

Towards A Domestic Abuse Free City

Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy

2017 - 2020

DRAFT

Foreword *(proposed)*

Welcome to Birmingham's new Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2017 - 2020 that has been produced with our Strategic Partners from across the City Council, Health, Criminal Justice and the Voluntary Sector.

Domestic abuse challenges the city's vision of Birmingham as a city of growth; where every child, citizen and place matters. Domestic abuse affects both physical and mental health; impacts on the well-being and development of children; has economic impacts in terms of productivity, absence from the workplace and the exclusion of people from fulfilling employment.

Domestic abuse is also one of the main reasons for homelessness in Birmingham. Domestic abuse is a priority for all who share our vision for the city – taking action on domestic abuse is everyone's business.



Cllr Paulette Hamilton
Chair – Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Board

The Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Board and Birmingham Community Safety Partnership hold joint responsibility for the successful delivery of the strategy, reflecting:

- The complex nature of domestic abuse and the associated inequalities which manifest including mental and physical ill health, homelessness and unemployment;
- The multi-layered and co-ordinated health, social and criminal justice approaches required to tackle this issue;
- The multi-agency input, investment and response required to achieve this.

We look forward to working together in leading the collective action necessary to be successful in tackling domestic abuse in Birmingham.

To be added

Chief Superintendent Chris Johnson
Chair – Birmingham Community Safety Partnership

Vision: Towards a Domestic Abuse Free City

Birmingham is a place where domestic abuse is not tolerated; where everyone can expect equality and respect in their relationships, and live free from domestic abuse.

Our vision is rightly ambitious and cannot be achieved by a single agency in isolation. To be successful, **domestic abuse must become everyone's business.**

Our strategy sets out the city's commitment to tackling domestic abuse. Guided by the principles of the national strategy *Ending Violence Against Women and Girls* (2016), we are focusing our approach on women and children – recognising that they are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse.

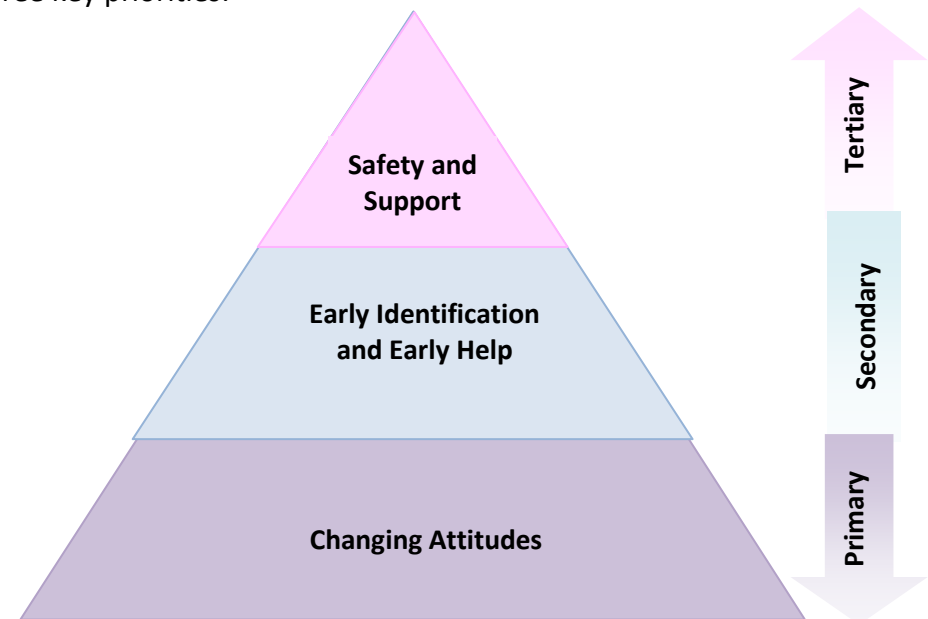
Although we have a strong history of partnership working in addressing domestic abuse in the city, domestic abuse is, as elsewhere, still increasing. In Birmingham, there has been a 57% increase in reports of domestic abuse to West Midlands Police and a 19% increase in prosecutions since 2013.

At the same time, our public services are shrinking and we need to find new ways of keeping our population safe and healthy, whilst at the same time enabling our communities to thrive.

As a result, the starting point for our new strategy is different from the past as the focus shifts towards proactive prevention and identifying domestic abuse as early as possible to limit its impact in the future.

To do this, a very careful and considered approach must be taken to rebalance our collective efforts towards **preventing domestic abuse happening in the first place whilst ensuring safety and protection is available where there remains a threat of risk or harm.**

Our new strategy outlines a layered prevention model and focuses on three key priorities:



Defining Domestic Abuse

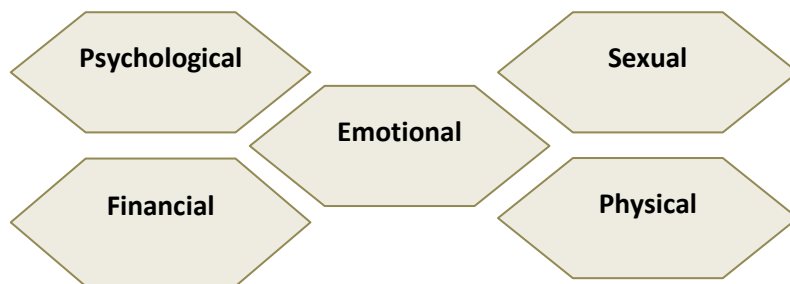
The Government defines domestic abuse as:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or 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”.

Controlling behaviour is behaviour that makes people sub-ordinate or dependent by isolating them from friends and family and other sources of support, taking control of their 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.

Types of domestic abuse include:



The Care Act 2014 sets out a clear legal framework for how the Health and Social Care system should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect. It specifies that freedom from abuse (and neglect) is a key aspect of a person’s wellbeing.

The Care Act recognises the complexity of domestic abuse and calls for a greater focus on family and intergenerational abuse in the domestic setting.

Scope of our Strategy

In line with national guidelines, the scope of this strategy recognises:

- Adults, children and young people who are experiencing (or have experienced) domestic abuse;
- Those who are perpetrating domestic abuse;
- Children who are exposed to domestic abuse; and
- The general population (for the purposes of prevention more broadly).

The Government emphasises the importance of recognising the gendered nature of domestic abuse; highlighting that the majority of systematic abuse is perpetrated by men against women, or against other men that they are in a relationship with. In addition, male violence accounts for the vast majority of deaths through domestic abuse.

The Impact of Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is *always* harmful to children and as a result, children and families are at the heart of our new strategy.

Every child deserves the best start in life. There is increasing national and local focus on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as a fundamental cause of poorer health, social and economic outcomes through the life course; particularly when experienced in the early years.

Domestic abuse is one of the key ACE indicators. Growing up in an abusive environment can be traumatic and stressful. In some cases, it can also increase the risk of experiencing abuse, or becoming more violent, particularly in the family context.

Adults experiencing domestic abuse can experience serious psychological, emotional, physical, and financial consequences. It is often one of several problems that a couple or family may face. Combined with poverty, drug or alcohol misuse, homelessness and / or mental health problems, domestic abuse can contribute to a life of multiple disadvantage.

Families experiencing domestic abuse are particularly vulnerable to financial exclusion, further exacerbating these consequences and severely limiting options and choices that are available when seeking safety and support.

Birmingham recognises the far-reaching and cross cutting impact that domestic abuse can have. As a result, there are strong links between domestic abuse and other key citywide strategic priorities:

- **Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2013)** recognises domestic abuse and its links to individual and family homelessness as key to being successful in ‘improving the health and wellbeing of our most vulnerable adults and children in need’;
- **Birmingham Early Help Strategy (2015-2017)** recognises reducing the number of children and young people affected by domestic abuse as a key contributing factor to the outcome ‘a good childhood for the best start in life’;
- The agreed purpose for **Improved Mental Health in Birmingham (2016)** recognises that tackling all types of domestic abuse is vital to its success as it is a major cause of mental health problems, which affect whole families and future generations;
- **Birmingham Homelessness Prevention Strategy (2017)** recognises domestic abuse as the second highest presenting reason for households in priority housing need, and calls for more to be done to tackle the root causes of homelessness in the city;
- **Birmingham Financial Inclusion Strategy (2017)** recognises families who experience domestic abuse to be amongst those most vulnerable to financial exclusion.

Domestic Abuse in Birmingham



Birmingham is a young city where more than a quarter of the population are under 18 years of age. By the time they reach adulthood, **1 in 5 children in the city will have been exposed to domestic abuse.**



We recognise experiencing adversity in childhood can have a significant impact on a child's health, education and wellbeing. **Locally, domestic abuse is a major additional factor for 77% of children needing Local Authority support, care or protection.** This is significantly higher than the national average.



Birmingham is the largest local authority in Europe and growing faster than the UK average. At the same time, domestic abuse is increasing - **there is an estimated 41,000 people** in the city experiencing domestic abuse. The majority of whom are women - a picture which has been increasing since the economic downturn of 2009.



Domestic abuse is the **second highest presenting factor for homeless applications in Birmingham.** Almost 90% of these applications are accepted as households in priority housing need and 78% of these are lone parent households.



Birmingham is an ethnically and culturally super diverse city. Whilst there is no evidence that Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women experience higher levels of domestic abuse than the wider population, the **abuse of BME women may be compounded by factors such as forced marriage or honour based violence. BME women may face additional barriers to accessing support as a result of, for example, language, cultural isolation, experience of racism, and in some cases, insecure immigration status.**



Our population is living longer. IRIS, a local primary care programme, has shown family doctors to be in a strong position to identify domestic abuse for groups of **women who are traditionally under-represented in services, including older women and disabled women.**



On average, **4 women die each year** in the city as a result of domestic homicide. Birmingham has conducted 21 domestic homicide reviews since 2011; of which **91% involved a female victim**, 95% involved a male abuser, and 57% involved children bereaved by the loss of a parent (usually their mother).

Safety and Support (*Tertiary Prevention*)

To be successful we must:

Ensure that those individuals experiencing domestic abuse are protected from harm and supported to recover.

What do we mean by Safety and Support?

Ensuring women who experience domestic abuse and their children are safe and protected from harm and have access to the right support at the right time.

Ensuring the first response of front line agencies is consistent and includes recognising types of domestic abuse, identifying threat of risk or harm, and collecting robust evidence;

Increasing the focus on preventing abusers from harming others, both in the first instance and repeatedly;

Strengthening the role of communities in the long-term recovery of women and children who have experienced abuse; helping them to successfully (re)integrate into community life.

Why is Safety and Support important?

It is important that people experiencing abuse and their children are supported and protected, whilst action is taken against their abusers.

There continues to be too much reliance placed upon families to keep themselves and their children safe. Abusive parents / carers often remain invisible in child protection proceedings although they are often the ones creating the risk.

There is insufficient focus on addressing the behaviour of domestic abusers. Recent changes in the law such as Coercive Control (s76 Serious Crime Act 2015) pave the way for our strengthened response to challenging and managing abusive behaviour through effective enforcement and deterrence.

Successful **Safety and Support** means:

Increasing the number of adults and their children who feel they can live their lives in safety.

Reducing the risk of harm from domestic abusers.

Early Identification and Early Help (*Secondary Prevention*)

To be successful we must:

Intervene early to prevent harm and reduce the impact of domestic abuse on victims and families.

What do we mean by Early Identification and Early Help?

Strengthening our partnership arrangements – from strategic plans to frontline practice – so that we can identify and respond to domestic abuse as early as possible in an effective, co-ordinated way.

Improving the effectiveness of domestic abuse support pathways and working with Trusted Professionals to encourage people to share their experiences and identify abuse early.

Ensuring children affected by domestic abuse receive the help they need to recover from their experience so that the impact is reduced in the long term.

Why is Early Identification and Early Help Important?

The need for interventions to ensure that children have safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments is important. Likewise, when domestic abuse is left unchecked and without intervention, the scale and severity of abuse increases. The earlier agencies can engage and recognise how domestic abuse affects different members of the family, the better.

Responding effectively to domestic abuse at the ‘front door’ in a large, diverse city like Birmingham requires a strong system behind the scenes. All agencies must know not only how to provide a first response themselves but also what to do next; knowing who to refer to and when.

Successful **early identification and early help** means that:

Domestic abuse is identified earlier and people are able to recover from abuse.

Escalation and harm from domestic abuse is reduced.

Changing Attitudes (*Primary Prevention*)

To be successful we must:

Prevent domestic abuse by challenging the attitudes and behaviours that foster it.

What do we mean by Changing Attitudes?

Changing the way we think about relationships, educating and raising awareness with our children about healthy and positive relationships, and empowering our communities to confront and challenge domestic abuse.

Continuing to challenge the cultural attitudes that may underpin practices of forced marriage and honour based violence.

Encouraging major employers in the city to adopt a common approach to supporting employees who experience domestic abuse and introduces a common challenge to employees who are abusers.

Successfully **Changing Attitudes** means an:

Increase in healthy and positive relationships.

Why is Changing Attitudes important?

Exposure to unsuitable material at a young age can affect our attitudes to violence and abuse, and may influence how boys and girls view each other as their own relationships take shape. Raising awareness and expectations of what a healthy and positive relationship look like is critical to preventing domestic abuse for our next generation.

The workplace is yet to receive multiagency attention in Birmingham. Employers need to create safe spaces for employees to disclose with confidence that they will be supported. Some organisations have domestic abuse policies for supporting workers; however, the approach is not common and rarely addresses employees who may also be abusers.

Decrease in social tolerance of domestic abuse.

Governance and Accountability

Strategic Oversight

Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Board and Birmingham Community Safety Partnership are jointly responsible for, and committed to, ensuring that Birmingham’s vision for domestic abuse becomes reality.

Strategic Assurance

The Birmingham Safeguarding Adults Board and the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board will seek assurance together, and through their respective governance structures, on the effectiveness of partnership working in the development and implementation of the Strategy Action Plan.

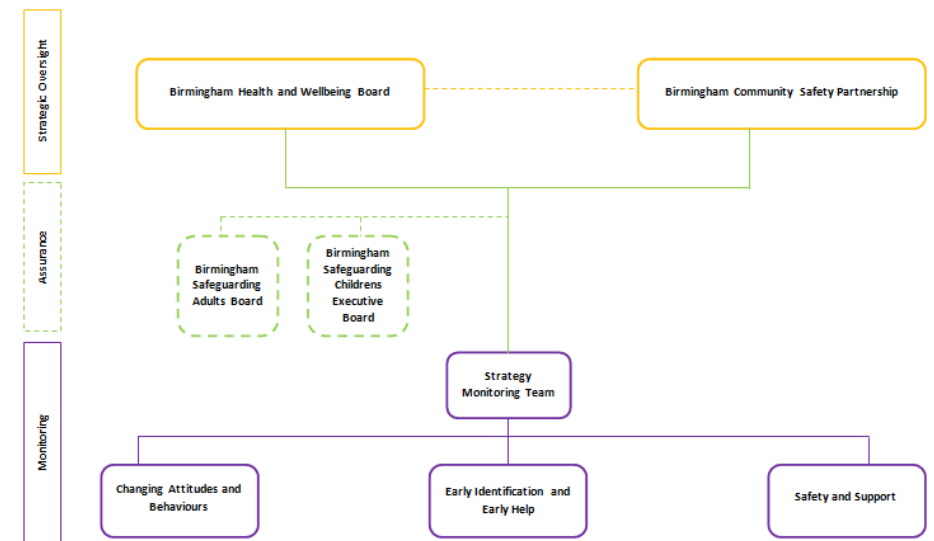
Monitoring Progress

The Strategy Monitoring Team will report progress against the Strategy Implementation Plan to the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership.

The Health and Wellbeing Board and Birmingham Community Safety Partnership will undertake a joint review of progress against the Strategy Implementation Plan on an annual basis up to and including 2020.

Governance

The strategy will be monitored through the following governance structure:



Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

As such, our approach has and will continue to be informed by the latest available intelligence when determining key actions associated with the delivery of our strategy vision.

Priority Action Plan

Delivering our Vision

Our Strategy Action Plan is set in the context of the principles outlined by the Government's National Statement of Expectations:

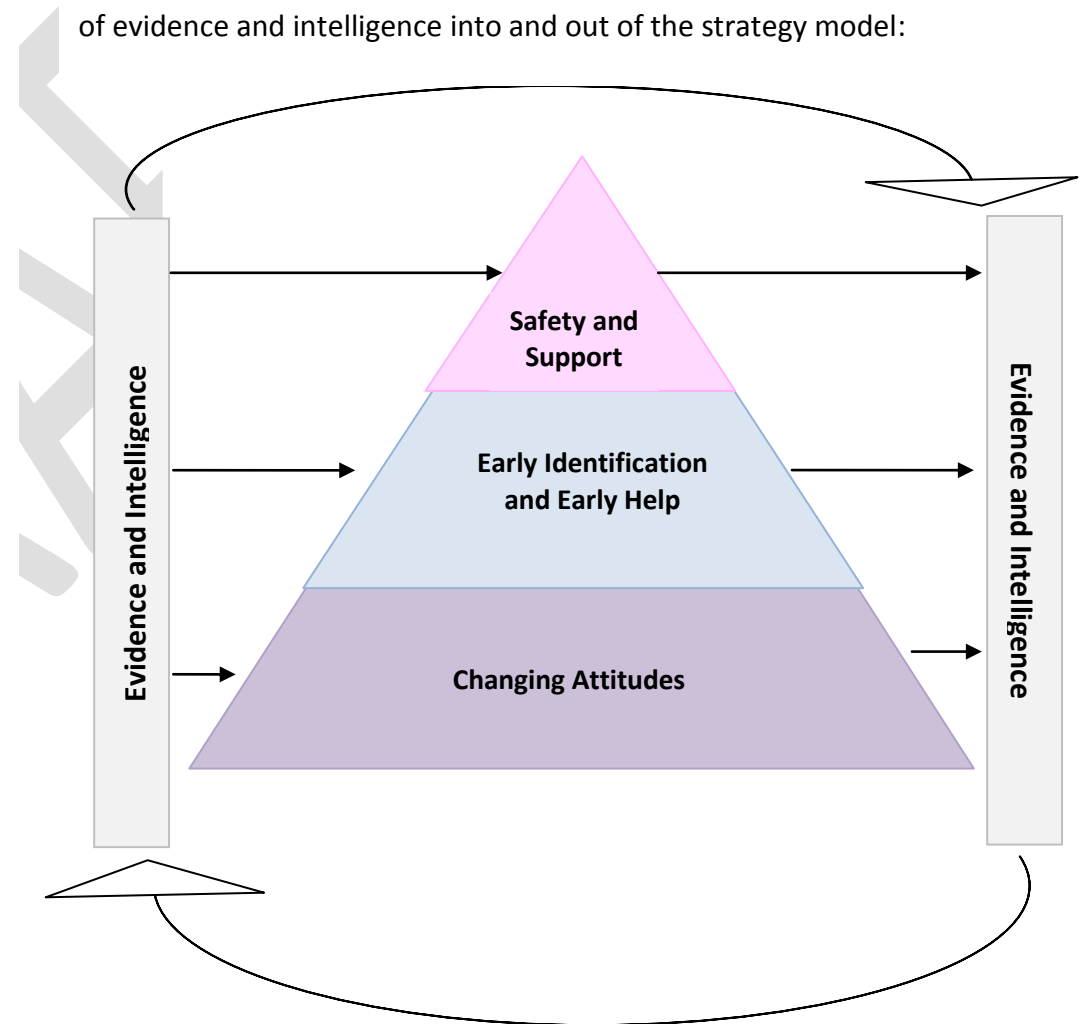
- There is a strategic, system wide approach to responding to domestic abuse and preventing it in the future;
- The person experiencing domestic abuse is at the centre of any action or intervention;
- There is a clear focus on abusers in order to keep victims safe;
- Communities are involved, engaged and empowered to seek, design and deliver solutions to domestic abuse.

Evidence and Intelligence

To inform and drive continued improvement and innovation in tackling domestic abuse throughout the strategy period, we must ensure that collectively we have access to, utilise and learn from the best available evidence base.

As such, there is a clear evidence and intelligence theme which underpins all three priority areas within the action plan.

Recognising the importance of both evidence based practice and practice based evidence, the following diagram demonstrates the flow of evidence and intelligence into and out of the strategy model:



Please note: The following draft set of actions have been identified from public consultation feedback on the draft strategy document, the Overview and Scrutiny Report on Working with Communities to Prevent Relationship Violence, and the Violence Against Women and Girls: National Statement of Expectations. This draft set of actions will be the focus of the Stakeholder Action Planning Event on 24 October 2017 and subsequent consultation period, and will be finalised following analysis of feedback thereafter.

Priority:	Aim:	Prevention Level:	Actions:	Lead:	Delivery Date:
Safety and Support	Ensure that those individuals experiencing domestic abuse are protected from harm and supported to recover.	Tertiary	Ensure there is access to a broad range of safe space provision proportionate to the need in the City which includes for e.g. multiple or high needs, provision for young women, men and support within own home.		
			Strengthen multi agency response for complex and / or high need individuals and their families – including homeless prevention and health and wellbeing support – recognising that people cannot be kept safe without holistically addressing all of their needs.		
			Agree a common tool across agencies for assessing risk and threat from domestic abuse, following the review being undertaken by the College of Policing.		
			Strengthen relationship between public protection processes of Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing (MARAC), Child Protection and Integrated Offender Management actively involving all Social Landlords, Childrens Services, and partner agencies.		

			Establish a secure case management system for MARAC.		
			Guarantee an independent support service for complex, high need victims of domestic abuse (e.g. Independent Domestic Violence Advisors).		
			Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board and Birmingham Safeguarding Adults Boards seek assurance from partners that they actively address domestic abuse through their safeguarding actions.		
			Establish a clear understanding of the family and community context in which abusers operate (Violence Against Women and Girls: National Statement of Expectations or VAWG NSE).		
			Establish a clear pathway for civil interventions and increase use of Civil Orders where criminal action is not possible.		
			Develop a multi-agency abuse management framework which involves management, diversion, disruption and wherever possible, prosecution of abusers with the aim of protection of adult and child victims of domestic abuse.		
			Develop good practice guidelines for working with women and mothers with multiple and complex needs.		
			Assess and address local specialist provision for abusers, supporting the commissioning and roll out of a broad diversity of abuser provision in line with the RESPECT accreditation (part VAWG NSE).		

			Develop and embed a common process for measuring victim satisfaction with the support they receive.		
			Ensure intelligence and learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews are used to inform frontline practice, policy and commissioning direction.		
Early Identification and Early Help	Intervene early to prevent harm and reduce the impact of domestic abuse on victims and families.	Secondary	Strengthen the city-wide understanding of need by accessing and analysing available data, evidence, service standards and intelligence with input from victims, local authorities, health, police, education, housing and the wider Third Sector (VAWG NSE).		
			Stabilise and expand the general practice – based domestic abuse training, support and referral programme.		
			Define and implement what works and what is safe practice for ‘whole family’ approaches to domestic abuse.		
			Better understand the training needs of local health and social care professionals to spot the signs of abuse, understand the impact of trauma and make referrals to specialist services (VAWG NSE).		
			Expand multi agency training for professionals, which includes knowledge and awareness of coercion and control.		
			Map Birmingham’s current domestic abuse support pathways across all relevant services to improve and optimise effectiveness.		
			Expand current helpline provision to ensure response is available for all who require it.		

		Increase the number of agencies with trained staff (with training and care pathways in place) able to identify individuals and / or families at risk of or experiencing domestic abuse.		
		Introduce an 'Ask Me' scheme where a person experiencing abuse can disclose in places they trust and where staff have been trained to provide an initial safe response.		
		Develop an integrated and multi-agency commissioning model in line with the Violence Against Women and Girls: National Statement of Expectations (2016). This should strike the balance between provision for safety and protection, as well as earlier intervention and recovery models for both adults and children.		
		Introduce early identification and early help pathways with 'Trusted Professionals' and across health and social care.		
		Continue to train professionals and agencies using the lessons learned from the Birmingham Domestic Homicide Reviews with a view to preventing and reducing the rate of domestic homicides in the city.		
		Evaluate the Child to Parent abuse pilot currently being undertaken in the Youth Offending Service with a view to extending the programme across wider services if effective.		
		Transform mainstream approach to domestic abuse by introducing citywide workforce development plan accompanied by service specific best practice guidance, pathways and toolkits to support front line delivery.		

			Reignite cross-over development between domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health workforces to ensure that approaches are developed together and skills are shared.		
			Ensure there is access to provision for young people who display violent or inappropriate behaviour (VAWG NSE).		
			Support the Social, Emotional and Mental Health Pathfinder which seeks to transform education for children and young people with multiple needs, including domestic abuse.		
Changing Attitudes and Behaviours	Prevent domestic abuse by challenging the attitudes and behaviours that foster it.	Primary	Ensure linked strategies including Housing, Homelessness and Early Help recognise, enable and ensure a robust response to domestic abuse (VAWG NSE).		
			Ensure West Midlands Domestic Abuse Standards are adopted consistently across the City.		
			Ensure service users are involved in the development of the forthcoming Birmingham LGBT strategy.		
			Widen community engagement and public awareness of domestic abuse, including forced marriage and honour based violence, by encouraging community led preventative approaches.		
			Undertake targeted community engagement with groups currently underrepresented in services such as LGBT communities, disabled and /or older adults.		

		Explore potential of By-Stander programmes to raise awareness and help increase reporting of domestic abuse.		
		Work with Birmingham Education Partnership and the Multi-Academy Trust to agree a Birmingham-wide whole school approach to domestic abuse through strengthening equality and respect.		
		Refresh and roll out guidance to schools, colleges, universities and youth settings on dealing with domestic abuse, including the use of nationally available campaign materials and the local development of curriculum materials.		
		Consider the expansion of programmes aimed at challenging male attitudes in BME communities to involve men in the campaign to stop violence against women.		
		Develop the Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention workplace standard in line with the Combined Authority work on the Public Health England Workplace Wellbeing Charter and encourage Birmingham wide adoption of workplace policies on domestic abuse through Birmingham Chamber of Commerce.		
		Work with local Banks, Building Societies and Post Offices to understand what they are doing to identify and support victims of coercive control e.g. offering safe space for disclosure (VAWG NSE).		

VAWG NSE = Identified in the Violence Against Women and Girls: National Statement of Expectations