

Safer Solihull

Working together for a safer Solihull

Solihull Domestic Abuse Strategy



2011-2014

Solihull Domestic Abuse Strategy 2011-2014

Version 1

Contents

Foreword	2
1. Introduction	3
2. What is domestic abuse	3
3. Who is affected by domestic abuse	4
4. The effects of domestic abuse on children	5
5. The effects of abuse on vulnerable adults	9
6. Who are the abusers	12
7. What are the recognised forms of abuse	12
8. The profile of domestic abuse in Solihull	13
9. National Context	17
10. Local Context	17
11. Where do we go from here?	19
12. How are we going to get there?	20
13. Equalities	24
14. Performance Management	25
Appendix A	
15. Safer Solihull Partnership Structure Chart	26
16. References	27

Foreword

Welcome to the Solihull Domestic Abuse Strategy refresh, which has been produced by the Domestic Abuse Strategic Group, part of the Safer Solihull Partnership. At the end of this strategy you will find a diagram of the Solihull Partnership and where domestic abuse sits within it.

The work of the Safer Solihull Partnership focuses on reducing crime and making our communities safer. We have always considered our response to dealing with Domestic Abuse as a fundamental part of our work, but in 2010 we elected to consider Domestic Abuse our number one priority.

Through our multi-agency Domestic Abuse Strategic Group we will aim to encourage more victims of domestic abuse and their families to seek help and reduce the number of incidents that occur.

The group is made up of the following organisations that have all contributed towards the production of this strategy refresh; Local Authority, Police, NHS Care Trust, Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation trust, Courts, Magistrates, Probation Service, Victim Support, Make A Better Life Trust, Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid, Solihull Community Housing, Welcome, Crown Prosecution Service, Aquarius and Relate. This strategy will provide you with an overview of what partners have done and are doing to tackle domestic abuse in Solihull.

This strategy will ensure victims receive an appropriate response and service, as well as addressing the need for early identification and prevention, protection and justice in order to effectively reduce domestic abuse.

The implementation plan that accompanies this strategy will be developed and refreshed on a regular basis to ensure it remains robust and effective.

We hope you find it useful and if you have any questions, suggestions or issues regarding the strategy please feel free to contact the Crime and Disorder Reduction Team on 0121 704 6644.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "SA Mark Rogers". The signature is written over a horizontal line.

Mark Rogers,
Chief Executive of Solihull Council
Chair of Safer Solihull Partnership

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Domestic Abuse is a strategic priority for the Safer Solihull Group, this document focus's on the key areas of intervention identified by Central Government and our own Assessments, to reduce offending and victimisation.

2. What is domestic abuse?

- 2.1 It has been argued that the term 'domestic violence' is misleading as it places an emphasis on physical assault and does not reflect the full extent of the complex issue. For this reason the term 'domestic abuse' is now more widely used.
- 2.2 There are many different definitions of domestic abuse being used across different agencies. The government paper 'Safety and Justice 2004' set out a new definition which was agreed by all government departments. This definition defines domestic abuse as being:
- 'Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between people who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.'**
- 2.3 Whatever form it takes, domestic abuse is rarely a one-off incident, and should instead be seen as a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour through which the abuser seeks power over their victim. Typically the abuse involves a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour, which tends to get worse over time. The abuse can begin at any time, in the first year, or after many years of life together. It may begin, continue, or become worse after a couple have separated and may take place not only in the home but also in a public place.



3. Who is affected by domestic abuse?

- 3.1 Domestic abuse occurs across society, regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, wealth, and geography. The figures show, however, that it consists mainly of violence by men against women. Children are also affected, both directly and indirectly and there is also a strong correlation between domestic abuse and child abuse.
- 3.2 Research continues to show that overwhelmingly, domestic abuse is experienced by women and perpetrated by men, but can include abuse within same sex relationships as well as abuse against men by women.
- 3.3 The support needs of other groups of people including men and gay and lesbian couples are not well understood and we acknowledge may require different approaches to provide appropriate support based on the diverse needs of the victims. We will work to understand the diversity of need and look at how we can best respond to those needs.
- 3.4 The definition has been widened to ensure that issues of concern to black and minority ethnic communities, such as so called 'Honour crimes'; forced marriage and women with no recourse to public funds are understood. We will consider how we can meet these needs from within Solihull.
- 3.5 Honour crimes are the violence or murder of a person accused of 'bringing shame' upon their family. Victims have been killed for refusing to enter a marriage, committing adultery or being in a relationship that displeased their relatives. In many instances, the crimes are committed by family members against a female relative.
- 3.6 A forced marriage is a marriage that is performed under duress and without the full and informed consent or free will of both parties. Under duress includes feeling both physical and emotional pressure. Some victims of forced marriage are tricked into going to another country by their families. Victims fall prey to forced marriage through deception, abduction, coercion, fear and inducements.
- 3.7 Many women come to the UK, often legally, in the hope of improving their lives. They may come on temporary work permits, student visas or spousal visas. Some women come to the UK to marry. The 'no recourse to public funds' rule says that a woman in this position - even if she's married to a British citizen - is not entitled to certain state benefits, including housing benefit and income support. These are the benefits women must be able to access in order to secure a place in any refuge. Women with no recourse face many more daunting issues on top of those already created by being a victim of abuse.

4. The effects of domestic abuse on children

- 4.1 Domestic violence affects both adults and children within the family. Some 200,000 children (1.8%) in England live in households where there is a known risk of domestic violence or violence ¹⁶³. Prolonged and/or regular exposure to domestic violence can have a serious impact on children's safety and welfare, despite the best efforts of parents to protect them. An analysis of Serious Case Reviews found evidence of past or present domestic violence present in over half (53%) of cases ¹⁶⁴.
- 4.2 Domestic violence rarely exists in isolation. Many parents also misuse drugs or alcohol, experience poor physical and mental ill health and have a history of poor childhood experiences themselves. The co-morbidity of issues compounds the difficulties parents experience in meeting the needs of their children, and increases the likelihood that the child will experience abuse and/or neglect.
- 4.3 Domestic violence has an impact and causes harm to children in a number of ways. Children are at increased risk of physical injury during an incident, either by accident or because they attempt to intervene. "The amendment to the Children Act 1989 made in section 120 of the Adoption Act 2002 clarifies the meaning of 'harm' in the Children Act to make explicit that 'harm' includes, for example impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another." Even when not directly injured, children are greatly distressed by witnessing the physical and emotional suffering of a parent. Children's exposure to parental conflict, even where violence is not present, can lead to serious anxiety and distress which may express itself in anti-social or criminal behaviour. Although separating from a violent partner should result in women and children being safe from harm, the danger does not automatically end. Moreover, the point of leaving an abusive relationship is the time of highest risk for a victim. Contact arrangements can be used by violent men not only to continue their controlling, manipulative and violent behaviour but also as a way of establishing the whereabouts of the victim(s).



