



*The Safer Rotherham*  
PARTNERSHIP

**Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy**

**2013/14 – 2016/17**

## Introduction

In November 2010, central Government set out its vision to eliminate domestic abuse and sexual violence in “A call to End Violence against Women and Girls”. This was followed by the publication of annual action plans that aimed to ensure, at a national level, the strategy was moved forward. This report outlines Rotherham’s response to the Government’s call to end Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) to date, and the work Rotherham needs to undertake to ensure compliance with the national VAWG agenda

## Background and local context

Every year thousands of women and girls throughout the UK experience some form of violence including; rape, domestic violence, forced marriage, called “honour” based violence, stalking, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Violence damages women and girls and has far reaching consequences for families, children, communities and society as a whole. Violence against women and girls is both a form of discrimination and a violation of human rights.

Protecting women from violence and enabling them to protect themselves, either through the criminal justice system or through increased safety measures, gives women greater capacity to protect their children.

Following extensive consultation during 2009, the Government published its strategic vision to ‘**Eliminate violence against women and girls: A Strategy**’ and in subsequent years have published an action plan which brings together all policy documents in to one national level strategic framework. The full strategy can be downloaded at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/call-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategic-vision>

The Government’s action plan has been summarised in Appendix 1.

Since 2010, Rotherham has responded to the call of Central Government by aligning the work of the domestic abuse and sexual violence sector. This has ensured that the Domestic Abuse Priority Group, on behalf of the SRP, are:

- In the short to medium term, encouraging victims to come forward and report violence and abuse, whilst at the same time reducing repeat victimisation
- In the longer term, seeking to eliminate violence against women and girls.

In the past three years the DAPG, has made significant progress in protecting victims of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, and has great potential to be recognised as a leader in its commitment to End Violence against Women and Girls.

Important advancements have included sustaining an Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Services, operation of a robust Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences and effective Specialist Domestic Violence Courts. We have developed a process to review domestic homicides to ensure that we learn any lessons and prevent the repetition of our mistakes, and also developed a process whereby serious incidents of Domestic Abuse can now be reviewed. We have developed mechanisms to ensure that early intervention in cases of domestic abuse aligns the needs of child(ren) living with domestic abuse are aligned with the support and protection of their abused parent or carer. We have recognised that men and boys can be victims of abuse or violence, and are confident that, in the past three years, we have improved our responses to them and in the provision of support. We will continue to do so as we improve our support and responses to victims of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

The Safer Rotherham Partnership accepts that Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence are, in the main, forms of gender based violence. However, we acknowledge that men and boys can be victims too and while we are improving our support provision for women and girls, we are working with partner agencies to improve support provision for men and boys. We are proactively working with our service providers to ensure that all victims of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence are adequately supported – regardless of gender and/or sexual orientation.

In 2013/14, Domestic Violence accounted for 31% of all violent crime reports to the Police in Rotherham. 6401 reported incidents of Domestic Abuse were responded to by SYP, of these, 1120 incidents were recorded as a crime. Of the 961 “crimed” incidents, 738 arrests were made (66%). Of the 6401 incidents, 455 victims were assessed as being of high risk of domestic homicide or serious injury and were referred to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), and of these, 107 (24%) cases were repeat MARAC cases that had been presented to MARAC in 12 months preceding the initial MARAC presentation. Of the 455 victims presented to MARAC, 328 involved families and we ensured that the children of these families (518 children) received appropriate support and intervention. 33 of these referrals were male, and 13 were young women aged between 16 to 18. Rotherham experienced 2 Domestic Homicides during this period, and is concluding a review of one that occurred in 2011.

Additionally, in 2012/13 the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (IDVAS) received 424 referrals, including the 455 referred to the MARAC and of which 74% engaged.

Choices and Options, a specialist community support service for victims of domestic abuse, received 435 referrals, all of which received support. 11 of these referrals were male.

Rotherham’s Counselling Service have also reported 20% increase in their referrals from January to December 2013 when compared to the 204 referrals received in 2012. Out of the 245 referrals they received in 2013, 24 were male (10%).

Apna Haq, our specialist community support service for BME victims, received and supported 98 referrals, an increase of 19 referrals from the preceding year. Of the

98 referrals received, 16 were experiencing Domestic Abuse from a partner, ex-partner or family member, 5 were experiencing Forced Marriage issues, 45 were being subjected to “Honour” based abuse, 7 were aged 16 – 18, 6 did not have recourse to public funding and 7 referrals required support in relation to their immigration status in the UK.

Rotherham Women’s Refuge (RWR) supported 158 women during 2012/13 (a 29% increase from the preceding year) to access safe accommodation, 19 of which had 47 children between them. 3 women needed support and did not have recourse to public funding. One woman was aged 16/17. In addition, through their out-reach support service. RWR also supported 26 women in the community – a 46% increase from the preceding year. In 2013/14, this service saw a further increase in the number of clients they supported, with 185 women accessing safe accommodation and 48 women being supported through their out-reach support service.

