

Sunderland Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy

2021 - 2024

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Foreword

We are pleased to present the Sunderland Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy.

The strategy sets out our commitment to providing safe accommodation with support services for those fleeing domestic violence. It also includes how we will further explore opportunities, to enable women and children living in Sunderland to remain in their own homes, if it is safe to do so.

The strategy highlights our 4 strategic priorities to deliver safe accommodation and support namely,

1. Ensure that what we do is underpinned by a robust needs assessment.
2. Deliver quality services which contribute to improving outcomes for survivors and children.
3. Increase our safe accommodation provision
4. Strengthen our approach in hearing the voice of survivors, and children and young people, including those with protected characteristics, to ensure their views are heard and influence what we do

These priorities have been informed by what stakeholders have told us, in particular women with lived experience. They will drive what we do, how we do it and how we will measure success. Getting the right support when needed will help victims, survivors and children to recover and rebuild their lives.

We are committed to making sure services are in place that support improved outcomes for all, who are fleeing domestic violence. This strategy is part of the Sunderland, multi-agency response to protect victims and survivors and prevent violence against women and girls, and male victims.

Patrick Melia

Chief Executive Sunderland City Council and Chair of Sunderland's Domestic Abuse and Violence against Women and Girls Executive Board

Councillor Kelly Chequer

Sunderland City Council Cabinet Member and Healthy City Portfolio Holder and Vice Chair of Sunderland's Domestic Abuse and Violence against Women and Girls Executive Board

Executive Summary: Sunderland Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy

Our Vision: To deliver safe accommodation and specialist support services to victims, survivors and children in crisis that is relevant to their needs, accessible, and empowering.

Our strategic approach and priorities are informed by

- Local needs assessment
- Stakeholder engagement response - Voice of women with lived experience, expert DA organisations, partnership agencies,
- Requirements of Part IV Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Strategic priorities – what we want to achieve	What we will do	Outcomes /success measures
<p>Priority one: Ensure that what we do is underpinned by a robust needs assessment</p>	<p>Improve our knowledge of need within Sunderland, regionally and nationally to better understand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of need and demand, • Barriers that prevent victims and survivors from accessing support within safe accommodation, • Increase in unregulated accommodation and usage <p>Engage with regional and national networks to facilitate the sharing of information. Work with providers to better understand capacity, levels of demand and agree core data requirements which provide insight</p>	<p>Local commissioning and decommissioning is informed by intelligent commissioning.</p> <p>There is clear evidence of actual and unmet need locally and regionally, to inform and deliver on local and joint regional commissioning opportunities</p>
<p>Priority Two: Deliver quality service interventions which contribute to improving outcomes for survivors and children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission services which are evidence based, and can demonstrate impact through an evidence-based outcome / progression tool • Commission services which meet needs identified by women with lived experience, giving priority to support services which address mental ill health, substance abuse and direct work with children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and adults experience improved physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing. • Increased resilience of survivors to prevent further experiences of DA. Improved ability to cope and recover. • Increased financial stability and independence • Survivors experience strong and resilient support networks

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through our contract monitoring process put in place clearly defined outcomes to be achieved by services, and KPI's which support the measurement of impact against outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survivors/children have hope and goals for the future Improved attachment / relationships with children and young people
Priority Three: Increase our safe accommodation provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through our operational group develop and implement an action plan which will increase the availability of dispersed safe accommodation based on our needs assessment, regional and national intelligence Increase provision for protected characteristic groups including male victims and perpetrators. Work with expert organisations, partners to understand how accommodation pathways for perpetrators can be developed in Sunderland; and learn from the current pilot projects. 	<p>There is evidence of increased capacity in meeting the demand of all survivors, in particular those who have protected characteristics, are male victims and perpetrators. Survivors who have teenage sons and survivors with additional needs</p> <p>Survivors achieve stable and secure accommodation with a minimum of moves, which contributes towards their recovery and ability to engage with specialist support services</p>
Priority four: Strengthen our approach in hearing the voice of survivors, children and young people, including those with protected characteristics, to ensure their views are heard and influence what we do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with survivors, experts in the field of DA to develop and implement a range of methodologies of engagement and participation, which work Establish a survivors forum, and a forum for children and young people Establish survivor representation in commissioning processes including how survivors can be engaged in the contract monitoring of services 	<p>Our offer of safe accommodation and specialist support services are equitable, accessible, and non-discriminatory.</p> <p>Survivors who access services report that their voices have been heard and barriers to accessing services addressed.</p>
Cross cutting local strategies/plans - Sunderland VAWG Strategy, Safer Sunderland Plan, Sunderland Healthy City Plan, Sunderland Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Prevention Strategy, Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board Strategic Delivery Plan and Business Plan, Sunderland Safeguarding Children's Partnership Business Plan, Sunderland Alcohol and Substance Abuse delivery plans, Sunderland Mental Health Strategy.		
Cross Cutting Partnership Boards – Safer Sunderland Partnership Board, Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board, Sunderland Safeguarding Children's Partnership, Sunderland Health and Wellbeing Board.		

Part One

1. Introduction

Purpose and scope

- 1.1. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 aims to respond to domestic abuse in England by,
 - Strengthening the support available to victims through statutory agencies,
 - Improving the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in protecting victims and bringing perpetrators to justice
 - Raising awareness of the impacts of domestic abuse.
 - Addressing the inconsistent approach to the commissioning and delivery of support within safe accommodation.
 - Reducing fragmentation of services and a postcode lottery which may determine whether survivors and their children receive help
 - The introduction of a statutory duty on local authorities to provide support that meets the diverse needs of victims of domestic abuse and their children, ensuring they have access to provision that is right for them.
- 1.2. The Act places a statutory duty on Tier One¹ local authorities in England to assess the need for accommodation-based support for victims of domestic abuse in their areas, to put in place a strategy to meet the needs identified and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.
- 1.3. Accommodation-based support is defined as “...support, in relation to domestic abuse, provided to victims of domestic abuse, or their children, who reside in relevant accommodation”²
- 1.4. There is a requirement that domestic abuse support will include:³
 - Advocacy support – development of personal safety plans, liaison with other services (for example, GPs and social workers, welfare benefit providers).
 - Domestic abuse-prevention advice – support to assist victims to recognise the signs of abusive relationships, to help them remain safe (including online) and to prevent re-victimisation.
 - Specialist support for victims with relevant protected characteristics and / or complex needs, for example, interpreters, faith services, mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support, and immigration advice.

¹ Tier one authorities are county and unitary councils (other than London Boroughs), the Greater London Authority and the Isles of Scilly Council)

² Relevant accommodation is defined as, refuge accommodation, dispersed accommodation; second stage accommodation, or other accommodation designated by the local housing authority, registered social landlord or registered charity as domestic abuse emergency accommodation. All accommodation must provide specialist domestic abuse support.

