



DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY

2023-2026



Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse Strategic Overview



Foreword

The Stevenage against Domestic Abuse Strategy sets out our vision, aims and objectives for dealing with domestic abuse, supporting those who are or who have suffered from domestic abuse by ensuring they have the appropriate support to meet their and their families need.

What is Domestic Abuse?

Home Office definition

Domestic Abuse is defined as:

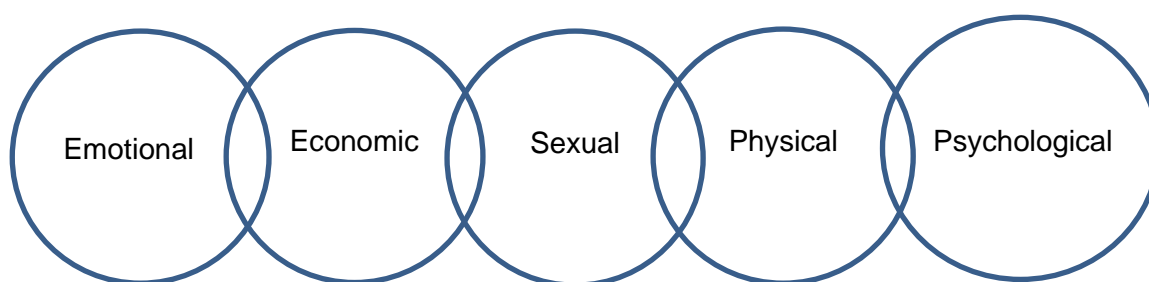
“Behaviour of a person (A) towards another person (B) is domestic abuse if:

A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and the behaviour is abusive.

Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse;
- violent or threatening behaviour;
- controlling or coercive behaviour;
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse;

It does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct”



Controlling Behaviour

A range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependant 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. This definition includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and it is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

Whilst we acknowledge the government's definition of Domestic Abuse it is worth noting that the impact on children and young people under the age of sixteen has far reaching impact as they often get caught up in domestic abuse within the home.

National Context

Domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation, and it can happen across all of society, regardless of age, race, religion, wealth or geography. The evidence for improving the response to domestic abuse is overwhelming.

New Government Domestic Abuse Act

In 2017, the Government made a commitment to deliver protections for victims of domestic abuse in law through a new landmark Domestic Abuse Act This included a commitment to enshrine a definition of domestic abuse in law and to create a domestic abuse commissioner in law.

The purpose of the Act was intended to raise awareness and understanding of domestic abuse and its impact on victims, to further improve the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice, and to strengthen the support for victims of abuse provided by other statutory agencies.

The Domestic Abuse act was passed and became law on 30th April 2021.

Key Changes the Act will deliver:

- introduce the first ever statutory government definition of domestic abuse to specifically include economic abuse and controlling and manipulative non-physical abuse - this will enable everyone, including victims themselves, to understand what constitutes abuse and will encourage more victims to come forward.
- Establish a Domestic Abuse Commissioner to drive the response to domestic abuse issues.
- Introduce new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders to further protect victims and place restrictions on the actions of offenders.
- Prohibit the cross-examination of victims by their abusers in the family courts.
- Provide automatic eligibility for special measures to support more victims to give evidence in the criminal courts.
- A legal definition of domestic abuse which recognises children as victims in their own right.

- Clarify the use of 'barring orders' in the family courts to prevent abusive ex-partners from repeatedly dragging their victims back to court – which can be used as a form of continuing domestic abuse.

Key National Statistics

- Domestic abuse accounts for 1 in 5 of all violent crimes.
- The CSEW estimated 2.4 million adults aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2022 (1.7 million women and 699,000 men).
- One in three women and one in six men endure violence from a partner, ex-partner/ family member during their adult life in England and Wales.
- Every minute, police in the UK receive a domestic assistance call yet only 35% of domestic violence incidents are reported to the Police.
- About 4,000 women die each year due to domestic violence. Of the total domestic violence homicides, about 75% of the victims were killed as they attempted to leave the relationship or after the relationship had ended.
- 1 in 5 children have been exposed to domestic abuse.
- 130,000 children live in households with high-risk domestic abuse.
- The National Domestic Abuse Helpline delivered 50,791 support sessions through phone call or live chat in the year ending March 2022.
- The Crown Prosecution Service domestic abuse-related charging rate in England and Wales increased for the first time in four years to 72.7%
- The number of police recorded domestic abuse-related crimes in England and Wales increased by 7.7% compared with the previous year, to 910,980 in the year ending March 2022.