- 4.4 Domestic violence also affects children because it impacts on parenting capacity. A parent (in most families, the mother) may have difficulty in looking after the children when domestic violence results in injuries, or in extreme cases, death. The impact on parenting, however, is often more subtle. Exposure to psychological and emotional abuse has profound negative effects on women's mental health resulting in a loss of confidence, depression, feelings of degradation, problems with sleep, isolation, and increased use of medication and alcohol. These are all factors that can restrict the mother's capacity to meet the developmental needs of her child. Moreover, belittling and insulting a mother in front of her children undermines not only her respect for herself, but also the authority she needs to parent confidently. A mother's relationship with her children may also be affected because, in attempts to avoid further outbursts of violence, she prioritises her partner's needs over those of her children.
- 4.5 The impact of domestic violence on children increases when directly abused, witnessing the abuse of a parent, or colluding (willingly or otherwise) in the concealment of assaults. Other relevant factors include the chronicity and degree of violence, and its co-existence with other issues such as substance misuse. No age group is particularly protected from or damaged by the impact of domestic violence. Children's ability to cope with parental adversity is related to their age, gender and individual personality. However, regardless of age, support from siblings, wider family, friends, school and community can act as protective factors. Key to the safety of women and children subjected to violence and the threat of violence is an alternative, safe and supportive residence 165.
- 4.6 An exploration of the possible impact on the unborn child shows the foetus is at risk of injury because violence towards women increases both in severity and frequency during pregnancy, and often involves punches or kicks directed at the women's abdomen. Such assaults can result in a greater rate of miscarriage, still or premature birth, foetal brain injury and fractures. Domestic violence is also associated with women's irregular or late attendance for ante-natal care. Poor attendance may be the result of low self esteem and depression or due to an abusive partner controlling and restricting women's use of medical services. Once born, the baby continues to be at risk of injury. For example, the infant may be in his or her mother's arms when an assault occurs. A young child's health and development may also be compromised when violence results in the mother having difficulty in concentrating, becoming depressed, or self medicating. When domestic violence undermines the mother's capacity to provide her infant with a sense of safety and security it can impact on the attachment process. Finally, domestic violence may influence a young child's social relationships, increasing their outbursts of anger, peer aggression and other behaviour problems.

- 4.7 Children in middle childhood, who live with domestic violence, continue to be at risk of being physically injured. Injuries may occur when the child is caught in the cross-fire or when trying to intervene to protect his or her mother. There is also evidence to link domestic violence with elevated levels of child sexual abuse ^{166,167}. Witnessing domestic violence affects children's emotions and behaviour and can lead to temper tantrums and aggression which are directed at family and peers, and cruelty towards animals. Exposure to domestic violence is also associated with children being more anxious, sad, worried, fearful and withdrawn, than children who are not exposed ¹⁶⁸. Some children cope with the stress and fear of violence by seeking to escape. During middle childhood this may be through fantasy and make-believe, or by withdrawing into themselves, or seeking a place of safety.
- 4.8 Experiencing domestic violence and seeing parents unable to control themselves or their circumstances may result in feelings of helplessness and confusion. Children may blame themselves for their parent's violence and feel inadequate and guilty when unable to stop the violent episode or prevent its reoccurrence.
- 4.9 Adolescents exposed to domestic violence may live in constant fear of violent arguments, being threatened or actual physical violence being directed at a parent (usually the mother) or themselves. The likelihood of being physically injured continues. Furthermore, in a recent survey of 13 to 17-year-old girls in intimate relationships, one in six girls said they had been hit by their boyfriends (4% regularly) ¹⁶⁹ and one in sixteen said they had been raped ¹⁷⁰. Experiencing domestic violence has a serious emotional impact: feelings can include fear, sadness, loneliness, helplessness and despair, and anger. In the home teenagers may focus their anger on both parents, towards the abuser for inflicting the violence and towards the victim for accepting the behaviour. Witnessing the abuse of a parent or experiencing intimate partner violence may result in adolescents exhibiting behavioural problems, both at home and in school, which have an impact on friendships and educational progress. Education can suffer when adolescents stay home to protect their parent or themselves from an abusive partner. Friends are highly valued by teenagers as confidants and sources of support, but behavioural difficulties may jeopardise friendships. Many adolescents cope with the stress of domestic violence by distancing themselves from their family or friends. They may withdraw emotionally through music, reading or participating in on-line virtual worlds, or physically by spending long periods out of the home, or running away.

- 4.10 Assessments, judgements and plans for children living with domestic or intimate partner violence benefit from the expertise of practitioners working in services for domestic violence. Services for children and families and young people need to take a proactive, collaborative approach to identifying and responding appropriately to domestic and intimate partner violence. Children and families and adolescents experiencing domestic and intimate partner violence are likely to need well targeted support from a range of different agencies. Mothers and children need safe places to stay and children and adolescents need mentors to ensure their needs are identified and met and their welfare is safeguarded and promoted.
- 4.11 The three central imperatives of any intervention for children living with domestic violence are:
- To protect the children, including unborn child/ren;
 - To empower the mother to protect herself and her child/ren;
 - To identify the abusive partner, hold him accountable for his violence and provide him with opportunities to change.



5. The effects of abuse on vulnerable adults

- 5.1 Vulnerable adults can also become victims of domestic abuse and their experience and ability to report or escape domestic abuse will be different to victims who are able bodied.
- 5.2 A Vulnerable Adult, as defined in the Department of Health 'No Secret' guidance is: a person aged 18 years or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation". (Community care services will be taken to include all care services provided in any setting or context).



5.2.1 **Women with disabilities are:**

- Twice as likely to experience gender based violence than non-disabled women.
- Likely to experience abuse over a longer period of time and suffer more severe injuries as a result.
- Less likely to seek help and often the help is not appropriate.
- Severely limited in their capacity to escape by their disability.
- Often subject to more acute abuse where the abusive partner is their carer and financial abuse is widely used.
- More likely to experience high levels of degrading emotional abuse and high level extreme sexual violence.
- Fearful of being placed in an institution as the only means of escape.



