

Luton Domestic Abuse Partnership

Domestic abuse strategic plan 2026 to 2031

Authors: Meaghan Kall, Jenny Bull

Contact: Jenny.bull@luton.gov.uk

Version: 1.0 (published)

Last updated: January 2026

Contents

Foreword.....	1
Overview.....	2
National and local picture.....	2
A survivor's journey	3
Our strategic priorities	4
What we are going to do and how we will measure our success.	4
Priority 1: prevent domestic abuse before it starts.....	4
Priority 2: Intervene early to stop escalation.....	5
Priority 3: Provide support and safe housing	6
Priority 4: Stop perpetrators re-offending	7
Priority 5: Ensure clear pathways to safety.....	7
Our commitment	8
Governance and accountability.....	8

Foreword

Domestic abuse is something that invades our lives. Whether we realise it or not, all of us know someone whose life has been impacted by domestic abuse in some form. It could be a friend, a colleague, a family member, or it could be ourselves. In Luton, an estimated 14,000 adults were victims of domestic abuse in the last year. This is unacceptable.

Domestic abuse has a devastating impact on victims, their families, friends, and the wider community. There are few risk factors to health, wellbeing, happiness, and a thriving, productive community that are as damaging as domestic abuse. Hence there is an urgent need for a multi-faceted, multi-agency approach to prevent domestic abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Strategic Plan 2026-2031 is built upon partnership and collaboration between all statutory and specialist agencies working with domestic abuse survivors and perpetrators to address domestic abuse and achieve the best outcomes for Luton residents.

We are aligning this strategy with our Luton 2040 vision, specifically the ambitions to ensure that everyone can live safe and healthy lives, and that no-one is left behind. It also supports the UK Government's pledge to halve the number of incidents of violence against women and girls over the next ten years. Addressing domestic abuse is fundamental to reducing health inequalities, protecting children and families, and supporting long-term wellbeing and resilience.

There is no excuse for domestic abuse, and it is everyone's business. Until we all take our share of the responsibility for it and help change the attitudes that allow it to continue unchallenged, then domestic abuse will never stop. I invite everyone who lives, works in or visits Luton to join me in pledging zero tolerance for any form of domestic abuse.

Councillor Maria Lovell MBE

Leagrave Ward (Lab)

Portfolio holder: Women, Equalities and Community Safety

Overview

Our strategic plan is based on priorities resulting from our statutory duties and the recommendations identified by our local needs assessment. The needs assessment synthesised local statistics, survivor's voices, feedback from front-line staff, policy, and best practice to identify five priority areas.

Our priorities are structured around the House of Support: the roof represents our overarching shared ambition, the five supporting pillars represent our priority areas, built on a foundation of partnership and collaboration which underpins all our work. From this we have developed specific aims to deliver against these priorities, which will be delivered through a Joint Action Plan.

Our priorities are underpinned by a commitment to being survivor-centred, trauma-informed, inclusive, and evidence-based. These cross-cutting principles will apply to all our work. We must be dedicated and consistent to bring about the change in beliefs, attitudes and behaviours needed to break the cycle of domestic abuse. This is the work of a generation, and this is why we align it with the Luton 2040 ambitions.

Our ambition is a Luton where domestic abuse is not tolerated, and residents can live free from fear, violence, and abuse. This document provides an overview of how we will deliver against this ambition.

National and local picture

In England and Wales, an estimated 12.6 million people (26% of adults) have experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16, this breaks down to around 30% of women and around 22% of men, according to the Office for National Statistics.

- Women are more likely to experience repeated or severe abuse, and more than three-quarters of domestic homicide victims are women.
- Suicide is now the leading cause of death in domestic abuse cases. (footnote 1)

Locally this means over 14,000 (1 in 13) people are estimated to have experienced domestic abuse, around 8,000 women and up to 6,000 men, experiencing abuse in the last year. Repeat victimisation is high, with almost 1 in 3 cases of domestic abuse cases being repeat victims.

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone regardless of background or circumstances, however the highest rates of domestic abuse related crime in Luton happen in some of our most deprived wards.

Domestic abuse contributes to a large amount of workload for statutory services, including 1 in 3 violent offences and 1 in 6 police reported offences overall, 1 in 2 referrals to Victim Care Services, 1 in 8 homelessness applications, 1 in 10 adult safeguarding referrals and 1 in 5 child safeguarding referrals.

