

THE WIRRAL PLAN: A 2020 VISION

# **ZERO TOLERANCE TO DOMESTIC ABUSE**

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**Wirral Council  
March 2016**

**THE WIRRAL PARTNERSHIP**

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## 1.0 FOREWORD

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### **Councillor George Davies -** Cabinet Lead for Housing and Communities

Prevention of violence and abuse is a critical element in tackling many other issues as it impacts on mental wellbeing, physical health and quality of life. Violence is contagious. Exposure to violence and abuse, especially as a child, makes individuals more likely to be involved in this behaviour in later life.

We want a Wirral that is free from all forms of violence and abuse and a culture of empowerment for those who have experienced abuse. We want to raise awareness of the health, psychological and social implications of domestic abuse and make sure that individuals know how and where they can get help.

This strategy will be the starting point for a new approach to tackling domestic abuse. We will ensure that domestic abuse is never tolerated or accepted, where victims are protected and supported and are able to live in safety in their own homes where possible.

Domestic Abuse is a complex issue with many people involved in tackling it. This strategy outlines completely new ways of working, with integration across all partners sharing resources to collectively tackle domestic abuse through a single team.

I am proud to present this strategy that outlines our ambition to collectively break the cycle of domestic abuse within our communities. It will influence many other areas such as community safety and safeguarding ensuring that tackling domestic violence is included as a priority in the work of many different groups.

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I hope everyone takes the time to read this strategy, to raise awareness of what domestic abuse is and what to do about it, and to get involved in making Wirral a place that has a zero tolerance to domestic abuse in all its forms.

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**Councillor George Davies**

**“ Our aim is to break the cycle of domestic abuse within families: reduce incidents of abuse, support victims and pursue perpetrators. ”**

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## **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

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Merseyside Police deal with around 97 reported domestic abuse incidents every day. As a member of Wirral's Partnership Board, I was really pleased to be asked to be the partner lead in the development of a strategy which will contribute to tackling domestic abuse in Wirral.



**Partner Delivery Lead:**  
**Chief Superintendent John Martin,**  
Wirral Area Commander

The police service's approach to domestic abuse has continued to improve and it is now more victim-focussed than ever. We understand that we need to make victims feel confident that if they report any form of domestic abuse to us that we will take them seriously and keep them safe. However we believe that domestic abuse is still a vastly under-reported crime and victims understandably worry that making a complaint could make the situation worse for them rather than better.

The number of women (and to a lesser extent men) killed or seriously injured by their partners every year in the UK is a testament to the fact that abuse and violence in the home can escalate to the most serious extremes if no-one intervenes. We are working to raise awareness with professionals on what the signs of domestic abuse can be and how they can flag up concerns to the police and to let victims know that a range of help is available twenty-four hours a day through local and national charities.

Our priority will always be protecting the victim from the violence and abuse, both in the short and long term. New legislation allows us to remove perpetrators from the home to give the victim space to decide what they want to do next, as well as disclose a person's violent past to their new partner if we or other agencies fear they could be at risk themselves.

Changing perceptions of what domestic abuse is and how it can be stopped takes time and raising public awareness is key. I am confident that working towards this pledge will see a significant reduction in repeat incidents of domestic abuse by 2020.

### **The current government definition of domestic abuse is:**

*"Any incident or pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality".*

**Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person dependant by isolating them from sources of support, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape, and regulating their everyday behaviour.**

**Coercive behaviour is an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.**

**This definition also includes so called "honour" based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.**





**ZERO  
TOLERANCE**

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## **3.0 OUR AMBITION**

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**Our Wirral Plan message is loud and clear – we will have zero tolerance to domestic violence.**