Women with mental health and / or substance misuse issues:

- Women who have experienced Domestic Abuse are significantly more likely to experience depression, anxiety, despair, trauma symptoms, self harm and suicide and be service users of mental health services.
- Some women are introduced to substances by their violent partners in order to increase their control over them.
- Mental health and drug & alcohol professionals tend to underestimate the proportion of their female clients who experience domestic abuse.
- One-third of women attending emergency departments for self-harm were domestic abuse survivors and 50% of women of Asian origin who have attempted suicide or self-harm are domestic abuse survivors.
- Women experiencing domestic abuse are up to fifteen times more likely to misuse alcohol and nine times more likely to misuse other drugs than women generally.
- When a woman seeks support, information or treatment for her substance misuse, her partner may become even more abusive, or may actively prevent or discourage her attendance at a substance misuse service.
- Women with problematic substance use who also experience domestic abuse are particularly likely to feel isolated and doubly stigmatised. They may find it even harder than other women to report or even to name their experience as domestic abuse; and when they do, are in a particularly vulnerable position, and may be unable to access any suitable sources of support.



5.2.1

Adults with Learning Disabilities

- There is very little information or data on the prevalence of Domestic Abuse with adults with learning disabilities.
- Adults with learning disabilities may also become victims of Forced Marriages which is often seen as a way of obtaining a carer for the adult, or a way of securing a person a visa to come to this country or in some cultures believe a forced marriage will “cure” the learning disability.
- It is reasonable to conclude adults with learning disability may not have access to information about Domestic Abuse if the only format available is traditional written text documents.

5.3

Abuse often involves control, and there are many ways that an abuser can control his victim such as through neglect or by denying them access to people, family and friends.

5.4

Vulnerable adults may face additional obstacles when trying to leave an abusive relationship, these can include:

- Inability to escape a situation due to architectural inaccessibility; difficulty financing and obtaining adaptive equipment to provide the mobility and independence to leave
- Cognitive impairment that make it difficult to recognise abuse and seek help, such as mental illness
- Isolation, with few chances to form a support network or meet with persons who might provide legal, psychological, financial or logistical assistance.

5.5

A lot of domestic abuse to older adults especially women is financial abuse often perpetrated by their sons and this will require a different response.

5.6

Supporting families in need and protecting vulnerable children and adults can be best achieved by implementing a Multi-Agency Strategy within the context of developing safer, healthier communities. No one agency can achieve this alone and it is imperative that we work together to safeguard the most vulnerable in accordance with Local Safeguarding Children's Board Procedures and the Safeguarding Adults Board Prevention Strategy.



6. Who are the abusers?

6.1 Abusers can be men, women and in some cases children although statistically in excess of 90 per cent of cases are perpetrated by men. Techniques used by abusers can be subtle and include violence and coercion. Much of the abuse takes place in private, behind closed doors, and often others, including professionals, regard the abuser as a model person even when confronted with evidence to the contrary.

6.2 Abusers will attempt to justify their behaviour as being caused by stress, substance misuse, low self-esteem, unemployment, over work or insecurity. However the real reason is the desire to exercise power and control.



7. What are the recognised forms of abuse?

7.1 **“Abuse”** is the violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological. It may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

7.2 **Physical Abuse:** Including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking or inappropriate sanctions.

7.3 **Sexual Abuse:** Includes rape and sexual assault or sexual attacks to which the victim has not consented, or could not consent or was pressurised into consenting.

7.4 **Psychological Abuse:** Emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliating, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

7.5 **Financial Abuse:** Theft, fraud, exploitation or pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance, financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, benefits or possessions.



8. The profile of domestic abuse in Solihull

8.1 We know from the Police violent crime profile the following about domestic abuse in Solihull:

- 1 in 3 Domestic Abuse incidents reported to the Police results in a crime being recorded
- Vulnerable months for Domestic Abuse offences are July, December and May
- Alcohol is involved in 18.2 percent of offences
- Emotional abuse is twice more likely to be experienced than Physical abuse
- Over a quarter of Victims are aged between 18 and 23 years of age
- Offenders are most likely to be white males between the ages of 19 to 27
- Two-thirds of offences resulted in injury caused by the weapon

8.2 This data shows the profile of domestic abuse in accordance with Police statistics. It is important to remember that not every victim will contact the Police. Many will contact a support service directly, and many will not contact anyone. Domestic abuse is one of the most under reported crimes and as such any information gathered will not show the full extent of the problem.

8.3 During June 2010 Solihull Partnership conducted a counting week to collect data on domestic abuse referrals to statutory and voluntary organisations that provide support to domestic abuse victims. Of the agencies invited to participate the following have provided data that has been analysed to provide a clear picture of the current level of domestic abuse in Solihull:

West Midlands Police
 Probation
 Housing
 Make A Better Life Trust
 Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid

8.4 The following tables highlight some of the information captured during the weeklong count from 7th to the 13th June 2010.

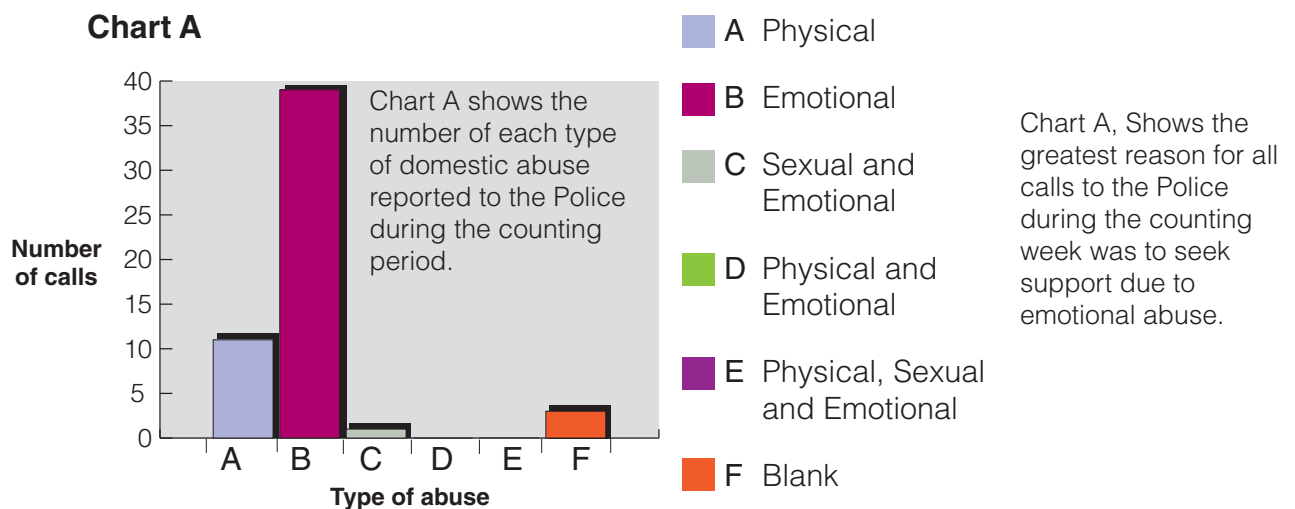


Chart B

Chart A shows the number of each type of abuse reported to Birmingham and Solihull's Women's Aid during the counting period.

