

**DRAFT Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women
and Girls Strategy
2025-2029**

**Consultation document
16 June to 01 August 2025**

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You may wish to speak to someone for support or advice after taking part in this consultation. Please call the free, 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247 or Men’s Adviceline free on 0808 8010327. For information about local support please visit [Help and support for domestic or sexual abuse | Barnet Council](#)

If you’re worried about your own behaviour, call Respect Phonenumber, free on 0808 802 4040.

Foreword

Domestic abuse and violence against women and girls (VAWG) are serious crimes which are often hidden or under reported. Ending VAWG is a priority for this Council and is a challenge requiring a partnership approach of shared knowledge together with expertise from core partners and stakeholders, charity and community groups, businesses and residents. Working in collaboration to tackle DA & VAWG in the diverse borough of Barnet means deepening our understanding of the issues faced by local communities. This strategy is informed by our ongoing engagement with survivors, and we are always thankful for their contribution to this important framework for 2025-29. This refreshed strategy builds on the progress made by the Barnet Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership, as well as previous strategies, to strengthen our coordinated response, setting out new commitments aimed at ending VAWG. The partnership objectives will guide our work over the next four years, with our focus on embedding a public health approach to prevent DA & VAWG with early intervention and healthy relationships education initiatives; ensuring victims and survivors get the help they need; holding perpetrators to account; and increasing feelings of safety in the borough. We continue to lead on and evaluate the Culturally Integrated Family Approach (CIFA) domestic abuse behaviour change perpetrator programme to address harmful behaviours in relationships and families. With additional funding from MOPAC we will be extending this pilot into additional London boroughs. In response to the DA Act 2021 which positions children as direct victims and survivors of DA, we are using a grant from the London Crime Prevention Fund to develop a programme of support for children with a particular focus on evaluating approaches for children who still live in the home with an abusive parent or carer. Partners will collectively hold each other to account using an annual action plan to measure progress and development of the commitments. Thank you for taking the time to take part in our consultation, your ideas are important to us and will help to shape how we work together to address the causal attitudes and behaviours, support victims and survivors, and robustly deal with people who perpetrate these crimes.

Councillor Sara Conway

Chair, Safer Communities Partnership Board

Help us to shape our new Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

We are seeking your views on Barnet's new Domestic Abuse (DA) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy. This draft strategy has been shaped through meaningful engagement with individuals who have lived experience of domestic abuse and VAWG, as well as professionals across Barnet who support victims, survivors, and those working to challenge abusive behaviours.

It has also been developed in partnership with a range of professionals including the police, housing, offender services, health services, education, safeguarding children and adults, and community and voluntary sector organisations, the strategy reflects a shared commitment to tackling abuse and supporting those affected.

Background

The Home Office defines VAWG as 'a range of unacceptable and deeply distressing crimes, including rape and other sexual offences such as stalking, domestic abuse, 'honour'-based abuse (including female genital mutilation, forced marriage and 'honour' killings), 'revenge porn' and 'upskirting', as well as many others.'

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides the first statutory definition 'Domestic abuse involves any single incident or pattern of conduct where someone's behaviour towards another is abusive, and where the people involved are aged 16 or over and are, or have been, personally connected to each other (regardless of gender or sexuality).'

'Abusive behaviour' is defined in the act as any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse.

Between April 2022 and March 2025, 9,437 domestic abuse cases were reported to police in Barnet. During the same period, 1,310 victims and survivors were referred to MARAC after being assessed as being at high risk of harm, and 2,434 accessed specialist support services, including [Solace Advocacy and Support Service](#).

MASH ([Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub](#)) assessments during the same period concluded 4,205 children were identified as living with, and at risk of, domestic abuse. We also recognise that many more adult and child victims and survivors are affected but face barriers to seeking help.

These figures likely include repeat victims and individuals known to multiple services. However, they do not reflect the many hidden victims in Barnet—those prevented from or unable to report abuse or seek help.

How we have refreshed our strategy

This refreshed strategy is dedicated to all victims and survivors. While women and girls are disproportionately impacted by all forms of VAWG, we acknowledge that anyone—regardless of gender, age, or background—can be a victim or survivor.

Our approach is grounded in a DA and VAWG strategy to benefit everyone including men, boys, and gender diverse individuals.

The draft strategy outlines our shared commitment in increasing knowledge and learning about domestic abuse and all forms of violence against women and girls; holding perpetrators accountable for their actions and partner agencies accountable for their response; whilst prioritising safety and wellbeing of adult and child victims and survivors.