³ HM Government advice 2021

- Children’s support – including play therapy and child advocacy.
 - Housing-related support – providing housing-related advice and support, for example, securing a permanent home and advice on how to live safely and independently; and
 - Counselling and therapy for both adults and children.
- 1.5. The requirement of the Act makes it clear that the act of decommissioning and commissioning of services will be a key component in the delivery of the strategy to ensure needs are met and positive outcomes achieved. Current guidance dictates that the strategy should influence the commissioning and decommissioning of services in relation to safe accommodation.
 - 1.6. This document sets out Sunderland City Council and its partners, response to the statutory requirements under Part IV of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as it relates to safe accommodation and specialist support services.
 - 1.7. The strategy does not cover the wider issues and responses to domestic abuse (e.g. prevention, Holistic response across key statutory and non-statutory agencies e.g. police, education, and health etc.in the life journey of survivors and their children) this is will be addressed in the VAWG strategy.
 - 1.8. The Safe Accommodation and Specialist Support Services Strategy will be an integral part of the Violence Against Women and Girls strategy (VAWG) and contributes to the Sunderland City Council and Partner response to VAWG
 - 1.9. This strategy will form the basis by which Sunderland City Council and partner agencies will meet demand, based on the current needs analysis, survivor voice and specialist expert domestic abuse insight from research and specialist providers.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. For the purpose of this document, the following government definitions will be adopted:
- 2.2. It defines domestic abuse as any pattern of abusive behaviour by a person toward another where both are over the age of 16 and are personally connected⁴. Abuse can be perpetrated through the following types of behaviours:
 - Physical or sexual.
 - Violent or threatening.
 - Controlling or coercive.
 - Economic.
 - Psychological or emotional.

⁴ ‘Personally connected’ is defined as intimate partners, ex-partners, family members or individuals who share parental responsibility for a child. There is no requirement for the victim and perpetrator to live in the same household.

2.3. The definitions below define abuse behaviours

- **Domestic Abuse** “any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, 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. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse”.
- **Controlling Behaviour** “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** “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”.⁵
- **Economic abuse** “Economic abuse involves behaviours that interfere with an individual’s ability to acquire, use and maintain economic resources such as money, transportation and utilities. It can be controlling or coercive. It can make the individual economically dependent on the abuser, thereby limiting their ability to escape and access safety.

Examples of economic abuse include:

- Having sole control of the family income.
- Preventing a victim from claiming welfare benefits.
- Interfering with a victim’s education, training, or employment.
- Not allowing or controlling a victim’s access to mobile. phone/transport/utilities/food.
- Damage to a victim’s property.

2.4. These definitions equally apply to those married, cohabiting and partners not living together.

2.5. The definition is broad in scope and includes issues such as Female Genital Mutilation, honour based violence, child on parent or sibling violence and elder abuse.

2.6. Part 1 of the Act provides that a child who sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, domestic abuse and is related to the person being abused or the perpetrator is also to be regarded as a victim of domestic abuse. This will help to ensure that locally commissioned services consider and address the needs of children affected by domestic abuse.

2.7. One of the key functions of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner will be to encourage good practice in the identification of children affected by domestic abuse and the provision of protection and support for these children.

⁵ The DA Commissioner’s new ‘Safety Before Status’ report <https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Safety-Before-Status-Report-2021.pdf> includes a new definition of immigration abuse in this report as a form of coercive control. Stakeholder engagement with women with lived experience undertaken in Sunderland also highlighted immigration abuse as a form of coercive control.

3. National context

- 3.1. Between April 2019 and the end of March 2020 it is estimated that 2.3 million adults (aged 16 to 74) in England and Wales had recently experienced domestic abuse. This is the equivalent of over 5% of the adult population. Records of domestic-abuse related crimes increased by 9% in this period compared to the previous year. Additionally, data from the early months of the coronavirus pandemic indicate that this increase continued, resulting in greater demand for domestic abuse support services⁶.
- 3.2. Domestic abuse affects women significantly more than men. 7.3% of women are estimated to have been recent victims, compared to 3.6% of men. Younger women (aged 16 to 19) are at greater risk than those in older age groups, as well as those that are separated or divorced, those that have a disability and those that are unemployed or on long term/temporary sick leave⁷
- 3.3. 89% of victims of domestic abuse who have been subject to repeat victimisation (over 4 incidents) are women and are victims of a repeated pattern of coercive control.
- 3.4. Women are more likely to experience higher levels of fear and are also much more likely to be killed by their partners or former partners than men.⁸
- 3.5. The vast majority of victims/survivors requiring safe accommodation will be women. The interventions provided to maintain safety for women within safe accommodation should also be gender informed.
- 3.6. We know that certain groups are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse and crimes of violence against women and girls. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) showed that amongst adults aged 16 to 74 in the year ending March 2020; disabled people were more than twice more likely to have been victims of domestic abuse, stalking or rape than people without a disability.⁹
- 3.7. In addition, when considering sexual orientation, gay, lesbian or bisexual people were more likely to be victims of domestic abuse than heterosexual people. This was also the case for stalking, sexual violence and rape.¹⁰
- 3.8. There is also concern that migrant women with no recourse to public funds are particularly vulnerable and high risk.¹¹ Migrant women will face additional barriers in achieving help and support often linked to intersectionality and a lack of understanding by frontline professional of their rights and entitlements.

⁶ Office for National Statistics 2020

⁷ Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2021

⁸ Successful Commissioning: a guide for commissioning services that survivor women and children survivors of domestic violence. 2014 Imkaan and Women's Aid England

⁹ Tackling violence against women and girls. HM Government July 2021

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

4. Local context

Sunderland prevalence and Impact

- 4.1. Sunderland currently has an estimated population of 277,846¹². Prevalence of domestic abuse is comparatively high in the city, with several key contributory characteristics. For example, residents experience significant levels of deprivation. Around 27% of the population live in areas that are amongst the 10% most deprived in England.
- 4.2. Local analysis of domestic abuse crimes¹³ which took place between January 2017 and August 2021 show high levels of domestic abuse crimes in areas of high deprivation in Sunderland. Hendon ward is ranked within the most deprived quintile according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation and has the highest recorded rate of domestic abuse - 169.2 per 1,000 of population. Hendon is followed closely by a further 11 wards that are within quintile 1 with rates between 81.4 and 139.4. Together this group of wards accounted for around 65% of domestic abuse crimes, whilst the 8 least deprived wards in Sunderland, only accounted for just under 20% (shown in Appendix 1)
- 4.3. There is a strong correlation between poverty and those who experience domestic abuse.¹⁴ In addition, alcohol consumption and the incidence of abuse. Alcohol is estimated to be a factor in a third of all incidents of domestic violence, with many perpetrators consuming alcohol prior to the assault¹⁵. Victims of domestic violence may also use alcohol as a coping mechanism and, in some cases; this may be used by perpetrators as an excuse for continued abuse.
- 4.4. Harmful and precarious alcohol consumption is common in Sunderland, with a number of indicators showing that alcohol-related hospital admissions are amongst the highest in the North East and significantly higher than England as a whole¹⁶

Incidence of Domestic Abuse in Sunderland

- 4.5. We know that nationally and locally domestic abuse is a significantly underreported crime, with shame, stigma and fear often preventing reporting.
- 4.6. During 2019/20, Northumbria Police¹⁷ recorded a combined rate of 34.9 domestic-abuse related incidents and crimes per 1,000 members of the population. This compares to a rate of 28.0 for England as a whole and places the force area amongst those most significantly affected in England and Wales.

¹² ONS 2021

¹³ Crime data from the Sunderland Safe accommodation and specialist support needs assessment

¹⁴ Evidence and policy review :Domestic Violence and Poverty :A Research Report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation By Eldin Fahmy, Emma Williamson and Christina Pantazis, University of Bristol School for Policy Studies 2018

¹⁵ Walby S and Allen J. 2004. Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: findings from the British Crime Survey. Home Office Research Study 276. London: Home Office / World Health Organisation 2020

¹⁶ Public Health England 2021

¹⁷Northumbria Police Force Area. - Sunderland, South Tyneside, Gateshead, North Tyneside, Newcastle, Northumberland

- 4.7. In Sunderland, a total of 7970 reported domestic abuse related incidents were recorded in this period. (2019/20) This is equivalent to a rate of 38.9 incidents per 1,000 people. The number of incidents increased by around 6% to 8434 in 2020/21; a rate of 41.2 incidents per 1,000 people. Sunderland has the highest rate of incidents in the Northumbria police force area. Neighbouring South Tyneside and Gateshead are both similar with respective rates of 40.9 and 39.3 incidents per 1,000 people in 2020/21
- 4.8. Demand for local domestic abuse support services in Sunderland increased quickly as initial lockdown arrangements eased in the summer of 2020 with over 1,500 referrals received during the 5 months from June to October in that year.
- 4.9. Domestic abuse incidents taking place in Sunderland in 2020/21 concerned a total of 4,841 victims. This is the highest recorded number of incidents in the force area and represents a rate of 23.7 victims per 1,000 people. Of these victims, 43% (2,057) had been subject to previous incidents; a rate of 10.1 per 1,000 people. This placed Sunderland at a comparatively high rate of repeat incidence within the Northumbria Police area.

	Repeat Victims			
	2019/20		2020/21	
	Number	Rate (per 1000)	Number	Rate (per 1000)
Sunderland	1931	9.4	2057	10.1
South Tyneside	1179	10.7	1121	10.2
Gateshead	1318	8.9	1379	9.3
North Tyneside	1288	8.5	1266	8.3
Newcastle	1860	6.6	1885	6.6
Northumberland	1481	6.3	1575	6.7

- 4.10. Of the total number of victims in Sunderland, 73% were female; 86% of victims were between the ages of 18 and 55, 12% were over 55 and just over 1% were aged 16 or 17. Rates per 1,000 in each age group were generally comparable with other parts of the Northumbria Police area.
- 4.11. The proportion of victims that were identified as being from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups was relatively low in Sunderland at around 3%. This is consistent with the population as a whole in Sunderland which has around 4% of the population estimated to be from BAME groups (Office for National Statistics, 2021). It was also similar to the proportion seen in most of the rest of the Northumbria Police area, with the exception of Newcastle upon Tyne, where 12% of victims were from BAME groups.
- 4.12. Perpetrators are also known to commonly commit multiple offences. Thirty known perpetrators were linked to over 20 domestic abuse crimes each. Within this cohort 39% of perpetrators were identified as having alcohol misuse behaviours.¹⁸

¹⁸ Northumbria Police 2021

- 4.13. Since the introduction of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR), in April 2011, Sunderland has convened 8 reviews, in the period 2013-2020. While each of the reviews have been different, they have highlighted specific complexities and issues, which included, greater awareness of abuse in older peoples relationships, suicide, victim response to abuse and signs which may suggest potential significant harm to the abuser, the impact of abuse on children and how we can better respond to victims with multiple and enduring needs.¹⁹
- 4.14. **MARAC**²⁰. Local rates of active MARACs are 6th highest in England and Wales at 60 cases per 10,000 adult females
- 4.15. In Sunderland during 2020/21, 686 cases were heard at the Sunderland MARAC; this represents a reduction of 13% compared to 2019/20 when there were 789 cases. 96% of victims were female. Sunderland has a MARAC rate of 58 cases per 10,000 population and whilst this mirrors the Northumbria rate, it is much higher than the national rate of 44 high risk cases per 10,000 population. Additionally, on average, these cases involved 1-2 children in the associated households, which is similar to the previous year.
- 4.16. 30 (4%) of the MARACs in the period concerned male victims. The proportion of MARAC victims that are male was significantly lower than the overall proportion of victims reported by Northumbria Police as male (27%); this would suggest that although a substantial proportion of incidents involve a male victim, the likelihood of males being identified as at high risk is significantly lower than females.
- 4.17. Sunderland MARAC cases during 2020/21 involved only a small number of people from BAME backgrounds (around 1%). Despite BAME victims being particularly vulnerable, they appear to be under-estimated in the MARAC cohort which could indicate that levels of risk may be under-estimated.
- 4.18. A consultation piece (commissioned by Sunderland City council and Sunderland CCG) undertaken by Imkaan (November 2018 – March 2019) with survivors of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and key stakeholders in Sunderland noted that Black and minoritised women were likely to be identified as being at lower risk.²¹
- 4.19. ‘Safety Before Status’ a study commissioned by the Domestic abuse commissioner’s office notes “Immigration abuse and insecure immigration status as a risk factor is not always identified in local safeguarding protocols, and often the risk faced by victims with insecure immigration status is misidentified. In comparing data with six northern agencies, the Angelou Centre found that over 80% of people referred who were identified as standard or medium risk and considered to have NRPF were reassessed by specialist agencies as high risk, and over 40% had to be referred to MARAC according to local safeguarding protocols.”²²

¹⁹ Domestic homicide accounts for around a fifth of all homicides Home Office, Homicide Index. Homicide in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

²⁰ MARAC – Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference. Conferences held in relation to women who are at high levels of risk of serious harm or homicide.

²¹ “Everybody has the right to be safe” Consultation with stakeholders and survivors of violence against women and girls in Sunderland Imkaan May 2019.

²² <https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Safety-Before-Status-Report-2021.pdf>

- 4.20. Many black and minoritised women are likely to be identified as lower risk – because staff do not always understand the context of their abuse, the risks that their immigration status puts them in that their perpetrators use their immigration status to coercively control.
- 4.21. Agencies referring cases to the MARAC in 2021 were identified as the police (78%), Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (7%), Children’s Social Care (4%), Health Services (4%) and Housing Services (4%). Other sources collectively referred 3% of cases. Overall, this means that around 20% of cases are identified through routes other than incidents dealt with by the police and demonstrates the need for frontline staff ²³who come into contact with victims of abuse to be able to identify signs of domestic abuse and respond appropriately.
- 4.22. **Housing services**, in Sunderland have seen a general increase in demand from those affected by domestic abuse in recent years with around 45% more people accessing the services in 2020/21 totalling 557 compared to 2018/19.
- 4.23. The following data refers to those accessing the services in 2020/21. During this period, 82% of clients were aged between 19 and 44 with the highest levels of demand from resident aged 25-34.
- 4.24. 70% of cases were female; this is similar to the gender profile of victims identified above via incident data. Sexual identity is recorded for most clients of housing services in the period and where present it indicates that 93% were heterosexual/straight, around 2% were gay/lesbian and around 3% identified as another sexual identity.
- 4.25. Where data was present, the proportion of clients from BAME backgrounds was around 5%, with the remainder identified as from white backgrounds. This is a slightly higher representation from BAME communities than in the wider population.
- 4.26. Information about the marital status of the clients was present in around 70% of cases. Where it was recorded, 82% were identified as single with around 10% identified as either separated or divorced. Alongside this, 60% of clients who approached housing services were recorded as living in a one-person household. Lone female parents living with dependent children also made up a further 30% of clients.
- 4.27. 70% of those who approached housing services were recorded as either unemployed or unable to work due to long term sickness or disability. Additionally, around 8% were working less than 30 hours per week.
- 4.28. Survivors exhibited a wide range of co-existing risks and complex additional needs in addition to domestic abuse. Almost 92% were recorded as having a history of mental ill health problems, 82% were recorded as experiencing physical ill health and/or disability, 76% were affected by alcohol dependency and 76% by drug dependency.
- 4.29. Housing placements associated with survivors accessing the services in 2020/21 were most commonly within privately managed Bed and Breakfast hotels (66%) or Hostels (20%). Notably, only around 3% of placements were

²³ This should include voluntary sector agencies, who are more likely to be in contact with those with protected characteristics, who are particularly vulnerable.

identified as specifically within facilities providing safe accommodation in relation to domestic abuse²⁴.