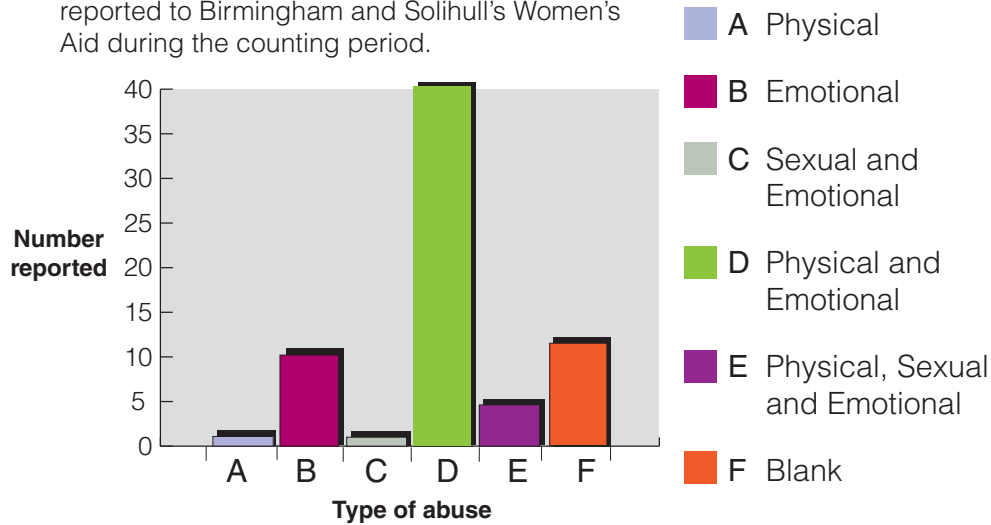


Chart B shows the greatest reason for all calls/referrals to Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid during the count was to seek support due to physical and emotional abuse.

Chart C

Chart C shows the number of each type of violence reported to the Make A Better Life Trust during the counting period

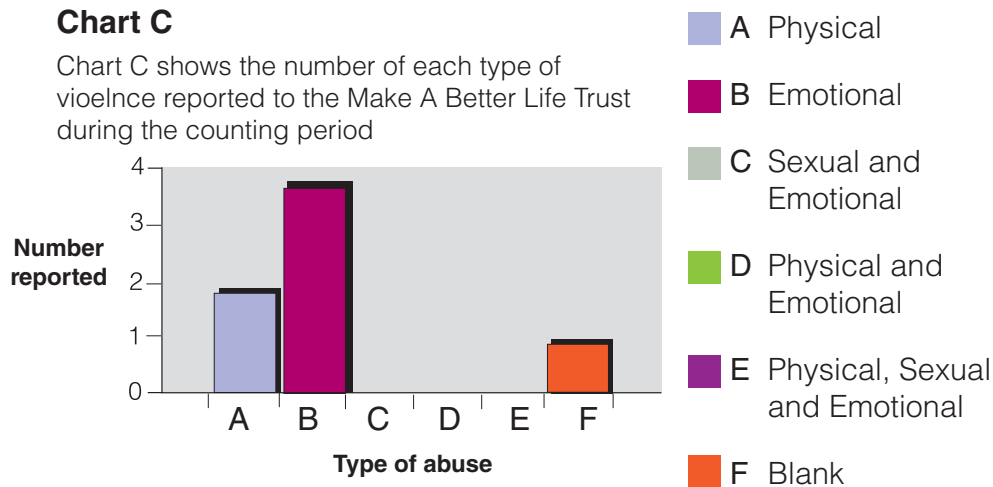


Chart C shows the greatest reason for all calls/referrals to MABL during the count was the same as above, to seek support due to physical and emotional abuse.

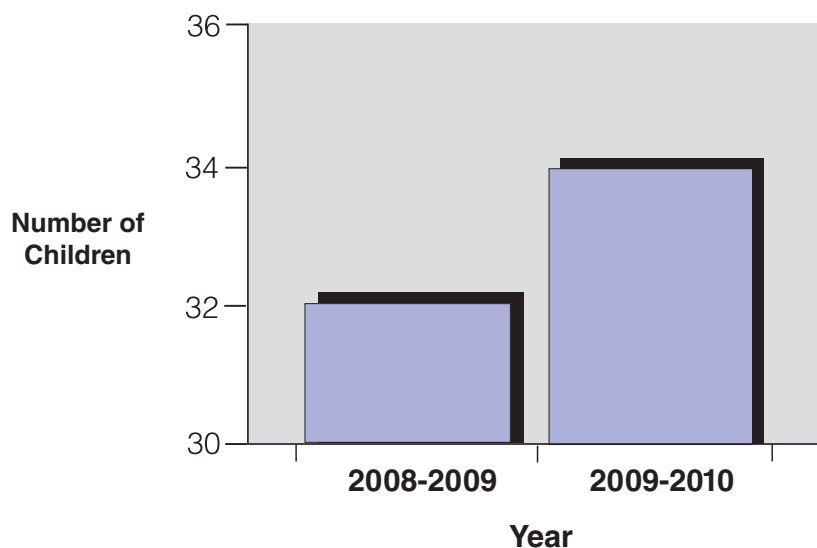
8.5

These charts show the majority of victims contact the Police regarding emotional abuse, however, more victims contacted support services regarding domestic and sexual abuse, during the counting period. This may suggest victims feel more comfortable disclosing other forms of abuse to someone specifically trained to provide a specialist domestic abuse service.

These graphs show a small amount of the information collected during the weeklong count in June. The total number of referrals made to all agencies that took part was 123. This is during one week only and we must remember includes a small number of services.

- 8.6 As discussed earlier children can be adversely affected by witnessing domestic abuse, the next few graphs begin to demonstrate the number of children in Solihull that have been affected. Again these levels only represent children that are known through involvement from children's services, Police or health, there may be many more not known to any service that are having to live with the effects of domestic abuse.
- 8.7 The graph below shows the number of children in Solihull who are subject to a child protection plan in 2008 and 2009 where the reason for the plan was a result of domestic abuse occurring in the family home.