Also, Our Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), supported 160 victims of sexual violence, an increase from 2011/12 of 9.6%. 13 of these were from our BMER communities, 25 were aged 13 years and under, 36 were aged between 14 – 17 years and 43 were aged between 18 – 25 years. 56 of these went on to be supported through the criminal prosecution process by the Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA) for Rotherham. Last year, all of these figures saw an increase – the service received 198 referrals, which was an increase of 23.75%. Of these, 11 were from BMER communities, 26 were aged 13 years and under, 45 were aged between 14-17 years and 84 were over 25 years. 151 of the 198 referrals went on to be supported by the Independent Sexual Violence Advocate for Rotherham and of these, 119 were engaged in the Criminal Justice System and 2 were male.

Research strongly suggests Domestic and Sexual Violence is significantly under reported both locally and nationally. The Violence Against Women and Girls Ready Reckoner tool estimates that, in Rotherham, at least 2970 women and girls experienced Domestic Abuse, 1305 experienced some form of sexual assault and 4412 were victims of talking activity. Eliminating Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence requires action across the whole Partnership; ensuring all agencies work together to address these key issues. However, although work is required across the broad range of factors associated with Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, most will be gained by addressing the critical issues in Rotherham, including domestic abuse (including stalking, forced marriage and “honour” based violence), sexual violence and sexual exploitation.

However, forms of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence present Rotherham with considerable challenges, especially in the austere times we currently face. The subsequent social impacts on individuals and families are likely to result in increases in violence and abuse. Resourcing our response will be critical if the Partnership is to reduce the long-term human and financial consequences.

This report signals the commitment of the SRP in meeting the challenges ahead and sets out an integrated and collective strategic approach to addressing this important community safety issue. It identifies how, as a Partnership, we can respond to the Government’s expectations as outlined in appendix 1.

The delivery plan, located in appendix 2, provides a mechanism for implementing the strategy and will include a performance framework pinpointing areas requiring greater emphasis. We have also developed key objectives that will mould the work we undertake to reduce violence against our women and girls over the next three years. We will review our performance against these objectives on an annual basis (appendix 3).

In this delivery plan, we seek to

- **Prevent** We will make it more difficult for domestic abuse and sexual violence to take place in the first place by challenging the attitudes and behaviours that foster it. We will also provide education to our children and young people to ensure they realise that these forms of behaviour are not acceptable
- **Protect** both adults and children experiencing Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence by identifying and safeguarding those at risk by intervening early to ensure they are protected from immediate harm and any escalation is prevented. We will seek to provide adequate levels of support for those affected by ensuring our approach to their needs is sensitive and appropriate
- **Pursue** our perpetrators by ensuring they are identified, disrupted and prosecuted where ever possible. We will also ensure that our service provision will provide appropriate and adequate wrap around support during criminal justice and civil court proceedings, to ensure that we reduce the risk to victims through robust information sharing and clear referral pathways

## Finance

At a national level, it is estimated that Domestic Abuse costs:

- To the State, victims and employers - £23 billion per year
- The cost to the NHS of repairing the physical damage to victims of domestic abuse is estimated to be £1.22 billion (NHS Employers), not including dental treatment or mental health treatment
- The cost to Employers in terms of loss is £2.7 billion due to time off due to injuries, and does not include stress related absences

In addition a domestic homicide costs £1.4 million per victim up to the point of prosecution and prior to any formal or statutory review being undertaken.

At a local level, the Violence Against Women and Girls Ready Reckoner Tool estimates that Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence costs services in Rotherham £24 604 407. This tool costs our Health and Mental Health Services £5 301 901, our local Criminal Justice Services (including the Police) £3 339 485 and Social Care services at least £628 890.

## Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

By responding to the national VAWG strategy in this focused and coordinated manner, Rotherham will be able to

- Evidence its local compliance with the national Violence Against Women's and Girls Agenda
- Evidence that the Rotherham's DAPG, on behalf of the SRP, are proactive in reducing the risk of domestic homicide in line with emerging national best practice
- Enable the actions of agencies stand up to scrutiny in a serious case or domestic homicide review
- Respond to victims and their families effectively

## **Background Papers and Consultation**

Eliminate violence against women and girls: A Strategy 2009, Updated Action Plans – 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013

South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner – Police and Crime Plan 2013 - 2017

Children and Young People's Plan 2010-2013

Joint Strategic Intelligence Assessment 2012/13

RMBC Corporate Priorities

- Ensuring care and protection are available for those people who need it most.
  - All children in Rotherham are safe
  - Vulnerable people are protected from abuse
- Helping to create safe and healthy communities
  - Anti social behaviour and crime is reduced

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## **Appendix 1 – Summary of National Action Plan**

### **1. Preventing Violence**

**Guiding Principle: To prevent violence against women and girls from happening in the first place, by challenging the attitudes and behaviours that foster it and intervening early to prevent it**

- A greater proportion of society believes violence against women and girls is unacceptable and empowered to challenge violence behaviour
- Fewer victims of sexual and domestic violence each year;
- Frontline professionals (e.g. teachers, doctors, police and prosecutors) are better able to identify and deal with violence against women and girls
- More employers recognise and support victims of domestic and sexual violence.

