



Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2017-2020

Consultation:
31 October 2016 - 6 January 2017

Summary Document

What are we trying to achieve?

Birmingham strives to be a city where everyone lives free from domestic violence and abuse. This is our vision for the new Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy for Birmingham.

Birmingham strategic partnerships including those from across the City Council, Criminal Justice, Health and Voluntary organisations have adopted domestic abuse as a shared priority for the City.

Having shared leadership in this challenging area is a positive start. To achieve our vision, domestic abuse must become everyone's business.

Our strategic vision is informed by the latest national policy direction. To reduce domestic abuse, the key aims for the Government include:

- Challenging the deep-rooted social norms, attitudes and behaviours, and by educating, informing and challenging young people about healthy relationships, abuse and consent;
- Making early intervention and prevention a priority, identifying individuals in need before a crisis occurs, and intervening to make sure they get the help they need for themselves and for their children;
- Services in local areas will work across boundaries in strong partnerships to assess and meet local need, and ensure that services can spot the signs of abuse in all family members and intervene early;
- Individuals will be able to share their experiences of violence and abuse to any public services.

To achieve this, we have identified the following priorities for Birmingham:

1. Changing Attitudes
2. Early Identification and Early Help
3. Safety and Support

We will be asking the people of Birmingham, service users and potential service users, strategic partners, and key agencies including current service providers to let us know whether these are the right priorities.

This section supports Question 1 of the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy Consultation Questionnaire

What is the scope of our domestic abuse prevention strategy?

Domestic abuse is defined by Government 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”.

This abuse can be:

- Psychological,
- Physical,
- Sexual,
- Financial,
- Emotional.

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by:

- isolating them from sources of support,
- exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain,
- depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and,
- regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

This definition includes so called ‘honour’ based violence and forced marriage. Whilst Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is also included within the Government definition, it is outside of the scope of this Strategy as it requires particular targeted activity.

In line with national guidelines, this Strategy will cover:

- 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).

Why do we need a domestic abuse prevention strategy?

Domestic abuse touches the lives, directly or indirectly, of many people in Birmingham. The scale of domestic abuse causes harm to individuals, children and families, and communities.

Domestic abuse in Birmingham, as elsewhere, is increasing and more people, both adults and children, are known to be at risk than ever before.

Domestic abuse takes place in all types of relationships, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) relationships. We know that it can also significantly affect other family members, particularly children.

By the time they become adults, at least 1 in 5 of children and young people in Birmingham may have been exposed to domestic abuse. Experiencing adversity in childhood, including abuse, can affect health and wellbeing. In some cases, it can also increase the risk of experiencing abuse or becoming an abuser as an adult. Locally, domestic abuse is a major reason for children needing Local Authority support, care and protection.

Some groups of people including Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and LGBT communities, disabled people, and older adults, can experience multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage or additional barriers to accessing support. We need to do more to help break down these barriers.

Previous strategies have worked to increase reporting of domestic abuse to the Police and Birmingham has been successful in achieving this. However, the most serious violence continues to increase and some aspects of domestic abuse, such as forced marriage and honour-based violence, remain significantly under-reported.

The Criminal Justice system is a vital response to serious abuse. More abusers are being held to account but overall only a small proportion of domestic abusers are effectively dealt with by the Criminal Justice system.

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

What do we want to do to address domestic abuse in Birmingham?

Priority 1: Changing Attitudes

Changing attitudes and behaviour is an ambitious and challenging priority but it is critical to successfully addressing domestic abuse.

We want to do more to prevent domestic abuse for our next generation. Building on the work of previous strategies, we propose to work with children and young people to educate them and raise awareness of healthy relationships based on equality and respect. We want to explore how we better support youth settings and higher education establishments (e.g. colleges, universities) to raise awareness of domestic abuse with young people. We also need to understand what else we could do to support them to respond to incidents of domestic abuse with their students.

We are all responsible for ensuring that domestic abuse is confronted and addressed in every aspect of Birmingham life. There would be a key role for the wider community (including voluntary / community organisations and faith groups) to raise awareness of domestic abuse (including forced marriage and honour based violence) and make clear that it is not acceptable in our neighbourhoods. We want to encourage community – led approaches to preventing abuse. This would include targeted engagement with under-represented groups including BME and LGBT communities, older adults and people with disabilities.

The workplace is a new area of focus for this Strategy. Whilst we know that some organisations have policies on domestic abuse, we propose the development of a workplace standard. This would encourage all major employers in the City to adopt a common approach to supporting employees who experience or are affected by domestic abuse. It would also introduce a common challenge to employees who are abusers.

This section supports Questions 1 and 2 of the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy Consultation Questionnaire

Priority 2: Early Identification and Early Help

Once patterns of abuse are entrenched, it is much harder to break the cycle. To reduce the impact of domestic abuse, we need to ensure that it is identified and responded to effectively at the earliest opportunity.

Our common approach to domestic abuse needs to be strengthened and trusted professionals, such as family doctors, are well placed to identify abuse. The new Strategy would require these professionals to do more to encourage people to share their experiences of abuse. It is proposed that everyday settings such as dentists or schools are developed as safe places. This would mean people could feel more confident to share their experience and get the support they need.

The nature and scale of coercion and control have started to be understood in recent years. We know more needs to be done so that we can better identify and support people who may be experiencing or affected by these types of abuse.

As well as identifying abuse and intervening earlier, we need to help more people, including children, to recover from abuse. This means making sure that the impact of abuse does not stay with them for a long period of time.

To be successful in tackling domestic abuse we need to continue to strengthen our partnership arrangements. This is important at every level – from strategic plans to frontline practice. We propose a collective approach to developing the workforce so that our response is consistent and effective.

To make services easier to access and understand for people who need support, and professionals alike, there is an opportunity to explore how to better co-ordinate the range of specialist services in the City. This would include improving the effectiveness of our domestic abuse care pathways.

This section supports Questions 1 and 3 of the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy Consultation Questionnaire.

Priority 3: Safety and Support

Whilst we work towards our vision, we still need to protect and support those at risk of serious harm from domestic abuse. It is important that we make sure that resources are effectively managed across all organisations.

There is a key role for multi-agency services with specialist skills to work together to improve safety and protection. We also need to strengthen the relationship between public protection processes including child protection, domestic violence tasking and integrated offender management.

The new approach would have a stronger focus on preventing abusers from harming others, both in the first place and repeatedly. We propose the development and implementation of a multi-agency abuser management framework which would include Criminal Justice, Civil Justice, Housing, Child and Adult protection powers. This would include the introduction of recognised abuser programmes which would focus on preventing abuse. This approach would help us to improve how we monitor abusers and hold them to account.

This section supports Questions 1 and 4 of the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy Consultation

What next?

We have developed a questionnaire that lists the things we think will help to achieve our vision for the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy and we would like to know what you think. Please complete the questionnaire and return to the FREE postal address below.

Alternatively, you can share your thoughts by contacting:

Website:

www.birminghambeheard.org.uk

Twitter:

@healthybrum
@bhamcomsafety

Email:

preventDA@birmingham.gov.uk

Write to:

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Please note that you do not need to use a stamp.

