition of domestic abuse is:

“Any single incident or a course of conduct of physical or sexual abuse, violence or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological, emotional or other abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been personally connected to each other”.

The definition of domestic abuse within the Domestic Abuse Act states that the person carrying out the abusive behaviour and the person directly receiving the abusive behaviour must be over 16. It defines children who see, hear or otherwise experience the abuse as survivors of the abuse.

National and local Context

[\(info graphic as a video\)](#) – needs assessment and voice feedback and inform from national (DANA and HL assessment to inform this section).

To include - data inc. comparison with national average/stat neighbours to clearly set out what the problem is we are trying to solve/reduce/prevent. -insights and voices. [DN: video] – *include disproportionate impact on women and girls.*

Our Expectation

That all people who live, work and study in Stoke-on-Trent can live safely and experience healthy relationships without the threat of domestic abuse or sexual violence.

To eradicate domestic abuse in Stoke-on-Trent by fostering a community where:

- Communities and professionals are informed, engaged, and proactive in preventing abuse
- Survivors are believed, supported, and empowered to recover with their voices being heard
- Children are recognised as survivors in their own right, their voice is heard, and their needs are supported
- Perpetrators are held accountable and offered opportunities for behaviour change.

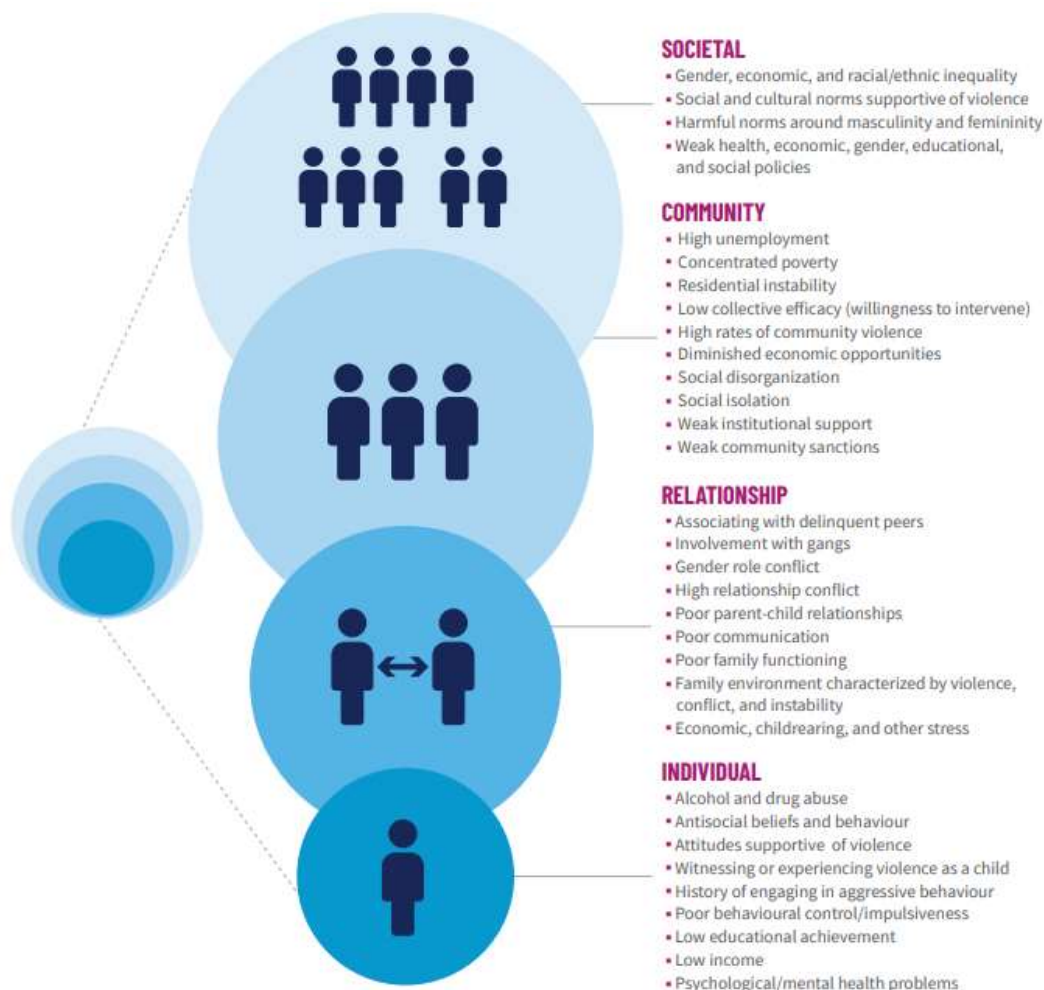
Our approach to domestic abuse

We will take a public health approach to domestic abuse focusing on prevention, early intervention, and recovery. This requires us to understand the root causes and risk factors of abuse, such as poverty, trauma, equality and inequality and implement evidence-based action to reduce these risks across the City. We will work in collaboration, ensuring that communities, healthcare, education, housing, social care and employers work together to support both survivors and those who cause harm. By shifting the focus from crisis response to prevention and systemic change, this approach aims to break the cycle of abuse and improve outcomes for entire families across our City.

Preventing domestic abuse requires a whole City approach which looks at the needs and assets of the entire population. The socio-ecological model enables us to act at several levels and considers the risk factors at each level (Figure 1). Our approach will take city-wide, community based and service-based interventions to prevent domestic abuse.

Early year's intervention is critical, ensuring that pregnancy, childhood and adolescents have stable and nurturing beginning that lasts into adulthood, where intergenerational cycles of domestic abuse can be broken. Children are also survivors in their own right and their needs recognised and supported. Therefore, the partnership will advocate for societal, and community change as well as oversight for specialist services to support survivors of domestic abuse and recognise the contributions that other programmes ie Family Matters and community wealth building contributes to domestic abuse reduction.

Figure 1: Social ecological model to understand and prevent domestic abuse and wider violence



Our Priorities

We will focus our work to eradicate domestic abuse in five main areas.

