



HM Government  
of Gibraltar

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# Gibraltar National Domestic Abuse Strategy 2023 – 2028

Breaking the Cycle

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## Foreword



Ending domestic abuse of all kinds is one of the most difficult challenges facing our society today. It is also one of the most important. Domestic abuse can and does happen to anyone. It does not discriminate on gender, age, profession or social background. The impact of abuse can result in a range of negative and harmful effects on health, wellbeing and outcomes in life.

2023 has completely changed the landscape for domestic abuse. As Minister of Justice, I am honoured to launch this crucial five-year domestic abuse strategy 2023 – 2028. This strategy includes new ground-breaking domestic abuse legislation which I presented to Parliament earlier this year and completely overhauls previous practice providing a more modern framework for the protection of victims and greater powers for the RGP. I established a strategic partnership composed of the key stakeholder agencies who provide domestic abuse seminars. A tremendous amount of work has taken place in the lead up to the development of this strategy including the introduction of departmental domestic abuse policies, therapeutic pathways, unprecedented investment in training, new services for children, and plans to enhance support services to victims. This comprehensive plan signifies this Government's unwavering commitment to address the scourge of domestic abuse that plagues our community.

Our mission is clear – to protect the vulnerable, empower survivors, and hold perpetrators to account.

In 2017, the Government developed the first 5-year Domestic Abuse strategy 2017 - 2023 and many improvements have been made since then. The global COVID pandemic inevitably meant that some of the fantastic initiatives that were developing had to be postponed, although a special strategy was immediately put in place [during that time](#) to deal with issues that were expected to arise out of the pandemic and

particularly lockdown.

This strategy embodies a collaborative effort between Government departments and agencies, the Royal Gibraltar Police, charitable organisations and other members of society. Together we can work hand in hand to improve support for victims and enhance preventative measures to create a society where no one lives in fear within their own homes.

Domestic abuse is a deep-rooted issue that affects countless lives, transcending social and economic boundaries. It is not confined to the shadows in private or at home; it ripples through society, leaving devastating impacts on families and especially children. We must confront this issue head-on, leaving no room for silence or indifference.

Domestic abuse impacts upon future generations and their ability, capacity and attitude towards relationships, parenting, self-esteem and mental health. Domestic abuse affects the whole family, and prevention or responses must recognise both the immediate impacts which domestic abuse may have on an individual or family, and also its long-term consequences.

No person should experience domestic abuse and for those who do, it is important that there is appropriate support available, at the right time. Through this strategy there is a clear commitment from all the stakeholders represented in the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership, to work together to prevent abuse in all its forms from happening, strengthen our service provision and interagency cooperation and continue to learn from research and best practice to understand what works best to continually improve our response to tackle domestic abuse and the harm it causes across Gibraltar.

Although we know domestic abuse can happen to anyone, from any background, in any relationship, the majority of domestic abuse is perpetrated by men against women. Male violence accounts for the vast majority of serious harm caused by domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse is the systematic abuse of power and control, and is fundamentally linked to inequality. Inequality between men and women not only increases the opportunity for the abuse of power, but it also makes it harder for women to live free from violence and abuse. It is clear that effectively responding to domestic abuse requires a response that takes account of broader gender inequalities.

Although women are significantly more likely to experience repeated abuse, physical injury or death compared to men, emerging evidence suggests men are a hidden population of domestic abuse victims due to stigma and under-reporting. Hidden

groups of victims also include members of LGBTQ+ community, young people and older people. It is therefore vital for Gibraltar to ensure an inclusive approach to tackling domestic abuse and that this is understood by all.

I commend the dedication and expertise of all who contributed to shaping this strategy, including importantly those with lived experience of domestic abuse. Let us remember that true progress lies not only in words on paper but in the actions we take to implement these measures. Each step forward, no matter how small, brings us closer to a safer, more just society for all.

In the face of domestic abuse, we stand united, resolute in our determination to ***BREAK THE CYCLE*** of abuse and build a future where everyone can thrive without fear. Together we shall champion justice, compassion, and hope as we embark on this transformative journey over the next five years and beyond

Samantha Sacramento  
Minister of Justice and Equality

# Our Vision

**We will protect, support and safeguard victims and their children; and promote behaviour change in perpetrators to enable everyone to live a life free from all forms of abuse.**



## Introduction

In order to ensure robust implementation of the new National Strategy on domestic abuse The Minister of Justice the Honourable Samantha Sacramento has established Gibraltar's Strategic Domestic Abuse Partnership, which includes key Government agencies who will work together to tackle the issue of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse knows no boundaries, affecting people of all ages, genders and backgrounds, it undermines the very fabric of our society, hindering the pursuit of individual happiness and collective progress. The partnership unites, embarking on a path of solidarity, understanding and action. Domestic Abuse can and does, happen to anyone. It is indiscriminate of age, gender, race, profession or social background and has a profound impact, particularly on children.

