

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 13 April 2026

Report Title

Domestic Abuse Strategy

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Safer Rotherham Partnership Domestic Abuse Strategy (2022–2027) has undergone a formal review. The review has highlighted the successful delivery of the strategy's underpinning action plan, with many actions now either fully completed with measurable outcomes or embedded into routine practice across partner agencies. These achievements demonstrate the strength of collaborative working and the integration of domestic abuse responses into core service delivery.

The Strategy has provided a clear framework for coordinated efforts to tackle domestic abuse and has enhanced support for victims / survivors and their families. While the Strategy commitment was for a five-year period, the Safer Rotherham Partnership has agreed that there is a need to remain responsive to evolving local and national contexts and as a result, the partnership has undertaken a fundamental review, resulting in a refreshed strategy with additional or amended priority areas. The refreshed Strategy will span three years (2026/27 to 2028/29). This reduced period will allow for earlier reflection and adaptation to emerging trends and demands and reflects lessons learnt in the delivery of the current Strategy.

In line with statutory responsibilities under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Council must ensure a Domestic Abuse Strategy is in place. The refreshed Strategy has been developed through consultation with the local Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group (DSAPG) which reports to the Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP).

Importantly, the refreshed Strategy will also incorporate the partnership's vision and commitment to addressing Sexual Offences and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

In addition, future commissioning activity, including the Domestic Abuse Support Outreach Service, will be aligned with the revised strategic aims to ensure continuity and effectiveness in service provision. The current commissioned services have worked to align with the aims of the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022 – 2027, with provider organisations playing an active role in the DSAPG.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Endorse the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences Strategy 2026/27 – 2028/29 (attached at Appendix 1.)
2. Note that regular oversight of the Strategy will be undertaken by the Safer Rotherham Partnership Board and the Improving Lives Select Committee.

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences Strategy Refresh
- Appendix 2 Initial Equality Screening Assessment Part A
- Appendix 3 Equality Analysis Part B
- Appendix 4 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

- [Previous Cabinet Report January 2021](#)
- [Report Template For Cabinet & Commissioner](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)
- [Violence Against Women and Girls - Statement of Intent](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
Improving Lives Select Commission – 29 January 2026

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Domestic Abuse Strategy

1. Background

1.1 The Current Strategy

- 1.1.1 The current Domestic Abuse Strategy for Rotherham (2022–2027) was designed following a robust consultation process. The Strategy is the primary driver of partnership and service delivery, setting the overarching direction and priorities across all key partners. All services, whether commissioned or non-commissioned, are delivered in alignment with the Strategy and agreed priorities and this is monitored and progressed through the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group.
- 1.1.2 The Strategy outlined six key priority areas, each accompanied by targeted activities that formed the basis of an action plan. These priorities guided the Safer Rotherham Partnership’s coordinated efforts and ensured a focused approach to tackling domestic abuse across the Borough.

1.2 Current Strategic Achievements

- 1.2.1 A comprehensive and robust action plan was developed to drive the delivery of the Strategy’s aims and objectives. This plan served as a critical mechanism for translating strategic intent into tangible outcomes, ensuring accountability and maintaining momentum across the partnership.
- 1.2.2 The domestic abuse action plan set out 35 actions and targeted activities against each key priority, with 81% of these now complete and / or embedded into service practice and 9% scheduled for inclusion in the refreshed Strategy. Outcomes have been measured through performance data from statutory and commissioned services, showing increased victim / survivor engagement and reporting, alongside qualitative evidence gathered from survivor feedback and case studies.

1.3 Drive Change Together

- 1.3.1 This priority focuses on providing seamless services for victims, strengthening governance processes and improving the way that the partnership works together.

1.3.2 Improved Risk Assessment Tools

The South Yorkshire-wide Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment – Honour Based Abuse (DASH-HBA) Risk Assessment form was revised to enhance clarity, usability, and effectiveness, taking on board user feedback to capture a better understanding of risk.

1.3.3 Specialist Training

The “8 Steps to Homicide” programme was commissioned to strengthen practitioners’ understanding of domestic abuse risk. Additionally, over 500 healthcare professionals received targeted training on non-fatal strangulation and domestic abuse awareness.

1.3.4 Data-Driven Campaigns

Enhanced data collection has informed more targeted and strategic initiatives such as the domestic abuse summer campaign and the older people’s domestic abuse campaign, which was aimed at challenging stereotypes and improving service reach. Resources from Adult Social Care and Public Health were pooled together to ensure the right messages were clear, appropriate and reachable for the older generation. The campaign messages were developed with local communities such as the Rotherham Older People’s Forum. As a result, there has been a 3% increase in older victims accessing support.

1.3.5 Further to this, grass roots work has been completed within the nighttime economy and South Yorkshire Police’s ‘GRIP’ team with security staff receiving domestic abuse awareness presentations on spotting the signs of domestic abuse and ensuring all staff are aware of specific campaigns and protocols such as ‘Ask for Angela’.

1.3.6 Improved Multi Agency working

A full review of all frontline domestic abuse safeguarding meetings such as multi agency risk assessment conference (MARAC), multiagency daily domestic abuse meeting (MADA) and multi-agency task and coordination meeting (MATAC) has been completed. These meetings are critical in safeguarding individuals and children while holding perpetrators accountable. As a direct outcome of the review, MARAC meetings have increased from two per month to three per month. This change has significantly reduced the waiting time for case discussions from seven weeks to two weeks, meeting the national domestic abuse charity Safe Lives recommendation and ensuring timely risk management and victim support.

1.4 Prevention and Early Intervention

1.4.1 This priority aims to increase the focus on early intervention and prevention, which is not only about stopping domestic abuse but also preventing the escalation of abuse.

1.4.2 Public Engagement Campaigns

Work to support the government’s ambition to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) within the next decade has included the “No More and Do More” campaign, which encourages local men and boys to challenge abusive behaviours and promote respectful attitudes. This focus is vital given the

scale of the issue locally, with 3,087 repeat VAWG perpetrators recorded on police systems between 2022 and 2025.

1.4.3 Digital Safety Innovation

The Safer Spaces Improvement Group, involving key partners including Rotherham Women's Network and local policing teams, is exploring digital solutions to enhance community safety and prevent abuse.

1.4.4 Workforce Development

A structured Domestic Abuse Training Plan was launched, featuring modules such as "Asking the Question" and "Risk Assessing," to support consistent, informed practice.

1.4.5 Cultural Narrative Workshop

In partnership with Sheffield Hallam University, a workshop for front line professionals was delivered to challenge traditional victim narratives, reframing vulnerability as resilience and promoting inclusive approaches to early intervention.

1.5 **Justice and Ongoing Protection**

1.5.1 This priority focusses on the provision of effective, engaged, supportive, responsive, and timely protection and justice.

1.5.2 Probation Programme – Building Choices

A cognitive behavioural programme has been established for men convicted of intimate partner violence, focusing on accountability and long-term behaviour change to reduce reoffending and improve victim outcomes.

1.5.3 Cranstoun: Inspire to Change

Commissioned in Rotherham, the Cranstoun 'Inspire to Change' programme is a nationally established intervention for non-convicted individuals who acknowledge abusive behaviour and seek change. 87 participants were able to be tracked after the completion of the programme and, of those, 73% showed reduced incidents of further abuse, with Rotherham demonstrating strong engagement and low repeat incident rates.

1.5.4 Strengthening Multi-Agency Response

Increased MARAC meeting frequency has reduced case backlogs from nine to three weeks, improving safeguarding outcomes. A review of the Police led MATAC has led to the development of a police RAPID response model to be embedded in the next Strategy.

1.6 Responding to Changing Need and Demand

1.6.1 This priority focuses on working together to plan, deliver and commission appropriate services to meet needs. The SRP is committed to co-production methods for reform and innovation.

1.6.2 Domestic Abuse Pathway

A single victim / survivor domestic abuse pathway was developed and commissioned which has ensured early identification of support needs and throughput directly to required intervention and support. This has involved the inclusion of the Domestic Abuse Assertive Outreach Team to tackle complexities and specialist housing officers to prioritise support for those who are homeless.

1.6.3 Hopian — Victim Needs Assessment Tool

A self-assessment tool has been developed by Hopian, the Council's commissioned Domestic Abuse support service, to support victims in identifying and prioritising their own support needs. This approach facilitates more personalised, trauma-informed interventions that are responsive to individual circumstances. By enabling victims to articulate what matters most to them, the tool ensures timely access to appropriate services, enhancing both engagement and outcomes.

1.6.4 Enhanced Access to Support

The commissioned Domestic Abuse Outreach Service provides a multi-channel support offer, including an online helpline and real-time webchat service, delivering confidential and accessible support to victims. These digital platforms complement face-to-face and telephone-based interventions, ensuring individuals can engage with services in a way that suits their circumstances and preferences. This flexible approach enhances reach, reduces barriers to disclosure, and enables timely, trauma-informed responses tailored to individual needs.

1.6.5 Assertive Outreach Team

A dedicated Domestic Abuse Assertive Outreach Team has been embedded within local service provision, offering tailored, trauma-informed support to individuals experiencing multiple and complex needs, including mental health challenges, substance misuse, and housing instability. This proactive model of engagement ensures consistent contact with victims / survivors who may struggle to access traditional services, fostering trust and improving long-term outcomes through sustained, personalised interventions.

1.6.6 Specialist Domestic Abuse Housing Officers

Specialist Domestic Abuse Housing Officers provide targeted support to victims / survivors of domestic abuse who have become homeless as a result of their experiences. While victims / survivors are in temporary

accommodation, these officers provide advocacy, emotional support, and coordinated access to wider services including housing, health, mental wellbeing, and financial assistance. This holistic approach not only promotes recovery and stability but also plays a critical role in preventing repeat homelessness and supporting long-term safety and independence.

1.7 **Minimising Harm through Early Help for Children and Families**

1.7.1 This priority seeks to minimise harm, providing positive outcomes, and promoting equality of access for all victims / survivors of domestic abuse, recognising and reducing barriers to reporting.

1.7.2 **Support for Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse**

In line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Rotherham has developed a responsive support offer for children. This includes statutory Early Help services and the commissioned domestic abuse support service Hopian, with their therapeutic interventions and Children’s-specific Independent Domestic Violence and Abuse Advocates (IDVAs), which are funded from South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA).

1.7.3 Refuge provision includes support for children with specific play facilities for all ages. These aim to build resilience, promote recovery, and ensure children feel safe and supported. This is evidenced by case studies and victim / survivor feedback.

1.7.4 **Operation Encompass**

Operation Encompass provides schools with a next-day notification when a domestic abuse incident has occurred in a child’s home. This enables school staff to offer timely, discreet monitoring and support, ensuring that children have a safe space and appropriate emotional assistance during the school day.

Rotherham leads the implementation of Operation Encompass across South Yorkshire, with 100% of schools and 53 nurseries enrolled. This comprehensive coverage ensures that children affected by domestic abuse consistently receive early intervention rather than waiting until concerns escalate to formal child protection processes.

As a result, schools are now able to identify needs earlier, provide immediate pastoral support, and help stabilise the child’s wellbeing and learning environment following an incident.

1.7.5 **Cranstoun: Level Up Programme**

Level Up programme is a commissioned 12-week school-based intervention for young people aged 11–15 displaying abusive behaviours. Of 109 referrals, 35 completed the programme, supporting early behaviour change and healthier relationships.

1.8 **Providing Safe Accommodation and Appropriate Support**

1.8.1 This priority aims to ensure that every victim of domestic abuse that presents as homeless to RMBC is provided with safe, supported secure accommodation.

1.8.2 All data referenced throughout the Strategy is drawn from the period April 2022 to March 2025, ensuring that the analysis, performance measures, and outcomes presented are based on a consistent and comprehensive three-year dataset.

1.8.3 **Refuge and Safer Options Housing**

Rotherham's Domestic Abuse Refuge has been re-commissioned. This offers ten Refuge units and ten additional off-site Safer Options Properties available for all family types and sizes, including male victims and survivors. This service has supported 474 individuals, offering secure accommodation and tailored support to aid recovery and long-term wellbeing.

1.8.4 **Specialist Accommodation**

The Council offers 13 fully furnished domestic abuse temporary accommodation properties with enhanced security, supporting over 200 adults and children made homeless due to Domestic Abuse. These spaces are environmentally designed to make people who have experienced trauma feel safe, respected, and in control, providing safety and stability for those fleeing abuse with targeted support offered by the Domestic Abuse Housing Officers.

1.8.5 **Homelessness Prevention Fund**

Financial support has been provided to 489 individuals, covering essential costs such as rent arrears, moving expenses, and household items helping prevent homelessness, remove barriers to moving on and promote housing stability.

1.8.6 **Security strengthening and Sanctuary Scheme**

Security measures have been implemented in 433 homes, enabling survivors to remain safely in their own properties. These interventions support empowerment, reduce displacement, and maintain access to local networks.

1.9 **Commissioning Background**

1.9.1 In October 2022 the Council implemented a new single pathway for domestic abuse support. The charity Hopian (formerly Rotherham Rise) provides the main domestic abuse outreach offer for Rotherham victims and survivors, following a competitive procurement process. This includes the one front door to domestic abuse support, a helpline and web-based help as well as one to

one and therapeutic support. This service has been key to the delivery of responding to changing need and demand. The current contract ends 30 September 2026 with the option to extend up to one year.

- 1.9.2 Other commissioned services supporting the domestic abuse pathway include the Cranstoun Inspire to Change Perpetrator Programme, a jointly commissioned initiative involving all South Yorkshire local authorities and SYMCA. This programme plays a critical role in addressing perpetrator behaviour and promoting long-term safety for victims. The current contract is due to end on 31st March 2026, and Cranstoun have secured the new contract to continue delivery from 1st April 2026.
- 1.9.3 Additionally, the security strengthening (sanctuary) scheme, delivered by SheffLOCK, provides essential security equipment such as ring doorbells, upgraded locks, and window alarms to help victims feel safe and remain in their own homes. This contract is also scheduled to conclude on 31st March 2026 and is currently progressing through the procurement process to ensure continuity of service.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences Strategy (2026/27 – 2028/29)

- 2.1.1 One of the Council's priorities is for every neighbourhood to be a thriving neighbourhood, where people can work together to achieve a good quality of life. This revised Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences Strategy builds on the successes of the previous domestic abuse strategy. The Strategy will now incorporate sexual offences and violence against women and girls (VAWG), ensuring these cross-cutting issues remain a strategic priority. Importantly the Strategy also continues to recognise the intersectional nature of domestic abuse, which extends beyond intimate relationships and includes child-to-parent abuse, honour-based abuse, and abuse of adults.
- 2.1.2 Adding sexual offences and violence against women and girls (VAWG) into this Strategy brings several important benefits, both in terms of service delivery and strategic impact such as:
 - **Holistic understanding of abuse** - domestic abuse often overlaps with sexual abuse and other forms of gender-based violence. Including these elements ensures the Strategy reflects the full spectrum of harm experienced by victims.
 - **Improved victim support** - Victims of sexual abuse and VAWG may have different needs (e.g. trauma-informed care, forensic services, specialist advocacy). However, a joined-up strategy ensures better coordination between services like police, health, housing, and specialist support providers.
 - **Enhanced prevention and early intervention** - It allows for targeted education and awareness campaigns that challenge societal norms and

promote healthy relationships across all 3 priority areas with a shared focus on young people and marginalised communities.

- **Better data and intelligence** - Integrating sexual abuse and VAWG improves data collection and analysis, helping identify trends, gaps, and high-risk groups.
- **Stronger Multi-Agency Collaboration** - Encourages joined-up working across police, health, education, social care, and third-sector organisations driving all priorities through the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority group (DSAPG)
- **VAWG Statement of Intent** – The Council has signed up to the violence against women and girls statement of intent; embedding this into the revised Strategy will help to bring structure and monitoring arrangements around this.
- **Duty to Collaborate** - The duty to collaborate under the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 will require local policing bodies, local authorities and Integrated Care Boards to collaborate in the commissioning of community support services in England for victims of domestic abuse, sexual abuse, and serious violence. Duty holders must also develop a joint needs assessment and local strategy which demonstrates how they will collaborate to deliver and improve relevant victim support services. The timelines for consultation pursuant to the statutory guidance underpinning the Duty to Collaborate will be updated subject to decisions on departmental spending allocations. We expect to consult in accordance with the statutory guidance in due course. Expanding the Domestic Abuse Strategy to include sexual abuse and VAWG will put the partnership in a strong position with regards the duty to collaborate.

2.1.3 Informed by national and local data, needs analysis, partnership consultation, and the voices and experiences of victims / survivors (as detailed in Section 4), the revised Strategy aims to address service gaps and embed new learning. Following feedback from the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group, the Strategy now aims to avoid overlap and focuses on four streamlined key priority areas as outlined below.

2.2 **Proposed Strategic Priorities 2026 – 2029**

2.2.1 Being responsive to feedback from partners and stakeholders, the strategic priorities have been streamlined from six to four by combining some overlapping areas, reducing duplication within the underpinning aims and enhancing clarity and focus.

2.2.2 Fewer priorities also reflect evolving practice as many actions from the 2022–2027 Strategy are now routine practice. This aims to enhance monitoring and accountability with fewer, broader priorities which allow for more cohesive action planning and clearer performance indicators. This holistic approach also combines related areas (e.g. support and accommodation) to reflect how some services are delivering in practice.

2.2.3	<p>1. Prevention, Early Intervention, and Minimising Harm</p> <p>This priority focuses on preventing domestic abuse before it starts and intervening early to stop escalation. It includes providing early help and support for children and families, promoting equality of access, and reducing barriers to reporting. The aim is to minimise harm and deliver positive outcomes for all survivors.</p>
	<p>2. Seamless Support and Safe Accommodation</p> <p>This priority ensures victims receive timely, coordinated, and effective support. It includes the provision of safe, secure accommodation for those presenting as homeless due to domestic abuse and embedding support services into everyday practice. The goal is to make support accessible, responsive, and part of routine service delivery.</p>
	<p>3. Justice, Protection, and Accountability</p> <p>This priority focuses on delivering justice and ongoing protection through responsive, and timely interventions. It also strengthens governance and accountability across the partnership, ensuring that partnerships work effectively together to safeguard victims and hold perpetrators to account.</p>
	<p>4. Adapting to Changing Needs and Demands</p> <p>This priority ensures services remain relevant and responsive to evolving needs and demands. It promotes coproduction in service planning and commissioning, enabling the partnership to adapt quickly and effectively to emerging challenges and opportunities. Adaptation is measured through continuous review of performance data, feedback from service users and practitioners, and regular needs assessments, allowing the partnership to monitor shifts in demand, identify gaps, and make evidence-based improvements to service delivery.</p>

2.2.4 Underpinning these four priorities is a set of aims which will continue to support a focused robust action plan. The priorities and aims have also been informed by wider cross-cutting work where domestic abuse is prevalent, including the Homelessness Prevention Strategy, Housing Strategy, and both Adult and Children’s Safeguarding Strategies.

2.2.5 Sexual abuse and violence against women and girls (VAWG) actions will also be embedded within the Strategy’s priority area actions. This ensures that emerging issues, survivor insights, and evolving evidence related to sexual abuse and VAWG are continuously reviewed, prioritised, and addressed through a coordinated and responsive partnership approach.

2.3 The Delivery

2.3.1 The delivery of the Strategy will continue to follow the established approach from previous years. Oversight will be provided by the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group through scheduled quarterly meetings, with clear governance and escalation pathways to the Safer Rotherham Partnership Board.

2.4 **Strategy**

- 2.4.1 This Strategy has been developed by the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group, on behalf of the Safer Rotherham Partnership.
- 2.4.2 In its preparation, the Council engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including professionals from community safety, domestic abuse services, voluntary and community sector organisations, South Yorkshire Police, and NHS Trusts. These partners contributed to revising strategic priorities, highlighting service gaps, and proposing solutions to strengthen the local response. Crucially, the voices of victims and survivors were central to this process through the completion of surveys and consultation groups, helping to shape the Strategy around the issues that matter most to them. The purpose of this Strategy is to clearly identify areas for improvement and guide collective action. Effective partnership working remains key to success, and this Strategy will serve as a driving force for enhancing services related to domestic and sexual abuse, as well as violence against women and girls (VAWG).

2.5 **Performance**

- 2.5.1 Periodic progress updates will be provided to both the Safer Rotherham Partnership and the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group, ensuring that delivery of the Strategy is consistently monitored and scrutinised. The partnership will continue to identify and review suitable performance indicators for each strategic aim, with regular reporting enabling partners to track progress, respond to emerging issues, and ensure accountability. Alongside this performance monitoring, the partnership will actively identify and manage any risks that may impact delivery, ensuring the Strategy remains on track and responsive to local need.

2.6 **Action plan**

- 2.6.1 A robust action plan will be developed to support this Strategy. The action plan will be driven by the aims and objectives contained within this Strategy and will identify specific actions needed in order to support each aim and deliver success.

2.7 **Promotion**

- 2.7.1 The promotion and implementation of the Strategy will include, awareness raising through events, promotional materials, social media and training.

2.8 **Domestic Abuse Commissioned Services**

- 2.8.1 Overall, there is a variety of provision supporting victims / survivors of domestic abuse across Rotherham and whilst the Council has implemented a one front door approach, the landscape of both commissioned and non-commissioned support and practical services available remains complex.

- 2.8.2 Across Rotherham, and within the national picture, there are varying arrangements for the delivery and commissioning of domestic abuse services including services delivered in-house by local authorities, services commissioned out by local authorities, services commissioned by the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority or specialist domestic abuse charities, that may rely on different funding streams.
- 2.8.3 The Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group (DSAPG) brings together key partners across all service provision to ensure cohesive working, underpinned by the Domestic and Sexual Offences Strategy and delivered through the partnership action plan.
- 2.8.4 Contract management data has shown a continued high demand for services. Both the commissioned and the Council's in-house services have achieved positive outcomes for people accessing them. Many people exiting the services have either a reduced or maintained level of risk. The revised Strategy will underpin any future commissioned provision or shaping of future services.
- 2.8.5 The local and national picture has shown an increase in demand for services. The Council has developed provision to meet relevant legislative requirements; however, demand will continue to be closely monitored through the DSAPG.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Option one – recommended

- 3.1.1 That Cabinet endorses the refreshed Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences Strategy 2026/27 – 2028/29, noting that regular oversight of the Strategy will be undertaken by the Safer Rotherham Partnership Board and Improving Lives Select Committee.
- 3.1.2 The refreshed Strategy will now include sexual offences and violence against women and girls. This allows a streamlined approach to cross cutting issues and allows the Council and the Safer Rotherham Partnership to drive change in a joined-up way, as well as meeting statutory requirements.
- 3.1.3 The Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group will produce a robust action plan to ensure the aims within the Strategy are achieved, with oversight from the Safer Rotherham Partnership Board.

3.2 Option two – not recommended

- 3.2.1 The current Strategy runs until 2027 and therefore the Council will continue to be compliant with its statutory duty until 2027. The Council could choose to retain the existing Strategy until then. This option was discounted for the following reasons:

- 3.2.2 The refresh of this Strategy is a statutory requirement. The identified priority areas have been co-produced through consultation and learning from service users, members of the public, and stakeholders across the partnership.
- 3.2.3 Many of the action plan aims of the current Strategy have been implemented and therefore a delay to strategy review does not allow for the development of new aims or actions and therefore delaying development and innovation.
- 3.2.4 The feedback from stakeholders, service users and the wider public has shown that whilst the priority areas are largely unchanged, the aims within each priority have shifted.
- 3.2.5 A strategy review in 2027 may not allow for the early inclusion of sexual abuse or violence against women and girls and could result in a missed opportunity to develop the offer in these areas.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 Needs assessment

- 4.1.1 A comprehensive needs assessment was completed in March 2024, identifying several areas requiring a more targeted approach. These include:
- Establishing a clear and accessible support pathway for children and young people affected by domestic abuse.
 - Embedding the voices of those with lived experience and survivors throughout the Strategy's development and implementation.
 - Ensuring appropriate support is available for individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), including active engagement with 'by and for' organisations.
 - Maintaining timely access to support services and safe accommodation for those affected.

4.2 Service User Consultation

- 4.2.1 Hopian (formerly Rotherham Rise) domestic abuse support service users participated in a face-to-face forum where key thematic questions were explored through open and honest dialogue; this was followed up with a questionnaire for those unable to attend.
- 4.2.2 In addition, service users from the Domestic Abuse Assertive Outreach Service (DAAOS) and the Domestic Abuse Housing Officer service were invited to respond to the same set of questions via a structured survey. Given the complexity of their circumstances, professionals determined that a survey format would be the most effective method for capturing meaningful feedback.

4.2.3 Snapshot of questions and some of the responses:

<p>How was the accessibility of support?</p>	<p><i>“Rotherham rise is known to quite a few people but not all. I think it needs to get out there a lot more than it is. I found Rotherham rise By Via Google Search. A lot of people out there probably know nothing about the help and support available to themselves.” (Hopian service user)</i></p> <p><i>“Accommodation issues, I am still living with the alleged perpetrator and cannot bid for properties due to my rent areas. It’s affecting my mental health. I feel lonely. I cannot invite people” (DAAOS service user)</i></p>
<p>What support do you require most when in crisis / leaving the abusive relationship?</p>	<p><i>“Crisis helpline or online chat you could reach out to especially if you find it hard to talk to family/friends or don't want to leave the house. This would be really helpful.” (Hopian service user)</i></p> <p><i>“I would want somewhere to ring to help me get out, no matter what time it was” (Hopian service user)</i></p> <p><i>“Someone who could listen to me without being judgemental” (DAAOS service user)</i></p>
<p>What support do you require most when remaining in the relationship?</p>	<p><i>“Courses to recognise abuse behaviours, Support for perpetrator- anger management” (Hopian service user)</i></p> <p><i>“Regular contact to check on my safety” (DAAOS service user)</i></p>
<p>What support do you require most after leaving?</p>	<p><i>“Support worker to call home visits and work with family-reassurance of safety” (Hopian service user)</i></p> <p><i>“Programme and courses about healthy relationship and emotional coping will be helpful” (DAAOS service user)</i></p>
<p>What’s been the most beneficial support you?</p>	<p><i>“I have found it really helpful to learn about warning signs of abuse, how to keep myself safe. It has been really good to be able to talk to Rotherham Rise and not be judged” (Hopian service user)</i></p> <p><i>“DA housing officers. Knowing I had someone to call, someone to support me to appointments. Someone who made sure I had things like food and clothes. And just felt like DA housing officers were there and understood me. It’s the first time I have experienced support like this” (DA Housing officer support service)</i></p>
<p>What support do you require</p>	<p><i>“First of all, making sure the child is safe at all times. Early help/social services. Child counselling Someone to talk to Refuge Rotherham rise do children groups” (Hopian service user)</i></p>

for your children?	<i>"I think you are often blamed for what happened to your children...it's not fair" (DAAOS service user)</i>
What do you need in relation to Housing support?	<i>"For me I would need somewhere safe to live and some financial support for bills" (Hopian Service user)</i> <i>"The process seems too long. I've been in a hotel for ages and I'm with people who smoke drugs and stuff, it's not me. I'm desperate for my own space but the flat they offered was at the other side of Rotherham to where I work. I'm still waiting and it's really hard. I can't see my kids or have them overnight because I'm still in the hotel. I'll be honest, I've felt very low at times" (DA Housing officer support service)</i>
Preferred supportive methods / venues?	<i>"I like to get away from home so any private room either at Rotherham Rise or local to where I live, so long as it is private" (Hopian service user)</i> <i>"At home where I feel safe / comfortable, or community venues, events (drop in info)" (Hopian service user)</i> <i>"Face to face is useful, and I don't mind phone calls, although I work a lot and can't always answer, I've missed a few. Face to face is good because you can get to know someone and trust them" (DAAOS service user)</i>
Other feedback?	<i>"I feel you need people with expert training in domestic abuse who understand what you are going through need to deliver this service. For example, a GP may not have the correct understanding or skills to properly guide you. This is why Rise is irreplaceable as they offer non-judgemental, expert advice on how to best support victims. The environment and staff there are so calm and caring. It is a special place, and I will always be grateful for their help and encouragement" (Hopian Service user)</i> <i>"Mental health support-Long term" (DAAOS service user)</i>

4.2.4 The themes identified within the service user responses will be addressed through the strategic priority aims outlined in the Strategy itself, which will be driven with a partnership co-produced action plan. Key performance indicators will be used alongside the survivor voice and case studies which we will capture consistently throughout the implementation of this Strategy.

4.3 **Public Consultation**

4.3.1 Community Safety Officers representing the Safer Rotherham Partnership hosted an engagement stall at the 2025 Rotherham Show, which attracted an estimated footfall of approximately 95,000 attendees.

4.3.2 This provided a valuable opportunity to gather public perceptions, identify perceived barriers to accessing support services, and explore community views on key priorities for addressing domestic and sexual abuse, as well as violence against women and girls (VAWG).

4.3.3 *Key themes identified from survey responses -*

Barriers to accessing support:

- Fear of the perpetrator
- Financial dependency
- Lack of trust in statutory services

4.3.4 Priority areas for tackling domestic abuse:

- Alleviating financial pressures to enable victims to leave abusive environments
- Ensuring timely and accessible support for all victims
- Providing dedicated support for children affected by domestic abuse

4.3.5 The themes emerging from the public consultation have identified key areas of focus for the Strategy. Notably, barriers such as a lack of trust in statutory services have been recognised as critical issues and are therefore embedded within the Strategy's core aims.

4.3.6 Additionally, the consultation highlights the need for increased promotional efforts to reassure victims that support is available. This aligns with the strategy's objectives under prevention, early intervention, minimising harm.

4.4 **Stakeholder Strategy Consultation**

4.4.1 In November 2024, the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Priority Group (DSAPG) convened a face-to-face consultation session at Riverside House. This session provided a valuable opportunity for key stakeholders to critically review the existing Domestic Abuse Strategy, highlighting examples of good practice and identifying areas for improvement.

4.4.2 The consultation was attended by representatives from South Yorkshire Police, the NHS, Adult and Children's Social Care, domestic abuse support services, 'by and for' organisations, as well as mental health and substance misuse services.

4.4.3 To facilitate focused discussion, the current Strategy was segmented into its priority areas. Partners were invited to assess which elements remained relevant and impactful, which had become embedded into routine practice. In addition to identify where gaps existed, that should be addressed in the next strategy.

4.4.4 Key Findings -

The group concluded that most of the existing priority areas remain relevant. However, it was noted that there is significant overlap across several aims and there were opportunities to build on previous aims that have now been achieved and embedded. A more streamlined and focused approach was recommended within the next strategy to enhance clarity and improve the monitoring of outcomes.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 The Strategy will be published in accordance with governance guidance. Delivery will be monitored through a quarterly dashboard showing key performance indicators and an annually refreshed delivery plan. This will be overseen by the Safer Rotherham Partnership Board.

5.2

Implementation	Target date	Lead
Strategy refresh scrutiny - ILSC	January 2026	Emma Ellis Kayley Charlton
Strategy Approval - Safer Rotherham Partnership Board	February 2026	Emma Ellis Kayley Charlton
Strategy Cabinet Endorsement	April 2026	Cabinet
Establish and create a Partnership Action Plan	April 2026	DSAPG
Strategy Partnership Launch	April / May 2026	Emma Ellis Kayley Charlton
Continuous delivery and KPI monitoring through DSAPG	Quarterly meetings	Emma Ellis Kayley Charlton
Strategy Progress report – Safer Rotherham Partnership	April 2027	Emma Ellis Kayley Charlton

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 The cost of creating the draft Strategy has been funded through approved revenue budgets. Any spend to achieve the aims within this Strategy will also be contained within these budgets.

6.2 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report. As detailed through the report, services commissioning and procuring future domestic and sexual abuse services will need to take account of the Strategy once implemented and all procurement activity must be undertaken in compliance with relevant legislation (Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or the Procurement Act 2023) dependent on the route to market, as well as the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 Pursuant to Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, local authorities are under a duty, following an appropriate needs assessment, to prepare, publish and implement a Strategy for delivering accommodation-based support to victims of domestic abuse. It is also a requirement under the legislation for the Council to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Strategy.
- 7.2 Further, under the Act the authority is required to establish a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board to advise on and provide oversight of the provision of that support. The Safer Rotherham Partnership is the Board which fulfils these duties. The body of the report sets out how the Council is complying with these duties.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct human resource implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 Domestic abuse can have a profound and lasting impact on victims and their families, with children and young people particularly vulnerable to significant emotional and physical harm.
- 9.2 The Strategy places a strong emphasis on these concerns, especially within its priority area: Prevention, Early Intervention, and Minimising Harm.
- 9.3 It aims to ensure that services across partner agencies are robust, coordinated, and effective in identifying and supporting all individuals affected by domestic abuse.
- 9.4 In alignment with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Strategy also recognises the importance of extending support beyond the direct victim. It reinforces the legal and moral imperative to acknowledge and respond to the needs of children as victims in their own right.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 An Initial Equality Screening Assessment and full Equality Analysis have been undertaken to support the refreshment of the Strategy and can be found at Appendices 2 and 3.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 A Carbon Impact Assessment has been undertaken which can be found in Appendix 4.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1. There are wide-ranging implications for partners, who have been involved throughout the process of the Strategy. Partners are also required to sit as part of the local Domestic Abuse Partnership which is now a statutory requirement. Partnership engagement, activity and outcomes will continue to be monitored through the Safer Rotherham Partnership.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The primary risk relates to the capacity to deliver on strategic objectives, particularly due to the uncertainty surrounding future Government funding linked to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Although funding has been consistently provided over the past five years, there has been no confirmation of continued support beyond the current period. To mitigate this risk, proactive measures will be taken, including regular partnership meetings, robust tracking of actions and performance, and, where necessary, adaptations to delivery models to ensure continued effectiveness.

14. Accountable Officers

Emma Ellis – Head of Service Community Safety and Regulatory Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	John Edwards	18/03/26
Executive Director of Corporate Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	16/03/26
Service Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	12/03/26

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