1. Preventing Domestic Abuse

- **Raising Awareness:** We will deliver awareness campaigns through a range of channels linked to our community capacity building programmes to challenge societal norms, inform residents and businesses about healthy relationships, the signs of domestic abuse, available support services, and how to report abuse.
- **Education for young people:** We will introduce educational initiatives to help young people understand what constitutes healthy relationships and how to seek help if they are experiencing abuse.
- **Training for Professionals:** We will train frontline professionals taking a trauma informed and adverse childhood experience approach, including healthcare workers, social services, education settings, community leaders, businesses and police officers, developing curiosity to better identify and respond to domestic abuse at the earliest possible stage, recognising children as survivors and create safe spaces.

2. Support for Survivors

- **Early Help:** We will provide flexible and accessible early help services, providing preventative support to individuals and families experiencing or at risk of domestic abuse, aiming to intervene before issues escalate.
- **Specialist Support:** We will provide access to legal, psychological, and social support for survivors including safe accommodation and/or sanctuary schemes for effective recovery. This includes advocating for housing options that are safe and supportive, along with access to services to support and recover including counselling and financial advice with tailored support for diverse groups, including families, children, men, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- **Children and Families:** We will ensure that children and young people who experience or witness domestic abuse are provided with the appropriate support services, including safe accommodation that allows them to heal and thrive.
- **Safe Accommodation:** We will ensure that survivors of domestic abuse can access safe, secure accommodation as soon as they need it. This includes:
 - **Housing Security:** Ensuring that survivors of domestic abuse are not evicted from their homes and can remain in their accommodation if they wish to do so through sanctuary schemes.
 - **Emergency Accommodation:** A network of refuges and temporary housing that provides immediate shelter to survivors and their children.
 - **Move-on Housing:** Support for survivors who are ready to move out of emergency accommodation and into longer-term, suitable independent housing.
 - **Supportive Housing Options:** Bespoke housing solutions that cater to the individual needs of survivors, including those with complex needs such as mental health support, substance misuse services, and those with disabilities.

3. Accountability and, behaviour change

- **Legal Consequences:** We will work collaboratively with local law enforcement and the Criminal Justice System to ensure that perpetrators face appropriate legal consequences for their actions, including arrests, court orders, and convictions.
- **Perpetrator Programmes:** We will offer perpetrators of domestic abuse access to behavioural change programmes that address the root causes of their abusive behaviour and work to prevent future harm.
- **Integrated Tasking and Coordination:** We will work towards developing a dedicated approach to perpetrators to ensure monitoring and support through multi-agency collaboration to reduce the risk of reoffending.