- 4.30. **Adult Social Care (ASC)** has seen increasing levels of activity relating to domestic abuse in recent years, with 43% more contacts recorded in 2020/21 compared to 2018/19. Additionally, 81% of these contacts went on to lead to new safeguarding adult's cases or to be linked to existing cases. For the period 2020/21 ASC saw a wide distribution of cases across all age ranges covered by the service, however a significant proportion (over 30%) were above the age of 64.
- 4.31. 73% of clients affected by DA were female. Marital status was not available in a large number of cases (44%), where it was present it showed 31% were married and this was notably higher than any other cohort (i.e., those presenting at housing, reporting abuse to the police etc.)
- 4.32. Fewer than 3% of contacts were identified as coming from BAME backgrounds, similarly to the wider population in Sunderland.
- 4.33. The most common presenting needs associated with clients included personal care (28%), support relating to mental health (15%) and support relating to learning disabilities (8%).
- 4.34. **Children's Social Care (CSC)** in Sunderland is provided by Together for Children. Between 2018/19 and 2019/20, the proportion of children's social care assessments in which a concern regarding domestic abuse against a parent was present has risen from 35.5% to 38.1%, indicating a similar trend to other data sources concerned with adults; whilst this is slightly lower than the wider North East (39.1%), it is significantly higher than England (32.5%).
- 4.35. Assessments identifying where a concern relating to a child being the victim of domestic abuse represented 12.5% during 2019/20, which was a decrease compared to the previous year. However, it remained higher than both the North East (11.5%) and England (12.3%) in the same period.
- 4.36. Concerns identified about other household member reduced from 5.4% in 2018/19 to 4.3% in 2019/20; this was lower than the North East (5.4%) and England (6.0%).
- 4.37. Domestic abuse is a significant safeguarding issue within Sunderland and we recognise the impact domestic abuse has for children. Children exposed to domestic abuse can experience trauma which can have a long lasting negative effect, developmentally, emotionally and in their ability to achieve.
- 4.38. In addition, this has to take into account that we know an overwhelming number of children subject to a child protection plan and those who may become subject to care plans, have lived with domestic abuse accompanied by substance abuse and parental mental ill health, which has impacted adversely on their lives and their ability to develop healthy relationships, positive self-esteem and resilience.

²⁴ Sunderland city council

5 Safe accommodation and specialist domestic abuse provision in Sunderland

- 5.1 Sunderland has a range of safe accommodation-based support available for survivors of domestic abuse. This consists of a blend of 'traditional' refuge, a recovery unit for women with additional needs, dispersed accommodation and sanctuary scheme. Survivors who access these services are primarily resident in Sunderland
- 5.2 Wearside Women in Need is currently the primary provider of safe accommodation and support in Sunderland which is commissioned by the LA.
- 5.3 Appendix 2 highlights safe accommodation and specialist support in Sunderland.

6 Summary of usage and demand

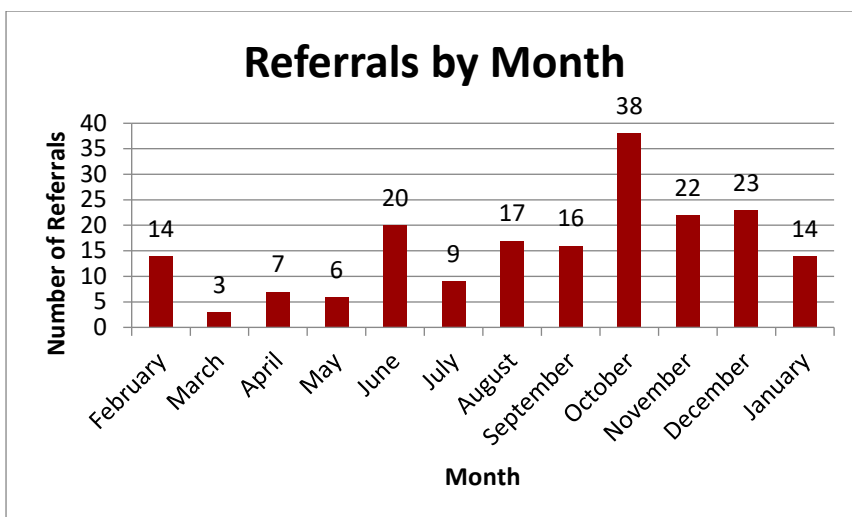
- 6.1 It has not been possible to provide detailed information on usage and demand for all services providing safe accommodation and support in Sunderland, particularly where services have not been directly commissioned Sunderland city council or CCG.
- 6.2 Relevant information available is set out below.

Wearside Women in Need (WWiN) – Refuge

- 6.3 WWiN provide refuge accommodation in Sunderland. In total, 26 units²⁵ are available. These are supported by specialist workers that provide one-to-one casework and therapeutic group work.
- 6.4 During the period February 2020 – February 2021 a total of 189 referrals were received for 'traditional' refuge services provided by WWiN. Housing services were the most common referral source (25%), followed by self-referrals (19%), other domestic abuse services (15%), children's social care (14%) and the police (11%). Others came from sources including substance misuse services, adult social care and health providers. It is estimated that on average, residents stay for between 6 and 7 months in refuge spaces in Sunderland, which is broadly comparable to England as a whole²⁶
- 6.5 On average, around 16 referrals were received per month. It is noted that there was a drop in referrals during the first wave of the pandemic and, as with other areas of provision, activity increased as restrictions were eased in the summer months, with an average of 20 referrals per month between June and October 2020.

²⁵ Includes 8 beds in recovery unit

²⁶ Sunderland: profile of domestic abuse provision Women's Aid, 2021



Source WWiN (period February 2020- January 2021)

- 6.6 26% of referrals received were accepted. The majority of referrals which were not accepted 48% related to a lack of capacity, and 11% to needs relating to substance misuse and mental ill health.
- 6.7 Of those referrals that were accepted, the majority were aged between 21 and 40 (80%). Around 10% of those accessing the services were pregnant at the time.
- 6.8 The table below shows breakdown of ethnicity of residents during the period February 20/January 21. 20% of residents in the refuge reported non-English language as their spoken language

Refuge Ethnicity of Accepted referrals	
White	%
British	71.43
Eastern European	6.12
Any other White background, please describe	2.04
Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Background	%
White and Asian	4.08
Asian / Asian British	%
Pakistani	4.08
Chinese	2.04
Any other Asian background, please describe	2.04
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	%
African	4.08
Other Ethnic Group	%
Arab	2.04
Not Asked	2.04

Source WWiN

- 6.9 Safe Lives reports²⁷ that “BAME women are less likely than white women to access a community based service and are represented at much higher rates in refuge.” This would be the case when looking at representation of BAME survivors across provision with the exception of services offered by the Angelou Centre.
- 6.10 Almost 37% of residents were non – Sunderland residents. These were almost exclusively from the North East region with a very small number from elsewhere in England.

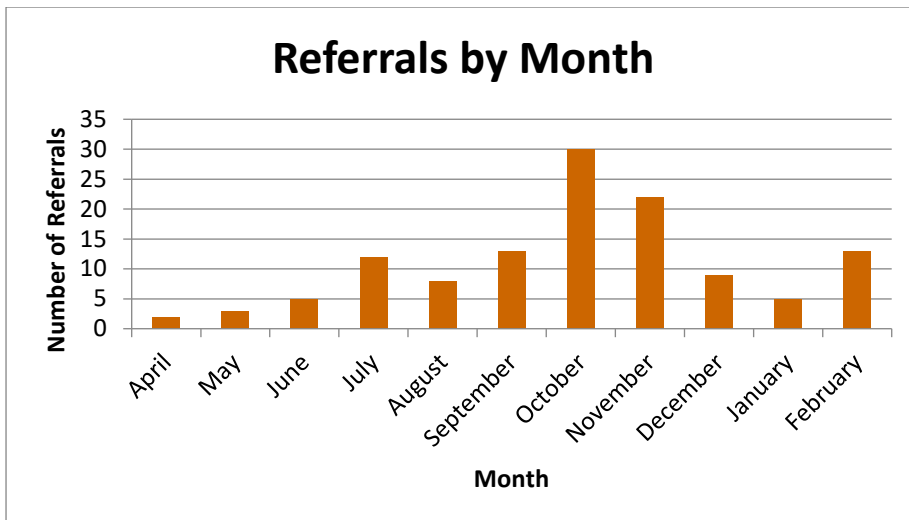
Local Authority of Residence	%
County Durham	12.24
Hackney	2.04
Hartlepool	2.04
Mansfield	2.04
Newcastle upon Tyne	4.08
North Tyneside	6.12
Northumberland	2.04
South Tyneside	6.12
Sunderland	63.27

Source WWiN

Wearside Women in Need - Recovery Unit

- 6.11 The Recovery Unit which aims to address the needs of women who are unsuitable for traditional refuge accommodation and may have difficulties engaging with other services. It provides support to those with complex needs such as mental health and/or substance misuse issues and those engaged in high-risk behaviours such as sex work. The project consists of 8 units.
- 6.12 For the period April 2020 to February 2021, a total of 122 referrals were received. Referrals received came from housing services (23%), domestic abuse services from other areas (20%) and self-referrals (14%). Other referrers included mental health services, adult social care, substance misuse services and the probation service.

²⁷ [Getting it right first time - complete report.pdf \(safelives.org.uk\)](https://safelives.org.uk/getting-it-right-first-time-complete-report.pdf)

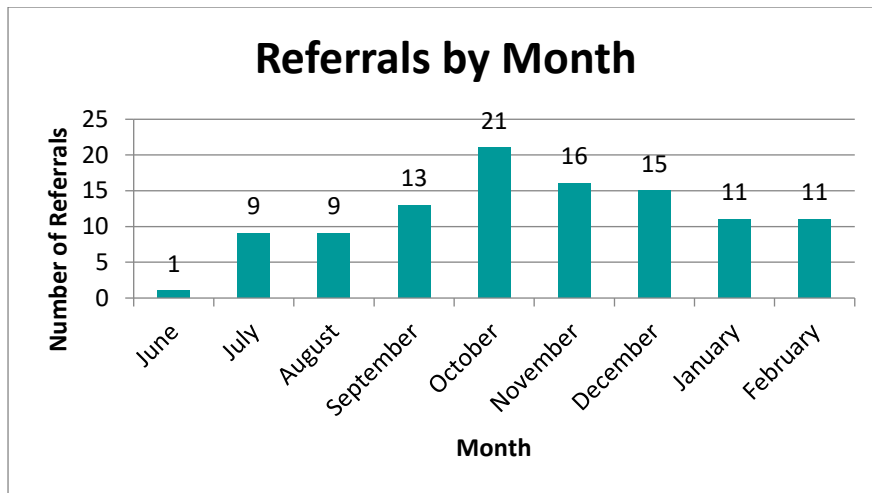


Source WWiN (period April 2020- February 2021)

- 6.13 Just over a quarter of referrals to the Recovery Unit were accepted. Around 18% could not be accommodated due to capacity issues. Additionally, smaller proportions of referrals were rejected due the service being unable to meet needs relating to substance misuse and some women were “not ready” to engage with services and declined any offer of support.
- 6.14 Survivors who accessed the Recovery Unit were almost exclusively aged between 21 and 40 (93%). Around 7% of those accessing the services were pregnant at the time of admission. The vast majority of service users identified themselves as heterosexual, with only around 4% identifying as pansexual. Those accessing the service were almost exclusively identified as White British, with only 4% from other backgrounds. The majority of those accessing the service were from Sunderland (82%), with the remainder from elsewhere in the North East region.

Wearside Women in Need - Sanctuary provision

- 6.15 The Sanctuary provision provides a multi-agency victim centred service which aims to enable households at risk of violence to remain in their own homes and reduce repeat victimisation through the provision of enhanced security measures and specialist support. A risk assessment will determine whether it is safe for the victim to remain in their own home and a safety plan is developed.
- 6.16 For the period from June 2020 to February 2021, 106 referrals were received, these were primarily made by Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVA's) and other parts of WWiN provision (82%). Other referrers include housing services, the police and children's social care. Referrals were relatively stable over time, though as with other services October 2020 saw the highest levels, with a total of 21 received.



Source WWiN (period June 2020 – February 2021)

Wearside Women in Need - Group work and counselling provision.

- 6.17 WWiN offer a range of group work opportunities for survivors. These include the following programmes:
- Power to Change
 - You and Me, Mum
 - Domestic Abuse Recovering Together
- 6.18 Additional group work is carried out in the Recovery Unit, covering domestic abuse, recovery, life skills and arts and crafts.
- 6.19 All survivors accessing safe accommodation are offered counselling and therapeutic programmes.
- 6.20 42 % of referrals made during the period February 2020- February 2021 were placed on a waiting list due to lack of capacity.

Changing lives sanctum project

- 6.21 Provides dispersed safe accommodation for survivors with additional needs who do not wish to live in shared temporary accommodation. Properties are available to both male and female survivors.

Angelou centre

- 6.22 The Angelou Centre provides refuge, specialist advocacy, outreach, therapeutic support and recovery programmes for women from black and minoritised ethnic backgrounds.
- 6.23 The Angelou centre is a specialist 'by and for' VAWG provider, led by women from BAME communities and supports women from across the North East as well as outside the region. Typically, it supports around 700 BAME survivors

of domestic abuse per year through its range of interventions, with capacity to accommodate 29 residents in its refuge provision.

- 6.24 Between March 2020 and April 2021, 32 referrals from Sunderland were made into the Angelou Centre VAWG Advocacy Service.
- Ethnicity Breakdown: 66% Bangladeshi Women, 22% African Women and 12% Pakistani women.
 - Immigration Breakdown: 28% are Asylum Seekers, 9% with indefinite leave to remain. (ILR), 44% on Spouse Visas and 19% with No recourse to public funds. (NRPF).