At its core, this strategy emphasises prevention, early intervention, and comprehensive support for survivors. Partnership members are committed to working together to avoid duplication, basing decision-making on consolidated evidence, exploring what action works best, sharing information early and ensuring the best use of available resources.

Through collaboration and information-sharing, we aspire to break down the barriers that often isolate victims, empowering them to step out of the shadows and access the support they deserve. Moreover, we work tirelessly to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions, ensuring that justice prevails and therapeutic support is offered to those perpetrators who wish to change their behaviours.

This strategy recognises that domestic abuse is a complex issue, impacting on individuals, families, communities, agencies and organisations across Gibraltar. Domestic abuse can lead to significant increase in the use of health services, hospital admissions and prescriptions due to chronic health conditions e.g. mental health, substance misuse and physical ill health. Other consequences include the impact on the criminal justice system, homelessness, loss of income or work, isolation from friends and family, poverty and financial hardship, all of which increase to an individual's vulnerability. The impact on children throughout their lifetime cannot even be measured.

For those families and children living with domestic abuse, there can be impacts on their long term physical and emotional wellbeing. Sadly, on occasions ultimately, consequences of domestic abuse can result in the death of the victim.

The partnership is united in our mission to create a Gibraltar where we 'break the cycle' of abuse where domestic abuse is a relic of the past. By implementing this National Strategy we reinforce our commitment to safeguarding the fundamental rights and dignity of all our citizens, fostering an environment where every person can thrive, and are free of abuse.

# Defining domestic abuse

The 2023 Domestic Abuse Act defines domestic abuse as;

**Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse towards another person. Both persons are aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other regardless of gender or sexuality.**

Domestic abuse happens across different types of relationships and is not limited to people who are or have been in an intimate personal relationship. Domestic abuse may happen across household relationships including against or by carers, or between family members over the age of 16.

Domestic abuse can take many forms. It can include, but is not limited to:

## Coercive control

Coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence).

This controlling behaviour is designed to make a person dependent by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive control creates invisible chains and a sense of fear that pervades all elements of a victim's life. It works to limit their human rights by depriving them of their liberty and reducing their ability for action.

Experts like Evan Stark state coercive control is akin to being taken hostage - *“the victim becomes captive in an unreal world created by the abuser, entrapped in a world of confusion, contradiction and fear.”*

## Economic abuse

Economic abuse is part of coercive control, it involves a pattern of controlling, threatening and degrading behaviours relating to money and finances.

The perpetrator uses money to control their partner's freedom. This can include using credit or debit cards without permission or building up debts in their partner's name.

Economic abuse is a broader term, as it also includes restricting access to essential resources and services, such as food, clothing or transport, and refusing to allow someone to improve their economic status through employment, education or training. Some examples of economic abuse are:

- controlling all of the household income and keeping financial information a secret;
- taking out debts in your name, sometimes without you knowing;
- stopping you from being in work, education or training;

- making you do a certain amount of hours at work, not contributing to any bills; and
- having control over spending, checking receipts, having everything in their name.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is one of the first forms of domestic abuse that people recognise because it's the most visible. It is often a way for a perpetrator to gain control. Some examples of physical abuse are:

- punching, slapping, hitting, pinching, kicking, scratching or biting;
- applying pressure to your neck or holding you down, strangling or choking you;
- pulling your hair out;
- spitting at or near you;
- using objects as weapons to attack and hurt you; and
- punching walls or breaking things.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse and violence can take place within relationships or between family members and can often be a part of domestic abuse. If you consent to something because you are afraid or you have been pressured into it, it is not consent.

Some examples of sexual abuse are:

- rape or sexual assault - this can be any sexual act you did not consent to. It can include forced kissing, touching or penetration;
- having sex with you when you are unable to consent, for example if you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol which may affect your ability to consent;
- using force, threats, guilt, manipulation or intimidation to make you perform sexual acts;
- forcing you to have sex with other people or to become a sex worker;
- forcing you to have sex or watch pornography in front of children; and
- degrading you during sex, such as calling you names, spitting, biting, punching or hurting you.