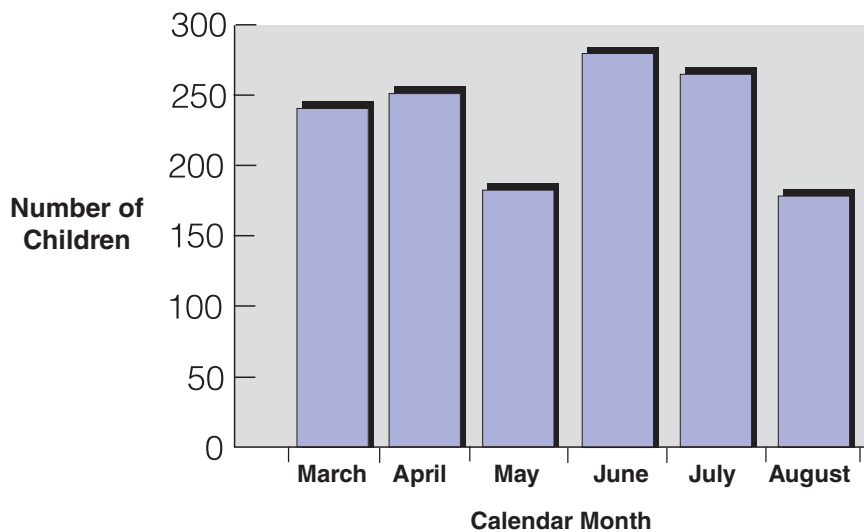
Chart D This chart shows the number of children subject to a child protection plan in 2008 and 2009 as a result of domestic abuse.



- 8.8 As part of Solihull's safeguarding work a new process known as triage was implemented in 2009 to address the needs of children as victims witnessing domestic abuse. This process brings together the Police, Health and Children's Services to share historical information and discuss the care needs of children identified as living with domestic abuse. During this meeting, held three times a week, the three services will discuss each child and assess the level of intervention/action required on a scale of 1 to 4. The following graph will show the number of children that have been assessed since the process began and to what level. Level 4 requires the most intense support and response.

Chart E

This chart shows the number of children discussed at Triage for the period March to August 2010.

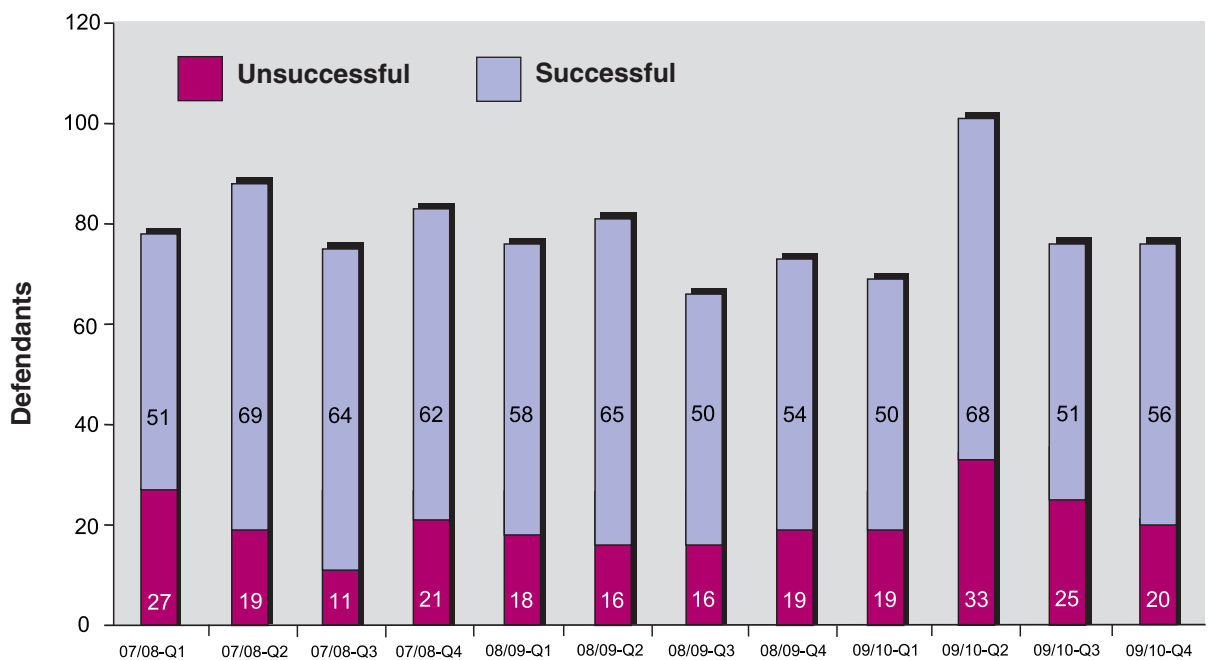


8.9

It is important that we do not just measure the number of referrals but also the number of cases passing through the criminal justice system. Again this is a small number when compared to the level of numbers seeking support but never the less will help us to gage success.

The graph below shows the comparison of successful to unsuccessful cases at Solihull Magistrates Court from 2007 to 2009.

Solihull Magistrates Court Specialist Domestic Violence Court - Historic Data



8.10

We can see that Solihull has consistently higher successful prosecutions compared to unsuccessful. This data does not include the reasons for an unsuccessful prosecution and this will be considered later in the action plan accompanying this strategy. We hope to develop a more robust data collection process to help us become more successful when commissioning domestic abuse services in Solihull.

9. National Context

- 9.1 The national context of domestic abuse has changed significantly with the coalition Government. At the time of producing this strategy the Equalities Minister and Home Secretary announced cuts of £2.5 billion and the halt to a new power to be given to the Police which would have allowed them to remove the violent partner from their home for up to two weeks, helping to safeguard the victim and family.
- 9.2 The coalition government has also confirmed in the Home Office's Draft Structural Reform Plan that a new violence against women strategy will be published in early 2011.
- 9.3 Until then we have the outcome of the extensive violence and against women and girls consultation that will be used to help develop our plans for the future. The guidance produced sets out a range of suggestions for the Police, Councils, the NHS and other government departments across the key areas; prevention, provision, protection. To download a the full pdf version of the consultation visit the home office website at www.homeoffice.gov.uk

10. Local Context

- 10.1 Domestic abuse cuts across all social, geographical and cultural groups. It affects individuals, families and the community as a whole. Research has consistently shown that domestic Abuse will affect 1 in 4 women during their lifetime. In Solihull we have a total population of 199,517. Of this population, 102,834 are female. (Census 2001) This means we potentially have 25,708 female victims of domestic abuse living within our community.
- 10.2 The Domestic Abuse Strategic Group, a sub-group of the Safer Solihull Group, drives the multi-agency work within Solihull. This group liaises closely with the Domestic Abuse Practice and Information Group and feeds into the Safer Solihull Group. Appendix A (page 26) shows the Structure of the groups and where Domestic Abuse fits.
- 10.3 Since our 2008 strategy was produced there have been a number of successful actions completed. Some of our achievements so far:
- An array of advertising produced over the course of the last two years to raise awareness of domestic abuse, and signpost to services; these have been in the form of leaflets, posters, bus advertising campaigns, newspaper articles, panic alarms, lip balms and our domestic abuse survivors pack can be found on the Solihull Council website, detailing all the services in Solihull that can provide support to any victim of abuse.
 - Many one-day training events have been held to increase the knowledge of professionals, to ensure victims are referred to the correct and appropriate service dependant on what they want and at the earliest opportunity These include safeguarding adult's staff and all designated safeguarding members of staff in schools.