To achieve these goals, we need to make tackling violence against women and girls everybody's business, including practitioners at statutory, community and voluntary levels; communities, friends and family; as well as local businesses. We all have a role to play, and that's why we welcome your views, which will help shape a strategy that is inclusive, effective, and rooted in real community needs. Together, we can build a safer, more supportive environment for all.

Also we know that people taking part in the consultation will have personal experience of VAWG including domestic abuse so please do share your views if you feel comfortable to tell us. For information about support for you or someone else please visit [Help and support for domestic or sexual abuse | Barnet Council](#)

How to have your say

We welcome your feedback on our strategy objectives and commitments.

The consultation will run from 16 June to 01 August 2025. It is open to all our residents, which includes people who have been moved to temporary accommodation in another area for their safety. We also welcome feedback from people who visit or work in the borough, including practitioners, private sector organisations, colleges, university students and staff, and community groups.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this consultation document.

You can have your say by:

- completing a questionnaire online at engage.barnet.gov.uk
- completing a paper questionnaire – available from consultation@barnet.gov.uk or by calling 020 8359 7016.

If you require this questionnaire in another format or you would like someone to help you to complete the questionnaire, please email: consultation@barnet.gov.uk or call 020 8359 7016.

The findings from the consultation will contribute to our final strategy.

Section 1: Legislation and Government Strategic Context

The [Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls' strategy](#) published in July 2021, under the previous Government, sets out the plan to prevent these crimes, improve the experiences of victims and survivors, ensure perpetrators are brought to justice, and improve the way different organisations work together. This is currently being refreshed to set out how the new Government will achieve their commitment to halve VAWG in a decade.

The [Tackling Domestic Abuse plan](#) was published in March 2022. This plan aims to build on the work of previous strategies and to complement the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. It sets out how various aspects of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 will be delivered.

Our Barnet strategy recognises the Government VAWG strategy and DA Act 2021 and will be supported by an annual delivery plan for each of the four years of the strategy to take into account the evolving nature of the work and strategic context to tackling DA & VAWG.

Section 2: Initial consultation findings

During the initial development of this draft strategy, we engaged with a wide range of key individuals, organisations, including, statutory partners, and community organisations. Most importantly, we have listened to residents who are victims and survivors of domestic abuse and VAWG.

The Barnet partnership has demonstrated strong collaboration and commitment, with valued organisations supporting our diverse population. This strategy builds on those strengths, using the feedback we received to shape our vision and objectives. Residents and professionals alike highlighted the importance of early intervention through education, particularly in schools, to address harmful attitudes and behaviours. We will continue to build on the [#HearMyVoice](#) initiative to engage more schools and colleges in embedding and evaluating prevention work.

Survivors who have access local services tell us how valuable the support they receive has been and for many continues to be. To help people feel confident and safe in reporting abuse, feedback highlighted the need for clear information about what happens after a report is made, about what support is available, and to the importance of being believed and understood. This is importantly vital in cases involving less visible forms of abuse such as coercive control and Honour Based Abuse. That's why we remain committed to ongoing training for all professionals so they know how and when to ask people about abuse, and can always respond with empathy, understanding, and belief when someone chooses to speak out.

We were told that effective practice often comes from swift responses to homelessness applications for individuals in refuges; joint efforts between police and domestic abuse services; and social workers who work at the survivor's pace without being patronising or causing further trauma. However, many adults and children shared the common challenge of accessing mental health support to help them cope with the trauma of abuse. For those living in refuge, they told us about their wishes to remain in Barnet after feeling at home here during their refuge stay. Yet, the shortage of

suitable housing leaves many fearing they will be relocated far away, disrupting the sense of safety and belonging they've begun to rebuild.

Feedback and suggestions gathered during the development of this strategy highlights the importance of community engagement and sensitive communication. People shared challenges in accessing support, including limited availability of resources, long waiting times, and insufficient awareness of available support options. We heard how important a supportive and safe response is from services such as police and housing. We know that a multi-agency approach is most effective which is why collaboration is the heart of all our work to tackle DA & VAWG in Barnet.

Section 3: Your experiences

Domestic Abuse and VAWG can occur anywhere, at home, in the workplace, in educational settings or in public places such as on the street, or public transport. It is important to understand that VAWG, including domestic abuse, is not limited to incidents of physical or sexual harm; It often involves patterns of oppressive behaviour and practises that are used to exert power and control over victims and survivors.

To ensure this strategy and its delivery plan are shaped by local need, we want to hear about your experiences, whether that involves concerns about friends or family, your own lived experience or witnessing abuse happening to others in the community.

We would like to ask you about:

- **how confident you feel in accessing support if you, a friend, or a family member was a victim of any form of DA or VAWG**
- **how safe you feel from VAWG in the streets and public spaces in Barnet**
- **your personal experience of DA or VAWG**
- **how often you have witnessed a woman being harassed by a man, or a group of males, in public**
- **what you think we can do to improve Barnet's response to victims and survivors of Domestic Abuse and VAWG.**

If you would prefer to go straight to the questions about the strategy, there is an option for you to do so.

If you would like to speak to someone for support or advice, call the free, 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247 or Men's Adviceline free on 0808 8010327.

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Section 4: Our vision

Our vision is to strengthen our collaborative approach to reducing the prevalence of domestic abuse and VAWG through education, shifting attitudes, and robustly responding by holding perpetrators to account. We want everyone especially women, girls, and children to live freely without experiencing or fearing harassment, domestic abuse, stalking or violence.

The partnership of services in Barnet is committed to working together to keep adults and children safe from Domestic Abuse and VAWG. Our vision is to make Barnet a place where residents feel safe, everyone feels able to tell someone about the abuse when they are ready, where communities and services understand and recognise domestic abuse and VAWG, and where everyone is able to access the help and support that they need, when they want it.

Ultimately, we want all residents to live free of the fear of domestic abuse and VAWG. This refreshed strategy is designed to hold those responsible for the abuse to account, whilst also recognising the importance of tackling the attitudes that enable such harm to exist. By recognising DA & VAWG as a public health issue, we can strengthen our understanding of the steps necessary to embed a culture of prevention and early intervention.

We are seeking your views on:

- **to what extent do you agree or disagree with our vision?**
- **if you disagree, please say why**
- **do you think we have missed anything?**

Section 5: Our objectives

The objectives set out below are the core of our Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls strategy. They are the areas we will focus on across the partnership to meet the needs of all our communities, and to ensure partners work together in a collaborative and transparent way.

Our objectives have been developed in consultation with victims and survivors of domestic abuse and VAWG and with voluntary and statutory partner agencies working in Barnet.

The objectives are outlined below:

Partnership Objective 1: Prevent and tackle domestic abuse & VAWG through effective early intervention and prevention measures and by tackling the causes.

The response to tackling DA & VAWG in Barnet is grounded in early intervention and prevention. By adopting a public health approach, we aim to deepen our understanding of the issues faced by our local communities while strengthening our data collection and analysis.

Partnership Objective 2: All victims and survivors, including children, are enabled to report domestic abuse & VAWG, access comprehensive support, and recover in the long term.

When we refer to victims and survivors, we mean adults, young people and children who are currently experiencing, or have previously experienced, any form of DA & VAWG. It is important to acknowledge the long-term impact of abuse as victims and survivors continuously tell us they need support at all stages of the journey. Our approach to service provision will be intersectional informed by data, insight, and the voices of our diverse communities. We are committed to ensuring that all victims and survivors receive the help and support they need at the earliest opportunity.

Partnership Objective 3: Ensure there is a comprehensive and robust response to people who are responsible for the perpetration of domestic abuse & VAWG including holding them to account and engagement in behaviour change interventions.

To achieve our vision of reducing the prevalence of domestic abuse and VAWG; and so, everyone especially women, girls and children can live freely without experiencing or fearing harassment, domestic abuse, stalking or violence, there must be a strong and coordinated response to those responsible for the harm.

Partnership Objective 4: Enhance the safety of our streets, communities, workplaces, education settings and public spaces through collaborative actions to reduce domestic abuse and VAWG in these environments.

Working with partners, we aim to increase feelings of safety in Barnet, in public spaces and across our communities as well as in education and work settings. We will continue to listen to residents to understand the causes of their unsafe feelings and embed prevention work to address gender stereotypes and attitudes towards women, girls and violence that enable DA & VAWG to continue.

We are seeking your views on:

- to what extent do you agree or disagree with the objectives we have identified to help deliver our strategy?
- if you disagree, please say why. have we missed anything?

Section 6: Our commitments for 2025-2029.

The supporting delivery plan will outline how we intend to achieve the objectives and fulfil our commitments. As part of this consultation, we are seeking your views on these commitments and welcome your suggestions on the actions needed to deliver them effectively.

Partnership Objective 1: Prevent and tackle domestic abuse & VAWG through effective early intervention and prevention measures and by tackling the causes.

This means preventing it happening in the first place and intervening at the earliest opportunity when it does happen.

We commit to:

- *Prioritising the coordination and impact measurement of work in schools to address attitudes and behaviours.*
- *We will continue to build on the learning from #HMV partnership with Middlesex University to strengthen their response and extend this work across the borough. A particular focus on engagement with Barnet & Southgate Collage and Woodhouse Collage*
- *Strengthening early identification of DA & VAWG through education, training, and knowledge exchange. Key partners in this work include police, health, social care, and education.*
- *To raise awareness, we will continue to build on the success of previous communication campaigns using data and community insight to ensure the messages reach all parts of Barnet.*
- *Building on Barnet Council's new DA Policy, we will support other employers to introduce policies and guidance for their staff.*
- *We will continue to develop public health approach to tackling DA & VAWG rooted in early intervention and prevention. This includes gathering evidence, data and insight and listening to our diverse communities. We recognise their need to better understand the informal support routes in communities, identifying the barriers to accessing support, and continue to raise awareness.*
- *We will strengthen collaboration with health partners, building on a good practice model such as IRIS programme funded by NCL ICB, that provide training and support to GP surgeries to improve early intervention and response for victims and survivors.*

Partnership Objective 2: All victims and survivors, including children, are enabled to report domestic abuse & VAWG, access comprehensive support, and recover in the long term.

We want everyone who experiences domestic abuse and VAWG to be able to tell someone when they are ready and receive a believing and understanding response. When they do tell someone, they should have provision that makes them feel safe and supported, not just now but for the long term too.

We commit to:

- *Enhance our child-centred, multi-agency response, ensuring it is risk-led and trauma informed. Understanding a child's lived experience of domestic abuse requires clarity about who is perpetrating the harm and the behaviours being used. We will encourage partners to move away from vague terms such as 'DA between parents.*
- *Strengthen the support for child victims and survivors from pre-birth through adolescence, in partnership with schools, family services, health and other key agencies. We will focus on understanding the accumulative impact of DA on children and how this might affect them in adulthood, including care leavers.*
- *Supporting young people at risk of relationship abuse will be a priority. Those who receive specialist young person's IDVA support report preferring services tailored to their age group. They also ask for clear, jargon-free language and prefer the term relationship abuse over domestic abuse.*
- *We will continue to raise awareness of DA & VAWG ensuring people know how to get help for themselves or someone they are worried about. Survivors tell us they want clear information about how to report and what to expect. We are committed to building trust and transparency between statutory services and victims and survivors and to understand the needs of our diverse communities to increase opportunity for victims and survivors to report and engage with support.*
- *Scrutiny of the MARAC process through will continue, through six-monthly Quality Assurance Panel with the learning actioned by the MARAC Steering Group.*
- *We will continue to hold six monthly MARAC Away days to promote good practice and improved outcomes for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence in Barnet.*
- *We are committed to strengthening links between services supporting victims facing multiple disadvantage, including those related to substance use, mental health, and homelessness. The links between DA and VAWG and Substance use is covered by the work of DA and VAWG at Combatting Drugs Partnership Board*
- *In many of the cases of suicide linked to DA, coercive and controlling behaviour is a key factor. We are committed to raising awareness of coercive and controlling behaviour (CCB) particularly its links to post separation abuse.*
- *We will promote and implement the learning and recommendations of 2025 MOPAC reports: 'Managing risk of serious harm from domestic abuse in London by SafeLives' and 'Adult-Child to Parent Abuse (ACPA) Research and Toolkit' by Equality Collabs.*

- *We are part of a research project on CAPVA - Child and Adolescent Violence and Abuse, for which the learning will inform our response to this going forward.*
- *Our DA & VAWG workforce is central to addressing risk and safety, as well as challenging harmful behaviour. We acknowledge the impact this type of work can have on people and understand the need to consider how to ensure Barnet has an intersectional approach including a diverse workforce which reflects our communities.*
- *We will work with school leaders, safeguarding leads, police officers, and safer neighbourhood teams to increase the number of schools signed up to Operation Encompass, and to collect data on police notifications to schools.*
- *In line with MOPAC guidance, we will continue working to ensure services meet the cultural, language and religious needs of victims and survivors, including those facing multiple disadvantages, and non-UK nationals with securing immigration status. We will also improve access for LGBT+ communities building on the success of Barnet Homes One Stop Shop.*
- *With support from the MOPAC London Crime Prevention Fund 2025-2029, we will develop and pilot an eight-session Clinical intervention model for Children & Young People effected by domestic abuse. This will include individual and group psychoeducation and trauma informed therapy with a focus on building resilience, emotional regulation, and self-esteem.*
- *The Barnet Group will continue working towards the DAHA Accreditation focusing on policy and procedure for staff and customers, training, communications and embedding a culture of awareness and responsiveness to domestic abuse.*