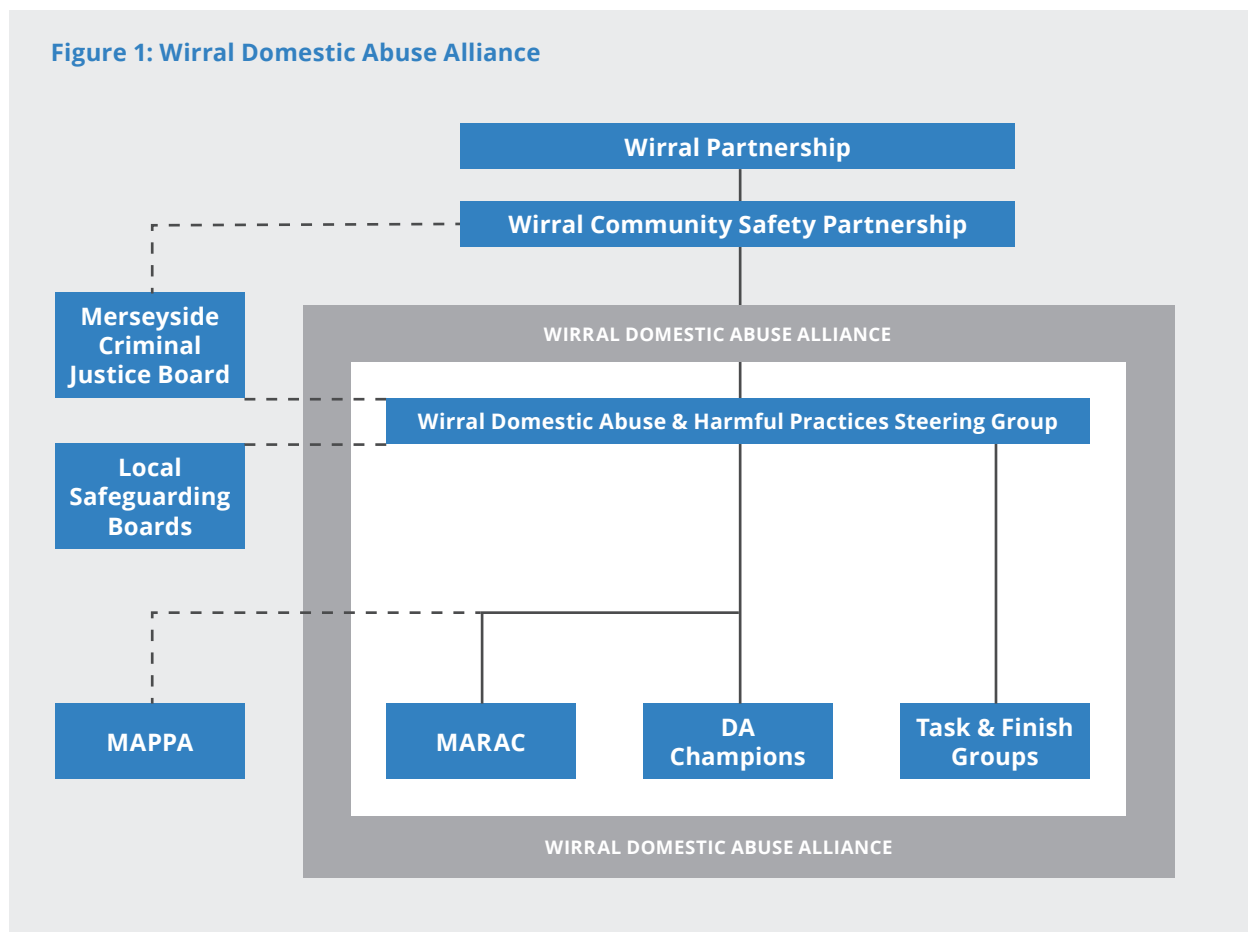
We want to stop violence and improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and families who experience domestic abuse. We want to see local residents and communities free from violence by decreasing the social tolerance and acceptance of domestic abuse.

To do this we need to adopt a whole family approach informed by what domestic abuse victims tell us what works well. We will introduce more preventative and early intervention measures, create an environment that supports disclosure and ensures perpetrators are effectively dealt with. This new approach has a clear aim to break the cycle of domestic abuse in our communities.

To achieve these objectives we need a strong, coordinated, community response and we aim to achieve this by working towards the development of a new Wirral Domestic Abuse Alliance model. This Alliance will be made up of specialist services, partner agencies and community representatives working to respond in a coordinated way. It will provide a single point of contact for advice and referral, as well as joint training to professionals.

Progress and delivery of this strategy will be monitored not only by the Wirral Community Safety Partnership but also the respective Wirral's Local Safeguarding Boards and will be overseen by the wider Wirral Partnership.

**Figure 1: Wirral Domestic Abuse Alliance**



MAPPA: Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement  
 MARAC: Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference  
 DA: Domestic Abuse



# 4.0 WHO IS THIS STRATEGY FOR?

This strategy is for all people on Wirral who are affected by domestic abuse including victims, witnesses, families, friends and perpetrators. It is also for communities, business leaders and professionals to lead an appropriate and joined up response to those affected by domestic abuse as we know that no single agency can address this complex issue in isolation.

This strategy provides the current picture of need in Wirral informed by insight provided by victims of domestic abuse and what we know works well to tackle the issues presented. It outlines clear actions to be delivered to effect significant change and how we will measure its impact through a range of key measures.

The clear purpose of this strategy is to set out our strategic approach and make the most effective use of our collective resources in order to make Wirral a safer and happier place to live, visit and work.