- Solihull has been recognised since its CAADA (coordinated action against domestic abuse) review in 2008 as running an excellent MARAC (multi agency risk assessment conference) this group addresses the needs of the victim and develops bespoke care packages. This process was victim focused and did not fully address the needs of children witnessing abuse. A new process has been implemented in Solihull called 'Triage' which is a meeting held three times a week to look specifically at the needs and safeguarding issues of any children that reside at an address where domestic abuse has been identified by the police. This group is made up of key stakeholders including Police, Children's Services and Health. Each Child's needs are considered using a screening tool and actions are put in place. The introduction of this process has meant a more timely response in considering children's needs and is intended to increase their safety through quick and effective information sharing.
- An area of work explored in the previous strategy document was to look at the difficulties faced by domestic abuse victims who have drug and or alcohol related issues. Working with Solihull Integrated Addiction Services and Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid we have developed practice guidance for professionals around this issue.
- Following on from a Domestic Abuse and Safeguarding Adults workshop held on the 15th April 2009 the first safeguarding adults multi agency procedures have been produced and are available on the Solihull MBC website.
- There is limited counselling support available to victims of domestic abuse in Solihull. Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid have begun to reduce this lack of provision by offering family counselling to those affected by abuse.
- The Make A Better Life Trust in Solihull is now rolling out its FREEDOM programme. They work with small groups of women that have been affected by abuse and look at rebuilding their self esteem and confidence. Referrals are taken from any agency or can be self-made. The aim of the programme is to give women the confidence to begin to move on, and teach them to recognise a controlling relationship to help reduce repeat victimisation.
- Domestic abuse is the second largest cause of homelessness applications in Solihull. The Sanctuary Scheme provides victims of domestic abuse and violent crimes with a real alternative to becoming homeless as a result of the fear they experience at home. The scheme involves the fitting a range of security devices to the victim's home to reduce the fear they feel from their perpetrators. Anyone living in the Borough of Solihull who has been threatened with or experienced abuse and would become homeless as a result can be referred to the scheme. This includes victims of domestic violence; hate crime or other threats of violence.
- In 2009 the Solihull Local Safeguarding Children's Board delivered a conference centred on domestic abuse and trafficking of children. The conference was an overwhelming success, and encouraged many people to seek more information about domestic abuse, and support services available in Solihull.

11. Where do we go from here?

- 11.1 We know by working together with statutory bodies, the voluntary sector and our communities we can achieve more. A coordinated response to domestic abuse would ensure that work is developed and sustained across the three standards identified in the Governments violence against women and girls strategy:

Prevention and early intervention

Protection and justice

Support to victims

- 11.2 Each strand is of equal importance in ensuring that, at the same time as meeting the needs of today's victims and bringing today's offenders to justice, we act now to reduce the acceptance of domestic abuse in our communities and work towards long-term sustainable reduction in the prevalence of domestic abuse in Solihull.
- 11.3 Solihull Partnership recognises the need to do more prevention and early intervention if we are to reduce domestic abuse in the long term. However, this strategy will also make a commitment to sustaining and further developing services to support victims and bring offenders to justice.
- 11.4 In commissioning and managing services the Safer Solihull Partnership will work with other partners and organisations, across the statutory and voluntary sectors; to maximise investment and value for money.



12. How are we going to get there?

12.1 We have done a great deal already in Solihull to address the impact of domestic abuse but we know that we can do more. So that we can measure our success we will develop a plan, with qualitative and quantitative measures that will clarify what we want to do and by when.

This will enable us to track our progress and ensure that we remain focused and provide value for money.

12.1.2 **Prevention and early intervention**

Train staff in front line services to respond to domestic abuse. We will develop a comprehensive and structured programme, after careful mapping of existing training, to develop a suitable package for the following: The list is not exhaustive and will evolve as we identify staff who will benefit from having a greater understanding of how best to respond the victims of domestic abuse.

Schools (teachers, governors and pupils)

Sure Start (Staff and service users)

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council SMBC, front line staff

Neighbourhood team staff

Police officers and staff

Health Professionals including A&E staff

Schools (staff and pupils)

Magistrates

Court staff

General Practitioners

Housing support staff

The voluntary and community sector

Adults Social Care

12.1.3 Domestic abuse training will be embedded into the induction of training programmes for all frontline staff across partner agencies.

12.2 **Raise public awareness**

12.2.1 We will sustain and build on the work currently being done to increase public awareness of the services available to support victims of domestic abuse and encourage reporting. We will give consideration to the complexities of domestic abuse and include awareness around forced marriage/honour based violence. This will include provisions of clear accessible information in public places, including health settings, libraries, connexions and many more. We will use the SMBC and partners' website's to promote services and signpost appropriately. This will, wherever possible, be linked to national campaigns.

12.3 **Early intervention**

12.3.1 We will develop a shared protocol and best practice guidelines for first response to victims of domestic abuse including children and young people, which will support partner agencies to maximise the effectiveness of their organisation in responding to victims of domestic abuse.

- 12.3.2 Continue to provide and also develop further opportunities to teach children and young people about appropriate behaviour and relationships to help them recognise abusive tendencies. We will look to provide information about where and how to ask for help and advice.
- 12.3.3 Using good practice already in place such as the Safeguarding Adults practice guidance as a model, we will integrate and co-ordinate the response to domestic abuse, to ensure quick, effective, appropriate interventions are available, no matter which agency is involved.
- 12.3.4 We will work with partners to assess the feasibility of a voluntary perpetrator programme for men who wish to address their abusive behaviour. This will complement the integrated domestic abuse programme (IDAP) delivered by the National Probation service, the only difference being the voluntary programme has no court requirement to attend.