(Footnote 1: Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) Report - vkpp.org.uk)

A survivor's journey

Join 'Jas' as she makes her journey to freedom with support from some of our local service providers.

Step 1: Jas went to her GP and said she felt depressed & anxious. (Context stat: 44% of victims disclose abuse to a healthcare worker first.)

Step 2: The GP referred her to Talking Therapies, where Jas disclosed coercive control by her husband and brother-in-law.

Step 3: The counsellor referred Jas to a local domestic abuse support service.

Step 4: Jas told her Domestic Abuse (DA) support worker she wanted to leave but was too scared. Her movements were monitored constantly. She was never allowed out alone. (Context stat: 1 in 7 women in the UK has experienced economic abuse by a current or former partner.)

Step 5: Jas made a homeless application to the council but was refused due to a tenancy being taken out in her name, which she knew nothing about. Her ID had been stolen and signature forged by the perpetrators. (Context stat: 1 in 8 homelessness applications in Luton are due to domestic abuse.)

Step 6: The Housing Officer did not believe her and asked to speak to her husband. Jas felt she had no choice but to stay with her abusers.

Step 7: As a result of the perpetrators being made aware of her disclosure the abuse at home escalated. (Context stat: 70% of women killed by their abusers were killed in their own home.)

Step 8: Her DA support worker helped Jas to make a safety plan including preparing an emergency bag should she need to leave in a hurry.

Step 9: Her DA support worker helped Jas make a statement to Police and raised an immediate safeguarding concern. (Context stat: 3 in 4 domestic abuse crimes are not reported to the police.)

Step 10: Police attended the address and Jas disclosed that she was stopped from leaving her home, not allowed to speak to family or neighbours, and her phone was constantly checked by the perpetrators.

Step 11: Police said that as she had her own key to the house there was nothing that they could do to support her. (Context stat: Domestic abuse victims attempt to leave their abuser on average 3 - 7 times.)

Step 12: Her DA support worker gained consent to share Jas's safeguarding risk assessment with a Housing Officer in the new area and supported Jas to submit her paperwork. (Context stat: The average cost for a single victim of domestic abuse is estimated at £43,600.)

Step 13: The new area organised temporary accommodation but were concerned about Jas leaving her home safely with the perpetrators being in the house. (Resource link: www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/the-survivors-handbook/)

Step 14: Her DA support worker helped Jas to leave her home safely by arranging a fake GP appointment and a taxi to take her to her new temporary accommodation. (Context stat: Around 1 in 3 women, 1 in 5 men and 1 in 5 children will experience domestic abuse during their lives.)

Step 15: Jas made it to safety and with financial support from the Women's Aid Future Fund and the IMPAKT DA Flexi Fund she was able to start her new life, in safety, free from abuse.

Our strategic priorities

Our ambition is to create a Luton where domestic abuse is not tolerated, and residents can live free from fear, violence and abuse.

Our priorities are built on a foundation of partnership working with both statutory and non-statutory partners, survivors and other stakeholders.

Priority 1: Prevent abuse before it starts. Teach our children and young people how to recognise and form healthy relationships and break the cycle of abuse by challenging harmful beliefs and norms in all communities.

Priority 2: Intervene early to stop escalation. Take a whole-family approach to offer early support and prevent escalation and equip professionals with the knowledge and confidence to recognise signs of domestic abuse and act swiftly.

Priority 3: Provide safe housing and support. Everyone impacted by domestic abuse has access to safe accommodation and has access to support that meets their needs.

Priority 4: Stop perpetrators re-offending. Break the cycle of abuse by helping perpetrators change their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour and work with the criminal justice system to secure the best outcomes for survivors.

Priority 5: Ensure clear pathways to safety. Build clear, joined-up referral pathways so professionals can respond effectively to safeguard adults and children impacted by domestic abuse.

What we are going to do and how we will measure our success.

Priority 1: prevent domestic abuse before it starts.

Objectives (what we will do)

1. Work with education settings and other youth targeted services to ensure they have access to clear up to date, age-appropriate guidance, referral pathways, training, and resources to support the delivery of the RSE curriculum in line with statutory guidance. This should include harmful

relationship behaviours, exploitation, coercive control, misogyny, sexual harassment, pornography, incel ideology and on-line harms.

2. Develop multi-agency programme of support using external specialist services to work directly with children & young people (CYP) and to deliver RSE curriculum and provide education and resources for parents and teachers.
3. Partner with faith and community leaders to raise awareness of impact of domestic abuse and misogyny, promote positive messages about healthy, respectful relationships and empower them to challenge harmful attitudes and beliefs.
4. Deliver targeted prevention & outreach activities in identified hotspot areas responding to latest data and trends.
5. Enhance awareness of domestic abuse support services among groups under-represented in those already accessing support, including men, older adults, LGBTQ+, and those from minority ethnic groups.
6. Raise awareness of the signs of domestic abuse and coercive control in all communities, with campaigns and projects informed by the 'voices' of survivors.

Measures (what success will look like)

- All Luton schools have an up-to-date RSE curriculum to include all harmful relationship behaviours in line with latest statutory guidance.
- Increase the proportion of secondary school children who recognise the signs of harmful behaviour in relationships (including those responding to SHEU surveys).
- Increased reporting & referrals across all risk levels with evaluation of commissioned support and monitoring of agreed outcomes.
- Increased reach of domestic abuse awareness campaigns & website traffic through evaluation and feedback.

Priority 2: Intervene early to stop escalation.

Objectives (what we will do)

1. Embed a whole-family, early intervention approach through partnership with Family Hubs and Family First Pathfinder programmes, co-locating specialist DA services where possible.
2. Improve early identification and support for young people impacted by DA or coercive control in intimate relationships, in collaboration with education and social care.
3. Expand community-based support for child victims, including protective behaviours and play therapy.
4. Strengthen partnership working with mental health and substance misuse services to address individual intersecting needs and improve support pathways, recognising the link between DA and an increased risk of suicide.
5. Provide regular training for frontline staff to better recognise & respond to all forms of DA, recognising the importance of routine enquiry by front line professionals.
6. Increase professional awareness of children as victims in their own right through targeted training and supervision.

7. Increase local provision of lower threshold support for all individuals & families affected by DA to address risks at the earliest opportunity.

Measures (what success will look like)

- Make trauma informed domestic abuse training mandatory for all council, police, and NHS staff in Luton by 2030.
- Expand offer of specific training themes for professionals including, routine enquiry, cultural competency, professional curiosity, safety planning, non-fatal strangulation, suicide, bystander training and working with those who cause harm.
- Embed domestic abuse specialist services in the Luton Family Hub Network.
- Increase the offer and range of specialist support available in community settings, particularly in hotspot areas.
- Increase confidence of professionals to identify and respond appropriately to DA & other harmful behaviours, including suicidal ideation.

Priority 3: Provide support and safe housing

Objectives (what we will do)

1. Provide safe accommodation for domestic abuse victims, ensuring that provision responds to the diverse needs of all adults and children and meets statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act.
2. Explore and expand innovative housing models to enable survivors to remain safely in their homes or communities.
3. Improve provision of temporary and short-term accommodation that meet needs of family and survivors (basic kitchen facilities, women only), with pathways to move-on accommodation that are trauma-informed.
4. Provision of specialist domestic abuse recovery & wellbeing support for all victims, including peer networks and trauma-informed therapeutic support.
5. Provide culturally sensitive specialist services ('by & for') to meet the needs of a diverse population (including specific risk groups such as men, ethnic minority, LGBTQ+, older people, disabled people).
6. Enhance specialist support and advocacy services for children and young people at all risk levels ensuring inclusive provision for neurodiverse individuals and those exhibiting child-to-adult violence.
7. Work with Police and other partners to expand Operation Encompass so that interventions can be introduced earlier.
8. Embed the Survivors Voice into the design and commissioning of services.
9. Increase joint commissioning activities, to improve efficiency, embed best practice & avoid duplication.

Measures (what success will look like)

- Increase victim satisfaction with statutory agency responses to domestic abuse.
- Increase in the proportion of survivors reporting increased confidence and wellbeing after accessing specialist support services.
- Reduce the proportion of repeat victims being attended by police referred to MARAC.

- Increase the number of those with protected characteristics accessing specialist domestic abuse services.
- More survivors are able to stay safely in their own home if they want to.
- Increase in the proportion of child victims who access specialist advocacy (KIDVA) and DA support services.
- Increase uptake rates across all our commissioned services and for those accessing specialist IDVA support.

