



Cumberland  
Community Safety  
Partnership

# Cumberland Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025 - 2030

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# Foreword

## **Colin Cox - Director Public Health, Cumberland Council**

As Cumberland's Director of Public Health and Communities, and Chair of the Cumberland Community Safety Partnership, I am honoured to present this Domestic Abuse Strategy on behalf of our partners across Cumberland.

The strategy reflects our partnership's commitment to strengthening the significant work already taking place to respond effectively to those affected by domestic abuse.

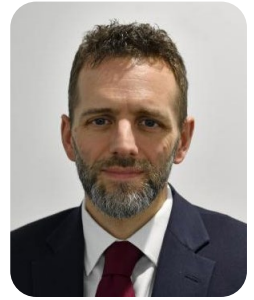
We will continue to link with national initiatives, ensuring our work is informed and evidence based and offers the best opportunities to those we support and work alongside.

The views and experiences of people affected by domestic abuse were central to the development of this strategy. We know domestic abuse can have devastating consequences, and we are committed to delivering a meaningful response informed by what you have told us is needed.

We believe that people can and should be able to live their lives free from domestic abuse. Children should not have to live with the negative impact domestic abuse can have on their lives, and they should have access to early intervention and support.

We believe those affected by domestic abuse should have the right support. We are committed to ensuring abusers are safely challenged and held accountable, and also supported to change their behaviour.

As a public health professional, I recognise the wide-reaching impact domestic abuse can have on individuals - affecting their mental, emotional and physical health. I invite you all to recognise, and join us in, our commitment to addressing domestic abuse as a matter of urgency. We must stand together, forego excuses and address domestic abuse a priority. Responding to domestic abuse is everyone's business.



## **Councillor Emma Williamson, Deputy Leader, Cumberland Council**

As Cumberland's Executive Member for domestic abuse, I fully support this strategy - it is a comprehensive approach to highlighting and addressing the impact domestic abuse has on our communities.

By prioritising the voices and experiences of those affected, the strategy ensures our responses truly meets the needs of our communities.

We've adopted a strong focus on both supporting victims and holding perpetrators accountable. At the same time, the strategy promotes prevention and early intervention, which is hugely important, and demonstrates a balanced and forward-thinking approach.



## The Vision

We want everyone in Cumberland to live free from domestic abuse. We want victims to get the help and support they want when they need it, for the abuse to stop, and for them to go on to live the lives they want.

We want our children to be safe and happy. We want them to grow up understanding kindness, and seeing loving, healthy relationships. We want them to have homes they can invite their friends to, and where their pets are safe. We want them to have aspirations, and to achieve them, with the right support from those who understand their experiences.

We want to work with those who have caused harm, understanding that they too may have experienced trauma, as we use a compassionate and trauma-informed approach to challenge and change harmful behaviour using nationally researched and evidence-based interventions.

We want to work together to build a better and kinder future for our communities in Cumberland.

## Introduction

This Domestic Abuse Strategy is Cumberland's first. It focuses on improving services for those affected by domestic abuse, and on improving our response to those who cause harm through domestic abuse.

The strategy describes what we will do to ensure those affected by domestic abuse receive the best possible support. We are committed to ensuring the views and experiences of those affected by abuse shape our services. We recognise the needs and challenges of our unique communities, including the rurality of the county and other challenges. This ensures our services are inclusive.

Domestic abuse is everyone's business. We have a responsibility to safeguard children and adults who are at risk. This is our statutory duty, and we want to work together to keep vulnerable children and adults safe.

This is a five-year strategy – in year three there is the opportunity to take stock of learning, reflect on findings and make any necessary adjustments. The strategy will be supported by a delivery plan. Building on our current achievements, we will continue to review and embed those services, which we believe are making a difference. We will explore joint commissioning arrangements for their sustainability.

We will work with our lived experience network to keep their voices at the centre of new developments, exploring the expansion of support to those impacted by domestic abuse. We will revisit opportunities to work in a meaningful way with those who have caused harm, exploring evidence-based programmes that have been shown, nationally, to make a difference.

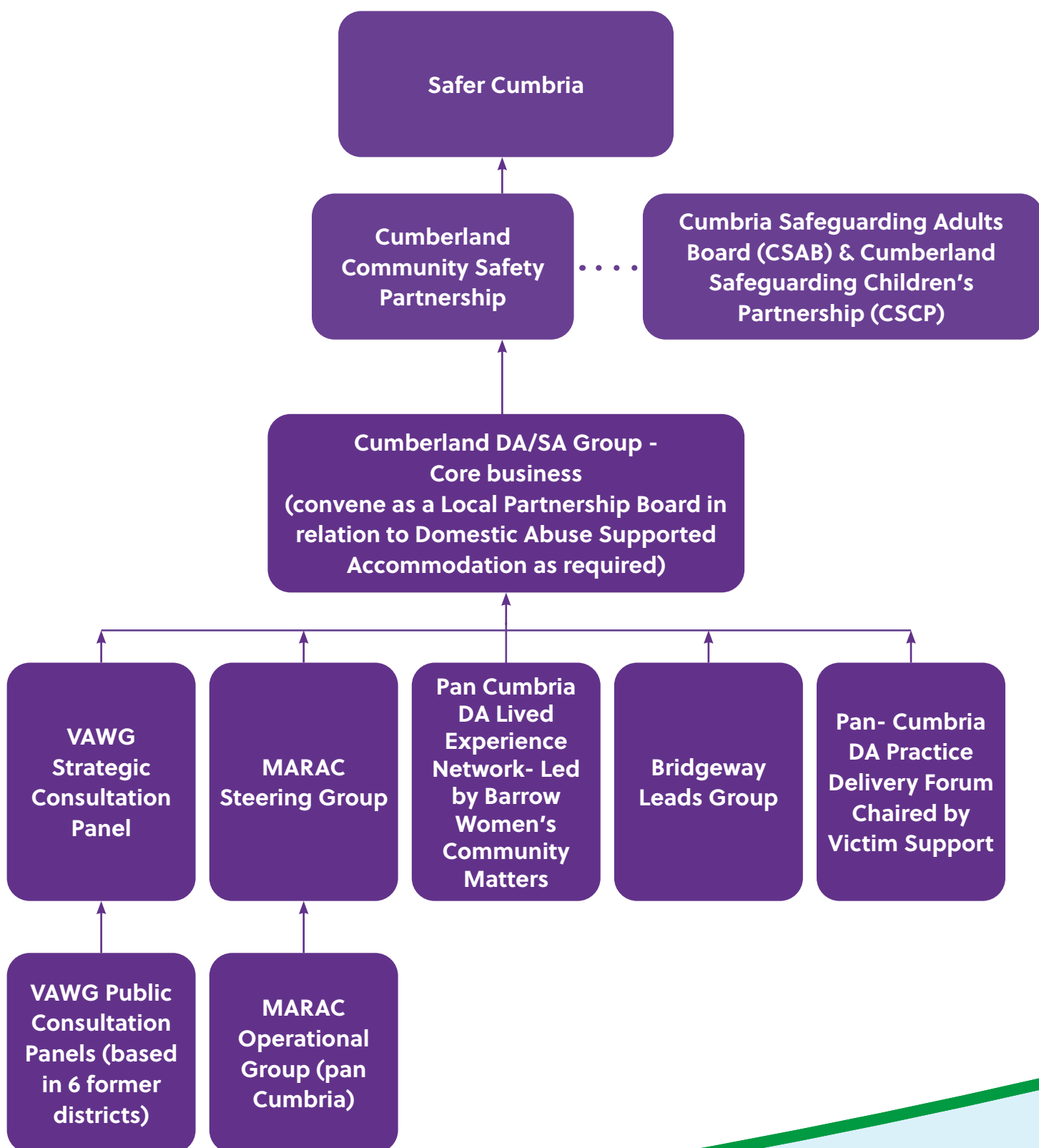
We will continue to collaborate across the partnership to undertake system-wide training, making sure our workforces are trauma informed and understand that no opportunity to support a victim should be missed.

We will participate in national campaigns and work in our local communities to raise awareness of domestic abuse and the services in place to provide the right support at the right time.

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Domestic Abuse Group/Local Partnership Board will be responsible for producing an evolving delivery plan with agreed priorities and timescales.

These plans will provide evidence of our activities and progress towards meeting our strategic priorities, and of the impact being made. The plan will be closely monitored through the relevant governance structures.

## Domestic abuse governance structure



## National context

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) strengthens the support for victims of abuse and enables those who cause harm to be brought to justice. The definition of domestic abuse, in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, is:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological, emotional or other abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been personally connected to each other.

The definition also recognises that domestic abuse can impact on a child who sees, hears and/or experiences the effects of the abuse, and treats such children as victims in their own right where they are related to either the abuser or the abused.

## National data

The [Crime Survey for England and Wales](#) estimates 2.1 million people aged 16 years and over (1.4 million women and 751,000 men) experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2023.

There was no significant change in the prevalence of domestic abuse experienced in the last year compared with the previous year.

The police recorded 889,918 domestic abuse-related crimes (excluding Devon and Cornwall) in the year ending March 2023, a similar number to the previous year.

There were 51,288 domestic abuse-related prosecutions in England and Wales for the year ending March 2023, compared with 53,207 in the year ending March 2022.

## Local data

Cumbria's Crime and Community Safety Assessment, published in January 2024, is available here <https://www.cumbriaobservatory.org.uk/crime-community-safety/crime-community-safety-further-information/>

It shows domestic abuse is one of the most commonly reported crimes in Cumbria. However, compared to 43 police force areas across England and Wales, Cumbria had the 16th lowest rate of domestic abuse-related crimes in 2022-23, placing the county in the second lowest quintile overall.

Research tells us domestic abuse is underreported. Below are some key statistics from 2023 - 2024, collated by SafeLives using information from all domestic abuse-related services in Cumbria. We are aware that families can live with domestic abuse for a long time before it is reported.

## In Cumberland...

We estimate

**21,500**

adults in Cumbria experienced domestic abuse in the last year.

Around **8%** of adult victims experienced both partner and family abuse.



**14,500 (68%)**

of adult victims were female.



**6,500 (32%)**

of adult victims were male.

**3,500**

victims were aged 16-24.



**5,000**

victims were aged over 60.

There were

**5,000**

disabled victims of domestic abuse in the past year.



There were

**3,500**

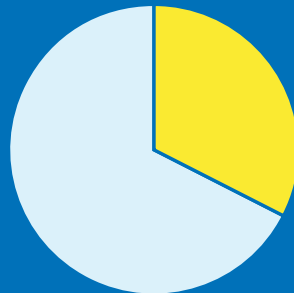
LGBTQIA+ victims of domestic abuse in the past year.

**400**

Black, Asian and racially minoritised people have experienced domestic abuse in the past year.

**14,500**

Non-visible victims in the past year.



**7,000**

Visible victims in the past year.

This shows the estimated number of visible adult victims in Cumbria 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 another support professional or organisation." Source: SafeLives: 2024.

# Delivering the strategy: our commitment

The strategy is underpinned by three aims:

## Prioritising prevention

We will focus on prioritising prevention, working together to identify domestic abuse early, and providing support to prevent escalation. Prioritising prevention means increasing awareness and providing education, while giving people the skills they need to identify healthy relationships and providing the right support at the right time.

- We will work in education settings to ensure that, from a young age, children and young people are taught to understand what a healthy relationship is. They should understand equality and respect, and what they can expect from their own friendships and relationships.
- We will ensure staff in education settings feel confident and skilled in supporting children and young people to talk about domestic abuse and how to respond in a way which meets their needs so they can have safer and positive futures.
- We will create a culture of prevention by continuing to raise awareness of domestic abuse. We will do this through public facing campaigns, including liaison with private industries, promoting the message that domestic abuse is everyone's business. We will increase public confidence by promoting success and providing assurance that lessons have been learned and practice has changed.
- We will ensure our statutory services, health settings and VCFSE (Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise) partners have information about local and national domestic abuse services. We will ensure staff have a good understanding of the support services available locally, and are able to connect adult and child victims, and where appropriate, those who cause harm, to specialist domestic abuse services.
- We will embed the use of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), Clare's Law, at the right time, to enable victims to be best informed and support them to make informed decisions about future relationships. <https://www.cumbria.police.uk/rqo/request/ri/request-information/cl/triage/v2/request-information-under-clares-law/>
- We will work with our urban and rural communities to raise awareness of, and shape our response to, domestic abuse - working together to develop meaningful pathways, recognising the specific requirements of those communities.
- We will continue to ensure the partnership's workforces have a consistent baseline knowledge of domestic abuse, including assessment and management of risk, through evidence-based learning packages.



## Supporting victims

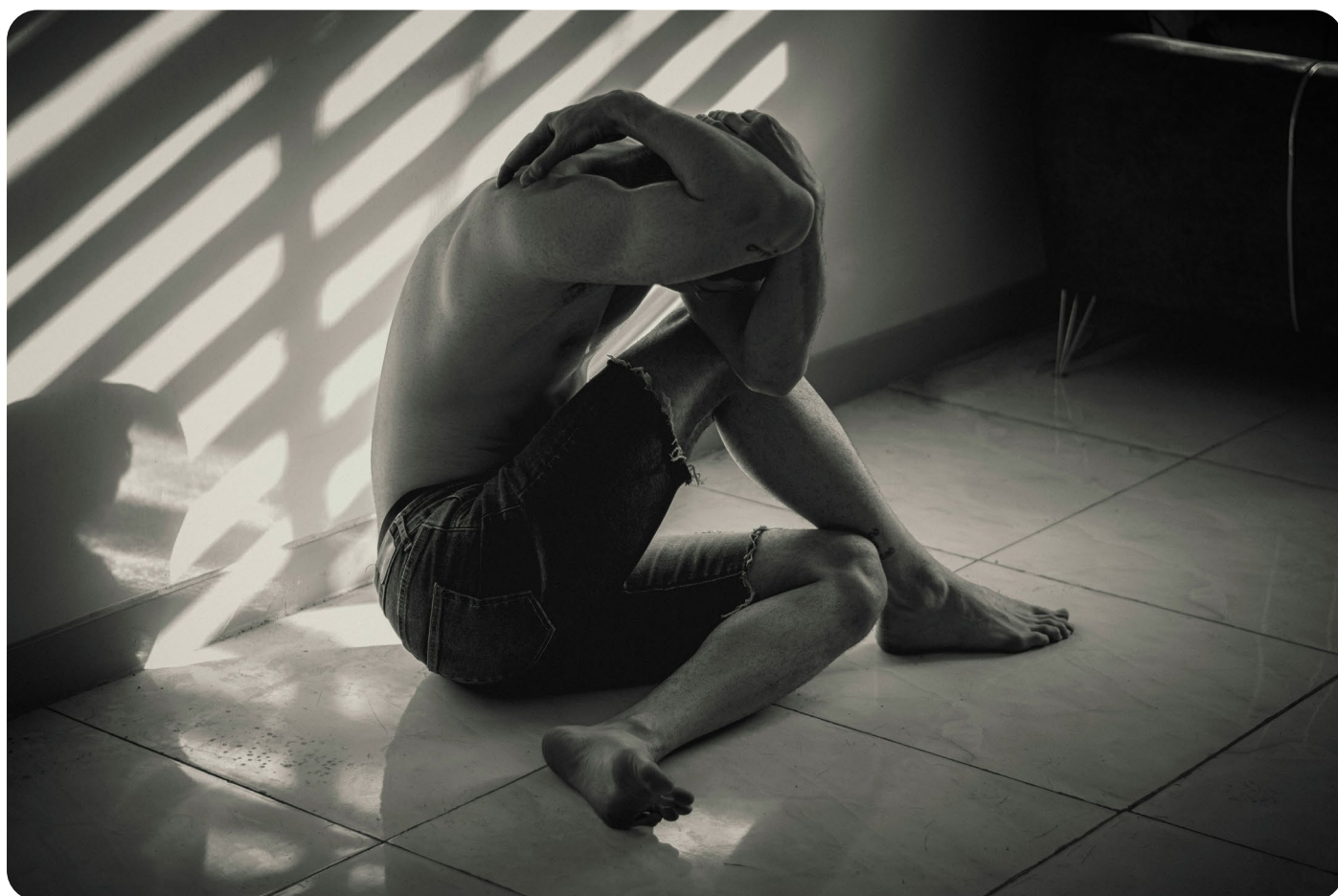
Telling someone about domestic abuse can be really difficult. We know many victims live with domestic abuse for a long time before they meet someone they trust enough to talk to.

They need to know they will be believed and will control the next steps of their journey - a journey that, wherever possible, will move at a pace they are comfortable with.

We want to support victims in a way that doesn't add to their trauma, and they should not feel judged or criticized. They should feel met with an authentic response from someone who cares and knows what to do next.

- We will ensure our partners in both urban and rural areas offer safe spaces to allow victims to speak confidentially. This reduces the risk associated with speaking out in front of those who have caused harm. We will ensure these spaces are available at a time and place suitable for the victims. This will enable victims to create space for action at a pace that meets their individual needs and those of their family.
- We will ensure staff are trauma-informed, can distinguish between parental conflict and domestic abuse, recognise signs of all forms of domestic abuse, and know how to access the right services at the right time.
- We will ensure victims are informed of pre-release arrangements for those that have caused harm, by encouraging engagement with Victim Contact and Victim Notification Schemes.
- We will work with health providers to embed routine enquiry, ensuring the signs are identified, and referral pathways are understood.
- We will consult with those from marginalised communities, and those defined under the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 with lived experience of domestic abuse. We will ensure specialist support services are inclusive and accessible, meeting the needs of victims and survivors.
- We will provide a comprehensive safe accommodation response for victims, via the Domestic Abuse Supported Accommodation (DASA) offer, under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act (Needs Assessment refreshed September 2023 here [Cumbria Observatory – Crime & Community Safety – Further Information \(JSNA, briefings and resources\)](https://cumbriaobservatory.org.uk/crime-and-community-safety/further-information/jsna-briefings-and-resources)). This will meet the needs of Cumberland's urban and rural communities and is aligned to the existing priorities in the Cumberland Accommodation Strategy (awaiting publication).
- We will ensure partners participate in the Domestic Abuse Related Death Review process, and that learning from this, Serious Case Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, are proactively shared via the CSP Domestic Abuse Group and Local Partnership Boards.  
<https://cumberlandcsp.org.uk/domestic-abuse-related-death-reviews>

