



Housing and Safer Policy and Performance Board

**Tuesday, 18 November 2025 at 6.30 p.m.
Board Room, Municipal Building, Widnes**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Alcock'.

Interim Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Mike Fry (Chair)	Labour
Councillor Chris Carlin (Vice-Chair)	Labour
Councillor Irene Bramwell	Labour
Councillor Neil Connolly	Labour
Councillor Emma Garner	Labour
Councillor Chris Loftus	Labour
Councillor Angela McInerney	Labour
Councillor Louise Nolan	Labour
Councillor Margaret Ratcliffe	Liberal Democrats
Councillor Tom Stretch	Labour
Councillor Angela Teeling	Labour

*Please contact Kim Butler on 0151 511 7496 or e-mail
kim.butler@halton.gov.uk for further information.*

The next meeting of the Board is on Tuesday, 3 February 2026

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Part I

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1. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	
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3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS)	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion or voting on the item.	
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In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

HOUSING AND SAFER POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Housing and Safer Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 16 September 2025 at the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors Fry (Chair), Carlin (Vice-Chair), Bramwell, Connolly, Garner, C. Loftus, L. Nolan, Ratcliffe and Teeling

Apologies for Absence: Councillor A. McInerney

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: S. Burrows, K. Butler, R. Freeman, N. Goodwin and H. Moir

Also in attendance: Councillor Wright in accordance with Standing Order Number 33.

**ITEM DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

	<i>Action</i>
<p>SAF9 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>The Chair reported that he had met with Police Crime Commissioner (PCC) on four separate occasions. He reported that he was now also a member of the Complaints Management Sub Committee, which had been established by the Police and Crime Panel to manage its responsibility for complaints.</p> <p>As the Chair was unable to attend the last Police and Crime Panel meeting, the Vice-Chair attended on his behalf. The Vice-Chair gave feedback from this meeting and reported that the PCC Annual Report was discussed and this would be circulated to the Board for information and comments.</p>	
<p>SAF10 MINUTES</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2025 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	

SAF11 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.

SAF12 HOMELESSNESS WORKING PARTY - REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS SERVICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board received a report from the Executive Director – Adults which outlined the recommendations of the Homelessness Working Party's review of Halton's Homelessness services.

In February 2025, a Homelessness Working Party was established by Councillor Marie Wright in order to increase Elected Members' understanding on homelessness in Halton; the current service offer; pressures; data and how resources were mobilised to provide services that support some of the most vulnerable adults in the Borough.

The report described the scope of the review and its findings were attached as an appendix to the report; section 3.5 of the report outlined the recommendations of the Working Party.

The following additional information was provided in response to Members questions/comments:

- Nightstop was a UK wide network of same-night emergency accommodation services that support young people in crisis;
- The Council had a drop-in facility at the Halton Direct Links, where people who were either homeless or those facing being homeless, could speak to officers. The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) also had specialist officers who dealt with homelessness and mortgage issues. They also supported people who had to attend court. These services were advertised on the Council's website;
- It was suggested that Nightstop needed to be promoted more widely as it was of the view that not enough people knew about the service;
- The Council had a contract with White Chapel, a charity, who go out at night and identify rough sleepers. The Chair requested a briefing about this service;
- Councillor Loftus requested a standing item on every agenda which provided an update on homelessness. Officers confirmed that there was a performance report (item 6 on the agenda) that would provide this

information, however, the only gap was empty properties but consideration would be given to this being included on future reports. The performance report was a new item that the Board had never received before, however, going forward this would be provided to each meeting; and

- A Members Seminar on Asylum Seekers and Refugees was held in November 2024 and consideration would be given to repeating this Seminar in the future.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) endorse the recommendations of the Homelessness Working Party's review of Halton's Homelessness services.

Executive Director
of Adult Services

Director of
Community &
Greenspaces

SAF13 IMPROVING HOUSING STANDARDS IN THE PRIVATE RENTAL SECTOR: THE RENTERS' RIGHTS BILL

The Board received a report from the Director of Public Health which provided an update on the current measures in place to enforce standards in the Private Rental Sector and the new measures proposed in the Government's Renters' Rights Bill.

The 2011 Census reported that 11% of households in the Borough were in the private rental sector, however, the 2021 Census reported that this number had risen to 14%. In 2024, Metastreet, a housing research consultancy, was commissioned by the Council to undertake a study and this estimated that there were 11, 486 dwellings in the private rental sector which equated to 19% of the Borough's housing stock. The study also predicted that around 4,000 properties in Halton's private rental sector had at least one serious housing hazard.

It was noted that last year, the Council's Environmental Health Team received 172 complaints about housing conditions, which indicated that there was a significant under reporting by tenants. It was hoped that measures contained in the Renters Rights' Bill would provide tenants with more protection and therefore encourage more people to report issues. Furthermore, measures to proactively improve housing standards in the private rental sector, would be set out in the Council's new Housing Strategy, which was currently under consultation. Section 4 of the report set out current laws and policies in

place to help the Council enforce property standards and protect tenants.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) i.e. properties with 5 or more tenants required a license. There were currently 127 HMO's in the Borough, although there was an additional 73 smaller HMO's (3-4 tenants) that did not require a license. However, it was noted that there could potentially be more smaller HMO's, as there was no current requirement for landlords to notify the Council. The Board acknowledged that there were concerns amongst both residents and Elected Members about HMO's, however, they provided a valuable contribution to the housing market and provided much needed accommodation for single person households. Members were assured that once in place, the Housing Strategy would set out measures to control HMO's going forward.

In response to comments/questions from the Board, the following additional information was noted:

- Concerns were raised about expensive leasehold properties in the Borough and therefore the difficulties owners had in selling their homes which forced them into renting them out;
- An opportunity was being explored to establish a Housing Partnership Board which would consist of representatives from all housing associations;
- The regulations in the new Bill would not include lodgers; and
- Members of the Board were encouraged to respond to the new Housing Strategy, which was currently out on consultation.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SAF14 EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Board received the Emergency Planning Annual Report, which provided an update on the work undertaken by the Emergency Planning Team and the work programme for 2024/25.

The Emergency Planning Team consisted of an Emergency Planning Manager and two Emergency Planning Officers.

As a Local Authority, Halton had a statutory duty to comply with the following legislation:

- the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004;
- Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations (COMAH) 2015; and
- Pipeline Safety Regulations (PSR) 1996.

Members noted that Halton had a number of Emergency Plans in place with the aim to ensure resilience. These Plans were regularly updated and tested. The Board was advised on examples of local risks, details of the exercises that take place at COMAH sites in the Borough, information on Emergency Centres and the work the Emergency Planning Team carried out with partner agencies both within Cheshire and cross-border, and as part of Cheshire Resilience Forum.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SAF15 COUNTER TERRORISM

The Board received a report which provided an update on the role of Prevent and the work that had been undertaken during 2024/25 and the first quarter of 2025/26. The report also outlined the current actions being taken in regard to the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025.

Prevent was a National Programme that aimed to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism and it worked to ensure that people who were susceptible to radicalisation were offered appropriate interventions.

Some Prevent work is funded by the Home Office and delivered in the Liverpool City Region (LCR) through Liverpool City Council's Prevent Team. Halton's lead and point of contact was the Emergency Planning Manager and supported by the Director of Community and Greenspaces. Halton received no dedicated funding for Prevent.

The Home Office tested compliance via the Prevent benchmarking process as part of its annual assurance programme to monitor the delivery of Prevent and focussed on the following areas:

- Multi-Agency Partnership Group;
- Local Risk Assessment Process;
- Partnership Plan;
- Referral Pathway;
- Training Programme;
- Reducing permissive environments;
- Communications and engagement; and
- Channel Panel

It was confirmed by the Home Office in May 2025 that Halton had met all the criteria for the annual Prevent benchmarking exercise for 2024/25.

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, often referred to as PROTECT but most commonly known as Martyn's Law, was designed to improve public safety and required certain premises and events to prepare for terrorist attacks. Martyn's Law enacted in response to domestic terror attacks and inquiries like the Manchester Arena inquiry and aimed to enhance protective security and organisational preparedness across the UK.

Halton had an officer working group which was chaired by the Head of Service for Stadium and Markets. The Council had also engaged on the offer from Counter Terrorism Police to deliver training for Council employees. A number of sessions had taken place, which had included SCan Customer Facing and SCan training for CCTV operatives. The Stadium and Leisure Services had also engaged directly with the Police regarding advice and training for staff.

Following some questions from the Board it was confirmed that the Council were responsible for the Stadium and the event organisers were responsible for Creamfields.

It was also suggested that the Council should be notified of any events that happen in the Borough, however, this was not a mandatory requirement.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) endorse the action the Council is taking in regard to the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025.

SAF16 COMMUNITY SAFETY DIVISION - ENFORCEMENT & CCTV UPDATE

The Board received a report from the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, which provided an update on progress and work programme in the Community Safety and Protection Division.

The report provided an update on:

- Environmental Crime and Waste Enforcement;

- Anti-Social Behaviour; and
- CCTV.

Concerns were raised about fly tipping. It was noted that some residents whose wheelie bins had gone missing, could not afford to pay for a replacement and therefore would put rubbish bags out. Another concern was the booking system in place for bulky rubbish; residents would only be allocated a collection date once they had paid for the service. Officers confirmed that the Council had a hardship discretion but concerns would be fed back to the team.

It was also noted that the Police Crime Commissioner was keen to use drones to track and recover stolen bikes and to tackle illegal or antisocial bike and e-scooter use. Drones were a safer alternative to traditional pursuits, which could be dangerous for riders, officers, and the public.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Director of
Community &
Greenspaces

SAF17 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 1 OF 2025/26

The Board received the Performance Monitoring Report for Quarter 1 of 2025/26.

The key priorities for development of improvement in 2025/26 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans for the various function areas reported to the Board as detailed below:

- Community Safety and Protection;
- Risk and Emergency Planning;
- Drug and Alcohol Action;
- Domestic Violence; and
- Housing.

The reports detailed progress against service objectives and milestones, and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

It was noted that this was the first performance report to be received by the Board. There would be some changes to Domestic Violence KPI's going forward consideration would be given to include empty homes on future reports.

Concerns were raised that when looking at crime figures, the Police wards did not match up with Council wards. It was agreed that this was a challenge and the

Chair agreed to raise this at his next meeting with Police.

RESOLVED: That the quarter 1 performance management report be received and noted.

SAF18 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 31 MAY 2025

The Board received a copy of a report, which was presented to the Council's Executive Board on 10 July 2025. The report outlined the Council's overall revenue and capital spending position as at 31 May 2025, together with the latest 2025/26 outturn forecast. The report also described the reasons for key variances from budget.

The Executive Board had requested that a copy of the report be shared with each Policy and Performance Board for information, to ensure that all Members had a full appreciation of the Councilwide financial position, in addition to their specific areas of responsibility.

RESOLVED: That the Council's overall spending position as at 31 May 2025, as outlined in the report, be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.20 p.m.

REPORT TO: Housing & Safer Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 18 November 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: Public Question Time

WARD(S) Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To consider any questions submitted by the Public in accordance with Standing Order 34(9).

1.2 Details of any questions received will be circulated at the meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That any questions received be dealt with.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Standing Order 34(9) states that Public Questions shall be dealt with as follows:-

- (i) A total of 30 minutes will be allocated for dealing with questions from members of the public who are residents of the Borough, to ask questions at meetings of the Policy and Performance Boards.
- (ii) Members of the public can ask questions on any matter relating to the agenda.
- (iii) Members of the public can ask questions. Written notice of questions must be given by 4.00 pm on the working day prior to the date of the meeting to the Committee Services Manager. At any one meeting no person/organisation may submit more than one question.
- (iv) One supplementary question (relating to the original question) may be asked by the questioner, which may or may not be answered at the meeting.
- (v) The Chair or proper officer may reject a question if it:-
 - Is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the Borough;
 - Is defamatory, frivolous, offensive, abusive or racist;
 - Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or

- Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.
- (vi) In the interests of natural justice, public questions cannot relate to a planning or licensing application or to any matter which is not dealt with in the public part of a meeting.
- (vii) The Chair will ask for people to indicate that they wish to ask a question.
- (viii) **PLEASE NOTE** that the maximum amount of time each questioner will be allowed is 3 minutes.
- (ix) If you do not receive a response at the meeting, a Council Officer will ask for your name and address and make sure that you receive a written response.

Please bear in mind that public question time lasts for a maximum of 30 minutes. To help in making the most of this opportunity to speak:-

- Please keep your questions as concise as possible.
- Please do not repeat or make statements on earlier questions as this reduces the time available for other issues to be raised.
- Please note public question time is not intended for debate – issues raised will be responded to either at the meeting or in writing at a later date.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None identified.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None identified.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

None identified.

6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

None identified.

6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

None identified.

6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

None identified.

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

None identified.

6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 None.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None identified.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None identified.

10.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO: Housing & Safer Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 18th November 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director - Environment and Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Domestic Abuse Partnership Board

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update regarding the work undertaken by the Domestic Abuse Board and the work programme for the period 2025/26.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) The Board notes the development of the statutory Domestic Abuse Partnership Board governance arrangements.**
- 2) Members endorse and comment on the work programme.**
- 3) Members comment on Joint Strategic Needs Analysis or Domestic Abuse (appendix 1).**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 strives to: -
- Promote awareness.
 - Protect and support victims.
 - Hold perpetrators to account.
 - Transform the justice response.
 - Improve performance.
- 3.2 The act places duties on relevant local authorities in England to: -
- Appoint a local Domestic Abuse Multi-Agency Partnership Board which it must consult as it performs specified functions, below.
 - Assess or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for accommodation based domestic abuse support in their area for all victims and their children who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those come from outside the area.
 - Prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their area having regard to the needs

- assessment.
 - Give effect to the strategy through commissioning and decommissioning decision.
 - Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of the strategy.
 - Report back annually to central government.
- 3.3 Halton's multi-agency domestic abuse partnership board has been through a period of review and reset which has included a review of membership to ensure senior level representation from defined stakeholders, published an interim strategy, mobilised a joint strategic needs assessment, and set out a partnership board work programme supported by a sub-group structure.
- 3.4 The Domestic Abuse Partnership Board is scheduled to meet quarterly however; this has currently been amended to bi-monthly in recognition of the significant work programme to be delivered.
- 3.5 Halton's interim domestic abuse strategy (appendix 2) sets out four strategic priorities: -
- Act before someone is harmed.
 - Increase safety for those at risk.
 - Identify and stop harmful behaviours.
 - Support people to live the life they want after harm occurs.
- 3.6 In responding to the priorities, the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board agreed a sub-group governance establishing four sub-groups titled Prevent, Prepare, Protect and Pursue, each sub-group has a terms of reference responding to one of the strategies core strategic pillars with a Senior Lead Officer Chairing; supported by either the Head of Service for Community Safety & Protection or the Domestic Abuse Manager. These workgroups will collectively operationalise the strategic priorities outlined in the strategy through high-level oversight, partnership coordination, and outcome-driven planning. This governance structure will also ensure the work of the board feeds through to the Boroughs other safeguarding, statutory and scrutiny boards.
- 3.7 Accommodation arrangements for domestic abuse have fed into the emerging Housing Strategy for the borough to ensure statutory requirements are met and there is an improved housing offer for emergency, supported and dispersed accommodation for domestic abuse victims and families in the future.
- 3.8 A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is in draft format (appendix one), it is anticipated that this will be signed off at the board meeting in December. This assessment provides a strategic overview of domestic abuse in Halton, supporting statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and informing future service commissioning, housing strategy, and multi-agency coordination.

3.9 The key findings thus far from the draft assessment are:

- **Prevalence & Risk:** Over 8,200 Halton residents are estimated to have experienced domestic abuse in the past year. Women aged 35–44 are the most affected group.
- **Service Strengths:** Halton’s IDVA service is highly praised for its professionalism and impact. Multi-agency working is supporting improved outcomes.
- **Areas of future focus:**
 - Support for male, LGBTQ+, ethnic minority, disabled and older victims.
 - Refuge and emergency accommodation, especially for complex needs.
 - High rates of victims returning to perpetrators (36.8% vs 3.5% nationally).
 - Waiting lists for mental health and trauma support.
 - Support for children and improving post-court support.

3.10 There are 13 strategic recommendations which the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board are asked to consider including alignment with the housing strategy, increase capacity for meeting demand and assessing complexity, increase trauma informed responses, review support for children affected and explore school-based interventions.

3.11 The JSNA will inform the next iteration of the Domestic Abuse Strategy which will be developed in 2026, to be implemented from 2027 which will be subject to further reports in due course as the strategy is developed.

3.12 The Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner secured funding to commence a ‘breaking the cycle of domestic abuse’ initiative to be piloted in Halton for twelve months which commenced in April.

3.13 The initiative involves commissioned services working in close alignment with Halton’s dedicated domestic abuse services to deliver perpetrator behaviour change. The PCC Office, Council departments, Police and providers have developed joint working arrangements including co-location and shared case management. The project aims to work with perpetrators and their families in Halton to change offending behaviour and break the cycle of abuse. The objectives are: -

- To deliver a service across Halton that looks at multi-disciplinary support a contextual safeguarding approach to address Domestic Abuse.
- Develop behavioural change programmes which provide immediate and longer-term support to both victims and perpetrators, enhancing the offer that is received through the ‘Choices’ provision.
- Ensuring the behavioural change program is supporting and

actively engages with the victim and has a 'whole family' approach.

- Reduce re-offending.
- Increase safety for victims and children safer, and support families to stay together, where it is appropriate.

3.14 Whilst the initiative is a twelve-month programme, there is potential this may be extended as the project has only recently reached a fully staffing compliment, and it has taken some time to align procedures across multiple agencies.

3.15 In addition to the work above, the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, and the Councils Domestic Abuse team are working Adults Safeguarding Board and partner agencies to raise awareness of older persons Domestic Abuse.

3.16 An event is planned for 21st November 2025, bringing together professionals from across the partnership and Halton. The event includes guest speakers from Age UK, Hourglass (domestic abuse charity for older people), and Halton Domestic Abuse Team to discuss prevention and best practice management for those supporting individuals at risk of or experiencing domestic abuse in later life.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Domestic Abuse Partnership Board delivers on statutory requirements as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and Halton's Strategy for Domestic Abuse (appendix 2)

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Domestic abuse delivery is currently within budgeted forecasts and allocated resource.

5.2 The PCC Breaking the Cycle project is externally commissioned and funded.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Improving the outcomes of those affected by domestic abuse directly supports this priority, improving physical and mental health, promoting wellbeing of self and family and enabling resilience and independence after experiencing harm.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Investing in workforce awareness of domestic abuse is essential to building organisational capacity and fostering a consistent, informed response across the local authority also recognising many of Halton's workforce are also our residents.

Enhanced training equips teams with the knowledge and confidence to identify, respond to, and support individuals affected by domestic abuse, promoting a more integrated and collaborative approach across services. Furthermore, supporting individuals to achieve safety and stability can significantly reduce barriers to employment, education, and training, therefore empowering them to rebuild their lives and access wider opportunities.

This dual focus on workforce development and survivor empowerment contributes to long-term resilience and social inclusion within the borough.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Domestic abuse is frequently intergenerational, with its impact often extending across multiple generations within families. As a local authority, Halton has a statutory obligation to safeguard children and young people from harm. Beyond this duty, there is a strategic opportunity to invest in early intervention and preventative measures that support children and young people in developing healthy relationships and fostering positive family environments.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

A robust domestic abuse provision plays a critical role in supporting the borough's most vulnerable residents and addressing entrenched inequalities. By confronting domestic abuse directly through coordinated prevention and protection strategies, the local authority contributes to the creation of safer, more resilient communities. Targeted interventions not only safeguard those at greatest risk but also help to reduce disparities in access to safety, support, and justice, ensuring that individuals affected by abuse are not further marginalised by systemic barriers.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

By strengthening multi-agency collaboration, addressing intergenerational harm, and empowering individuals through recovery and opportunity, these efforts foster safer households and

more resilient communities. This holistic approach not only meets statutory obligations but also reinforces Halton's commitment to reducing harm, tackling inequality, and promoting long-term wellbeing across the borough.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 Halton Borough Council has a statutory duty to provide support to individuals experiencing domestic abuse, as outlined in relevant legislation. Failure to fulfil this duty could result in serious consequences, including domestic abuse-related fatalities or significant harm to residents. Such outcomes would not only have profound human and social impacts but could also expose the Council to reputational damage and potential legal liability. Ensuring robust and responsive domestic abuse services is therefore essential to safeguarding vulnerable individuals and maintaining public trust and accountability.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 Domestic abuse affects individuals across all demographics, but evidence shows that certain groups, such as women, children, disabled individuals, LGBTQ+ communities, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds may face heightened risks and additional barriers to accessing support. Halton Borough Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that its domestic abuse services are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the diverse needs of its residents. This includes recognising intersectional vulnerabilities and tailoring interventions to promote fair access to safety, justice, and recovery.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None to report.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Domestic Abuse Service, Safer Policy Performance Board, 6th February 2024

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
2025**

**DOMESTIC
ABUSE
NEEDS
ASSESSMENT**

Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment 2025

Author: Rosanna Marr (Graduate Domestic Abuse Officer)

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This needs assessment aims to understand the nature and prevalence of domestic abuse in Halton. It will be used to inform the development of Halton's domestic abuse strategy and the provision and commissioning of domestic abuse services.

The Impact of Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse affects an estimated 3.8 million adults per year¹ in England and Wales alone, and has a devastating impact on individuals and families, affecting victims mentally, emotionally, physically, socially and economically. Existing inequalities, such as poverty, disability, or systemic discrimination, often intensify these harms. In 2017, the Home Office estimated that domestic abuse costs society approximately £66 billion (in England and Wales) in a single year, equating to around £85 billion in July 2024 prices.²

Types of Abuse

Domestic abuse most frequently occurs between intimate partners but can also be inflicted by other family members, including instances of Child to Parent Violence and Abuse (CPVA). It can take many forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, coercive, controlling and economic abuse, often occurring together, and in some cases, may lead to domestic abuse-related deaths. The experience of domestic abuse varies greatly from person to person, shaped by individual circumstances and backgrounds. A person's identity, for example, their race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, economic position, immigration status, disabilities, health and mental health, can significantly influence how they experience abuse, the effects it has on them, and their ability to seek and receive help. Support services should therefore be tailored to address the diverse and overlapping challenges faced by survivors, ensuring sensitivity to the multiple layers of disadvantage and risk they may encounter.

National Context

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 marked a significant step forward by creating a comprehensive legal definition of domestic abuse, appointing a Domestic Abuse Commissioner, and introducing key safeguards, such as preventing abusers from directly cross-examining survivors in court. Complementing this, the government's Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan outlines a cross-departmental strategy centred on prevention, enhanced support for victims, holding perpetrators to account, and strengthening the overall system. However, despite these developments, challenges

¹ Office for National Statistics (2025) *Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2025*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2025#domestic-abuse>

² Domestic Abuse Commissioner (2025) *HM Treasury Autumn 2025 Spending Review: Phase 2 Submission*.

<https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/012025-DAC-HMT-Autumn-2025-Phase-2-submission.pdf>

remain, particularly as incidents of violence against women and girls continue to rise.³

Local Context

The Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership Board leads the local response to domestic abuse by developing and implementing Halton's domestic abuse strategy and coordinating multi-agency efforts. Halton Borough Council commissions key services from providers such as Halton Women's Centre, which offer practical and emotional support to women affected by domestic abuse. While Halton has some safe accommodation options, including refuge, there is currently a lack of specialist by-and-for or second-stage accommodations within the borough. Male victims face limited access to safe housing. Ongoing efforts aim to expand and diversify support and accommodation options better to meet the needs of all survivors in Halton.

The Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership's key priorities are:

1. **To act before someone harms or is harmed:** By building their evidence and understanding, to develop approaches that stop abuse from happening in the first place
2. **To identify and stop harmful behaviours:** Using emerging evidence and practice to increase and improve the responses that challenge harmful behaviour
3. **To increase safety for those at risk:** To keep supporting and strengthening the work which protects people from abuse, increasing safety and wellbeing quickly and effectively
4. **To support people to live the lives they want after harm occurs:** To improve and expand the support for everyone impacted by abuse, for all forms that impact takes

National and Local Prevalence of Domestic Abuse

According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales⁴ (CSEW), for the year ending March 2025, an estimated 3.8 million people aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the last year, equating to 7.8% of the adult population. This includes approximately 2.3 million women (9.5%) and 1.5 million men (6.5%).

Based on these national prevalence rates and local demographic data from the 2021 Census, it is estimated that over 8200 residents aged 16 and over in Halton may have experienced domestic abuse in the past year, including almost 5000 women and over 3000 men.

Domestic abuse in Halton is closely linked with wider social and health factors that increase risk and can make it harder for victims to seek safety or change their situation. Higher rates of poverty, unemployment, and long-term illness or disability are all relevant locally, alongside factors such as caring responsibilities and pregnancy, which are nationally recognised as increasing vulnerability. Substance misuse can also intensify abuse or form part of victims' coping responses. These

³ National Audit Office (2025) *Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls*.

<https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls/>

⁴ Office for National Statistics (2025) *Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2025*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2025#domestic-abuse>

interrelated factors suggest that applying national prevalence rates may underestimate local need and underline the importance of person-centred, preventive approaches that connect domestic abuse support with anti-poverty measures, health and substance misuse services, and early help for families.

According to the CSEW⁵, the police recorded 815,941 domestic abuse-related offences in England and Wales in the year ending March 2025. This highlights the significant underreporting of domestic abuse to the police, given that an estimated 3.8 million people may have experienced domestic abuse during the same period.

Domestic abuse prevalence rates were higher among several groups:

- Women
- Those aged 16-19
- Mixed and white ethnic groups
- Adults with a disability (defined as a long-standing illness, disability or impairment which causes difficulty with day-to-day activities)
- Those with a long-term or temporary illness, students and those looking after their family and home (employment status may have changed as a result of the abuse)
- Separated and divorced individuals (marital status may have changed as a result of the abuse)
- Individuals in households composed of a single person with one or more children (household structure may have changed as a result of the abuse)

In Halton, the most at-risk categories, based on closed-case statistics since 2023, were white women aged 35-44.

Available Domestic Abuse Data

Domestic abuse remains a largely hidden crime, with an estimated 50 incidents occurring before victims access support. Only 35% of domestic violence cases are reported to the police, limiting our understanding of the true scale of the issue.⁶

In 2024, Halton recorded 2,461 domestic abuse-related offences, with a rate of 19.2 per 1,000 population, significantly higher than the Cheshire Constabulary average of 13.7. The most frequent offences were assault without injury, stalking, and assault with injury, which together made up more than half of all cases. Violence with injury accounted for 436 incidents, with slightly more reports from Widnes than Runcorn. Offences peaked in March and September.

There was a strong correlation between domestic abuse and wider crime types. Notably, 91 % of stalking offences were linked to domestic abuse. In total, 41 % of stalking and harassment offences and 59 % of sexual offences carried a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) flag.

⁵ Office for National Statistics (2025) *Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2025*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2025#domestic-abuse>

⁶ SafeLives (n.d.) *Length of abuse*.

<https://safelives.org.uk/about-domestic-abuse/what-is-domestic-abuse/facts-and-figures/length-of-abuse>

Halton recorded 3,349 VAWG offences during the year, a rate of 26.1 per 1,000 population, again above the force average. Offences peaked in August and remained consistently high throughout spring and summer.

The borough recorded 2,251 stalking and harassment offences, with harassment being the most common subtype. Widnes Local Policing Unit saw the largest increases, particularly in the Inner cluster.

Sexual offences reached their highest levels in five years, with 530 incidents including 191 rapes and 376 child sexual abuse cases. Rates across all sexual offence categories were higher in Halton than in the wider force area.

In 2024/25, Halton's domestic abuse service received 1,833 referrals across all risk levels, with 603 cases allocated to IDVA support and the majority referred by police; however, a substantial proportion either declined support or could not be contacted, highlighting both demand and the importance of sustained engagement.

Safe Accommodation Data

Halton's response to domestic abuse aligns with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, ensuring victims can access safe and appropriate accommodation. While most support happens through safety planning and multi-agency partnerships that help victims remain at home, some require emergency housing due to ongoing risk.

Halton offers a range of housing options, including refuge, sanctuary schemes, supported accommodation and targeted services for those with complex needs. The Whole Housing Approach guides local efforts to support early intervention, tenancy protection and long-term recovery.

Despite strong partnerships, a 2024 Housing Needs Assessment found a shortage of emergency accommodation, especially for residents with complex needs. Survivors are not always prioritised as required, highlighting the need to strengthen prevention and ensure compliance with statutory duties.

Community sentiment strongly supports this direction. According to Halton's draft Housing Strategy, based upon the housing needs assessment, supporting domestic abuse survivors through accommodation was the second-highest priority identified by residents, with 68.3% of household survey respondents naming it a key issue. In response, the Council has proposed a series of strategic housing actions, including:

- Ensuring survivors receive appropriate priority through Housing Options
- Reviewing local domestic abuse housing needs in full
- Developing a new 3-4 bed refuge for emergency placements, including those with complex needs
- Improving accommodation options for older people fleeing abuse
- Standardising and expanding the Sanctuary Scheme across providers
- Enhancing perpetrator behaviour change offers
- Collaborating with private landlords to co-design a survivor-focused housing scheme
- Recognising that many victims need safe, short-term support rather than long-term dependency

These intentions, though still in draft form, signal the Council's commitment to aligning housing strategy with domestic abuse legislation, survivor voice, and local demand.

National data shows 63,580 referrals for domestic abuse safe accommodation were made across England. Most were female adults, with only 3% male and 1% trans or non-binary individuals, highlighting a gap in support for male victims.

Halton received 104 referrals and supported 119 individuals, representing around 0.09% of its population. Of those supported, 92 were female adults, 2 were male, 1 was trans or non-binary, and 24 were children. Nearly 30% came from outside the borough. This suggests Halton's provision primarily supports adult women, with a lower representation of children and male survivors than seen nationally.

Halton reported 34 individuals with additional support requirements. Mental health needs were most common, followed by alcohol and drug support needs. This reflects a need to improve access to trauma-informed and therapeutic services.

Halton currently has 12 refuge bed spaces and no dispersed, specialist, or second-stage accommodation. As a result, 60% of supported individuals were in refuge and 40% received support through sanctuary schemes. These allow victims to remain at home safely through property-based security enhancements.

Halton's average stay in refuge accommodation was approximately four months, longer than the national average. Short stays were more frequent than average, and one-third of lengths of stay were not recorded. A lack of alternative accommodation may be contributing to longer durations and reduced turnover.

Capacity constraints are the leading reason households could not be supported in Halton, accounting for 81% of the 57 cases, more than double the national rate. Only one case was recorded as 'unmet need', likely suppressed due to small numbers.