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by Getty Images

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## 5.0 WHAT WE KNOW

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## DOMESTIC ABUSE

### 1.4M WOMEN AND 700,000 MEN

SUFFERED SOME FORM OF DOMESTIC ABUSE IN ENGLAND AND WALES 2013 – 2014<sup>1</sup>

### OVER 100,000 PEOPLE

IN THE UK ARE CONSIDERED TO BE AT HIGH RISK OF BEING MURDERED OR SERIOUSLY INJURED, AS A RESULT OF DOMESTIC ABUSE<sup>2</sup>

### 130,000 CHILDREN

ARE ESTIMATED TO LIVE IN HOMES WHERE HIGH-RISK DOMESTIC ABUSE IS PREVALENT<sup>2</sup>

ESTIMATED COSTS OF PUBLIC SERVICES TO SUPPORT VICTIMS OF ABUSE AND THE RESULTANT LOST ECONOMIC OUTPUT OF VICTIMS EQUATES TO

**£15.8 BILLION EACH YEAR IN THE UK<sup>3</sup>**

THE COSTS TO HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SERVICES, HOUSING, CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES AND CIVIL LEGAL COSTS ARE THOUGHT TO ADD A FURTHER

**£3.9 BILLION TO THE ANNUAL COSTS<sup>3</sup>**

DURING 2014/15 THERE WERE

**1,856 DOMESTIC ABUSE OFFENCES**

IN WIRRAL AND 8,384 IN MERSEYSIDE. THIS WAS A YEAR ON YEAR INCREASE OF 58% IN WIRRAL FROM 1,173 IN 2013/14 AND 52% IN MERSEYSIDE FROM 5,174 RESPECTIVELY<sup>4</sup>

DURING 2014/15 THERE WERE

**740 HIGH RISK REFERRALS**

TO WIRRAL MULTI AGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE, AN 18% INCREASE FROM 634 IN 2013/14<sup>5</sup>

DURING 2014

**THE WIRRAL REPEAT VICTIMISATION RATE WAS 16%**

COMPARING WITH A MERSEYSIDE RATE OF 20%, AND A NATIONAL RATE OF 24%<sup>6</sup>

### 757 CASES OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

WERE DISCUSSED AT WIRRAL MULTI AGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE<sup>7</sup> (JUNE 2014-MAY 2015).

FEMALE VICTIMS WERE INVOLVED IN

**737 (97.4%)**

OF THE CASES DISCUSSED

**7 VICTIMS**

(0.01% OF TOTAL CASES) BELONGED TO THE LGBTI GROUP.

**34 CASES (4.5%)**

INVOLVED A VICTIM WITH A DISABILITY.

**25 CASES (3.3%)**

INVOLVED A VICTIM FROM THE BME GROUPS.

**26 CASES (3.4%)**

INVOLVED YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16-17 YEARS.

IN 17 CASES (2.2%) THE YOUNG PERSON WAS THE VICTIM AND IN 9 CASES (1.2%)

THE YOUNG PERSON WAS THE PERPETRATOR.



## 5.1 National and Local Knowledge

**In order to focus our efforts to make the most difference we will build on existing national and local intelligence and listen to victims, practitioners and perpetrators.**

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone at any age; both victims and abusers come from all backgrounds and social classes and have different occupations, income, gender and sexuality. However, research tells us that it is predominantly experienced by women and carried out by men.

Women with disabilities are nearly twice as likely to experience domestic abuse as non-disabled women<sup>8,9</sup>. Women victims also suffer more severe forms of domestic abuse, violence and control and are more likely to be seriously injured or killed by their partner or ex-partner<sup>10</sup>.

Domestic abuse is linked to a range of personal, social and economic factors that can contribute to the likelihood of it occurring. There are strong links between substance misuse, particularly in respect of alcohol with research indicating that alcohol was an exacerbating factor in as many as 73% of cases of domestic violence<sup>11</sup>. Evidence suggests that incidents of domestic abuse increases with deprivation<sup>12</sup> and that the risk of abuse is heightened at specific times such as around the ending of a relationship<sup>13,14</sup>.

It is important to acknowledge that domestic abuse also includes the psychological damage caused by abusive, controlling behaviours<sup>15,16</sup>. The ethnic minority population can be faced with additional harmful practices including honour-based violence, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage<sup>17</sup>.

In terms of reporting domestic abuse, research indicates that women experience barriers to disclosing domestic abuse, such as fear of not being taken seriously, or of further reprisals or of social services involvement where children are involved. As such, there is likely to be significant under reporting of domestic abuse incidents within this group<sup>18</sup>.

