

Dudley Borough

Sexual Assault and Abuse Strategy

2021 - 2024

safe & sound

Dudley's Community Safety Partnership

Action plan available on request from Community.safety@dudley.gov.uk

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Introduction

Sexual assault and abuse are forms of interpersonal abuse that can affect anybody, at any age, from any background, at any time. Safe and Sound, Dudley's community safety partnership takes a serious and committed approach to addressing sexual assault and abuse. We work closely in partnership across agencies and with communities to ensure that timely and effective help and support is available for individuals, in addition to ensuring that perpetrators are held to account for their actions.

This strategy reflects the regional West Midlands Sexual Assault and Abuse Strategy which in turn aims to locally embed the national NHS England (NHSE) Strategic direction for Sexual Assault and Abuse Services, Lifelong care for victims and survivors: 2018 -2023¹ which aims to improve local, regional and national multi-agency governance, partnerships and strengthen pathways for victims and survivors.

Relevant links to Regional and National guidance and legislation can be found in appendix 1

Definition

This strategy adopts the West Midlands Definition of Sexual Assault and Abuse:

West Midlands Definition of Sexual Assault and Abuse (Sexual Violence):

'Sexual violence' and/or 'sexual abuse' can both be defined as any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature that takes place without consent or without understanding. It encompasses a broad range of activities, physical, visual and verbal, that are: of a sexual nature; take place without consent or without understanding; are experienced, at the time or later, as a threat, invasion or assault and that take away the ability to control intimate contact. Whilst sexual violence has been recognised as a cause and a consequence of gender inequality disproportionately affecting women and girls, we recognise there are heterosexual male victims, and victims within the LGBT+ community.'

This strategy includes the following forms of sexual assault and abuse:

- Adults, children and young people who are or who have experienced sexual assault and/or abuse whether recently or historically.
- Those who are perpetrating sexual assault and/or abuse.

It responds to sexual assault and abuse in the context of:

¹

Strategic Direction for Sexual Assault and Abuse Services, Lifelong care for victims and survivors: 2018-2023, NHS England

- Any non-consensual sexual activity within any context
- Any penetrative or non-penetrative offence
- Child sexual abuse
- Child sexual exploitation
- Sexual exploitation and grooming
- Trafficking of people for the purpose of sexual exploitation
- Pressure or coercion into sexual activity
- Sexting
- Sexual abuse via social media and online technology
- Sexual harassment
- Upskirting
- Image based sexual abuse
- Female Genital Mutilation (as a form of VAWG with the impact of SAA)

National profile: Sexual assault and abuse in England and Wales

Nationally sexual assault and abuse disproportionately affects women and girls, with 1 in 5 females estimated to experience sexual assault and abuse from the age of 16 years old and 1 in 25 males estimated to experience sexual assault and abuse within the same age bracket (CSEW, 2018).² The prevalence of sexual assault and abuse experienced by children under 16 years is estimated to encompass 7.5% of the current adult population (CSEW, 2020).³ To caveat this is it important to recognise that under-reporting means the true prevalence of sexual assault, abuse and exploitation is not fully understood.

As hidden crimes, only around 10-15% (CSEW 2018)⁴ of incidents become known to policing. Currently only 1.4 percent of reported rape offences are prosecuted in England and Wales (Home Office 2020)⁵.

The regional picture

Within the period 2014-2019 the West Midlands recorded on average an increase of reporting or identification of incidents of sexual assault and abuse. Reported adult rape offences increased by over 40% and reported child rape offences increased by over 55%.⁶

Since 2017 there have been a stable pattern of referrals for Adult SARC remaining around 420-450 referrals per year.