Of the 38 households that exited support, 60.5% moved on in a planned way. However, 36.8% returned to live with the perpetrator, compared with just 3.5% nationally. This is a significant safeguarding concern and may indicate challenges related to coercive control, lack of stable housing options, or insufficient follow-up support. Halton also had a higher-than-average rate of eviction or 'asked to leave' cases.

Despite limited accommodation types, Halton has delivered inclusive specialist services and demonstrates strong data recording. However, the borough would benefit from expanded housing options, increased therapeutic provision, and better pathways for families and male survivors.

Domestic Abuse-Related Death Reviews

Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDRs) investigate deaths of individuals aged 16 or over linked to violence or abuse by family or household members, including suicides, to learn lessons and improve victim support.

Between April 2023 and March 2024, England and Wales recorded 262 domestic abuse-related deaths, including 98 suspected suicides and 80 intimate partner

homicides. For the second year, suicides exceeded partner homicides, showing improved awareness of the abuse-suicide link.⁷

From 2020 to 2024, there were 1,012 such deaths, with victims mostly female and suspects predominantly male, many with mental health and substance misuse issues. Sharp instruments caused nearly half of homicides, and most suspects had prior domestic abuse police records.

Halton has had no confirmed domestic abuse-related deaths since 2014, but remains prepared to conduct DARDs if needed.

Halton's Domestic Abuse Service Research

Halton Borough Council conducted a qualitative study involving surveys and a 'pinpoint' focus group with service providers to better understand domestic abuse support needs in the area.

Key Findings - Service Providers:

- **Strong IDVA Engagement:** IDVA services were praised for responsiveness, communication, and partnership working, particularly in MARAC and with housing teams
- **Support Gaps:** There are significant service gaps for LGBTQ+, deaf, ethnic minority, and low-to-medium risk victims
- **Service Navigation Issues:** Many providers lack up-to-date information on available services, highlighting the need for a central service directory
- **Legal & Court Support Overstretched:** Victims often lack legal advocacy; court delays and poor follow-up are common
- **Housing Strain:** While housing teams are collaborative, refuge access is limited, and temporary solutions like hotels are inadequate
- **Insufficient Support for Children:** Limited local provision for children affected by trauma; more play therapy and specialist staff needed
- **Mental Health Access Difficult:** Support is inconsistent, with long waits and over-reliance on signposting
- **Training Needs:** Staff in other services raised the need for better training in trauma-informed practice, legal processes, and support for marginalised groups
- **Systemic Challenges:** High caseloads, communication issues (especially from Children's Social Care), and fragmented agency coordination persist
- **Recommendations:** Include creating a service portal, improving support for mid-risk victims, expanding trauma services, and boosting IDVA capacity

Key Findings - Service Users:

- **Awareness & Access:** Many victims are unaware of local services; most found help only through self-directed searches
- **Positive Experiences:** IDVA team and Women's Centre received strong praise for empathetic, consistent support
- **Negative Experiences:** Users reported poor follow-up, misjudgement by professionals, and fragmented services, especially post-court

⁷ Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) (2025) *Domestic Homicide Project*.
<https://www.vkpp.org.uk/vkpp-work/domestic-homicide-project/>

- **Housing Barriers:** Many experienced homelessness or poor support from housing services; safety measures were inconsistently applied
- **Children Lacking Support:** Services for affected children are limited; schools vary in response effectiveness
- **Justice System Frustration:** Delays, lack of updates, and confusing processes undermine confidence in legal protection
- **Health/Mental Health Support:** Mixed experiences - some accessed helpful referrals, others felt abandoned
- **Inclusion Issues:** Male, LGBTQ+, and older victims reported feeling excluded or unsupported by current services

While Halton demonstrates strengths in IDVA support and multi-agency collaboration, critical service gaps remain - particularly for marginalised groups, children, and victims with complex needs. Consistent communication, better service mapping, legal advocacy, trauma-informed approaches, and inclusive provision are essential for system improvement.

Halton Housing Needs Assessment Research

The Council also recently undertook a Housing Needs Assessment. During this assessment, feedback was also sought from staff working within the Domestic Abuse Team in Halton and other relevant Housing officers. They shared the following:

- Professionals believe domestic abuse is one of the most significant challenges in Halton. The true scale is not fully understood, particularly for those sofa surfing or staying with family and friends
- The emergency accommodation is not fit for purpose. It is widely known, lacks privacy, and its gender blind model is seen as unsuitable. People with complex needs are often excluded. A new multi-bedroom refuge is required
- Older people experiencing abuse face limited options, especially if they require ground-floor accommodation
- The sanctuary scheme is valued, but officers noted inconsistency in provision across the social housing sector. A clear service standard is needed
- There is strong support for keeping families in their homes and removing the perpetrator where safe and appropriate. However, resources to support perpetrators are currently limited
- Many victims do not require long-term support but do need safe, short-term accommodation to plan their next steps
- There is a shortfall of move-on accommodation, and survivors are not consistently prioritised in line with the legal duty
- Stronger engagement with local landlords is needed to expand housing support schemes

Citizens Advice Halton Study

In early 2025, Citizens Advice Halton⁸ conducted qualitative research with women in Halton who had experienced domestic abuse. Their findings offer critical insight into the barriers survivors face and what they need from services. This lived-experience evidence aligns closely with broader strategic priorities in the borough.

Survivors identified six main barriers to receiving support:

- **Lack of awareness** of what abuse is and what help exists
- **Fear of retaliation**, particularly relating to safety, housing, or children
- **Distrust of services**, especially statutory bodies, due to fear of judgment or child removal
- **Services not meeting needs**, being too impersonal, fragmented, or culturally inappropriate
- **Lack of diversity** in services, with minority and LGBTQ+ survivors feeling unseen or excluded
- **Perception of loss** when leaving - home, stability, community, and financial security

Survivors described an ideal domestic abuse service as:

- Empathetic and validating, where being believed matters
- Offering a single point of contact for consistency and trust
- Providing practical support with housing, benefits, court forms, and home safety
- Delivering timely responses, ideally same-day
- Built as “by and for” services, with lived experience and cultural understanding embedded

Recommendations from Citizens Advice Halton for how to improve Halton’s Domestic Abuse support offer:

1. Proactively ask about abuse in all frontline settings
2. Develop a multi-agency one-stop hub for coordinated support
3. Raise local awareness of what abuse looks like
4. Improve signposting and visibility of help
5. Expand support for those below IDVA thresholds
6. Commission inclusive, survivor-led services that reflect Halton’s diversity

These findings and recommendations provide a strong case for survivor-informed, timely, and inclusive support pathways, aligned with trauma-informed practice and long-term recovery goals.

Recommendations

Summary of recommendations:

1. Create a Centralised, Up-to-Date Domestic Abuse Service Directory (webpage and poss. Print version – IN PROGRESS)
2. Expand Support for Low- and Medium-Risk Victims

⁸ Citizens Advice Halton (2025) *Domestic Abuse: Community Research Report - Lived Experiences of Survivors in Halton*.

<https://haltoncab.org.uk/research-and-campaigns/>

3. Increase Capacity and Longevity of the IDVA Service
4. Improve Court, Legal, and Criminal Justice Navigation
5. Address Housing and Accommodation Gaps – Also in new Housing Strategy
6. Strengthen Support for Children and Young People
7. Improve Support for Marginalised and Underserved Groups
8. Enhance Inter-Agency Coordination and Communication
9. Improve Mental Health and Wellbeing Access
10. Provide Long-Term Recovery and Empowerment Options
11. Strengthen Interventions for Perpetrators and Expand Child-to-Parent Abuse Response
12. Tackle Workplace Domestic Abuse
13. Strengthen Future Needs Assessments

Glossary

This glossary provides definitions for acronyms used throughout the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment to support understanding across professional and community audiences.

CPVA: Child to Parent Violence and Abuse

CSEW: Crime Survey for England and Wales

CSP: Community Safety Partnership

CSC: Children's Social Care

DA: Domestic Abuse

DAHA: Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance

DAP: Domestic Abuse Partnership

DARDR: Domestic Abuse Related Death Review

DHR: Domestic Homicide Review (previous name for DARDR, see above)

DLUHC: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

HDAP: Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership

IDVA: Independent Domestic Violence Advisor, a specialist professional who supports victims at high risk of harm, offering safety planning, advocacy and emotional support

IPH: Intimate Partner Homicides

IPV: Intimate Partner Violence

LGBTQ+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/ Questioning and other identities

LPUs: Local Policing Units

MARAC: Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference

MHCLG: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

NEET: Not in Education, Employment or Training

NFS: Non-fatal strangulation, a form of physical abuse now recognised in UK law as a standalone offence under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

NHS: National Health Service

NPCC: National Police Chiefs' Council

NSPCC: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

ONS: Office for National Statistics

PCC: Police and Crime Commissioner

PTSD: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

RSHE: Relationships, Sex and Health Education

SHP: Safer Halton Partnership

SVSDA: Suspected Victim Suicides following Domestic Abuse

VAWG: Violence Against Women and Girls

Introduction

This needs assessment seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of the nature and extent of domestic abuse in Halton. Its findings will support Halton Borough Council in planning, delivering, and commissioning domestic abuse services. By identifying gaps in provision, the assessment will help the Council and its partners allocate limited resources more strategically, focusing on the individuals, communities and areas most in need.

The assessment will:

- Examine relevant national policies and legislative frameworks
- Outline Halton's current approach to tackling domestic abuse
- Analyse national data and research on domestic abuse prevalence
 - Review local data to assess the scale and characteristics of domestic abuse in Halton
- Gather insights from local service providers and stakeholders
- Present a set of evidence-based recommendations

Halton's Vision

Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy 2011 – 2026 sets out that the vision of all partners is that:

"Halton will be a thriving and vibrant borough where people can learn and develop their skills; enjoy a good quality of life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment, the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality; sustained by a thriving business community; and safer, stronger and more attractive neighbourhoods."

Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029:

Priority 1: Improving health, promoting wellbeing and supporting greater independence

Priority 2: Building a strong, sustainable local economy

Priority 3: Supporting children, young people and families

Priority 4: Tackling inequality and helping those who are most in need

Priority 5: Working towards a greener future

Priority 6: Valuing and appreciating Halton and our community

The Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership's Vision:

"We have listened to our local survivors, their children and working together have designed a clear pathway to the Partnership to ensure that we are and continue to be service user-led. Halton has a long-established multi-agency partnership ethos. We recognise that no one agency can end domestic abuse, and we will continue to

work in collaboration and challenge agencies to ensure that Halton intervention models are based on best practice, evidence and robust evaluation. No one should live in fear, especially in a domestic setting... Halton aims to create safer homes, safer communities and a safer society, benefiting all of our residents, reducing fear and harm experienced by those affected by domestic abuse.”

Progress Since 2021

- **Integration of Services for Stronger Collaboration:**
In 2023, Halton’s Domestic Abuse Service was brought in-house and relocated to the Municipal Building in Widnes. This move has strengthened delivery, partnership, collaboration and increased interaction with the Council’s Community Safety Team
- **Housing Needs Considered Through a Domestic Abuse Lens:**
In 2024, the Council commissioned a comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment, which included an estimate of the local need for safe accommodation for those experiencing domestic abuse. This ensures housing strategies are better informed and responsive to the statute, which sets out requirements for emergency, step-down supported and dispersed accommodation for domestic abuse victims and children
- **Enhanced Data Collection and Monitoring:**
A new domestic abuse data dashboard was developed in 2024, providing clearer insights into service demand and outcomes and helping to drive data-led improvements
- **Increased Focus on Perpetrator Interventions:**
Progress has been made in understanding and addressing perpetrator behaviour. The Council now provides a perpetrator offer with the delivery of the ‘Choices’ programme with additional provision offered through *MyCWA*, funded by the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, and ‘Remedi’, which includes an offer for those who harm under the age of 16
- **White Ribbon Accreditation:**
Halton achieved White Ribbon accreditation in 2024, reflecting its commitment to ending male violence against women. This included establishing a cross-departmental steering group, appointing champions and ambassadors, and launching awareness-raising activities
- **Improved Domestic Abuse Awareness in Primary Care:**
The commissioning of the IRIS programme in 2024/25 helped raise awareness of domestic abuse across Halton’s GP practices. The project introduced a specialist referral pathway and strengthened links between healthcare and support services
- **Stronger Police-Based Presence in Halton:**
There is now a dedicated Domestic Violence Advocate (DVA) for Halton, working closely with Cheshire Police to strengthen early intervention and improve the response to domestic abuse. The PCC office has invested heavily and has an area of focus on tackling domestic abuse. The response to the Serious Violence Duty has seen a programme on serial domestic abuse

perpetrators and investment in a whole system approach for harm reduction in a domestic abuse pilot

- **Improved Access to Support Online:**
Work is underway to launch a new domestic abuse webpage featuring enhanced information on local services and support. There has also been a focus on information and access to services with family hubs and Police Officer
- information to share at the point of contact
- **New Public Awareness Materials:**
Posters and information cards are currently being developed for distribution across the borough, making it easier for individuals to access help
- **Self-Referral Form Introduced:**
A new online self-referral form has been added to the Council's website, making it easier for survivors to reach out for support, advice, and services directly
- **Support for Children Affected by Domestic Abuse:**
The Children's Society's *Resolve* service has been commissioned in Halton, recognising children and young people as victims in their own right and providing specialist support
- **Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership Board Reset:**
The Board was reviewed and reset to ensure delivery of statutory duties and strategic requirements. The Board is currently in progress of establishing several subgroups to provide extra support, and also is expanding its membership to include representation from more third sector and commission partners, and lived experience through including domestic abuse survivors
- **MARAC Improvements:**
Halton is actively working to enhance its MARAC practices, including a MARAC review, plans to establish a dedicated Steering Group, and will be participating in a shadowing program with another local authority recognised for its exemplary MARAC model.

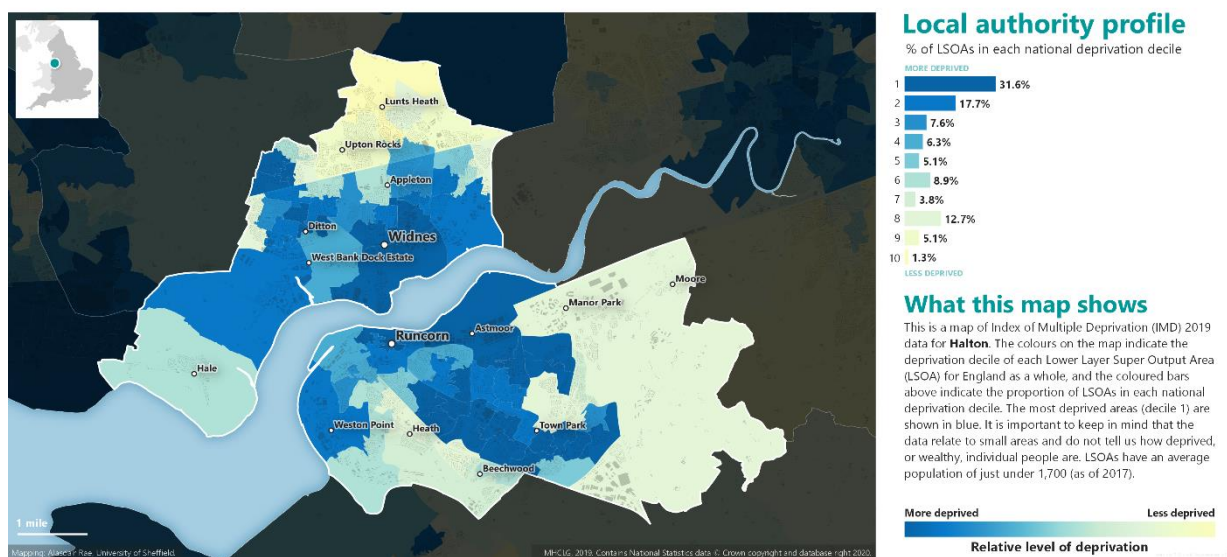
Borough Profile

Halton is a unitary authority (formed in 1998), and a largely urban area when compared to other areas of Cheshire. It covers the towns of Runcorn and Widnes, and the parishes of Daresbury, Hale and Preston Brook, serving a population of 128,478 and approximately 58,000 households (based on the 2021 census and Halton's Housing Strategy data). Halton is the 23rd most deprived local authority in the country, with 30% of households living in the top 10% of most deprived areas in the country. The 5 most deprived wards in Halton are Halton Lea, Central & West Bank, Halton Castle, Grange and Norton South & Preston Brook.

Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019



HALTON



Halton shares many of the social, economic and crime/Anti-Social Behaviour issues more associated with its urban neighbours in Merseyside, and has been part of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority since 2014. The environment acts as a contributory factor to the abuse and violence seen in Halton.

The 0-15 years cohort has increased by 1.3% in the last ten years, ages 16-64 have decreased by 3% and, most significantly, the 65+ age group has increased by some 29.3%. The rise in over-65s signals a growing need for age-appropriate domestic abuse services, particularly accessible housing and outreach. Significantly, the proportion of primary-aged children eligible for free school meals is the 11th highest in the country, and for secondary schools, Halton is the 10th highest.

The average life expectancy is 77.1 years for males and 80.5 years for females, both below the England averages of 78.8 and 82.8 years. Health outcomes present a challenge in the borough with cancer, cardiovascular, respiratory and liver disease being higher than the national average, and poor mental health a prominent feature in our communities.

Halton has a very stable community, with a low level of outward migration, which is more or less the same as those migrating into Halton. 96.5% of the population is white, with only 4.8% of the population being born outside of the UK. The main language spoken is English at 97.3%.

23% of Halton's population aged 16-65 are claiming Universal Credit, compared to a national average of 17.9%. There is also a much higher proportion of 16 and 17-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), at 5.5% compared to 3.2% (England). The unemployment rate has reduced to just 3.2% for individuals aged 16 or over, which is lower than the national average of 3.7%; however, there is a higher rate of economic activity (25.9%) than the national average (21.1%). People are classed as 'economically inactive' if they are not in employment, but don't meet the criteria for being 'unemployed'. Common reasons include being retired, looking after

the home or family, or being temporarily or long-term sick and disabled. High levels of economic inactivity may increase vulnerability to abuse and create barriers to leaving perpetrators.

The Impact of Domestic Abuse

The CSEW⁹ for the year ending March 2025 estimated that 3.8 million people aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the last year. Domestic abuse remains an underreported crime. In the same period, police recorded 815,941 million domestic abuse-related offences. The National Centre for Domestic Violence¹⁰ estimates that just under a quarter (24%) of domestic abuse-related crime is reported to the police.

Domestic abuse is a gendered crime. The CSEW estimated that 2.3 million women and 1.5 million men experienced domestic abuse in the previous year. A significantly higher proportion of women were victims of each of the overarching types of abuse than men.

Halton recognises that being subjected to Domestic Abuse can have a considerable impact on the health and well-being of an individual, for their children and for others such as family and friends who try and help. The direct immediate impact may include cuts, bruises, broken bones, lost teeth and hair, sight and hearing damage, as well as miscarriage, stillbirth, complications of pregnancy, and homicide of victims and children.

The results of domestic abuse can be long-lasting and may cause or worsen other chronic health issues, and stress-related conditions, including asthma, epilepsy, digestive problems, migraine, hypertension, fibromyalgia and skin disorders. Domestic abuse has a significant effect on an individual's emotional, psychological and mental wellbeing and can lead to anxiety, depression, PTSD and suicide, and can be associated with psychosomatic symptoms such as numbness, shaking, nervous twitching, cramps and paralysis. It may also lead to feelings of isolation, worthlessness and dependency on the perpetrator, as well as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and sleeping and eating disorders.

Those affected by domestic abuse are at greater risk of increased use of alcohol, drugs and other substances used as a coping mechanism. Domestic abuse can also lead to an individual having to take time off work and from caring responsibilities, and can lead to homelessness.

The psychological impact of domestic abuse can be so severe that it leads to suicidal ideation and attempts. The Domestic Homicide Project found that there were 98 suspected victim suicides following domestic abuse in the year ending March

⁹ Office for National Statistics (2025) *Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2025*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2025#domestic-abuse>

¹⁰ National Centre for Domestic Violence (n.d.) *Domestic Abuse Statistics UK*.

<https://www.ncdv.org.uk/domestic-abuse-statistics-uk/>

2024¹¹, which is likely an underestimate, as a previous Refuge report found that 24% of its service users had felt suicidal at least at one point.¹²

The health of children affected by domestic abuse is also likely to have been seriously compromised from witnessing abuse, and also in many cases from abuse that they may have suffered. Prior experiences of physical and psychological trauma may also make them less likely to seek help in the future.

Inequalities

Domestic abuse rarely occurs in isolation and is often shaped by complex, overlapping factors. In Halton, socioeconomic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and long-term illness or disability can heighten vulnerability and make it harder for victims to seek safety or change their circumstances. Understanding these interlinked issues is vital to developing preventive and person-centred approaches that address root causes as well as immediate harm.

Women in poverty are much more likely to experience almost every type of violence and abuse, at rates which are generally twice as high as those of other women. Women in poverty are twice as likely as other women to have been raped either as children or adults.¹³ Victims who are homeless are vulnerable to being further targeted by perpetrators of both physical and sexual abuse, and the risk of homelessness for an individual and their children can prevent a victim from leaving a home shared with a perpetrator.¹⁴

Victims from ethnic minority backgrounds may face multiple and additional barriers when trying to escape domestic abuse, and may remain in abusive situations for longer before reporting. These barriers can be understood as the result of 'intersectional discrimination' whereby cultural and structural inequalities overlap and multiply to hinder women's ability to seek help. They may not report abuse to the police or public services due to a lack of trust, racism and cultural insensitivity, language barriers and possible limited understanding of the law and their rights, or for fears surrounding immigration and deportation.¹⁵

Pregnant women may be more vulnerable to domestic abuse. In 2023, the NHS estimated that one in three pregnant women experiences domestic abuse¹⁶. Abuse

¹¹ **Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme** (n.d.) *Domestic Homicide Project*.

<https://www.vkpp.org.uk/vkpp-work/domestic-homicide-project/>

¹² **Aitken, R and Munro, V.** (2018) *Domestic Abuse and Suicide: Exploring the Links with Refuge's Client Base and Work Force*.

<https://www.refuge.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/domestic-abuse-suicide-refuge-warwick-july2018.pdf>

¹³ **Agenda** (2016) *Joining the Dots: The combined burden of violence, abuse and poverty in the lives of women*.

https://www.agendaalliance.org/documents/121/Joining_The_Dots_Report.pdf

¹⁴ **Home Office** (2022) *Domestic Abuse: Statutory Guidance*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-act-2021/domestic-abuse-statutory-guidance-accessible-version>

¹⁵ **Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services** (2024) *Minoritised Ethnic Women's Experiences of Domestic Abuse and Barriers to Help-Seeking: A Summary of the Evidence*.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/minoritised-ethnic-womens-experiences-domestic-abuse-barriers-help-seeking-summary-evidence>

¹⁶ **House of Commons Library** (2021) *The Role of Healthcare Services in Addressing Domestic Abuse*.

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9233/>

often begins or escalates during pregnancy, putting both the adult victim and unborn child at risk.

Those with a long-term illness or disability are more than twice as likely (11.7%) to experience domestic abuse. Sign Health reported that deaf women are at twice the risk of being abused.¹⁷ The need for specialist services can also make accessing effective support more difficult.

There are many similarities between heterosexual and LGBTQ+ people's experiences of domestic abuse. However, LGBTQ+ victims may also experience abuse of power and control closely associated with having their sexuality, gender identity or gender reassignment used against them. LGBTQ+ victims can experience distinct personal and structural barriers in reporting abuse and accessing services.

Health

Domestic abuse can have significant physical health consequences. Victims often sustain injuries like bruises and fractures. Prolonged exposure to abuse may cause chronic pain, headaches, digestive problems, and a decline in overall health. Additionally, abuse can lead to issues such as unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and pregnancy-related complications.

Physical abuse may include non-fatal strangulation (NFS), which perpetrators of domestic abuse can use to control and intimidate victims. Despite the strong link between NFS and domestic homicide, it can be difficult to evidence due to a lack of visible injury. Between July 2022 and June 2023, approximately 700 offenders were sentenced for non-fatal strangulation or suffocation offences in England and Wales. This offence was introduced in 2022 under section 75A of the Serious Crime Act 2015, as part of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The number of offenders sentenced increased each quarter, with a notable rise in the proportion of cases heard in the Crown Court, from 25% in July-September 2022 to 76% in April-June 2023. The majority of these offenders were male, and the most common sentence was an immediate custodial sentence, averaging around 17 months.¹⁸

The mental health effects of domestic abuse can be profound. Victims are at a higher risk of developing depression and anxiety disorders, and many go on to experience Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Perpetrators frequently isolate victims from their social networks, leading to feelings of loneliness and social withdrawal. Prolonged abuse can also severely impact a victim's self-esteem and sense of self-worth.¹⁹

The Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey²⁰ found that 75% of women experiencing extensive physical and sexual violence were not receiving medication or counselling

¹⁷ **SignHealth** (2025) *Domestic Abuse Service – Information for professionals*.
<https://signhealth.org.uk/for-professionals/domestic-abuse-service/>

¹⁸ **Sentencing Council** (2023) *Non-fatal strangulation and suffocation - Statistical bulletin - Sentencing*.
<https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/html-publication/item/non-fatal-strangulation-and-suffocation-statistical-bulletin/>

¹⁹ **Anxious Minds** (n.d.) *How Domestic Violence Affects Mental Health*.
<https://www.anxiousminds.co.uk/how-domestic-violence-affects-mental-health/>

²⁰ **NHS Digital** (2021) *Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey: Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, England, 2014*.

for mental health problems, despite clear signs of severe mental ill health. Additionally, 36% of women in this group had attempted suicide. These women were also more than twice as likely to misuse alcohol, often as a way to cope, and eight times more likely to be dependent on drugs compared to women with little experience of violence and abuse.

Victims of domestic abuse frequently face homelessness and financial instability as they try to leave their abusers. These challenges can have a significant impact on both their physical health and mental well-being.

Male Victims

The CSEW²¹ estimated that in the year ending March 2025, there were around 1.5 million male victims of domestic abuse. Despite this, only 4.8 per cent of those accessing support from local domestic abuse services in England and Wales are men. Between a third to a quarter of stalking victims are male, and men who experience partner abuse are more likely to attempt suicide. The ManKind Initiative estimates that between three and five men die by suicide each week as a result of domestic abuse.²²

The risk increases significantly for LGBTQ+ men. For example, the percentage of gay men (6%) or bisexual men (7.3%) who suffered domestic abuse in 2019/20 was more than for heterosexual men (3.5%).²³

Male victims of partner abuse are much less likely to disclose their experiences, often as a result of social stigma. Research from the ManKind Initiative reveals that 58.9% of men who contact their helpline have never previously spoken to anyone about the abuse they endure, and 64% indicate that they would not have sought help if the service were not anonymous. Among these men, 98% report experiencing psychological abuse, 82% experience coercive controlling behaviour, 69% suffer physical abuse, and 29% face economic abuse.²⁴

However, the rate of male survivors disclosing partner abuse has significantly improved. In the year ending March 2023, only 21% of male victims reported not telling anyone about their experiences - a marked decline from 49% in 2017/18. Among female victims, the figures were 18.2% in 2022/23 compared to 19% in 2017/18.

As of February 2025, there were 60 organisations in the UK offering 436 refuge or safe accommodation spaces for men, 128 were exclusively for men, and 308 were mixed-use. The median provision per organisation is five spaces. Halton does not

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/adult-psychiatric-morbidity-survey/adult-psychiatric-morbidity-survey-survey-of-mental-health-and-wellbeing-england-2014>

²¹ **Office for National Statistics** (2025) *Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2025*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2025>

²² **ManKind Initiative** (2023) *4 Key Facts on Male Victims of Domestic Abuse 2023*

<https://mankind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/4-Key-Facts-on-Male-Victims-of-Domestic-Abuse-2023-final-June-2023-revised.pdf>

²³ **Home Office** (2022) *Supporting male victims*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-male-victims/supporting-male-victims-accessible>

²⁴ **ManKind Initiative** (2025) *Statistics on Male Victims of Domestic Abuse*.

<https://mankind.org.uk/statistics/statistics-on-male-victims-of-domestic-abuse/>

currently offer any spaces exclusively for men; their refuge accommodation is available for all genders.

Children

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children are recognised as victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear or are otherwise impacted by the abuse, and are either related to or fall under the parental responsibility of the victim and/or perpetrator. This means a child may be considered a victim when, for example, one parent abuses the other, or when a parent is abused by or abuses a partner or relative.

Estimates from the Office for National Statistics show that between 2017 and 2019, 19.3% of children aged 10–15 (approximately 751,000) lived in households where an adult reported experiencing domestic abuse in the previous year, revising earlier estimates of approximately 7%.²⁵ Additional data from the NSPCC shows that between April and September 2024, there were 3,879 contacts to their helpline concerning children affected by domestic abuse - a 19% increase compared to the previous year.

In the year ending March 2023, around 32.4% of adults aged 16 to 59 who reported experiencing partner abuse were living in a household where at least one child under the age of 16 was present. Of those, 28.1% of victims reported that the child had seen or heard the abuse during the most recent incident.²⁶

A review by SafeLives found that nearly all children (97%) living in households affected by domestic abuse were exposed to the abuse. Among these children, about two-thirds experienced direct harm, including physical or emotional abuse, or neglect. More than half of the exposed children exhibited behavioural problems or felt responsible for negative events, with these effects potentially persisting into adulthood. Additionally, difficulties with school adjustment were identified in over one-third of cases.²⁷

The NSPCC reported²⁸ that witnessing domestic abuse can have many impacts on children's behaviour and mental health, and signs that a child has experienced domestic abuse can include:

- Aggression or bullying
- Anti-social behaviour
- Anxiety, depression or suicidal thoughts
- Attention seeking
- Bed-wetting, nightmares or insomnia
- Constant or regular sickness, like colds, headaches and mouth ulcers

²⁵ **Office for National Statistics** (2020) *Children Vulnerability to Victimisation in England and Wales: Year Ending March 2017 to Year Ending March 2019*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/childhoodvulnerabilitytovictimisationinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2017toyearendingmarch2019>

²⁶ **Office for National Statistics** (2023) *Partner abuse in detail, England and Wales: year ending March 2023*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/partnerabuseindetailenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2023>

²⁷ **SafeLives** (2014) *In Plain Sight: The Evidence from Children Exposed to Domestic Abuse*.