Through discussion with victims we examined domestic abuse specifically on the Wirral<sup>19</sup>. Women told us that they recognised their status as a victim of domestic abuse but this recognition occurred at different points in their journey. The reasons for seeking support were varied and included, children and family, fear for their lives, the inability to 'take it anymore' and a desire to re-build their self-confidence. When seeking support they had mainly approached voluntary sector organisations although the police and social services were also mentioned.

Their views on the level of support received in Wirral varied from very helpful to unsupported. Half of the women claimed a greater awareness of local provision to support victims would be helpful. The other half suggested that more understanding and empathy from professionals would improve current provision.

In terms of the perpetrators of abuse, self-reported feedback<sup>20</sup> from those attending a Wirral programme to address their abusive behaviour identified a number of underlying issues that contributed to their relationship problems. These included substance misuse, stress and worry, managing emotions and communication problems. Following the programme all attendees reported increases in their ability to control emotions, confidence to learn from their past experiences and make positive changes for the future, to resolve problems and conflict effectively and to express themselves clearly and calmly.

In order to better understand domestic abuse on the Wirral from all viewpoints, local practitioners were also asked for their opinions<sup>21</sup>. They felt that the public were generally aware about domestic abuse, although many felt that more could be done to raise public awareness and that only a minority believed that victims and perpetrators would know where to access appropriate support. Over half of the participants believed that local provision was not sufficient for demand. A considerable number of participants made specific comments on the lack of early intervention/prevention support currently for 'low to medium risk' victims and not a single participant felt provision for children affected by abuse or perpetrators currently meets demand.

**Responses as to how the local system could be improved included:**

- Greater public awareness through local media.
- A local support network.
- The presence of an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate in the local Accident and Emergency Department.
- The better identification of abuse through routine enquiry supported by increased access to domestic abuse training for staff.
- Improved multi-agency working and greater investment in service provision.
- Improved strategic coordination to link the Adult Safeguarding and Community Safety Partnership Boards.
- A long-term strategic plan to avoid hasty, ill-informed commissioning decisions.
- The provision of more therapeutic services for victims and children, including working with young people in relation to healthy relationships.

To increase the awareness of domestic abuse and the effect it can have on children, Wirrals Community Safety Partnership commissioned the following adverts onto 2 designated Wirral Fire Engines as part of the Be a Lover and Not a Fighter campaign.



## Case Studies

### Jade's story

**He was great at first, couldn't do enough for me. He always wanted to know where I was and wanted to be with me all the time.**

It was lovely at the beginning but started to worry me because of how he would be if I wanted to go out with my friends without him. He changed, became moody and angry and then one night out of the blue he punched me, hard. He told me he was so sorry, he loved me and it was because he loved me so much that he wanted me all to himself.

I believed him. It felt good to be told that I was loved so much. I stopped going out without him as I didn't want him to get mad again. He checked my phone all the time and rang me at least 30 times a day to see how I was or as I know now, to see where I was.

I was at school. I was 16 and he was 18.

I did not know this was abuse until he hit me the second time and my mum saw the mark. She called the police. I thought it was because he cared. I thought it was okay for him to want me all to himself. I thought I knew what I was doing. I was wrong.

The Police put me in touch with the Family Safety Unit and I met with a woman there. She helped me to understand what he was doing was wrong. He was controlling me and hurting me. That was not love. That was abuse.

I am safe now. I do not let boys tell me what I can do, who I can see and what I can wear. I do not need someone to control me. I know what love is and it is not being scared of the person who tells you they love you.

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### Louise's Story

**We grew up together, went to school together and ended up together. I knew his family and he knew mine. We all lived in the same area. We had our first baby when I was 17. We got a flat together and then he started drinking, soon drinking every day.**

He blamed the baby crying and us having no money on me. I used to try to calm him down, keep him quiet so the neighbours didn't hear or the baby would wake up. This went on for years. I learned to live with it. He wasn't always bad. When he was nice to me life was good.

It just didn't last for long. I put up with his tempers; he would push me around, throw things.

The police came out a few times as the neighbours called them. I pretended everything was okay, said it was just silly arguments. I don't think they believed me though. He got arrested a couple of times but there was no way I could make a statement.

I told the social workers the same. He would move to his mums for a few weeks when they came to the house. I told them it was over and wished it was but I knew he would come back. He would come banging on the door at night when he was out of his head. I let him in to stop the neighbours getting annoyed and so that children would not wake up. I knew it was wrong but at least I didn't have to manage the kids on my own and his family would be a nightmare if I said anything. He had been in my life since I was little. I could not think how it would be without him.