4. Collaboration and Community participation

- **Collaboration Across Agencies:** We will strengthen our partnerships with housing providers, the police/criminal justice system, health services including mental health, alcohol and drug services, community voluntary and social enterprise sector and local communities to deliver a coordinated understanding and response to domestic abuse promoting learning, innovation, transformation and best practice across the City and Pan Staffordshire.
- **Community participation:** We will actively work with our local community to provide a strong voice of both children and adults to develop local solutions to foster a culture of zero tolerance towards domestic abuse, raise awareness, reduce stigma, change attitudes and encourage reporting of domestic abuse and ensuring the voice of children and adult survivors are amplified and heard.

5. Ensuring a positive impact

- **Intelligence development and Analysis:** We will collect and analyse data to better understand the scope and scale of domestic abuse in Stoke-on-Trent, ensuring our approach is tailored to the diverse needs of the community.
- **Impact Evaluation:** We will continually evaluate the effectiveness of our domestic abuse approach to ensure it meets the evolving needs of survivors and their families, as well as perpetrators through our outcome's framework covering, listening to survivor voices and assessment of the full causal pathway of domestic abuse and learning from best practice and domestic abuse death reviews.

Legislative Framework and national policy

The strategy is underpinned by the following key legislation:

Victims and Prisoners Act 2024: Establishes the duty to collaborate requiring local policing bodies, local authorities and ICB's to collaborate in the commissioning of community support services in England for victims of domestic abuse, sexual abuse and serious violence.

Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023: Affects provision of safe accommodation as it allows the government to create National Supported Housing Standards, which will set out minimum standards for supported exempt accommodation.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021: Establishes a legal definition of domestic abuse, including emotional, coercive, and economic abuse. Creates a duty for local authorities to provide support in safe accommodation. Introduces the role of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner to monitor and improve responses.

Children Act 1989 and 2004: Recognises children as victims if they witness domestic abuse. Places a duty on services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Housing Act 1996 (as amended): Places a duty on local authorities to assist those made homeless or at risk due to domestic abuse. Grants priority need status to victims of domestic abuse.

Crime and Security Act 2010: Introduces Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Orders (DVPOs) for immediate safety measures.

Serious Crime Act 2015: Creates the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or family relationships.

Human Rights Act 1998: Ensures victims' rights to life, liberty, and protection from degrading treatment are respected and upheld.

Other Relevant Legislation and Guidance

There is a range of other existing legislation concerning domestic abuse, including (but not limited to):

- Stalking Prevention Act (2019)
- Care Act (2014)
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004)
- Police Reform Act (2002)

- Crime and Disorder Act (1998).

The Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Strategy (2021) which sets out a number of key objectives for the government, primarily to increase support for victims and survivors, increase in reporting to the Police, increasing victim engagement to increase the number of perpetrators brought to justice and reduce the prevalence of violence against women and girls overall.

The government published its **Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan (2022)**, is made up of four pillars of prioritising prevention to reduce the amount of domestic abuse, domestic homicides and suicides linked to domestic abuse, by stopping people from becoming perpetrators and victims, supporting survivors feel that they can get back to life as normal, with support for their health, emotional, economic, and social needs, pursuing perpetrators to 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 and a stronger system to improve the systems and processes that underpin the response to domestic abuse across society.