There are other forms of abuse including;

- **Harassment and stalking**
- **Online and digital abuse**

# New Domestic Abuse Act

The prevention of domestic abuse and the protection of all victims lies at the heart of the Domestic Abuse Act 2023 ("**the Act**").

In 2022, The Minister for Justice, the Honourable Samantha Sacramento published a Bill for a Domestic Abuse Act. This law was passed by Parliament and was partly commenced as an Act in July 2023, and with the exception of a few sections will be commenced in Autumn 2023.

This legislation includes a new offence to close a gap in the law around patterns of controlling or coercive behaviour that occurs during a relationship between intimate partners, former partners who still live together or family members. This offence sends a clear message that this form of domestic abuse is a serious offence, particularly in light of the violation of trust it represents, and will provide better protection to victims experiencing repeated or continuous abuse. It sets out the importance of recognising the harm caused by coercion or control, the cumulative impact on the victim and that a repeated pattern of abuse can be more injurious and harmful than a single incident of violence.

The Act also creates new powers to deal with domestic abuse in Gibraltar. These include domestic abuse protection notices issued by police officers in urgent circumstances for a limited time that may require that a person leave his or her residence. Before issuing a notice, the officer must consider the welfare of any child, the opinion of the victim, representations made by the person against whom the notice is made and the opinion of any other residents of the premises who are personally connected. In all cases a Court will review the issue of a notice.

The Act also includes domestic abuse protection orders which are a Court issued version of the above notice in family, criminal and civil actions. The application for an order may be made by the person for whose protection the order is sought (or the Commissioner of Police) and may be made in any family, criminal and civil actions. The Court needs to be satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that the person has been abusive towards a personally connected person and that the order is necessary and proportionate to protect that person from domestic abuse by him or her.

The Act also creates other new offences. These include a new specific offence of non-fatal strangulation or non-fatal suffocation. The use of choking or strangulation as a form of domestic abuse or violence is well documented as is the fact that such behaviour may be undercharged or minimalised if there is no physical injury caused. This offence is not limited to persons who are personally connected.

Finally, the Act also provides for domestic homicide reviews to be established in circumstances where the death of a person over the age of 16 years has or appears to have resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a related person or a person with whom they were or had been in an intimate relationship or a member of the same household.

# Strategic Partnership

Gibraltar's Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership is led by the Minister of Justice and Equality and is a collaboration between the statutory services namely;

- Royal Gibraltar police (RGP),
- Care Agency,
- Gibraltar Health Authority (GHA),
- Department of Education,
- Housing Department,
- Gibraltar Court Services,
- Office of Public prosecution, (OCLP),
- Central HR,
- Public Health
- Probation Service

This group works closely with partners in the community sector and charities. Together, the partnership is committed to achieving shared goals on preventing, supporting and protecting those impacted by domestic abuse in Gibraltar, and ensuring access to services early and that greater accountability and justice is sought against those perpetrating it.

This strategy sets out the joint vision, priorities, and commitments of the partnership.

The overall vision states:

***We will protect, support and safeguard victims and their children; and promote behavior change in perpetrators to enable everyone to live a life free from all forms of abuse.***

The Strategic Partnership is committed to:

- seamless referrals
- working together
- consolidating and improving the evidence- base;
- exploring what works best;
- sharing information early; and
- ensuring the best use of available resources across the partnership.

All agencies have a part to play and importantly to interplay.

# Policy, Strategy and Action Plan

This strategy reflects the Domestic Abuse Act 2023 and seeks to draw upon those inter-connecting world-wide agendas such as, UN Violence Against Women and Girls and the Criminal Justice system wide response to victims and witnesses. As well as incorporating any local organisational drivers, as well as the wider partnership approaches and activity, which together will contribute towards our national response to domestic abuse.

The Strategic Framework has a focus on tackling the root causes of violence against women and girls which include damaging social norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours which are discriminatory towards women and girls, and which create a culture that enables violence, harm, and abuse to develop and be sustained.

The strategy will be delivered through activity identified in the action plan, through the medium of three sub groups - prevention, support and protection and Justice.

Bringing together information from across our partnership is vital as it enables us to see the 'whole picture' in relation to national needs, demands, the provision of services and the identification of gaps.

The action plan will be overseen by the Strategic Domestic Abuse Partnership, who have the responsibility of ensuring its progress. The action plan remains a 'live' document and is updated regularly.



# How do we break the cycle?

**Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse and anyone can be a perpetrator of domestic abuse.** However, evidence shows there are factors that increase the likelihood of becoming a victim or a perpetrator (risk factors) and factors that reduce the likelihood (protective factors). These are contributing factors but not direct causes.

In order to '*break the cycle*', we have used the 4-level socio-ecological model illustrated below. This model can be used to describe risk factors associated with being a victim or a perpetrator of domestic abuse, and can also help to identify opportunities for prevention. This model considers the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community, and societal factors. It allows us to understand the range of factors that protect people from experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse. The overlapping rings in the model illustrate how factors at one level influence factors at another level.

Besides helping to clarify these factors, the model also suggests that in order to prevent abuse, it is necessary to act across multiple levels of the model at the same time. This approach is more likely to sustain prevention efforts over time and achieve population-level impact.

Understanding the dynamic and complex interrelations between these factors highlights **domestic abuse cannot be tackled in isolation.**



## Socio-ecological model for violence prevention

Dahlberg LL, Krug EG. Violence: a global public health problem. In: Krug E, Dahlberg LL, Mercy JA, Zwi AB, Lozano R, eds. *World Report on Violence and Health*.

Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization; 2002:1-21.

## Individual

The first level identifies biological and personal history factors that increase the likelihood of becoming a victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse. Some of these factors are age, education, income, substance misuse, or history of abuse. Prevention strategies at this level promote attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that prevent abuse. Specific approaches may include conflict resolution and life skills training, social-emotional learning, and safe dating and healthy relationship skill programs. Experiencing **childhood trauma** is considered one of the most significant risk factors associated with being a victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse - responding to this is essential for '*breaking the cycle*' of intergenerational abuse.

## Relationship

The second level examines close relationships that may increase the risk of experiencing domestic abuse as a victim or perpetrator. A person's closest social circle-peers, partners and family members influence their behaviour and contribute to their experience. Prevention strategies at this level may include parenting or family-focused prevention programs and mentoring and peer programs designed to strengthen parent-child communication, promote positive peer norms, problem-solving skills and promote healthy relationships.

## Community

The third level explores the settings such as schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods in which social relationships occur, and seeks to identify the characteristics of these settings that are associated with becoming victims or perpetrators of abuse. Prevention strategies at this level focus on improving the physical and social environment in these settings (e.g., by creating safe places where people live, learn, work and play) and by addressing other conditions that give rise to abuse in communities (e.g. poverty, poor housing conditions, unemployment, discrimination and high density of alcohol and drug use in a particular community).

## Societal

The fourth level looks at the broad societal factors that help create a climate in which abuse or violence is encouraged or inhibited. These factors include social and cultural norms that support abuse as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts. Other large societal factors include the health, economic, educational, and social policies that help to maintain economic or social inequalities between groups in society. Prevention strategies at this level include efforts to promote societal norms that protect against abuse as well as efforts to strengthen household financial security, education and employment opportunities, and other policies that affect the structural determinants of health.

This socio-ecological framework highlights the need for a high level multi-agency response and life-course approach to tackling domestic abuse. The development of the Strategic Partnership and subgroups has been integral in supporting the development of Gibraltar's National Strategy

LEVEL	INFLUENCES	STRATEGY	PREVENTION ACTIVITIES EXAMPLE
<b>INDIVIDUAL</b>	Factors that increase risk such as biological, personal history, alcohol/drug use, attitudes/beliefs that support sexual violence	Promote attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that support equality, respect and non-violence	Educational sessions that encourage individuals to challenge violence, sexism, racism, homophobia etc, and comprehensive sexuality curricula that promote healthy sexual relationships that are mutually beneficial to both partners.
<b>RELATIONSHIP</b>	Relationships with peers, intimate partners, family members can influence risk for sexual violence.	Promote healthy communication and behaviours by modelling relationships.	Peer or bystander projects that gives young people tools to change the climate of their social circles by rejecting or intervening when they hear or witness behaviours that support violence, sexism etc.
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	Factors that increase risk based on community and social environments, including an individual's relationships with schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods.	Promote a climate in the community that by targeting processes or policies.	Launching a social marketing campaign on awareness of domestic abuse that promotes consent and safe practices in intimate relationships.
<b>SOCIETAL</b>	Larger, macro-level factors that influence violence such as gender inequality, religious or cultural belief systems, societal norms and policies that create gaps in service.	Promote social norms, policies and laws that support freedom, rights and healthy relationships.	Targeting government departments to increase funding for prevention activities in schools. Creating a program that provides them with reasons to promote prevention: lifelong effects of violence on the community, cost to society etc.

