



# Tackling Interpersonal Violence and Abuse

Including Violence Against Women and Girls

Wolverhampton's Multi-Agency Strategy 2019 -2022

# Contents

Glossary of terms	2	Forced Marriage	12
Foreword	3	Honour-based Violence	13
Introduction	4	Sexual Violence	14
National Context	5	Stalking and Harassment	15
Regional Context	6	System Improvements Across all Strands of IPV	16
VAWG Strategy 2016-2019 Successes	7	Early Areas of Focus	17
Interpersonal Strategy 2019-2022 Outcomes	8	Delivery	18
Facing our Challenges in Partnership	9	Equality & Diversity	20
Domestic Abuse	10	Acknowledgements	20
Female Genital Mutilation	11	Appendices	21

## Glossary of terms

<b>CSE</b> Child Sexual Exploitation	<b>IPV</b> Interpersonal violence
<b>CSP</b> Community Safety Partnership	<b>ISVA</b> Independent Sexual Violence Adviser
<b>DHR</b> Domestic Homicide Review	<b>MARAC</b> Multi-agency risk assessment conference
<b>DA</b> Domestic Abuse	<b>MASH</b> Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
<b>DASHH</b> Domestic abuse, stalking harassment and honour-based violence risk assessment	<b>PCC</b> Police and Crime Commissioner
<b>DV</b> Domestic Violence	<b>SARC</b> Sexual Assault Referral Centre
<b>DVPP</b> Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme	<b>SV</b> Sexual Violence
<b>FGM</b> Female Genital Mutilation	<b>SWP</b> Safer Wolverhampton Partnership
<b>FM</b> Forced Marriage	<b>VAWG</b> Violence Against Women and Girls
<b>HBV</b> Honour-Based Violence	<b>WCCG</b> Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group
<b>IDVA</b> Independent Domestic Violence Adviser	<b>WDVF</b> Wolverhampton Domestic Violence Forum

# Foreword

The rate of reported interpersonal violence (IPV) crimes provides clear evidence of the continuing partnership effort and shared responsibility needed to tackle this issue. IPV includes violence against women and girls (VAWG), which has been cited as being perhaps the most pervasive violation of human rights across the globe and continues to have devastating consequences for millions of victims and children.

Too many families are blighted by the long-term effects of these violent crimes in all its forms, which have cross-cutting implications; they are crimes, community safety issues, public health issues, vulnerable adult and child protection issues, as well as societal issues in terms of community tolerance.

The Safer Wolverhampton Partnership (SWP) is leading our local response to IPV, including VAWG and is determined to work towards eliminating these unacceptable practices in our city and adopting a zero-tolerance approach where they are perpetrated. We will do this by working closely with other boards where there are shared responsibilities, empowering our communities with facts and help-seeking pathways, training our front-line staff in effective responses, holding perpetrators and offenders to account, and safeguarding and supporting victims, survivors, and children.

SWP will be working collaboratively with Wolverhampton Domestic Violence Forum (WDVF) to inform and drive forward implementation of this strategy. WDVF is a long-standing partnership organisation that brings together specialist services to shape VAWG strategic responses and coordinate multi-agency delivery. We recognise, however, that the success of this strategy will lie not only with a strengthened agency response, negotiating revised approaches with our partners to achieve improved frontline practice, but also by changing the culture of acceptance within our communities. By working within those communities where there is a heightened risk we can increase confidence in reporting traditionally 'hidden' crimes, stem the cycle of abuse, that sometimes spans generations, and reduce vulnerability.

This strategy provides an update to the city's VAWG strategy and builds on the significant progress that has already been achieved by close partnership working over recent years. We all have a part to play in building on this success, mobilising our communities, as well as using a range of partners' resources and powers. We will develop more effective ways of working to achieve our shared outcomes of reducing the prevalence of IPV and VAWG, reducing repeat victimisation, bringing more offenders to justice and reducing serious harm.