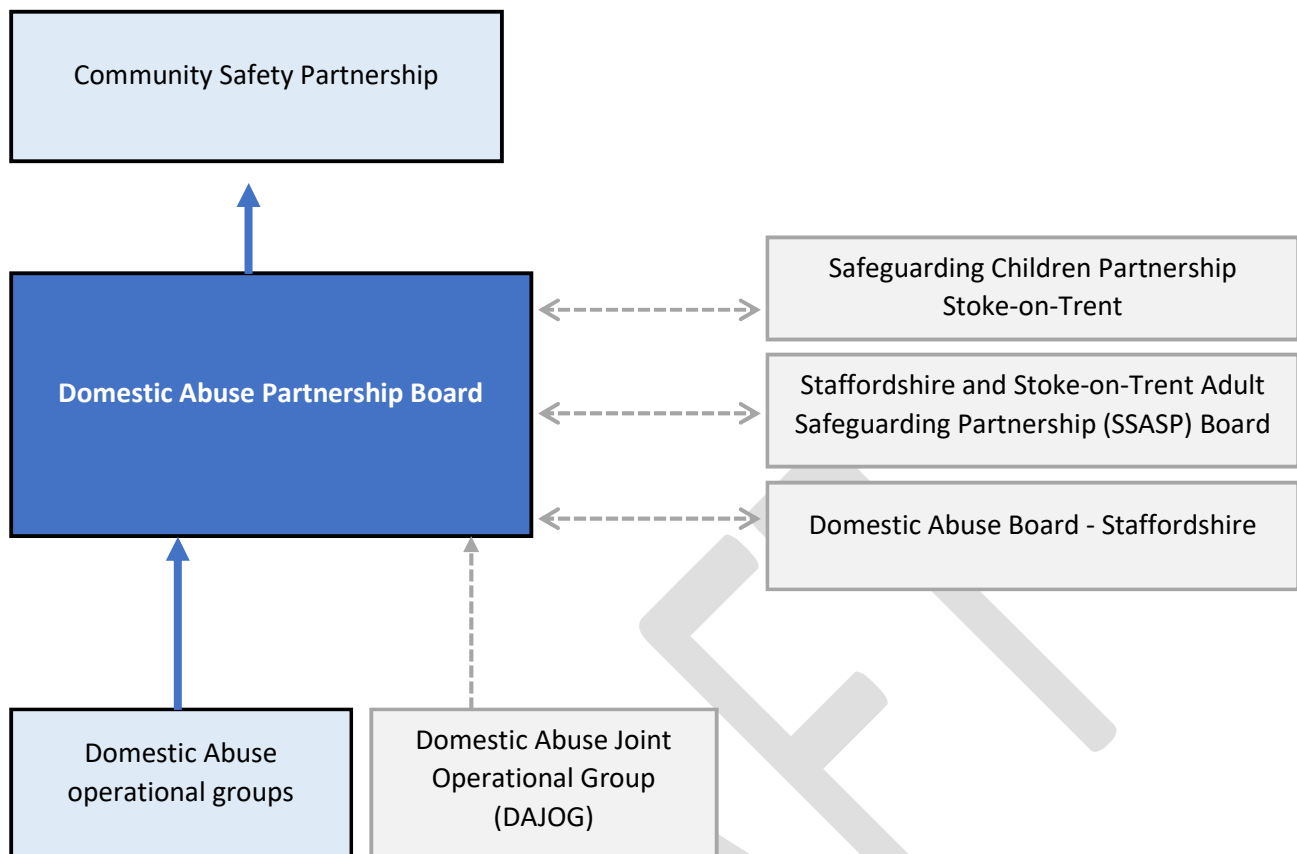
Delivery and Governance

The strategy will be delivered through the Stoke-on-Trent Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, which includes representatives from:

- Survivors of domestic abuse
- Voluntary and community organisations
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council
- Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
- Probation services
- HM Courts and Crown Prosecution Service
- Staffordshire Police
- Health services
- Domestic Abuse Services
- Housing providers including safe accommodation.

The Stoke-on-Trent Domestic Abuse Partnership Board is accountable to the City's Community Safety Partnership Board. The Partnership Board has relationships with the Children's Safeguarding Board, the Adult Safeguarding Board, the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Family Matters Partnership Board and Staffordshire's domestic abuse board. Through these relationships, assurance and accountability will be maintained, as well as coordination of action between partners within and out of the City. A domestic abuse implementation/operational group and a Trust Group will be established, and both will report into the Board building on the established Voice Group. Task and Finish Groups may be convened to progress elements of the strategy.

Progress will be monitored through an outcome's framework, and the strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains responsive to emerging needs.



This Domestic Abuse Strategy reflects our commitment to creating a city where domestic abuse is not tolerated, and all residents are safe and supported. By working together, we can make Stoke-on-Trent a place where everyone can live free from fear and harm.

Support organisations

The police

Call the UK police non-emergency number 101, if you need support or advice from the police and it's not an emergency. If you have a hearing or speech impairment, use our textphone service on 18001 101.

[New Era](#) - Help for victims and perpetrators

[Glow Domestic Abuse Service](#) - Support for victims, their families, and for perpetrators.

[Staffordshire Women's Aid](#) – provides confidential service for adults, children over 4 and close family members/significant others who have been affected by sexual assault or abuse

Further information can be found at: [Domestic abuse – Children and Family Services](#)

Note: This strategy is aligned with the Stoke-on-Trent Community Safety Strategy 2024–2027 and supports the broader objectives outlined in the Corporate Strategy 2024–2028.