<https://safelives.org.uk/research-policy-library/in-plain-sight/>

²⁸ **NSPCC** (ND) *Domestic Abuse*.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/domestic-abuse/#signs>

- Drug or alcohol use
- Eating disorders
- Problems in school or trouble learning
- Tantrums
- Withdrawal

Experiencing domestic abuse in childhood or adolescence has been shown to increase the likelihood of experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse later in life.²⁹

In 2024/5, 33% of Halton's domestic abuse referrals involved children, with support being offered by both the Domestic Abuse Service and Children's Services. In 2023, Halton commissioned the Resolve Service through The Children's Society to provide specialist emotional and practical support for children and young people aged 5 -18 (or up to 25 with additional needs) who have been affected by domestic abuse. The service offers up to 12 one-to-one sessions tailored to each child's needs, focusing on safety planning, building resilience, and understanding healthy relationships. It also delivers the Gateway programme for parents, helping them recognise the effects of abuse on their children and how best to support them. A whole-family approach is central to the service, with an emphasis on hearing and prioritising the child's voice throughout.

Between July and September 2023, Resolve received 30 referrals. Of these, 22 children engaged in face-to-face support, and 20 parents participated in the Gateway programme. Only 2 cases were considered out of scope. In addition to direct support, Resolve also works alongside professionals in social care, particularly during pre-court proceedings, to help ensure decision-making is informed by the child's emotional well-being and safety. The service reflects a strong commitment to early intervention and trauma-informed care within the Halton area.

Young people can also be victims in their own relationships. Although it is often under-recognised, teenage relationship abuse can include emotional manipulation, physical violence, sexual coercion, and digital abuse. One of the challenges is that teenagers may not identify their experiences as abusive, especially in relationships that are short-term or perceived as casual. As many data sources only include information for those aged 16 and over in relation to domestic abuse, it can be a hidden problem. A 2025 Youth Endowment Fund³⁰ survey of 10,000 13-17 year olds in England and Wales found that:

- 49% of teens in relationships experienced violent or controlling behaviour
- 20% had been forced or pressured into sexual activity
- 17% had intimate images shared without consent
- 27% felt afraid to disagree with their partner
- 26% felt afraid to break up with their partner
- 27% saw or experienced online sexual violence (e.g. threats of sexual assault or non-consensual images)

²⁹ Costa, B. M, et al (2016) *Longitudinal Predictors of Domestic Violence Perpetration and Victimisation: A Systemic Review*.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1359178915000828>

³⁰ Youth Endowment Fund (2024) *Children, Violence and Vulnerability report*.

<https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/news/half-of-teens-in-relationships-suffer-violence-or-controlling-behaviour-reveals-new-repor>

- 33% had encountered content promoting violence against women and girls

Certain vulnerable groups were at significantly higher risk, including teenagers involved in gangs, children with special educational needs and those excluded from school.

Experiencing abuse during adolescence is especially harmful, as it occurs at a critical stage of emotional and psychological development. During this transitional period between childhood and adulthood, young people may struggle to make sense of their experiences, form healthy relationships, or seek help. Their ability to disclose abuse is often shaped by fear, shame, or uncertainty about whether their situation will be taken seriously.

Halton offers support for perpetrators under the age of 16 through their PCC-funded Remedi offer, and their domestic abuse support is available for all ages through their Domestic Abuse team and Children's Services. Through new campaigns, Halton hopes to raise awareness of domestic abuse for teenagers by sharing posters and cards in local colleges, and by offering more tailored support and information on their website.

Wider Economic Impact

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner estimates that domestic abuse has an economic and social cost of around £85 billion in England and Wales each year (based on the Home Office figure of £66 billion in 2019).³¹ As an economic analysis commissioned by Women's Aid shows, for every pound invested in domestic abuse support services, we will see a saving to the public purse of at least £9.³² Early intervention, support services and perpetrator programmes are key to reducing long-term costs.

Examples of costs incurred by domestic violence include:

- **Healthcare Costs:** Victims often require medical treatment for physical injuries and mental health conditions, including use of the NHS and emergency services
- **Criminal Justice System:** Costs include policing, prosecution, legal aid, courts and imprisonment related to domestic abuse
- **Housing and Social Services:** Victims may need emergency accommodation or refuge services, as well as additional security on existing housing
- **Lost Economic Output:** Victims may miss work, reduce hours, or lose jobs entirely. Abusers may also experience job loss or legal consequences affecting their employability
- **Impact on Children:** Children exposed to domestic abuse are more likely to require educational support, mental health services and can be at increased risk of entering the criminal justice system

³¹ **Domestic Abuse Commissioner** (2025) *Written Evidence Submitted by The Domestic Abuse Commissioner*. <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/138343/pdf>

³² **Women's Aid** (2023) *Investing to Save: The Economic Case for Funding Domestic Abuse Support*. <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/investing-to-save-report>

Overview of Abuse Types

At the national level, our analysis primarily draws on data from the police, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). These sources typically categorise domestic abuse into the following types:

- Non-sexual abuse by a partner or family member, including physical force, threats and emotional or financial abuse
- Sexual assault and attempted sexual assault
- Stalking, including domestic and non-domestic
- Coercive control

Halton recognises the following behaviours as types of abuse related to domestic abuse, which include all those outlined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021:

- Physical abuse
- Isolation
- Verbal abuse
- Threatening behaviour
- Emotional and psychological abuse
- Economic and financial abuse
- False allegations
- Stalking
- Sexual abuse
- Online abuse
- Coercive and controlling behaviour

According to the latest CSEW for the year ending March 2025, 7.8% of people aged 16 and over experienced domestic abuse in the past year. This includes 6.1% who experienced partner abuse and 2.7% who experienced abuse by a family member. Emotional abuse was the most common form, affecting 5.0%, followed by economic abuse (2.7%), threats (2.6%), and physical abuse (1.3%).

Domestic stalking was reported by 2.2%, with 1.7% stalked by a partner or ex-partner and 0.7% by a family member. Domestic sexual assault affected 1.6%, including 1.5% at the hands of a partner or ex-partner and 0.1% by a family member.

Since the age of 16, 20.5% of people are estimated to have experienced some form of domestic abuse, although the survey did not disaggregate lifetime figures by perpetrator type. Some individuals may have experienced abuse from both partners and family members during their lifetime.³³

The data available from the police, CSEW and ONS can be limited. Police data can be underreported as it only includes crimes, CSEW relies on self-reporting and ONS

³³ **Office for National Statistics** (2025) *Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2025*.
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2025>

data can be subject to definitional and method changes, which can skew data year on year.

Intimate Partner Abuse

Domestic abuse most commonly occurs in intimate partner relationships, but it is not limited to marriages, civil partnerships, or cohabiting couples. Abuse can take place between current or former partners, regardless of marital or living status. Intimate partner abuse is often characterised by patterns of coercive control, where one partner seeks to dominate the other through emotional, psychological, financial, or physical tactics.

Abuse often persists or intensifies after separation, as perpetrators may feel a loss of control, increasing the risk to the victim's physical and emotional safety. Separation is now widely recognised as a high-risk period, particularly in cases involving coercive control and stalking. Most domestic murders occur in the first 6 months of a relationship ending, making this the most dangerous time for anyone trying to escape an abusive relationship.³⁴

Intimate partner abuse affects people across all genders, sexual orientations, and relationship types, including same-sex relationships and non-cohabiting dating couples, highlighting that abuse transcends traditional partnership models. Victims may also face intersecting challenges related to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, or immigration status, which can create additional barriers to seeking support and safety.

Young people can be particularly vulnerable to domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships. Despite growing awareness, abuse among teenagers often goes unrecognised, both by the victims themselves and by those around them. Such abuse may take the form of emotional manipulation, physical violence, sexual coercion, or digital control, including harassment through social media, messaging apps, GPS tracking, or non-consensual sharing of images. Technology has introduced new avenues for abuse that may be especially prevalent in intimate partner relationships.

Furthermore, the impacts of intimate partner abuse often extend beyond the individuals involved, affecting children, extended family members, and wider communities, with profound social and psychological consequences.

Family Abuse (including CPVA and honour-based abuse)

Abuse within family settings extends beyond intimate partnerships and can involve harmful behaviours perpetrated by family members against other relatives. Such abuse encompasses a wide range of actions, including physical or sexual abuse, 'honour'-based violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), reproductive coercion, forced abortion, and other culturally or socially motivated harmful practices. These forms of abuse are often driven by attempts to control or 'protect' the perceived honour of an individual, family, or community, enforcing strict adherence to codes of behaviour.³⁵

³⁴ **Independent Domestic Abuse Services (IDAS)** (n.d.) *Post-separation abuse*.
<https://idas.org.uk/16-days/post-separation-abuse/>

³⁵ **HM Government** (2019) *Multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation*.

Young people may face an elevated risk of abuse from family members, partly due to the complex dynamics of trust and authority within families. For many children and adolescents, it can be difficult to differentiate between acceptable behaviour and abuse, especially when the perpetrator is a caregiver or other trusted adult. Disclosure is often hindered by fear of retaliation, lack of safe reporting mechanisms, or concern about disrupting family relationships. Research from Galop indicates that young people who identify as LGBTQ+ experience disproportionately higher rates of abuse from immediate family members compared to their heterosexual peers, underscoring the intersection of family abuse with issues of identity and acceptance. The most common perpetrators of domestic abuse against LGBTQ+ people were parents, mothers (45%) and fathers (41%).³⁶

A significant and growing concern within family abuse is Child-to-Parent Violence and Abuse (CPVA). In 2023/4 the government ran consultation to seek views on a definition of child to parent abuse, as there is currently no agreed definition. Although violence and abuse can be committed by a parent's adult children, CPVA is usually in reference to those aged 10-16, or 18, to avoid cross over with other family abuse, and also applies to harm directed towards a guardian, carer or anyone with a caregiving role. Such behaviour may include verbal humiliation, threats, physical violence, controlling or jealous actions, property damage, theft, and inappropriate sexualised conduct. While some incidents may be isolated, CPVA often manifests as a persistent pattern of abuse. CPVA is predominantly perpetrated by sons against mothers (with single mothers being disproportionately affected); however, both sons and daughters abuse both mothers and fathers.³⁷

The stigma surrounding CPVA contributes to significant underreporting. Parents may hesitate to seek help due to fears of blame, disbelief, or punitive consequences for their child, such as criminalisation or removal from the family home. There is also a lack of research in the UK; there is currently no population-level data on CPVA. As a result, recorded cases likely represent a small fraction of the true prevalence of CPVA nationally.

Halton's Domestic Abuse Service provides support for survivors of family abuse, including parents and caregivers experiencing CPVA, alongside support from Children's Services, and Halton's Remedi programme for those who harm under the age of 16 in conjunction with the PCC office.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is a significant and distressing component of domestic abuse, often hidden behind the broader patterns of physical and emotional violence experienced by victims. Within intimate or familial relationships, sexual abuse can include forced sexual acts, coercion, harassment, and other forms of non-consensual sexual

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-statutory-guidance-on-female-genital-mutilation>

³⁶ Galop (2021) *LGBT+ young people and family abuse*.

[LGBT+ Experiences of Abuse from Family Members | Galop](#)

³⁷ Baker, V., & Bonnick, H. (2021). *Understanding CAPVA: A rapid literature review on child and adolescent to parent violence and abuse for the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Office*.

<https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CAPVA-Rapid-Literature-Review-Exec-Summary-November-2021-Baker-and-Bonnick.pdf>

behaviour. It is a serious violation that compounds the trauma of domestic abuse and can have profound long-term impacts on survivors' physical and mental health.

Halton defines sexual abuse (within a domestic violence context) as:

- Sexual harassment/ pressure, or sexual acts, including with other people
- Forcing sex, including after physical assaults
- Sexually degrading language
- Rape
- Forcing someone to have sex or commit a sexual act against their will
- Unwanted sexual contact and demands
- Forcing involvement in making or watching pornography
- Deliberately hurting someone during sex
- Pressuring someone or tricking someone into having unsafe sex
- Refusing to use, or lying about using, contraception

In England and Wales, sexual abuse within domestic settings is, unfortunately, common. According to the CSEW for the year ending March 2024, 1.6% of adults aged 16 and over experienced sexual assault within a domestic context in the previous 12 months.³⁸ This translates to tens of thousands of individuals subjected to sexual violence by a current or former partner or family member annually. Moreover, over the longer term, the CSEW has shown that a majority of sexual offences, including rape and assault by penetration, are committed by partners or ex-partners. For example, data combining 2017 and 2020 surveys indicate that 44% of rape victims aged 16 to 59 reported their partner or ex-partner as the perpetrator.³⁹

The impact of sexual abuse within domestic abuse can be particularly severe because it violates personal boundaries in the context of a relationship where trust and safety should exist. Survivors often face stigma and may be reluctant to disclose abuse due to fear, shame, or concerns about not being believed, which is sadly exacerbated by poor conviction rates. This underscores the importance of sensitive and accessible support services tailored to the unique challenges faced by those experiencing sexual abuse in domestic settings.

Economic Abuse

In their 2023-2024 Impact Report, Surviving Economic Abuse reported that 4.1 million UK women experienced economic abuse from a current or former partner in the last 12 months, with the rising cost of living coming so soon after the pandemic exacerbating the devastating impact of this form of domestic abuse.⁴⁰

³⁸ **Office for National Statistics** (2025) *Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2025*. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2025>

³⁹ **Office for National Statistics** (2021). *Nature of sexual assault by rape or penetration, England and Wales: Year ending March 2020*. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/natureofsexualassaultbyrapeorpenetrationenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2020>

⁴⁰ **Surviving Economic Abuse** (2024) *Impact Report 2023 – 24*. <https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Surviving-Economic-Abuse-Impact-report-2023-24-December-2024.pdf>

Economic abuse consists of actions that severely undermine a person's ability to access, manage, or maintain financial resources, property, or essential goods and services. These actions often include restriction, exploitation, or deliberate sabotage, such as controlling a person's income, denying access to necessities like food or transport, or accumulating debt in the victim's name. When such behaviour is repeated, affects the victim's everyday life, and occurs between individuals who are personally connected, it may constitute controlling or coercive behaviour under the Serious Crime Act 2015. The law recognises this form of abuse as serious when it causes fear of violence or substantially disrupts daily living.

Halton's Domestic Abuse Partnership Strategy⁴¹ gives the following examples of economic and financial abuse:

- Totally controlling the family income
- Not allowing someone to spend any money unless 'permitted'
- Making someone account for every pound they spends
- Running up huge bills such as credit/store cards in someone else's name
- Purposely defaulting on payments
- Setting up false companies, accounts or credit cards
- Deliberately forcing someone to go back to the family courts as a means of costing them additional legal fees
- Refusing to contribute to household income
- Interfering with or preventing someone from regularising their immigration status, so they are dependent on the perpetrator
- Preventing someone from claiming welfare benefits, forcing someone to commit benefit fraud or misappropriating such benefits
- Interfering with someone's education, training or employment
- Not allowing someone access to their mobile phone/ car/ utilities
- Damaging someone's property

Economic abuse can lead to financial dependence or instability, which often makes it more difficult for victims to leave abusive relationships and can extend their exposure to harm. In some cases, this abuse continues even after separation. Children may also be affected, potentially facing deprivation or poverty as a consequence. A national survey by Surviving Economic Abuse found that more than half of those experiencing economic abuse fell into debt, with a quarter suffering credit damage or coercive financial control.⁴²

In a Women's Aid study, 52% of female respondents still living with their abuser reported that they could not afford to leave due to having no money of their own. Additionally, nearly one-third of participants in the Women's Aid 2018 Survivor Voice

⁴¹ Halton Borough Council (2025) *Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership Strategy 2025–2026*.

<https://moderngov.halton.gov.uk/documents/s79831/Appendix%201%20DA%20Strategy%2025-26.pdf>

⁴² Surviving Economic Abuse (2024) *Measuring economic abuse: Preliminary findings on the prevalence and impact of economic abuse on women in the UK*.

<https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Measuring-economic-abuse-preliminary-findings-Nov-2024.pdf>

Survey said their access to money was controlled by the perpetrator during the relationship.⁴³

Online Abuse

The Online Safety Act 2023 was enacted to address online harms, including image-based abuse and cyberstalking. The Act simplifies prosecution by removing the need to prove intent to cause distress when sharing intimate images without consent, and also criminalises the creation and sharing of sexually explicit deepfake images without consent.

Halton's Domestic Abuse Partnership Strategy outlines online abuse as:

- Cyberstalking someone
- Placing false and malicious information about someone on their or others' social media
- Trolling someone
- Denying someone access to their own social media platforms or control of their own content
- Revenge porn
- Monitoring or controlling someone's email and phone calls (including work emails and calls)
- Image-based abuse – for example, the non-consensual distribution of private sexual photographs and films with the intent to cause someone distress
- Hacking into, monitoring or controlling someone's email accounts, social media profiles and phone calls
- Use of spyware or GPS locators on items such as someone's phone, computer, wearable technology, car, motorbike, and pets
- Hacking internet-enabled devices such as PlayStations or iPads to gain access to someone's accounts or trace information such as someone's location
- Using personal devices such as smart watches or home devices (e.g. Amazon Alexa) to monitor, control or frighten someone
- Use of hidden cameras

Online harassment is an increasingly common problem, with the ONS reporting that approximately 7% of women and 4% of men have experienced cyberstalking once or more since the age of 16.⁴⁴ Women's Aid also reported that 85% of survivors who experienced online abuse said it was part of a broader pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour, also taking place offline.⁴⁵ In 2023, the Revenge Porn Helpline received nearly 19,000 reports, marking a 106% increase on the previous year.⁴⁶

⁴³ **Women's Aid** (n.d.) *The Impact of Domestic Abuse*.

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/the-impact-of-domestic-abuse/>

⁴⁴ **Office for National Statistics** (2024) *Stalking: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/stalkingfindingsfromthecrimesurveyforenglandandwales>

⁴⁵ **Women's Aid** (2022) *Technology and domestic abuse: Experiences of survivors during the Covid-19 pandemic*.

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/4.-Technology-domestic-abuse-and-Covid-19-1.pdf>

⁴⁶ **Revenge Porn Helpline** (2024) *Reports to the Revenge Porn Helpline*

[Reports to the Revenge Porn Helpline Increased by 106% in 2023 | Revenge Porn Helpline](#)

Halton's new Domestic Abuse website will provide people with access to information on how to stay safe online.

National Context

Over the past several years (2021-2025), the national landscape for tackling domestic abuse has seen significant change, with legislative, strategic, and funding updates aimed at improving prevention, protection, support, and accountability.

Domestic Abuse Act (2021)⁴⁷

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provided the first statutory definition of domestic abuse in the UK. It defines abusive behaviour as including:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional, or other abuse

To qualify, the behaviour must involve individuals aged 16+ who are "personally connected" through relationships, marriage, family ties, or cohabitation. The Act introduced several landmark reforms:

- Children are now recognised as victims if they see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse
- Creation of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, responsible for promoting best practices and publishing a strategic plan every three years
- Local authorities now have statutory duties to assess and provide accommodation-based support for victims, informed by a local needs assessment conducted at least every three years, supported by Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Boards

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy (2021)⁴⁸

This strategy set out a cross-government ambition to reduce violence against women and girls through prevention, protection, and prosecution. Key priorities included:

- Increasing support for victims, including improved access to specialist services and additional funding for frontline organisations.
- Strengthening the criminal justice response to enhance victim outcomes and offender accountability.
- Focusing on prevention through education campaigns and early intervention.
- Improving data collection to better understand and address root causes.
- Launching the *StreetSafe* online tool for the public to report places where they feel unsafe.
- Committing to long-term system reform, robust legislation, and better multi-agency collaboration.

⁴⁷ **UK Government** (2021) *Domestic Abuse Act 2021*.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents>

⁴⁸ **Home Office** (2021) *Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy>

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act (2022)⁴⁹

This Act introduced the Serious Violence Duty, requiring local authorities, emergency services, and partners to collaborate to prevent and reduce serious violence, including domestic abuse. Local strategies must identify patterns of violence, understand the root causes, and implement targeted interventions.

It also mandated that Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) address serious violence in their strategies, although local partnership arrangements may vary.

Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan (March 2022)⁵⁰

Published by the Home Office, this national plan outlined four central pillars:

1. Prioritising Prevention
2. Supporting Victims
3. Pursuing Perpetrators
4. Strengthening the System

The plan aims to reduce domestic abuse prevalence, prevent domestic homicides and suicides, improve survivors' health and economic outcomes, and ensure a more coordinated, skilled systemic response.

Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Strategic Plan (2022–2025)⁵¹

The Commissioner's plan focuses on:

- Standing with victims and survivors
- Improving support for marginalised and underserved groups
- Addressing the inconsistency of services across England and Wales
- Promoting coordination between local agencies and national government

Domestic Homicide Sentencing Review (2023)⁵²

This review introduced key reforms following long-standing advocacy by victims' families, campaigners, and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner. Key changes include:

- Longer sentences for murders involving coercive control, even where physical violence was limited
- Recognition of psychological abuse as an aggravating factor in sentencing
- Introduction of statutory aggravating factors for murders with a history of coercive or controlling behaviour under the Sentencing Act 2020
- A commitment to fairness and consistency in sentencing, ensuring domestic abuse-related killings are treated as seriously as other homicides
- The government pledges to monitor the impact through continued consultation with the judiciary, CPS, and advocacy groups

⁴⁹ **UK Government** (2022) *Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022*.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/32/contents>

⁵⁰ **Home Office** (2022) *Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-domestic-abuse-plan>

⁵¹ **Domestic Abuse Commissioner** (2023) *Strategic Plan: September 2022 to September 2025*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-commissioners-strategic-plan>

⁵² **Ministry of Justice** (2023) *Domestic Homicide Sentencing Review and Government Response*.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-homicide-sentencing-review>

Victims and Prisoners Act (2024)⁵³

This Act further strengthens victims' rights and access to justice:

- Enshrines the Victims' Code in law, clarifying what victims can expect from the criminal justice system
- Makes Operation Encompass a legal requirement, ensuring schools are informed when children are exposed to domestic abuse
- Requires commissioners to collaborate in delivering high-quality, consistent victim support
- Raises awareness of key roles such as Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs)

Before being elected in 2024, the Labour Party made a commitment in their general election manifesto to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) within the next decade. This pledge reflects a broader national urgency to address the scale and severity of gender-based violence. That same year, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and the College of Policing formally declared VAWG a "national emergency," citing that it accounts for nearly one in five (just under 20%) of all recorded crimes in England and Wales.⁵⁴ This recognition marks a significant escalation in the national response, positioning VAWG not only as a criminal justice issue but also as a public health and societal crisis requiring sustained, coordinated action across policing, government, and frontline services.

The Rise of Misogyny

The rise of misogyny, particularly among young boys and adults in the UK, has become a pressing concern, with alarming statistics and cultural shifts highlighting the depth of the issue. A recent poll, conducted by Zencity, revealed that 69% of women in England and Wales have personally experienced or know someone who has experienced male violence or harassment in the past year, with higher rates among younger women. Worryingly, the poll also found that 4 in 10 women do not believe that the police treat violence and harassment of women seriously, and 1 in 10 women said they would not report a rape or assault by a partner.⁵⁵

In response, the UK government has initiated several measures aimed at combating misogyny and its detrimental effects. As previously mentioned, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 introduced provisions to strengthen the legal framework against gender-based violence, including measures to improve the handling of domestic abuse and sexual violence cases. Additionally, the Online

⁵³ **UK Government** (2024) *Victims and Prisoners Act 2024*.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2024/21/contents>

⁵⁴ **National Police Chiefs' Council and College of Policing** (2024) *National Policing Statement on Violence Against Women and Girls*.

<https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/call-to-action-as-violence-against-women-and-girls-epidemic-deepens-1>

⁵⁵ **Dodd, V.** (2025) *Most women in England and Wales have seen abusive male behaviour in the past year, says poll*. The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jun/30/most-women-in-england-and-wales-have-seen-abusive-male-behaviour-in-the-past-year-poll-finds>

Safety Bill (2021)⁵⁶ seeks to hold online platforms accountable for harmful content, aiming to reduce the exposure of young individuals to misogynistic material online.

Educational institutions are also viewed as pivotal in challenging and preventing misogynistic behaviour. The Department for Education has updated the Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum to include lessons that challenge harmful gender stereotypes and promote respectful relationships. These lessons are designed to equip students, particularly boys, with the tools to critically assess and reject misogynistic narratives encountered online and in their communities.⁵⁷

Local Context

Local Governance

Halton Borough Council has local governance in place to coordinate domestic abuse prevention, support, and response, working closely with Cheshire Constabulary and partner agencies to protect victims and address perpetrator behaviour.

Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership (HDAP) and Local Partnership Board

Halton Borough Council, in collaboration with Cheshire Constabulary, holds primary responsibility for tackling domestic abuse within the borough. This includes developing and implementing Halton's Domestic Abuse Strategy, aligned with the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Under the Act, Halton Borough Council was required to establish and appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board to oversee the strategic coordination of domestic abuse services and support across the area. The Partnership Board's members include representatives from:

- Halton Borough Council departments, including Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Public Health, Environment and Regeneration and the Domestic Abuse Team
- Cheshire Constabulary: Halton Area Commander
- Halton Place Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Halton Housing

It is noted that there are some gaps in Board representation, as the board was reset at the beginning of the year. Halton is looking to increase membership for commissioned services and third-sector representatives.

The Partnership Board reports to Halton's Community Safety Partnership (CSP), called Safer Halton Partnership, which identifies domestic abuse and violence

⁵⁶ **UK Government** (2021) *Online Safety Bill (Draft)*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill>

⁵⁷ **Department for Education** (2024) *New RSHE guidance: What it means for sex education lessons in schools*.

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/05/new-rshe-guidance-what-it-means-for-sex-education-lessons-in-schools/>

against women and girls as a key priority. The Safer Halton Partnership envisions Halton as a place where women and girls are safe and feel safe to live their lives free from fear and harassment. They believe that effective early intervention, joint working, and a drive to challenge the culture and attitudes that give rise to all forms of abuse can help make Halton a safe place for women and girls to live, work and enjoy their leisure time. Their key areas of focus around domestic abuse include:

- Develop approaches that prevent abuse before it happens
- Identify and stop harmful behaviour
- Support and strengthen those at risk
- Improve and expand support for everyone who is affected by abuse

When required, it is the Safer Halton Partnership that fulfils statutory obligations in relation to Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews.

The Partnership brings together senior representatives from various agencies (including the Council, Cheshire Constabulary, Cheshire Fire and Rescue and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB) to develop and implement the Domestic Abuse Strategy, which will be informed by the upcoming Halton Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment.

Halton has also recently made progress by adding a domestic abuse victim survivor to its Halton Safeguarding Adults Board.

Statutory Duties of Halton Borough Council

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places several statutory duties on Halton Borough Council concerning support for victims and their children living in safe accommodation. The Council must:

- Establish a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (see Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership above)
- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of accommodation-based domestic abuse support at least every three years
- Update and publish any relevant strategies for delivering support services based on this assessment
- Implement the strategy through commissioning or decommissioning services as needed
- Commission and provide accommodation-based support, ensuring the availability of services such as refuges, dispersed accommodation, sanctuary schemes and specialist provision

Domestic Abuse Support Services

Halton Borough Council provides domestic abuse support through several avenues, including a dedicated Domestic Abuse Housing Officer, Adult Social Care and Children's Services, but also has a specialist in-house Domestic Abuse Service with a team of trained Independent Domestic Violence Advisors. Halton currently has a Domestic Abuse Manager, 4.5 IDVAs, a specialist Harm Prevention Officer, 1 Administration Officer, and 1 Performance and Improvement Officer, and is currently recruiting for a Senior IDVA.

Halton's IDVAs act as the primary point of contact for medium to high-risk victims of domestic abuse. They provide practical and emotional support to improve safety and reduce harm. The support offered includes:

- Conducting risk assessments, discussing appropriate options, and developing individualised safety and support plans
- Participating in Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) to coordinate safeguarding responses for high-risk victims
- Providing information, emotional support, and practical assistance related to criminal and civil court processes, including attending hearings where appropriate
- Offering housing-related advice and support, including access to sanctuary schemes, emergency accommodation, and long-term housing solutions
- Facilitating access to legal advice and advocacy, including support around protective orders and family law matters
- Delivering specialist support tailored to the needs of individuals with protected characteristics (e.g., disability, race, sexual orientation) and those with multiple or complex needs, such as mental health issues or substance use
- Supporting victims to engage with additional services, including counselling, children's services, and health care professionals

Halton's IDVAs play a critical role in ensuring victims feel supported, informed, and protected throughout their recovery and any criminal justice proceedings.

Commissioned Services in Halton

Halton Borough Council commissions additional domestic abuse services from key local providers, including:

- *Refuge - SHAP*
- *Resolve – Children's Society*
- *RASAC (Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre) – part-funded by Community Safety*

Other Local Services

Several local organisations within Halton, Cheshire and the Liverpool City Region offer information, advice and support free of charge. Halton's new domestic abuse website will include more information relating to these available services:

- **Halton Women's Centre:** A multi-service hub for women and children experiencing domestic abuse, offering support groups, outreach, and advocacy
- **Fortuna Female Society:** A community group offering a supportive network for women, including their Women:Kind Café for women affected by domestic abuse
- **Authentic Voice Forum:** A monthly forum for survivors and those affected by domestic abuse to have their say on how services work to support those experiencing domestic abuse

- **Cheshire CARES (Cope and Recovery Enhanced Service):** an enhanced service offering emotional and practical support to help victims cope and recover from the impact of crime.
- **Citizens Advice, Halton:** An independent and impartial charity ready to support people with a wide range of help, including relationship issues, problems with housing, access to grants, advocacy and representation
- **Cheshire & Merseyside RASASC:** Confidential and anonymous phone line, counselling, pre-trial therapy and support groups (online and face to face) for anyone who has experienced sexual violence, including specialist counselling for children and young people.
- **Venus:** Charity offering support for victims of abuse in Halton, predominantly for children, young people and vulnerable adults. Venus offers both a course and one-to-one support in the community, focusing on promoting good home conditions.

National and Local Prevalence of Domestic Abuse

According to the CSEW⁵⁸ for the year ending March 2025, an estimated 3.8 million people aged 16 years and over (in England and Wales) experienced domestic abuse in the last year, equating to 7.8% of the adult population. This includes approximately 2.3 million women (9.5%) and 1.5 million men (6.5%).

Based on these national prevalence rates and local demographic data from the 2021 Census, it is estimated that over 8200 residents aged 16 and over in Halton may have experienced domestic abuse in the past year, including almost 5000 women and over 3000 men. However, it is important to recognise that applying national prevalence estimates to Halton may underestimate the true local scale of domestic abuse, given the borough's higher levels of deprivation and other overlapping risk factors.

According to the CSEW⁵⁹, the police recorded 815,941 domestic abuse-related offences reported in England and Wales in the year ending March 2025. This highlights the significant underreporting of domestic abuse to the police, given that an estimated 3.8 million people may have experienced domestic abuse during the same period.

As demonstrated in the paragraphs below, Halton's most at-risk groups include women aged 25 - 44, single-parent households, and individuals with long-term

⁵⁸ **Office for National Statistics** (2025) *Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2025*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2025#domestic-abuse>

⁵⁹ **Office for National Statistics** (2025) *Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2025*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2025#domestic-abuse>

illness or disability. These findings should inform targeted service planning and outreach.

Sex and Gender Identity

Domestic abuse remains a gendered crime. According to the latest CSEW, year ending March 2025, an estimated 2.3 million women and 1.5 million men experienced domestic abuse in the past year. Police-recorded data show that 72.5% of domestic abuse-related crime victims were female, which rose to 92.1% for domestic abuse-related sexual offences. Between March 2021 and March 2023, 65.4% of domestic homicide victims were women, compared to 12.3% of non-domestic homicide victims.⁶⁰

Survivors may also self-identify, identify as non-binary, transgender male, transgender female or other. A 2021 SafeLives study found that for trans victims and survivors of domestic abuse, 72% had experienced multiple forms of abuse, 81% of perpetrators were male, and 58% had housing needs.⁶¹

Halton has a population of approximately 128,478 (based on 2021 census data), with an estimated 103,000 residents aged 16 and over. Based on national prevalence rates, it is estimated that almost 5000 women and over 3000 men in Halton may have experienced domestic abuse in the past year.

Since 2023, Halton's Domestic Abuse Team's records of all closed cases indicate that 83.02% involved female victims, 16.78% male victims, and 0.2% where the gender was unknown.

Age

In 2021, the CSEW removed the upper age limit for survey respondents, which was previously 59 years. In the year ending 2024, the order of prevalence for domestic abuse by age group (in England and Wales) was as follows:

16 – 19: 8.7%
20 – 24: 7.1%
25- 34: 5.1%
35 – 44: 5.1%
60 – 74: 4%
55 – 59: 3.8%
75 and over: 2.1%

The percentage of women who experienced domestic abuse in the last year was significantly higher than men for the majority of age groups, except for those aged 24 years and under, and those aged 55 to 59 years, where there was no statistically

⁶⁰ **Office for National Statistics** (2024). *Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2024*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2024>

⁶¹ **SafeLives** (2021) *Transgender victims' and survivors' experiences of domestic abuse*.

<https://safelives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Transgender-victim-survivors-experiences-of-domestic-abuse-briefing.pdf>

significant difference in the prevalence of domestic abuse between men and women.⁶²

Based on the 2021 Census, Halton Borough has a population of approximately 104,000 residents aged 16 and over. Applying the national prevalence rate of 4.8% for domestic abuse among individuals aged 16 and over, it is estimated that around 4992 people in Halton may have experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2024.

Since 2023, Halton's Domestic Abuse Team's records of all closed cases show that the most frequent age groups they have worked with are 35-44 (30.83% of cases) and 25-34 (26.82% of cases).

Ethnicity

Halton is a largely homogenous borough, with 96.5% of its population identifying as White according to the most recent census data. Other ethnic groups include 1.1% identifying as Asian, Asian British, or Asian Welsh; 0.4% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean, or African; 1.4% as Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups; and 0.6% as Other ethnic groups. English is the primary language for the vast majority of residents, at 97.34%. Furthermore, only about 3% of the population was born outside the UK, reflecting relatively low levels of recent immigration compared to more ethnically diverse urban areas.

Data from Halton's Domestic Abuse Team on closed cases mirrors this demographic profile, with most individuals identifying as White British. A small proportion, 1.03%, are recorded as 'other white origin,' while 2.84% identify with different ethnicities. However, ethnicity information is missing in 31.9% of cases, which may impact the accuracy and interpretation of these statistics.

For the year ending March 2024, the CSEW showed that there were some statistically significant differences between ethnic groups in relation to experiencing domestic abuse. Mixed (7.1%), Other (5.1%) and White (5%) were the most highly represented groups, with Black or Black British (3.4%) and Asian or Asian British (3%) following.⁶³ However, it is important to consider that lower representation of domestic abuse in some ethnic groups may reflect cultural factors such as stigma, differing perceptions of abuse, or barriers to reporting, rather than actual lower incidence. These factors can influence the willingness or ability of individuals from certain communities to disclose their experiences, potentially leading to an underestimation of domestic abuse within these groups.

Based on the previous estimate of over 8000 (approximately 8276) Halton residents having possibly experienced domestic abuse in the last year, this translates to approximately 8067 residents in the White ethnic group, around 166 in the Mixed

⁶² **Office for National Statistics** (2024) *Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2024*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2024>

⁶³ **Office for National Statistics** (2024) *Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2024*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2024>

ethnic group, about 12 in the Black ethnic group, and roughly 29 in the Asian ethnic group who may have experienced domestic abuse during that period.

Sexual Orientation

The CSEW does not routinely include breakdowns by sexual orientation. This omission means that data often fails to fully capture the experiences of LGBTQ+ populations.

A 2024 article by DIVA Magazine summarised key findings from an ONS data release that included victim characteristics by sexual orientation and gender identity. According to this report, gay men are more likely to experience domestic abuse compared to straight men (7.6% of gay men compared to 2.8% of straight men), and lesbians are less likely to experience domestic abuse compared to straight women (3.4% compared to 6.3%). This aligns with the fact that most perpetrators of intimate partner violence and domestic violence are men. Surprisingly, 11.2% of bisexual women reported experiencing domestic abuse in the last year, compared to 4.5% of heterosexual individuals. This includes a far higher rate of sexual assault by partners.⁶⁴

These findings are consistent with longer-term evidence cited in the Home Office's Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance⁶⁵, which recognises LGBTQ+ communities as facing heightened risks of abuse, often compounded by barriers to disclosure and access to services. The guidance states that "LGBT victims may experience additional vulnerabilities and barriers when seeking help, including fear of discrimination or being outed".

A recent study by Galop gave some insight into the prevalence of the LGBTQ+ experience of family abuse. 29% of 5000 LGBTQ+ respondents had experienced abuse from a family member or members (and 43% of trans and non-binary people).⁶⁶

In Halton's 2021 census, 2736 people identified as gay or lesbian (1555), bisexual (976), pansexual (162), queer (4), asexual (32) or other (7), making up 2.63% of the area's population aged 16 and over.

Marital Status

Recent census data⁶⁷ reveals a notable shift in relationship patterns among Halton residents aged 16 and over, aligning closely with both regional and national trends. In 2021, 39.3% of Halton adults reported never having been married or in a civil partnership, an increase from 35.4% in 2011. At the same time, the proportion of those who were married or in a registered civil partnership declined from 45.1% to

⁶⁴ Kelley, N. (2024) *New data shows bi+ women and trans people are more likely to experience domestic abuse*, DIVA Magazine.

<https://diva-magazine.com/2024/11/28/new-data-shows-bi-women-and-trans-people-are-more-likely-to-experience-domestic-abuse>

⁶⁵ Home Office (2022) *Domestic Abuse Act 2021: Statutory guidance*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-act-2021/domestic-abuse-statutory-guidance>

⁶⁶ Galop (2022) *LGBT+ experiences of abuse from family members*, Galop LGBT+ anti-violence charity.

<https://www.galop.org.uk/resources/lgbt-experiences-of-abuse-from-family-members>

⁶⁷ Office for National Statistics (2023) *How life has changed in Halton: Census 2021*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E06000006>

42.2%. The percentage of adults who were divorced or had dissolved a civil partnership fell slightly, from 9.8% to 9.6%. These changes reflect broader societal shifts in attitudes toward marriage and long-term partnerships.

These trends in Halton are consistent with those seen across the North West and England more widely. In the North West, the share of adults who had never married or entered a civil partnership rose from 35.6% to 39.4%, while across England the increase was from 34.6% to 37.9%. A key factor behind these shifts is the evolving legal recognition of relationships: same-sex marriages became legal in England and Wales in 2014, and opposite-sex civil partnerships were introduced in 2019. These developments have expanded the range of formal relationship options; however, they have not resulted in an overall increase in people entering formal partnerships.

Importantly, there is a clear correlation between relationship status and vulnerability to domestic abuse. A recent CSEW⁶⁸ shows that separated (15%), divorced (11.8%), and single individuals (7.6%) are significantly more likely to experience domestic abuse than those who are married or in a civil partnership (2.5%) or widowed (2.4%). These national patterns are relevant locally in Halton, where similar relationship status profiles are emerging. It is important to note that relationships and marital status may change as a result of the abuse experienced.

Overall, Halton's relationship demographics are evolving in line with broader trends, with increasing numbers of adults delaying or opting out of formal partnerships. These shifts have important implications for local services, particularly concerning domestic abuse prevention and support, where single, divorced, and separated individuals are disproportionately affected.

Employment Status and Occupation

Between 2011 and 2021⁶⁹ Halton experienced the third-largest reduction in unemployment among people aged 16 and over (excluding full-time students) in the North West. The unemployment rate in Halton fell significantly from 5.1% to 2.7%, a decrease of 2.4 percentage points. Only Knowsley and Liverpool saw larger declines during this period, with Knowsley's rate dropping from 5.9% to 3.1% and Liverpool's from 6.2% to 3.4%.

This positive trend was reflected across the entire North West region, where unemployment decreased from 4.2% to 2.8%. Despite these improvements, it's important to note that the 2021 Census occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time of rapid changes to the labour market influenced by lockdowns, guidance, and furlough schemes, which may have impacted the data.

Other economic activity indicators in Halton showed relatively stable employment rates for those aged 16 and over (excluding full-time students), with slight decreases in full-time student employment and minor changes in economic inactivity categories such as retirement, long-term illness, and caregiving.

⁶⁸ **Office for National Statistics** (2024) *Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2024*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2024>

⁶⁹ **Office for National Statistics** (2023) *How life has changed in Halton: Census 2021*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E06000006>

A recent CSEW⁷⁰ reported that adults with long-term or temporary illnesses (12.9%) and those looking after family and home (8.4%) experience higher rates of domestic abuse compared to employed individuals (4.6%). Unemployed adults also face a slightly higher risk (6.8%) than those employed, as well as students (9.9%), while retired individuals (2.4%) report the lowest rates. Given Halton's improving employment rates - with unemployment decreasing from 5.1% in 2011 to 2.7% in 2021 - this data suggests that employed residents may be somewhat less vulnerable to domestic abuse than unemployed or economically inactive groups. However, the relatively higher risk among those with health issues or caregiving responsibilities highlights a need for targeted support services in Halton to protect these vulnerable populations, especially as the area still has a significant proportion of residents who are economically inactive due to illness or family care.

Working hours in Halton

In 2021, 7.9% of employed Halton residents aged 16 and over reported working 15 hours or less per week, a figure virtually unchanged from 7.8% in 2011. Meanwhile, the proportion working over 49 hours per week decreased from 10.0% to 8.8%, and those working between 31 and 48 hours increased from 62.0% to 64.5%.

Halton had the joint third lowest percentage in the country of people working 15 hours or less per week, tied with Wakefield. Only the City of London (7.2%) and Knowsley (7.8%) had lower proportions, though comparisons with the City of London should be made cautiously due to its unique size.

It is again worth noting that working hours in 2021 may have been influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Household Structure

According to a recent CSEW,⁷¹ single-person households with children experience a higher prevalence of domestic abuse compared to other household types.

Specifically, 20.1% of individuals in single-person households with children reported experiencing domestic abuse in the past year, compared to 4.4% in households with no children and 4.6% in households with multiple people and one or more children.

Applying these national prevalence rates to Halton, which has approximately 53,000 households, the estimated number of households experiencing domestic abuse is as follows:

- **Single-person households with children:** Approximately 10,653 households (20.1% of 53,000)
- **Households with no children:** Approximately 2,332 households (4.4% of 53,000)

⁷⁰ **Office for National Statistics** (2024). *Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2024*.
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2024>

⁷¹ **Office for National Statistics** (2024) *Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2024*.
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2024>

- **Households with multiple people and one or more children:**
Approximately 2,438 households (4.6% of 53,000)

These estimates suggest that single-parent households in Halton are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse. This highlights the need for targeted support services and interventions to address the specific challenges faced by these households. Again, it is important to note that household structure may have changed as a result of abuse.

Crimes and Convictions

In the year ending March 2024, police in England and Wales recorded approximately 1,350,428 domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes, of which 851,062 were recorded as crimes. Nationally, 72,641 domestic abuse suspects were referred to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), and 49,046 of these resulted in a charge, reflecting a high charging rate of 79%, the highest recorded to date⁷². For the year ending 2025, police recorded approximately 815,941 domestic-abuse related offences, showing a 4% decrease from the previous year.⁷³

Within Cheshire Constabulary, which covers Halton, local enforcement data reflects robust efforts to address domestic abuse. A 2024 inspection found that 63% of 678 domestic abuse arrests involved the use of force, demonstrating consistent and proactive policing⁷⁴. In Cheshire, domestic abuse also features prominently in serious violent crime, accounting for one-third of violent crimes with injury, nearly 30% of rapes, and more than a quarter of knife-related offences⁷⁵.

Available Domestic Abuse Data

Cheshire Constabulary

The following information was shared by Cheshire Constabulary concerning domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes in Halton, and comparatively, the wider Cheshire area.

In 2024, a total of 2,461 domestic abuse-related offences were recorded in Halton. This equated to a rate of 19.2 offences per 1,000 population, which remained higher than the overall rate for Cheshire Constabulary, recorded at 13.7. The most commonly recorded offences during the year were assault without injury, stalking,

⁷² **Office for National Statistics** (2024) *Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system, England and Wales: November 2024*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabuseandthecriminaljusticesystemenglandandwales/november2024/pdf>

⁷³ **SafeLives**. (2025) *Statement in response to ONS crime figures 2025*

<https://safelives.org.uk/news-views/ons-crime-figures-2025-statement/>

⁷⁴ **HMICFRS** (2024) *PEEL 2023–25: An inspection of Cheshire Constabulary*. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services.

<https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets-hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/uploads/peel-assessment-2023-25-cheshire.pdf>

⁷⁵ **Warrington Borough Council** (2024) *Cheshire Serious Violence Strategy 2024–2029*.

<https://www.warrington.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/Cheshire%20Serious%20Violence%20Strategy%202024%20-2029%20-%20January%202024%20v3.pdf>

and assault with injury. These three categories remained consistent with 2023 and together accounted for over half, approximately 55%, of all domestic abuse-related incidents in Halton.

Looking at the monthly distribution of offences, the highest number of incidents occurred in August (230 offences) and May (227 offences). In contrast, October and November saw the lowest volumes, with 155 and 177 offences respectively. Interestingly, this pattern differs slightly from the rest of the force area, which experienced a peak in June during the European football tournament.

Geographically, Runcorn Local Policing Unit (LPU) recorded the highest number of offences, with 1,243 incidents over the year. Within Runcorn, Runcorn East experienced the greatest demand, followed by Runcorn West and Widnes Outer. Widnes Inner was the only cluster to see an increase in offences compared to the previous year. There were no notable changes to crime recording practices in 2024, although it is possible that the introduction of the Principal Crime Rule in the previous year continued to influence how some offences were captured.

Beat Team Cluster	Domestic Abuse			
	2023	2024	Change	% Change
Runcorn	1362	1243	-119	-9%
Runcorn East	743	650	-93	-13%
Runcorn West	619	593	-26	-4%
Widnes	1211	1218	7	1%
Widnes Inner	532	562	30	6%
Widnes Outer	679	656	-23	-3%
Total	2573	2461	-112	-4%

Of note, 68% (1,661 offences) of the domestic-related offences recorded across Halton also had a VAWG flag, suggesting many victims were female.

Domestic-related Violence with Injury

In 2024, there were 436 recorded domestic abuse-related offences involving violence with injury in Halton, representing a rate of 3.4 offences per 1,000 population, higher than the rate for Cheshire Constabulary overall, which stood at 2.4. Unlike the broader trend for domestic abuse offences in Halton, which saw higher volumes in the Runcorn policing area, incidents involving violence with injury were more commonly recorded in Widnes, with 227 offences compared to 209 in Runcorn.

Across all local policing clusters, incident volumes in this category were lower than in the previous year. Runcorn West recorded the highest number of offences in the area, followed by other clusters within Runcorn and Widnes.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

In 2024, a total of 3,349 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) offences were recorded in Halton - the lowest annual figure in the five-year period beginning in 2020. The rate of VAWG offences in Halton stood at 26.1 offences per 1,000 population, which remained higher than the Cheshire Constabulary average of 19.2 per 1,000.

Both Local Policing Units (LPUs) in Halton recorded high levels of demand for VAWG offences in 2024. Runcorn LPU reported the largest number of incidents overall, followed closely by Widnes LPU. Within Runcorn, the Runcorn East cluster saw the highest volumes during the year. These areas also experienced the highest levels of recorded VAWG offences in the previous year, reflecting consistent demand over time.

Beat Team Cluster	Violence Against Women and Girls			
	2023	2024	Change	% Change
Runcorn	1955	1714	-241	-12%
Runcorn East	1093	920	-173	-16%
Runcorn West	862	794	-68	-8%
Widnes	1753	1635	-118	-7%
Widnes Inner	823	778	-45	-5%
Widnes Outer	930	857	-73	-8%
Total	3708	3349	-359	-10%

Stalking and Harassment

In 2024, there were 2,251 offences recorded under the Stalking and Harassment Home Office offence group in Halton. This included 1,243 harassment offences, 493 stalking offences, 272 malicious communication offences, and 242 offences related to controlling or coercive behaviour. Compared to other areas within the Cheshire force, Halton continued to record higher rates across all categories, with an overall rate of 17.6 offences per 1,000 population, above the force average of 12.7. Harassment in Halton stood at 9.7 per 1,000, stalking at 3.8, malicious communications at 2.1, and controlling or coercive behaviour at 1.9.

At a local level, Widnes LPU recorded more offences than Runcorn, accounting for the majority of the increase in total volume. Notably, changes in malicious communication and harassment figures were most evident in both Widnes and Runcorn. Within Widnes, the Widnes Inner cluster reported the most significant increase in incidents, primarily driven by a rise in harassment offences. In contrast, Runcorn East and Widnes Outer clusters saw small decreases.

Widnes LPU was the largest contributor to the borough-wide increases in harassment, stalking, and controlling or coercive behaviour, and also to the decrease in malicious communications. Of all stalking and harassment offences recorded in Halton, 41% were flagged as domestic abuse-related. For stalking offences specifically, this rose to 91%, higher than the force-wide figure of 88%. Additionally, 60% of all offences within this category were flagged as Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), a proportion that aligns with the overall force average and indicates that most victims were female. As with other domestic-related offences, recording patterns may still be influenced by the Principal Crime Rule introduced in the previous year (this rule states that when several crimes occur during the same event, only the most serious offence is recorded or prosecuted, rather than counting every single offence separately).

The high rate of stalking offences linked to domestic abuse suggests a need for enhanced early intervention and digital safety support.

Sexual Offences

In 2024, there were 530 recorded sexual offences in Halton - the highest total reported in the past five years. This included 191 rape offences and 339 categorised as other sexual offences. Child sexual abuse accounted for 376 of the total, also reaching its highest level during the period. The rate of recorded sexual offences in Halton was 4.1 per 1,000 population, exceeding the Cheshire Constabulary average of 3.7. Rates were also comparatively higher in Halton for rape (1.5 versus 1.3), other sexual offences (2.6 versus 2.3), and child sexual abuse (2.9 versus 2.4).

When broken down by policing area, both Widnes and Runcorn saw an increase in sexual offence volumes. The rise in Widnes was more prominent, largely driven by an increase in other sexual offences. Across the policing clusters, Runcorn West recorded the largest rise, again primarily due to increases in other sexual offence types. Runcorn East, by contrast, saw a drop in reported rape offences and the overall total. Widnes LPU accounted for all of the increase in rape offences across the borough and was also the primary contributor to the increase in other sexual offences.

Among the offence types within this category, exposure and voyeurism recorded the most notable rise. Additionally, 59% of all sexual offences recorded in Halton were marked with a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) flag, highlighting the disproportionate impact of these crimes on female victims. Reporting patterns may also have been influenced by wider cultural or media factors, such as public attention drawn to historic cases through national operations like Operation Yewtree.

Halton continues to experience a higher demand for domestic abuse and related services compared to the wider Cheshire area, with consistently elevated offence rates. Offences such as stalking, harassment, and sexual violence show strong links to domestic abuse, both in terms of case numbers and the predominance of female victims. Among local areas, Widnes, particularly the Inner cluster, emerges as a significant concern due to noticeable rises across several offence types.

Seasonal patterns indicate that reporting tends to peak during spring and summer, which could help shape how and when support services are deployed. These findings highlight the ongoing need for trauma-informed, gender-responsive services, especially for women and children, and make a strong case for sustained investment in prevention, early intervention, and wraparound community support.

Halton Domestic Abuse Database

In addition to recorded offences, Halton's domestic abuse service received 1,833 referrals during 2024/25 across all risk levels. Of these, 603 cases were allocated to an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA), while 525 individuals declined support, and 437 could not be contacted despite follow-up attempts. A further 127 referrals were identified as perpetrators. The police remained the primary source of referral, demonstrating the continued role of frontline services in identifying and responding to domestic abuse cases. These figures reflect both the growing demand and challenges in engagement, and highlight the importance of outreach, trauma-informed practice, and consistent follow-up support.

MARAC Data

A MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) is a meeting where information is shared on victims at the highest risk of serious harm or murder as a result of domestic abuse. It is attended by representatives of local agencies such as the police and health. The meetings usually take place monthly or fortnightly and discuss an average of 16 cases at each meeting.

Between January and December 2024, there were 128,596 cases discussed across 283 MARACs in England and Wales, marking a 3% increase from the previous year and a 15% rise since 2020. The number of cases per 10,000 adult women also rose to 48, surpassing the expected benchmark of 40. Police remained the primary referrers, responsible for 64% of all cases, slightly up from 63% last year. Despite this rise in overall cases, the repeat case rate decreased marginally to 30%, staying within the typical range of 28-40%.⁷⁶

Victim demographics revealed some emerging trends, including an increase in cases involving victims with disabilities, which accounted for 10.3% of referrals, up from 10.1%. Cases involving racially minoritised victims rose to 15.6%, and male victims represented 6.5% of cases. Young victims aged 16 to 17 years made up approximately 1.3% of cases, equating to around 1,698 individuals. These shifts highlight the growing identification and referral of diverse victim groups requiring targeted support.

The rise in both the total number of cases and the rate per 10,000 adult women suggests improved detection and referral processes, potentially aided by new MARAC portal tools that use updated population data from the 2021 census. The stable repeat case rate underscores the ongoing cyclical nature of domestic abuse and the importance of long-term intervention strategies. Additionally, the increases in referrals among disabled individuals, racially minoritised groups, and male victims emphasize the need for more inclusive and tailored domestic abuse services.

Cheshire

In the year ending March 2024, there were 2,190 cases discussed at MARACs in Cheshire⁷⁷ with 652 individuals being discussed at MARACs in Halton. The number of domestic abuse cases discussed at MARACs was 47 per 10,000 adult females. This reflects a moderate rate of activity in relation to the adult female population.

Cheshire recorded 573 repeat cases, which accounted for 26% of its total. This indicates a relatively lower proportion of repeat victimisation being referred to MARAC compared to other areas.

2,311 children were living in households involved in MARAC cases in Cheshire, which corresponds to the population size and reflects the number of young people exposed to high-risk domestic abuse within the county. Overall, Cheshire demonstrates steady MARAC activity with a lower-than-average proportion of repeat cases and a significant number of children affected.

⁷⁶ SafeLives (2025) *Marac data – Key findings January 2024 to December 2024*.

<https://safelives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Marac-Data-External-Key-Findings-January-24-to-December-24.pdf>

⁷⁷ SafeLives (2024) *Our quarterly Marac data*.

<https://safelives.org.uk/research-policy/practitioner-datasets/marac-data>

735 cases were heard at MARAC in Halton in 2024/25. Although 700 cases were heard, the referral rate could be much higher as a MARAC consideration meeting screens referrals, and this figure does not include repeat referrals.

Halton is actively working to enhance its MARAC practices, including a MARAC review, plans to establish a dedicated Steering Group - a structure commonly adopted by other local authorities. To support this development, Halton's Domestic Abuse Manager will participate in a shadowing program with another local authority that is recognised for its exemplary MARAC model.

Safe Accommodation Data

Halton Borough Council is currently developing a new borough-wide Housing Strategy, supported by a comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment. This will include data on supported accommodation, homelessness, and domestic abuse-related housing needs. A large-scale household survey was conducted in late 2024 to inform this work, and the draft strategy is expected to be published in 2025.

While specific figures for domestic abuse presentations to housing services in 2023/24 have not been published, Halton's strategy acknowledges the need for safe, affordable, and accessible housing, particularly for vulnerable groups, including survivors of domestic abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 outlines statutory duties for local authorities to provide housing-based support for domestic abuse victims/survivors. This act aims to ensure that victims/survivors can access safe accommodation and appropriate support services.

Halton's Whole Picture Approach details clear work streams and outlines key priorities to ensure that local people are supported at the earliest stage of their experience to prevent the escalation of risk and harm. This includes the provision of specialist services to support the whole family – victims and their children, as well as those who harm. The intention is to work together to provide safety, recovery and sustainable change.

Accommodation need arises where prevention and early intervention has not been possible or successful, and is a last resort for individuals and families who are at risk of further harm if they do not move out of their home.

Only a small minority of people need such provision as there are many ways in which Halton provides safety in homes and communities, including:

- Safety planning with and support for victims to end abusive relationships in a planned and risk-managed way
- Using a range of multi-agency fora to bring all involved agencies together to safeguard clients
- Accessing the criminal and civil justice system to address the source of the problem, i.e. the alleged perpetrator
- Engaging the person who is harming in changing their behaviour

However there remain some families where the person causing harm continues to pose a significant threat and there is no other option than to seek safe alternative accommodation. This is provided locally through our Halton Domestic Abuse Service commission, where temporary supported accommodation (refuge) is made available to those in need. Service users have indicated that their preference is to maintain as 'normal' a life for them and their children as possible, and how important it is that we offer a range of solutions rather than a one size fits all.

Anyone accessing accommodation receives one to one support to address the abuse that has brought them into temporary accommodation and to support them towards independence and gaining a new permanent home, the offer of support will be accessible in all housing options provided in Halton.

The partnership between the council and the local registered social landlords is strong, working in collaboration, Halton aims to further develop options that will strengthen the offer of support for people who wish to remain in their own homes through an extended range of sanctuary measures.

The Sanctuary Scheme is a multi-agency victim-centred initiative which aims to enable households at risk of violence to remain safely in their own homes by installing a 'Sanctuary' in the home and through the provision of support to the household.'

Whole Housing Approach

The Whole Housing Approach is an evidence-based model that has been used as a framework to develop and construct a model for Halton. It was first conceptualised in 2018 by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) in collaboration with the National Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy and Practice Group. The approach aims to:

- Enable earlier identification and intervention of domestic abuse
- Reduce the number of people rendered homeless because of domestic abuse
- Enable survivors to remain safely in their homes where it is their choice to do so, or to keep their tenancy status if they relocate
- Where a current joint tenancy is in place, enable the tenancy to be altered so the perpetrator is removed and the tenancy is put in the victim's sole name

The diagram below illustrates the model and its twelve components. The blue circles represent different forms of accommodation, including the three main tenure types (social, private rented, and private ownership) and temporary accommodation settings (refuges, supported accommodation). The orange circles are the housing options and specialist domestic abuse services designed to provide safe and stable housing that allow victims/ survivors to either remain in their property or relocate to new accommodation.



In response to the local need for accommodation, Halton offers a range of options including:

- Housing-related support – providing housing-related advice and support, for example, securing a permanent home and advice on how to live safely and independently
- Specialist support for victims with relevant protected characteristics and those presenting with complex needs
- Specialist services that can respond to those people who require interpreters, have regard to cultural and faith requirements, mental health advice and support, and immigration advice
- Inclusive, supported temporary accommodation
- Community-based supported accommodation
- Secondary stage accommodation
- House for life options
- Access to supported accommodation for people not eligible for benefits
- Grants to facilitate safe access to supported accommodation

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, victims/survivors of domestic abuse are automatically classed as having priority need for housing. This means local authorities must secure suitable accommodation if the person is homeless or at risk of homelessness. Previously, victims/ survivors had to prove they were vulnerable due to Domestic Abuse, but now no additional vulnerability test is required.

Local authorities must take action to prevent or relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants. These duties include:

Prevention Duty (56 days) applies if a victim is threatened with homelessness within 56 days (e.g., they are still in their home but cannot stay due to domestic abuse). The council must provide advice, support and practical help, such as arranging alternative accommodation before they become homeless, helping them remain in their home safely (e.g., through sanctuary schemes providing extra security) or assisting with financial help (e.g., Discretionary Housing Payments.)

Relief Duty (56 days) applies if a victim is already homeless, the council must make reasonable steps to help secure accommodation for at least six months. This could involve placing them in emergency accommodation (e.g., refuge, hostel, or temporary housing), helping them find private rented accommodation, or referring them to housing associations.

Main Housing Duty is required where the victim remains homeless after the 56-day relief duty; the council has a duty to provide long-term housing if they:

- Are eligible (most UK residents qualify)
- Are in priority need (which all domestic abuse victims/survivors are)
- Are not intentionally homeless (e.g., they did not deliberately refuse suitable housing)

Councils may offer social housing or help with private rental properties.

Normally, applicants must have a local connection to a local council area; however, domestic abuse survivors are exempt and can apply to any local authority. This is crucial for those needing to escape their abuser's area.

Local authorities must ensure any accommodation offered is suitable and safe, considering the risk from the perpetrator (e.g., the victim must not be housed near them) and the victim's support needs (e.g., access to domestic abuse services), the location (e.g., school, work, family support). Survivors can challenge unsuitable accommodation if it puts them at risk.

Housing Strategy Recommendations

In 2024, Halton Borough Council commissioned consultants to conduct a Housing Needs Assessment, which considered the suitability of accommodation for domestic abuse survivors. It found that there is insufficient domestic abuse emergency accommodation, and a total lack of domestic abuse accommodation for those who cannot be placed in emergency accommodation, i.e., complex needs, offending history. It states that there is a need for emergency accommodation for residents, rather than for them to be sent outside of the borough or put in hotels. Equally, where vulnerable families face eviction, the assessment found that the support pathway needs to be improved across multi-disciplinary teams who can prevent rather than respond. Homelessness service providers in Halton confirmed that survivors of domestic abuse are not being given the top priority for accommodation. This is against the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act.

This Housing Needs Assessment supported the creation of a new Housing Strategy, which, at the time of writing, is currently in draft form. The new strategy places domestic abuse accommodation at the heart of its future priorities. In the Council's Household Survey, supporting survivors of domestic abuse emerged as the second-highest concern, with 68.3% of respondents identifying it as a strategic priority. In response, the Housing Strategy sets out a clear and ambitious plan to improve access to safe, appropriate housing and to align its delivery with survivor needs, legal duties and trauma-informed practice.

Key proposals include:

- Ensuring survivors are granted appropriate housing priority via the Housing Options Team
- Conducting a full review of domestic abuse housing needs to better understand scale, complexity, and demand
- Developing a new 3 - 4 bed refuge for emergency placements, including capacity to support individuals with complex needs
- Providing tailored accommodation options for older survivors (aged 60+)
- Strengthening and standardising Sanctuary Schemes across housing providers
- Supporting more survivors to remain safely in their homes, where appropriate
- Expanding perpetrator behaviour change support, with necessary resources
- Increasing access to safe, short-term accommodation for those not requiring long-term support
- Collaborating with private landlords to co-design a supportive housing scheme for survivors
- Reviewing commissioning options for emergency accommodation as part of ongoing delivery improvement

These proposals would address many of the needs and limitations identified within this Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment.

Available Housing Data

The MHGLC (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government), previously called DLUHC, compiles data to monitor progress and implementation of Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 across England. This relates to local authorities' duty to provide domestic abuse support services to domestic abuse victims within safe accommodation.

The latest report in 2023/24⁷⁸ reveals that English local authorities reported 63,580 referrals for domestic abuse safe accommodation. 36,870 (58%) of these were female adults, 1830 (3%) were male adults, 320 (1%) were trans or non-binary, and 24,940 (39%) were children. This demonstrates that the amount of males supported in safe accommodation services is extremely low compared to how many men are experiencing domestic abuse.

In 2023/4 Halton received 104 referrals for safe accommodation. Halton has 12 Refuge bed spaces and no dispersed, specialist, or second-stage accommodation available. The absence of these accommodation types may limit flexibility and options for victims, with a potential gap in supporting those with specialist or more diverse issues.

Despite not having specific specialist accommodation, Halton did report providing 'By and For' specialist services with targeted support, e.g., services that support specific

⁷⁸ **Office for National Statistics** (2024) *Domestic abuse in England and Wales – Data tool*.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesdatatool>

survivor groups such as counselling, advocacy, or casework. Halton reported 4 such services, each tailored for a different group, including Black and minoritised survivors, survivors with disabilities, LGBTQ+ survivors, and an 'other' category. In an area with very low diversity, this is crucial in ensuring inclusive support is available.

Halton's non-specialist accommodation available for both single and family households is currently as follows:

Brennan Lodge, Widnes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 37 self-contained rooms offering supported provision for single clients • 2 self-contained rooms offering supported hostel provision for rough sleepers
Columba Hall, Widnes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 self-contained apartments for families
Market Street/ Lacey Street, Widnes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 self-contained apartments offering move-on provision for former rough sleepers
Grangeway Court, Runcorn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 self-contained units offering supported provision for families
Halton Lodge, Runcorn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 66 self-contained rooms offering supported hostel provision for single clients • 4 self-contained rooms offering supported hostel provision for rough sleepers

All of the above temporary supported hostel provision is used to accommodate vulnerable homeless households in accordance with Local Authority statutory duty.

Support Received in Safe Accommodation

In 2023/24, Halton supported 119 individuals through domestic abuse safe accommodation, with the majority of survivors receiving general support, as well as offering advocacy support, domestic abuse prevention advice, children's support, housing-related support, and financial/legal advice. Counselling and therapeutic support were notably limited, with only 8 individuals receiving this service, suggesting a potential gap in trauma-informed recovery provision.

According to Halton's Domestic Abuse database, there are currently 8 adults (including 2 families with 3 children) staying in their Refuge accommodation. Half of these are from Halton, half are from outside the borough. The average length of stay is currently 211 days.

Individuals Supported in Safe Accommodation

In 2024/25, 27 adults were supported in the refuge accommodation and have since left, including 21 single adults and 10 children within 6 families. The average length of stay was 97 days, with a max stay of 383 days. The most common age range for individuals staying was 25 – 34.

In 2023/4 Halton supported 119 individuals (roughly 0.09% of Halton's total population) who were referred for safe accommodation support. Of these, 92 were female adults (77%), 2 were male (2%), 1 who identified as trans or non-binary (1%), and 24 children (20%). This represents a much higher proportion of female adults and a lower proportion of children than the national average, demonstrating that Halton's safe accommodation services are predominantly accessed by adult women. This could suggest either fewer family placements, which may indicate a gap in provision for families. Halton may benefit from developing more child-inclusive services and male survivor pathways.

Nearly 30% of Halton's supported individuals (35) came from outside the borough, which is above the national average of 12%.

Halton supported 34 individuals with at least one special characteristic. These characteristics included (an individual may have multiple):

- 6 black and minoritised individuals (lower than the national average)
- 5 individuals with disabilities
- 2 ex-offenders (slightly higher than the national average)
- 5 individuals with drug support needs (higher than the national average)
- 10 individuals with alcohol support needs (significantly higher than the national average)
- 20 individuals with a history of mental health issues (slightly above the national average)
- 8 individuals under 25 (in line with national trend)
- 2 individuals aged 65+ (slightly higher than the national average)

Mental health needs are the most common special characteristic in Halton, which again demonstrates the need for more mental health support services, counselling, and therapeutic services.

Accommodation Types

71 out of the 119 individuals supported in safe accommodation were supported in refuge accommodation, which equates to 60% which is much higher than the national average of 31%. 48 were supported by sanctuary schemes, a type of support that helps victims of domestic abuse to remain safely in their own homes, rather than having to flee. The home can be made more secure through tailored safety measures, such as:

- Reinforced doors and locks
- Fireproof letterboxes
- Window alarms or security lighting
- Safe rooms with enhanced security features

These interventions are risk-assessed and delivered in partnership with the council and the police.

In Halton, sanctuary schemes make up a significant proportion of the borough's domestic abuse response, suggesting an emphasis on helping people stay in their homes where safely possible.

Length of Stay

Halton's most commonly reported length of stay in refuge accommodation is between 3 to 6 months, with the average stay being about 4 months. This is slightly higher than the English average. The length of stay was not captured in approximately 33% of cases (which may be due to lack of data or ongoing stays); however, this demonstrates stronger local data recording than nationally, where lengths of stay were not recorded in 52% of cases. A lack of dispersed accommodation and limited bedspaces could contribute to longer stays and reduce turnover, and restrict access for new referrals.

Short stays are more common in Halton than nationally, which could reflect early departures or limited suitability, or capacity.

Households Unable to Be Supported

In 2023/24, Halton reported that 57 households were unable to be supported. 46 of these cases were due to capacity constraints. This is more than double the national rate, indicating a local shortage of spaces.

2 cases were due to households not accepting referrals, 1 due to unmet needs, and 7 due to 'other reasons'.

Households Exiting Safe Accommodation

In 2023/24, 38 households stopped receiving accommodation support. Halton has a strong rate of planned move-ons (60.5%), which is encouraging and suggests effective case management for many survivors.

However, the proportion returning to live with the perpetrator, both from sanctuary and non-sanctuary settings, is alarmingly high (combined 36.8% vs 3.5% nationally). This may indicate:

- Coercive control or economic dependence
- Lack of long-term housing options
- Insufficient follow-up or outreach support

The eviction/asked to leave rate is also significantly higher than average, which may reflect challenges in managing complex needs or behavioural issues in a small service.

Domestic Abuse-Related Death Reviews

According to the Femicide Census, one woman has been killed every three days in the UK since 2009. 90% of the killers were family, partners, or known to the victim.

61% of women were killed by a current or former partner. 80% of the killings were committed in the home of either the victim or the perpetrator.⁷⁹

Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews are done when the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted in violence, abuse, or neglect by either a relative, a spouse, partner, or ex-partner, or a member of the same household. This includes death by suicide.

The purpose of a DARDR is to help identify lessons we can learn from the death, prevent further domestic abuse, and improve services for victims of domestic abuse.

The Domestic Homicide and Suspected Victim Studies 2020 – 2024 Report⁸⁰ stated that between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, there were 262 domestic abuse-related deaths recorded in England and Wales. These included:

- 98 suspected suicides following domestic abuse (SVSDA)
- 80 intimate partner homicides (IPH)
- 39 adult family homicides
- 28 unexpected deaths
- 11 child deaths
- 6 'other' (where the victim and suspect lived together, but were not related or intimate partners)

For the second year in a row, suspected suicides following domestic abuse have overtaken the number of homicides involving current or previous partners (For LGBTQ+ victims, 68% of recorded cases were SVSDA). This reflects increased awareness and progress made against recommendations in the project's last report, which focused on improving policing's ability to better recognise and record the link between domestic abuse and suicide. The rise in suspected suicides linked to domestic abuse underscores the need for trauma-informed mental health support, early identification of coercive control, and stronger post-separation safeguarding.

Over four years (1 April 2020 – 31 March 2024), the number of people killed by their current or previous partner consistently represents around a third of domestic abuse-related deaths each year.

Between April 2020 and March 2024, there were 1012 deaths. These included 501 domestic homicides, 354 SVSDA, 71 unexpected deaths, 61 child deaths, and 25 deaths classified as 'other'. Overall, the most common method of death was by sharp instrument, accounting for 45% of domestic homicides. 73% of victims were female, and most were between 25 and 54 years old (60%). On the other hand, suspects were predominantly male (80%), with the majority aged 25 to 54 years old (69%).

Notably, across the four years of data collection, 22% of victims and 43% of suspects were recorded as having mental health needs. The most commonly recorded risk factors in relation to the suspected included mental ill health, as well as alcohol use, a history of coercive and controlling behaviour, and drug misuse. Another commonly recorded risk factor was separation (threat of actual ending of the relationship.)

⁷⁹ **Femicide Census** (2025) *Femicide Census – Profiles of Women Killed by Men*.

<https://www.femicidecensus.org>

⁸⁰ **Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP)** (2025) *Domestic Homicide Project*.

<https://www.vkpp.org.uk/vkpp-work/domestic-homicide-project/>

Overall, 67% of suspects were known to the police as a suspect or perpetrator of domestic abuse.

While there have been no confirmed domestic abuse-related deaths in Halton since 2014, the Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership Board remains prepared to respond to and manage Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDRs) should they be required, with multi-agency coordination and survivor-informed learning at its core.

Feedback from Domestic Abuse Services

Halton Domestic Abuse Service Research

To gain deeper insight into the demand for domestic abuse support in the area, Halton Borough Council carried out a qualitative study. Input was gathered from service users and providers through a combination of surveys and a facilitated 'pinpoint' focus group. The objective was to explore the pressures on local services and highlight key challenges affecting the current system.

Service Providers:

The Council engaged with a range of local organisations working in the field of domestic abuse, including service providers, charities, and specialist agencies, to gather their perspectives. Participating organisations included Halton Housing, The Children's Society - Halton Resolve, RASASC Cheshire, Cheshire Constabulary, and Children's Services. The 'pinpoint' focus group session was attended by 8 representatives, including staff from Halton Borough Council, Probation, Change Grow Live, MyCWA and Halton Resolve. It is important to note that comments on staff performance and service needs reflect the views of a limited sample and apply across all agencies involved, not solely Halton's IDVA team.

Several key themes emerged from these discussions:

1. Strong Partnership Working and Positive IDVA Engagement

Findings:

- Consistent praise for IDVA responsiveness, professionalism, and collaboration.
- Evident staff dedication – IDVAs and other professionals show passion, teamwork and resilience despite heavy workloads.
- MARAC and multi-agency links seen as a strength.
- Strong collaboration between wider services.

Supporting Quotations:

"I am always impressed with the IDVA service... practical ideas and passionate support."

"Very good communication from IDVA service in a timely manner. They liaise with referrers on next steps."

"Target hardening tools are always increasing – doorbell initiatives etc. - great partnership with housing."

2. Gaps in Support for Marginalised & Complex Needs

Findings:

- Low confidence in support for LGBTQ+, deaf victims, those from ethnic minority groups, and those with immigration needs.
- Lack of services for low-to-medium risk cases and those not scoring high enough on DASH.
- Lack of specialist workers for complex cases, child-on-parent abuse, stalking, historic abuse, male victims and those without children.
- Inconsistent support for historic abuse cases.

Supporting Quotations:

“There is no real service offer for LGBTQ+ victims - that gap is very clear.”

“Support for those who don’t meet IDVA criteria is extremely limited.”

“We should be liaising more with ‘by and for’ organisations that support marginalised communities.”

3. Inconsistent Knowledge of Available Services

Findings:

- Staff struggled to navigate or keep up with which services exist and what they offer.
- Half said they could not easily find information about available services.
- Directory of services considered helpful but seen as hard to maintain.
- GP referrals remain low despite training.

Supporting Quotations:

“Do we have a current index of services? Is there a portal? It's hard to keep track.”

“An up-to-date website or service directory would be ideal.”

“Some services end suddenly due to funding – it makes consistency difficult.”

4. Court and Legal Support Is Limited or Overloaded

Findings:

- Support with legal matters, court orders, and attendance is stretched or unclear.
- Victims often moved instead of being legally protected in their own homes.
- Courts perceived as prioritising perpetrators’ rights over victims’.
- Lack of specialist domestic abuse training across services and courts.
- Long trial waits discourage victims and weaken testimony quality.

Supporting Quotations:

“The focus is still too much on moving the victim. More court support to remove the perpetrator is needed.”

“Court delays, overwhelmed services – legal support isn’t always by someone the victim knows.”

“Staff need better knowledge of court procedures and legal orders.”

5. Housing Support Is Helpful but Overwhelmed

Findings:

- Target hardening and MARAC participation by housing teams are seen as a strength.
- Refuge accommodation is difficult to access; hotel stays are impractical.

Supporting Quotations:

“Moving them doesn’t solve the issue as they often just move within the same area.”

“Hotel accommodation with no kitchen and children to feed is not sustainable.”

“Housing can be a blocker - survivors with kids often have no options but refuge, which they don’t want.”

6. Insufficient and Inconsistent Support for Children

Findings:

- Services for children affected by DA are limited, especially for trauma recovery.
- Lack of long-term support and a need for trauma-informed play therapy.
- Limited trauma-therapy provision is worsened by trial-related delays and long waiting lists.
- More prevention work needed in schools.

Supporting Quotations:

“There isn’t much locally for children affected by trauma.”

“Trauma-informed sessions are useful – we need more like this.”

“More facilities and qualified staff needed to support children long-term.”

7. Health and Mental Health Support Is Hard to Access

Findings:

- Support exists but is patchy, with long waits and a reliance on signposting.
- Survivors need practical and therapeutic support, not just prescriptions.
- Long counselling waiting lists, compounded by delays linked to court proceedings.

Supporting Quotations:

“Health is often ‘opt-in’ or closed - not helpful for complex needs.”

“Access to mental health support is too hard and takes too long.”

“Signposting is there, but actual delivery and accessibility is poor.”

8. Training Gaps and Suggestions

Findings:

- Staff in other services raised the need for further training in:
 - Legal processes (including Non-Molestation Orders)
 - Trauma-informed practice (including trauma-informed play therapy)
 - Support for marginalised communities
 - Service knowledge and referral pathways.
- Some social workers and services lack knowledge of domestic abuse (e.g., DASH risk assessments, differences between parental conflict vs. abuse).

Supporting Quotations:

“Trauma-informed play therapy training would be hugely beneficial.”

“We need to understand coercive control better and what each service offers.”

“Bite-sized, refresher, and CPD training on legal tools like Non-Molestation Orders would help.”

9. Common Systemic Challenges

Findings:

- Overstretched staff, high caseloads, and lack of communication (including from Children’s Social Care).
- Long wait times and survivors overwhelmed by demands from multiple agencies.
- Inconsistent referrals and limited access to information across teams.
- MARAC meetings could be shorter and more focused.
- Delays in police sharing case information and evidence.

Supporting Quotations:

“Survivors are penalised for speaking up - too many demands make them consider going back.”

“One key professional to mediate between agencies would make a huge difference.”

“We need better communication from CSC. They often don’t invite us to meetings or update us.”

10. Recommendations from Practitioners

Suggestions for Improvement:

- Create a central portal or index of services.
- Develop support for low- and medium-risk clients.
- Improve multi-agency coordination and feedback (e.g., MARAC).
- Increase access to counselling and trauma support.
- Better refuge availability, especially locally.
- Address staffing capacity in high-demand services like IDVA.
- Expand specialist provision for complex cases, historic abuse, and male victims.
- Increase prevention and awareness work (schools and community campaigns).
- Improve court processes and trial timelines.

Service Users:

Service users offered both praise and constructive criticism of domestic abuse services in Halton. While many had positive experiences, significant gaps and challenges were also identified. In total, there were 55 responses to the public survey. Again, it is important to note that comments and experiences are based on respondents' experience with all domestic violence services and support accessed in Halton, including police, third sector, NHS, and Halton’s IDVA service.

Key themes, with supporting feedback:

1. Service Usage and Awareness

Findings:

- All respondents had experienced domestic abuse (personally or through someone they knew).

- Almost 3/4 of respondents had used a support service, but many were unaware of what's available or how to access it.

Supporting Feedback:

"I didn't know it existed, and I didn't want to make a fuss at home."

"I sought help via Google but only found the national domestic abuse line, not a localised service."

2. Positive Experiences

Findings:

- Many praised the IDVA service and Halton Women's Centre.
- Empathetic, non-judgemental support and clear guidance were key to positive experiences.

Supporting Feedback:

"The IDVAs are wonder women. They were there for me through the worst time in my life... stood by my side at court."

"I was referred by my Doctor to the Women's Centre... they were caring, listened to my worries, arranged counselling... I can't thank the team enough."

3. Negative Experiences

Findings:

- Many cited inconsistent follow-up, dismissive professionals, and lack of communication, especially after court.
- Social services and police were frequently criticised for poor response, misjudging victims, or enabling abusers.

Supporting Feedback:

"I received no support for over 12 months, the court case is on 7th July - I've had nothing."

"Social services used the information against me and made me look like the abuser."

"Very negative experience of Police, CPS and IDVA service... staff had poor knowledge... services are not joined up."

"The police made a very negative impact on the experience, I would probably not call them again."

4. Housing and Accommodation

Findings:

- Access to housing support was limited. Some respondents were homeless, sofa-surfing, or living in cars.
- Many did not receive security measures or were not aware they were available.

Supporting Feedback:

"I moved my belongings into a storage facility and lived in my car for 9 months."

"I applied for housing... received absolutely no support. Didn't even respond to my application."

"They said they would put security cameras up, but never did."

"I had additional locks fitted... my address was also highlighted to the police."

5. Support for Children

Findings:

- Children often lacked support even when abuse was ongoing or disclosed.
- Schools were sometimes helpful, but services were inconsistent and overstretched.

Supporting Feedback:

"Social services didn't believe me or school... they enabled Dad to continue the abuse over about 6 years."

"The school was useless regarding domestic violence with children – they need training."

"Halton Resolve did sessions with my older children... support now continues in school."

6. Criminal Justice System

Findings:

- Mixed experiences with court-related services.
- Long delays, lack of updates, and emotional strain were common concerns.

Supporting Feedback:

"I have waited 2+ years to attend Crown Court - only for it to be postponed until 2026."

"No follow-up after the sentencing."

"We were not kept in the loop... use of acronyms was very off-putting."

7. Health and Mental Wellbeing Support

Findings:

- Some found help through GPs, referrals, or counselling.
- Others described being left to cope with trauma and mental health issues alone.
- A high proportion of respondents identified themselves as having a mental health condition.

Supporting Feedback:

"I chose to go to my Doctor... they got me into a specialist team to help with mental health and alcohol issues."

"The gateway program was brilliant... I'm now waiting for counselling."

8. Inclusion Gaps: Male, LGBTQ+, Older Victims

Findings:

- Male and LGBTQ+ respondents felt particularly unsupported or dismissed.
- Some noted that services were perceived as "for women only."

Supporting Feedback:

"I'm a man & finding a service is much harder."

"I feel due to it being a same sex situation it wasn't taken as seriously."

“There isn’t enough support for older women with no young children.”

Halton’s Housing Need Assessment Research

The Council also recently undertook a Housing Needs Assessment. During this assessment, feedback was also sought from staff working within the Domestic Abuse Team in Halton, and other relevant Housing officers. They shared the following:

- One of the major concerns of the team dealing with victims/survivors of Domestic Abuse is that there is not a true understanding of the scale of the challenge. The team believe that Domestic Abuse is the most significant challenge to Halton at present. The hidden numbers who are sofa surfing and staying with friends and relatives is unknown and further work is needed to be understand this and the ongoing impact in Halton. Poor housing offers can perpetuate Domestic Abuse.
- The Anne Street West scheme which is currently used as emergency accommodation for victim/survivors of Domestic Abuse is not fit for purpose. Its location is well known across the borough, and dispersed accommodation is the preferred model. It is also gender blind and allocation of a property is based on risk and therefore men and women can be allocated here. That is not a model that works well. In addition to this, where individuals have complex needs and are also going through domestic violence, they will not be accepted to Street West. Without appropriate options, the council is not meeting its legal obligations. Although dispersed options are required, there is a need for a 3 to 4-bed refuge type accommodation to offer emergency placements.
- There is a growing challenge of older people age 60+ who are living in abusive situations and do not have any alternative (ground floor) accommodation to move to.
- The council offers a sanctuary scheme, and a similar consistent offer would be welcomed in the social rented sector. The view from officers is that registered providers may put additional locks on properties, but this is not a full sanctuary measures, and a service standard for specification and timeframes needs to be in place.
- There needs to be more emphasis on retaining victims/survivors with children within the property and removing the perpetrator (with support). It is far easier to house a single person than a family and this is an aspiration of the team. The council is supporting perpetrators, but more resource is required.
- Not all people who experience Domestic Abuse are inherently vulnerable in every aspect of their lives. While they may be in a vulnerable position during the abuse, once they leave, many have the ability to make independent choices, secure jobs, and access the financial resources needed to find stable accommodation. The key support they require is not long-term dependence but a safe, temporary space where they can plan their next steps.

- There is a lack of move-on accommodation for victims/survivors of Domestic Abuse who do require housing support. Victims/survivors of Domestic Abuse are not being given the priority need that the legal duty places on the local authority.
- Further work needs to be undertaken with local landlords to develop a support scheme.

Citizens Advice Halton Study

In addition to engagement conducted as part of this needs assessment, further qualitative research was undertaken by Citizens Advice Halton in early 2025. This work captured the voices and experiences of women in Halton who had lived through domestic abuse. Their insights provide powerful context for understanding both the barriers to support and the essential components of effective service delivery.

Key Barriers to Accessing Support

The research identified six interconnected barriers that often prevented or delayed survivors from seeking and receiving help. These themes reflect the reality of many victims' lives in Halton today:

- **Lack of Awareness:** Many women did not recognise what they were experiencing as abuse, especially in the absence of physical violence. Coercive control, emotional manipulation, and financial restrictions were frequently misunderstood or minimised. Some women described the abuse as having “felt normal” at the time, only realising in hindsight how serious it had been. There was also low awareness of available support services, especially among those not already involved in the criminal justice system
- **Fear of Retaliation:** A significant proportion of survivors described the risks associated with speaking out or leaving an abusive partner. These included threats of increased violence, losing their children, homelessness, or becoming the subject of community gossip or judgment. One participant expressed concern that “if we go to court... he will be...more abusive” illustrating the fear that legal action would escalate danger rather than reduce it
- **Distrust of Services:** Participants often feared that approaching professionals, particularly the local authority, police, housing officers, or social services, would result in blame or further trauma. Some had past experiences of being judged or disbelieved, and others feared their children would be taken away. This deep-seated mistrust meant many delayed seeking help, even at high levels of risk
- **Services Do Not Meet the Needs:** Services were frequently described as disconnected, inaccessible, or unresponsive. Victims reported that they were “left with mountains of paperwork” or required to repeat their traumatic stories over and over again to different people. This fragmented approach created additional emotional strain and undermined trust. There were also concerns about counselling and advice services that were poorly timed or culturally out of step with their lived realities

- **A Lack of Diversity:** Survivors from minoritised communities, including those who were LGBTQ+, from ethnic minority backgrounds, or with insecure immigration status, often felt excluded or misunderstood. Non-English speakers reported language barriers and poor translation. Some felt dismissed because their situation didn't fit a stereotypical image of domestic abuse
- **Leaving Always Means Loss:** Leaving an abusive relationship was not only emotionally fraught, but also tied to significant losses: housing, financial security, community, and even identity. These were especially difficult to face alone. Many participants described staying in harmful situations because they saw no alternative. The pain of starting over, especially with children or no income, was often perceived as worse than enduring the abuse

These insights paint a vivid picture of the structural and emotional challenges faced by survivors. They also underscore the need for services that are accessible, trauma-informed, culturally competent, and guided by the voices of those who have lived through domestic abuse.

When asked what a high-quality, effective domestic abuse service should include, participants consistently identified five essential features:

- **Validation and Empathy:** More than anything, survivors wanted to be listened to and believed. The importance of emotional validation was repeatedly emphasised
- **A Single Point of Contact:** Continuity of care was vital. Victims felt strongly that having a single, named support worker helped build trust, reduced the trauma of repeating their stories, and provided a more consistent experience throughout their journey
- **Practical Support:** Many survivors struggled with complex forms, applications for housing, benefit claims, or court procedures. Some missed out on help because they were too overwhelmed to complete paperwork. Survivors also wanted quicker access to home safety measures, such as reinforced doors, letterbox shields, panic alarms, and security cameras - practical steps that made a real difference in their sense of safety
- **Timely Intervention:** Survivors expressed the importance of receiving help immediately, ideally on the same day. Delays often led them to downplay or minimise the abuse, resulting in inaction or returning to an unsafe home
- **“By and For” Services:** Many participants preferred to engage with services delivered by people with lived experience of domestic abuse, or by those who could understand the cultural, emotional, or community context of their situation

The Citizens Advice Halton report concluded with six key recommendations. These reflect the service design changes most requested by survivors and should be considered within any future commissioning or strategy development:

- **Proactive Conversations:** All public-facing professionals should be trained and expected to routinely ask about domestic abuse in their everyday roles.

Normalising this conversation increases early identification and opens the door to help

- **Multi-Agency One-Stop Hub:** A confidential, low-barrier location where individuals can access housing, health, legal, emotional and financial support from different agencies under one roof would reduce trauma and improve outcomes
- **Local Awareness Raising:** There is an urgent need to improve public understanding of all forms of abuse, including coercive control and financial manipulation. Community education can empower people to recognise abuse earlier
- **Better Signposting and Information Access:** Survivors should be able to easily find up-to-date, clear information about support services. This includes printed materials, online listings, GP posters, and local awareness campaigns
- **Support Beyond IDVA Thresholds:** Many survivors are not classified as high-risk but still need help. Expanding access to trained advisers at organisations like Citizens Advice Halton can ensure survivors get quality-assured support to rebuild their lives
- **Commissioning “By and For” Services:** Services should reflect the diverse identities of Halton’s population and be co-designed with the communities they intend to serve. Culturally competent, inclusive, and survivor-led support builds trust and ensures relevance

Recommendations

These recommendations have been developed in response to evidence from the surveys with service providers and service users, the targeted pinpoint focus group session, the Citizens Advice Domestic Abuse Report, and the Housing Needs Assessment. They also take into account developments since 2021, current local needs, and domestic abuse prevalence, as well as relevant policy updates and statutory requirements issued by the Government. They have been shaped and formally endorsed by **Halton’s Domestic Abuse Partnership Board**.

1. Awareness, Accessibility & Inclusion

Many survivors, professionals, and community members lack awareness of what domestic abuse services exist and how to access them. Access barriers are greater for marginalised groups and in workplace settings where staff may not know how to signpost.

Actions:

- Develop and maintain a centralised, up-to-date online and print service directory, including referral routes and eligibility.

- Distribute posters, leaflets, and business cards with QR code links to this directory across GP surgeries, schools, housing offices, libraries, workplaces, and community hubs.
- Ensure materials are multilingual, accessible, and inclusive, reflecting the diversity of Halton's communities.
- Partner with "by and for" specialist organisations to co-design inclusive messaging and ensure reach to male, LGBTQ+, deaf, disabled, and ethnic minority survivors.
- Establish mechanism to ensure information is up to date.
- Improve offer at Halton Women's Centre.
- Improve referral pathways via GPs, IDVAs and schools

2. Tiered and Ongoing Support Pathway

Many victims who do not meet the IDVA threshold receive little or no support, while others feel abandoned once crisis or court involvement ends. There is a need for a continuum of support that includes early intervention, trauma recovery, and empowerment.

Actions:

- Develop a consistent Low- and Medium-Risk Offer across agencies, providing early help, advocacy, and signposting.
- Fund and expand peer support groups, early intervention, and step-down services for those leaving crisis support or the justice process.
- Increase access to non-medical trauma and wellbeing services, including group and peer-led recovery, to complement clinical mental health options.
- Establish a "Step-Down" and recovery pathway following court outcomes, housing interventions, or IDVA closure, ensuring continuity of care.
- Promote empowerment, skill-building, and survivor-led recovery models, strengthening resilience and reducing repeat victimisation.
- Monitor outcomes to identify and address any gaps in early help or recovery provision.

3. Strengthen & Diversify the IDVA Service

The IDVA service is highly valued but overstretched, with limited specialist capacity. Survivors and professionals highlight the need for IDVAs in additional settings and for longer-term involvement in complex cases.

Actions:

- Secure funding to expand the IDVA team and introduce specialist posts in courts, hospitals, an IDVA based in iCART, and a multiple lived experience IDVA.
- Ensure IDVAs provide continuity of case management for complex or high-risk survivors, including follow-up after court, housing, or MARAC interventions.
- Explore use of volunteers or peer supporters to enhance the service while maintaining professional oversight.

- Integrate specialist therapeutic or trauma-informed practitioners within the IDVA team.
- Strengthen coordination between IDVAs, police, CPS, probation, housing, and health partners to ensure seamless information sharing and consistent support.

4. Justice, Accountability & Court Support

Survivors often experience confusion, delay, and lack of support within the justice process. Perpetrator interventions and monitoring also vary in quality and availability. A coordinated approach is needed to improve outcomes and accountability.

Actions:

- Train all relevant professionals on legal options (Non-Molestation Orders, Occupation Orders, Clare's Law, etc.).
- Strengthen post-court Step-Down pathways linking survivors to recovery and support services.
- Embed survivor-informed justice approaches within criminal justice agencies.
- Encourage specialist review and scrutiny into how the police investigate domestic abuse offences and communicate with victim survivors.

5. Housing & Whole Housing Approach

Survivors face housing insecurity, inconsistent support, and limited refuge spaces. A consistent, trauma-informed housing response is needed to ensure safety and compliance with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Actions:

- Deliver and embed the Whole Housing Approach model across all housing providers.
- Expand access to refuge and move-on accommodation and standardise security measures (locks, alarms, CCTV).
- Strengthen joint working between housing and IDVA services, ensuring survivors can remain safely in their homes when appropriate.
- Ensure all local housing and homelessness policies are compliant with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and reflected in the Council's Housing Strategy.

6. Support for Children, Families & Intergenerational Prevention

Children affected by domestic abuse are often overlooked and under-supported. Families need holistic, trauma-informed interventions to break intergenerational cycles of abuse and strengthen safe parenting.

Actions:

- Integrate domestic abuse pathways into Family Hubs, ensuring early help and consistent referral routes.
- Introduce and resource a specialist Child-to-Parent Abuse response, potentially located within Children's Social Care and linked to drug and alcohol teams.

- Monitor outcomes for children and families to inform prevention and early help strategies.
- Improve access to therapies for children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse

7. Evidence, Data & Continuous Improvement

Consistent data collection, survivor voice, and shared learning are essential to sustain improvements. Better evidence will strengthen commissioning, governance, and accountability across all workstreams.

Actions:

- Strengthen inter-agency data-sharing protocols and establish a consistent outcomes framework.
- Improve qualitative data collection, including inclusive focus groups and targeted surveys for survivors and perpetrators, and develop an improved evaluation form for both survivors and perpetrators.
- Ensure surveys and consultations are accessible in multiple languages and inclusive of diverse communities.
- Continue to quality-assure the MARAC process, ensuring consistent attendance, risk management, and follow-up.
- Involve survivor representatives in the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and key workstreams to embed lived experience in decision-making.
- Use findings from needs assessments and MARAC reviews to shape commissioning and workforce development.
- Publish annual progress and learning reports to demonstrate transparency and accountability.

Next Steps

Following the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board Meeting on 13^h October 2025:

- Update recommendations following receipt/ approval from Domestic Abuse Partnership Board
- Present final draft to Domestic Abuse Partnership Board 15th December 2025 for approval.

HALTON DOMESTIC ABUSE PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY 2025-2026



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**‘WHEN I FIRST MET MY SUPPORT WORKER I WAS CONFUSED AND CONCERNED ABOUT MY FUTURE, BUT AFTER THE FIRST TWO MEETINGS I FELT AT EASE AND WAS FEELING LIKE I HAD SOMEONE WHO WANTED TO LISTEN AND HELP ME MOVE FORWARD IN MY LIFE, I FEEL LIKE THE COURSE HELPED ME OPEN UP AND TALK ABOUT FEELINGS AND LEARN ABOUT MISTAKES AND MOVING FORWARD, I THINK THE COURSE CAN HELP ANYONE EVEN PEOPLE WHO DON’T BELIEVE THEY NEED IT’ .
(CHOICES)**

FOREWORD

In Halton we recognise that domestic abuse is a complex, challenging issue which can have a devastating impact on individuals, families and communities. It can affect anyone, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation, and it occurs across all society, regardless of age, race, religion, wealth or geography.

For many years, we have had a strong focus on tackling domestic abuse in all its forms and we remain resolute in this.

Our vision is for everyone to be able to recognise domestic abuse, take responsibility and work together to tackle it, and the Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership will lead on ensuring that we achieve this vision.

We believe that tackling domestic abuse is vital to building, stronger, safer and healthier communities and it is Halton's aim to create safer homes and communities, and a safer society benefitting all residents, and reducing fear and harm.

Halton has a long-established strong ethos of working in partnership with other agencies – we recognise that no one agency can end domestic abuse and so we will continue to work in collaboration and challenge each other to ensure that are plans and services are based on best practice, evidence and robust evaluation.

Partnership agencies will work together to demonstrate a ‘whole picture’ response - the whole person, family, community, and society approach to supporting victims, children, perpetrators and families affected by domestic abuse.

This strategy will detail key priorities that we have identified, and focuses on hearing the authentic voices of survivors, children and families affected by domestic abuse, along with the local community, to ensure our services are responsive to local needs.

We will keep increasing the opportunities for those with lived experience to speak for themselves, in their own voices, and be heard by those who can make change.

The strategy will also respond to the needs of those who abuse so we can reduce harm caused to victims, to make for happier, safer future relationships.

We will promote support services and provide people with skills so that when they are concerned about someone they know, they have access to specialist help, feel supported and are equipped to prevent harm.

We will ensure that frontline staff have the tools and skills to recognise domestic abuse, provide advice, and carry out effective safety and support work with individuals and families. We must do everything we can to ensure victims and their families are protected from harm within the community or in supported accommodation.

Thank you to all the partners and individuals who have contributed to this strategy – this vital work will help us to continue tackling domestic abuse and make a real difference in Halton.

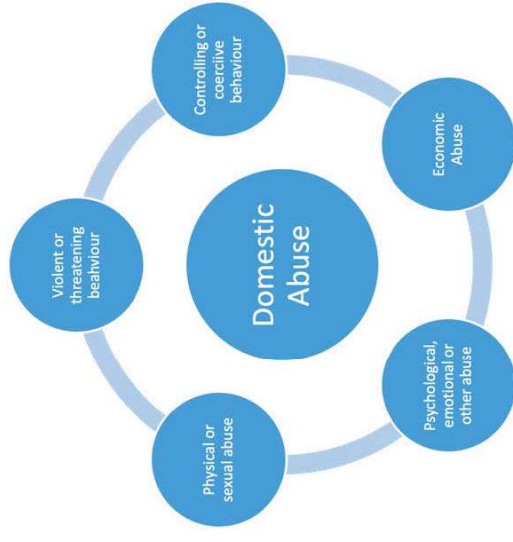
Cllr Martha Lloyd Jones
Executive Board Member,
Community Safety

Sue Wallace-Bonner
Executive Director,
Adult Services

SECTION 1: WHAT IS DOMESTIC ABUSE

The Domestic Abuse Act and wider action plan will help to ensure that victims have the confidence to come forward and report their experience, safe in the knowledge that the justice system and other agencies will do everything they can both to protect and support them and their children and pursue their abuser.

For the first time there is a Statutory Definition of 'Domestic Abuse' (The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Definition in detail – see Appendix 1). This is defined as 'behaviour which is abusive by one person towards another person'. The persons have to be personally connected. Behaviour is to be regarded as 'abusive' if it consists of any of the following:



To be 'personally connected' means individuals who are either married, civil partners, couples engaged to be married or have agreed to enter into a civil partnership, those who have been in an intimate personal relationship with one another or those who have a child or children to whom they each have parental responsibility or they are relatives.

Anyone can be a victim of domestic violence, regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, faith or class. Abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. There are lots of examples of domestic abuse and each situation will be unique. For examples of domestic abuse, refer to Appendix 2.

'THE IDVA SERVICE WAS INTEGRAL TO MY SUPPORT SYSTEM. I DID NOT FEEL ALONE ANYMORE ONCE I HAD AN IDVA AND ONE WHO CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD MY PLIGHT. I DIDN'T KNOW I COULD GET COURT SUPPORT, THIS WAS THE BIGGEST HELP OF ALL. FROM THE MINUTE I REFERRED MYSELF TO THE END OF MY CASE, MY IDVA HAS BEEN THERE FOR EVEN THE DAFTEST OF THINGS WHEN NEEDED.'

(IDVA)

SECTION 2: DOMESTIC ABUSE, THE SCALE AND CHALLENGE.

National Context:

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

Who are the Victims of Domestic Abuse?

- Each year more than 75,000 people in the UK are at imminent risk of being murdered or seriously injured as a result of domestic abuse.
- Over 70,000 high-risk adult victims and 96,000 children are discussed at Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (Marac) meetings across England and Wales every year.
- 93% of these victims are female
- 7% are male
- 17% are from Black, Asian or racially minoritised communities
- 10% are disabled
- 1.6% are lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans (LGBT)
- [\(Who is affected by domestic abuse? - SafeLives\)](#)

Domestic abuse is a gendered crime

- Domestic abuse is a gendered crime which is deeply rooted in the societal inequality between women and men. (Women's Aid et al, 2021).
- Domestic abuse happens disproportionately to women and girls. (CEDAW 1992: para. 6)
- Perpetrators of CCB (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour) have fixed ideas about gender roles and feel largely justified to abuse their partners (Evan Stark)
- Coercive control is committed by men against women. Coercive control operates largely through sexual inequality and gender norms that reflect the greater power men continue to have over women in wider society. (Evan Stark)
- Coercive control is linked to domestic abuse homicide and victim suicides (Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides 2020-2023)
- 'Only by understanding the gendered nature of this crime and recognising the specific needs of all victims and survivors, can the whole of society mount an appropriate response' Rachel Maclean MP, Minister for Safeguarding 2024

I ASKED YP IF SHE HAD ENJOYED THE SESSION. YP SAID THAT SHE HAD AND WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING ME AGAIN NEXT WEEK. AT THE END OF THE SESSION YP RATED HERSELF 10/10 AS KNOWING ALL ABOUT KEEPING HERSELF SAFE.
(RESOLVE)

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the UK

- Estimated 2.1 million adults aged 16 and over to have experienced domestic abuse in the previous 2022 Crime Survey for England and Wales, year ending March 2023
- The victim/survivor was a woman in 73% of domestic abuse crimes recorded by police in England and Wales (2020-21)
- Year ending March 2021, the majority of defendants (92%) in domestic abuse-related prosecutions were men
- 36% of stalking and harassment cases and 19% of sexual offences take place in the context of domestic abuse
- Year ending March 2021, 93.5% of domestic abuse-related sexual offences were female victims. 6.5% were male.
- (Data supplied from 26 police forces in England and Wales Office for National Statistics (ONS). (2022) Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2022. Published online: ONS. pp. 7)

Prevalence of intimate partner homicide UK

- 248 domestic abuse related deaths recorded between April 2020 to March 2023
- 84% of IPH cases involved a female victim and male suspect(s) Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides 2020-2023
- 38% of the women killed from 2009 to 2018 were killed within the first month of separation and 89% in the first year – Femicide census
- 64% of the DHRs had aggravating factors, with coercive control being the most common
- 80% of the victims were female and 20% were male. For perpetrators, 83% were male and 17% female.
- There were dependent children in 52% of the households where the victim was aged under 60
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-findings-from-analysis-of-domestic-homicide-reviews/key-findings-from-analysis-of-domestic-homicide-reviews#executive-summary>)

Children and domestic abuse

- Domestic abuse affects the whole family. In the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 it was finally recognised that children who experience domestic abuse are victims in their own right.
- Over 105,000 children in the UK live in households where there is high-risk domestic abuse. [SafeLives Marac national dataset \(2023\)](#)
- 62% of high-risk victims and 65% of medium risk victims have children, on average 2 each. [SafeLives Insights data](#)
- Over a quarter (27%) of children in high-risk domestic abuse households are under 3 years old. On average, high-risk abuse has been going on for 2.6 years, meaning these children

are living with abuse for most of their life.

- [SafeLives Insights Idva Dataset 2021-2022](#)
- 78% of children living in domestic abuse households are directly harmed by the perpetrator of the abuse, in addition to the harm caused by witnessing the abuse of others. [SafeLives Children's Insights dataset 2021-2022](#)

Perpetrators of domestic homicides

Risk factors and vulnerabilities

248 Intimate Partner Homicide (IPH)(1st April 2020 – 31st March 2023)

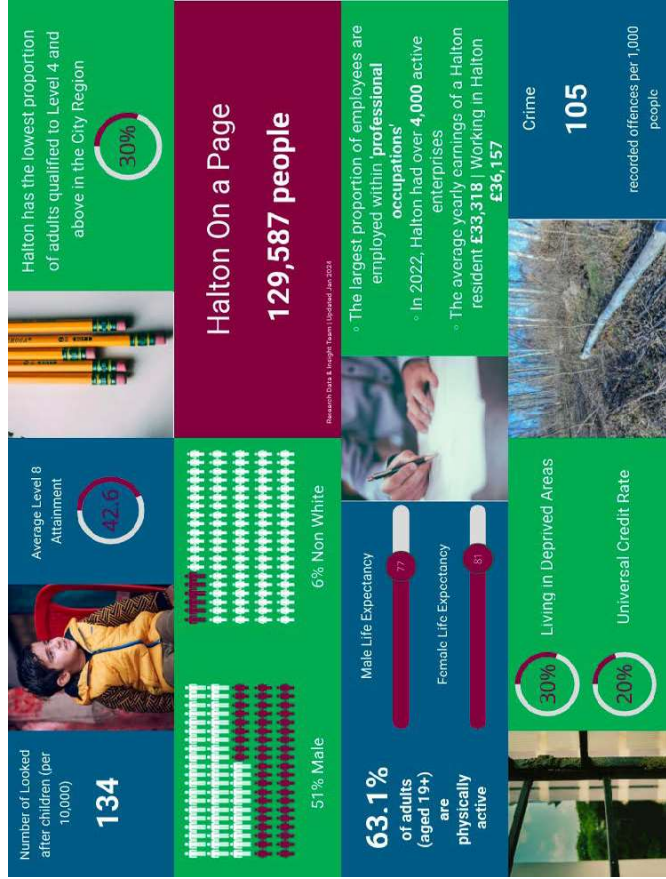
Across the three-year dataset the top five most commonly recorded risk factors in relation to the suspect were identified as:

1. Mental ill health
2. History of Controlling and Coercive Behaviour
3. Alcohol use
4. Drug misuse
5. Threat/fear of, or actual relationship ending/separation

(www.vkpp.org.uk/vkpp-work/domestic-homicide-project/ (March 2024) National Domestic Homicide Project)

Non-fatal strangulation (NFS) as part of coercive control

- Numerous studies have shown that strangulation will not have visible injuries in many cases. NFS is a gendered crime committed against women by men.
- The lack of injuries and lack of training across the system has resulted in a minimisation of non-fatal strangulation. Training Institute for Strangulation Prevention (2021)
- It has both immediate and long-term health impacts and can be lethal.
- Prior NFS was associated with over seven-fold odds (OR 7.48, 95% CI 4.53–12.35) of becoming a completed homicide
- It is not a defence that the victim consented to the infliction of the serious harm for the purposes of obtaining sexual gratification (Domestic Abuse Act 2021)



Key data

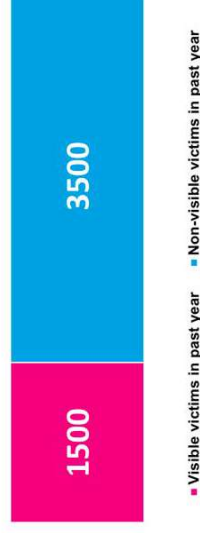
- DA/DV volume crime: accounts for $\frac{1}{4}$ of all recorded violent crime in UK. One contact every 30 seconds...
- DA/DV is more likely to result in injury than other types of assault and victims are more likely to become repeat victims than any other type of crime.
- 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men experience DA/DV. 1 in 5 women and 1 in 10 men experience stalking.
- Low conviction rate. Consequence of this?
- DA/DV cannot be separated from DV homicide.
- Two women are murdered every week in England and Wales at the hands of partners or ex-partners.
- High profile murders: IPCC, Article 2 and Public Inquiries.
- Coercive control and stalking behaviours continue to be missed by professionals.
- Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour Based Violence Risk Model (DASH 2009-2023) is the common risk toolkit now being rolled out across police service and partner agencies.

Halton IDVA Key Data

Key statistics in the past 12 months (Jan - Dec 2024)

- Team has received 1649 Domestic Abuse Referrals to which 610 (37%) have been classed as High Risk and 533 (32%) have been passed to an IDVA to work with the victim
- The team of 5 IDVA's currently have 181 active cases
- Of the current 181 active cases, 70 of them have been heard at MARAC in the last 12 months
- The following stats are for the last financial year 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024
- There were 1278 cases opened and closed over the year
- 1609 referrals made into the Domestic Abuse team to which 32% have been classed as high risk and to which 31% have been allocated to IDVA support.
- 87% of the referrals were made by the Police

Prevalence of adult victims – in the past year – visible victims



This shows the estimated number of visible adult victims in the local area in the past year. We estimate that a **third (34%) of female victims** and a **quarter (24%) of male victims** in the past year were visible. This calculation uses a combination of Marac data to show visible high-risk victims and data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for visible non-high risk victims as they reported in the CSEW that they had "told other support professional or organisation".

Prevalence of adult victims – since the age of 16

- We estimate there are 20,000 adult victims in Halton who have experienced domestic abuse at some point in their lives since the age of 16
- An estimated 15% of these adult victims will have experienced both partner and family abuse
- Of the total estimated adult victims 13,500 (68%) are estimated to be female
- Of the total estimated adult victims 6,000 (32%) are estimated to be male

Prevalence of adult victims – in the past year

- We estimate there are 5,500 adult victims in Halton who have experienced domestic abuse at some point in the last year
- We estimate that around 8% of those adult victims will have experienced both partner and family abuse
- Of the total estimated adult victims in the past year, 3,500 (68%) are estimated to be female
- Of the total estimated adult victims in the past year, 1,500 (32%) are estimated to be male

Prevalence – in the past year – partner abuse (IPV)

- We estimate that there were 4,000 adult victims in the local area who have experienced partner abuse in the past year¹.
- We estimate that there were 3,000 children living in a household with partner abuse in the past year²
- We estimate that there were 3,000 people using abusive behaviours in their intimate partner relationships in the past year in the local area
- Of those 20% are estimated to be serial perpetrators of domestic abuse³

Prevalence in the last year marginalised groups:

- We estimate that there were 1,000 Young victims aged 16-24¹
- Useful resource: see our [Spotlights on Young People and DA](#)
- We estimate that there were 1,000 Older victims aged 60+²
- Useful resource: see our [Spotlights on Older People and DA](#)
- We estimate that there were 100 Black, Asian and racially minoritised victims who have experienced domestic abuse in the past year³
- Useful resource: see our [Spotlights on 'Honour'-based Violence and Forced marriage and DA](#)
- We estimate that there were 1,000 Disabled victims of domestic abuse in the past year
- Useful resource: see our [Spotlights on Disabled people and DA](#)
- We estimate that there were 1,000 LGBT+ victims of domestic abuse in the past year⁴
- - Useful resource: see our [Spotlights on LGBT+ people and DA](#)
- - Useful resource: see our [Spotlights on Parenting and DA](#) and our [Spotlights on Young People and DA](#)

Caveat: Older (75+) victim prevalence rates are based on a proxy rate from the CSEW for abuse in the past year only for those aged 60-74. This is because there is no CSEW prevalence rate data for the year ending in March 2020 for those aged 75+.

The sum of females and males may not add up to the total due to rounding.

HALTON'S CHALLENGES RELATING TO DOMESTIC ABUSE

HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS FOR VIOLENCE (INCLUDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE) IS 72 PER 100,000, WHICH IS NEARLY DOUBLE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 42 PER 100,000. THE NORTH WEST IS 60 PER 100,000

THE UNDER 18 CONCEPTION RATE IS 22 PER 1000, NEARLY TWICE AS HIGH AS THE ENGLISH AVERAGE (13 PER 1000)

RATE OF HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS CAUSED BY UNINTENTIONAL AND DELIBERATE INJURIES PER 10,000 (15-24) IS 182, WHICH IS MUCH HIGHER THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 118

THE RATE OF CHILDREN SUBJECT TO CHILD PROTECTION PLANS IS 72 PER 10,000, WHICH IS NEARLY TWICE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 43 PER 10,000 AND HIGHER THAN THE NORTH WEST (49)

HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS DUE TO SUBSTANCE MISUSE (15-24) ARE TWICE AS HIGH (177 PER YEAR) AS NATIONALLY (81 PER YEAR), AND MUCH HIGHER THAN THE NORTH WEST (105 PER YEAR)

The Crime Survey for England and Wales found that (in the year ending March 2017) the majority of adults responding to the survey thought it was always unacceptable to hit or slap a partner. However some respondents thought it was always, mostly or sometimes acceptable to hit or slap a partner in response to:

- having an affair or cheating on them (7.1%)
- flirting with other people (2.0%)
- constantly nagging or moaning (1.5%). (ONS, 2018)

There are still lots of stereotypes and misconceptions around domestic abuse and its causes. Victim-blaming is common issue that results in people not asking for help.

Local context:

Halton is a largely urban area when compared to other areas of Cheshire. Its two biggest settlements are Widnes and Runcorn that face each other across the River Mersey, 10 miles upstream from Liverpool. Unlike Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, and Warrington, Halton shares many of the social, economic and crime/ASB issues more associated with its urban neighbours in Merseyside and is part of the Liverpool City Region.

Halton Borough Council serves a population of 125,800 (Census 2011) and 53,300 households.

Halton is ranked 23rd in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2019). The environment acts as a contributory factor to the abuse and violence seen in Halton. The 5 most deprived wards in Halton are Windmill Hill, Halton Lea, Halton Castle, Riverside and Norton South.

Key Halton Data 2020-21

- In an average week there are 55 domestic related crimes reported to Cheshire Police, originating from Halton Borough. Halton has the highest number of domestic related crimes per 10,000 population of 50.38 compared to 36.15 in other areas of Cheshire.
- 553 Domestic Abuse Related Crimes have occurred in Halton that have resulted in injury; Halton had the highest number per 10,000 pop (9.58), compared to 6.91 in Cheshire.
- 334 cases have been processed through the MARAC, with 176 cases appearing as repeats. Per 10,000 female population (16+), Halton had the highest rate of cases discussed at MARAC.

- 23 Domestic Violence Protection Notices were authorised by Cheshire Constabulary.
- Claire's Law (DVDS) Referrals – 64 Domestic violence disclosures were made via the Right to Ask Scheme and a further 42 disclosures via the Right to Know Scheme ('Right to Know' requests are triggered by police where indirect information or intelligence held by ourselves or partner agencies indicates that an individual is at risk of harm from their partner.)
- 241 children and 3 unborn babies were identified at child protection assessment were domestic abuse has been a significant, attributing factor to harm caused.

Hearing and Responding to Service Users Voices

In Halton we not only consulting with service users in developing our plans and services, we also consult with the wider community to ensure we model services that are responsive, and meet the needs of our local community.

Responses to the Halton domestic abuse victims and those who have tried to help someone else suffering from domestic abuse 2021 survey, including a review of victims feedback and consultations have been used to shape this strategy and directly contribute to the modelling of local services.

We recognise the importance of having authentic service users voices in our local service delivery, over the next three years we will improve existing arrangements and will have representation of both adult and children as victims of domestic abuse at our Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership Board. We will work with service user panels to help shape our future commissioning plans, and work with the voluntary and community sector in particular to ensure that both victims, children and those who harm are listened to.

We acknowledge that domestic abuse is a complex issue and we will continue to gather the voices of those who present with additional needs, we are passionate in Halton about supporting hard to reach clients, hearing their voices is essential to mitigate their risks, and ensuring resources are available their needs and shape services that can respond to their choices. Developing a broader understanding and knowledge base.

SECTION 3: THE 2025-2026 HALTON VISION

Halton recognise that domestic abuse is a common and complex issue that has a debilitating impact upon the health and wellbeing of those affected by it, and on the communities it is perpetrated within. We have had a strong focus on tackling domestic abuse in all its forms for many years and we remain resolute in our ambition, in Halton we believe that tackling domestic abuse is vital to building stronger, safer and healthier communities. We recognise that domestic abuse can occur in many forms and can be experienced differently by different groups, such as women and girls, members of the LGBT and BME communities and men, who may disproportionately experience various elements of these abuses. It is widely evidenced that these issues not only impact on the victim, their families and children but also the wider community and broader society with the associated emotional, health and financial costs.

Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-2026 sets out the vision of all partners is that:

Halton will be a thriving and vibrant Borough where people can learn and develop their skills; enjoy a good quality of life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment; the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality; sustained by a thriving business community; and safer, stronger and more attractive neighbourhoods."

Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan 2024-2029:

- Priority 6. Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence.
- Priority 7. Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy.
- Priority 8. Supporting Children, Young People and Families.
- Priority 9. Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need.
- Priority 10. Working Towards a Greener Future
- Priority 11. Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The Halton Vision:

"FOR EVERYONE TO BE ABLE TO RECOGNISE DOMESTIC ABUSE, TAKE RESPONSIBILITY AND WORK TOGETHER TO TACKLE DOMESTIC ABUSE IN HALTON"

The Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership will lead on ensuring that we achieve this vision. We have listened to our local survivors, their children and working together have designed a clear pathway to the Partnership to ensure that we are and continue to be service user led. Halton has a long established strong multi agency partnership ethos, we recognise that no one agency can end domestic abuse and we will continue to work in collaboration and challenge agencies to ensure that Halton intervention models are based on best practise, evidence and robust evaluation. No one should live in fear, especially in domestic setting. In the next three years, Halton aims to create safer homes, safer communities and a safer society benefitting all of our residents, reducing fear and harm experienced by those affected by domestic abuse.

'I RECEIVED ALL THE SUPPORT I NEEDED. I KNOW THAT SOMETIMES I DIDN'T MAKE THINGS EASY, BUT I WAS NEVER JUDGED'.

IRENE 56

‘I REALLY DIDN’T WANT TO LEAVE REFUGE. THIS WAS THE LONGEST PLACEMENT I HAVE EVER HAD. I FELT SAFE AND KNEW I COULD GET HELP WHENEVER I NEEDED’.

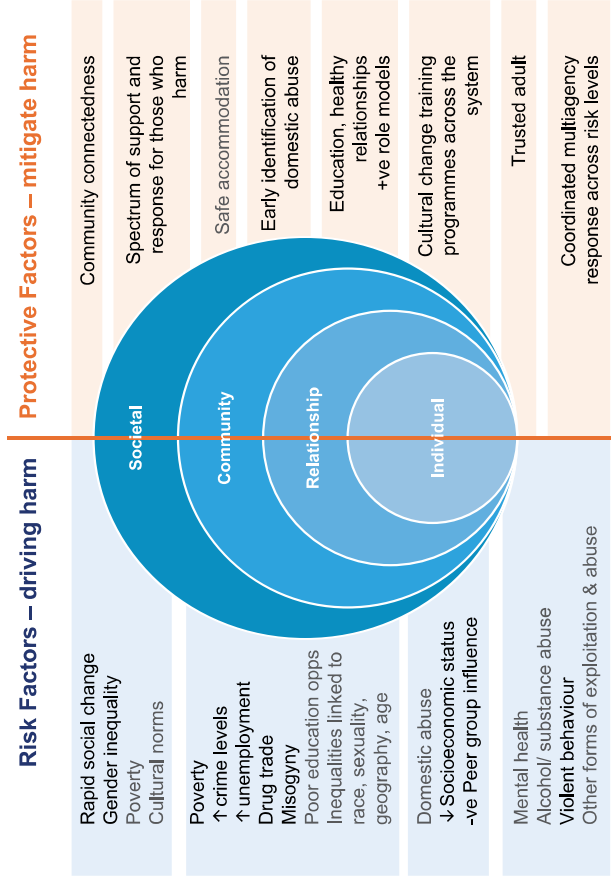
SOPHIE 42

SECTION 4: A WHOLE PICTURE APPROACH

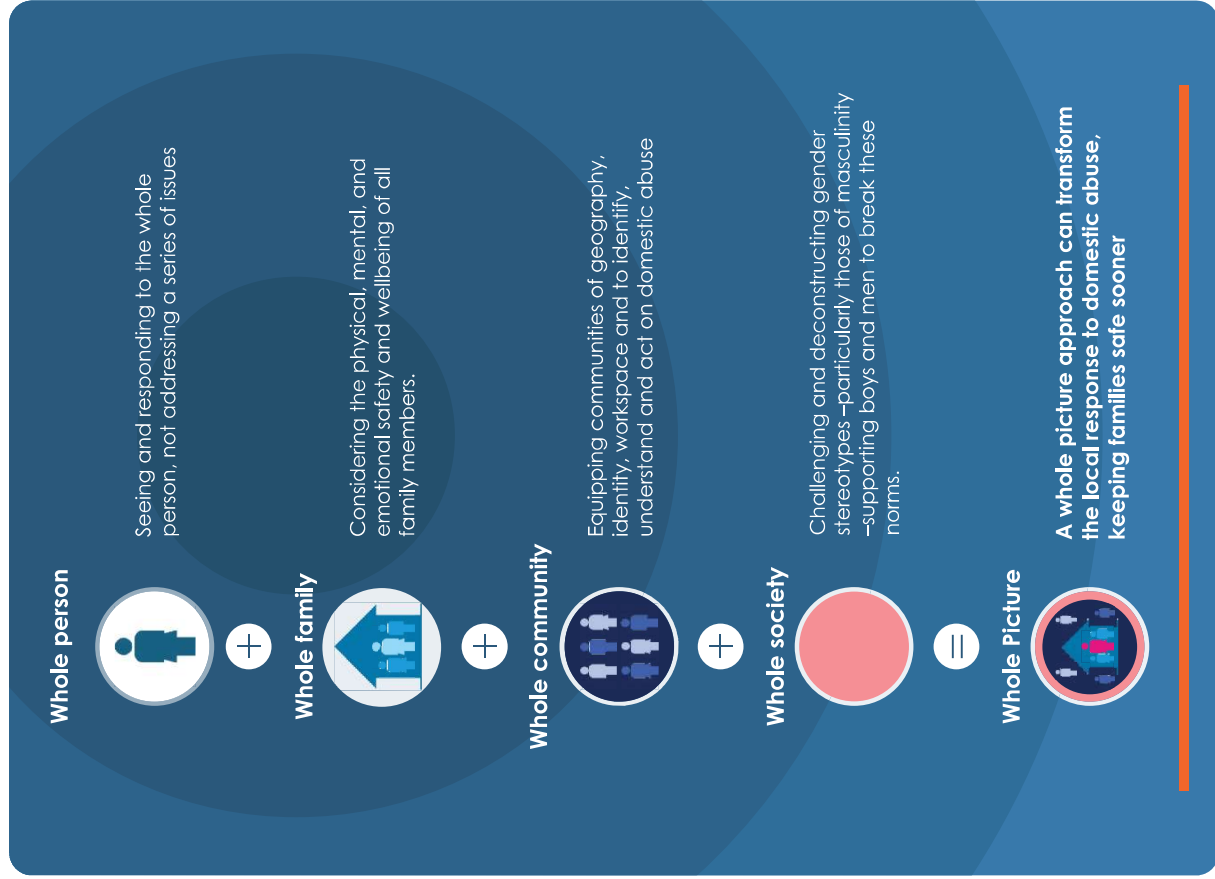
The Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership Strategy will build on previous strategies and will re-inforce local approaches to tackling domestic abuse. Partnerships agencies will work in collaboration demonstrating a Whole Picture response, Whole person, Whole Family, Whole Community. Whole Society approach to supporting victims, children, perpetrators and families affected by domestic abuse.

We believe the following SafeLives framework sets out the comprehensive and enduring whole picture approach that needs to be in place for domestic abuse to be ended for good.

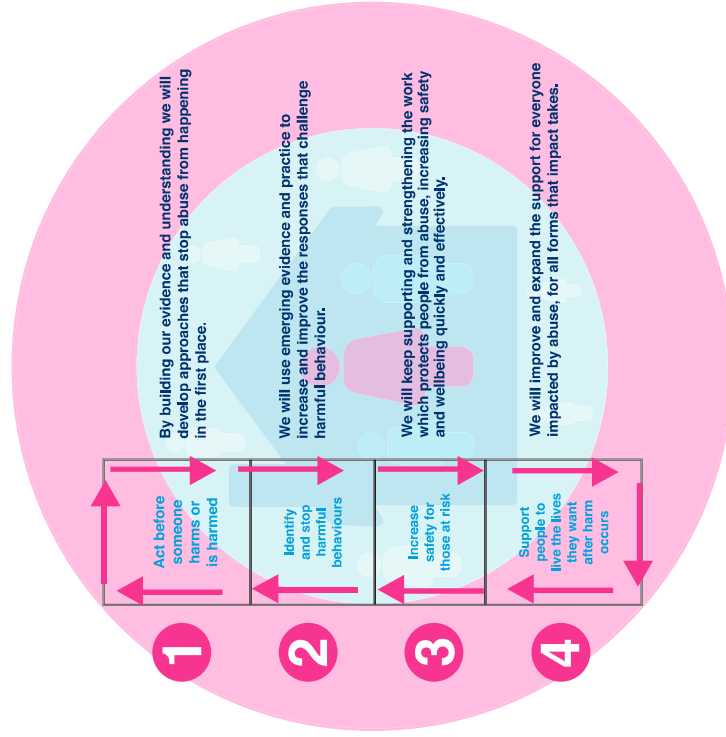
Risk and protective factors across the system



Halton's Domestic Abuse Partnership Strategy has a basis in the Safelives Whole Picturework. This is outlined below.



During 2025 - 2026 Halton we will:



In everything we do, the expert voice of frontline practitioners and the authentic voice of survivors will be a prominent and vital part. We will keep expanding the opportunities for those with lived experience to speak for themselves, in their own voices, and be heard by those who can make change.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1 – ACT BEFORE SOMEONE IS HARMED

- Domestic abuse is never acceptable, Halton have adopted a zero tolerance culture.
- We actively promote Clare's Law, The Right to Know and The Right to Ask.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3 – INCREASE SAFETY FOR THOSE AT RISK

- Ensure that all frontline staff have the tools and skill sets to recognise domestic abuse, provide advice and have the understanding to do effective safety and support work within their remit, with the individuals and families they support.
- We must do everything within our gift to ensure victims and their dependents are protected from harm within the community or within a range of supported accommodation options.
- We develop specialist skill sets to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our community, that services and support are accessible and equitable.
- Working in partnership with Criminal Justice we must work in collaboration to ensure that those who harm are brought to justice.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2 – IDENTIFY AND STOP HARMFUL BEHAVIOURS

- Everyone needs to understand their responsibilities and what they can do to contribute to tackling domestic abuse in Halton.
- Promote support services and upskill people so that when families, friends, neighbours or co-workers are concerned about someone they know, they have access to specialist help, feel supported and are equipped to prevent harm.
- Through improved systems and sharing information about adults and children at risk of harm we are able to identify and understand the needs of individuals and families so we can provide timely interventions.
- We share and spend resources in a way that best matches our collective whole picture approach.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4 – SUPPORT PEOPLE TO LIVE THE LIVES THEY WANT AFTER HARM OCCURS

- Victims are offered support and services that best fit their needs and help them to recover. Victims and families are empowered to be resilient and independent.
- Children and young people are recognised in their own right, providing early and effective interventions, offering support and advice to parents and young people in order to address need and support behavioural change;
- Those who harm are offered the support they need to change and tackle the underlying motivators to their behaviour.

SECTION 5: A WHOLE HOUSING APPROACH

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021), places a statutory duty on tier one local authorities relating to the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children residing within refuges and other safe accommodation.

A Whole Picture Approach details clear work streams and outlining key priorities to ensure that local people are supported at the earliest stage of their experience to prevent the escalation of risk and harm. This includes the provision of specialist services to support the whole family – victims and their children, as well as those who harm. The intention is to work together to provide safety, recovery and sustainable change.

Accommodation need arises where prevention and early intervention has not been possible or successful and is a last resort for individuals and families who are at risk of further harm if they do not move out of their home.

Only a small minority of people need such provision as there are many ways in which we can provide safety in homes and communities, including:

- Safety planning with and support for victims to end abusive relationships in a planned and risk managed way
- Using a range of multi-agency forums to bring all involved agencies together to safeguard clients
- Accessing the criminal and civil justice system to address the source of the problem i.e. the alleged perpetrator
- Engaging the person who is harming in changing their behaviour

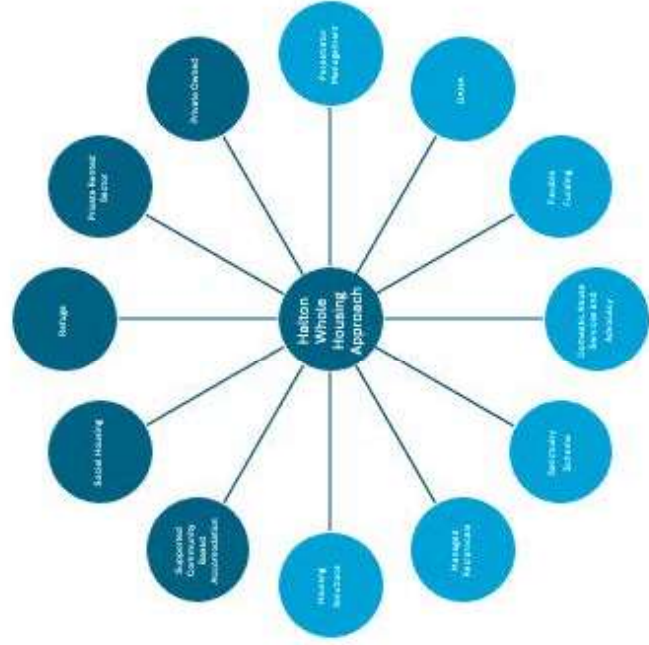
The Whole Housing Approach is an evidence-based model that has been used as a framework to develop and construct a model for Halton.

The Whole Housing Approach was first conceptualised in 2018 by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) in collaboration with the National Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy and Practice Group. The approach aims to:

- Enable earlier identification and intervention of domestic abuse
- Reduce the number of people rendered homeless because of domestic abuse
- Enable survivors to remain safely in their homes where it is their choice to do so, or to keep their tenancy status if they relocate
- Where a current joint tenancy is in place, enable the tenancy to be altered so the perpetrator is removed and the tenancy is put in the victims sole name

The diagram below illustrates the model and its twelve components. The blue circles represent different forms of accommodation including the three main tenure types (social, private rented and private ownership) and temporary accommodation settings (refuges, supported accommodation). The orange circles are the housing options and specialist domestic abuse services designed to provide safe and stable housing which allow victim/survivors to either remain in their property or relocate to new accommodation.

**'THE SANCTUARY SCHEME MADE ME FEEL SAFER IN MY OWN HOME'
SARAH 49**



Sustainability

To ensure what we offer is sustainable we will:

- Develop the Whole Housing approach to interface with our existing systems and pathways including Marac, the Integrated Front Door.
- Embed the learning within staff teams and across the partnership through models of joint working, secondment opportunities and shared learning events
- Build the evidence base and financial case for the approach through high quality external evaluations that can be used to support future funding applications.
- Include performance measures that evidence sustained change.
- Create tools, materials and interventions that can be used by professionals, and families themselves, beyond the timescale of the project
- Align all work with local relevant strategies

The Halton Response

In response to the local need for accommodation, Halton will offer a range of options including:

- Housing-related support – providing housing-related advice and support, for example, securing a permanent home and advice on how to live safely and independently.
- Specialist support for victims with relevant protected characteristics and those presenting with complex needs.
- Specialist services that are able to respond to those people who require interpreters, have regard to cultural and faith requirements, mental health advice and support, and immigration advice.
- Inclusive supported temporary accommodation
- Community based supported accommodation
- Secondary stage accommodation
- House for life options
- Access to supported accommodation for people not eligible for benefits
- Grants to facilitate safe access to supported accommodation

JOHN 62

I came to this area from another part of the country with my 2 children. I am a Muslim woman, and felt very welcomed in to Refuge. All of the staff went out of their way to help me, to make sure I had everything I need. They told me where I could shop for halal food, and supported me to sort out my money and to find a school for the children very quickly. My children loved living in Refuge. My little girl said she was very happy that daddy couldn't come to live with us, because daddy was mean and used to hit my brother. Staff supported me to contact the mosque to get a divorce, and in appointments with the police, to take a statement, and to go to court with me. The manager also helped me to do some volunteer work with the Syrian refugees in Halton. I have now moved out of Refuge into my own home, and have received lots of support to get furniture and other items I need for the house. I have had extra security put on my house – lights and camera, to make me feel safe, and I visit staff in the Refuge most days when I take the children to school. When I have settled in, I would like to do some voluntary work in the Refuge. The children are so much happier than they were before – I can't thank everyone enough!

AMIRA 27

SECTION 7: THE HALTON DOMESTIC ABUSE PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Developing the Frontline

The Workforce across all multi-agency need to have the appropriate support and training to make sure that this Strategy is effective. That we are assured that the workforce has the confidence, skills and motivation to tackle domestic abuse. To achieve this we must seek to create a stable workforce with the ability to attract and retain staff from a range of backgrounds and experiences. We must ensure that we have processes in place that support staff to act and provide appropriate interventions. Our workforce will be most effective when they have the space and time to enhance their skill sets, they are offered reflective supervision and we adopt an ethos of continual learning across all levels of the multi-agency partnership.

Performance Measuring, Accountability and Quality Assurance

The Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership will act upon and implement best practise. It will use performance information to measure how well the Board is doing to tackle domestic abuse furthermore, it will use reports from inspections and case file audits to reflect what is happening on the frontline and seek assurances that service delivery is of a high standard. The Board will seek opportunities and act as a critical friend and support peer reviews.

Effective Commissioning

The Partnership will collaborate with commissioners to ensure that the right support outcomes are in place to assist those affected by domestic abuse through robust arrangements, using information from local needs assessments to determine needs and priorities both commissioning services and when appropriate de-commissioning services.

The successful delivery of the vision for Halton lies in the strength of the Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership Strategy 2025-2026. The Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership must hold agencies to account in order to be effective, it is vital that all agencies work together to tackle domestic abuse in Halton in a coordinated inclusive approach whole approach. Local service delivery shapers must ensure that we are able to demonstrate key competencies:

Leadership and Delivery Structures

Leadership, delivery and partnership structures must be in place so we are able to evidence validation across all levels of the multi-agency partnership. Community leaders must foster and adopt a strong approach to tackling domestic abuse supported by engagement and buy-in by our elected members, strategic leads with offers of help and validation. Greater levels of success will be achieved by seeking new opportunities to work across a broader spectrum, encouraging new partnership working arrangements and seeking to be more inclusive, this strategy will aim to work in collaboration with businesses and other local authorities to benefit everyone affected by domestic abuse in Halton.

Creating a Greater Understanding and Knowledge Base

The multi-agency Partnership needs to be strong and effective with a clear commitment from local decision makers and the authentic involvement of people with lived experience of domestic abuse. The Partnership will evidence this by using research, including using the learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews, Safeguarding Adults Reviews and Serious Case Reviews as a basis of decision making within the Board. Both children and adults will be represented using the voice of the victim and experiences of those who have lived with/witnessed domestic abuse including children.

My IDVA was very supportive, very attentive and listened to my concerns patiently and was constantly checking on me. She also helped by providing me with a letter to the court regarding information on the issue of domestic abuse and this was a massive help. I was also referred for one to one counselling sessions which I am still undergoing and this too is helping massively as I get to face and discuss some of my anxieties and issues that have been affecting me as a result of the domestic abuse endured in the past. This has brought to light some of the suppressed and deep rooted impact, and has helped me be more self-aware of some subconscious mechanisms developed along the way. It has also helped me appreciate how far I have come in the past 2 years since I made the decision to leave the abusive relationship. I really appreciate the support I have received, before then I had felt like I had nowhere to go, especially as I had no police records or anything to prove what I was saying was true, and that in itself does some damage. So, I am grateful for your immeasurable support and I hope to be in a position in future where I can pay it forward by providing support/help to other victims.

MICHELLE 46

APPENDIX 1:

Definition of domestic abuse Sections 1 and 2 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Any incident or course of conduct (pattern of incidents) of:

- physical or sexual abuse;
- violent or threatening behaviour;
- controlling or coercive behaviour;
- economic abuse;
- psychological, emotional or other abuse; Economic abuse" means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B's ability to (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or (b) obtain goods or services

Between those aged 16 or over who are or have been:

- intimate partners;
- family members;
- or have a parental relationship in relation to the same child.

Definition of Coercive Control Sections 1 and 2 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. (<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/violence-against-women-girls/domestic-violence/>) policy page on Home Office website.

Children as victims of domestic abuse Section 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Under the Act children (people under the age of 18) are defined as victims of domestic abuse if they: See or hear, or experience the effects of, the abuse AND A person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if (a) the person is a parent of the child, or (b) the person has parental responsibility for the child.

APPENDIX 2: TYPES OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

(1) Examples of physical abuse include:

- Being kicked, punched, pinched, slapped, dragged, scratched, choked, bitten, pushed, stabbed
- Use or threats of use of 'weapons' including knives and irons
- Being scalded, burnt or poisoned
- Objects being thrown including food, drinks, cutlery
- Violence against family members or pets
- Causing you physical harm by denying access to medical aids or equipment
- Harming you whilst performing 'care' duties (especially relevant for disabled victims) including force feeding, withdrawal of medicine or over-medication

(2) Examples of isolation:

- Limiting outside involvement such as family, friends and work colleagues
- Not allowing any activity outside the home that does not include her or him
- Constant checking up on your whereabouts

(3) Examples of verbal abuse:

- Constant yelling and shouting
- Verbal humiliation either in private or in company
- Constantly being laughed at and being made fun of
- Blaming you for their own failures;
- Insults and threats; and
- Mocking someone about their disability, gender, sexual orientation, physical appearance etc.
- Mocking your "sexual performance"

including in front of friends, work colleagues and on social media

(4) Examples of threatening behaviour:

- The threat of violence
- The threat of use of 'weapons' including knives and irons
- The threat of use of violence against family members or pets
- Threatening to use extended family members to attack you
- Destroying your personal and treasured items
- Threatening to tell the police that you are the person committing the domestic abuse, committing sexual abuse including against your children
- Threatening to remove your children, that you will never see them again or that they will take them abroad without your permission

(5) Examples of emotional and psychological abuse:

- Intimidation
- Withholding affection and giving you the silent treatment
- Turning your children and friends against you
- Being stopped from seeing friends or relatives
- Constantly being insulted, including in front of others
- Repeatedly being belittled
- Keeping you awake/stopping you sleeping – sleep deprivation
- Excessive contact, for example stalking
- Using social media sites to intimidate you

36

(such as Facebook and Twitter)

- Willfully stopping fathers from seeing their children by breaching court orders (Child Arrangement Orders)
- Manipulating your anxieties or beliefs
- Telling you that you are to blame for the abuse and injuries
- Persuading you to doubt your own sanity or mind (including "Gaslighting" – read more [here](#))
- Telling you, you are not the father of your children
- Telling you, you are not a "real" father
- Denying the abuse committed against you ever happened or trying to minimise it
- Telling you, your bruises, cuts and injuries are not serious
- Accusing you falsely of having affairs and/or constantly looking at other women
- Mocking your "sexual performance" including in front of friends, work colleagues and on social media

(6) Examples of power and control:

Abusers believe they have a right to control their partners by:

- Telling you what to do and expecting obedience
- Telling you, you will never see your children again if you leave
- Using force to maintain power and control
- Not accepting responsibility for the abuse – not their fault
- Continual and purposeful breach of family court orders
- Forced marriage

(7) Examples of economic abuse and financial abuse:

- Totally controlling the family income
- Not allowing you to spend any money unless 'permitted'

- Making you account for every pound you spend
- Running up huge bills such as credit/store cards in your name – including without you know.
- Purposely defaulting on payments
- Setting up false companies, accounts or credit cards
- Deliberately forcing you to go back to the family courts as a means of costing you additional legal fees
- Refusing to contribute to household income;
- Interfering with or preventing you from regularising your immigration status so you are economically dependent on the perpetrator;
- Preventing you from claiming welfare benefits, force someone to commit benefit fraud or misappropriating such benefits;
- Interfering with your education, training, or employment;
- Not allowing you access to mobile phone/car/utilities;
- Damaging your property.
- Denying you food or only allowing you to eat a particular type of food

(8) Examples of sexual abuse:

- Sexual harassment/pressure, or sexual acts, including with other people
- Forcing sex after physical assaults
- Sexually degrading language
- Rape
- Forcing you to have sex (or commit a sexual act) against your will
- Unwanted sexual contact and demands
- Forced involvement into making or watching pornography
- Deliberately being hurt during sex
- Being pressurised or being tricked into having unsafe sex

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- Your partner telling you they are taking contraception (The Pill) when they are deliberately not / refusing to use contraception
- threats to expose sensitive information (e.g. sexual activity) or make false allegations to family members, religious or local community including via photos or the internet;
- preventing you from learning a language or making friends outside of their ethnic/ or cultural background;
- threatening precarious immigration status against you, withholding documents, and giving false information to a victim about your visa or visa application; threats of institutionalisation.

- humiliate, degrade or dehumanise you
- forcing you to take part in criminal activity such as shoplifting, neglect or abuse of children to encourage self-blame and prevent disclosure to authorities;
- financial abuse including control of finances, such as only allowing you a punitive allowance;
- threats to hurt or kill;
- threats to a child;
- threats to reveal or publish private information (e.g. threatening to 'out' someone).
- assault;
- criminal damage (such as destruction of household goods);
- rape;
- preventing you from having access to transport or from working
- controlling or monitoring your daily activities, including making you account for your time, dictating what you can wear, when you can eat;
- isolating you from family and friends, intercepting messages or phone calls or refusing to interpret
- intentional undermining your role as a partner, spouse or parent
- preventing you from taking medication or over-medicating you, or preventing you from accessing health or social care (especially relevant for victims with disabilities or long-term health conditions)
- using substances to control you through dependency;
- using children to control you – threatening to take the children away or manipulating professionals to increase the risk of children being removed into care;
- parental alienation, including preventing children from spending time with your or their grandparents, from visiting friends' houses and from participating in extracurricular activities;

- calls)
- Image-based abuse – for example the non-consensual distribution of private sexual photographs and films with the intent to cause you distress
- Hacking into, monitoring or controlling email accounts, social media profiles and phone calls
- Blocking you from using online accounts, responding in the victim's place or creating false online accounts;
- Use of spyware or GPS locators on items such as phones, computers, wearable technology, cars, motorbikes and pets
- Hacking internet enabled devices such as PlayStations or iPads to gain access to accounts or trace information such as your location
- Using personal devices such as smart watches or smart home devices (such as Amazon Alexa, Google Home Hubs, etc) to monitor, control or frighten you
- Use of hidden cameras.

(12) Types of Coercive and Controlling Behaviour

Such behaviours might include:

- isolating you from your friends and family;
- depriving you of your basic needs;
- monitoring your time;
- monitoring your online communication tools or using spyware;
- taking control over aspects of your everyday life, such as where you can go, who you can see, what to wear and when you can sleep;
- depriving you access to support services, such as specialist support or medical services;
- repeatedly putting you down such as telling you that you are worthless;
- enforcing rules and activity which

- Your partner telling you they are taking contraception (The Pill) when they are deliberately not / refusing to use contraception
- Telling the police (or threatening to) that you are the one committing the domestic abuse when it is the other way around
- Telling friends, families, your employer and others (or threatening to) such as sports clubs that you are the one committing the domestic abuse
- False allegations of another 'crime' such as abusing children

(9) Examples of false allegations:

(10) Examples of being stalked:

Stalkers will often use multiple and differing methods to harass their victims. Stalking can consist of any type of behaviour such as:

- following you to and from work
- checking your email and phone calls
- regularly sending gifts
- making unwanted or malicious communication
- damaging property or clothes
- physical or sexual assault

(11) Examples of digital and social media abuse (often this can be with former partners):

- stalking you
- placing false and malicious information about you on your or others' social media
- being trolled
- having no control on your content or not allowed to have access
- revenge porn
- monitoring or controlling your email and phone calls (including work email and

APPENDIX 3: LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

This strategy has been developed in line with statutory policies, guidelines and frameworks as well as sector specific legislation and publications

- The Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- Housing Act 1996
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Ending violence against women and girls (VAWG) Strategy 2016-2020
- The Care Act 2014
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Halton Local Safeguarding Adults Board
- Halton Children and Young People Safeguarding Partnership

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Safelives (2019) *The Whole Picture - Our strategy to end domestic abuse, for good*

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REPORT TO: Housing & Safer Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 18 November 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Director of Public Health

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Trading Standards Service Update

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Board with an update on the work of the Trading Standards service over the last 12 months and the contribution this work makes to the Borough's public protection and community safety objectives.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- i) the report be noted.**
- ii) Members follow the Halton Trading Standards page on Facebook to increase awareness.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Trading Standards team provide a wide range of statutory services to protect consumers and legitimate businesses from unfair, misleading, or unsafe trading practices. These services include, (but are not limited to) weights and measures, product safety, age restricted sales, explosives, scams awareness, fair trading, doorstep crime, e-crime, fraud, counterfeit, and illicit goods - including tobacco and vapes and animal feeding stuffs.
- 3.2 The team also provide an enhanced consumer advice service to help consumers in Halton to enforce their own consumer rights.
- 3.3 The work of the team is intelligence led and focused on risk, ensuring that resources are targeted at those products and business that pose the greatest risk to consumers and legitimate business.
- 3.4 The latest Consumer Detriment Survey from the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) shows that two-thirds of UK consumers experienced detriment in 2023-24 at a total cost of £71.2bn – a

significant increase from the £54.2bn figure revealed in the 2022 survey.

- 3.5 The CMA define detriment as a consumer experiencing problems with an item or a service that caused stress to the consumer, cost them money, or took up their time.
- 3.6 The average number of detriment incidents per consumer rose from four to seven, with an average loss per incident of £32. Key issues included poor-quality products (affecting 35% of consumers), delivery problems (20%) and unsafe or defective items (19%). More than 60% of detriment stemmed from online purchases.
- 3.7 The survey also found some groups were more disproportionately affected, with younger people, those from ethnic minority backgrounds, and people with long-term, health conditions reporting higher levels of detriment. 24% of experiences had a negative effect on mental health. (Source: Trading Standards Journal)
- 3.8 **Scams Awareness**
Anyone can become the victim of a fraud. However, postal, telephone and doorstep frauds are often targeted specifically at disadvantaged consumers, or those in periods of vulnerability such as being isolated, having physical or mental disabilities, or suffering a bereavement. The National Trading Standards (NTS) Scams Team estimates that the detriment to UK consumers because of these frauds is between £5 and £10 Billion a year. The Home Office estimate that 1 in 17 adults were victims of fraud in 2023.
- 3.9 The perpetrators of fraud and scams are criminals. They use sophisticated techniques to target, manipulate, and often coerce and control victims.
- 3.10 Many frauds originate abroad and so it is not always possible to identify a perpetrator. Where they are UK based the team will investigate criminal activity and liaise with the appropriate agencies which may include the NTS Scams Team and the Police, when considering the appropriate enforcement action.
- 3.11 The focus of the service is to raise awareness of frauds and provide residents with advice and guidance to prevent and protect them from becoming victims. Where a resident is already the victim of a fraud, the team will work closely with the individual to provide support, advice, and guidance to prevent them becoming a repeat victim. They will also try and obtain the money back via their bank, using

several established procedures.

- 3.12 Fraud is the most experienced crime in the UK. Victims can face devastating financial, emotional, and psychological harm. Statistics show that once someone is a victim of a fraud they are twice as likely to be targeted again. Fraud victims are more likely to need care in their own home or need to move into a care home, often as an additional cost to the Local Authority.
- 3.13 The team have developed referral routes with the police, Age UK, and the Council's complex care teams. Awareness sessions have been provided to adult social care staff on how to identify individuals who may be vulnerable to scams and referral routes to Trading Standards. Further sessions are being delivered to the elderly and vulnerable throughout the Borough to increase awareness and prevent them becoming the victim of a scam.
- 3.14 **Scams Case Study**
The team recently helped an elderly female recognise that she was a victim of a romance scam, which had been ongoing for around 8 years. She had been relentlessly targeted for her money. Having recently been diagnosed with Dementia this impacted on her ability to communicate with the bank. Trading Standards contacted the bank to seek compensation on her behalf. After a lot of work, the Bank have now acknowledged that this was a scam, meaning she will receive a refund of around £70,000, which she had paid out to the scammer over several years.
- 3.15 The loss of such a sum would have had a significant impact on the victim's wellbeing and financial independence. She is now looking forward to getting her life back to normal.
- 3.16 Cases such as this, take a lot of time, effort, and patience to build upon and gain the trust of the victim, and for them to engage with Trading Standards to get the help and support that they need. Trading Standards engaged with Adult Social care and worked with them to contribute to capacity and wellbeing assessments, which will allow her to live an independent life and prevent further additional costs to Halton.
- 3.17 **Doorstep Crime**
Doorstep crime involves residents, who are often elderly or vulnerable, being pressured into agreeing to work on their property. This can arise from a cold call at their door, or by the victim

contacting a trader that appears to be legitimate. The work is often unnecessary, and what may start off as a small job, ends in the victim being pressured into further work, which is carried out to a poor standard, of little or no value, or not done at all. They will often demand payment in cash and the price charged is significantly higher than the actual cost or value of the work undertaken. In many cases the price will rise, and the trader will make further demands for payment by exerting pressure or becoming aggressive. In some cases, the trader will offer to take the victim to the bank to coerce them into making a payment.

- 3.18 The team respond to many cases of doorstep crime each year. The numbers fluctuate and vary over the seasons. Where a live incident is reported a rapid response visit is carried out, alongside the Police. This is to safeguard the victim, prevent any money being handed over, and where necessary arrest any suspects for further investigation.
- 3.19 The team assess all criminal complaints, and where an alleged crime has been committed and an offender can be identified, they will consider criminal action for any potential fraud or consumer protection offences. Where fraud or theft is suspected the police may investigate. Most doorstep crime offenders operate across borders and Local Authority boundaries and are part of much wider organised criminality as part of an Organised Criminal Group (OCG). The team liaise with neighbouring Trading Standards teams, the Police and partner agencies to ensure that intelligence is gathered and shared, and any enforcement action is coordinated.
- 3.20 Banks that are signed up to the Banking Protocol are trained to alert the Police and/or Trading Standards if they spot unusual transactions, for example a consumer making large cash withdrawals for home improvement work. If the Protocol is invoked, then the consumer will be prevented from withdrawing the money and Police and / or Trading Standards will intervene.
- 3.21 **Doorstep crime case study**
An elderly victim was advised he needed a new roof and paid £9,900. He was left with water pouring through the ceilings of his home. The team assisted, and the work was found to have no value, and the roof had to be completely re-done at a further cost to the victim. A lengthy criminal investigation uncovered further fraudulent activity across the North West and previous convictions for similar offences. The case was joined with two other Trading Standards prosecutions in Stockport and Lancashire. Mr Steven Lee was

sentenced at Preston Crown Court to the maximum permitted term of imprisonment of 10 years for numerous offences under the Fraud Act. The judge in the case commended the work of Trading Standards *“I also want to commend the various trading standards and other bodies that have acted to bring this case together. The success of the case is due to the skill, expertise, and resilience of those involved and the co-ordinated way they have worked to ensure that all the offending has been dealt with together, which has ensured the court can deal with all the criminality.*

- 3.22 *I want the comments to be passed on to the relevant senior officers so the investigators can be commended as appropriate.*

- 3.23 Unfortunately, the victim in Halton died before hearing the outcome of the case. Sadly, this is a situation that happens often, as victims in doorstep crime cases are impacted in several ways, and often this is a catalyst which sees their health decline. This only goes to illustrate the importance of the team and the work they do.

- 3.24 On a more positive note, our civil team were able to obtain a refund of £9000.00 for this elderly victim from his bank. This was refunded to him before he passed away, and he expressed his sincere gratitude for the help he was given by this service for both the criminal investigation and the refund of monies from his bank.

- 3.25 **Tobacco and Vapes**
The team have a range of powers to deal with the risks posed by illicit tobacco and vapes.

- 3.26 The trade in illicit tobacco includes products that may be counterfeit or illegally imported and sold illegally without the payment of VAT or excise duty. These products are sold at a fraction, often just a third of the price, of legitimate products. By evading taxation these products undermine the principal public health control on tobacco consumption. Through a combination of taxation and other legislation, such as the ban on smoking indoors, the rate of people smoking has reduced from 26% in 2000 to 13% in 2023. Illicit tobacco risks reversing the significant public health progress that has been made.

- 3.27 Over half of all smokers of illicit tobacco come from the most deprived socioeconomic groups. (source Gov.uk). The health risks associated with tobacco consumption are well documented. The sale of illicit tobacco therefore compounds the health inequalities experienced by these groups.

- 3.28 Vapes were developed by the tobacco industry in response to the indoor smoking ban which was introduced in the UK in 2007. There is now growing concern about the use of vape products by children and adults who have never previously smoked, thereby exposing them to the risk of becoming addicted to nicotine.
- 3.29 Legitimate vape products must be approved by the Medicines Health Care Regulatory Authority (MHRA), to ensure they meet standards relating to health and safety. The quantity and strength of nicotine within the products is also restricted. Illicit products are not MHRA approved.
- 3.30 New legislation came into force on the 1st June 2025 preventing the supply of disposable vapes, which are now illegal in the UK. Retailers in Halton were written to, to advise them of the new legislation and support them with the implementation.
- 3.31 Since 2020 the team have seized over 263,000 illegal cigarettes with a value of around £230,000, So far in 2025 the team have seized over 1900 illegal vapes.
- 3.32 The team have adopted a multi-faceted approach to tackle illicit tobacco and vapes. Using intelligence to target premises and disrupt criminal activity by seizing illicit products to remove them from the market.
- 3.33 The most recent approach is with the use of Closure Orders under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 to close premises that are persistently found to sell illegal products and also sell the illegal products to children. This can be used as a standalone means to disrupt and stop criminal activity or can be used in conjunction with other means such as a criminal prosecution.
- 3.34 The team works closely with partner agencies to investigate, prosecute and disrupt the criminals. Utilising funding available from the NTS Operation CeCe (tobacco) and Operation Joseph (vapes), to fund the use of tobacco search dogs and third-party test purchases.
- 3.35 With the recent introduction of track and trace legislation there are also additional sanctions for HMRC to fine businesses up to £10,000 for each seizure of illicit tobacco and to remove their ability to sell tobacco. Trading Standards are able to refer cases to HMRC to

administer the sanction and provide the valuable intelligence regarding those involved in the illegal manufacture, importation or distribution of tobacco in the UK. The track and trace legislation requires legitimate tobacco products to have identity marks and security features to ensure legitimate products can be identified and distinguished from counterfeit products.

- 3.36 A penalty for £5000 was issued in June 2025 to Town Market Widnes Ltd. This was due to a referral from Halton Trading Standards to HMRC, after a seizure of illegal tobacco from the premises in November 2024

- 3.37 **Illegal Tobacco and Vapes case study.**
 Dannys Mini Market – 36A Langdale Road, Runcorn was issued a Closure Order in July 2025 at Warrington Magistrates after a Trading Standards investigation. The premises had a history of illegally trading illicit tobacco and vapes (e-cigarettes). The persons connected with the premises were warned on multiple occasions that the illegal activities on the premises must stop or Trading Standards would seek a Closure Order. Unfortunately, these warnings were not heeded and to protect the public a Closure Order was sought and granted for an initial three-month period. Swift action was taken by the team to stop the illegal activity from continuing. The premises has since been cleared and is no longer trading as a retail outlet.

- 3.38 The news of the closure has been widely reported and has received praise from legitimate business owners and has prompted further intelligence being received about other premises who are involved in criminality. This sends a strong message that criminality of this nature will not be tolerated in Halton.

- 3.39 Several other premises have been warned about their conduct and are being reviewed for a Closure Order. Since they were first used in 2024 five premises have been closed by means of a Closure Order. Many other premises have ceased trading following the process. In some cases, the team have worked with landlords to remove those committing criminality without the need to resort to court. Therefore, the impact is much wider than the five premises that have resulted in Closure Orders.

- 3.40 Licence reviews may also be utilised where premises are licensed under the Licensing Act 2006.

3.41 **Age restricted sales**

The Trading Standards team enforces a range of legislation that places age restrictions on certain products such as alcohol, tobacco, vapes, knives and fireworks. They work with premises selling age restricted products to advise and educate and promote age verification schemes, such as Challenge 25, to help prevent sales being made to children who are under the legal age.

3.42 The team also undertake test purchase operations using child volunteers to test a retailer's systems and see if they sell to age restricted products to children. This is targeted at premises where intelligence has been received regarding sales to those underage.

3.43 Owing to difficulties recruiting young volunteers there has only been one test purchase operation in the past 12 months, however we have recently recruited several volunteers, and have operations planned in the coming months working with Cheshire Police

3.44 The 2025/2026 Young People's Alcohol, Tobacco, and E-cigarette Survey is to commence this November 2025. Eight secondary schools in Halton have been approached to participate, and the survey is to conclude in February 2026, with the data analysed and a final report due in early 2026.

3.45 **Consumer advice and the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline**

The main route for referrals into the Trading Standards team are via the Citizens Advice Consumer Service Helpline (CitA). CitA will provide initial advice to the consumer. Cases requiring further criminal investigation are referred on to the team for action. Halton is one of a small number of Local Authorities that have retained a consumer advice function, and some civil cases are referred through for enhanced consumer advice and support to help consumers enforce their legal rights with support and guidance.

3.46 The civil and criminal team work together to try and obtain redress for the consumer and take enforcement action where appropriate for any criminal breaches.

3.47 Despite being a small team, in the last twelve months the civil advice team has helped Halton consumers achieve over £78,000 of civil redress, in cases where this would not have otherwise been possible without their expertise.

3.48 The civil team have received numerous messages from consumers

who have been grateful for their support. Often, they are on low incomes and find technology difficult to use. The impact they have for these consumers is significant.

3.49 Consumer advice case study

A consumer who was housebound and suffering from serious illness was having persistent problems with her fire not working. The impact was significant to her as she used her fire daily. The trader had tried, but failed, to fix the fire on several occasions. The customer had requested a refund but had been unsuccessful. The civil team intervened and secured a full refund for her, despite being two years from purchase. The consumer wrote to the civil team, and stated *"Thanks immensely for your help, we absolutely could not have done this without you!"*

3.50 Product safety

The team are responsible for enforcing various pieces of product safety legislation designed to ensure that all consumer products are safe and do not pose a danger under normal or reasonably foreseeable conditions. Products subject to this legislation include, but are not limited to, electrical goods, cosmetic products and toys.

3.51 Inspections have been carried out at high-risk importers in the Borough, especially those importing toys and electrical items. These inspections assess these documentation and processes in place by the importer, so they comply with their legal duties and thus place safe products on the market.

3.52 Product safety and counterfeit goods often interlink. In recent months, the team visited two premises in Halton and seized 615 counterfeit Labubu dolls. The counterfeit Labubu dolls are poorly made and are unsafe. Many contain small, detachable parts such as eyes, hands, and feet, which present a serious choking hazard to young children. Loose stitching, and exposed stuffing, further increase the risk of suffocation. These fake toys often breach the UK's Toys (Safety) Regulations 2011, lacking CE or UKCA safety markings, importer details, and required safety warnings. Without proper safety checks, they may also contain toxic substances such as lead, harmful dyes, or banned plasticisers.

3.53 Firework licence applications, processing and inspections, have been carried out. The licencing regime allows Halton Trading Standards to monitor the sellers of fireworks and manage the risks of storing explosives within the Borough.

3.54 Last year over 100 new electric blankets were swapped for old ones, as part of a project to improve home safety within the Borough. Halton Trading Standards carried out the project using funding granted by the Electrical Safety-First charity. The old electrical blankets were subsequently assessed for safety, with a failure rate of over 60%. The blankets were swapped free of charge to residents and helped tackle the risk of fire and serious harm within the Borough.

3.55 **iCan Consumer Alert Network & Facebook**

The team operate iCan a popular email alert service to warn consumers, business and community groups of scams and product safety information. There are over 720 external recipients such as community groups, charities, agencies (such as the police) and members of the general public. iCan messages are also distributed to all HBC council staff and elected members.

3.56 Individuals or organisations that wish to join iCan should email trading.standards@halton.gov.uk

3.57 The team have recently launched a dedicated Trading Standards Facebook page – ‘Halton Trading Standards’. This will be utilised to publicise the work of the team and provide advice and information to consumers and business. This is still in its infancy, and we would encourage members of the Board to like and follow the page to increase the reach within Halton.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Trading Standards functions are statutory services. The Trading Standards team is a small, but integral part of the Public Health department enabling the core Trading Standards functions to contribute to the borough’s public health and community safety objectives.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

The team’s work to tackle illicit tobacco and vapes contributes to the

borough's public health objectives in reducing the prevalence of smoking and the harm caused by illicit and illegal products.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

The work of the team supports the legitimate business community by investigating and preventing illegal trading practices.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The work of the team to enforce legislation regarding age restricted products such as tobacco, alcohol and knives helps to protect children from the harms caused by these products. The work around product safety and unsafe items such as toys also protects children from harm.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The team's work to investigate cases of doorstep crime, raise awareness of scams and support victims helps to protect the community and contributes to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The newly created Trading Standards Facebook page will enable the team to engage with residents and partner organisations to share important consumer safety information and ensure the community are protected from scams and the activity of rogue traders.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no significant risks arising from his report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO: Housing & Safer Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 18th November 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director - Environment and Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Performance Management Reports for Quarter 2 of 2025/26

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider, and to raise any questions or points of clarification, in respect of performance management for the first quarter period to 30th September 2025.
- 1.2 Key priorities for development or improvement in 2025-26 were agreed by Members for the various functional areas reporting to the Board as detailed below:

- Community Safety & Protection
- Risk & Emergency Planning
- Drug & Alcohol Action
- Domestic Violence
- Housing

- 1.3 The report details progress made against objectives and milestones and performance targets and provides information relating to key developments and emerging issues that have arisen during the period.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Policy & Performance Board:

- 1) Receive the second quarterly performance management report.**
- 2) Consider the progress and performance information and raise any questions or points for clarification; and**
- 3) Highlight any areas of interest and/or concern where further information is to be reported at a future meeting of the Board.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Departmental objectives provide a clear statement on what services are planning to achieve and to show how they contribute to the Council's strategic priorities. Such information is central to the Council's performance management arrangements, and the Policy and Performance Board has a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 All Key Performance Indicators relate directly to the following Council's priorities:

- Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence
- Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy
- Supporting Children, Young People and Families
- Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need
- Working Towards a Greener Future
- Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 At the time at which Annual Business Plans are developed Directorate Risk Registers are also refreshed and updated.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 None identified.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None identified.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.

Housing and Safer – Priority Based Monitoring Report Q2

Reporting Period: 1st July to 30th September

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of issues and progress against key service objectives/milestones and performance targets, during the second quarter of 2025 / 26 for service areas within the remit of the Housing & Safer Policy and Performance Board.
- 1.2 Key priorities for development or improvement in 2025 - 26 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans, for the various functional areas reporting to the Local Economy Policy and Performance Board.
- 1.3
- Community Safety & Protection
 - Risk & Emergency Planning
 - Drug & Alcohol Action
 - Domestic Violence
 - Housing
- 1.4 The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress to date is explained within Section 5 of this report.
- 1.5 Corporate Priorities



Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029
Our Community, Our Priorities, Our Future

Plan on a Page



2.0 High Priority Equality Actions

- 2.1 Equality issues continue to form a routine element of the Council's business planning and operational decision-making processes. Additionally, the Council must have evidence to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which came into force in April 2011.
- 2.2 The Council's latest annual progress report in relation to the achievement of its equality objectives is published on the Council website and is available via:

<http://www4.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/Equality-and-Diversity.aspx>







3.0 Performance Overview











The following information provides a synopsis of progress for both milestones and performance indicators across the key business areas that have been identified by the Directorate.

Community Safety & Protection



Key Objectives / milestones





Corporate Priority	Priority One - Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Community Safety & Protection
ERD 31	Deliver the statutory requirements and services that support victims of Domestic Abuse as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Milestone:	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Number of referrals into the Domestic Abuse Service for support to victims.	 	502 referrals, a reduction of 21 referrals compared to 521 in Q1. This is an increase in referrals from the same quarter in year 2024, 447.
Number of days cases are open.	 	27 days, there has been no change from Q1 in the number of days cases are open for. This shows consistency in the management of cases across the service. This is a decrease from 60 in the same period last year.
Number of cases closed.	 	108 cases closed in Q2 an increase from 96 in Q1. A significant variation from 79 in Q2 the previous year.





Repeat referral rate.	 	46% a decrease in repeat referrals from 50% in Q1 demonstrating interventions are working. This is the same as Q2 in 2024, 46%.
Number of referrals into the Domestic Abuse Service for perpetrators	 	18 There has been a significant decrease in referrals this quarter compared to 35 in Q1. This could be due to the introduction of the Police & Crime Commissioners Office Breaking the Cycle programme offering several interventions for perpetrators. This is a slight decrease from Q2 last year (23) .
Number of days cases are open.	 	125 days in Q2 compared to 39 days in Q1, this evidences more clients engaged with the course through to completion in its entirety.
Number of cases closed	 	8 cases were closed in Q2, a decreased from 14 in Q1.
Repeat referral rate	 	11% repeat referral rate in Q2 compared to 9% in Q1.

Corporate Priority	Priority One - Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Community Safety & Protection
ERD 32	Ensure preparedness and risk and resilience in Emergency Planning for Halton as set out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004



Milestone:	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Delivery of two COMAH exercises per year to ensure the boroughs nine COMAH sites complete an exercise every 3 years	 	Exercise Lanxess 4 was delivered in May followed by a multi-agency debrief; the exercise report was published in June 2025, Q1. Exercise Halton 19 was delivered on 2nd October 2025; a multi-agency debrief is scheduled for 22/10/25.

		The exercises were completed in Q1 and Q3 with the annual target met.
Number of Emergency Planning training sessions delivered to ensure responders are equipped to deliver effective responses to major incidents and standby ensuring that the Council has robust preparedness.	 	<p>2 major live Comah Exercises (including Qtr 1 as above)</p> <p>2 bespoke training & exercise sessions delivered in Q2.</p> <p>3 responders training sessions delivered in Q2.</p> <p>1 large scale exercise as part of the Cheshire Resilience Forum Emergency Planning have supported with planning and facilitation.</p>
100% responders attending training sessions	 	89% of Responding Officers attended training an increase from 84% in Q1.





Corporate Priority	Priority Five - Working Towards a Greener Future Community Safety & Protection
ERD 33	To work towards a cleaner, greener Halton applying statutory powers as set out in the Environment Protection Act 1990 & Environment Act 2021

Milestone:	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Issue a minimum of 15 fixed penalty notices (FPN's) per quarter	 	Q2 total is 9 ; reduced staff capacity has impacted on the number of FPN's issued in the second quarter. However, the service anticipates achieving the annual target as it experiences seasonal variation.
Achieve minimum of three prosecutions for environmental crime per quarter.	 	<p>1 in Q2; there are 2 cases pending listing at Court by the Magistrates submitted in Q1, and 2 cases pending listing from Q2. There are also 2 additional case files in progress.</p> <p>With the number of cases ongoing and those awaiting listing the service anticipates the annual target of 12 prosecutions will be met.</p>

Corporate Priority	Priority Six - Valuing and Appreciating Halton and our Community. Community Safety & Protection
ERD 34	To co-ordinate an effective Community Safety Partnership, Safer Halton as set out in Section 6 Crime & Disorder Act 1998 placing the duty on responsible Authorities

Milestone:	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Overall crime figures for Halton	 	2,817 crimes, a reduction of 1.9% from Q1. A decrease of 19.5% compared to the same quarter in the previous year.



Corporate Priority	Priority Two - Building a Strong Sustainable Local Economy. Community Safety & Protection
ERD 35	Ensure a fit for purpose surveillance service that contributes to tackling crime & disorder whilst supporting residents to feel safe in the borough.

Milestone:	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Minimum of 80% of public surveillance cameras to be fully operational.	 	74% of cameras were fully operational however, it is worth noting that 85% of what are classified as priority one cameras were fully operational during this period and 80% priority two cameras.
Minimum of 90% fully operational control room weeks	 	99% achieved, an increase from 91% in Q1.


Housing – Planning & Development

Corporate Priority	Priority Two – Building a Strong Sustainable Local Economy. Planning & Development
ERD 12	Providing new homes that meet Halton's needs

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
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Number of homes granted planning permission		Between 1 July 25 –30 Sept 6 planning applications were approved; most of these applications were for change of use.
Number of annual completions of market and affordable homes		The Housing AMR states the number of Net homes built in 24/25 was 387.



Corporate Priority	Priority One – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Four - Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need. Priority Six - Valuing and Appreciating Halton and our Community. Empty Properties
ERD 13	To reduce the number of empty homes within the borough.

Milestone:	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Number of empty homes in Halton		The total number of empty properties in Q1 and Q2 is 1173. Properties are empty for various classifications.

Housing – Homelessness

Corporate Priority	Priority Four - Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need Community Safety & Protection
ASC objective 6	Annual review of the Homelessness Strategy to determine if any changes or updates are required

Milestone:	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Number of homeless presentations made to the Local Authority for assistance, in accordance with Homelessness Act 2017 (Relief, Prevention, Homeless, Advice)		2024/25 Actual = 3988 2025/26 Target = 4500 2025/26 Q2 = 875 Q2 data statistics broken down as follows: - Presentations = 875 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach = 75 • Relief = 175 • Main Duty = 31

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention = 192 • Advice = 402 <p>There continues to be an increase in homelessness nationally. Halton has seen an increase in family presentations, due to no fault S21 notice seeking possessions, placing additional pressure upon temporary accommodation providers.</p> <p>The main emphasis is placed upon prevention, with officers making full use of the prevention incentives available to support client to remain in their homes or source alternative accommodation.</p>
Local Authority accepted a statutory duty to homeless households in accordance with homelessness Act 2002 (Number)		<p>2024/25 Actual = 911 2025/26 Target = 1500 2025/26 Q2 = 31</p> <p>There has been a decrease in in the homelessness acceptance duty. This is partly due to the prevention work across the team and working.</p> <p>With landlords to source alternative accommodation prior to Homelessness.</p>
Number of households living in Temporary Accommodation (Hostel, Bed & Breakfast)		<p>2024/25 Actual Hostels: Single = 1260 Families = 210 Hotels: Single = 21 Families = 56</p> <p>2025/26 Target Hostels = 2500 (combined) Hotels = 150 (combined) 2025/26 Q2 Hostels: Single = 105 Families = 28 Hotels: Single = 7 Families = 4 Dispersed Singles = 12 Families - 0</p> <p>Due to the increase in homelessness this has placed additional pressure upon temporary accommodation providers. Although there has been a reduction in hotel usage, due to demand, there is often a reliance on hotels for short periods of time.</p> <p>There continues to be an increase in families presenting as homeless, for the above stated reasons. The service has a robust process in place to transfer families from hotels into commissioned services as quickly as possible, with concerted efforts being made to increase</p>

both temporary and long-term accommodation provision.

4.0 Financial Statements

COMMUNITY & GREENSPACE

Revenue Budget as at 30th September 2025

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	15,451	7,788	7,486	302	603
Agency - Covering vacancies	20	12	12	0	0
Agency - In addition to establishment	16	16	199	(183)	(274)
Premises	3,304	1,562	1,609	(47)	(93)
Supplies & Services	3,659	1,514	1,639	(125)	(249)
Transport	117	66	83	(17)	(33)
Extended Producer Responsibility	500	0	0	0	0
Other Agency Costs	454	209	228	(19)	(39)
Other Expenditure	187	13	13	0	0
Waste Disposal Contracts	7,121	1,125	1,133	(8)	(16)
Transfers to Reserves	1,091	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	31,920	12,305	12,402	(97)	(101)
Income					
Sales Income	-1,359	-687	-691	4	8
Fees & Charges Income	-6,300	-3,622	-3,709	87	174
Rental Income	-1,118	-465	-428	(37)	(73)
Government Grant Income	-5,210	-1,319	-1,319	0	0
Reimbursement & Other Grant Income	-871	-371	-371	0	0
SLA Income	-23	0	0	0	0
Internal Fees Income	-216	-39	-129	90	179
Capital Salaries	-236	-15	0	(15)	(31)
Transfers From Reserves	-619	-4	-4	0	0
Total Income	-15,952	-6,522	-6,651	129	257
Net Operational Expenditure	15,968	5,783	5,751	32	156
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,657	829	829	0	0
Transport Support	2,433	1,270	1,312	(42)	(84)
Central Support	4,297	2,148	2,148	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-843	-422	-422	0	0
Net Total Recharges	7,743	3,825	3,867	(42)	(84)
Net Departmental Expenditure	23,711	9,608	9,618	(10)	72

Comments on the above figures

Net spend against the Community and Greenspaces department has seen an improvement to the net outturn position since the previous report at 31st July 2025. The forecasted outturn is now expected to fall £0.72m under the approved budget profile (in comparison to £0.123m overspend previously forecasted).

Employee spend continues to be an area providing underspend for the department into the new financial year, forecast spend being £0.603m under the approved budget profile. There continue to be vacancies held for restructures taking place contributing to the underspend. However, as a result of this, in order to facilitate the very visible services provided to the residents of Halton, both Agency and Supplies & Services expenditure is forecasted to be (£0.274m and £0.249 respectively) above the approved 2025/26 budget.

Estimated spend on premises costs is forecast to be £0.093m over budget in 2025/26. The Stadium utility costs are notably higher than the available budget and will continue to be a budget pressure this year. There is more focus on internal services that can be provided (See £0.179m forecast overachieved Internal Fees Income), and should this continue, it can be utilised to offset the premises costs in subsequent financial years.




Supplies and Services is forecasting an overspend of £0.249m which is a budget pressure throughout the Department and is primarily caused by inflationary cost increases of key goods and services over recent years. There is a risk if the Council were to contain these costs within the budget profile there would be a reduction in the service provided.

Historically, Waste Disposal Contracts had contributed to an underspend for the department, however, due to the rise in costs last year, expenditure is now likely to fall close to the approved budget profile. It is worth noting, as the size of the contracts are very large, small percentage changes to the invoices can have significant impacts on the outturn position of the department, and with invoices being received several periods after the costs are incurred, the outturn position may change throughout the year. Within 2025/26 there has been a budget line created for the Extender Producer Responsibility Scheme, this funding has been provided to manage packaging waste. In order to facilitate the scheme and ensure compliance, £0.500m has been forecasted to be utilised within the financial year, should there be any budget underutilised by 31st March 2026 this will require carrying forward into the 2026/27 financial year.

Income for the Community and Greenspaces Department is on track to be higher than the approved budget by £0.257m. The aforementioned internal fee focus by the Stadium is contributing to this as well as increasing usage of internal room hire across the buildings within the Department. The benefit of this income staying within the council rather than going to external suppliers is offset by some other income targets being unachievable. The main contributor to the overachievement however is with Halton Leisure Centre, income is remaining consistently high, and forecasts have been adjusted as such to reflect this. In comparison to last financial year, the outturn income figure is expected to rise by approximately 99%.

There also continues to be pressures with the Brindley as the extension works are underway, income did fall within the previous financial year, and is currently forecast to do the same this year. Once the works are completed the income is likely to rise again, however, this will require close monitoring as the utility expenditure will also increase with the larger site.

APPROVED BUDGET SAVINGS COMMUNITY AND GREENSPACES DEPARTMENT

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Stadium & Catering Services – School Meals	12	Cease to deliver the school meals service, which has made significant losses of over £200,000 for a number of years and is forecast to make a similar loss by year-end. Work would be undertaken with schools over the next two years to support them to secure an alternative means of delivery, whether in-house or via an external provider.	12	0		School meals service has ceased and is reflected in the 25/26 budget.
Green Waste		Green Waste – increase green waste charges from £43 to £50 per annum, to bring Halton onto a comparable basis with charges levied by neighbouring councils.	0	100		Green waste charges have been increased to £50.
Area Forums		Area Forums – cease the funding for Area Forums.	0	170		Area forum budgets have been removed in 25-26
Total Community & Greenspace Dept			12	270		

Capital

Scheme Detail	205/26 Original Allocation	2025/26 Revised Allocation	Cumulative Actual Spend to 30 Sept 2025	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Nov 2025	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 Jan 2026	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026	Allocation remaining	2026/27 Forecast Allocation
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Stadium Minor Works	22.1	22.1	24.6	24.6	24.6	24.6	-2.5	30.0
Halton Leisure Centre	99.7	99.7	89.3	86.8	88.8	90.8	8.9	0.0
Children's Playground Equipment	67.8	67.8	50.5	60.5	60.5	65.0	2.8	65.0
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Upton Improvements	13.0	13.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.0	0.0	0.0
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12.0	12.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.0	0.0	0.0
Open Spaces Schemes	600.0	770.0	564.5	600.0	650.0	770.0	0.0	600.0
Runcorn Town Park	450.6	450.6	0.0	0.0	60.0	125.0	325.6	280.0
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,841.6	250.0	152.5	170.0	180.0	250.0	0.0	1,591.6
Pickerings Pasture Cafe	469.2	450.0	110.3	175.0	300.0	450.0	0.0	19.2
Cemetery Infrastructure work	469.1	469.1	0.0	89.0	207.0	410.0	59.1	683.0
Stadium Public Address System	810.0	346.0	34.9	176.0	286.0	346.0	0.0	379.0
Litter Bins	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	0.0	20.0
Replacement Cremator	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
Stadium Steelwork Repairs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	600.0
Brindley Lighting	0.0	200.0	0.0	100.0	150.0	200.0	0.0	0.0
Grangeway Court Refurbishment	0.0	52.0	8.0	10.0	16.0	52.0	0.0	948.0
CCTV Infrastructure Works	0.0	105.0	1.2	5.0	50.0	105.0	0.0	395.0
Total Community & Greenspaces	5,215.2	3,327.3	1,035.8	1,496.9	2,072.9	2,933.4	393.9	5,630.8

There were some delays to capital projects starting within the last financial year due to staffing issues. These are likely to be completed within the 2025/26 capital scheme. In regard to the cemetery infrastructure work there is potential to receive grant/external funding rather than rely solely on borrowing. The *replacement cremator* line is in relation to a cremator installed last year; however the contractors are requiring some additional works required to get it fully commissioned and proper emissions testing to be carried out. Management are currently reviewing options, where possible this will be funded from underspend from other schemes.

Adult Social Care**Revenue Operational Budget as at 30 September 2025**

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	18,788	9,394	8,727	667	983
Agency- Covering Vacancies			906	(906)	(1,454)
Premises	498	290	251	39	78
Supplies & Services	698	465	568	(103)	(176)
Aids & Adaptations	37	18	21	(3)	6
Transport	341	170	166	4	9
Food & Drink Provisions	228	133	74	59	96
Supported Accommodation and Services	1,408	704	554	150	293
Emergency Duty Team	157	34	33	1	(7)
Transfer To Reserves	295	13	13	0	0
Contracts & SLAs	1,044	451	458	(7)	(2)
Housing Solutions Grant Funded Schemes					
Homelessness Prevention	548	250	224	26	0
Rough Sleepers Initiative	167	84	82	2	0
Trailblazer	75	38	38	0	0
Total Expenditure	24,284	12,044	12,115	(71)	(174)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-1,044	-435	-317	(118)	(253)
Sales & Rents Income	-538	-291	-286	(5)	(12)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-2,182	-1,000	-852	(148)	(301)
Capital Salaries	-117	-58	-58	0	0
Housing Schemes Income	-783	-727	-727	0	0
Total Income	-4,664	-2,511	-2,240	(271)	(566)
Net Operational Expenditure	19,620	9,533	9,875	(342)	(740)
Recharges					
Premises Support	789	395	395	0	0
Transport	792	396	401	(5)	(11)
Central Support	4,039	2,020	2,020	0	0
Asset Rental Support	13	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-112	-56	-56	0	0
Net Total Recharges	5,521	2,755	2,760	-5	-11
Net Departmental Expenditure	25,141	12,288	12,635	(347)	(751)

Comments on the above figures

The above information relates to Adult Social Care, excluding Community Care and Care Homes.

Net Department Expenditure is currently £0.347m over budget profile at the end of the sixth period of the financial year. Current expenditure projections indicate an overspend for the full financial year in the region of £0.751m.

Comparison to previous year outturn and period 4 forecasted outturn

The outturn position for financial year 2024/25 was £0.545m over budget. Based on the estimated outturn position for 2025/26, there is an expectation that the estimated outturn overspend will be £0.206m higher than the last financial year.

The outturn position for period 4 was £0.698m over budget. Based on the estimated outturn position for period 6, there is an expectation that the estimated outturn overspend will be £0.053m higher than period 4.

Employee related spend.

The projected full-year cost is above the annual budget by £0.471m. This a reduction of £0.235m from the projected full year over budget spend as at period 4.

Factors relating to the projected overspend include.

Unbudgeted agency costs are in respect of covering vacant posts, particularly in terms of front line Care Management and Mental Health Team posts. However, there has been a reduction in Agency staff use by 3 Agency staff members since June 2025, the reduction of use of these Agency staff members has been reflected in the forecasted spend until the end of the financial year. Agency spend across the division as a whole at the end of September 2025 stood at £0.906m, with a full year spend of £1.454m projected. This is partially offset by a forecasted underspend on the staffing budget of £0.983m.

During previous agreed savings, the budget for Care Arrangers posts was removed. This has not been addressed within the staffing, resulting in a projected unbudgeted spend of £0.096m during 2025/26 financial year.

Within period 4 reports, it was reported of an unbudgeted Market Supplement which has been awarded to social workers across the division. To assist with easing budgetary pressures, the budget to cover the market supplement has been provided on a temporary basis, initially for 12 months, resulting in an increase in budget of £0.391m. This increased budget is reflected within the figures above and has assisted in the reduction of the full year forecasted over budget spend between this report and the report from period 4.

Supplies and Services related spend.

The projected £0.176m forecasted full year spend above budget relates to an increased volume of caseload in respect to Deprivation of Liberty Standards (DoLs) assessments. Spend to September 2025 was £0.097m, with a total spend for financial year forecast at £0.233m.

Transport related spend.

The transport and transport recharge budgets were substantially increased for 2025/26 financial year. Due to this, the forecasted spend is broadly to budget.

Housing Strategy related spend.

Housing strategy initiatives included within the report include the Rough Sleeping Initiative and the Homelessness Prevention Scheme. The Homelessness Prevention Scheme is an amalgamation of the previous Flexible Homelessness Support and Homelessness Reduction Schemes and is wholly grant funded. It is assumed that unspent funding is carried forward to the following financial year.

Income

Income for the Department as a whole is under the budgeted income target by £0.271m with a projected under achieved target at the end of the financial year being £0.566m. The main areas making up the under achievement of target income are Community Meals, Telehealthcare and Transport. Within the projected income figures for the remainder of the financial year is a further reduction of income for Community Meals in the run up to the end of the service in March 2026. There has been a drop in forecast income for the Supported Housing Network, funding of a significant care package through to the end of the year will no longer materialise.

2025/26 Savings



Savings targets including in the budgets for Positive Behaviour Service of £0.250m and Telehealthcare of £0.280m are unlikely to be achieved.

Progress against 2025/26 approved savings for the Adult Social Care Directorate are included at Appendix A.

2025/26 Adult Social Care Directorate Savings

Appendix A




Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Housing Solutions	474	Remodel the current service based on good practice evidence from other areas.	125	0	U	Currently Under Review
Voluntary Sector Support	N/A	Review the support provided by Adult Social Care and all other Council Departments, to voluntary sector organisations. This would include assisting them to secure alternative funding in order to reduce their dependence upon Council funding. A target saving phased over two years has been estimated.	100	0	✓	Achieved
Community Wardens/Telecare Service		Community Wardens/Telecare Service – a review will be undertaken of the various options available for the future delivery of these services, with support from the Transformation Delivery Unit.	0	280	✗	Unlikely to be achieved – currently forecast overspend position

Care Management Community Care Budget		Community Care – continuation of the work being undertaken to review care provided through the Community Care budget, in order to reduce the current, overspend and ongoing costs.	0	1,000		Unlikely to be achieved – currently forecast overspend position
Various		Review of Service Delivery Options – reviews will be undertaken of the various service delivery options available for a number of areas including; Day Services, Halton Supported Housing Network, In-House Care Homes, Reablement Service and Oak Meadow.	0	375		Currently Under Review
Total ASC Directorate			225	1,655		




5.0 Application of Symbols

Symbols are used in the following manner:

Progress Symbols

<u>Symbol</u>		<u>Objective</u>	<u>Performance Indicator</u>
Green		Indicates that the <u>objective is on course to be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that the annual target <u>is on course to be achieved</u>.</i>
Amber		Indicates that it is <u>uncertain or too early to say at this stage</u> whether the milestone/objective will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that it is <u>uncertain or too early to say at this stage</u> whether the annual target is on course to be achieved</i>
Red		Indicates that it is <u>highly likely or certain</u> that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that the target <u>will not be achieved</u> unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken.</i>

Direction of Travel Indicator

Green		Indicates that performance is better as compared to the same period last year.
Amber		Indicates that performance is the same as compared to the same period last year.
Red		Indicates that performance is worse as compared to the same period last year.
N / A	N / A	Indicates that the measure cannot be compared to the same period last year.