# What those with lived experience told us

To support the development of this Domestic Abuse Strategy, in May 2023 the Minister of Justice and Equality carried out a survey of victims to ensure their voices were heard & they informed this strategy. The survey commissioned by the Ministry of Justice and Equality was conducted by researchers of the Centre of Excellence in Responsible Gaming at the University of Gibraltar. The survey aimed to understand the views of those who have experienced domestic abuse to inform the development of the Gibraltar Domestic Abuse Strategy.

To enhance clarity within the report, the term "*victim*" is used to denote individuals currently experiencing domestic abuse, while the term "*survivor*" is used to describe individuals who experienced it in the past.

This work has been used to shape the underlying principles of Gibraltar's approach and this strategy.

## Barriers to help-seeking

Understanding the factors that prevent individuals from seeking help in domestic abuse cases is paramount. Despite the prevalence and negative consequences of domestic abuse, many victims remain silent and do not seek assistance. Exploring these inhibiting factors provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics surrounding domestic abuse and the barriers that victims face.

The most frequently reported factor that retained people from seeking help was the fear that the abuser might find out that they asked for help: 63% of the respondents reported that this completely or very much held them back from seeking help. 58.1% of the victims and survivors reported that they completely or very much feared that their family or the community might find out, 56.6% were afraid of being judged for being a victim of domestic abuse, and half of them (50.8%) thought they wouldn't be believed if they told someone about their problem. A bit less than half wanted to protect their family reputation (42.3%).

33.1% completely or very much believed that the abuse wasn't serious enough to report it.

30.9% were not aware of the existing services and 31.1% did not know how to access services, and 28.6% were held back by previous negative experience of support services.

## Summary of key findings

- The majority of respondents are survivors of domestic abuse and female.
- Most of the participants encountered domestic abuse for the first time during their young adult years.
- Domestic abuse tends to last for years, a significant proportion for more than 10 years.
- The most frequent type of abuse reported by almost all respondents was coercive/psychological or controlling behaviour followed by physical abuse.
- Verbal abuse was the most prevalent subtype of coercive/psychological or controlling behaviour, closely followed by threats and intimidation
- The spouses/partners/civil partners were the most common perpetrators. A minority of survivors and a significant proportion of victims still lives with the perpetrator.
- Almost half of the victims did not report domestic abuse to any of the available agencies. Those, who asked for support most frequently contacted the police.
- Satisfaction levels varied among services, with Women in Need receiving the most positive ratings.
- Participants found it difficult or very difficult to find information that they required regarding domestic abuse.
- A majority of them asked relatives or close friends for help, and a quarter of them also talked to someone at work.

- The most common factor holding back respondents from seeking help or support is the fear that the abuser and the family/community would find out. More than half of them also feared that they would be judged and wouldn't be believed. One-third didn't know about available support or how to access it.

# Victim's story

“At first, I was in denial and didn't want to think about the fact I was being abused – but people were looking out for me all along and never gave up on me.

For instance, my previous employer really cared about me and kept reaching out even though I kept making excuses for the abuse. At the time, I wasn't in the right state of mind to fully accept the help or acknowledge what was happening to me. I was pushing away reality as a way of coping and defending myself against the pain and trauma.

Then one day someone left me alone in an office with the contact details for a support organisation and encouraged me to get in touch. It was a relief to finally start accessing support but also very painful because I was in the process of finally acknowledging that I was being abused. I felt a huge sense of shame and guilt.

I was at the start of a long journey, beginning to acknowledge that I was being treated badly in my relationship. For the first time, I began to think about the word “abuse” internally, but could still not say it out loud.

During that period, I left my relationship for a second time but soon went back. There was nothing anyone could do at the time to get me out – but I still felt their support and valued it deeply.

One friend tried to call out my ex on some of his behaviour, but he didn't even need to react because I was soon jumping to his defence while he just deflected it all back on her, saying she was bad news. But still she supported me, gently encouraging me to focus on how I felt about myself irrespective of the relationship. That was the start of coming back to myself and gaining consciousness. It was massive.

My ex always found ways of isolating me so my friend and I didn't have much time together but when she did get me alone, she would simply ask: “How are you feeling? How are you treating yourself?”.

She had an anti-anxiety book and we did one of the exercises together which involved her writing down some of my favourite experiences of the year and helping me to vocalise what they meant; spelling out to me the positives that were evidenced by these experiences. I carried that note around with me for a long time. My friend still feels she did not do enough to help me but this alone was so fundamentally important.

The truth is I was just not ready to leave for a long time. It takes so much to leave and it took a long time after my first contact with a support organisation and a year after

writing that note with my friend that I finally broke free.

In the end my body took over and decided for me. I became ill and couldn't work due to surgery. I was trying to recover at home and the truth suddenly came to me as a simple, unemotional fact: "If nothing about my situation changes, my body will give up and I will die." I could feel myself slipping away. My body had helped me to survive for a long time but now it was just not bothering to keep going.

It was a purely physical feeling, there was no rational thinking or emotion involved. My body was trying to escape, to leave the situation by blacking out or just sleeping. At the same time it was telling me something much more loudly than in the past because I had not been listening. My brain was numb, so my body was trying to talk to me instead.

I had been forced to turn off my feelings for so long because if you allow yourself to feel too much sadness or desperation, you can't survive. And so with the wisdom of my body and the support of my friends on my side, I left during the pandemic, having only just recovered from the coronavirus and my surgery.

Leaving for good was the hardest thing I have ever done. However, I knew as I walked out the door that this time it was finally over.

Now that I am free from abuse there are sometimes difficult feelings which overwhelm me because I am finally in a safe place to acknowledge them. It's hard to cope when that happens but with the right support I can now work through those emotions and finally let them go. And as I go through this process, those moments occur less and less.

The journey to acknowledging abuse is a long and personal one (and there will be many setbacks) but hopefully stories like mine will help other women to realise that – with one step at a time – it is possible to reach a place of peace and safety". (*courtesy of Women's Aid England 2022*)



# Our Strategic Priorities

This strategy provides a foundation to shaping future activity relating to domestic abuse in Gibraltar.

There is a responsibility on all government departments and agencies to approach, manage and provide services consistently. We need to challenge some of our solitary and at times unconnected processes, and identify ways to work better in partnership where necessary.

This includes continuing to engage meaningfully with people who have experienced abuse throughout the delivery of the strategy, as well as seeking outside support from the academic world and the charities who are well placed to challenge our thinking. Through the development and implementation of this Strategy we want to adopt a holistic, broader partnership response to domestic abuse. This includes our approaches to preventing domestic abuse through our work with people who harm, and working with people across all ages and stages of life in order to challenge and prevent repeat abuse from happening. And 'break the cycle', It also includes our approach to improving responses to the needs of particular groups within our community of all ages, sexual orientations, gender, people affected by disability, people who have a caring responsibility, and people from different ethnic and / or faith backgrounds.

This overarching domestic abuse strategy reflects a multi-agency approach to what we want to achieve. Through the delivery of our priorities, we aim to protect, support and protect victims and their children and promote behavioural change in perpetrators to enable everyone to live a life free from all forms of abuse. The Partnership recognises accommodation-based support is just one part of a much wider response to domestic abuse. It was important to go further and understand the wider needs, demands and issues domestic abuse is having on our local community.

Delivering against this strategy is a partnership responsibility of the Strategic Domestic Abuse Partnership.

The strategy will be supported by an action plan, agreed to and championed by each partner within the Strategic Domestic Abuse Partnership. Actions developed will be linked directly to the identified priorities and be outcome focused.

Progress will be monitored through the Strategic Domestic Abuse Partnership and delivered via the three sub groups.

Feedback from interventions and services supporting the work being delivered in the action plan will all form a vital part of ongoing service development, our future planning and monitoring processes. Throughout our work, we will ensure the voice of those with lived experience, families affected and those perpetrating domestic abuse are involved to inform and continually improve our provision.

Implementation against the partnerships' priorities will require sustained commitment from all partners, if we strive to make significant differences to the lives of those impacted by domestic abuse

## **Key Strategic priorities**

**Strategic Priority 1 - Driving change together**

**Strategic priority 2 - Prevention and Early Intervention**

**Strategic Priority 3 - Provision of services and support to victims and survivors of domestic abuse**

**Strategic Priority 4 - Protection and justice**



# Key Aims

- To improve the confidence, capability and expertise of all staff across government departments, and ensure that people are provided with consistent approaches and attitudes wherever they present.
- To ensure better outcomes for people who use or who need services, and for all people in our community who experience, or who cause harm by domestic abuse, by improving the response.
- To work in partnership to promote and prioritise education work, prevention and early intervention across Gibraltar; and to build capacity across our community in order to undo and stop repetitive patterns of abuse from occurring.
- To ensure all services are consistent, strengths based and trauma-informed and remove any potentially re-traumatising impact of current practices and processes.



# Achieving our priorities – what will the Partnership do?

High-level Strategic Priorities	High-level Actions
	<p><b>We will protect, support and safeguard victims and their children; and promote behaviour change in perpetrators to enable everyone to live a life free from all forms of abuse.</b></p>
<p><b>Strategic Priority - 1</b>  <b>Driving Change together</b></p> <p>Working Together. A whole systems approach means working collaboratively with our partners across Gibraltar in order to deliver our vision, including people with lived experience of domestic abuse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will develop a coordinated approach to how we respond to, support, and provide services to people affected by domestic abuse. By increasing our knowledge and awareness we make it easier for people to access support as early as they need to, and we can make sure that our responses are consistent, safe and compassionate.</li> <li>• By increasing public knowledge and awareness we will support people to make more informed judgements about their relationships and their individual situations.</li> <li>• We will raise levels of domestic abuse awareness and confidence with all professionals and employers to enable them to identify and respond effectively to domestic abuse at the earliest opportunity.</li> <li>• We will ensure all government departments have <b>their own</b> domestic abuse policy.</li> <li>• We will share information early, and improving data and intelligence recording, ensuring robust governance.</li> <li>• We will improve / develop information sharing processes across agencies, which will support a shared understanding of risk across agencies.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will involve those with lived experience of domestic abuse to support and inform our decision-making.</li> <li>• Responding to domestic abuse is everyone’s business; having a skilled workforce and educated population on healthy relationships and domestic abuse will help for earlier identification and intervention.</li> <li>• Investment in training must be at a level to make sure it is widespread, consistent, specialist and tailored. It must be embedded into practice and staff allowed the space and time to reinforce their learning and development in their day to day practice.</li> <li>• Promote domestic abuse awareness across the business and private sector, encouraging ‘healthy work environments. and encouraging every workplace to adopt a domestic abuse pledge and develop a domestic abuse policy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Priority - 2</b></p> <p><b>Prevention and Early identification</b></p> <p>Improve support to victims/survivors and families affected by domestic abuse through early identification and early support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventing domestic abuse starts with a good understanding of healthy relationships, and an awareness that domestic abuse and coercive control is unacceptable. It has to start in early years education, as our beliefs and values of respect, consent and healthy relationships are formed through our early experiences. Identifying domestic abuse triggers, early signs and behaviours, will mean services can respond more effectively, appropriately and quickly, and people will be able to recover from abuse quicker and in a more sustainable way.</li> <li>• We will encourage people to seek support earlier by improving information, education and communication systems. Being able to intervene at an earlier stage in someone’s journey through domestic abuse will mean better harm prevention and a reduction in the impact of the abuse on whole families.</li> <li>• We need to ensure robust communication strategies between this and other Strategies across the Government in Gibraltar to complement and build capacity across services.</li> </ul>

- We will work with children and young people to raise awareness about issues of equality and respect, develop appropriate age and stage awareness in order to help them better recognise domestic abuse and coercive control behaviours, and increase their resilience to these negative behaviours in relationships.
- We will develop work with education to further develop sessions on healthy relationships, along with support service pathways.
- We will introduce 'none in three' app in schools and youth clubs for young people to learn about healthy relationships.
- We will promote responsible and safe use of social media and its impact on abuse.
- We will Introduce operation encompass and domestic abuse recovery programme with Child-line and the NSPCC.
- We know that the places where people have the opportunity to first disclose issues of domestic abuse can be at their GP surgery, but equally it can often be at maternity check-ups, in nursery or classrooms, at A&E departments, or other services such as Sexual Health or Mental Health services. Routine Enquiry allows services to build in opportunities for disclosure that people may need.
- We will support staff to be able to identify and intervene appropriately and as early as possible by strengthening first responses and Routine Enquiry across our services; and to respond in a more coordinated way by strengthening partnership arrangements and improving the effectiveness of domestic abuse pathways.
- We will establish a Short Life task and finish Group to develop a 'Routine Enquiry' in place across maternity services, and to create safe places for disclosure in the community.
- We will establish a 'shop front' venue in the community for early help and disclosure.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will work with the Housing Department to ensure robust approaches to domestic abuse are in place and visible.</li> <li>• We will work collaboratively with partner agencies including charities and other organisations to develop prevention practices / policy / good practice guidance in response to domestic abuse.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Priority - 3</b></p> <p><b>Provision of services and support to victims and survivors of domestic abuse</b></p> <p>Make sure that the right services are available at the right time to people who need them, to protect them from further harm and to support them in their recovery. Ensure services do no further harm.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will ensure that the workforce have the knowledge and skills to respond sensitively, consistently and cohesively from a first disclosure, and throughout the process of any court action. This will give people the confidence to approach any service at any time and get a consistent response with a better outcome.</li> <li>• We will explore additional supports to people who may find it more difficult to seek help – older people, male victims, and people of any sexual orientation or gender identity, people affected by disability, or impaired mental capacity, people who have a caring responsibility, and people of differing ethnic and / or faith backgrounds.</li> <li>• We will explore opportunities to raise awareness of economic abuse issues and alerts for frontline staff through training and development.</li> <li>• We will ensure that all agencies to work together and are skilled to risk assess and safety plan to support and safeguard victims and their families at every opportunity and to ensure every contact counts, by setting up a Multi Agency (MARAC) for Gibraltar.</li> <li>• We will ensure staff are aware of the referral pathways for high risk victims of domestic abuse, and that they have the knowledge and skills to undertake common shared risk assessment to ensure informed and timely referrals into the MARAC process.</li> <li>• We will review and develop robust HR policies and practices to support staff through crisis, disclosure, recovery and support.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will ensure the victims' voice is heard to support decision making and service development via a victim survey.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic priority - 4</b></p> <p><b>Protection and justice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting and disrupting perpetrators to change their behaviour and break the cycle of domestic abuse; and to enhance the safety of victims and their families with the support they receive</li> <li>• Support the Criminal Justice System's response in holding domestic abuse perpetrators to account and delivering positive outcomes for victims.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will enable domestic abuse victims get access to appropriate information to access safe and supportive accommodation responding to the family's needs.</li> <li>• We will ensure there are emergency safe housing options available for those affected by domestic abuse.</li> <li>• We will develop a response to address the housing needs and issues faced by domestic abuse perpetrators to support work to keep families safe.</li> <li>• Work together to ensure there are integrated therapeutic pathways for children, victims and perpetrators in order to break the cycle.</li> <li>• We will continue to work with and support Woman in Need and other support systems for victims.</li> </ul> <p>Changing the attitudes to domestic abuse and improving understanding of what drives and sustains domestic abuse, is the only way we can collectively challenge the behaviour of people who abuse.</p> <p>Working with perpetrators is essential if we are to adopt a whole family approach. This will help with the prevention of domestic abuse and the provision of support to all people affected by it.</p> <p>Prison settings provide a unique opportunity to explore and address some of the issues surrounding abusive behaviours. Working specifically with offenders who have been convicted of domestic abuse is complex but essential to 'break the cycle' of domestic abuse.</p>

Our service approach needs to be compassionate enough to engage and help people who cause harm to understand and recognise the impact of their behaviours and robust enough to challenge those behaviours. This will also help us to see abusive behaviour through a trauma lens in order to better address the behaviours of people who cause harm.

- We will look to develop a suite of interventions to address individual perpetrator behaviour to respond to levels of risk and individual needs.
- We will strengthen the support and training given to those who work with domestic abuse offenders, including in prison settings, to reduce the risk of re-offending. This will include working with Drug and Alcohol Recovery Services.
- We need to make sure that staff are trained and developed to be able to identify the early signs and indicators of domestic abuse and to respond earlier and appropriately to reduce patterns of repeat harm. They need to have the skills and confidence to engage with people who abuse, working with them to reduce risk.
- We will increase our focus on addressing the behaviours of domestic abusers, in order to shift the expectation that the non-abusive partner or parent (usually the mother) must keep themselves and their children safe.
- We will ensure timely justice processes by collecting data from sentencing and courts and develop feedback loops for improvement.



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