7 Women with lived experience

7.1 During July and August 2021 Sunderland City Council undertook an independent engagement exercise with women with lived experience of domestic abuse and accessing local support services.²⁸ This included representation from women who were receiving services from WWIN and The Angelou Centre. Interventions received included outreach support, refuge accommodation, and residential recovery support.

7.2 Women were asked to give their views on what they felt good safe accommodation and support services would look like. In general, the women used the services they received from WWIN and The Angelou centre as a benchmark and reported that they experienced them as setting good standards. Some of the repeated comments made include:

- “I get the support and therapy I need ... I have experienced a lot of trauma, I am still scared to travel outside alone staff recognise this, and have helped me”
- “The rooms are nice I have my own bathroom ... we have communal rooms and communal kitchen, there are rooms where I can sit and be myself and have quiet time”
- “Sometimes it feels like hard work ... we have to do various sessions and I feel like there is nothing for me ... It would be nice to do fun activities go to the beach, kayak”
- “More specialist support should be available if you have substance misuse and mental health related problems, staff do what they can, but they are not specialists”
- “I came here frightened and terrified with nothing ... I feel safe here”
- “I now understand that I was in an abusive relationship ... I am getting the support I need to know what a healthy relationship is”
- “Children need support and therapy ... my little girl is scared and anxious around men”

7.3 Key messages arising from women’s expressions regarding “what good looks like” include:

- Alternative accommodation should be made available for the perpetrator. Women and their children should not have to leave their home. Women perceived this as disruptive for them and their children and unnecessary if safety plans can be put in

²⁸ Stakeholder and engagement report attached as an appendix

place to protect themselves and their children. Women identified a key factor for their recovery would be provision of alternative accommodation for the perpetrator. All too often their experience was that the perpetrator would return to the family home and put pressure on the women to “take him back”.

- Trauma informed therapy and support with substance misuse and mental health issues are key requirements of specialist support.
- Age appropriate therapy for children.
- BAME women specifically valued support on immigration issues and benefit entitlement. Fundamental to their abuse was coercive control, the threat of deportation and an inability to provide for basic needs such as food and shelter. In addition, they expressed a need to be somewhere safe where staff understand and are able to act on the linguistic, cultural and generational complexities rooted in their abuse. This would help remove barriers in seeking help
- Support needs to be holistic and not just about trauma. Is also needs to provide women with life skills and build confidence.
- Self-contained units with wrap around support are preferred. However, there is recognition that this may not be suitable for all.

8 Gaps in provision and or lack of capacity

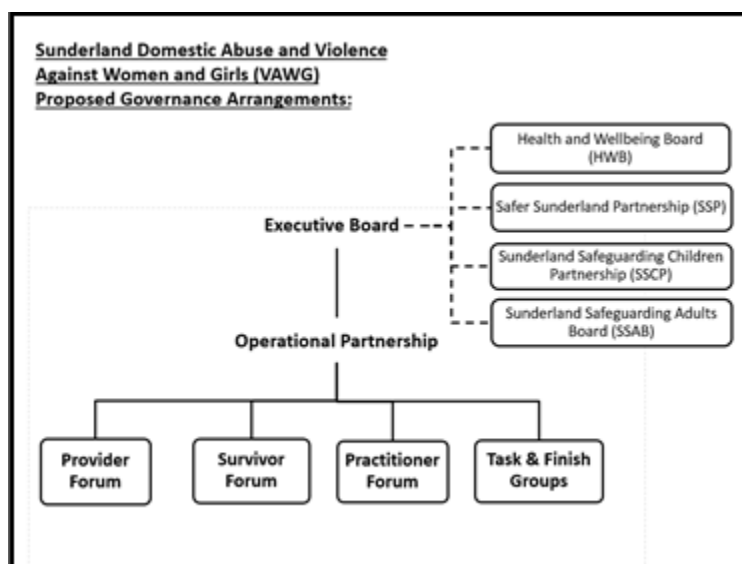
8.1 Key areas identified where there are potential gaps in provision and or a lack of capacity include

- Direct therapeutic work with children
- Capacity issues are evident re counselling and group work programmes given the need for waiting lists.
- The level of demand re safe accommodation exceeds the available bed space/units available within Sunderland
- If there is an increase in the number of units / properties made available to offer safe accommodation this may require an increase in resources providing specialist outreach support.
- Specialist clinical support for survivors with mental ill health and or active substance abuse behaviours
- Appropriate and culturally informed services for survivors with protected characteristics notably black and minoritised women, LGBT+ survivors, and those with a disability.
- Limited safe accommodation with wheelchair access and adaptations for survivors and or children with limited mobility.
- Provision able to accommodate survivors who are actively engaged in risky behaviour which puts them at immediate risk and those around them e.g., significant substance abuse and continued relationships with perpetrators to support their risky behaviour.
- Pathways of accommodation for the removal of perpetrators from households which would enable survivors to secure sanctuary services, and engage with specialist support services which aid recovery for survivors and their children.

Part Two

9 Aims and Principles

- 9.1 In accordance with the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, a Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Executive Board was established in June 2021. The governance structure is illustrated below.(further details can be found in Appendix 3)



- 9.2 The Sunderland Domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Executive Board has agreed the following key principles which will underpin multi agency approach on domestic violence;

- Address prevention, early intervention, crisis, and long-term recovery and safety working with a wide range of services, pathways and systems to improve outcomes for children, adults and their families affected by domestic abuse and wider forms of VAWG in Sunderland.
- Build on best practice taking a Coordinated Community Response (CCR) and in doing so ensure domestic abuse and VAWG is everyone's business.
- Deliver locally developed, locally owned; solutions which engenders a shared responsibility across agencies, with effective coordination and good governance.
- Delivering more than a crisis response, by focusing equally on prevention and early intervention; and trauma informed responses
- Take an inclusive approach, ensuring the needs of the survivors (including multiple forms of difference and intersectional needs) are central to service criteria and recognise the diversity of survivor experience, including the voices of children.
- Take a whole system response to a whole person, shifting responsibility for safety away from individual survivors to the community and services existing to support them.
- Shift responsibility away from survivors, by holding perpetrators accountable for their behaviour and the abuse.

9.3 Sunderland City Council and partners seek to ensure that commissioned services for safe accommodation and specialist support;

- Demonstrate and deliver a joined-up approach of commissioned specialist services, where the pathways are clear and survivors and their children are referred into and between services based on their level of need.
- Deliver improved safety leading to a reduction in repeat victimisation,
- Accommodation and support services should be needs-led, strengths-based, and trauma-informed.
- Help survivors to recognise and avoid future abusers (stopping the cycle of abuse), empowering them to build safe, happy, productive lives for themselves and their children, and increase levels of independence
- The ability to secure a reduction in child protection concerns
- Contribute to Sunderland's ability to secure longer-term reduction in health inequalities and improvements in the wider determinants of health.

9.4 The result being Sunderland City Council and partners are better able to direct resources where a) need and unmet need is evident, b) service intervention improves the quality of life for survivors and their children c) causes of domestic abuse alongside prevention and perpetrator-focused work is addressed. In addition in the long term reduce the amount of public money spent addressing the harmful and debilitating consequences of abuse.²⁹

10 Our Strategic Priorities

10.1 Our strategic priorities are based on what the needs assessment and stakeholder engagement has told us, in particular the voice of women with lived experience.