² Crime in England and Wales, Sexual offences: year ending March 2017, Office for National Statistics

³ Child sexual abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2019, Office for National Statistics

⁴ Crime in England and Wales, Sexual offences: year ending March 2017, Office for National Statistics

⁵ Crime outcomes in England and Wales 2019 to 2020, Home Office

⁶ West Midlands Police: Strategic Policing and Crime Board, 21st January 2020, Police and Crime Plan Priority: Hidden Crimes Title: Increased reporting and recording of hidden crime – Tackling Sexual Violence Presented by: ACC Meir

Referrals for therapeutic services delivered by specialist support providers have risen by 53% from 2014 to 2019 (based on monitoring data to the OPCC from CRASAC).

The local picture

It is important to note that due to the hidden nature of sexual assault and abuse, it is difficult to ascertain an accurate picture of the extent of the problem locally. Partners are working together to identify a data set that can inform practice locally.

Impact of Sexual Assault and Abuse

Sexual assault and abuse can have a lifelong impact on a person. It can take many years for an individual to disclose sexual assault or abuse, particularly those people who have been abused or assaulted as a child. For children, discovery is more common than disclosure and non-verbal cues and behaviour change are often the first signs that abuse has or is occurring. Evidence shows us that some of the most prevalent reasons why women and girls in particular do not report abuse is the fear of being blamed/shamed or of not being believed (CSEW, 2018 Table 23).⁷ Victim blaming compounds a person's trauma and does not allow them to seek the support that they may want or need.

The trauma caused by sexual assault and abuse can be further exacerbated if the response that an individual receives when the abuse is discovered or disclosed is not met with choice, empowerment and support. The key is to ensure responses to sexual assault and abuse are trauma informed.

The impact of any sexual assault or abuse is largely hidden and often not fully understood by public society. The damage and devastation caused by sexual assault and abuse can be enormous and varied. Trauma manifests differently; it is repressive and can be triggered latently; often leading to bouts of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress. Any aspect of someone's life can be affected, leading them to struggle to cope with everyday activities. The effects of sexual assault and abuse present in different ways for different individuals; the common thread being serious compound trauma.⁸

Local Priorities

This strategy and the annual action plan aim to illustrate how partners will continue to work together in order to respond to the local priorities identified to reduce sexual assault and abuse incidents:

⁷ Crime in England and Wales, Appendix tables: Sexual offending: year ending March 2018, Office for National Statistics

- Respond as appropriate to identified data sets
- Identify and address gaps in local services
- Improve services so that Victims and Survivors are better protected and supported, involving Victims and Survivors in the service design and commissioning process
- Ensure victim care pathways between specialist services are robust and understood
- Ensure that Dudley's workforce is trained suitably and know how to respond appropriately to victims and their families
- Raise awareness among communities of what constitutes sexual assault and abuse and how to report, in addition to building confidence in victims to report.
- Educate children and young people on consent, healthy relationships and respect.
- Support partners in an effective approach to managing perpetrators in order to reduce risk
- Online Harms
- Ensure equitable opportunities to access appropriate services for those affected by sexual assault and abuse

A number of guiding principles underpin these priorities:

- Sexual assault and abuse will not be tolerated in any shape or form
- Sexual assault and abuse is widespread and although certain groups are disproportionately impacted, it can occur in any neighbourhood and in any community. It knows no barriers, affecting any socio-economic group, ethnicity, age, gender identity, relationship, sexual orientation, disability, race or religion.
- Although the vast majority of sexual abuse is perpetrated by men on women and girls, men and boys are subject to sexual assault, abuse and exploitation, as are Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender plus (LGBT+) individuals.
- Sexual assault and abuse is underreported for a range of reasons
- Everyone has the right to live their lives free from violence and abuse or the fear of violence and abuse
- Sexual assault and abuse is intentional behaviour and the responsibility for it lies with the perpetrator
- Violence and abuse can have devastating consequences for victims, which can be lifelong and affect their physical and mental health
- Recognition that the needs and types of support for adults and children and young people will be different and the response should be tailored accordingly and trauma informed

⁸ Providing effective trauma informed care for women, NHS with further guidance from paper Engaging with complexity – providing trauma-informed care for women by the Mental Health Foundation & partners

- Combating sexual assault and abuse requires a comprehensive and coordinated interagency response. Those affected often experience abuse in isolation but have needs spanning a multitude of services with interweaving timespans.

Prevention and Early Intervention

If attitudes towards sexual assault and abuse are to change then education is needed from an early age. Messages around positive relationships need to be shared with pupils in pre-school establishments, continuing through primary school into secondary schools and colleges in addition to other educational establishments and settings via healthy relationships education. It is essential to remember that young people under the age of 18 are potential victims and perpetrators.

Campaigns aimed at both general and targeted communities work towards raising awareness of sexual assault and abuse and all of its facets, The safe and sound communications plan identifies various campaigns and press releases throughout the year, in addition to linking in with regional and national campaigns and initiatives.

Responses to victims

A comprehensive local specialist service directory is available on the [safe and sound website](#), along with other useful contacts and information.

Black Country Women's Aid deliver the Specialist Support service for Sexual Assault and Abuse in Dudley and can be contacted through our Sexual Assault and Abuse Single Point of Contact (SPOC) that is widely promoted across the borough.

The number is also open to victim's families and professionals and helps people get to the right service as easily as possible as and when support is needed.

In 2020 as the Covid-19 pandemic swept the UK, the risk of abuse from within the home rose. Reporting of domestic abuse to West Midlands Police escalated to the highest levels ever seen. Children and young people were at further risk of child abuse from within the home and online harms. The inability of the population to leave their homes and/or seek support has led to a concerning national increase in multiple forms of abuse and neglect. Disclosure of interpersonal abuse usually occurs historically so it is important to ensure communities are aware of the support and services available to them and know where to go when they need help. Now more than ever it is crucial to be present and available to those in need, to act quickly to support the agencies delivering sexual assault and abuse services and strengthen their abilities to supply services.

Work With Perpetrators

While much focus is on prevention and subsequent support for victims, it is important to highlight work with perpetrators.

We need to ensure that there are provisions and services in place to manage and identify perpetrators of sexual assault and abuse; risk assess and address the basis of the offending behaviour to attempt to limit it, support behaviour change and reduce access to opportunities where offences could occur.

There is a need to support those with additional needs and vulnerabilities. For children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours there is a need to ensure there is provisions for support, education and behaviour change to help them to move healthily into adult society.

Examples of work with perpetrators in Dudley include:

West Midlands Police: Upon conviction or caution for a relevant sexual offence an individual becomes 'registerable' under the Sexual Offences Act. This event then starts a process that ultimately sees the individual referred into the Dudley Police Sex Offender Managers who robustly manage the individual whilst they are in the community. Dependant on the level and type of management required a risk assessment is completed (by NPS if they are lead agency) or police will complete an ARMS assessment and Risk Management Plan if single agency management. An associated risk level and visit schedule is set. The nominal may also have civil orders (Sexual Harm Prevention Order or Sexual Risk Order) together with their standard notification requirements. Overall, these allow for a robust and individually tailored management aimed to mitigate the risk posed to the community and deter any reoffending. Police, partners and the nominal will work together to identify offending catalysts and then work with pathways providers to address those issues and prevent re-offending. Any breaches of the requirements or further offending identified will be immediately recorded and dealt with.

Probation: Risk assessments take place through the use of the OASYS Sexual Harm predictor and a clinical assessment called Active Risk Management, which help to identify whether intervention is required.

Intervention is dependant on the risk level and the need of the person on probation. All intervention should be sequenced and considered to the persons need and can include one to one work with a trained probation officer called Maps for Change, an accredited programme called Horizon and for the highest risk, The Kaizen Programme. Most Kaizen programmes are run in custody. An adapted programme for people with a lower IQ and an iHorizon for people who have committed non-contact sexual offences are also used. Polygraph testing is used for the highest risk people on probation when on licence (after being released from prison). This is a very useful tool in monitoring compliance and managing risk.

Youth Offending Service: Children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour and receive a criminal justice outcome are referred to the Youth Offending Service. Multi-agency professionals within the YOS are trained in AIM 3 (Assessment, Intervention & Moving On), which is accepted as the best current tool for assessing harmful sexual behaviour in children and young people. The assessment is organised into five domains: sexual behaviours, non-sexual behaviours, developmental factors, environmental/family influences & self-regulation. Use of the AIM3 helps to develop an overall profile of a young person across the five domains.

Alongside the assessment training, YOS practitioners have also been trained to deliver AIM3 interventions. Intervention is a process through which change is affected by the young person and significant adults around them engaging in work with professionals. The intended outcome is for the young person to be able to live their life positively without engaging in further harmful sexual behaviours. YOS practitioners jointly work cases of young people requiring AIM3 assessment and intervention, to ensure the most holistic experience for the young person involved. Throughout the intervention, partner agencies are engaged in the process, including close working with Police Sex Offender Managers if there is a registration element.

Governance and Implementation

The strategy reflects the West Midlands Sexual Assault and Abuse Strategy and the West Midlands Regional Sexual Violence Standards and will be implemented and monitored through Dudley's Sexual Assault and Abuse Strategic Group. This is a multi-agency strategic group which reports into the Safe and Sound Strategic Board. The board leads the Domestic and Sexual Abuse agendas for Dudley on behalf of other strategic partnerships within the borough (see below).

The sexual assault and abuse agenda is also progressed via a number of other strategic groups and partnerships including:

- Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership
- West Midlands Sexual Assault and Abuse Board - a sub group of the West Midlands Community Safety Partnership which in turn reports to the Strategic Police and Crime Board
- West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit

West Midlands Rape and Sexual Violence Standards

Statutory and voluntary sector organisations within the West Midlands have worked together to create a set of Rape and Sexual Violence Standards⁹. These standards set out the levels of service and support that victims across the West Midlands should receive and can expect and therefore are a key document in creating Dudley's action plan. Organisations in Dudley Borough are requested to ensure these standards are being reached. Audits against the standards will take place via the Sexual Assault and Abuse Strategic Group.

⁹ Rape and Sexual Violence Strategic Governance Group Standards June 2016, Preventing Violence Against Vulnerable People and SAA Board

Contact telephone numbers and further information

West Midlands Police Emergency	999
West Midlands Police non emergency	101
Dudley's Sexual Assault and Abuse Single Point of Contact	01384 455411
Dudley MASH (Childrens)	0300 555 0050
Dudley MASH (Adults)	0300 555 0050
Dudley Council Plus (Single point of contact for all council services)	0300 555 2345
Emergency Duty Team (Out of hour's social care)	0300 555 8574

Please visit the relevant helphub page on the Dudley safe and sound website for additional contacts, information and advice on the following areas of sexual and domestic abuse

- Sexual Assault and Abuse: <https://www.dudleysafeandsound.org/sexual-assault-and-abuse>
- Violence Against Women and Girls: <https://www.dudleysafeandsound.org/violenceagainstwomenandgirls>
- Domestic Abuse: <https://www.dudleysafeandsound.org/domesticabuse>
- Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse: <https://www.dudleysafeandsound.org/forcedmarriage>
- Stalking: <https://www.dudleysafeandsound.org/stalking>

Relevant links to Regional and National guidance and legislation

[NHS England: Strategic direction for sexual assault and abuse services. Lifelong Care for Victims and Survivors 2018 – 2023](#)

[Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy: 2018 – 2020](#)

[Working Together to Safeguard Children – July 2018](#)

[The Care Act 2014](#)

[West Midlands Sexual Assault and Abuse Strategy 2020-2023](#)

[West Midlands Rape and Sexual Violence Strategic Governance Group Standards 2016](#)