Partnership Objective 3: Ensure there is a comprehensive and robust response to people who are responsible for the perpetration of domestic abuse & VAWG including holding them to account and engagement in behaviour change interventions.

Focusing on those who are causing the harm is key to stopping domestic abuse and VAWG.

We commit to:

- *We will strengthen the multi-agency response to disrupting and stopping abusive behaviour, working closely with Police, Probation, Housing, and the Voluntary Sector to maximise existing resources and expertise. This includes a focus on high-harm offenders.*
- *We will prioritise an approach that engages perpetrators and holds them accountable for the risk they pose to adults and children.*
- *We will work to increase referrals from Barnet MARAC to DRIVE for high-risk high harm perpetrators.*
- *Within the CIFA programme, we will deliver services as part of an intersectional lens, addressing the multiple identities and experiences of both victims and perpetrators. This includes outreach to LGBTQI+ communities through the Respectful Partnerships programme, which explores cultural and historical influences behind abusive behaviours.*

- *We will use evaluation findings, lived experiences and service users' voices to improve the delivery of behaviour change programmes.*
- *We will work with partners to address concerns by young women who feel that not enough is done to engage young perpetrators. They have highlighted a disparity between support for victims and that for perpetrators.*
- *We will continue to build a skilled and confident workforce through the Safe and Together training. Practitioners will be supported to have early conversations with individuals using abusive behaviours and to engage them in change programmes. Our goal is for every agency to feel confident in discussing behaviour, understanding its impact, and accessing specialist advice.*

Partnership Objective 4: Enhance the safety of our streets, communities, workplaces, education settings and public spaces through collaborative actions to reduce domestic abuse and VAWG in these environments.

We want everyone in Barnet to feel safe in their community. The partnership is committed to addressing this collaboratively across the borough.

We commit to:

- *We will continue to apply a public health approach to address harmful attitudes, behaviours, and norms rooted in misogyny that enable and normalise VAWG in society. Learning from the success or otherwise of comms campaigns, we will continue to prioritise messaging aimed at stopping the root cause.*
- *Coordinate a collaborative approach to increasing feelings of safety for the people who live, work, study in and visit Barnet.*
- *Misogyny and online harms are an ongoing safeguarding concerns for children and young people. We will work with partners and schools to develop a coordinated response.*
- *Barnet Council has signed up to the Women's Night Safety Charter. We will encourage other organisations to do the same, demonstrating their commitment to women's safety.*
- *Based on the evaluation of the Safe Haven pilot in North Finchley, we will continue to support and promote existing schemes such as Safe Spaces, Ask for Angela, and UK Says No More. These programmes are already established and managed by partners, and we will reinvest time in raising awareness and accessibility.*
- *Our VAWG communications will be shaped by insights gathered from men and boys in Barnet, ensuring future campaigns targeted at them are relevant, impactful, and informed by their perspectives. Our VAWG communications will effectively use insights gathered from men and boys in Barnet to inform future VAWG campaigns targeted at them.*

Our delivery plan will be reviewed on an annual basis throughout the life of the strategy by the VAWG Delivery Group to identify partnership actions to achieve the objectives.

We would like to hear your views on any actions that you feel would help partners to achieve the objectives.

These actions might be in relation to domestic abuse and violence against women and girls in terms of:

- your experience of living in the borough
- accessing services from the council or other partners
- working in the borough
- working for the council
- as a partner or community organisation working within the borough

We are seeking your views on:

- **are there any actions you would particularly like to see included in our detailed delivery plan?**

Ending domestic abuse and violence against women, girls, and gender diverse individuals requires all of us, residents, professionals, community groups, and local organisations, to work together. Your voice matters. Whether you have lived experience, work in a related field and/or a member of our Barnet community, we want to hear from you.

Please take part in the consultation by completing the questionnaire online or requesting a paper copy. Your feedback will directly shape the final strategy and help ensure it reflects the needs and priorities of our diverse communities.