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# Introduction

The Safer Wolverhampton Partnership (SWP)<sup>1</sup> is the strategic lead for addressing IPV<sup>2</sup> and VAWG in Wolverhampton. The Partnership is committed to:

- Addressing the root cause of IPV, including VAWG
- Challenging perpetrator behaviour and holding them to account
- Alleviating the wide-ranging effects of all forms of IPV on victims<sup>3</sup>, survivors, their children, and our communities.

The vast majority of IPV is made up of VAWG; VAWG acknowledges the gendered nature of interpersonal violence, in that the majority of victims are female. Whilst it cannot be over-emphasised that the national and local strategies recognise that there are both female and male victims and perpetrators and therefore encompass work around women and girls, and also men and boys, the gendered nature of these crimes must feature in our service response.

The IPV strategy covers six key themes: Domestic Abuse (DA), Sexual Violence (SV), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Honour-Based Violence (HBV), Forced Marriage (FM) and Stalking and Harassment.

These crimes are cross-cutting issues that require partnership responses. Building on the significant progress made against previous strategies, partners continue to review their core operations, managing budgetary constraints against a backdrop of increasing demand. A greater collaborative effort is therefore needed in the

commissioning and delivery of services to realise efficiencies, mitigate risk, address potential gaps in service, and shape new approaches. Data will also be reviewed regularly to identify any locally emerging crimes which require focus.

Effective partnership working in many areas is improving the city's response to IPV, which include:

- Attracting a range of external funding to address gaps in service and ensure sustainable improvements
- Development of an integrated response with partner boards through well informed policies, systems, and frontline practice
- Safeguarding of victims and children with risk-based responses
- Behaviours challenged through effective perpetrator and offender management and a risk-based stepped model response to holding perpetrators and offenders to account
- Reduce repeat victimisation by delivering an effective criminal justice system which responds effectively to victims
- Developing our communities' role in addressing IPV in all its forms
- Maximising joint working opportunities by ensuring our local approach is aligned to regional and national efforts to address IPV
- National, regional, sub-regional, and local policies and protocols, supporting delivery and aiding development of new approaches

<sup>1</sup> You can see a list of SWP members here: <http://www.saferwolverhampton.org.uk/partners.html>

<sup>2</sup> The term interpersonal violence is used to refer to the six crimes addressed in this strategy (domestic abuse, sexual violence, forced marriage, honour-based violence, female genital mutilation and stalking and harassment) previously known as VAWG. This decision was taken after feedback from wider stakeholders to clarify that these crimes will be robustly tackled regardless of the gender of the victim. Despite this, we recognise that these crimes have a gendered nature in that the majority of victims are female and will continue to ensure that this informs our approach to tackle IPV.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this document we will use the word victim, in recognition of the fact that a victim of domestic abuse is a victim of a crime. However, we understand that many victims prefer the term survivor, to place focus on their strength and resilience rather than the crime committed against them. We have not used the term victim/survivor for readability but encourage you to read this term as appropriate, according to your preference.



## National Context

The Government's latest ending VAWG Strategy 2016-2020<sup>4</sup> is framed around prevention, provision of services, partnership working and pursuing perpetrators. It proposes a preventative model, service delivery transformation and a step change in social action to achieve sustainable long- term reductions in the inter-generational prevalence of these terrible crimes.

In recent years there has been an important shift in government policy to aid local delivery:

- the introduction of significant new legislation requiring domestic homicide reviews (DHR) to be undertaken with a view to learning lessons where a domestic abuse death has occurred,
- the introduction of specific offences of stalking forced marriage and revenge pornography
- the new domestic abuse offence to capture coercive or controlling behaviour in an intimate or family relationship

A range of new tools and powers have been introduced, which include:

- DA, FM and FGM protection orders
- a national DA disclosure scheme
- mandatory reporting of FGM by registered teaching, social care and health practitioners
- strengthened measures to manage sex offenders and those who pose a risk of sexual harm

<sup>4</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020)

## Regional Context

Across the West Midlands a multi-agency response to tackling IPV has gained momentum in recent years as efficiencies of cross-border working are realised. The seven Local Authority areas spanning the West Midlands Metropolitan area have a strong established history of collaborative working, covering not just the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), but also encompassing Local Authority leads, Safeguarding Boards and the work of the West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC). The establishment of a West Midlands CSP provides further opportunity to prioritise these crimes and join up our regional approach.

Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships formed in 2016, provide a vehicle for the NHS and councils to coordinate service delivery, agree system wide priorities, and to plan collectively how to improve residents' day to day health. By empowering local leaders to plan around long term needs of the people they serve, health and care systems can make simple, practical

improvements for local communities and support the integration of a strengthened response within health services.

The PCC has committed to improving services for victims of crime, including regional provision of victims' service and establishment of an independent Victims' Commission to inform a wide range of provision across the West Midlands. The PCC's Strategic Police & Crime Plan<sup>5</sup> also highlights the commitment to protect people from harm, tackling hidden crimes including FGM, HBV and FM.

There are already positive examples of joint working that can be cited across the West Midlands. West Midlands DV minimum standards were approved by all 7 areas in 2014, setting out eleven key principles of working. Strategic learning from DHRs and opportunities for future cross-border working will continue to be identified during the life of our refreshed IPV strategy.



<sup>5</sup> [www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/media/435616/2016-2020-Police-and-Crime-Plan-digital.pdf](http://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/media/435616/2016-2020-Police-and-Crime-Plan-digital.pdf)

# VAWG Strategy 2016-2019 Successes

Wolverhampton's establishment of the first joint adult and children's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in the West Midlands in 2016, strengthened the response to assessing and responding to the city's safeguarding needs and integrating the domestic abuse care pathway across universal services.

<b>Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference – manages high risk cases) process reviewed and improved</li><li>MARAC coordinator employed</li><li>Mainstreaming of services i.e IDVA post in Wolverhampton Homes</li><li>Set-up and completion of a 2 year non-mandated DV perpetrator programme</li><li>Continuation of critical processes, eg Specialist Domestic Violence Court, MARAC, and integrating DV joint screening into MASH business as usual</li></ul>
<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Overarching Domestic Violence Protocol adopted and implemented</li><li>MARAC Protocol implemented</li><li>Development and launch of the first UK multi-agency joint adult and child Forced Marriage and Honour-based Violence Protocol</li><li>Safeguarding Board organisations have put in place policies around DV</li></ul>
<b>Partnership working</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Two conferences, media publicity, local events, literature, and campaigns to raise awareness of the newer subject areas of forced marriage, honour based violence, and female genital mutilation</li><li>Regional DHR learning event</li><li>Closer links with key boards across the city i.e. Safeguarding Boards</li><li>Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group (WCCG) have fully supported the strategy by utilising non-recurrent safeguarding funding from NHS England to develop local arrangements and facilitated the roll out of GP support and training</li></ul>

Whilst 2016-2019 strategy successes have allowed us to consolidate our partnership response, it is accepted that progress is still needed with some aspects of delivery. The commitment to further our work with educational establishments, actively involve community and faith organisations within delivery, extend the use of civil interventions to manage perpetrators and strengthen our key messaging all feature as early areas of focus and are highlighted as partnership challenges within the refreshed strategy.

# Interpersonal Violence Strategy 2019-2022

## Outcomes

Strategy outcomes, objectives and principles remain in line with the national picture. Our current context and performance over the last three years have informed the strategy outcomes.

### Our Outcomes



Reduce the rate of repeat incidents for domestic abuse



Reduce serious harm resulting from interpersonal violence including homicide prevention



Increase the rate of reported interpersonal abuse offences brought to justice



Reduce the prevalence of interpersonal abuse including VAWG

### Our objectives:

- Build cross-agency skills and capability to provide effective advice and support around interpersonal abuse
- Improve the criminal justice response to interpersonal abuse
- Increase early identification of and intervention with victims by utilising all points of contact with front line professionals
- Support victims through the criminal justice system and manage perpetrators to reduce risk

### Our outcomes will be achieved whilst maintaining the following principles:

- Victims and perpetrators have access to services without discrimination due to disability, sexual orientation, race, religion/faith, culture, age or income group; women-only services will be supported as will ensuring men's access to other services.
- Services to victims and perpetrators will be designed and proportionate to the level of risk they face or pose.
- There is a commitment to providing quality services which draw on national and international best practice and standards.



## Facing our Challenges in Partnership

Both the national and local strategy recognise the over-riding challenge is the need to move to a more preventative model of addressing these crimes; due to their cross-cutting nature, it is essential that this is done in partnership.

Interpersonal Violence and VAWG present a number of challenges which require a partnership response:

- Gaps in provision of a recovery model approach to DA
- Impact on children - DA is a key predictor for Children and Young People in Care, Children in Need, Child Protection and Serious Case Reviews
- Management of increasingly complex cases – particularly those with the ‘toxic trio’<sup>6</sup> present
- Increasing demand and numbers of repeat cases
- Enhancing specialist knowledge into non-specialist front line services, and responding to new legislation
- Engagement of schools and education establishments
- Integration of behaviour change programmes
- Addressing housing needs and challenges
- Monitoring, auditing, and ensuring accountability
- Raise awareness and develop capacity and confidence of staff to respond
- Greater integration of responses is needed within core business of partners to inform commissioning & develop new approaches to growing demand

Whilst the crime types span all age groups, there are a number, where cultural practice within certain communities places children and young people at a significantly higher risk of harm.

Where harmful practices are maintained within certain countries of origin, it can place children and young people at a greater risk of harm:

- Young girls from known FGM practicing communities are vulnerable to FGM
- The Forced Marriage Unit suggests young people aged 16-25 are most at risk of being forced into marriage
- Local levels of risk within the city are currently being assessed.

The ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’<sup>7</sup> updated guidance 2018 issued to schools, sets out clear expectations of schools and individual staff in identifying risks associated with FGM, alongside other safeguarding responsibilities.

Despite improvements made in the partnership approach to respond to these issues, an effective city-wide response must be developed with a shift in focus from crisis management to prevention, to stem the growing demand for high risk support services; maintaining the status quo is not an option. As a partnership, there is a need to move towards a position where we are preventing the cycle of abuse, identifying and supporting victims at a much earlier point to stem the escalation towards crisis, and addressing perpetrators’ abusive behaviours.

<sup>6</sup> The term ‘toxic trio’ has been used to describe the issues of domestic abuse, mental ill-health and substance misuse.

<sup>7</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2)

## Domestic Abuse

*“any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, & emotional abuse.”<sup>8</sup>*

**In the city in 2017-2018 there were 6251 domestic abuse incidents reported to the Police (220 more incidents than the previous year) 47.3% of which were recordable offences**

This increase in reporting is in part attributable to an increase in prevalence due to economic downturn, more accurate recording on Police systems, an increase in incidents reported in public places that have been witnessed and reported by third parties, and public confidence in reporting. DA is known to have the highest repeat rate of any crime and to escalate in frequency and severity over time, so it is important to monitor repeated reports of DA as an indicator of increasing risk, and focus on managing that risk.

Despite this increase, the British Crime Survey recognises that:

*“the under-reporting of crime to the Police is known to be particularly acute for intimate violence offences”.*<sup>9</sup>

The increasing volume of domestic abuse incident reports is impacting on existing services, as is the number of high-risk of serious harm cases referred to MARAC which has continued to increase year on year until 2017- 2018. Further specialist capacity is needed to manage all high-risk domestic abuse cases within the city.

The learning from statutory DHRs has aided the move towards integrated partnership working.

	2016-2017	2017-2018
Reported Domestic Abuse Incidents	6031	6251
% Recordable offences	42.4	47.3
MARAC cases	652	651
% Repeat cases	36	36
% Non-Police referrals	31	37

<sup>8</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/news/new-definition-of-domestic-violence-and-abuse-to-include-16-and-17-year-olds](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-definition-of-domestic-violence-and-abuse-to-include-16-and-17-year-olds)

<sup>9</sup> <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218140037/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs07/bcs25.pdf>

## Female Genital Mutilation

*Female genital mutilation refers to all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003) makes it illegal to practice FGM in the UK, to take abroad British nationals or permanent UK residents for FGM, and to aid FGM being conducted abroad.*

Wolverhampton is a proud well-integrated multi-cultural city. Alongside the advantages of our diversity, we are also home to residents where FGM is prevalent in their country of origin. This can place children and young people at a greater risk of harm. As these crimes are often perpetrated by family members, there is an understandable reluctance for victims to report to Police or seek support.

***UNICEF data estimates the majority of FGM practice is carried out on girls under 14, with the majority cut before the age of 5, closely followed by those aged 5–9.<sup>10</sup>***

There is a need to raise awareness of FGM within our communities and amongst young people in particular. The focus is to dispel myths, and present the moral, legal and medical facts and consequences of these crimes to make it easier for victims to report with confidence. The intention is to train front-line staff in identifying risks of FGM and how to respond appropriately using the full range of powers available.

	2016-2017	2017-2018
Number of FGM incidents reported to the Police	17	27
% of recordable offences	1	0

<sup>10</sup> <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/female-genital-mutilation/>

## Forced Marriage

*A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not (or in the case of some adults with learning or physical disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. Coercion is likely to have been used with one or both spouses; by family members, friends and the wider community.*

The practice of forced marriage is not confined to one culture or religious group and can happen regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, age, gender and sexuality. It is significantly different from an arranged marriage which is a respected tradition in many cultures where both parties give their consent.

FM is now a specific offence under s121 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007 included provisions for the courts to make Forced Marriage Protection Orders to prevent forced marriages from occurring and to protect those who have already been forced into marriage.

***During 2017-2018 there were four Forced Marriage incidents recorded by the Police in Wolverhampton.***

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 states that all adults over the age of 16, have the capacity to make decisions, unless proved otherwise. There is no legal basis on which someone can agree to marriage, civil partnerships or sexual relations on behalf of someone who lacks the capacity to make these decisions independently.

	2016-2017	2017-2018
Forced marriage incidents reported to the Police	5	4
% of recordable offences	80	25

## Honour-based Violence

*So-called honour-based violence is defined as ‘a crime or incident, which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community’*

There is no specific offence of so-called, "honour-based crime". It is an umbrella term to encompass various offences covered by existing legislation. HBV can be described as a collection of practices, which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour.<sup>11</sup>

***During 2017-2018 there were 24 honour-based abuse incidents recorded by the Police in Wolverhampton.***

Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and/or community by breaking their honour code. Punishment can be imposed because of a belief, actual or perceived, that a person has not been properly 'controlled' and is failing to conform to family or community expectations. Linked offences can include forced marriage, threats, theft (e.g. passport), assault – physical or sexual, kidnap, abduction, murder or imprisonment or rape.

	2016-2017	2017-2018
Honour-based violence incidents recorded by the Police	24	24
% that are recordable offences	62.5	67

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/honour-based-violence-and-forced-marriage-guidance-identifying-and-flagging-cases>

## Sexual Violence

*Sexual violence is defined as ‘any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature, which is unwanted and takes place without consent or understanding’.*

The definition of sexual violence includes but is not limited to rape, sexual abuse of a child or adult, sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape as part of a forced marriage, trafficking, exposure, voyeurism, and sexual exploitation of a child or adult. Perpetrators of sexual violence can be current or former partners or spouses, family members, colleagues, friends, as well as strangers.

The Crime Survey of England and Wales estimates that sexual violence affects 20% of women and 4% of men aged 16 or above, but that 5 in 6 incidents are not reported to the Police. Historic reporting of sexual violence increases following high profile sexual abuse scandals and media coverage, and publication of related national reports.

There is a higher prevalence of sexual violence for younger women with an estimated 1 in 3 teenage

girls experiencing some form of sexual violence from a partner, some of these incidents occurring on school premises.<sup>12</sup> There is also a higher prevalence of rape, sexual assault, and sexual exploitation of young women and girls associated with gangs.<sup>13</sup>

Conviction rates for rape and other serious sexual offences is lower than for other crimes.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 protects individuals from abuse and exploitation, and is designed to be fair and non-discriminatory.

The quality of services for victims of sexual assaults has been improved through a West Midlands Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), with local Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVA) providing local specialist advice and support regardless of whether cases are reported to the Police.

	2016-2017	2017-2018
Serious sexual offences reported to the Police	535	615

<sup>12</sup> University of Bristol for NSPCC, 2009

<sup>13</sup> University of Bedfordshire for the OCC, 2014

## Stalking and Harassment

*Stalking is 'a pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is repeated, persistent, intrusive and causes fear of violence or engenders alarm or distress in the victim.'*

The Protection of Freedoms Act (2012) identifies stalking as a criminal offence, allowing prosecution of perpetrators indulging in behaviour that causes the victim harassment, alarm or distress. This can include behaviour which consists of stalking or harassing victims using social media platforms, by post, by direct personal contact, or a combination of these channels.

Stalking and harassment is thought to affect 1 in 5 women and 1 in 10 men, and victims tend not to report it until around the 100<sup>th</sup> incident. Of those who contact the national stalking helpline, approximately 45% are being stalked by ex-partners, and a further third have had some sort of prior acquaintance with their stalker.





## System Improvements Across all Strands of IPV

In addition to bespoke delivery around each of these strands, there will be more generic activity spanning all strands of IPV:

- Deploy all powers available through partners to protect victims and manage offenders/perpetrators
- Embed risk-based decisions and responses across frontline practice
- Improve criminal and civil justice responses.
- Strengthen systematic data monitoring and analysis
- Embed learning from DHRs & Serious Case Reviews, Safeguarding Adult Reviews and evidence changed practice
- Strengthen governance and reporting arrangements
- Embed clear referral pathways which are understood by communities and organisations, including to the SARC, MARAC and DVPP
- Continue a sustainable programme of staff training
- Embed robust, cross-agency policies and procedures
- Support educational establishments to cascade key messages to pupils
- Addressing provision gaps in the recovery model
- Focusing on improved management of complex cases

There is a range of criminal justice and civil remedies that protect victims and children witnessing interpersonal violence and abuse.



## Early Areas of Focus

### Communities

- Raise awareness within communities to emphasise the full moral, legal, health and safeguarding implications of interpersonal violence
- Direct preventative work in education settings, delivering key messages
- Develop a communications plan to outline how we will engage communities, partners and stakeholders across the city
- Continue and strengthen engagement with community champions

### Practitioners

- Update FGM and FM profiles to better identify prevalence and refresh FM and HBV protocol for frontline practitioners
- Embedding learning from DHRs
- Continue to train front line practitioners in responding safely and effectively to IPV and VAWG
- Improve systematic recording of interpersonal abuse across partners

### Victims

- Strengthening and promotion of care pathways
- Improve provision for the management of complex cases
- More effective management of low-medium risk DA cases through safety planning to avoid escalation of risk
- Seek feedback from victims to shape future services to meet the needs of our diverse communities
- Place greater emphasis on reducing repeat victimisation of DA
- Ensure joined up criminal and civil justice protection processes

### Offenders

- Embed the stepped risk-model for managing DA offenders and perpetrators
- Extend the use of civil interventions to manage perpetrators
- Continue use of DVPPs to challenge offending behaviour

## Delivery



The key themes of the action plan are **Prevention, Provision, Protection & Justice, and Performance.**

Underpinning the strategy is an action plan which will set out the main actions to achieve the objectives and outcomes. This requires a commitment from partners to review their delivery contributions against objectives. Alongside this will be active approaches to seek funding from a range of external sources.

The action plan will be monitored through WDFV's Executive Board, with governance provided by SWP Board. The action plan will be reviewed annually and aligned to a risk register, highlighting areas of underperformance with mitigating actions agreed.

Interpersonal violence and VAWG cuts across a number of other national, regional, and local strategies. There are well established relationships with other strategic boards in relation to some of the shared areas of responsibility for these cross-cutting issues. There are also clear links and overlaps between these crimes and other

high-profile issues including child sexual exploitation (CSE), gang and youth violence, modern slavery, and reoffending generally. This strategy will ensure that work is cross-referenced across these subject areas.

As well as maintaining a clear focus on supporting victims, our collective response to tackle the offending behaviour of perpetrators needs to gain more traction. The introduction of Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes (DVPPs) in 2017-2018 provided a key step in this direction. A significant culture-shift and awareness of provision is needed to embed these services as part of the city offer and support a move away from 'victim blame', which can often be the default position of many services. The Black Country Reducing Reoffending Strategy will provide an added catalyst to tackling offending behaviour associated with IPV.

## Coordinated Community Response

The UK national model of best practice in dealing effectively with violence against women and girls is that of a coordinated community response model. This model requires a broad community ownership, so it becomes everybody's business and there is a collective response advocating that VAWG is not acceptable, will not be tolerated, and that it will be dealt with appropriately by holding perpetrators to account and safeguarding victims and their children.

**In order to achieve a coordinated community response in Wolverhampton, underpinning our strategy outcomes, the action plan focuses on achieving the following fundamental building blocks:**

### High quality specialist service provision and capacity that meets demand

**Communities** are well informed and engaged with our commitment to address all elements of interpersonal violence

**Care pathways** are communicated and understood by the public and by organisations

**Front line staff** across organisations are trained and supported by policies and procedures to identify interpersonal violence and to respond safely via risk assessment and care pathways

**Organisations** are accountable for embedding lessons from domestic homicide reviews, serious case reviews, and good practice to improve frontline practice

Wolverhampton's Over-Arching DV Protocol was refreshed in 2018 and endorsed by The Safer Wolverhampton Partnership Board, and the Safeguarding Children and Adult Boards. Member organisations are working towards complying with the 16 organisational requirements included in the protocol (Appendix 2). This protocol has been incorporated into a West Midlands Domestic Violence Standards document, the principles of which are being integrated into partners' core business.

## Equality & Diversity

It is important to emphasise the gendered nature these crimes, in that the majority of victims are female. However, the national and local strategies recognise that there are both female and male victims and perpetrators and therefore encompass work around women and girls, and also men and boys.

The strategy also acknowledges and aims to address the additional barriers to seeking help for particular groups. One of the West Midlands eleven Domestic Violence standards specifically covers issues of equality and diversity. There are specific cultural aspects of DA, some of which have arisen in DHRs, and recommendations in respect of these are being progressed within the VAWG strategy implementation. A full equalities analysis informs our approach.