12.4 **Protection and justice**

- 12.4.1 Building on work already in place through the Specialist Domestic Violence Court programme, we will work to improve the confidence of victims to report incidents, and continue to support them through the criminal justice process.
- 12.4.2 We will continue to ensure that the Solihull Multi Agency Risk Assessment conference meets coordinated action against domestic abuse (CAADA) accreditation, and links with the Triage process to ensure robust care plans are developed to address family needs as well as individual ones.

12.5 **Support for Victims**

- 12.5.1 Support for victims in Solihull is provided through specialist support services including Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid, Make A Better Life trust and Victim Support. Between these services victims of abuse have access to a refuge, floating support one to one counselling and support groups, to name a few. We are currently concluding the process to set up a new additional Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate service.

The partnership will focus on sustaining the level of service that already exists within Solihull whilst considering opportunities to develop that provision further through the commissioning of new services. We will work to develop accessible, integrated multi-agency support services delivered in neighbourhoods across the borough to provide support to all victims at all levels of risk.



- 12.5.2 We will establish effective systems to enable ease of access to services for all, paying particular attention to our most vulnerable people and those with disabilities. This will include clear pathways for referrals where there are cross cutting themes, e.g. where a victim receiving support for substance issues discloses domestic abuse. Clear pathways give professionals the information they need to effectively signpost a victim with complex needs.
- 12.5.3 We will develop a framework for collecting feedback from those affected by domestic abuse and receiving support from a Solihull support service. We will use this to identify gaps in service provision and commission services as required.
- 12.5.4 We will work with the Safeguarding adults board to ensure victims with diverse needs receive an appropriate service, as well as monitor and implement developments in support packages available for those with complex needs, for example mental health and substance misuse.
- 12.6 **Meet Victim's housing needs**
- 12.6.1 We will ensure that the housing-related needs of victims are provided for, by working with housing providers, to continue delivering and developing a high quality service.
- 12.6.2 Housing issues for victims of domestic abuse are extremely complex and can change dramatically within a few hours. Meeting these needs effectively and contributing to reducing risk requires co-ordination at both strategic and operational levels, and a clear understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse within all housing related agencies.
- 12.6.3 Ensure the continuation of the Solihull specialist domestic violence court (SDVC) through regular steering group meetings that effectively manage the SDVC programme, and produce appropriate feedback and recommendations to the Domestic Abuse Strategic Group about reducing attrition rates.
- 12.7 **Protect and support children and young people**
- 12.7.1 111 children potentially witnessed the domestic abuse recorded during the Solihull counting period in June 2010. This does not represent the true figure of how many children are living within households where domestic abuse is prevalent. Meeting their needs effectively is crucial to our aim to reduce domestic abuse in the long term. Where incidents are not reported and the abused parent does not seek support from any agency, living with domestic abuse causes serious, but often hidden harm to children and young people.
- 12.7.2 Through integrated working, we will provide education and support for children and young people who may be affected by domestic abuse, by developing and adopting a tool and good practice guidelines for the whole workforce for considering and addressing the level of needs of children and young people living with domestic abuse.
- 12.7.3 Solihull Safeguarding Children Board provides inter agency multi-agency training and has procedures in place to identify and deal appropriately with children at risk of significant harm by domestic abuse. We know that a high percentage of children referred to children's services have witnessed domestic violence and abuse.

- 12.7.4 All agencies will work to embed support for those children affected by domestic violence into their services, and to ensure that in turn these services are integrated with other support services being offered to the parent. This will ensure a holistic and responsive service to children and young people affected by domestic violence and abuse.
- 12.7.5 We will ensure that key messages are inserted into universal training such as the Common Induction and Integrated Working Awareness courses which are for new starters in the workforce as well as existing staff about recognising domestic abuse and how to respond.
- 12.7.6 The LSCB currently run a one day level 3 course on domestic abuse for those practitioners covering facts and figures, links between domestic abuse and child abuse, identifying risk factors and identifying safe and appropriate responses. The workforce team can advertise this course through our website to ensure practitioners have every opportunity to take advantage of the training available.
- 12.7.7 We will also include needs around domestic abuse in the annual training needs analysis for the workforce.

12.8 **Sexual assault and rape**

- 12.8.1 Sexual assault and rape are features of many domestic abuse cases, and we will ensure that specialist services such as the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) are integrated into multi-agency working practices. Counselling services, for victims of sexual abuse and rape, are delivered by the Rape and Sexual Violence Project (RSVP) of Birmingham and make a vital contribution to the support for victims strand.
- 12.8.2 To ensure that victims of sexual violence within a domestic setting receive the specialist support they need, we will build on the successful working relationship between the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor, Rape & Sexual Violence Project, Victim Support, Women’s Aid and Make A Better Life Trust.

12.9 **Drugs and Alcohol misuse**

- 12.9.1 The use of drugs and alcohol by victims is not uncommon as a coping strategy, and their use by perpetrators tends to lead to more frequent and more serious assaults. There is excellent cross agency working between Solihull Integrated Addiction Services (SIAS) and domestic abuse services in Solihull. This will be reflected in a multi-agency protocol, which identifies clear referral pathways, and addresses the practical difficulties of supporting service users with complex needs.

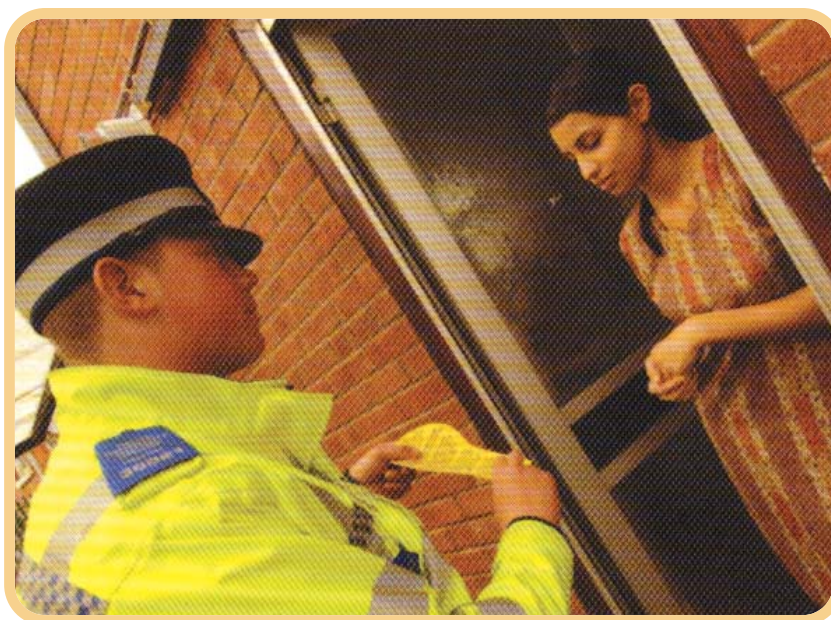


12.10 **Health and Well being**

- 12.10.1 Health services are on the front line in responding to domestic abuse and play a crucial role in the co-ordinated community response. Health data will form an integral part of analysing need and future commissioning plans.

13. Equalities

- 13.1 An equalities impact assessment has been carried out on this strategy, and individual equalities impact assessments will be carried out on any new services developed.
- 13.2 Domestic abuse occurs across all social groups, affecting both males and females, although the vast majority of victims are female and the majority of perpetrators male. Solihull is committed to ensuring that all residents who are experiencing domestic abuse have access to appropriate support services. Marketing and education materials will be gender neutral, and we will seek clarification as to how the needs of male victims will be met in commissioning services.
- 13.3 We will ensure that we meet the additional needs of victims of domestic abuse who are from black and minority ethnic communities, in same sex relationships, have physical or mental health issues, or are particularly vulnerable because of their youth or age, have a disability or have no access to public funds.
- 13.4 We will sustain and further develop specialist services that address the needs of specific marginalised groups e.g. Asian women, or travelers, to ensure accessibility to services.

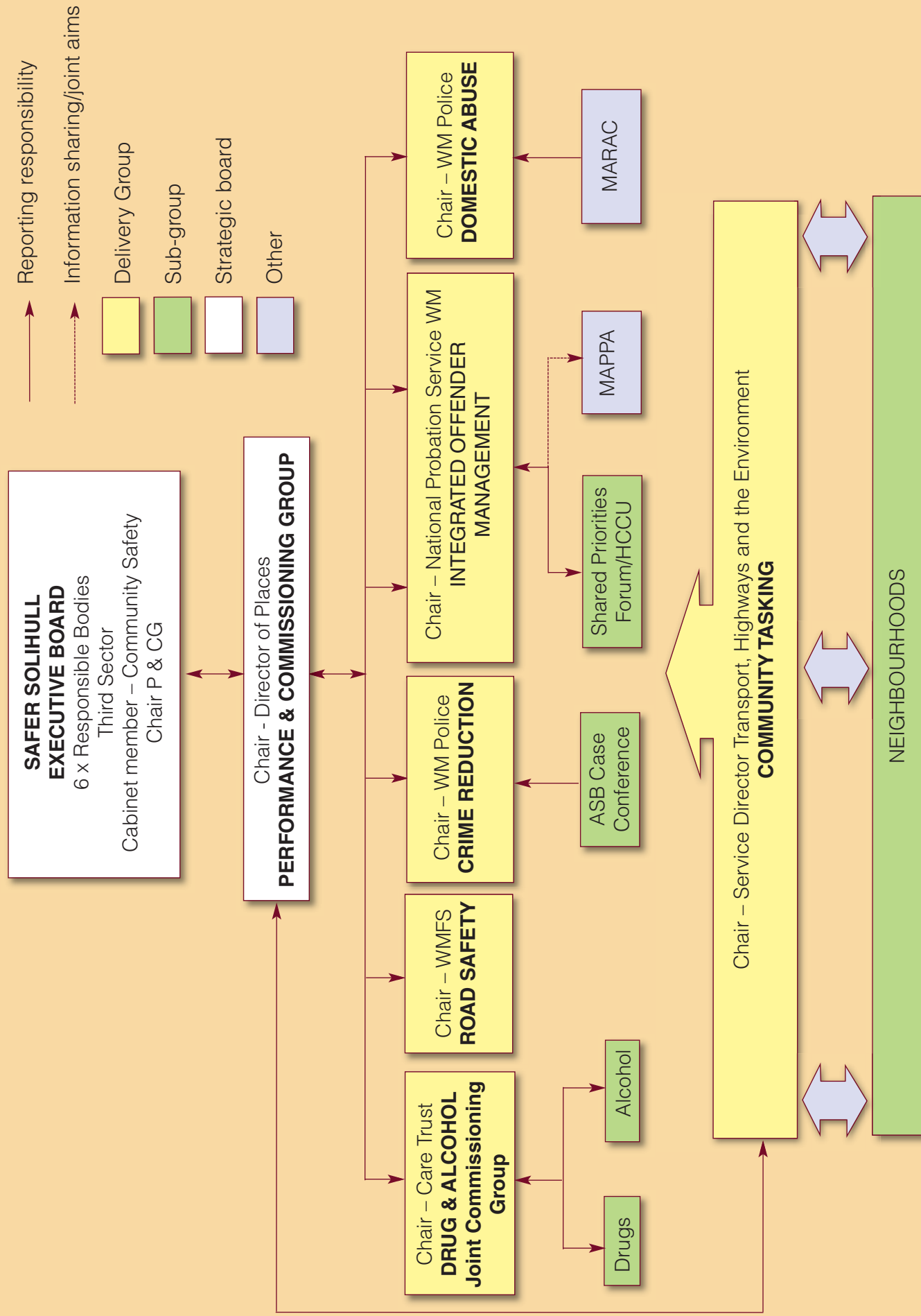


14. Performance Management

- 14.1 Monitoring and evaluation of this strategy and its supporting action plan is important to us to ensure that we have a coordinated multi agency response to domestic abuse in Solihull.
- 14.2 In order to achieve this we will develop a performance framework to measure our effectiveness, assess the impact and identify and celebrate good practice.
- 14.3 The strategy together with our action plan will set out what we intend to do, by when and by whom.
- 14.4 We have already adopted National Indicator 32, reducing repeat incidents of Domestic abuse in cases managed by our Multi Agency Risk Assessment conference but we intend to develop more measures within our action plan that will enable us to track our progress and ensure that we remain focused and provide value for money.
- 14.5 The Domestic Abuse Strategic Group and the Safer Solihull Partnership will monitor our progress, but we are also helped by other groups. These being:
- 14.6 The Solihull Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC) that is held weekly is monitored by the SDVC local operational group which reports to the West Midlands Local Criminal Justice Board. They monitor the success of cases being taken to court.
- 14.7 The domestic abuse practice and information group (DVPI) is a multi-agency group of practitioners with expertise and experience in domestic abuse. Through its representation on the domestic abuse strategic group, the DVPI provides advice and information and also takes forward suggestions for performance measures to complement NI32, and to ensure that the impact on families is included in qualitative data collection.
- 14.8 While the Safer Solihull Partnership is the lead for domestic abuse, all our delivery groups of the Safer Solihull Partnership play a part in working to reduce domestic violence, support victims and their families, and bring perpetrators to justice and will help us to monitor our success.



15. Safer Solihull Partnership Structure Chart



16. References

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