

**Somerset Domestic  
Abuse Strategy  
2017 –2020**



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## Foreword

Domestic abuse continues to have a detrimental impact on the lives of adults and children across the county of Somerset, with the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment 2017 estimating that approximately 19,000 adults experienced domestic abuse in the previous year. We're committed to not only supporting victims of this often hidden crime, but also help prevent future victimisation, support families to recover from trauma, and support those who need help to change their abusing behaviour.

Domestic Abuse is comprised of many types of abuse and violence which can only be tackled through a robust multi-agency response. This strategy aims to provide the context and direction for the development of initiatives and services across the county.

Whilst I'm delighted to say there have been many achievements [please see the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment for more details] to improve the co-ordinated community response to tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence within the county over the previous few years, during the past twelve months, the Safer Somerset Partnership has reviewed the effectiveness of its response to tackling domestic abuse. This has resulted in a reinvigorated Domestic Abuse Board, who have produced this new Domestic Abuse Strategy which replaces the Somerset Interpersonal Violence



Liz Spencer

Chair of Safer Somerset Partnership

## Strategic Vision

The Safer Somerset Partnership has the following vision:

“We aim to lead a co-ordinated effort to both prevent and reduce incidences of all types of domestic abuse and sexual violence in Somerset. Everyone can contribute to raise awareness of not just the effects that this has, but to challenge those who tolerate it and help protect those affected.”

## Understanding Domestic Abuse - Definition

The Safer Somerset Partnership has adopted the national definition, which is currently the following:

Home Office Definition:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

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

This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group. It is also important to remember that the majority of research suggests that domestic

All agencies working in Somerset (statutory, voluntary and private) are required to use this definition, so that there is a common approach to tackling domestic abuse.

## National Strategies and Influential Policy

There are many strategies and national statutory guidance that is relevant to the domestic abuse agenda. These can be found at appendix 3.

## A Focus on Children and Thinking Family Plus the Impact of Hidden Harm

Every year in Somerset there are thousands of children living in households where there is some form of domestic abuse taking place. As the Somerset Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment (2017) states, living with domestic abuse can have a significant negative impact on a child's health and wellbeing. These impacts include increased:

- Risk of physical maltreatment
- Risk of depression
- Difficulty in achieving academic potential
- Likelihood of participating in anti-social behaviour
- Inability to be resilient to life's challenges.

We will respond to this knowledge by taking action to ensure that we are protecting our children and young people from becoming victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse now or in their future lives. This will include us considering the needs of the whole family where domestic abuse has been identified as affecting an individual —a “think family” approach.

### Hidden Harm

As a result of both national research and emerging local evidence, in 2015, Somerset County Council Public Health produced a “[Hidden Harm Needs Assessment](#)” to determine the breadth of the impact of domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental ill-health and how when 2 or more of these co-exist how they can affect children.

We will build upon the existing initiatives already underway in Somerset to improve the co-ordination of effective support to families, so as to reduce the likelihood of families needs being missed.

## Domestic Homicide Reviews

Since the introduction of the statutory requirement for Community Safety Partnerships to conduct DHR's in April 2011, the Safer Somerset Partnership has received 19 notifications of deaths to consider conducting a review. Of those, there have been 8 “formal” reviews and 2 “informal” reviews conducted.

All DHRs once approved by the Home Office DHR Quality Assurance Panel are published online at <http://www.somersetsurvivors.org.uk/domestic-homicide-reviews/>. The completion of the action plans for each review are overseen by the Somerset Domestic Abuse Board.

A report reviewing lessons learnt from all of Somerset's DHRs has been produced and can be found at <http://www.somersetsurvivors.org.uk/domestic-homicide-reviews/>. This learning has been incorporated into the development of the priorities and actions for this strategy.