I had the third baby when he tried to strangle me. He was on a bender. My son was there. He was 5 years old. He was watching. He was screaming. I started to black out. That's when I knew he could kill me. The police came that night, I made a statement. I was so scared. He got bail. That's when the real hard work started.

His family & friends tried to get me to drop the charges, the kids wanted to see him and I missed him. One more chance he said, give me one more chance. It was easier to let him back than keep him away.

Luckily I got the right help at the right time. The police put me in contact with the Family Safety Unit. They understood. They knew why "I didn't just leave". I made the decision to put my children first.

I worked with social services and the school and my health visitor instead of fobbing them off. I began to understand this was not about me or what I had done. This was about him and what he was choosing to do to us.

He kept ringing me or posting messages on Facebook about missing me and the kids. I admit I did struggle not to get back with him but I knew if I took him back my kids would end up seeing me dead.

We have been apart for over a year now. He sees the kids at his mums. I know he is getting support from his probation officer and is on a course to help him with his abuse and drinking. I wish I had done it years ago but you need the right help at the right time. I feel safer and my children are happier. My son still talks about that night every now and again but at least I know he will never have to see anything like it again. He gets help at the Leapfrog programme and I am making new friends at Tomorrow's Women. There is help and support available. It's not easy to leave but I know I made the right decision.

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### Helen's story

**I am 67. My husband died 8 years ago. I lived with my 38 year old daughter, Susan. I have bad arthritis and need help around the house and someone to do my shopping. Susan was my carer but she used to drink and has suffered from depression.**

It felt like it was me who was caring for her most of the time. She stopped being nice to me when I wouldn't give her money for her drink. She would shout and push me and then just take the money anyway. I felt guilty as I knew she was not well. She would drink from breakfast to bedtime and used to pass out sometimes in the kitchen, I used to worry she would set the house on fire as she smoked when she was drunk. I was ashamed.

One day Susan pushed me too hard. I fell over and really hurt my knee. My GP came out and I just broke down and hold him everything. He asked me if I would speak to the police, I said I didn't want to get Susan into trouble but I knew I couldn't carry on much longer.

He arranged me for me to meet someone from the Family Safety Unit. They met me at the surgery and gave me lots of advice about what I could do to get help. I think I always knew deep down that she was not going to stop drinking and hurting me just because I wanted her to. I knew I had to be a tough and ask her to leave and look for somewhere else to stay.

They encouraged me to tell other members of the family what was going on and not to be ashamed. They also gave me ideas on how to stay safe in the house and arranged for the Fire Brigade to come to the house and check it for safety. My family were shocked but they made it clear to Susan that it had to stop and she had to sort her drinking out.

I felt more confident and able to ring the police when she was really bad. I hated doing it, I felt sorry for her and I blamed myself as I was her mum so I must have done something wrong for her to be like this. Eventually her drinking got so bad she got taken into hospital. I decided then it had to stop. I got the locks changed and told her she could not come back.

She was offered support for her drinking and went to stay with her cousin. That did not work out and she is now living in the town centre in a hostel. Susan has been off the drink for a while. She does not need to live with me and I feel much better living on my own. I could not have done this without the help from everyone. No one should be scared of their own flesh and blood.



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## 6.0 OUR PRIORITIES

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**In developing this strategy, we have ensured that the voice of victims have identified the priorities of the strategy.**

We have listened to what they tell us works and what could be improved. We have also learnt from perpetrators what has helped them to work to resolve their problems and behaviour. We have people working with both victims and perpetrators to understand the issue from all viewpoints. This insight has been combined with key information and best practice research to develop priorities targeted to affect significant change.

The strategy has been developed in partnership with the Domestic Abuse Sub Group that reports to the Joint Local Safeguarding Boards. The Group is attended by a wide range of representatives including Tomorrows Women Wirral, Wirral University Teaching Hospital, Primary and Secondary School advisors, Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Services, The Family Safety Unit, Strategic Housing, Magenta Living, Wirral Community Trust, National Probation Service, Merseyside Community Rehabilitation Company and Wirral Council.

**The four identified priorities are:**

**Prevention** – and early intervention

**Provision** – children and young people at the heart of our domestic abuse response

**Partnerships** – a strong coordinated community response

**Perpetrators** – make victims safer and reduce reoffending

## 6.1 Prevention - and Early Intervention

### Why is it a Priority?

Intervention especially in early childhood can prevent individuals developing a propensity for violence and abuse and also improve educational outcomes, employment prospects and long-term health outcomes. The Early Help and Prevention Strategy 2015-2017 will play a critical part in breaking the cycle of domestic abuse by focusing on the children and young people. Helping those who experience and perpetrate domestic abuse, and the professionals they may come into contact with, to identify the need to seek help as soon as possible is a priority in ensuring that support is offered at the earliest possible opportunity.

### How are we going to get there?

- We will commission a joint response focused on prevention and early intervention. This includes support to children and adults after violence or abuse has ceased, to prevent recurrence of abuse or repeat behaviour (breaking cycles of abuse) and to address the longer-term harm caused. It also covers community involvement ensuring our diverse communities and vulnerable community groups are engaged and supported.
- We will design a service delivery model that is responsive to the level of risk.
- We will develop strong volunteer involvement and peer support – Domestic Abuse Champion network;
- We will deliver a coordinated education and public awareness campaign that clearly articulates Wirral's position of having a Zero Tolerance towards any Domestic Abuse;
- Ensure that professionals are trained in identifying domestic abuse and the consequences of abuse.

### How we will measure if we're getting it right?

- Number of domestic abuse Wirral MARAC cases per 10,000 adult females.
- Children and young people experiencing domestic abuse (Wirral MARAC cases).
- A reduction in the number of repeat victims of domestic abuse.
- Improved understanding through training sessions.
- Number of children and YP being supported through early intervention.

## **6.2 Provision – Children and Young People at the Heart of our Domestic Abuse Response**

### **Why is it a Priority?**

It is vital to ensure that victims of domestic abuse, in all its forms receive a prompt and appropriate service to support them and meet their needs. The analysis of current provision for domestic abuse is that high risk victims are extremely well catered for on Wirral, it is necessary to build up the provision for the standard to medium level cases to ensure all victims receive the right type of support.

Based on the strong links between domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health, the local partnership will build on the strengths of existing joint working. To support this effort, domestic abuse will be further embedded as a cross-cutting theme of all local strategies in respect of children and families, substance misuse, mental health and crime reduction.

We will ensure that priority is given to helping the victims of domestic abuse remain in their familiar home environments. A key principle will be that wherever possible (and always in high risk situations) we will seek to remove the perpetrator from the household, situation, allowing couples, families, children and individuals to move forward with the least amount of disruption to their life.

We also know that identifying hidden victims of domestic abuse who are otherwise unknown to services is a gap. One approach is for domestic abuse advisors to be based in hospitals as a means of reaching hidden victims of domestic abuse. Victims presenting at hospitals suffer more severe abuse, are not likely to be engaged with any other services and are more likely to still be living with the perpetrator. (SafeLives 2015)<sup>5</sup>.

### **How are we going to get there?**

- Aim to “get it right first time” by providing support and clear referral pathways for victims, professionals, friends and families.
- Review the current domestic abuse accommodation offer on Wirral to ensure it is focussed on helping victims stay in their own property and meets projected needs.
- Identify intervention programmes that mitigate the risk of children becoming future victims/perpetrators of domestic abuse and/or harmful practices.
- Investigate the deployment of Domestic Abuse advisors to engage potential domestic abuse victims presenting at Accident and Emergency.

### **How we will measure if we’re getting it right?**

- Children and young people experiencing domestic abuse (Wirral MARAC cases)
- Number of domestic abuse Wirral MARAC cases per 10,000 adult females
- Increase in the number of people reporting DA across the DA Alliance spectrum

### 6.3 Partnership – A Strong Community Coordinated Response

#### Why is it a Priority?

Wirral has many organisations and individuals deeply committed to supporting victims, tackling the issues of domestic abuse and helping those affected. As a partnership we need to better understand what agencies and groups are operating in Wirral. It is clear from the needs analysis that there is a gap in provision particularly for people at a 'medium' level risk of abuse. If we are able to target resources more effectively then additional people could be supported before the abuse becomes a high risk case with associated dangers.

Joint working arrangements including co-location and integrated working within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) have delivered some significant benefits – information sharing, integrated risk management, multi-agency working, local systems and processes for safeguarding children with clear pathways to support and integral to the partnership response to violence and abuse.

This strategy will also support the incredible amount of work already underway by the local safeguarding boards. It will include the Making Safeguarding Personal programme which is being driven by the Safeguarding Adults Programme Board.

It is vital that all people working with children and young people know how to identify domestic abuse and how to respond appropriately. We need to address the emotional, psychological and physical harm to children and young people of violence and abuse and match responses to the child's age. Interventions that aim to strengthen the relationship between a child and a non-abusing parent, such as effective parenting and family recovery programmes are effective in reducing harm. Our interventions need to reach young people including those experiencing violence and abuse in their own relationships.

#### How are we going to get there?

- Undertake further insight work to establish the domestic abuse provision in Wirral.
- Work with all partners to develop proposals for fully integrating resources to tackle domestic abuse through a single team – co-located at the MASH.
- Establish a clear joint commissioning approach for delivering comprehensive interventions across the spectrum of domestic abuse services.
- Identify ways of creating neighbourhoods where people feel safe and are safe by utilising perception indicators and feedback from service user focus groups.

#### How we will measure if we're getting it right?

- Evaluating the services we provide to ensure that they are as effective as possible and provide the best possible value for money
- Measuring the number of children affected by domestic abuse who have accessed support programmes.
- Improved understanding through training sessions e.g. Freedom Programme, etc.

## **6.4 Perpetrators – Make Victims Safer and Reduce Re-offending**

### **Why is it a Priority?**

‘What to do’ with domestic abuse perpetrators continues to be a contested area in policy, practice and academia. On the one hand, there are repeated calls for interventions that call the perpetrator to account, whilst on the other a deep scepticism about both routes for doing so – domestic abuse perpetrator programmes or criminal justice sanctions. What is clear on Wirral is that there is a need of a balanced approach for both.

Engaging perpetrators in programmes designed to reduce the risk of harm posed and future offending can have a positive impact on many lives. There are currently two adult perpetrator programmes in Wirral; one imposed on perpetrators through court proceedings (Building Better Relationships) and one aimed at supporting males who struggle with relationships and are in danger of being convicted of domestic abuse (the HELP programme).

We will review these programmes to evaluate how to increase their effectiveness.

There are opportunities for using effective programmes used in other areas to tackle domestic abuse. The Wirral Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Unit is a specialist multi-agency team that provides intensive support and challenge to offenders to help them address and reduce their behaviour and is known to have made a significant contribution to the reduction of acquisitive crime and violence in Wirral. Plans have been developed to use the same supportive approach to manage a cohort of domestic abuse perpetrators with an aim to achieve similar reductions in offending behaviour.

It is often the case that perpetrators of domestic abuse are charged with Common Assault. There is a campaign growing nationally to seek a specific clause to see the description as Common Assault (Domestic Abuse). It is thought that this would act as a greater deterrent as future employment and other opportunities could be curtailed as a result of having to declare that you have been found guilty of domestic abuse.

### **How are we going to get there?**

- Work with our colleagues across the Liverpool City region to evaluate the effectiveness of the perpetrator programmes currently available.
- Build on the successful IOM model for managing a domestic abuse cohort.
- Lobby the Ministry of Justice to identify a specific ‘Domestic Abuse’ clause to section 39 Common Assault.
- We will work with the Courts to ensure that they deal efficiently and effectively with ant Domestic Abuse perpetrators

### **How we will measure if we’re getting it right?**

- A decrease in incidents of repeat Domestic Abuse (Wirral MARAC cases)
- Number of perpetrators identified and referred into behaviour change programmes (both via agencies and self-referrals)
- Effective completion of behaviour change programmes.
- Feedback on the effectiveness of perpetrator intervention and support programmes.
- Numbers and proportion of successful prosecutions.

**“ There is one universal truth,  
applicable to all countries, cultures  
and communities: violence against  
women is never acceptable, never  
excusable, never tolerable! ”**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon



 **Thinkstock.**  
by Getty Images

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## **7.0 HOW WE WILL DELIVER THIS STRATEGY**

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## 7.1 Action Plan

### 1. Prevention – and Early Intervention

Action	By When	Lead Organisation
<p>Commission a co-ordinated agency, community and voluntary sector response based on prevention and early intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link with Early Help and Prevention Strategy</li> <li>• Link with Local Safeguarding Boards to ensure relevant work programmes and initiatives are considered in the delivery of this strategy e.g. Making Safeguarding Personal</li> <li>• Create a Domestic Abuse Champion Network</li> </ul>	September 2016	Wirral Domestic Abuse Alliance
<p>Design a service delivery model which is responsive to the level of risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify sustainable alternative solutions to the gaps in service provision as a result of the closure of the Zero Centre</li> <li>• Collaborate with Liverpool City Region colleagues to identify any shared service potential</li> </ul>	March 2017	Wirral Domestic Abuse Alliance
Encourage businesses to adopt a domestic abuse pledge and become Domestic Abuse Champions	March 2017	Wirral Domestic Abuse Alliance
Deliver coordinated training, education and public awareness strategy to ensure that everyone is aware of Wirral's Zero tolerance to all forms of Domestic Abuse.	April 2016	Wirral Council

## 2. Provision – Children and Young People at Heart of our Domestic Abuse Response

Action	By When	Lead Organisation
Prioritise the marketing of a clear referral pathway for all victims, professionals, agencies, friends and families.	March 2017	Wirral Council
Identify initiatives to strengthen work already being undertaken to deliver interventions which mitigate the risks of children becoming future victims/perpetrators.	March 2020	Wirral Domestic Abuse Alliance
Investigate the deployment of Domestic Abuse advisors to engage domestic abuse victims presenting at accident and emergency	TBC	WUTH
Undertake a review of Supported Accommodation for victims of Domestic Abuse to ensure that it is able to respond to individual needs.	March 2020	Wirral Council Housing Authority

### 3. Partnership – A Strong Community Coordinated Response

Action	By When	Lead Organisation
Develop the Domestic abuse and Harmful Practices Steering Group to deliver effective leadership and a clear strategic vision to tackle domestic abuse locally.	April 2016	Wirral Council / Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group / Police
Work with all partners to develop proposals for fully integrating resources to tackle domestic abuse through a single team – co-located at the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.	September 2017	Merseyside Police
Establish a clear joint commissioning approach for delivering comprehensive interventions across the spectrum of domestic abuse services.	March 2017	Wirral Council
Identify ways of creating neighbourhoods where people feel safe and are safe	March 2017	Community Safety Partnership
Complete a programme of research to map the domestic abuse provision in Wirral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link to Needs Assessment</li> <li>• Capture harder to reach groups</li> <li>• Link into Wirral Joint Strategic Needs Analysis</li> </ul>	September 2016	Public Health

#### 4. Perpetrators – Make Victims Safer and Reduce Re-offending

Action	By When	Lead Organisation
Work with colleagues across the Liverpool City Region to evaluate the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes currently on offer.	March 2017	Office of Police & Crime Commissioner / Wirral Council
Build on the Integrated Offender Management Model to manage a cohort of Domestic Abuse perpetrators and evaluate the effectiveness of this intervention.	March 2020	Pledge Champions and Cabinet Member
Lobby central government to bring about a specific 'Domestic Abuse' clause to the Common Assault crime category.	March 2020	Pledge Champions and Cabinet Member
Work with the MJCB and the Courts to ensure that high risk perpetrators are dealt with swiftly and appropriately.	March 2020	Merseyside Police / NPS



## 7.2 How Will We Know if We are Getting it Right?

### **We will demonstrate that the strategy is making a difference by the following outcome measures:**

- Wirral victims of domestic abuse are protected and can live in safety, preferably within their own homes.
- Fewer children and young people experience domestic abuse.
- Perpetrators of domestic abuse do not repeat their abusive behaviour.

### **We will know how we will have achieved these outcomes though:**

- Number of domestic abuse Wirral MARAC cases per 10,000 adult females.
- Children and young people experience high risk domestic abuse (Wirral MARAC cases).
- Increase in the number of reported of domestic abuse cases from male and other minority groups.
- A decrease in the percentage of incidents of repeat Domestic Abuse (Wirral MARAC cases).
- Numbers and proportion of successful domestic abuse prosecutions.
- Evaluating the services we provide to ensure that they are as effective as possible and provide the best possible value for money.

- Number of perpetrators of domestic abuse identified and referred into behaviour change programmes (both via agencies and self-referrals).
- Effective completion of behaviour change programmes e.g. Freedom Programme.
- Feedback on the effectiveness of perpetrator intervention and support programmes.
- A reduction in the number of victims requiring relocation – both adults and young persons.

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As awareness of domestic abuse and how to get help is raised, we may see an increase in the number of first time reports during the initial phase of the strategy implementation.

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## 8.0 CONCLUSION

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**People who have experienced domestic abuse have told us about the huge impact it has on their lives.**

Factors such as family, finance and housing make it difficult to escape domestic abuse; victims are often unable to talk about domestic abuse, even with health and care professionals, due to stigma and shame. Tackling the issue before behaviour escalates and becomes more severe can make the system easier and less fearful to navigate.

In this strategy we have set out our approach to working with victims and survivors, children and young people and perpetrators of domestic abuse as well as training and awareness raising and future development. It promotes the need for communities, statutory and voluntary sectors to work together effectively, alongside service users.

Domestic Abuse is unacceptable and has to stop. This strategy is our commitment to realising that ambition and ensuring that everyone in Wirral has a Zero Tolerance towards Domestic Abuse.

## 9.0 STEERING GROUP MEMBERS

The strategy has been developed in partnership with the Domestic Abuse Sub Group that reports to the Joint Local Safeguarding Boards. This Group will oversee the delivery of the strategy and produce an annual review outlining the progress made in achieving the identified outcomes.



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## 10.0 REFERENCES

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