- We will ensure children are recognised as victims of domestic abuse, as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act. We will ensure the voices of babies, children and young people are captured, and support from specialist providers is timely, of good quality and shows evidence of how they have worked to minimise the impact of the abuse so that children can be safe and recover.
- We will work towards shared training opportunities in relation to domestic abuse awareness, risk management and trauma informed practice. This will enable us to develop a shared language, recognising the positive benefits of responding to victims in a trauma informed and non-victim-blaming way.
- We will continue to strengthen our existing arrangements with specialist agencies in the community, voluntary and faith sectors, and work collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes for those affected by domestic abuse.
- We will continue to review opportunities for the commissioning of specialist services, giving consideration to their long-term sustainability and geographical reach across Cumberland's urban and rural communities.
- Partners will have robust internal domestic abuse policies to support their workforces, should they experience domestic abuse.



## **Pursuing those who have caused harm**

Changing attitudes, and improving our understanding of what drives and sustains domestic abuse, is the only way we will collectively challenge and change the behaviour of those who cause harm.

In Cumberland, there is one commissioned behaviour change programme supporting those who cause harm, as well as programme access for those who have been convicted by the criminal courts.

Challenging those who have caused harm needs an approach that compassionately supports individuals to understand and recognise the impact of their behaviours - and is robust enough to challenge those behaviours and facilitate change.

We will continue to explore funding opportunities to commission evidenced-based programmes - helping those who cause harm to change their behaviour at all risk levels.

- We will ensure domestic abuse cases are investigated swiftly, and evidence gathering is of good quality, to help increase charges. We will ensure the victim's voice - including recognition of children as victims in accordance with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 - is central to the evidence presented, increasing the number of evidence-led prosecutions.
- We will continue to work with the Crown Prosecution Service and courts (criminal, civil and family) to ensure charges and sentences are proportionate, and the victim voice is heard.
- We will work with housing providers to ensure those who cause harm are offered housing and relevant specialist support to break the cycle of offending. This will include an increase in access to commissioned and evidenced based programmes which are underpinned by a compassionate and trauma-informed framework.
- We will ensure, through evidenced-based learning, that our workforces are confident in identifying and addressing the behaviour of those who cause harm.
- We will ensure the partnership arrangements between MARAC, MATAC and MAPPA are robust, and high-risk behaviours of domestic abuse and stalking perpetrated by some adults are considered for MAPPA management in a timely way. This will ensure our response to managing the most serious offenders reflects the risk they pose, and our protection of their victims is coordinated and strong.
- We will explore joint commissioning opportunities to address harmful behaviours associated with child to parent abuse, using national research and evidence-based practice.

## We will know we are successful when:

- Victims feel safer
- Children and young people are happier and feel safe.
- There is increased access to services in our rural communities.
- Representation from marginalised groups increases in our services.
- Successful criminal justice outcomes increase.
- We see a reduction in reoffending and revictimisation.
- Joint working protocols and practices are in place, supporting robust information sharing between statutory, voluntary and specialist domestic abuse services.
- We have sustainable jointly commissioned services in place.
- Those who cause harm participate in programmes and we see a change in their attitudes and behaviour.
- Private industry collaborates with us to keep its workforces safe.
- Staff tell us they feel supported at work.
- Routine enquiries are in place in our health settings.
- People feel listened to and in control of their own support.
- People feel optimistic and ready for a brighter future.
- Our partnership arrangements provide assurance that we have processes in place to manage those we are most worried about, and we are working together to keep people safe.
- We can offer safe and appropriate accommodation to those who need it through our DASA offer.
- Our workforce tells us they feel confident in understanding and responding to domestic abuse.
- Cumberland achieves a culture change where domestic abuse is everyone's business and won't be tolerated.



## Acronyms

<b>DA</b>	Domestic Abuse
<b>MARAC</b>	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
<b>MATAC</b>	Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination
<b>MAPPA</b>	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
<b>ONS</b>	Office of National Statistics
<b>VAWG</b>	Violence Against Women and girls
<b>VCFSE</b>	Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise