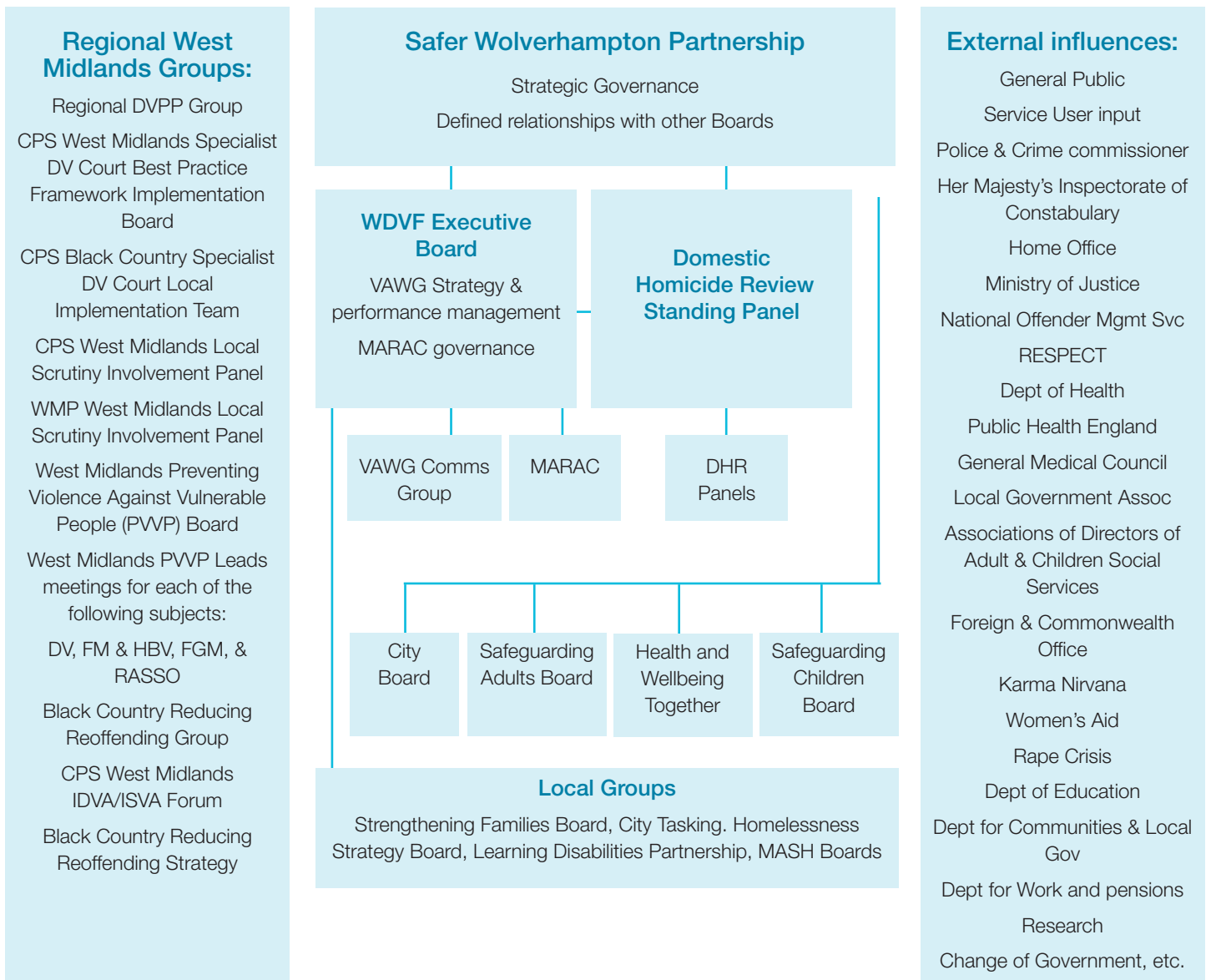
Those who may have barriers to seeking support include:

- Male victims
- Our Black, Asian, Minority, Ethnic, and Refugee communities
- Victims with disabilities
- Older victims
- Victims under 18 years
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, and Transgender communities
- Those with no recourse to public funding
- Those with complex needs including mental ill-health and substance misuse issues

## Acknowledgements

This strategy has been put together by member organisations of the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership, Wolverhampton Domestic Violence Forum and Wolverhampton Safeguarding Adults and Children Boards.

# Appendix 1



## Appendix 2

Over-Archiving Domestic Violence Protocol 2018 - organisational requirements:

- Have in place a domestic violence policy for service users
- Have in place a workplace domestic violence policy
- Include a routine question about domestic violence on referral forms/assessments
- Provide spaces for individuals to make safe disclosures
- Hold organisational knowledge about how to avoid unsafe responses
- Ensure that responses are culture and diversity aware
- Train staff in domestic violence to an appropriate level depending on their role, including having a nominated VAWG Champion(s)
- Undertake a DASH risk assessment, or have in place an agreed referral pathway for a DASH risk assessment to be undertaken when domestic violence is disclosed
- Ensure the case is referred to MARAC where the risk assessment identifies the individual as high risk of serious harm or homicide
- Maintain up to date contact details of appropriate local help and information and leaflets to signpost victims to specialist support agencies
- Ensure learning from domestic homicide reviews is embedded
- Where appropriate, ensure that perpetrator programmes incorporate RESPECT standards
- Share domestic violence datasets through partnership arrangements (when requested)
- Ensure these requirements and The West Midlands DV Standards are incorporated into designing, commissioning, and contracting services
- Seek assurance that these requirements and The West Midlands DV Standards are embedded via internal audits
- Provide an annual statement of compliance with these requirements to WDVV Exec Board on request.

## Appendix 3

You can find organisations which are able to support and offer advice to victims of VAWG here: [www.saferwolverhampton.org.uk](http://www.saferwolverhampton.org.uk)



For further information  
Email: [safer@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:safer@wolverhampton.gov.uk)