SADA Statistics – USE ANNUAL REVIEW STATS – 2022/2023

Overall SADA stats

Safe accommodation

Cambs feedback interview stats

Male clients

Female clients

Training Stats

Food Parcel Stats

Stevenage having highest police rate figures for DA

Supporting clients with complex needs

Supporting clients with No recourse

Strategic framework

We have referenced from the Survivor's against Domestic Abuse (SADA) framework to inform our local strategy and have robust governance arrangements in place to ensure that agencies are held to account for its delivery. SADA is governed by Stevenage Borough Council and we adhere to all of their government procedures. Our strategy covers services for all victims and survivors and their families of domestic abuse and the voice of the children.

SADA is made up of the Domestic Abuse (DA) Forum, SADA Working Group and SADA Board. The DA Forum is a group of domestic abuse survivors that have come together to develop and propose actions to improve local provisions for domestic abuse survivors. As part of the Forums role we have developed various drop in's which take place county wide; both face to face and virtually. The details of these drop-ins are kept confidential.

We have also developed a champions network which is built up of external and internal partner agencies that have attended full training with SADA around domestic abuse and are now a champion for their organisation or department.

Alongside this we have developed an electronic resource pack which is a link for professional to use when needing to refer clients into SADA. This pack includes referral forms for all of our services and support.

SADA working group will develop and implement best practices and strategies that meet SBC Working group's agenda for reducing incidents of domestic abuse. The group will assist in the development and implementation of a strategy and action plan for domestic abuse that includes survivor and perpetrator participation. This will also include our selection of holistic support programmes.

All changes to the domestic abuse service, improvements, funding opportunities and projects are taken to the SADA Board who meet every six months. The Board is the strategic lead for Survivors against Domestic Abuse. The chair of the Board is Cllr Jackie Holywell.

In addition, there is a six weekly SADA Multi-Agency Panel Meeting (SADAP) with partners, including Health Visitors, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA), Children Services, Mental Health Team, Police and housing providers to discuss "medium and low risk" cases by definition.

The panel discuss each case, identifies the risk, safety planning and shares information with partner agencies. All of the partners represented have signed an information sharing agreement and agreed the terms of reference for the group.

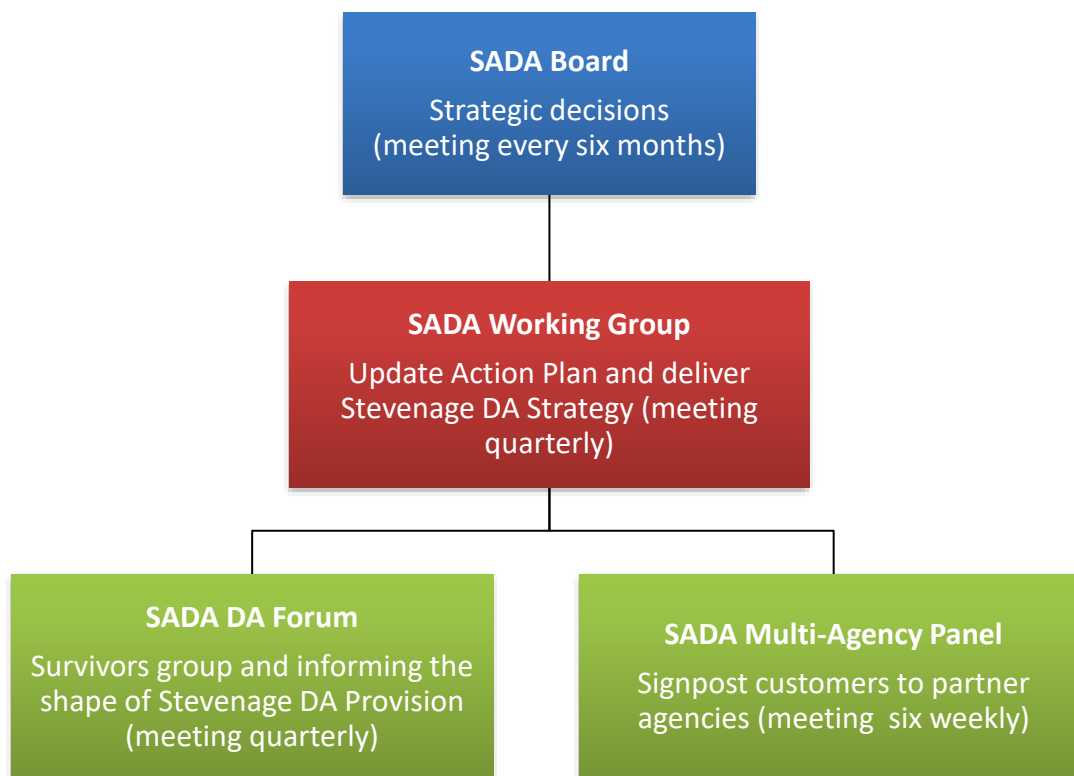
To further support our partners and victims/survivors we have produced a survivor's handbook which gives details of support available and full details including rights and legal pathways.

We have now been able to secure several safe accommodations to allow people fleeing domestic abuse to stay for up to 3 months on a licence with a plan and resettlement package in place. These safe spaces will accommodate one family at a time and are fully equipped with everything they need to meet their needs, including food and toiletry provisions. The safe accommodations we currently have stretch across Hertfordshire, Central Bedfordshire and South Cambridgeshire and are fully managed by SADA and secured through a private landlord.

We are now able to offer a service to support victims and survivors that have or are experiencing modern slavery, human trafficking and sexual exploitation. We have a referral pathway in place with housing and can offer support to them to either stay or return to their home country.

We have been commissioned by Cambridgeshire County Council to work on a project that allows us to collate and share feedback from young people and adults who had experienced domestic abuse within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The project is an opportunity for both survivors of domestic abuse and young people to highlight the positive and potentially negative experiences of the services they engaged with. The data we collect is then presented to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence partnership board.

Furthermore, we have now commenced a project exploring deprivation and domestic abuse within North Hertfordshire. This work is undertaken within local schools looking at the impact domestic abuse may be having on the families, tailoring a package of support to those families in need with a dedicated support worker in post.



In partnership with Housing providers across the county and beyond, we will assist and contribute to the development and implementation of strategic objectives and associated services, ensuring that domestic abuse is effectively integrated internally and with partner agencies.

SADA has produced a Communications Plan and has a directory and handbook of services available in Stevenage and how to access them.

What does this mean for other services?

SADA will work with other agencies to offer intensive support, earlier-on in the victim's journey by:

- Conducting joint visits with colleagues internally and partners externally – this also allows for prompt information sharing and updates on repeat survivors and offenders.
- Repairs Team and Housing Teams will be able to flag up where there are repeat repairs reports regarding damage that could be indicative of domestic abuse and a joint visit with Tenancy Services can be completed in order to offer support.
- Giving advice and helping to put the right support in place for the victim and their families.
- Put a team around the client and family where appropriate
- Being an advocate for the victim and other family members including children

- Safety Planning with the victim/survivor.
- Referring the case for discussion at the SADA Multi agency Panel
- Offer safe accommodation including refuge accommodation to victims at risk, including an out of hours service for any clients in SADA safe accommodation
- Offer emotional and practical resettlement for victims moving onto permanent accommodation
- Represent SADA and advocate for client at multi agency meetings across the county.
- Work in partnership with local agencies, completing client referrals and signposting for additional support/guidance.
- Provide a Modern Slavery service across Stevenage and North Hertfordshire
- Colocation working with local schools and housing providers.

By working with the clients, we aim to positively improve the lives of those around them, including their children whose voices are sometimes not heard. By working in partnership with other agencies and those who have experienced domestic abuse, it can help tackle the problem and find solutions.

SADA will continue to research and identify good practice in the management and reduction of domestic abuse ahead of making recommendations to Stevenage Borough Council and partners for developing new practices and ensuring continuous improvement in how we deliver the service.

SADA carries out domestic abuse awareness training with internal and external partners. This has led to our champions network and we have a range of champions across agencies countywide. We are continuing to work with repairs, voids, refuse and street cleaning teams by carrying out regular Toolbox Talks virtually. This is also rolled out to external housing providers such as Settle and First Garden City Homes.

All staff are required to complete mandatory training around domestic abuse awareness, modern slavery and safeguarding. They are also required to undertake a robust induction with SADA.

Identified gaps in DA provision that SADA have been working towards

There are a number of services currently available for people affected by domestic abuse in Hertfordshire; however, SADA have been working towards overcoming the following identified gaps:

- Supporting perceived 'low-risk' cases. For 2022/2023 SADA have supported:
- Support for under reported groups,
For 2022/2023 SADA have supported: MEN/ ETHNIC/LGBTQ+/CHILD ON PARENT/OLD PERSON stats

- Provision of support for all family members experiencing of witnessing domestic abuse, including children. SADA have now commissioned a Play worker to work with children and their families whilst in refuge.
- Ensuring that a multi-agency approach is taken with SADAP meeting every six weeks to discuss low and standard risk cases and champion meetings every quarter, county wide.
- Holistic approach looking at wider issues than the DA and offering holistic based programmes to our clients.
- Training for external and internal partners with a focus on SADA awareness, domestic abuse, and the DA act 2021.
- Embedding Safeguarding policies and procedures into the SADA service.
- Exploring the potential link between Domestic abuse and Deprivation.

Objectives of our Action Plan

1. Raising awareness and delivery of Domestic Abuse Services for victims and survivors of domestic abuse
2. To adopt a whole housing approach to supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse
3. To work co-operatively with internal and external partners Raising awareness and delivery of domestic abuse services for victims and survivors of domestic abuse

Our priorities

We have an extensive portfolio of safe accommodation, including a refuge, housing, apartments, and Houses of Multiple Occupancy. We are continuing to add to our portfolio by sourcing further accommodation from Private Landlords. Our accommodation stretches from Hertfordshire, Central Bedfordshire, South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire.

SADA strives to be proactive and prevent cases escalating further. particular, prevention encompasses not only campaigning and education but also the provision of services that intervene earlier in the trajectory of abuse. Crucially, at all stages of intervention, earlier and later, our services provision aims not only to protect and support but also to break cycles of domestic abuse. Our innovation is focused on understanding what works in breaking the cycle and on rolling out those solutions.

Through our work we have achieved the key outcomes

SADA have obtained a charity status – Friends of SADA.

Have a rolling awareness training programme available to all external and internal partner.

Holistic based programmes available for families across Hertfordshire.

Work in partnership to provide appropriate levels of support by having a robust procedure and a service that meets the needs of the whole community.

Continue to Identify local aims and priorities across the Hertfordshire and neighbouring counties.

Identify County and National agendas and changes to legislation and how SADA feeds into this.

We have a robust Domestic Abuse Champions network across the county.

We Identify best practices

We are supporting survivors and their families who have complex needs including mental health, substance misuse and alcohol.

Identify repeat victims and repeat perpetrators/

31 SADA Safe Accommodations, including a refuge.

Partnership working within Schools across Stevenage and North Hertfordshire to provide domestic abuse awareness to staff and young people.

We have a robust Modern Slavery service across Stevenage and North Hertfordshire.

We have a dedicated support team who identify the practical and emotional support needs of our client and provide the relevant package for them.

We now attend MARAC meetings county wide.

We co-locate with external partners across the county to offer local support to the communities.

Training and process for DHR reviews including having a member of the team who attend the DHR Board.

Partners are committed to;

- A two-way dialogue between the public and voluntary sectors to support a root and branch review of the most effective ways to handle each phase of the commissioning cycle, from the initial scoping of requirements to the mechanisms for contract management and review.
- A risk management approach to target resources effectively to those most in need.
- Developing effective partnerships between statutory services and voluntary and community networks to maximise service solutions.
- Effective and consistent monitoring and data analysis to identify and respond to trends.
- Best practice and lessons learnt from domestic homicide reviews influencing future direction.

Accountability

The SADA Board will have overall responsibility for the Strategy which will be reviewed every three years

An EQIA has been prepared and is attached

Performance

As a partnership we have been able to gather a substantial amount of data and are committed to produce quarterly statistical information for the working group which is reviewed by the SADA board. We have improved some of the processes and systems we use to collect data and have developed a new performance information framework.

To collect this data we use a dedicated case management system.