

DOMESTIC ABUSE

Prevention and early help	Supporting communities to prevent and build resilience to domestic abuse. Intervene at the earliest stage to prevent escalation and behaviours which foster it and intervening early to prevent it.
Partnership:	All practitioners (voluntary sector, children’s services, health, housing, adult’s social care, community safety, education, police, probation) work together to achieve the best possible outcomes for the individual or family.
Provision and Improvement	Ensuring the services provided in Luton for victims, perpetrators and children are timely, consistent and deliver the appropriate outcomes.
Protection	Responding to risk, protecting vulnerable victims and families affected by domestic abuse.

There are nine goals to support delivery of the four DALPB strategic priorities:

1) Justice, recovery and ongoing protection Provision of effective, engaged, supportive, responsive and timely protection and justice.	2) Ensuring the new requirements of the DA Bill are appropriately implemented with regards housing support for victims of Domestic abuse.	3) Strengthen and develop early intervention work in respect of harmful relationships and behaviour.
4) Improving support for those experiencing DA across Luton, including hard to reach groups such as The Elderly, BAME, LGBTQ+ and disabled victims.	5) Supported by our partners ensure that we have the right knowledge and services in place to accommodate the needs of all victims	6) Ensure frontline practitioners are trained to recognise DA and offer appropriate support.
7) Develop co-ordinated service provision and pathways to services for all victims of DA in Luton.	8) Strengthen the response to perpetrators by holding them to account for their behaviours and actions.	9) Ensure the current refuges are fit for purpose to cater for all victims and families.

What is already happening in Luton...

- ‘Own My Life’ - an innovative, creative and educational 12-week course for women. It can be delivered online or in-person and supports women to regain ownership of their lives when they have been subjected to abuse or violence by partner. This is done using short videos, structured discussions, group and individual activities, and a comprehensive learning journal. <https://www.ownmylifecourse.org/what>

- Freedom Programme - a free 12 week programme that examines the roles played by attitudes and beliefs on the actions of abusive men and the responses of victims and survivors. The programme also describes in detail how children are affected by being exposed to abuse and very importantly how their lives are improved when the abuse is removed. <https://www.freedomprogramme.co.uk/>
- Talk4M - Group support is provided for men who have experienced domestic abuse in a safe, therapeutic environment. This service is for male victims living in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire or Luton. <https://familiesfirstbedfordshire.org.uk/family-services/>

What are our plans for 2024/25?

- Rolling out the [Ebonista Freedom Programme for Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse](#)
- Achieving [daha Accreditation](#) for housing providers response to domestic abuse
- [Safe Spaces](#) in Luton who provide a safe place and support for domestic abuse
- Survivors Voice
- Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA)
- Reviewing the programmes of direct support for children

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is defined by the Home Office as acts of violence or abuse that we know disproportionately affect women and girls. Most of these offences are committed by male perpetrators. Crimes and behaviour covered by this term include rape and other sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking, 'honour'-based abuse, as well as many others, including offences committed online.

Bedfordshire Police differs from other forces in that their focus is on male perpetrator violence, naming it 'MVAWG' and is in their control strategy and an overarching force priority. They have been working internally to create a 'call it out' culture and formed a support group in Bedfordshire Police to call out sexual misconduct and inappropriate behaviour. This support network is called 'Blue Bell', we support victims and witnesses through the process of reporting misconduct, in turn rooting out individuals who do not reflect our standards.

Bedfordshire Police are driving the agenda around these issues to get a better understanding of how practitioners can be equipped and educated to deal with some of these rapes and serious sexual offences, investigations that are taking place. The pillars themselves are concentrated on three areas, the pursuit of perpetrators, the second part is safe spaces, working with our nighttime economy, and building trust and confidence within the system.

The Police are looking at their own vetting systems to make sure that they have the right people policing our communities and streets, but also fully understanding that the people that are in the Police want to protect people. Forces are now being truly held to account for how they address these issues but also how they do that with the support of our partner agencies.

Project Firefly continues and aims to be that light in the dark; to give residents better protection from all forms of violence in the nighttime economy setting. The operation aims to:

- Provide dedicated officers in night-time hotspots such as bars and clubs at weekends and other busy periods.
- Train our officers and use overt patrols to stop opportunities for would-be offenders to commit violent and sexual offences.
- Educate would-be male offenders and bystanders to misogynistic and abusive behaviours about the impact of their choices.
- Provide training to licensed premises and businesses to educate them on the signs to spot and support available
- Work with partners to increase support to women and girls in Bedfordshire's night-time economy.
- Signpost ways for victims to report incidents and seek support.

The LSCP and its partners supported the **White Ribbon '16 days of action' campaign** in November 2023. Bedfordshire Police undertook a collaboration with Luton based community group Nine Red Presents to share 16 survivors' voices through a series of blogs and poetry as part of an international campaign against gender based violence.

During this period, partners and other organisations across the county to raise awareness of key topics such as male violence against women and girls (MVAWG), domestic abuse, stalking and harassment and serious sexual assault.

The 16 voices demonstrate the raw emotions survivors face when going through and rebuilding from domestic abuse, sexual assault and other crimes. One survivor spoke about when she was in a coercive and controlling domestic abuse relationship, and the breakdown and changes in the relationship as he started to overcome her. She said:

“There wasn't a definitive change in his behaviour. It was slow changes, barely noticeable. He made me feel safe. Until he didn't. He'd already taken my job, so I had no money and he had full financial control. In doing so, he prevented me from being able to go back home to see my friends and family.”

More information can be found at [MVAWG work](#) and the [Police and Crime Commissioner](#)