

North Tyneside Domestic Abuse Partnership

Domestic Abuse Strategy

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Introduction

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time in a relationship. It is estimated that one in five people in England and Wales have experienced domestic abuse in their lifetime. Domestic abuse (sometimes referred to as domestic violence) occurs in a range of relationships, including with an intimate partner, a child, a sibling, an ex-partner, a casual partner or a family member. It can happen at any point in a relationship, whether you live with the person or not.

Domestic abuse is not always physical. Any type of threatening, controlling or coercive behaviour is abuse – whether it is physical, psychological, sexual, economic or emotional.

Domestic abuse is a high harm, high volume crime that remains largely hidden. Nationally it is estimated that 2.3 million adults aged 16 to 74 had experienced domestic abuse in 2022. However, there can be many barriers to disclosing abuse, seeking criminal justice outcomes, and accessing services.

Whilst both men and women can be affected by domestic abuse, females are disproportionately the victims. Anyone can be affected by domestic abuse – regardless of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief. In addition, domestic abuse can manifest itself in different ways within different communities.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – Part 1

Definition of domestic abuse

Section 1: Definition of “domestic abuse”

- (1) This section defines “domestic abuse” for the purposes of this Act.
- (2) Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if—
 - (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are “personally connected” to each other, and
 - (b) the behaviour is abusive.
- (3) Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—
 - physical or sexual abuse
 - violent or threatening behaviour
 - controlling or coercive behaviour
 - economic abuse
 - psychological, emotional or other abuse

It does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct. It is widely recognised that the perpetrator’s desire to exercise power and control over the victim is at the centre of abusive behaviours.

Types of abuse

Intimate partner abuse

Domestic abuse most commonly takes place in intimate partner relationships, including same sex relationships.

Teenage relationship abuse

Young people can experience domestic abuse within their relationships and may not self-identify as victims. Teenage relationship abuse often occurs outside of a domestic setting.

Abuse by family members

Domestic abuse may also be perpetrated by a family member: by children, grandchildren, parents, those with “parental responsibility”, siblings, or extended families including in-laws.

Child to parent abuse

Child to parent abuse can involve children (10 years and over), including adult children, and abuse toward siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles as well as other family members such as those acting as kinship carers.

Impact of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can cause serious and devastating long and short term physical and mental, emotional, and psychological health impacts on adults and children. Not all domestic abuse begins with or results in physical abuse. Domestic abuse and associated trauma can have a significant impact on a victim's emotional, psychological and mental wellbeing.

Some victims may require support to address their adopted coping mechanisms, such as using alcohol, tobacco or drugs.

Many victims can be made homeless by domestic abuse. Annual statutory homelessness statistics for 2020–2021 show that 12% of households in England recorded 'domestic abuse' as their main reason for being homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Victims may suffer from the effects of economic abuse resulting in unemployment, diminished employment prospects, debt or coerced debt, or poverty.

Impact upon children

The impacts that domestic abuse can have on children can include:

- Feeling anxious or depressed;
- Low self-esteem and difficulties with forming healthy relationships;
- Physical symptoms such as stomach aches or bed wetting;
- Delayed development or deterioration in speech, language and communication;
- Reduction in school attainment, truancy, risk of exclusion from school.

Inequalities

Health inequalities are the unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population and between different groups within society.

According to national data, individuals are more likely to have been victims of domestic abuse if they:

- Are female;
- Have a disability;
- Identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender;
- Are from a mixed ethnic background.

There are also differences and difficulties in accessing support for men and boys who are victims of abuse, facing specific fears around stigmatisation and lack of recognition that they are victims. As such it is estimated that only half of male victims of partner abuse will tell anyone.

Mental health problems are not a cause of domestic abuse; however, it can be a risk factor for perpetration and victimisation.

Statutory duties

North Tyneside Council is classified by Government as a tier one local authority. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021, placed several requirements upon on the Authority under the new Safe Accommodation Duty; this includes:

1. The development of a local domestic abuse partnership;
2. The completion of a domestic abuse needs assessment;
3. A safe accommodation duty including domestic abuse support;
4. Establishing an overarching domestic abuse strategy.

1. North Tyneside domestic abuse partnership

Governance

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a duty on local authorities and the police to work together with key partners and organisations to develop and implement local crime reduction strategies as a community safety partnership. The Safer North Tyneside Partnership is accountable for this statutory responsibility and associated performance requirements. The partnership is chaired by the Cabinet member responsible for community safety and reports to the North Tyneside Strategic Partnership, chaired by the Elected Mayor.

Domestic abuse is a key strategic priority for the Safer North Tyneside Partnership. The strategic priority is delivered through a domestic abuse partnership board which includes membership from North Tyneside Council, Northumbria Police, Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner, National Probation Service, local NHS stakeholders and domestic abuse service providers.

The domestic abuse partnership maintains links with the North Tyneside Safeguarding Adults Board and the North Tyneside Local Safeguarding Children's Board to coordinate key cross-cutting priorities.

Strategic approach

The vision of the North Tyneside Domestic Abuse Partnership is:

“To reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse across North Tyneside and ensure that victims, their children and families have the confidence to report it and seek support and to provide support and services to effectively minimise the short and long-term impact of domestic abuse on victims, their children and families.”

The North Tyneside Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024-2027 has four priorities which are aligned to Governmental priorities for tackling domestic abuse:

1. Prioritising prevention – reducing the amount of domestic abuse by stopping people from becoming perpetrators and victims in the first place.
2. Supporting victims – all victims and survivors of domestic abuse have access to support for their health, emotional, economic and social needs.
3. Pursuing perpetrators – reduce the number of repeat offenders and ensure those who commit crime are dealt with accordingly.
4. Creating a stronger system – improve the systems that underpin the response to domestic abuse.

Local drivers

There are several local drivers for this domestic abuse strategy:

- The Elected Mayor's Our North Tyneside Plan 2021–2025 aims to create a secure, family-friendly and caring borough.
- The North Tyneside Health and Wellbeing Board's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy – Equally Well: A healthier, fairer future for North Tyneside 2021–2025. Equally Well aims to provide equal life chances, create thriving places and communities, and maintain individuals' independence.
- The Safer North Tyneside Crime Reduction Strategy and Partnership Plan which includes key priorities for addressing serious violence including domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.
- The Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner established a violence reduction unit to tackle serious violent crime and homicides. The violence reduction unit published its Serious Violence Response Strategy 2024–2029 which includes domestic abuse.
- The Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has four key priorities that align with the Home Office's four pillars for tackling domestic abuse. These priorities are set out by the PCC's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2023–2025.



2. Health needs assessment

A health needs assessment (HNA) is a recommended public health tool to provide evidence about a population on which to plan services and address health inequalities. A HNA provides a vital tool in helping to target populations most in need of efforts to prevent domestic abuse and improved support and services for those that require it. The HNA provides an opportunity for cross-sectoral partnership working and developing creative and effective interventions moving forward. A detailed HNA has been developed for the North Tyneside Domestic Abuse Board.

Summary of key highlights

Prevalence

Domestic abuse is an underreported crime. Based on national prevalence rates, it is estimated that up to 7,500 North Tyneside residents may have experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2023. Northumbria Police recorded just over 5,500 domestic abuse incidents in North Tyneside in 2023–2024 – this figure will include those with more than one incident.

The rate of domestic abuse related incidents and crimes is above the England average (38.0 per 100,000 in North Tyneside compared to the 30.6 per 100,000 England average). This has increased from 36.7 per 100,000 in 2021–22 and is consistent with a rising trend since 2015–2016.

Nationally one in five (20.5%) people aged 16 years and over in England and Wales reported experiencing domestic abuse in their lifetime. Locally this could equate to over 35,000 North Tyneside residents having experienced domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse rates are stubbornly high in North Tyneside's more deprived wards. Local specialist domestic abuse services have seen an increase in referrals and have long waiting lists.

Inequalities

Domestic abuse is more prevalent among several groups including those aged 16–19, mixed and white ethnic groups and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) people. Those who are separated, divorced or single, with a long-term or temporary illness, and those looking after their family and home also appear more vulnerable.

Perpetrators

Nationally, the vast majority (95%) of domestic abuse perpetrators are male.

The North Tyneside Domestic Abuse Partnership could improve its engagement with perpetrators. In 2023–2024 there were 17.7% less referrals than in the previous year.

Safe accommodation

Between 2019–2020 and 2023–2024, the number of domestic abuse presentations to North Tyneside Council's Housing and Property Services increased by two thirds (67.6%).

Households are increasingly placed in emergency bed and breakfast accommodation as demand for safe accommodation outstrips supply. There is little safe accommodation provision in North Tyneside for domestic abuse victims who are male or have protected characteristics.

Victims

Based on national prevalence, local estimates suggest that in the year ending March 2023, the following may have experience domestic abuse in North Tyneside.

Sex

- More than 5,000 women
- Over 2,500 men

Age

- Up to 5,636 people aged between 16–59
- Up to 695 people aged between 16–19
- Up to 1,210 people aged between 60–74
- Up to 269 aged over 75

Sexual orientation

- Up to 246 gay or lesbian individuals
- Up to 303 bisexual individuals

Household structure

- Up to 2,076 single parent households
- Up to 2,114 households with no children
- 1,848 residents who were married or civil partnered
- Up to 837 households with multiple people and one or more children

3. Safe accommodation strategic approach

It is nationally recognised that domestic abuse is a significant cause of homelessness. Survivors of domestic abuse who become homeless face multiple barriers to gaining a safe secure place to live. Housing is a basic need that must be met before other challenges can be addressed and housing providers play a vital role in the response to domestic abuse.

Victims of domestic abuse should have access to safe accommodation and appropriate support services that is of the highest quality and tailored to the needs of the individual or family. This will be available to residents of North Tyneside and those who come from outside the local area.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a responsibility on tier one local authorities to assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support in their area for all victims or their children, including those who come from outside the area. It requires the local authority to develop the appropriate strategic response which considers all other relevant strategic guidance (i.e. the Housing Act 1996, the Homeless Act 2002 and the Homeless Reduction Act 2017). It also recognises that the Act does not place a requirement on local authorities to provide domestic abuse victims with accommodation.

Safe accommodation is defined by the Act as:

- **Refuge accommodation:** a refuge offers single gender or single sex accommodation and domestic abuse support which is tied to that accommodation (this includes their children).
- **Specialist safe accommodation:** offering single gender or single sex accommodation, alongside dedicated domestic abuse support which is tailored to also support those who share particular protected characteristics.
- **Dispersed accommodation:** properties for survivors who may not be able to access traditional refuge accommodation.
- **Sanctuary schemes:** a multi-agency victim centred initiative which aims to enable households at risk of violence to remain safely in their own homes.
- **Move on or second stage accommodation:** supported housing which provides the bridge to settled housing.

Social Housing Regulation 2023

As well as requirements associated with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Social Housing Regulation 2023 includes specific requirements for tackling domestic abuse such as:

- Registered providers must have a policy for how they recognise and effectively respond to cases of domestic abuse.
- Registered providers must co-operate with appropriate local authority departments to support the local authority in meeting its duty to develop a strategy and commission services for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation.

The regulations aim to ensure that in delivering these requirements, providers have ensured that relevant staff are appropriately trained to support tenants, understand the circumstances surrounding their housing tenure, raise awareness regarding the support available, a victim centred approach including the recognition of protected characteristics, achieve accredited status related to domestic abuse, and ensure the appropriate governance regarding the Regulations.

Housing and safe accommodation data

High quality data and intelligence plays a key role in ensuring a coordinated response to domestic abuse. The HNA identified a range of needs which have helped inform the domestic abuse partnership.

Safe accommodation provision

There are currently 22 units of safe accommodation for domestic abuse victims in North Tyneside. This includes 14 units of refuge accommodation and eight units of dispersed accommodation. There are currently no by-and-for specialist or second-stage accommodation units for domestic abuse victims in the borough. There is also a limited amount of safe accommodation for male victims of domestic abuse as they can currently only access the eight dispersed units.

A recent Specialist and Supported Housing Needs Assessment was commissioned by North Tyneside Council. It estimated need for an additional 15 units of safe accommodation for domestic abuse victims in the borough.

Support services

The new duty ensures that a range of domestic abuse support services are available locally. Presently, North Tyneside Council commissions domestic abuse services from two main providers. Harbour Support Services primarily supports adults and Acorns focuses on children and young people. The Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner provides additional funding to the services commissioned by North Tyneside Council. Provision will constantly be reviewed to ensure it addresses local need and fulfils the statutory requirements of the Act.

4. North Tyneside Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021 – 2024

The previous domestic abuse strategy was a partnership commitment to tackling domestic abuse across North Tyneside. A detailed action plan has been in place with a number of sub groups operating over the three year period in order to deliver against the key priorities. Some notable achievements were:

Recognising

- North Tyneside Council achieved White Ribbon status and has over 140 White Ribbon Ambassadors and Champions.
- Safeguarding practitioner within Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.
- Piloted 'Ask me' programme and learning embedded in further projects.
- Operation Encompass embedded in schools across North Tyneside.
- Established a multi-agency training strategy to ensure the workforce is equipped to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and act accordingly.

Responding

- A point of contact Domestic Abuse Support service for male and female victims over the age of 16, supporting all levels of risk, including safe accommodation.
- Therapeutic and outreach support for children and young people.
- Implemented the Sanctuary Scheme which aims to enable households at risk of violence to remain in their own homes and reduce the risk of repeat victimisation.
- Implemented the Sanctum Project which provides critical support to a cohort of people for which refuge is not suitable.
- Ongoing programme of work to support those who require drug and alcohol support services in partnership between Harbour and North Tyneside Recovery Partnership (NTRP).



Rehabilitation

- Respect Accredited programmes across Northumbria for male perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse.
- Completed national pilot programme to work across the partnership with consistent offenders.
- Commissioned the Changing Behaviour service across North Tyneside.

Reviewing

- Survivor and victim's forum, enabling their experiences to inform delivery.
- Provider forums, enabling their experiences to inform delivery.
- Domestic abuse related death reviews, informing learning locally.
- Improved data collection, sharing and analysis across the partnership.

The domestic abuse partnership has worked effectively to deliver the previous strategy and associated action plan. Many of the strategic actions are ongoing with partners committed to continuing to improve outcomes for all victims. The recent domestic abuse needs assessment and changing legislation have highlighted that continued multi agency action is required over the next three-year period, to deliver the refreshed strategy and tackle domestic abuse in North Tyneside.

5. Strategic Priorities and Actions 2024–2027

In setting out a revised set of priorities for 2024–27 the domestic abuse partnership will:

Prioritise prevention

Aim

To reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse and domestic abuse related deaths by preventing people from becoming perpetrators and victims.

Actions

- Research and promote quality assured interventions and resources for primary prevention with men and boys and to raise awareness of healthy respectful relationships, working in partnership with Education North Tyneside, schools and the wider children and young people workforce.
- Incorporate the learning from domestic abuse related death reviews across all agencies to prevent domestic abuse and fatal domestic abuse.
- Ensure the partnership utilises the North Tyneside domestic abuse marketing toolkit to ensure specialist support information is easily accessible when needed by both professionals and the community.

Support victims

Aim

Help all domestic abuse victims return to life as normal by supporting their health, emotional, economic and social needs.

Actions

- Continue to review safe accommodation provision and demand and its accessibility including the Sanctuary scheme to inform next steps locally.
- Continue to develop the domestic abuse training offer to ensure multi-agency staff have the skills and knowledge to identify, signpost and refer those that require it for support.
- Consider the required policies and procedures for housing providers under the Social Housing Regulations 2023.
- Review commissioning and provision of domestic abuse services following the domestic abuse needs assessment and continued focus on the domestic abuse data dashboard in line with the duties associated with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Pursue perpetrators

Aim

Reduce the number of repeat offenders, ensure that agencies work together to target, disrupt and engage those causing risk and harm, and provide support and stabilisation to those who want to change their behaviour.

Actions

- Continue to raise awareness of the local offer and referral pathways, utilising the Champions network, expanding multi-agency partnerships, campaigns and training.
- Maintain effective partnership working to improve the management of risk, support engagement and ensure appropriate referral, whilst retaining a focus on the needs of the victim. Ensure colleagues feel secure and supported in engaging with perpetrators.
- Work with partners to find solutions to challenges, developing innovative ways of engaging with those causing risk and harm and encouraging engagement with the Changing Behaviour service.

Build a stronger system

Aim

To improve the systems and processes underpinning the response to domestic abuse in North Tyneside.

Actions

- Align strategic local actions with national ambitions to ensure a consistent approach across North Tyneside. Ensure collaboration between partners around strategy, assessment of needs and commissioning.
- Focus on primary prevention to protect residents and reduce service demand.
- Develop local systems in response to changing legislation and presentation of harms including learning from local safeguarding boards. Ensure services are appropriate for the local area.
- Continue to ensure the survivor voice is heard throughout the local system including commissioning services.

Domestic Abuse Partnership Action Plan

Domestic abuse is a complex, multi-faceted system that requires each agency to work in partnership to improve the lives of victims and survivors of abuse. The strategic actions set out in this strategy will not take place in isolation but as part of a co-ordinated approach to supporting vulnerable people and families across North Tyneside.

To ensure the delivery of the strategic themes, the partnership will oversee the development of a multi-agency action plan and report achievements through the Safer North Tyneside Partnership.

North Tyneside Domestic Abuse Partnership Board

- North Tyneside Council
- Northumbria Police
- Northumbria Police & Crime Commissioner
- Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue
- National Probation Service
- Rape Crisis Tyneside Northumberland
- VODA
- Harbour Support Services
- Acorns
- Northumbria Healthcare Service
- North East and North Cumbria ICB
- Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust
- Newcastle Hospitals Trust



North
Tyneside
Council



**NORTHUMBRIA
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violence
reduction
unit



Probation
Service



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust



North East and
North Cumbria



Cumbria, Northumberland,
Tyne and Wear
NHS Foundation Trust



The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