10.2 Our strategic priorities for 2021- 2024

1. Ensure that what we do is underpinned by a robust needs assessment.
2. Deliver quality services which contribute to improving outcomes for survivors and children.
3. Increase our safe accommodation provision.
4. Strengthen our approach in hearing the voice of survivors, and children and young people, including those with protected characteristics, to ensure their views are heard and influence what we do.

10.3 The table below sets our actions for the delivery of our priorities and measures used to monitor and evaluate success.

²⁹ Due to its high prevalence and prolonged period of abuse, the total socio-economic costs of domestic abuse were estimated at £66 billion for the 1,946,000 estimated number of victims identified in England and Wales within 2016/17 (about £74 billion in today's prices)

11 Our actions to support delivery and measures used to monitor and evaluate success

Strategic priority	What we will do	Key Outputs	Key Outcomes
<p>Ensure that what we do is underpinned by a robust needs assessment</p>	<p>We will improve our knowledge of need within Sunderland, regionally and nationally to better understand</p> <p>a) The levels of need and demand, through the acquisition of robust data from local and regional partners, national specialist organisations and nationally held data sets</p> <p>b) Barriers that prevent victims and survivors with diverse needs from accessing support within safe accommodation</p> <p>c)The increase in unregulated accommodation and usage</p> <p>Engage with regional and national networks to facilitate the sharing of information. (To include networks initiated by local authorities and networks led by specialist DV organisations)</p> <p>Work with providers to better understand capacity, levels of demand and agree core data requirements which provide insight</p>	<p>Core data requirements agreed with relevant partner agencies to inform annual review of needs assessment</p> <p>Consistent collection of data across all commissioned service areas.</p> <p>Able to identify gaps in provision and put in place plans/strategies to meet those gaps.</p>	<p>Local commissioning and decommissioning is informed by intelligent commissioning.</p> <p>There is clear evidence of actual and unmet need locally and regionally, to inform and deliver on local and joint regional commissioning opportunities</p>
<p>Deliver quality service interventions which contribute to improving outcomes for survivors and children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission services which are evidence based, and can demonstrate impact through an evidence based outcome / progression tool e.g. outcome star, strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) ‘on track’ ‘Insights’ or other recognised tools methodologies, to capture related data on outcomes for survivors and children, • Commission services which meet needs identified by women with lived experience, giving priority to support services which address mental ill health, substance abuse and direct work with children • Through our contract monitoring process put in place clearly defined outcomes to be achieved by services, and KPI’s which support the measurement of impact against outcomes 	<p>Service providers are able to evidence improved circumstance of survivors and children.</p>	<p>Children and adults experience improved physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Increased resilience of survivors to prevent further experiences of DA. Improved ability to cope and recover.</p> <p>Increased financial stability and independence</p> <p>Survivors experience strong and resilient support networks</p> <p>Survivors/children have hope and goals for the future</p> <p>Improved attachment / relationships with children and young people</p>

Strategic priority	What we will do	Key Output	Key Outcomes
<p>Increase our safe accommodation provision</p>	<p>Through our operational group develop and implement an action plan which will increase the availability of dispersed safe accommodation based on our needs assessment, regional and national intelligence</p> <p>Increase provision for protected characteristic groups including male victims and perpetrators³⁰</p> <p>We will work with Safe Lives and partners to understand how accommodation pathways for perpetrators can be developed in Sunderland and learn from the current pilot project implemented through MOPAC³¹ across 5 London boroughs and the Making Safe Scheme in North Yorkshire ³²</p>	<p>Survivors and their children experience limited accommodation moves</p> <p>A percentage reduction in the numbers of victims and survivors who are accessing unregistered accommodation which does not provide safe, secure, accommodation with specialist support.</p> <p>Proposal for pathways into accommodation for perpetrators developed and opportunity to engage in pilot project sought</p>	<p>There is evidence of increased capacity in meeting the demand of all survivors, in particular those who have protected characteristics, are male victims and perpetrators. Survivors who have teenage sons and survivors with additional needs</p> <p>Survivors achieve stable and secure accommodation with a minimum of moves, which contributes towards their recovery and ability to engage with specialist support services</p>
<p>Strengthen our approach in hearing the voice of survivors, children and young people, including those with protected characteristics, to ensure their views are heard and influence what we do</p>	<p>We will work with survivors, experts in the field of DA and service user participation and engagement, and co-production to develop and implement a range of methodologies of engagement and participation, which work</p> <p>Establish a survivors forum, and a forum for children and young people</p> <p>Establish survivor representation in commissioning processes</p> <p>Identify and implement ways by which survivors can be engaged in the contract monitoring of services</p>	<p>We are able to evidence engagement with survivors and children</p> <p>We are able to evidence how those engagement activities have influenced what we do. (e.g. you said, we did)</p>	<p>Our offer of safe accommodation and specialist support services are equitable, accessible, and non-discriminatory.</p> <p>Survivors who access services report that their voices have been heard and barriers to accessing services addressed.</p>

³⁰ Nationally, there is a shift to enable victim/survivors to stay in their own home, with perpetrators moving into alternative provision

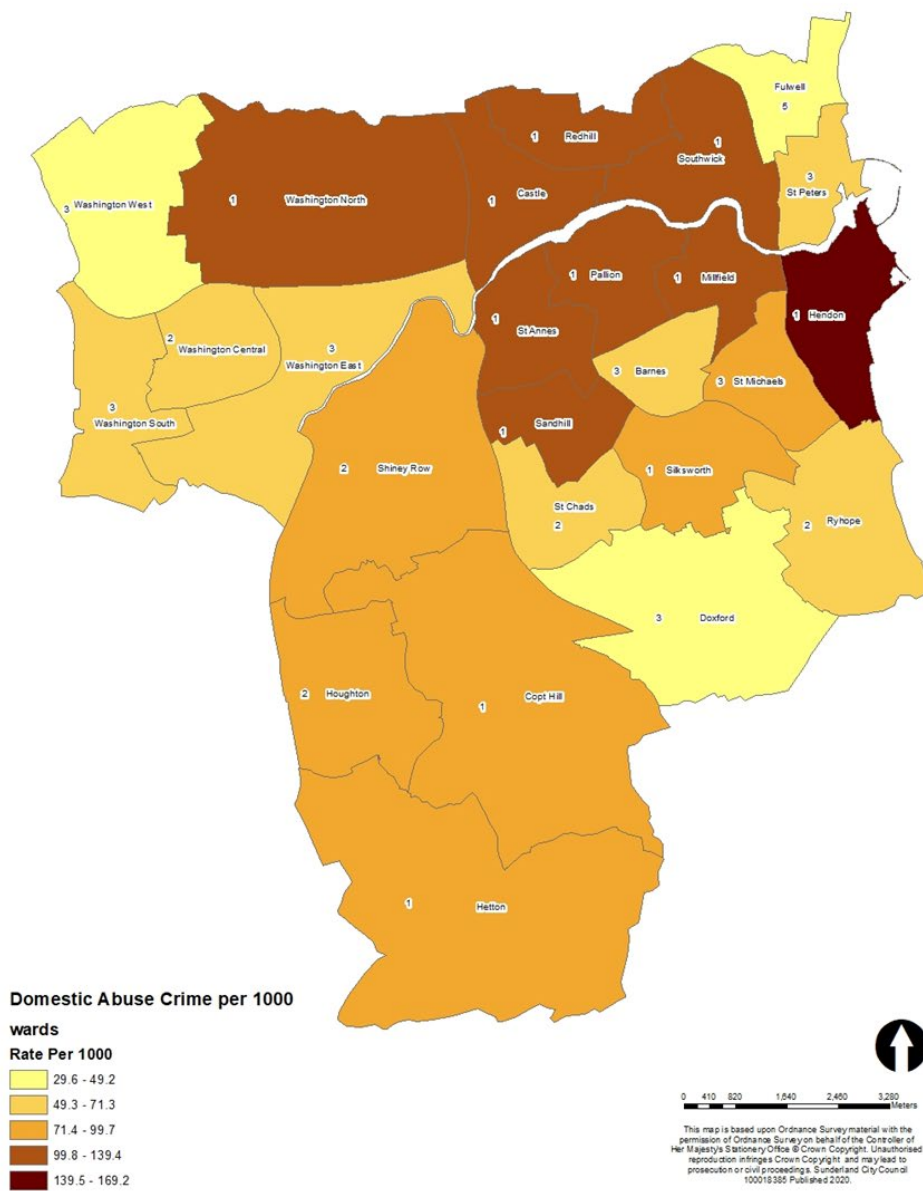
³¹ Mayor's Office for Policing and crime

³² This project supports pathways into accommodation for perpetrators enabling women and children to remain in their homes.

12 Appendices

Appendix 1 Domestic Abuse Crimes in Sunderland 2017-2021 by Electoral ward and IMD Quintile (Northumbria Police 2021)

**Domestic Abuse Crimes by Ward and IMD Quintile
01 January 2017 - 16 August 2021**

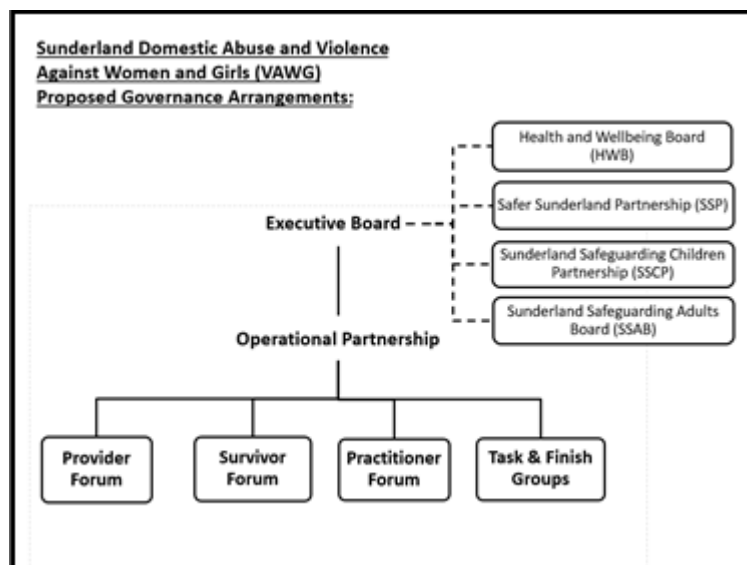


Appendix 2 Safe accommodation and support services in Sunderland.

Provision	Current provider	Capacity	
Crisis Refuge Accommodation, Specialist Domestic Abuse Outreach Support Group work	WWIN	28 units spread across 3 buildings 4FTE IDVA's 9 outreach workers 2 group workers	Provides safe accommodation for women and their children fleeing domestic violence Offers Support groups and group work programmes and individual casework. Outreach resettlement support
Crash Pad and Complex Needs Outreach.	WWIN		Offering one to one support to victims of domestic abuse, and safe accommodation for women in crisis (short term)
Trauma informed Recovery Unit	WWIN	8 Units	A residential project which provides safe accommodation and trauma informed counselling for women who are unable to access traditional refuge accommodation, due to additional mental health and substance abuse needs
Dispersed accommodation Complex Needs Provision Sanctum project	Changing Lives -	8 self-contained properties	Provides safe accommodation for survivors with additional needs who do not wish to live in shared temporary accommodation. Properties are available to both male and female survivors. The service is responsive to supporting survivors who are ineligible for housing benefit, have teenage sons or pets or people in gender transition or who define themselves as non-binary. The scheme aims to offer access for individuals for 6-9 months and delivers intensive supported via a dedicated team with a view to enabling residents to take a holistic approach to their own recovery. 8 properties are available in Sunderland.

Sanctuary Scheme	WWiN	Covers 70 properties	Provides a multi-agency victim centred service which aims to enable households at risk of violence to remain in their own homes and reduce repeat victimisation through the provision of enhanced security measures (target hardening) and specialist support. A risk assessment will determine whether it is safe for the victim to remain in their own home and a safety plan is developed.
Accredited Group Work	WWiN		Freedom Programme 26 week programme for female survivors of domestic abuse
Perpetrator Programme (Impact Family Services)	Impact family services		A voluntary behaviour change programme consisting of 26 weekly group work sessions aiming to help perpetrators to recognise where they have been abusive and develop ways to ensure they are not abusive in the future.
Refuge and advocacy service	The Angelou Centre	29 units	Provides refuge accommodation, specialist advocacy, outreach, therapeutic support and recovery programmes for women from black and minoritised ethnic backgrounds. Not commissioned by Sunderland City council or partners .charity based in Newcastle Upon Tyne

Appendix 3 Governance Arrangements



The Operational Partnership will advise and support the work of the Board by driving forward business and operational matters requiring focus, attention and development.

A Provider Forum – this will provide a regular formal forum for commissioned and non-commissioned providers working in and around this field of work to consult and be consulted on local, regional and national initiatives and developments. There would be representatives from the Provider Forum on the Operational Partnership.

A Survivors' Forum – this will provide a forum for survivors of domestic abuse and wider forms of VAWG over the age of 18 years to have a space for safe discussions and dialogue, where they can:

- Share their thoughts, feelings and experiences, feel connected, empowered, uplifted and decrease isolation.
- Give opinions about services based on experience.
- Help identify any gaps or barriers to accessing support services.

- Ensure the services are coordinated.
- Influence service development and practice; and
- Highlight, promote and celebrate good practice in the city.

The forum will acknowledge that domestic abuse can affect anyone regardless of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, age, disability or socio-economic background, therefore the membership of the forum should reflect that. However, there will be topics that may require targeted invitations to a specific meeting. The prerequisite for membership is that individuals have been (or are currently) affected by domestic abuse or wider forms of VAWG. Members do not have to have had experience of being a service user.

A Practitioner Forum - open to all professionals who have a relevant interest. The Forum will encourage links between people working in education, early years, youth offending, youth work, social services, police, probation, health, housing, policy and commissioning, CAMHS, CAFCASS, and people working as refuge staff, family nurses, health visitors, school nurses, teenage pregnancy coordinators, IDVAs and more.

Task and Finish Groups. Established to support the delivery of the Board's priorities.

The Board may wish to consider holding an annual Joint Development Session involving representation from the Operational Partnership, the Provider Forum, the Survivor Forum, the Practitioner Forum, the four strategic partnerships and any Task and Finish Groups under the umbrella of the Boards wider governance arrangements. The annual event would provide a forum to hear the voices of victims and come together to tackle the complex issues of domestic abuse and VAWG in partnership.