

Bracknell Forest Domestic Abuse Strategy 2026-2032



Accessing Support

If you or someone you know is affected by domestic abuse, you are not alone. Free, confidential support is available for adults and children in Bracknell Forest.

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, and reaching out for help is a brave and important step. You can choose what support feels right for you.

Local support in Bracknell Forest

BWA (Berkshire Women's Aid)

Supports people of all genders with specialist confidential advice, outreach, advocacy and refuge accommodation.

 0808 801 0882

 www.berkshirewomensaid.org.uk

National support services

National services available include:

- [24 hour National Domestic Violence Helpline](#) (for women, run by Refuge): 0808 2000 247
- [Men's Advice Line](#) (for male victims): 0808 801 0327
- [Mankind Initiative](#) (for male victims): 0808 800 1170
- [Galop](#) (LGBT+ helpline): 0800 999 5428
- [National Stalking Helpline](#) (advice for victims of stalking): 0808 802 0300
- [National Honour Based Helpline](#) (for those affected by Honour Based Abuse, run by Karma Nirvana): 0800 5999 247
- [Childline](#) (for children and young people): 0800 1111

Support for people concerned about their own behaviour

If you are worried about your behaviour towards a partner or family member, confidential help is available through the [Respect Helpline](#): 0808 8024040.

Emergency and police support

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, always call 999.

If you are unable to speak, you can press 55 when prompted to alert the operator that you need help.

If you use British Sign Language (BSL), you can contact emergency services through the 999 BSL app or website for free.

For non-emergencies contact Thames Valley Police on 101, [report it online](#), or visit your nearest police station.

More information

Further information about support, safety advice and services can be found on the Bracknell Forest Council website: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/domestic-abuse.

A directory of support services is included in [Appendix 2](#) of this strategy.

Foreword

Domestic abuse devastates lives, families, and communities. In the year ending March 2025, it is estimated that 3.8 million people (aged 16 years and over) in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse. It does not discriminate, affecting people of all ages, genders, ethnicities, and backgrounds, and too often remains hidden behind closed doors. In Bracknell Forest, we are committed to addressing domestic abuse, confronting it and supporting those affected with a co-ordinated, trauma-informed and whole system approach, accessible to all.

This strategy sets out our collective vision and priorities for addressing domestic abuse in Bracknell Forest from 2026 onwards. It builds on the strong foundations laid by previous work, aligns with the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#), and responds directly to the voices of survivors, frontline professionals, and our local communities.

We recognise that tackling domestic abuse requires strong and sustained partnerships. Our strategy has been shaped through collaboration with statutory agencies, the voluntary and community sector, health partners, education providers, and, crucially, those with lived experience.

Our priorities are clear: raise awareness and challenge harmful attitudes; intervene early to prevent abuse; provide effective, wraparound support to adult and child victim-survivors (recognising children as victims in their own right); and take robust action against those who perpetrate harm. We will also remain flexible and reflective, learning from what works (and what does not), listening to lived experience, and adapting our approach to meet emerging needs.

We are proud to present the Bracknell Domestic Abuse Strategy 2026-2032. It is not just a document; it is a call to action. Every resident, organisation and professional has a role to play in making Bracknell Forest a place where everyone can live free from fear, abuse, and coercion.

Councillor Georgia Pickering

Cabinet Member for Housing, Community Safety and Communication
Bracknell Forest Council Armed Forces Champion

Executive Summary

Domestic abuse affects individuals, children, families and communities across Bracknell Forest. This strategy sets out our shared commitment to prevent abuse, intervene early, support adult and child victim-survivors, and hold perpetrators to account. It is informed by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the 2024 Bracknell Forest Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment, and feedback from those with lived experience, local professionals and partner agencies.

This strategy aligns with the UK Government's [Freedom from Violence and Abuse VAWG Strategy \(2025\)](#), ensuring Bracknell Forest contributes to the national ambition to halve violence against women and girls within a decade.

Children are recognised as victims in their own right. The impact of domestic abuse on their safety, development, wellbeing and long-term outcomes is significant, and this strategy strengthens our ambitions for children. We are committed to ensuring that children are safe, heard and supported; have access to timely and trauma-informed interventions; and can recover, develop resilience and thrive.

Our strategic approach focuses on four priorities:

1. **Prevention and Early Intervention** – raising awareness, building resilience, education and identifying risk earlier.
2. **Support for victim-survivors** – providing accessible, trauma-informed support for both adults and children, improving safe accommodation pathways, and addressing the needs of those with additional vulnerabilities.
3. **Holding Perpetrators Accountable** – reducing reoffending through robust criminal justice responses and behaviour change interventions.
4. **Partnership Working** – strengthening multi-agency collaboration, learning, data and governance.

This strategy will be delivered through a detailed, multi-agency action plan owned by the Domestic Abuse Executive Group. Each priority includes clear actions, lead agencies, timescales and measures of success. Progress will be monitored quarterly, with an annual report and a full mid-strategy review in 2029 to ensure our response remains effective, evidence-based and aligned to statutory requirements.

Partners across Bracknell Forest are committed to a coordinated whole system approach that prioritises safety, promotes recovery and improves outcomes for adults and children living with domestic abuse.

Introduction

This strategy has been produced by the Bracknell Forest Domestic Abuse Executive Group which brings together partners from Bracknell Forest Council, Thames Valley Police, the National Probation Service, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley, Abri Housing, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (BHFT), BWA (Berkshire Women's Aid), Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board, Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust, Kaleidoscopic UK, NHS Thames Valley Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) NHS Foundation Trust.

Our shared aim is to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse and ensure that where domestic abuse does occur, all those affected are able to access timely, appropriate and trauma-informed support.

This strategy sets out our joint commitment across agencies in Bracknell Forest to support all those impacted by domestic abuse, including adult and child victim-survivors, and those who perpetrate abuse. It is grounded in the voices of those with lived experience and shaped through extensive engagement with partners and the community.

Our approach aligns with the UK Government's Freedom from Violence and Abuse: A Cross-Government Strategy to Build a Safer Society for Women and Girls (2025), which sets out a national ambition to halve violence against women and girls within a decade and outlines a whole-system, whole-society approach. While the national Strategy recognises the disproportionate impact on women and girls, Bracknell Forest's approach supports all victim-survivors, regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation or background, ensuring our response is inclusive and accessible to anyone affected by domestic abuse.

This strategy also supports Bracknell Forest Council's statutory duty to have in place a strategy that ensures the provision of support for victims and their children within safe accommodation as required by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (a definition can be found on [page 19](#)).

Our Vision

Bracknell Forest is a place where domestic abuse is not tolerated; where everyone can live safely, free from fear, abuse and control; where every adult and child victim-survivor is believed, supported and empowered; and where perpetrators are challenged and held to account.

We are committed to a future where children and young people are safe, recognised as victims in their own right, and supported to recover and thrive.

Through strong partnership working, Bracknell Forest Council and our partners are committed to delivering a coordinated and effective response to domestic abuse that promotes safety, prevents harm and builds resilience across our borough.

Strategic Ambition for Children

Children are uniquely affected by domestic abuse. Its impact can be immediate and lifelong, influencing safety, health, education wellbeing and future relationships. Our ambition is to ensure that children are visible, protected and supported at every stage of their journey through services.

We want every child victim-survivor to:

- Be safe, protected and prioritised within all safeguarding responses.
- Be heard, with their experiences taken seriously and guiding decision-making.
- Experience stability in education, housing and relationships wherever possible.
- Have timely access to high-quality, trauma-informed support.
- Have improved health, wellbeing and resilience, supported to rebuild confidence and recover from trauma.
- Experience positive long-term outcomes, free from cycles of harm or intergenerational abuse.

This ambition underpins all four of our strategic priorities and ensures that every action we take strengthens the safety, visibility, outcomes and long-term recovery of children affected by domestic abuse.

Our Strategic Priorities

To achieve our vision, our strategy focuses on four strategic priorities. These priorities underpin our approach, key areas of work and success measures to ensure that progress can be monitored and evaluated effectively over the next six years.

Each priority is set out below with a clear description of our approach.

1. Prevention and early intervention

To stop domestic abuse before it starts and ensure early identification and appropriate responses when it does occur.

Prevention and early intervention are essential to reducing the prevalence and impact of domestic abuse. By identifying risks and responding at the earliest opportunity, we can stop domestic abuse from occurring or escalating, reduce harm, and break the cycle. Early intervention helps maintain safety, stability and well-being for both adult and child victim-survivors, while also reducing long-term demand on services.

Our approach includes:

Increasing awareness of what domestic abuse is and the support available

Knowing where and how to access support is crucial when a person experiencing domestic abuse is ready to seek help. Effective communication campaigns will increase community awareness, improve understanding of domestic abuse and ensure people know how to access support safely. We will strengthen community awareness by ensuring information is available to help people recognise abuse earlier and feel more able to seek support when they are ready.

Working with schools and youth settings

Early education on healthy, respectful and safe relationships is critical to prevention. Developing awareness and resilience from an early age can help children and young people to recognise abusive behaviours, understand consent, and seek support when needed, reduce the likelihood of future victimisation or perpetration.

Training professionals across the partnership

A skilled and confident workforce is essential to preventing abuse, supporting recovery and ensuring effective safeguarding. Professionals working across our partnership agencies, including health, education, social care, housing, community safety, policing, legal and court systems, and voluntary sector services must be able to respond effectively. Professionals should have the skills and confidence to make safe enquiries, recognise and identify risk, respond in a trauma-informed way, and safeguard both adults and children. Adult and child victim-survivors should feel safe, listened to, and supported. Developing workforce competence is essential to ensuring domestic abuse is not minimised, overlooked or missed.

Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)¹

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme is a vital tool for prevention and early intervention. Through the 'Right to Know' and the 'Right to Ask' processes, individuals and professionals can request information about a person's history of abusive or violent behaviour. This enables early risk identification, empowers potential victims to make informed decisions, and ensures that disclosures

¹ [Request information under Clare's Law: Make a Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme \(DVDS\) application | Thames Valley Police](#)

are accompanied by safeguarding support and referrals to specialist services. We will continue to promote and strengthen the use of the DVDS across Bracknell Forest.

Post-separation abuse

Domestic abuse frequently continues after a relationship has ended. We will recognise and address post-separation abuse, including coercive control, stalking, harassment, economic abuse and unsafe child contact arrangements. Early identification of these patterns is essential to preventing escalation and ensuring the ongoing safety of adult and child victim-survivors.

2. Support for Victims and Survivors

To ensure all adult and child victim-survivors of domestic abuse receive timely, trauma-informed, and person-centred support that enables recovery, safety and long-term independence.

Support for adult victim-survivors - Adults affected by domestic abuse will have access specialist support that is timely, safe, and culturally competent. Support will be coordinated across agencies to improve safety, address trauma and empower victim-survivors to rebuild their lives free from fear.

Support for child victim-survivors – Children will be recognised as victims in their own right. They will receive age-appropriate, timely and trauma-informed support, with a focus on safety, emotional wellbeing, stability and recovery. Through this strategy, we aim for children to: feel safe, supported and listened to; access timely therapeutic and emotional support; experience improved emotional wellbeing; maintain stability in education, routines and relationships, build resilience and healthy relationships; have clear, consistent pathways into specialist support.

Our approach includes:

Specialist community-based support

We will ensure adult victim-survivors have access to specialist services, including Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs), outreach, floating support, safe accommodation pathways, and health and wellbeing services. Support will be delivered in a trauma-informed way, ensuring victim-survivors feel believed, listened to and safe.

Safe and accessible accommodation

We will provide a range of safe accommodation options, including refuge provision and the Sanctuary Scheme, in line with Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Adult and child victim-survivors will be supported to access housing pathways that prevent homelessness, promote safety and stability.

Health, mental health and wellbeing support

Adults will have pathways into physical and mental health services, including trauma-informed care and support for suicidal ideation, aligning with the Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy.

Criminal and civil justice support

Victim-survivors will be supported to navigate criminal, family court processes including access to advocacy services (through partner agencies), protective measures such as Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders (DVPNs/DVPOs),² and other safeguarding tools.

² A Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) is an emergency measure issued by police, which can be followed by a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) from the court to extend protection for up to 28 days.

Children as victims in their own right

Children will have access to specialist interventions that address the impact of domestic abuse and support recovery. This includes programmes such as [DART](#) (Domestic Abuse Recovering Together) and services offered through [Safe!](#).

Post-separation abuse support

We recognise that abuse does not always stop when a relationship ends, in fact it is a high risk time for adult and child victim-survivors. Many experience post-separation abuse, including coercive control, stalking, harassment, child contact manipulation and financial abuse. Our support offer will include post-separation support.

Lived experience

We will engage with adult and child victim-survivors to ensure their voices shape services, policies and interventions. Lived experience will inform all aspects of the strategy, ensuring our responses are practical, relevant and sensitive to the needs of those affected.

3. Holding perpetrators accountable

To reduce re-offending, protect adult and child victim-survivors, and change abusive behaviours through robust multi-agency management of perpetrators.

Bracknell Forest is committed to challenging and disrupting abusive behaviour, holding perpetrators accountable, and reducing the risk of harm to adult and child victim-survivors. Effective perpetrator intervention is central to promoting adult and child victim-survivor safety and preventing future abuse.

Our approach includes:

Perpetrator programmes

- Deliver evidence-based interventions for perpetrators where safe and appropriate (DAPS – Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Service), linked to parallel support for adult victim-survivors.
- Deliver the Who's In Charge programme, to address child-to-parent violence and abuse (CPVA)
- Continue to support the Drive model to target high-risk, high-harm, and serial perpetrators through intensive case management.
- Deliver targeted interventions for repeat offenders through MATAC (Multi Agency Tasking and Co-ordination).

Criminal justice response

- Ensure effective investigation and prosecution of domestic abuse offences.
- Promote the use of Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders (DAPNs/DAPOs) to safeguard adult and child victim-survivors and prevent further harm.
- Provide support for victim-survivors as they navigate the criminal justice system.

Civil and court-based measures

- Promote the use of non-molestation orders, occupation orders, and other civil remedies to protect victim-survivors.
- Ensure specialist support for victim-survivors navigating family court proceedings, including child contact and residence cases.

Awareness and early intervention with potential perpetrators

- Promote early engagement strategies such as Plain Talking.

- Increase awareness of what domestic abuse looks like, including coercive control, across local communities.
- Ensure people know how to access when concerned about their own behaviour.

Post-separation perpetrator behaviour

Our perpetrator response will include post-separation behaviours, recognising that risk often increases when a victim-survivor leaves a relationship. Multi-agency management will focus on disrupting ongoing coercive control, stalking, harassment and unsafe child contact practices.

4. Partnership Working

To ensure a whole system, co-ordinated community response that brings agencies together to prevent and tackle domestic abuse effectively.

Bracknell Forest recognises that domestic abuse is complex and requires a strong, co-ordinated multi-agency response. Effective partnership working is essential to preventing harm, supporting adult and child victim-survivors and holding perpetrators accountable.

Our approach includes:

Integrated service delivery

Ensuring that responses across health, social care, education, housing, policing and community safety services have clear, accessible and trauma-informed referral pathways.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)

Ensuring MARAC processes are timely, effective, and fully integrated with safeguarding for adults and children, supporting information sharing and co-ordinated safety planning for high-risk cases.

Information sharing and learning

Strengthening information sharing, embedding learning from Domestic Abuse-Related Death Reviews (DARDs) and other safeguarding reviews, ensuring that key themes, risks and recommendations are understood across agencies and embedded into practice, policies and training. Improving data collection, information sharing and analysis across the partnership to better understand prevalence, identify gaps in support, monitor trends, and target interventions more effectively.

Governance

Maintain strong governance through the Bracknell Forest Domestic Abuse Executive Group, Domestic Abuse Forum and other key partnerships. Ensuring domestic abuse is embedded into key partnership plans and priorities (e.g. safeguarding, early help, housing, health, education and criminal justice).

Commissioning services

Commission services in partnership to avoid duplication, maximise value for money, and address identified need. Monitor service delivery through clear quality standards and victim-survivor feedback.

What is domestic abuse?

Definition

Domestic abuse is a significant public health, safeguarding and criminal justice issue at both a national and local level. It affects individuals, families and communities across Bracknell Forest. It is not limited to physical abuse, it can take many forms, often hidden, with devastating and long-lasting consequences for adult and child victim-survivors.

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) provides, for the first time, a statutory definition of domestic abuse in England and Wales. Under the Act, domestic abuse is defined as:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between individuals aged 16 or over who are personally connected to each other, regardless of gender or sexuality.

Individuals are considered personally connected if they:

- Are or have been married or in a civil partnership
- Are or have agreed to marry one another or enter into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- Are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- Are or have been parents or had parental responsibility for the same child
- Are relatives

Behaviour is abusive if it includes, but is not limited to:

- **Physical abuse:** Hitting, slapping, strangulation, or any other form of physical abuse.
- **Sexual abuse:** Any sexual act without consent or under coercion.
- **Violent or threatening behaviour:** throwing objects, damaging property, threats of physical harm (to self or others), threatening to use of weapons, driving dangerously or aggressively, blocking doorways or exits.
- **Emotional or psychological abuse:** Insults, threats, humiliation, intimidation, isolation, or manipulation that undermines a person's sense of self-worth.
- **Coercive or controlling behaviour:** A pattern of acts designed to isolate, dominate, intimidate or exploit a victim. This became a criminal offence in 2015.
- **Economic abuse:** Controlling access to money, employment, or basic needs, such as food or transport.
- **Digital abuse:** The use of technology to harass, stalk, or intimidate, including tracking devices or online threats.
- **So called 'Honour' based abuse:** Violence and abuse committed to protect or defend the honour of a family or community, which may include forced marriage or female genital mutilation (FGM).

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also recognises children as victims in their own right if they see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse. This acknowledges the significant and long-term impact that witnessing abuse can have on children's health, development, and emotional wellbeing.

Domestic abuse has an effect across all social, cultural, and economic boundaries. While women are disproportionately affected, anyone, regardless of age, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or background, can be a victim or survivor of domestic abuse. Some groups may face additional barriers

to accessing support, including disabled individuals, older adults, LGBTQ+ communities, and people with insecure immigration status or no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

Domestic abuse often involves ongoing patterns of abuse that escalate in severity and frequency over time. Even after a relationship has ended, the abuse may continue (post-separation abuse), particularly where victim-survivors co-parent with the perpetrator or face ongoing stalking, harassment, economic abuse and control.

Domestic abuse has long-lasting effects, not only on the direct adult victim but on children, extended family, workplaces, and wider communities. The impacts on mental and physical health, housing stability, and financial security are profound.

How common is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is a complex and often 'hidden' crime, happening most often behind closed doors. While statistical data helps us to understand patterns, prevalence and impact, we recognise that domestic abuse is also significantly under-reported. Many adult and child victim-survivors may never come to the attention of services due to fear, stigma, coercion, or lack of trust in systems. Therefore, recorded data provides only a partial picture of the true scale of domestic abuse.

- An estimated 3.8 million people aged 16 and over in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2025, equating to one in four (25.8%) people.³
- Women are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse with 2.2 million females (9.1%) and 1.5 million males (6.5%) men experiencing domestic abuse in the last year.³
- In the year ending March 2025, police recorded approximately 1.4 million domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes in England and Wales³, however domestic abuse is still considered an under reported crime so the real scale is likely far greater.
- Between April 2023 and March 2024, there were 262 domestic abuse-related deaths.⁴
 - 98 suspected victim suicide following domestic abuse (SVSDA)
 - 80 intimate partner homicides (IPH)
 - 39 adult family homicides
 - 28 unexpected deaths
 - 11 child deaths
 - 6 'other' (where the victim and suspect lived together, but were not related or intimate partners)
- Over four years (April 2020 – March 2024), the number of people killed by their current or previous partner consistently represents about a third of domestic abuse-related deaths each year.⁴

Groups at higher risk or facing additional barriers

Domestic abuse can affect anyone, but some groups of individuals face heightened risks or additional barriers when seeking help. These may relate to identity, life stage, health needs, socio-economic factors or wider structural inequalities.

³ Office for National Statistics, Domestic Abuse prevalence in England and Wales, November 2025
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesoverview/november2025#headline-statistics-on-domestic-abuse>

⁴ Domestic Homicide Project www.vkpp.org.uk/vkpp-work/domestic-homicide-project

Age:

Older adults may face distinct vulnerabilities, including dependence on family/partner/carers, and reduced contact with professionals. Older victims may also be less likely to disclose abuse due to fear of losing independence, loyalty to family members, or assumptions that services cannot support them.

- One in four (23%) victims of recorded domestic homicide are over the age of 60.
- Older victims were nearly equally likely to be killed by a current/former partner or spouse (46%) as they were by their (adult) children or grandchildren (44%).⁵

Child to Parent Violence And Abuse (CPVA):

CPVA affects both adolescent's using violence and abuse towards parents/carers and adult child-to-parent/carer-abuse, which is increasingly recognised in national domestic homicide data. Abuse can stem from complex dynamics including disability, mental health, trauma or unmet needs within the family. These cases often remain hidden due to stigma, shame, or a parent's/carer's desire to protect their child from criminalisation.

Children and young people:

Children are recognised as victims in their own right and can experience direct harm even when not the primary target. Children may experience long-term impacts on mental health, development, education and relationships and may require specialist therapeutic support.

- Over 105,000 children live in homes where there is high-risk domestic abuse.⁶
- 78% of children living with domestic abuse are directly harmed by the perpetrator of the abuse, in addition to the harm caused by witnessing the abuse of others.⁶

Disability:

Disabled adults face disproportionately higher rates of domestic abuse and additional barriers to accessing support. Disability may be exploited by perpetrators through increased dependence, control over personal care, communication barriers, or withholding of medication, equipment, or mobility aids.

- In the year ending March 2020, around 1 in 7 (14.3%) adults (aged 16-59 years old) experienced domestic abuse in the last year, compared with 1 in 20 (5.1%) of adults without a disability.⁷

Ethnicity:

Adult and child victim-survivors from minoritised ethnic communities may face cultural stigma, family pressures, racism, language barriers, or mistrust of statutory services. These factors can make disclosure more difficult and may lead to adult and child victim-survivors enduring abuse for longer before seeking help.

Homelessness:

Domestic abuse is a major driver of homelessness. Adult and child victim-survivors fleeing domestic abuse may face unsafe housing options, re-victimisation, financial instability, or challenges accessing refuge due to complex needs or their household composition.

- 32% of homeless women cite domestic abuse as a contributing factor to their homelessness.⁸

⁵ [parliamentary-briefing---domestic-abuse---jan-2020.pdf](#)

⁶ [Our quarterly Marac data - SafeLives](#)

⁷ Outcomes for disabled people in the UK: 2020, Office for National Statistics
www.ons.gov.uk/releases/outcomesfordisabledpeopleintheuk2020

⁸ [Homelessness and domestic abuse spotlight - SafeLives](#)

Male victim-survivors:

Men also experience domestic abuse, but many face additional barriers to seeking help, including stigma, fear of not being believed and harmful societal expectations around masculinity. Some may minimise their experiences or fear being misidentified as the perpetrator.

Mental health:

Mental health issues can increase vulnerability to abuse and be exacerbated by coercive control, trauma and isolation. Adult and child victim-survivors may be dismissed or not believed due to their mental health needs, while perpetrators may use mental illness as a tool of control.

Migrant victims (including those with insecure immigration status and No Recourse to Public Funds – NRPF):

Fear of deportation, language barriers, limited social networks, mistrust of authorities and lack of access to public funds can prevent victim-survivors from seeking help. Those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) face significant structural barriers in accessing safe accommodation and financial support.

Neurodiversity:

People who are autistic, have ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), learning disabilities or other neurodivergent conditions may face additional communication barriers, increased vulnerability to coercion, and may struggle to navigate complex service systems. Trauma responses may also present differently, meaning their experiences can be misunderstood by professionals.

Pregnancy and new birth:

Pregnancy is a recognised period of high-risk for domestic abuse to begin or escalate. New parents may experience increased isolation, financial dependence, fear of involvement of services, and reduced opportunities to seek help. Abuse during pregnancy poses significant risks to both the parent and the unborn child.

Rural or geographically isolated:

People living in semi-rural or isolated areas may experience reduced access to transport, fewer support services, and a greater community visibility, making it harder to seek help discreetly. Perpetrators may use isolation as a deliberate tool of control.

Sexual orientation and gender identity:

LGBTQ+ victim-survivors may experience unique forms of abuse, including threats of “outing”, isolation from community networks, and discriminatory responses from services.

- 15.2% of bisexual adults reported experiencing domestic abuse in the last year, compared to 8.4% of gay or lesbian and 5.2% of heterosexual adults.⁹

Socio-economic factors:

Economic instability, poverty, illness or dependency can increase risk and reduce opportunities to leave an abusive relationship.

- 4.6% of employed adults experienced domestic abuse in the last year, when compared with 12.9% of those with a long-term or temporary illness, 9.9% of students, and 8.4% of those looking after their family and home.
- However, those who were retired experienced a lower proportion of domestic abuse in the last year (year ending March 2024) compared with those who were employed.¹⁰

⁹ [Domestic Abuse Plan](#)

¹⁰ [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

So called 'Honour Based' Abuse (HBA) and Forced Marriage

In the year ending March 2024, police in England and Wales recorded 2,755 offences related to so-called 'honour-based' abuse, a decrease of 8% when compared with the previous year (n=3,008).¹¹

In 2024, the Home Office Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) received 812 contacts related to a possible forced marriage and/or possible female genital mutilation (FGM).¹² Of these cases, 83 (35% involved victims aged 17 and under, 81 cases (34%) involved victims aged 18 to 25 and 63 cases (26%) involved victims with mental capacity concerns. 171 cases (71%) involved female victims and 69 (29%) involved male victims.

Suicide and domestic abuse

There is growing recognition of the links between domestic abuse and suicide. Research highlights that domestic abuse can be a major risk factor for both suicidal ideation and completed suicide. The National Domestic Homicide Project found that 2023/24 was the second year in a row that suspected victim suicides following domestic abuse had overtaken the number of homicides involving current or previous partners.¹³

¹¹ Gov.uk www.gov.uk/government/statistics/so-called-honour-based-abuse-offences-year-ending-march-2024

¹² Gov.uk www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forced-marriage-unit-statistics-2024

¹³ Domestic Homicide Project www.vkpp.org.uk/vkpp-work/domestic-homicide-project/

Local context: what we know in Bracknell Forest

Domestic abuse is a significant issue in Bracknell Forest, impacting individuals and families across the borough. As with national data, the information we hold locally only represents part of the picture, for many of the reasons outlined above.

Data from Bracknell Forest agencies (1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025)

- 2,807 domestic abuse occurrences (crimes and non-crimes)¹⁴ were recorded by Thames Valley Police.
- 1 in 5 recorded crimes (20%) in Bracknell Forest were related to domestic abuse.
- 110 victims at high-risk of harm or homicide were referred to the Bracknell Forest Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).
- 152 children were identified as living in households discussed at MARAC.
- 531 calls were received through the Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA) helpline, the commissioned domestic abuse support service. 350 (66%) of these were self-referrals.
- 17 individuals were supported into BWA refuge accommodation in Bracknell Forest; all but 1 originated from outside Bracknell Forest. A further 26 individuals were placed in BWA accommodation outside of Bracknell Forest.
- Of the 17 individuals supported into BWA refuge accommodation in Bracknell Forest:
 - 100% (n=17) identified as female
 - 47% (n=8) were aged 25-34 years old
 - 35% (n=6) were White British
 - 94% (n=16) identified as heterosexual
 - 47% (n=8) of residents had a history of mental health support needs at referral
 - 12% (n=2) of residents identified themselves as having a disability at referral
 - 41% (n=7) of residents had children and 6% (n=1) was pregnant at referral
- 211 individuals were supported by Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA) through their community-based Outreach and Advocacy service, commissioned by Bracknell Forest Council.
- Of these, 211 individuals supported in the community.¹⁵
 - 93% (n=196) identified as female
 - 37% (n=79) were aged 35-44 years old
 - 61% (n=128) were White British
 - 69% (n=146) identified as heterosexual
 - 42% (n=89) of clients reported mental health support needs at referral
 - 21% (n=44) of clients identified themselves as having a disability at referral
 - 61% (n=128) of clients had children and 4% (n=8) were pregnant at referral

¹⁴ Non Crime Occurrence: This term is used to describe a record of an incident which has come to the attention of the police, which, on the Balance of Probabilities would normally amount to a notifiable crime, but a resultant crime has not been recorded.

¹⁵ Please note that BWA monitoring also includes where the demographics of those being referred are 'unknown'. This may be because the client has not disclosed their details, or do not go on to engage fully in the service and this information was not provided in the initial referral.

- 35 referrals were made to the Sanctuary Scheme.¹⁶ Of these, 27 were successfully completed, enabling individuals to remain safely in their homes. Eight referrals were cancelled (due to landlord refusal, the client moving or withdrawing).
- 27 households were placed in temporary accommodation (whose main reason for loss of settled accommodation was due to domestic abuse).
- Of all homelessness presentations, 92 (5.37%) cited domestic abuse as the main reason for the loss of settled accommodation.
- Bracknell Forest Children's Social Care Service received 1,532 referrals. Over one-in-ten (12.3%) of these referrals had domestic abuse as a factor.

Needs Assessment

In 2024, Bracknell Forest Council commissioned a new Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment, providing a comprehensive evidence-led analysis of local patterns of need, service provision, lived experience and areas for improvement. The Needs Assessment concluded with a series of evidence-based recommendations across key themes: public awareness and community engagement; legal interventions and criminal justice; safe accommodation and housing solutions; support for victims with complex needs; and multi-agency collaboration and data collection. These recommendations (see [Appendix 1](#)) have been reviewed and used to inform the development of this strategy.

Lived experience

As part of the 2024 Needs Assessment, we conducted a survey to capture the experiences of Bracknell Forest residents affected by domestic abuse and their views on accessing support. Through the survey, specialist services and local professionals, we promoted an opportunity to be interviewed. Overall, we received 52 responses to the survey from members of the public and spoke to 5 adult victim-survivors. Below is a summary of findings.

• Nature of abuse

Non-physical abuse is highly prevalent among adult victim-survivors in Bracknell Forest, with all respondents reporting at least one form. The most commonly experienced forms of non-physical abuse were shouting (95%), humiliation (90%), and isolation from family and friends (88%), often experienced repeatedly.

80% of adult victim-survivors told us the person abusive to them monitored their letters, phone calls, emails, texts or social media. 78% told us the abusive person kept track of where they went or how they spent their time.

The most common forms of physical abuse adult victim-survivors experienced were pushing (80%) and grabbing (68%). Over a third (39%) had experienced being choked or strangled. Non-fatal strangulation has been a criminal offence since June 2022.

Over two in five (41%) had sustained injuries that required medical treatment.

Sexual violence and coercion were also reported. 53% of adult victim-survivors said they had been manipulated into sex or sexual activity, with 80% of those experiencing it more than three times.

¹⁶ The Sanctuary Scheme helps victims of domestic abuse to remain safely in their homes through tailored security measures.

Additionally, 29% had been forced to watch pornography, 29% forced to make explicit content and 21% forced with so called 'revenge porn'.¹⁷

- **Disclosure and help-seeking**

Overall, 37% of adult victim-survivors reported the abuse to the police, though most did not report all the incidents. Only 13% reported all the incidents, while 45% did not report any incidents to the police.

The most common agencies adult victim-survivors disclosed abuse to were their GP (34%), their child's nursery (20%) and children's services (20%).

"GP was amazing and supportive. My housing officer was fantastic and signposted me to BWA and relevant courses."

Common barriers to speaking about their experience or seeking help included: being scared of what the perpetrator would do if they found out (51%), feeling concerned that they would not be taken seriously (43%) and being worried that they would be blamed or judged (40%).

Adult victim-survivors in Bracknell Forest were slightly more likely to seek help within the community with 54% telling a friend and 29% turning to family members. However, 34% did not disclose the abuse to anyone in their personal or social network.

"My friend burst out into tears. I asked her not to tell anyone which she didn't. Afterwards I was frightened that she may tell someone. I told another friend about an episode. Unfortunately, perpetrator went through my phone and found the messages."

"My friend made it clear I should stop seeing him and none of these assaults on me were 'accidents' and were done on purpose."

- **Support needs of victim- survivors in Bracknell Forest**

Confidentiality was overwhelmingly the most important need, identified by 97% of adult victim-survivors. Other key priorities included having a choice of female or male worker (53%), and access to a 24 hour service (53%).

When asked about specific types of support, 75% said they needed help with mental health, 45% with finances and 41% with support for their children's wellbeing.

- **Experiences of specialist support in Bracknell Forest**

16% of adult victim-survivors did not seek help because they did not know how to.

Over a third (37%) sought support from BWA, a national service or another local service provider.

Among adult victims-survivors with children, 15% said they did not seek support for their children solely because they did not know where to get this.

"Bracknell Forest team who run the freedom course and DART."

¹⁷ Revenge porn refers to the non-consensual sharing of private, intimate images or videos with the intent to humiliate, control, or harm a person

I didn't think what I was experiencing was bad enough to warrant taking the time of a support organisation."

"I experienced really good support from the Bracknell Early Help team around DA and parenting. I couldn't have asked for better support."

"All I can say is meet [names of workers redacted] and that is what you need more of! [name of worker redacted] especially is an amazing lady who knows her field and cares so much."

"Accessibility, empathy, to be believed."

"Stop focusing on always criminal or physical abuse."

Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy

Bracknell Forest's first [Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-24](#) was published in January 2022. The Strategy was produced in response to Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which introduced a new duty on local authorities to ensure support for victims of domestic abuse and their children within 'relevant' safe accommodation.

The definition of safe accommodation includes:

- Refuge accommodation – specialist accommodation providing a place of safety for victims and their children, usually with on-site support.
- Specialist accommodation – for example, accommodation with dedicated specialist support for victims with protected characteristics (e.g. disability, ethnicity sexual orientation).
- Dispersed accommodation - self-contained accommodation or shared housing, often located in the community, with floating or visiting support.
- Move on, or second stage accommodation – transitional housing for those no longer needing intensive support but who would still benefit from a level of help before fully independent living.
- Sanctuary schemes – where security measures are installed in a victim's own home to enable them to remain safely.

The strategy set out strategic priorities and recommendations for improving access to support for domestic abuse victims and their children in safe accommodation and proposed commissioning a number of new services, supported by government funding allocated to local authorities to give effect to the strategy.

A 2025 [review](#) of the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation strategy found that significant progress had been made, including more safe accommodation options, additional support provision and stronger multi-agency working, with effective oversight by the Domestic Abuse Executive Group. The review set out recommendations to ensure victims of domestic abuse have access to appropriate support in safe accommodation. They include some specific actions to address gaps in provision and information as well as proposals to undertake further work to explore how specialist support for victims from particular cohorts and those with complex needs can best be improved. The recommendations from the review, endorsed by the Domestic Abuse Executive Group, are detailed below and have been incorporated into this strategy to ensure continued progress.

Theme	Action
Refuge	Monitor ongoing demand for refuge accommodation and explore long-term options for reshaping this provision.
Specialist support	Consider options to fund or commission a mental health support service for victims which can assist in accessing specialist mental health services where needed.
Specialist support	Work with partners to provide information on and access to a range of counselling and therapeutic services.
Outreach support service	Review safe accommodation outreach support for victims placed in temporary accommodation and whether it should be offered as a combined accommodation with support package.
NRPF (No Recourse to Public Funds)	Engage with and support the work of the NRPF task and finish group to develop a toolkit and improve pathways for assisting victims with NRPF.
Homeless prevention	Improve information for victims on the Council's website on safe accommodation options and support (including information on the Sanctuary service), informed by user feedback.
Housing options	Set up ongoing engagement meetings between the housing service and BWA to improve housing information and referrals.
Victim engagement	Seek opportunities for engagement with victims on safe accommodation services through BWAs Lived Experience initiative and other similar opportunities.

Strategic Alignment

This strategy does not operate in isolation. It aligns with and contributes to a wide range of local, regional and national strategies, policies and statutory frameworks. Together, these ensure that Bracknell Forest's approach to preventing and responding to domestic abuse is coherent, evidence-based and embedded within a whole-system model.

Local and Regional Alignment

- [Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy 2021-26](#)
- [Bracknell Forest Community Safety Plan 2025-28](#)
- [Bracknell Forest Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-26](#)
- [Bracknell Forest Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-26](#)
- [Bracknell Forest Housing Strategy 2023-28](#)
- [Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board Strategic Plan 2023-26](#)
- [Bracknell Forest Serious Violence Strategy 2024-27](#)
- [Bracknell Forest Youth Justice Plan 2024-27](#)
- [Children and Young People's Plan 2023-26](#)

This ensures domestic abuse is recognised as a cross-cutting issues influencing safety, health, wellbeing, housing stability and safeguarding across the borough.

National Alignment

Bracknell Forest's Domestic Abuse Strategy is underpinned by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which provides a statutory definition of domestic abuse, recognises children as victims in their own right, and places a legal duty on local authorities to assess need and commission support within safe accommodation. The Act also establishes the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and sets out expectations for multi-agency coordination and good practice at a local level.

In addition to the Act, this strategy aligns with key national policy frameworks, including:

- [Freedom from violence and abuse: a cross-government strategy](#) – this strategy sets out the government's vision and actions for meeting its ambition to halve violence against women and girls in a decade.
- [Domestic Abuse: statutory guidance](#) – a framework document designed to support organisations to identify and respond to domestic abuse and promote best practice.
- [National Statement of Expectations \(2022\)](#) – provides guidance to local areas on effective commissioning and partnership approaches.
- [Respect Standards and Accreditation](#) – frameworks to guide effective perpetrator interventions and ensure safe practice.
- [Independent Domestic Violence Adviser \(IDVA\) statutory guidance](#) (May 2025) – sets out the support the role provides, the required training and qualifications and how the role works alongside other professionals that support victims or that work within the criminal justice system.
- [Domestic homicide reviews: statutory guidance](#) (December 2016) – includes information about the purpose of a domestic homicide review, conducting a review, involving families and friends the importance of having a representative review panel.

Aligning with these national frameworks ensures that Bracknell Forest's approach reflects best practice, statutory requirements and emerging national priorities, while responding directly to the needs of local communities.

Consultation

Development of this strategy has been informed by engagement with local residents, victim-survivors, professionals and partner agencies. Consultation feedback was gathered through the 2024 Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment (those with lived experience and professionals), the Bracknell Forest Domestic Abuse Executive Group, the Domestic Abuse Forum, the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board (BFSB), and a BFC People Directorate Head of Service workshop. An online public consultation ran for 8 weeks (13 November 2025 to 8 January 2026), inviting comments on the draft priorities and the strategy.

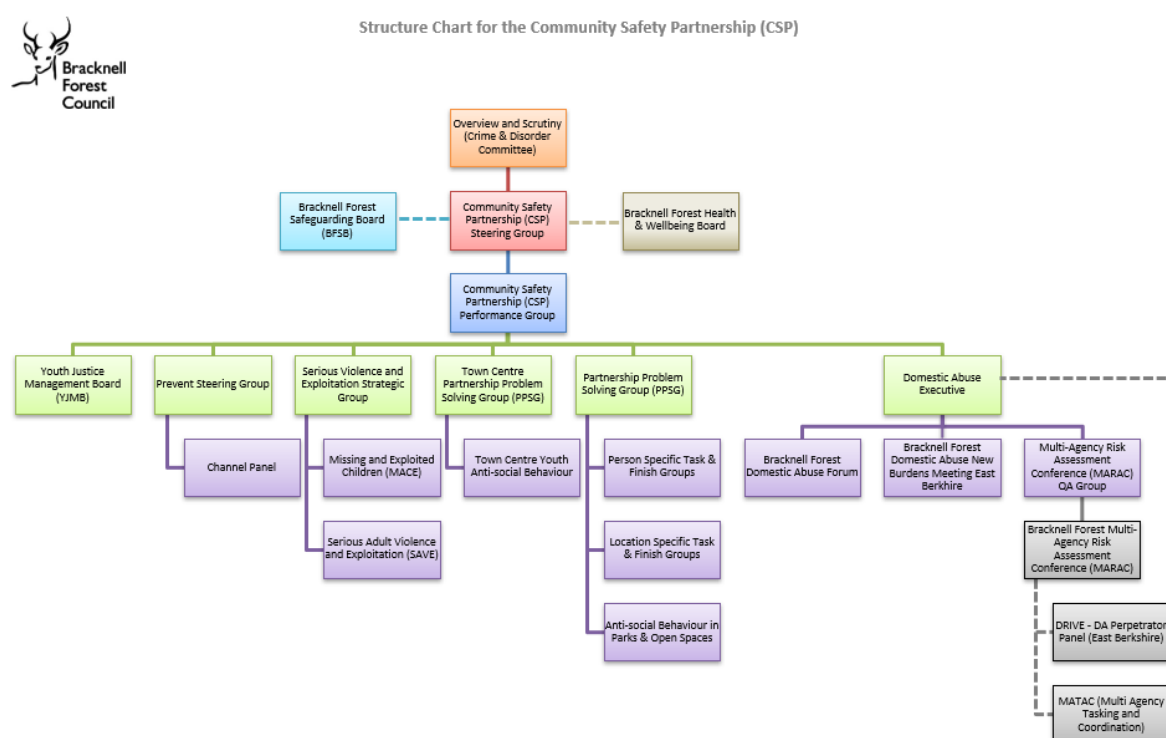
Feedback from the consultation showed overall support for the strategy and its strategic objectives but called for clearer visibility of support for all genders, stronger action on post-separation abuse, improved public awareness, and better links with courts and specialist training. Public feedback also highlighted the need for ongoing peer support. Partnership feedback stressed the strategy must be more clearly articulate its vision and outcomes for children. All consultation responses have been listened to and have directly shaped the final priorities, commitments and actions set out in this strategy.

Governance, monitoring and measuring success

Governance structure

The Bracknell Forest Domestic Abuse Executive Group provides strategic oversight for the delivery of this strategy and fulfils the statutory function of the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The Group is a sub-group of the Bracknell Forest Community Safety Partnership (CSP)¹⁸, a statutory, multi-agency partnership, working together to create a plan to reduce crime and disorder in the area.

The Group meets quarterly to oversee implementation, coordinate multi-agency activity, review performance, identify emerging risks or gaps, and ensure the response to domestic abuse remains effective, evidence-based and aligned to statutory requirements and local need. It also ensures that domestic abuse remains a standing priority within wider strategic partnerships, including the CSP.



Monitoring and Performance Framework

The strategy will be subject to ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that our approach remains effective and continues to meet the needs of adult and child victim-survivors, families and the wider community.

A detailed action plan, aligned with this strategy, will capture the collective activity of partner agencies and provide a clear framework for accountability, co-ordination and delivery. Progress against the action plan will be monitored by the Bracknell Forest Domestic Abuse Executive Group, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures, including an agreed data set. Quarterly performance reports will be reviewed by the Group to ensure continuous oversight and timely identification of challenges or gaps.

¹⁸ www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/crime-and-emergencies/crime-and-community-safety/community-safety-partnership

Progress made against the domestic abuse key performance indicators identified by the CSP will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the CSP Performance Group which reports into the CSP Steering Group.

An annual report will provide a summary of key data and trends, including the work of statutory and voluntary agencies providing domestic abuse support, progress against objectives of this strategy, lessons learned to inform service development and partnership planning for the year ahead. The report will be presented to the Bracknell Forest Domestic Abuse Executive Group at its summer meeting and shared with other relevant partnerships (Safeguarding Board, Department Management Team etc) as appropriate.

An annual public scrutiny meeting is also held to oversee and hold the CSP to account against its priorities, one of which is domestic abuse.

A full mid-strategy review will take place in 2029 to assess overall impact, respond to new evidence or legislative changes and revise priorities where necessary.

Lived experience and continuous improvement

The voices and experiences of adult and child victim-survivors will remain central. Feedback from lived experience groups, future needs assessments, learning events, commissioned providers and where possible community engagement activities will be used to inform service development, evaluate effectiveness and shape future priorities.

Learning from Domestic Abuse-Related Death Reviews (DARDRs), safeguarding reviews, audit findings and national research will also be embedded into practice, commissioning and partnership delivery.

This approach ensures Bracknell Forest maintains a responsive, trauma-informed and inclusive system that adapts to new evidence, strengthens accountability and continually improves outcomes for adult and child victim-survivors.

Appendix 1 – Bracknell Forest Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment Recommendations (2024)

Public awareness and community engagement

1. **Increase public awareness campaigns:** Focus on highlighting non-physical forms of domestic abuse, such as emotional and economic abuse, to increase public understanding and recognition.
2. **Break the stigma around disclosure:** Develop campaigns that reassure victims they will be taken seriously, supported, and believed, using survivor stories and positive messaging.
3. **Tailored language accessibility:** Ensure awareness materials are available in key languages spoken in Bracknell Forest, such as Nepalese, Polish, and Romanian, to improve accessibility for non-English speakers.
4. **Confidentiality focus:** Emphasise the confidentiality of services in all outreach efforts, as over 90% of victims identified this as a key concern.
5. **Bystander training programmes:** Implement community-based bystander training to equip friends, family, and local groups with the skills to support victims when abuse is disclosed.
6. **Engage with health services:** Ensure GPs, nurses, and health professionals are trained to identify domestic abuse, make safe enquiries, and signpost to appropriate support services.
7. **Increase community-based referrals:** Partner with nurseries, schools, and community organisations to raise awareness about domestic abuse and create additional referral pathways.
8. **Targeted campaigns for specific demographics:** Develop community-specific awareness campaigns for groups with lower service engagement, such as male victims, ethnic minorities, and disabled individuals.

Legal interventions and criminal justice

9. **Increase formal legal action:** Strengthen strategies to ensure that arrests for domestic abuse offences lead to formal legal outcomes, such as charges and prosecutions.
10. **Enhance right to know and right to ask schemes:** Investigate the barriers to successful disclosures and work with agencies to improve disclosure rates for both schemes.
11. **Expand use of DVPN/Os:** Provide additional training for police and professionals to improve the use of Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) in protecting victims.
12. **Improve multi-agency collaboration:** Enhance collaboration between the police, legal services, and domestic abuse organisations to ensure victims' safety and hold perpetrators accountable.
13. **Streamline disclosure processes:** Simplify the process for Right to Ask/Know applications to improve efficiency and encourage more disclosures.

14. **Encourage legal support for victims:** Provide legal advice and support for victims to navigate legal actions, including occupation orders and other protective measures.
15. **Evaluate criminal justice outcomes:** Regularly review criminal justice outcomes in domestic abuse cases to identify gaps and implement improvements in legal responses to abuse.

Safe accommodation and housing solutions

16. **Develop a whole housing approach:** Integrate domestic abuse and safe accommodation strategies to prevent overlap, maximise early intervention, and ensure seamless pathways to housing support.
17. **Increase refuge capacity:** Expand refuge services in Bracknell Forest to accommodate growing demand, particularly for victims with complex needs, such as mental health and substance misuse issues.
18. **Specialised accommodation for vulnerable groups:** Ensure refuges and housing services are equipped to meet the specific needs of disabled victims, older people, and ethnic minority communities.
19. **Explore safe accommodation for male victims:** Address the gap in refuge spaces for male victims of domestic abuse by exploring safe accommodation options tailored to their needs.
20. **Improve private landlord engagement:** Engage with private landlords to increase access to affordable housing for survivors of domestic abuse and use safe accommodation funding for dedicated landlord engagement programmes.
21. **Increase access to the sanctuary scheme:** Raise awareness about the Sanctuary Scheme to ensure victims, particularly older people, can remain in their homes safely when appropriate.
22. **Long-term housing solutions:** Expand the availability of long-term, affordable housing options for domestic abuse survivors to reduce dependence on short-term refuge stays.
23. **Provide housing assistance for NRPF victims:** Use safe accommodation funding to support victims with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), ensuring they can access housing services and support.

Support for victims with complex needs

24. **Expand mental health services:** Ensure that domestic abuse survivors, particularly those with long-term support needs, have access to specialised mental health services and trauma-informed care.
25. **Address substance misuse through joint working:** Strengthen referral pathways between domestic abuse services and substance misuse providers, such as New Hope, to address victims' complex needs.
26. **Crosstrain domestic abuse and substance misuse professionals:** Facilitate cross-training between domestic abuse workers and substance misuse professionals to improve joint case management for clients with dual needs.

27. **Holistic support services:** Provide integrated support services that address the intersection of domestic abuse, mental health, substance misuse, and economic vulnerability for survivors.
28. **Provide financial support and counselling:** Expand access to financial counselling, emergency funds, and housing advice to help survivors regain economic independence and rebuild their lives.

Multi-agency collaboration and data collection

29. **Improve data collection on protected characteristics:** Ensure that agencies collect consistent and detailed data on victims' protected characteristics, such as disability, ethnicity, and immigration status, to tailor services more effectively.
30. **Regularly review service delivery:** Implement a regular audit and evaluation of domestic abuse services in Bracknell Forest to ensure that services remain responsive to emerging trends, demographic changes, and gaps in provision.
31. **Enhance cross-sector collaboration:** Foster stronger multi-agency working between housing, health, social care, and domestic abuse services to deliver holistic support to victims, particularly those with complex needs.
32. **Tailored support for vulnerable groups:** Develop specific support programmes for minoritised groups, including male victims, ethnic minorities, disabled individuals, and older people, ensuring that services are inclusive and culturally sensitive.

Appendix 2 – Support services

LOCAL SUPPORT		
Aurora New Dawn	023 9247 9254 www.aurorand.org.uk	Specialist one to one advocacy, support and consultancy for anyone in the Thames Valley experiencing domestic abuse related stalking. Clients are not required to report to the police in order to access support.
BWA (Berkshire Women's Aid) – supporting all genders	0808 801 0882 www.berkshirewomensaid.org.uk	Commissioned domestic abuse service in Bracknell Forest. Offering confidential, specialist outreach and advocacy support (supports all genders), and refuge support for women and children.
Bracknell Forest Council	01344 352000 www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/domestic-abuse Children's Social Care - 01344 352005 Adult Social Care – 01344 351500 Emergency Duty Team (5pm-9am and weekends) - 01344 351999 Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board https://bracknellforestsafeguarding.org.uk	
FLAG DV (Free Legal Advice Group for Domestic Violence)	01635 015 854 (Mon – Fri, 11am -1pm) www.flagdv.org.uk	Offering free Family Law leg advice and support to individuals in the Thames Valley impacted by domestic abuse.
Kaleidoscopic UK	www.kaleidoscopic.uk	Peer led organisation supporting adults and children affected by domestic abuse.
SAFE!	0800 133 7938 www.safesupport.org.uk	Support for young people in the Thames Valley affected by crime including domestic abuse. Includes the Building Respectful Families Service, providing support to families experiencing Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA).
Thames Valley Police	999 – emergency 101 – non emergency www.thamesvalley.police.uk Domestic abuse Thames Valley Police	
Victims First	0300 1234 148 www.victims-first.org.uk	Dedicated to making sure that all victims and witnesses receive the support they need to cope and recover from the impact of crime.

NATIONAL SUPPORT		
AAFDA – Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse	07887 488464 www.aafda.org.uk	Advocates for families after the homicide or suicide of their family member or friend, following domestic abuse.
Domestic Violence Assist	0800 195 8699 www.dvassist.org.uk	UK's only registered charity arranging Non-Molestation Orders, Prohibited Steps Orders and Occupation Orders.
Forced Marriage Unit (FMU)	020 7008 0151 www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage	Provides support to British national facing forced marriage abroad and assists anyone in the UK at risk of being forced into marriage.
Galop	0300 999 5128 www.galop.org.uk	Supporting LGBT+ people who have experienced abuse and violence.
Karma Nirvana	0800 5999 247 www.karmanirvana.org.uk	The national Honour Based Abuse helpline.
Men's Advice Line	0808 801 0327 www.mensadvice.org.uk	Confidential helpline for male victims of domestic abuse, offering support and practical information.
National Stalking Helpline	0808 802 0300 www.stalkinghelpline.org	Providing advocacy, information, and support to victims of stalking.
Respect Helpline	0808 802 4040 www.respectphoneline.org.uk	Offering help for domestic abuse perpetrators who want to change.
Samaritans	116 123 (free) 0330 094 5717 (local call charges) www.samaritans.org	Specially trained volunteers listen and help anyone that calls to talk through their concerns, worries and troubles. Phone or email. Also see the website for the self-help app and for tips on what to do if you are worried about someone.
24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline	0808 2000 247 www.womensaid.org.uk www.refuge.org.uk www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/friends-and-family	Confidential women's national helpline Friends and family handbook

Appendix 3 - National policy and legislative context

Our strategy is rooted in a strong national framework that seeks to transform the response to domestic abuse across the UK. It builds on key legislation and national strategies that place domestic abuse on the public agenda and outlines clear duties for local authorities and their partners.

Overview of Legislation

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021¹⁹	The Domestic Abuse Bill received Royal Assent on 29 April 2021. The Act works to increase awareness of domestic abuse, to improve the effectiveness of the criminal justice system and to strengthen support for people who have experienced abuse. The Act also creates the first statutory definition of domestic abuse, recognising that it is not limited to physical abuse but includes emotional, coercive or controlling behaviour, and economic abuse. Further information can be found earlier in this strategy. The Act introduces several important provisions, including: - A legal duty on local authorities to assess the need for and commission safe accommodation-based support for victims and their children. - The establishment of a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (LPB) to oversee the local authority's responsibilities under the Act. - Recognition of children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right if they see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse. - Appointment of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner to monitor response and promote good practice. - New protections for survivors in the family and criminal courts. - Introduction of new crimes, such as non-fatal strangulation and threats to share intimate images.
Online Safety Act 2023²⁰	The Online Safety Bill received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023. The Act is landmark law designed to make online spaces safer, especially for children, by placing new legal duties on tech companies to manage harmful content on their platforms.
The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024²¹	The Victims and Prisoners Bill received Royal Assent on 24 May 2024. It is a UK law that combines reforms to victims' rights with significant changes to the parole system and certain rules for prisoners. The Act aims to establish measures to 'better serve victims and the public through improving victims' experience of the Criminal Justice System. The Act includes statutory guidance and minimum expectations in relation to the role of the

¹⁹ Domestic Abuse Act 2021 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents/enacted

²⁰ www.gov.uk/government/collections/online-safety-act

²¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2024/21/contents

	Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) ²² , will require commissioners to consider child victims in the delivery of IDVA services and will introduce a statutory duty on Police and Crime Commissioners, health and local authorities around the joint commissioning of domestic abuse support services.
The Police, Crime and Sentencing Courts Act 2022 (including the Serious Violence Duty)²³	The Police, Crime and Sentencing Courts Bill received Royal Assent in April 2022. Part 2 of the Act creates a requirement for specified authorities to collaborate and plan to reduce or prevent serious violence including domestic homicide and abuse. Specified authorities are required to work together and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence, including identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in an area, the causes of that violence (so far as it is possible to do so), and to prepare and implement a shared strategy.
The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017²⁴	The Homelessness Reduction Bill received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017 and came into force on 3 April 2018. The Act supports people who are homeless, to have access to accommodation, placing a greater emphasis on earlier intervention and broader responsibility. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 changed homelessness legislation to give priority need to people who have experienced domestic abuse. The changes to the legislation mean that, people made homeless due to domestic abuse are given priority need for homelessness assistance.
Modern Slavery Act 2015²⁵	The Modern Slavery Act 2015 consolidates previous offences relating to trafficking and slavery placing specific requirements on employers and businesses. Modern slavery is often hidden from view and may involve or take place alongside a wide range of abuses and other offences such as grievous bodily harm, assault, rape, or child sexual abuse.
The Serious Crime Act 2015²⁶	This Act introduced the offence of coercive or controlling behaviour against an intimate partner or family member and holds a maximum penalty of five years.
The Care Act 2014²⁷	This legislation introduced the general duty on local authorities to promote an individual's 'wellbeing', which includes considering a person's domestic, family and personal relationships. The Care Act includes Section 42 which states that if an adult with care and support needs (such as a disability) is suspected to be at risk of any form of abuse or neglect, the local authority must make enquiries and take steps

²² www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-domestic-violence-adviser-statutory-guidance

²³ www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-bill

²⁴ www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-reduction-bill-policy-factsheets

²⁵ www.gov.uk/government/collections/modern-slavery-bill

²⁶ www.gov.uk/government/collections/serious-crime-bill

²⁷ www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-2014-part-1-factsheets

	to protect them. This includes working with other agencies such as health and the Police and providing independent advocacy when it is needed.
The Protection of Freedom's Act 2012²⁸	This legislation makes stalking and harassment a criminal offence.
The Crime and Security Act 2010²⁹	The Crime and Security Act 2010 gained royal assent on 8 April 2010. The legislation created Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs), rolled out from 8 March 2014 ³⁰ .
The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007	The Act aims to protect victims of Forced Marriage including empowering the courts to make Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPOs).
The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004³¹	This legislation extends provisions to combat domestic violence and creates a new offence of 'causing or allowing the death of a child or vulnerable adult'. Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDRs) previously called Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) were established on a statutory basis under Section 9 of this Act and brought into effect on 13 April 2011 ³² .
The Children Act 1989³³ and the Adoption and Children Act 2002³⁴	This legislation places a duty on local authorities to provide services to Children in Need and to investigate the circumstances of a child where they are informed that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. Section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act extends the legal definition of harming children to include harm suffered by seeing or hearing ill treatment of others, including in the home.

²⁸ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/9/contents/enacted

²⁹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/17/contents

³⁰ www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-violence-protection-orders/domestic-violence-protection-notices-dvpns-and-domestic-violence-protection-orders-dvpos-guidance-sections-24-33-crime-and-security-act-2010

³¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-domestic-violence-crime-and-victims-act-2004

³² [Domestic homicide reviews: statutory guidance - GOV.UK](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-homicide-reviews-statutory-guidance)

³³ [Children Act 1989](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/24/contents)

³⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/38/contents

Appendix 4 - Funding

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed new duties on local authorities to ensure that victims of domestic abuse and their children can access support in safe accommodation. Funding was allocated to local authorities for delivery of their duties via an annual grant.

At the time of writing our strategy, the Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government (MHCLG) has confirmed that over three years, from April 2026 domestic abuse funding will sit within a new ring-fenced Homelessness Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant, allowing local authorities to take a more integrated approach to supporting vulnerable people.

Funding from this grant will continue to be used to meet Bracknell Forest's duty in relation to Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Whilst the statutory funding is specific to the support of victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation, we know that the majority of victims of domestic abuse who do seek support will do so from community based services, as a means of increasing their safety whilst maintaining their networks.

Funding for some areas of our strategy is dependent on continued local and national funding and grants. We will seek opportunities, and work with local agencies, to apply for and strengthen relevant bids.

The amount of statutory funding Bracknell Forest Council has received/is due to receive from the Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government is outlined as below:

2021/22 = £203,767
2022/23 = £204,331
2023/24 = £208,418
2024/25 = £212,350
2025/26 = £264,643
2026/27 = £269,427
2027/28 = £276,018
2028/29 = £282,535