### **2. Provision of Services**

**Guiding principle: provide adequate levels of support where violence occurs**

- Violence against women and girls victims receive a good and consistent level of service across England and Wales
- Statutory, voluntary and community sector get the response right the first time
- High quality commissioning and service provision at a local level

### **3. Partnership Working**

**Guiding principle: Work in partnership to obtain the best outcomes for victims and their families**

- Better support available for victims and their families with statutory, voluntary and community sectors working together to share information and agree practical action
- Improved the life chances of victims of violence against women and girls overseas, with this issue an international priority for the UK

### **4. Justice Outcomes and Risk Reductions**

**Guiding principle: Take action to reduce the risk to women and girls who are victims of these crimes and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice**

- Increased confidence of women and girls to encourage access to the Criminal Justice System
- Improved criminal justice outcomes for victims of violence against women and girls, including the rate of convictions
- Increased rate of rehabilitation among offenders
- Reduced multiple incidents of violence by using the appropriate risk management tools



## Appendix 2

## Prevent

We will make it more difficult for domestic abuse to happen

We will ensure that the SRP has an effective strategy in relation to VAWG, governance arrangements, protocols, policies and procedures in place to ensure a coordinated multi agency response to domestic abuse and other VAWG issues (SRP/DAPG)

We will work with partners and communities including local businesses to ensure that they have an increased awareness of Domestic Abuse and healthy relationships so that they can respond appropriately regardless of the level of risk and form of abuse e.g. "honour" based abuse, forced marriage, stalking, sexual violence etc (SRP/DAPG)

We will build victim and perpetrator profiles throughout the partnership to ensure that we can develop innovative and timely responses to support child and adult victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence (VCS, SYP, CYPS, health, RMBC, Probation, CRC, IDVA)

We will make it more difficult for perpetrators to abuse by putting in place systems that ensure a robust response to the victims (VCS, SYP, CYPS, Health, RMBC, Probation, CRC, IDVA)

We will monitor the number of repeat cases reviewed by MARAC so that we can improve intelligence and develop a partnership briefing on key offenders (SYP)

We will reduce the number of local domestic homicides and use lessons learned from these and serious incident reviews to improve our partnership response (SRP, DAPG) Safeguarding Boards for Adults and Children)

## Protect

We will identify and safeguard those at risk

We will ensure that domestic abuse risk assessment is aligned with the partnerships core business and that victims of abuse are identified early and supported accordingly (VCS, SYP, CYPS, health, RMBC, Probation, CRC IDVA)

We will ensure that children are supported appropriately and consistently where domestic abuse is a feature in their lives either as part of safeguarding procedures or early help (VCS, SYP, CYPS, health, RMBC, Probation, CRC, IDVA)

We will have a robust MARAC process which helps reduce the risk to the victims and to ensure they are supported appropriately (SYP)

We will develop non-criminal justice based perpetrator programme to reduce repeat victimisation (SRP/DAPG)

We will increase the number of perpetrators taking part in the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) and Community Domestic Abuse Programme (CDAP) (Probation and HMCTS)

We will increase the number of restraining orders where criminal processes are taking place (SYP, CPS, HMCTS)

We will increase the numbers of victims of honour based violence and forced marriage who are appropriately supported including those who have no recourse to public funding (VCS)

We will work with partners to ensure that there is a sufficiency of high quality services in operation to be able to support victims (SYP, RMBC, PCC)

We will work with partners to ensure that victims of all sexual violence are able to access support when they need it (SRP, DAPG, PCC)

## Pursue

We will identify perpetrators, disrupt and prosecute where possible

We will ensure that rigorous processes are in place to prosecute offenders (SYP and CPS)

We will work with the Crown Prosecution Service to ensure that domestic abuse cases are prosecuted appropriately (SYP, IDVA and VCS)

We will increase the percentage of reported domestic abuse incidents "crimed" (SYP)

We will work with partners to ensure that victims of domestic and sexual violence are confident and encouraged to access the criminal and civil justice system (VCS, SYP, CYPS, Health, RMBC, Probation, IDVA, VCS)

Increase the numbers of victims subjected to honour based violence and forced marriage who are supported by the VCS, and ensure they are supported to pursue prosecution where this is appropriate (VCS, IDVA)

We will work with partners to explore opportunities to link offenders in to alcohol and drug services to ensure that those that cause harm face the consequences including – Drink banning Orders, Attendance Centre, Breach of Peace legislation, etc (SYP, RDASH)