## Priorities

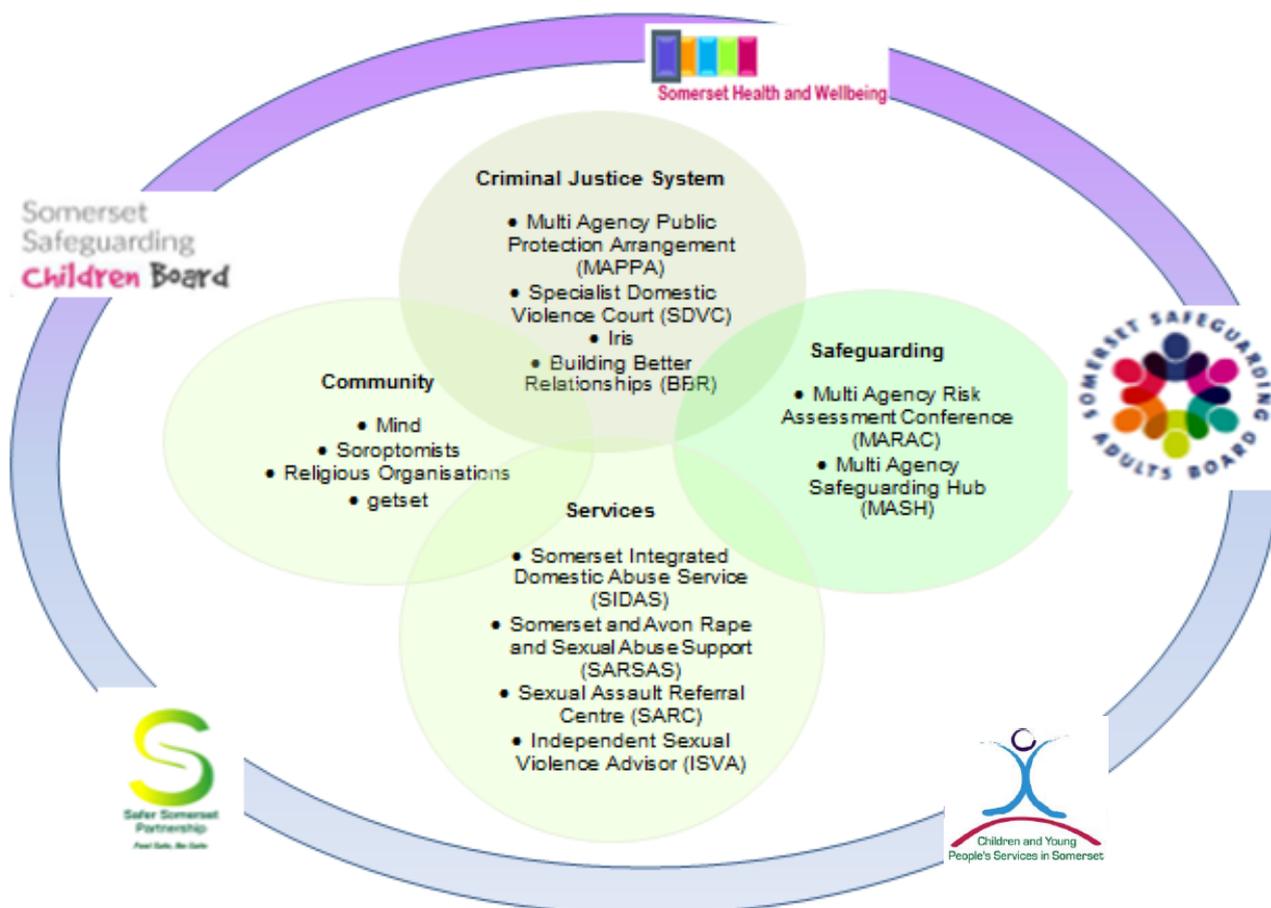
A Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment for Somerset was completed this year, which can be found at [www.somersetintelligence.org.uk](http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk). The findings from this extensive piece of work helped to determine three main priority areas. These all support Somerset further developing its co-ordinated community response to tackling domestic abuse. These are:

1. Effective and resilient system for supporting victims of domestic abuse
2. Breaking the cycle of victimisation by working with offenders and increasing prevention activity
3. Working in partnership for best results.

An action plan on a page can be found at Appendix 1, and a SMART version of this will be overseen by the Domestic Abuse. The communications strategy can be found at Appendix 6.

## Local Domestic Abuse System

The Domestic Abuse Board is committed to providing assurance of effectiveness and quality across the whole domestic abuse system in Somerset. The illustration below helps to describe this system



## Governance

Appendix 3 illustrates the current governance structure for the Safer Somerset Partnership, which includes the Domestic Abuse Board.

Delivery of the activities contained within the action plan is the responsibility of each of the relevant/identified strategic partners. Strategic leads are responsible for the coordination of an annual self-assessment audit for their service/organisation to the Domestic Abuse Board, the purpose of this is to ensure there is a commonality of approach across Somerset by key strategic partners. Appendix 5 includes these principles and the self assessment.

Additionally, the Public Health team at Somerset County Council collates a “dashboard” for each quarterly Domestic Abuse Board meeting to gain an oversight of the different activity across the domestic abuse partnership. This includes information from the specialist integrated domestic abuse service support provider. The service provider is contractually required to achieve Safe Lives Leading Lights and Respect Minimum Safe Practice Standard accreditations to help validate the quality of their service delivery for both victims and perpetrators.

## Appendix 1—Action Plan

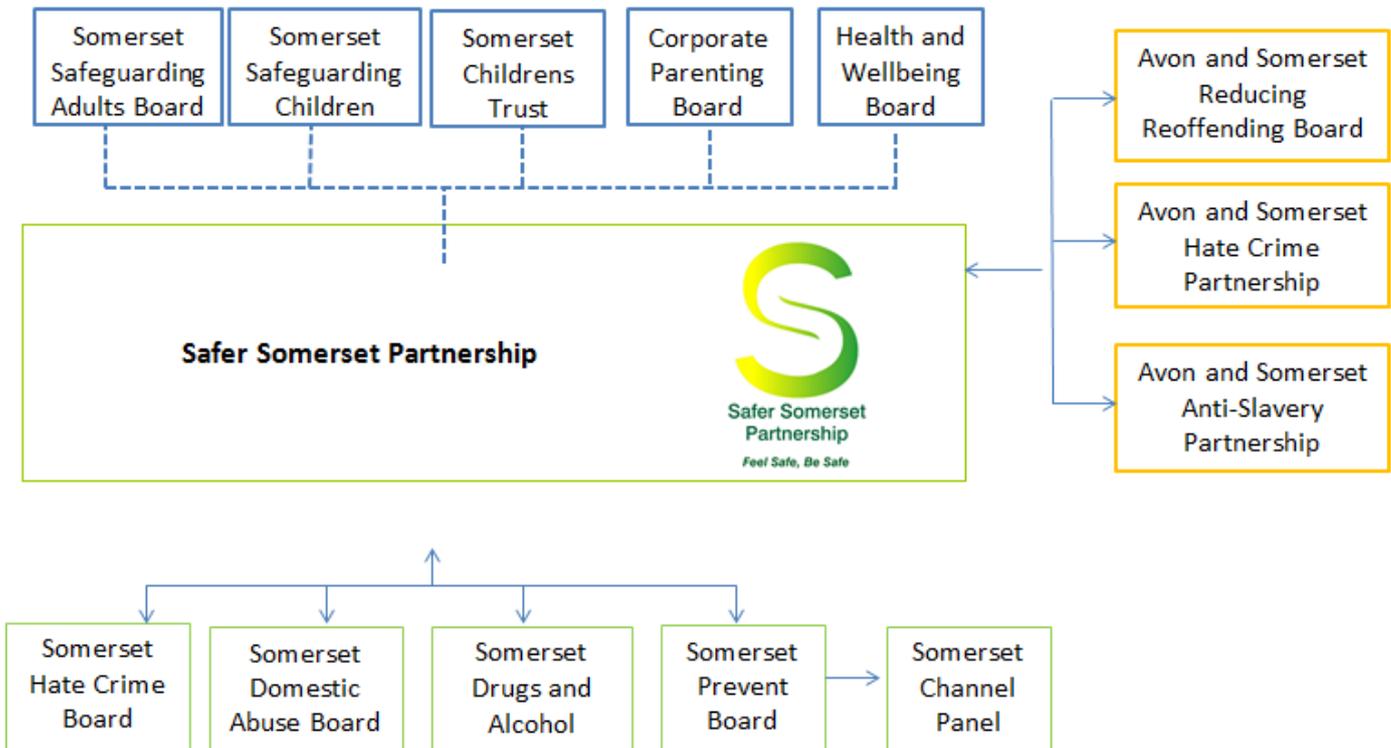
See separate document

## Appendix 2 National Strategies and Influential Policy

- National strategy to end violence against women and girls: 2016 to 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020>
- National Statement of Expectations—<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/violence-against-women-and-girls-national-statement-of-expectations>
- National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) Guidance: PH50 Domestic violence and abuse – how health service, social care and the organisations they work with can respond effectively <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/PH50>
- The Care Act 2015—<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-and-support-whats-changing/care-and-support-whats-changing>
- Children Act 2004 and Children Act 1989 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>
- LGA: Adult safeguarding and domestic abuse - A guide to support practitioners and managers [http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=5928377b-8eb3-4518-84ac-61ea6e19a026&](http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=5928377b-8eb3-4518-84ac-61ea6e19a026&)
- JTAI guidance [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/544747/Joint\\_targeted\\_area\\_inspections\\_inspection\\_framework\\_and\\_guidance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/544747/Joint_targeted_area_inspections_inspection_framework_and_guidance.pdf)
- DHR guidance—<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/revised-statutory-guidance-for-the-conduct-of-domestic-homicide-reviews>
- Serious Crime Act 2015 (Controlling or coercive behaviour is defined under section 76 of the Serious Crime Act (2015) as causing someone to fear that violence will be used against them on at least two occasions, or generating serious alarm or distress that has a substantial effect on their usual day-to-day activities) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-guidance-framework-controlling-or-coercive-behaviour-in-an-intimate-or-family-relationship>

## Appendix 3—Safer Somerset Partnership Governance

The diagram below illustrates the current (as at summer 2017) governance structure for the Safer Somerset Partnership.



## Appendix 4 Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Services in Somerset

This appendix describes the specialist services available in Somerset. It's not an exhaustive list but aims to provide an overview of the types of services available to people experiencing domestic abuse or sexual assault.

### Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse Service

Survivor/Victim Services	Perpetrators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Independent Domestic Violence Advisors</li><li>• Young People's Violence Advisors</li><li>• Domestic Abuse Co-Ordinators</li><li>• Family Intervention Workers</li><li>• Overcoming Abuse (behaviour change programme – 12 weeks)</li><li>• Helpline (7-day a week)</li><li>• Accommodation (refuge and safe-house)</li><li>• Chill 'n' Chat (One Teams)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lifeline (behaviour change programme—20 weeks +)</li><li>• Becoming Respectful (behaviour change programme – 12 weeks)</li></ul>
All SIDAS support can be accessed via a hub which acts as “one-front-door” to the specialist service.	

### Somerset and Avon Rape and Sexual Abuse Support (SARSAS)

- Helplines (One helpline for girls/women and a second helpline for boys/men)
- One to One Support
- E-support (for girls/women and men/boys)
- Counselling (for girls/women and men/boys)
- Phoenix Project (in partnership with Barnardo's)

### The Greenhouse

- Counselling to boys aged 13-18 who have experienced sexual abuse/violence

### Independent Sexual Violence Advisor

- One to One Support

### Safer Somerset Partnership

- Somerset Survivors - Specialist website to provide advice and information to people affected by domestic abuse, or for people wanting to support them.
- Multi-agency training – Training to help practitioners best respond to situations where domestic abuse is suspected or disclosed.

### Sexual Assault Referral Centre

- Emotional and psychological support
- Medical care
- Practical help
- Counselling

## Appendix 5 Domestic Abuse Board Common Principles

Each organisation commits to the following:

- Prioritise the safety of victims and their children in every aspect of decision making and intervention, in the knowledge that victims and children are at most risk when they are about to leave (or do leave) an abusive relationship. We will work to protect them when they do.
- Understanding that with an effective and skilled response, victims and children can be supported earlier before abuse escalates.
- Understand the impacts and risk of domestic abuse to the whole family and take them into account during assessment and action planning
- Treat all victims and perpetrators with respect and dignity.
- Seek to gain informed consent from victims and perpetrators where possible when there's an intention to share information.
- Respect confidentiality and privacy wherever possible, and understand the increased risks associated with information sharing in the context of domestic abuse.
- Activity work to develop competent services which are sensitive to the diverse needs of individuals.
- Work co-operatively with the range of services that victims need.
- Recognize the importance of specialist independent domestic abuse services in providing a voice for victims and children and guiding us on safe practice.

### Self Assessment

On an annual basis each domestic abuse board member will provide a report evidencing their services current response to tackling domestic abuse. This aims to identify good practice and areas for improvement to help more victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. The self assessment is shown below.

Requirement	Reporting - Frequency	What to Report
i. Domestic abuse policy for service users.	Annual	Submission of policy to DA Board Co-Ordinator
ii. Domestic abuse workplace (HR) policy.	Annual	Submission of policy to DA Board Co-Ordinator
iii. Include a routine question about domestic abuse on any service user referral forms.	Annual - or as updated if sooner	Submission of forms to DA Board Co-Ordinator
iv. Train staff in domestic abuse to an appropriate level depending on their role – (either Level 1 and/or Level 2 courses organized by SCC)	Annual	Confirmation of how many staff from service/agency attended the multi-agency training
v. When domestic abuse is disclosed, to undertake a DASH risk assessment or have an agreed referral pathway enabling a DASH risk assessment to be undertaken.	Annual	Confirmation of how many DASH's completed and/or how many DA victims / perpetrators have been identified
vi. Have a designated and trained MARAC representative (and trained deputy) and where a risk assessment identifies high risk of serious harm or homicide, to utilize the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and participate in the process.	Annual	Confirmation of how many victim cases escalated to MARAC, and number/location of MARAC meetings attended by your agency
vii. Maintain and publicise contact details of appropriate local help, information and leaflets to signpost victims to specialist support agencies. (Using SCC DA literature)	Annual	Confirmation of location of materials in each agency/service, and number distributed (where possible)
viii. Commitment to participating at and learning from domestic homicide reviews.	Annual	Confirmation of attendance at any panel meetings, &/OR how have implemented learning from DHR in their agency

## Appendix 6 Communications Plan

### 1 Purpose of this strategy

1.1 To support the impact of the Somerset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017-21.

### 2 Key Outcome for this Strategy

2.1 Help more people to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and sexual violence (victims, offenders, friends, families and the wider community), and for them to know what help is available and how to access.

### 3 Key Messages for Any Domestic Abuse/Sexual Violence Campaigns

3.1 These will be bespoke depending on the circumstance, but any communications should support these key principles.

- **abuse in relationships is not normal or acceptable at any age** – if you are in an abusive relationship it's not your fault and you do not have to stand for it
- **it's not just physical violence, like punching or kicking, that makes a relationship abusive** – if you are threatened with violence, have no say over what you wear or who you see or speak to, or are constantly criticised it is still abuse
- **abuse is never OK** – blaming abuse on anger, jealousy, alcohol or the other person's behaviour is not acceptable
- **help is available** – if you need some support getting out of an abusive relationship or just want to talk to someone visit

<u>To victims of domestic abuse:</u>	<u>To offenders of domestic abuse:</u>
<p>Don't suffer in silence. The cycle of domestic abuse can only be broken if you come forward and report it.</p> <p>Report domestic abuse to an organization or professional that can help and support you – this may not necessarily be the police.</p> <p>Promote the Somerset Survivors website <a href="http://www.somerset survivors.org.uk">www.sometsurvivors.org.uk</a> that has a list of local and national services and organisations</p>	<p>Domestic abuse and sexual violence will not be tolerated by Safer Somerset Partnership agencies.</p> <p>Be prepared to face the consequences of your crime – a prison sentence and the stigma of being a domestic abuse or sexual violence offender.</p>

3.2 Safer Somerset Partnership agencies should not only encourage victims to seek help and support, but also challenge attitudes to offenders of domestic abuse and sexual violence

## Appendix 6 Communications Plan (p.2)

### 4 Key audiences

4.1 The impact and extent of domestic abuse and sexual violence is throughout all sectors of our communities, irrespective of age, ethnicity, disability, etc. Audiences will include:

- Victims of domestic abuse or sexual violence
  - Offenders of domestic abuse or sexual violence
  - Media
  - Wider general public
- Friends and family of victims

### 5 Support Materials produced by Safer Somerset Partnership

5.1 Any agency who wishes to promote awareness and support for domestic abuse and sexual violence victims, can obtain a variety of materials to help them. These include:

Leaflet – Domestic Abuse Support

Poster – Domestic Abuse Support

“Business Cards” – Promoting domestic abuse helpline to all

Miscellaneous materials

Leaflets/posters for services to support victims of sexual violence

5.2 These are available by emailing [communitysafetyteam@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:communitysafetyteam@somerset.gov.uk) They are normally free of charge. But we know that some agencies require large quantities, and as we only have a limited budget for printing materials, large orders maybe subject to a charge.

PDF versions of many of the leaflets and posters can be found online at <http://www.somersetsurvivors.org.uk/materials-to-download/>

### 6 Key Dates

6.1 There are several key days/weeks during each year, which can provide a focus to any communications and campaigns. These include:

<b>March</b> (8 <sup>th</sup> )	International Women’s Day
<b>April</b>	National Stalking Awareness Day
<b>June</b> (15 <sup>th</sup> )	World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

## **Appendix 7 Training Strategy**

See separate document