Priority 4: Stop perpetrators re-offending

Objectives (what we will do)

1. Work with partners to expand availability of diversionary measures, interventions and behaviour change programmes for those who harm, including wrap-around support and mandatory course attendance, to reduce reoffending.
2. Make reducing repeat offending a strategic priority by focusing on interventions with high-risk perpetrators and patterns of repeat victimisation.
3. Work with local commissioners, probation services, and other key agencies to establish a multi-agency perpetrator working group to oversee commissioning and provision and ensure alignment with national standards.
4. Continue to work with Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) to assess and manage the risks posed by sexual and violent offenders alongside the police, prison service, probation trusts, and services providing support to their victims.
5. Raise awareness of and encourage increased referrals to perpetrator intervention programmes by front-line professionals.
6. Continue to support criminal justice and law enforcement partners in providing a robust response to those that cause harm and ensuring parity of support for victim survivors.

Measures (what success will look like)

- Increase the number of domestic abuse perpetrators engaged with and completing behaviour change interventions.
- Reduction in repeat offending following interventions.
- An established perpetrator working group to commission services per guidance.
- Create a single pathway to support for perpetrators of abuse that do not access court mandated programmes.
- Increase the proportion of arrests that result in charge or successful prosecution.
- Work with partners to reduce the time taken to resolve domestic abuse cases, minimising the impact on survivors' wellbeing.
- Improved victim satisfaction with the criminal justice system.

Priority 5: Ensure clear pathways to safety

Objectives (what we will do)

1. Ensure that the provision of trauma-informed culturally competent support is included in the contract terms as standard for all local DA commissioned services.

2. Work with our local safeguarding teams to integrate domestic abuse and MARAC into all safeguarding pathways.
3. Work with law enforcement and other statutory partners to improve public understanding and confidence in, and ensure appropriate promotion and use of, legal DA protective measures (such as Clare's Law, DAPO, SPO etc.)
4. Standardise and improve data collection across agencies, ensuring protected characteristics are captured to identify unmet needs and reduce inequalities.
5. Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of non-statutory commissioned services to ensure accountability, continuous improvement, and measurable positive impact.

Measures (What success will look like)

- Evidence of consistent practice improvements from front line practitioners and improved confidence in utilising pathways to support, such as by an increase in appropriate safeguarding referrals.
- Reduction in repeat referrals across all pathways (Children's and Adults Social Care, MASH etc).
- Increase in number of applications and disclosures made under Clare's Law – 'right to ask' and 'right to know.'
- Improve data collection and reporting, to include those with protected characteristics, for victims entering statutory and non-statutory services.
- Funding co-location of domestic abuse specialists in adult's and children's social care.

Our commitment

Our priorities are underpinned by a commitment to cross-cutting principles that we will apply to all our work.

Survivor-centred

We will put survivor's voices at the heart of Luton's domestic abuse response, informing service design and specification, service evaluation and need assessments.

Trauma-informed

We will use and advocate for trauma-informed approaches with everyone affected by domestic abuse, particularly recognising the intersectional trauma caused by adverse childhood experiences, discrimination, poverty, and complex needs.

Inclusive

We recognise that domestic abuse can affect anyone at any stage of life, and will actively create safe, inclusive, culturally competent spaces where everyone is welcome, regardless of age, race, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, or immigration status.

Evidence-based

We will adopt an evidence-based public health approach to domestic abuse that will give greater weight to prevention, early intervention, and a whole-family approach to breaking the cycle of abuse.

Governance and accountability

The Luton Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (DALPB) is responsible for delivering the Strategic Plan through a joint delivery Action plan.

The Action Plan will be structured around five workstreams: one for each priority area. Each workstream will be co-chaired by a statutory and a non-statutory partner, who will define activities and timelines, and assign leads on the Action Plan.

Workstream co-chairs will report on progress at quarterly DALPB meetings. The Action Plan will be reviewed annually and updated following a refreshed DA Needs Assessment every three years.

The Strategic Plan is underpinned by strong partnership working to ensure a coordinated, integrated response to domestic abuse across Luton and Bedfordshire.

The DALPB is accountable and reports to the Luton Community Safety Partnership. The board also works closely with Luton Adults & Children's Safeguarding Boards and our Pan Beds domestic abuse partners.

Our domestic abuse partners are:

- Commissioners and Funders
- Luton Council (Public Health, Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Housing)
- Health partners (ICB, Primary Care, Hospitals, Community Health, NHS England, Mental Health)
- Criminal Justice (Police, Probation, Courts)
- Education (Early Years, Schools, Colleges, University, Adult Learning)
- Community partners (Councillors, Faith and Community Groups, Citizens Advice Bureau)
- Safeguarding partners (MARAC, IDVA, LSAB/LCSB)
- Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector