



Domestic Abuse

Introduction

The UK government defines domestic abuse as:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and/or emotional.”

This definition includes so called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

In September 2012 it was announced that the definition of domestic abuse would change to include victims aged 16 – 18 years. The aim of this was to increase awareness that young people can be the victims of this type of offence. This new definition was implemented in April 2013.

Domestic abuse is widely acknowledged as being under reported which affects the reliability and interpretation of data. Research shows that whilst female victims are likely to suffer more violent and repeated abuse, male victims less likely to report the domestic abuse that they are suffering.

Bedford Borough Community Safety Partnership is a joint partnership between Bedford Borough Council, Bedfordshire Police, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, The National Probation Service, BeNCH Community Rehabilitation Company and Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group who work together to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour that affect our communities. These agencies have a duty to come together and work with other groups, organisations and agencies to prevent crime and disorder. The CSP was formed in response to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as a statutory requirement.

The Act also requires each CSP Strategy Group of Responsible Authorities to produce an annual Crime and Disorder Strategic Assessment to identify key crime and disorder issues that affect Bedford Borough.

A CSP Strategic Assessment was carried out in September 2016. Domestic Abuse (DA) was identified as one of five emerging themes, evidenced by reporting levels to the police and referrals into services such as the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) and the IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) service. This is a continuation from the previous year’s assessment and DA has been adopted as a CSP



priority within the new CSP plan 2017-20.

Links to the current CSP Strategic Assessment and CSP plan can be found at the end of this chapter.

Domestic Abuse is a cross cutting priority on a number of Bedford partnership strategic boards including Adult and Children Safeguarding groups and the Community Safety Partnership where governance arrangements exist to reduce the likelihood of a domestic homicide and harm to victims. There are domestic abuse partnership arrangements that span Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Council and there are informal links with Luton Borough.

What do we know?

National

- CSEW estimated in 2014/15 for a thematic review, that 8.2% of women and 4.5% of men experienced Domestic Abuse in the last year.¹
- Based upon CSEW estimates and using the ONS 2014 population estimates for the Borough, it would suggest that each year more than 5,530 women and 2,760 men would be a victim of Domestic Abuse. This represents a level of under reporting in excess of 60%.
- Government estimates are that more than 1 in 4 women will be victims of Domestic Abuse in their lifetimes.²

It is important to remember that Domestic Abuse is not one, easily definable offence but can be a collection of offences.

Local

In the period April 2015 – March 2016 Bedfordshire Police recorded 3,213 Domestic Abuse incidents in Bedford Borough, an average of more than 61 incidents a week. This is an increase of 151 incidents on the previous year. 41.8% of Domestic Abuse incidents were recorded as Domestic Abuse crimes, 1344 in total for the year; this is an increase of 11.3% (136 offences) from the previous year.

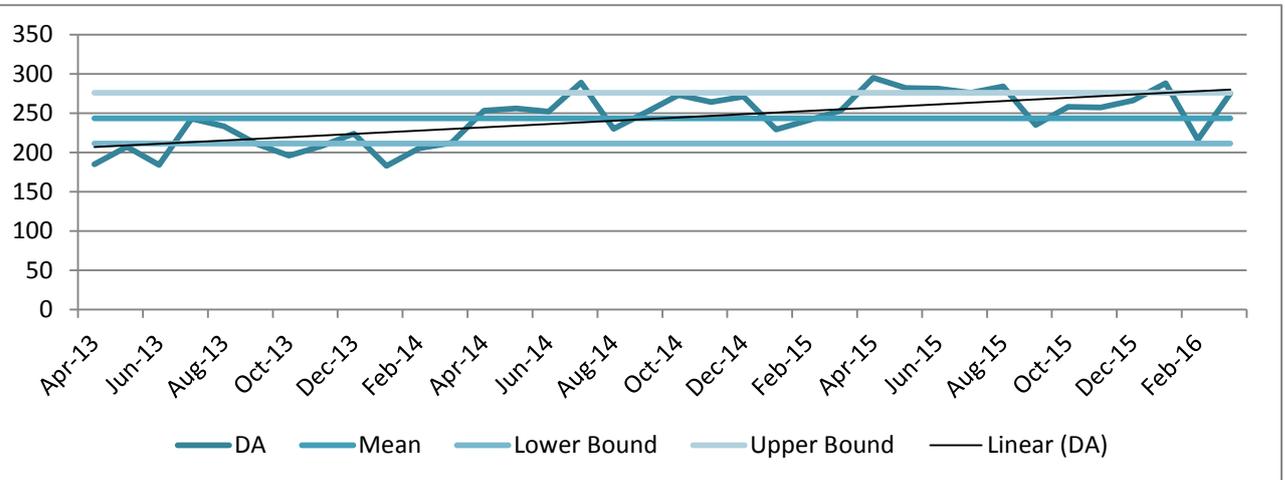
- 10.5% of all Domestic Abuse crime and incidents recorded in the 12 months were scored as high risk; this is a reduction from the previous year of 13.9%.
- 68.8% of all Domestic Abuse crimes and incidents recorded in the 12 months were scored as medium risk; this is an increase on the previous year of 66.3%
- 36.2% of reported Domestic Abuse for the period identified a repeat victims; this is an increase from the previous year's figure of 35.1% (slightly below that of 2013-14, 36.5%).
- 66.4% of the Domestic Abuse crimes reported to the police resulted in an arrest; this is a reduction on the previous year's figure of 76.2%.

¹ ONS - [Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences](#), 2014-15

² HM Government (2010) [Call to end violence against women and girls](#); strategic vision



Levels of reporting in domestic abuse crimes have been steadily increasing over the last three strategic years. The need to increase the number of domestic abuse reports was identified in the 2014-17 CSP plan and so this pattern can be considered positive. It may indicate that there are increasing levels of confidence in the services that support victims.



The trend line suggests that levels of reporting will continue to rise over the next performance year, but not necessarily at the same rates as has been seen in earlier years. The recorded rates of increase are not equal across all demographic groups.

There appears to be some seasonal pattern to recorded offences, with slightly higher levels in the warmer summer months and around Christmas.

Numbers of reports Crimes and Incidents are higher in the afternoons and evening. This pattern is consistent throughout the week. Levels of reporting peak at the weekends particularly the evenings through to early mornings.

Victims

- According to all DA crimes and Incidents reported to the Police between Apr 2015 and Mar 2016, 77.5% of victims were female, this is a continued reduction from the last 2 performance years.

The rate of increase in male victims is particularly positive as national Crime Survey data suggests that the levels of underreporting amongst male victims is considerably higher than female victims.

- The average age of a victim, where known, was 36 years this is a slight reduction the previous year (37yrs).
- The greatest proportion of victims (15.6%) were aged 26-30 years, (31-35yrs in 2014-15).
- The age groups that recorded the fastest rate of increase were; 16-20yrs (+63.4%) and 61-65yrs (+50.9%)
- 32 victims were aged between 16-17yrs at the time of the offence, this is a



significant increase from the previous year of 2.

The greatest proportion of victims are white North European (74.2%) followed by Asian (14.3%) and black (10%). These figures are broadly consistent with the previous two years. The proportion of BME victims has been gradually increasing over the three year period representing 25.8% of all recorded victims in the most recent year. Whilst this increase is encouraging there is still an under representation of BME victims when compared to the 2011 Census data for the Borough that reported 28.5% of the Borough's population being from a BME group, with the exception of black victims (According to the 2011 Census data only 4% of the Borough's population are black).

When both Age and Ethnicity are looked at together it is clear that the increase in reporting of BME Victims is in the younger age groups, 16-35yrs.

- 8.06% of Victims were classified as being under the influence of Drink or Drugs at the time of the offence, this compares to just 2.99% of victims across all crime categories.
- 27.17% of all Victims were classified as vulnerable; this compares to 23.83% of victims across all crime categories.
- The most significant increase in vulnerability is in the area of mental health where a 129.5% increase has been recorded amongst DA victims; 44 victims in 2013-14 to 101 victims in 2015-16.

High Risk Victims

Victims that score 14+ on the DASH Risk Indicator Checklist (RIC) are considered to be High Risk. Between Apr 2015 and Mar 2016 10.5% of all Domestic Abuse crimes and incidents reported to the police were deemed to be High Risk. The demographic of this group differs to that of the overall victim group.

- 95.5% of High Risk Victims are Female
- 79% of High Risk Victims are White
- High Risk Victims are younger – the greatest proportion are aged 21-25
- 53.4% of High Risk Crimes and Incidents are committed by an Ex-spouse or partner
- 73.4% of all High Risk victims are classified as vulnerable

Offenders

According to all DA crimes and Incidents reported to the Police between Apr 2015 and Mar 2016, 80% of offenders were male, this is a continued reduction from the last 2 performance years.

- The average age of an offender, where known, was 35 years this is a slight reduction the previous year (36yrs).



- The greatest proportion of offenders (17.5%) were aged 26-30 years, this is consistent with the previous 2 years.
- The age groups that recorded the most significant increases were 16-20 years (+66) and 21-25 years (+57)
- 45 offenders were aged under 18yrs at the time of the offence, this is a significant increase from the previous year of 8.

Location

In the period Apr 2015 – Mar 2016, 81.5% of all recorded DA was recorded in Urban Wards of the Borough. This is consistent with the previous year.

Ward Name - Top 5	Count	% Total
Castle Ward	395	12.6%
Cauldwell Ward	380	12.1%
Kingsbrook Ward	281	9.0%
Harpur Ward	236	7.5%
Goldington Ward	233	7.4%
Total	1525	48.6

Five urban wards contribute 59.6% of all reported DA within the Borough. These are consistent with last year’s assessment.

Four of these wards include areas identified in the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation as being amongst the 10% most deprived in England. (Castle, Cauldwell, Kingsbrook and Harpur)

The relationship between High levels of DA and deprivation is consistent with previous CSP assessments.

These five wards are also consistent with high levels of unemployment. They are the top 5 wards in the Borough for those claiming Job Seekers Allowance for over 12 months according to the Department for Work and Pensions – Oct 2015.

National and local evidence (best practice)

- Bedfordshire Domestic Violence Partnership website <http://www.bedsdv.org.uk>
- Data: Bedfordshire Police Performance Management Team
- Home Office: Cross Government definition of Domestic Violence, a Consultation, December 2011
- National Crime Survey
- HM Government Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls 2011-2015

Current activities and services

Key services and current activities include:



(a) Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Service

The IDVA service provides specialist short-term crisis intervention and safety planning for the highest risk victims of domestic abuse. IDVAs receive accredited training which provides them with a full knowledge of both criminal and civil court processes, interventions and proceedings in order to support clients at court if needed. This is a Shared Service for Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.

The IDVA service within Bedford Borough received 221 referrals from the period Apr 15 – Mar 16; this was a slight reduction of 8 on the previous year. The greatest proportion of referrals (61.5%) came from Bedfordshire Police, whilst 7.2% of clients self-referred. A positive increase in referrals from Health agencies was recorded with 16 referral in the year compared to only 1 in the previous year.

Key outcomes

- 14.5% of clients were re housed or the abuser was evicted, this is a significant increase from the previous year's figure of 7%.
- 27.6% of clients completed a pattern changing course, this is an increase from the previous year's figure of 22.3%
- 16.7% of clients were supported to access health services (inc mental health), a reduction on the previous year's figure of 19.2%
- 6.8% of clients were supported to change drug or alcohol dependence, this is an increase from the previous year's figure of 3.9%
- 6 clients (2.7%) were re homed in a refuge, a reduction on the previous year's figure of 12.

Additional funding to expand the IDVA service has been provided by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Whilst this has been well received the service is still considered to be under resourced.

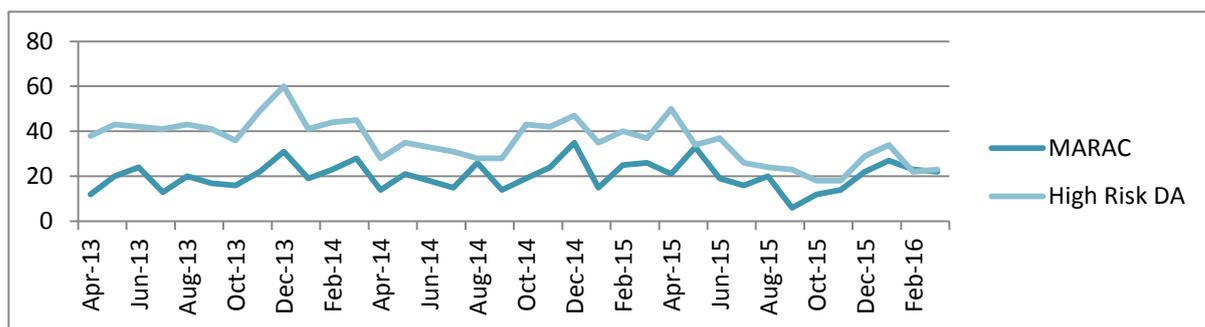
From 31st March 2017 the Home Office will cease to provide local authorities with a grant contribution towards the cost of the IDVA service. The annual £20,000 currently received split between Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough will cease. This loss of funding adds a significant risk to the IDVA service.

(b) Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

Within Bedford Borough, MARAC meetings take place monthly. The meetings are supported by approximately 20 agencies that share information and agree safety plans to reduce the risk of harm to the most high risk victims of domestic abuse.

Referrals are made within 6 weeks of the most recent incident and by use of the DASH Risk Indicator Checklist (RIC). Those victims that receive a score of 14+ on the DASH assessment are considered to be high risk. MARAC referrals can also be made on the basis of professional judgement for those victims that score below 14 points.

Between Apr 2015 and Mar 2016, 253 cases were discussed; this is an increase of 1 case on the previous year.



The number of cases heard at each MARAC follows the pattern of reporting in High Risk DA to the police. Higher numbers can be seen in the summer months and around Christmas, which follows a season pattern that is well documented.

It should also be noted that the overall numbers of High Risk DA reported to the police is reducing. This is particularly positive within the context of an overall increase in reporting of DA crimes and incidents. It would suggest that victims are coming forward at an earlier stage and that early interventions may be preventing the risk from increasing.

Bedford MARAC	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	Safe Lives Target	Most similar force	National
Cases Heard	245	252	253	260		
Repeats	106 (42.3%)	101 (40.1%)	97 (38.3%)	28%-40%	26%	25%
Children Affected	337	372	303			
Police Referrals	126 (51.4%)	138 (54.8%)	139 (54.9%)	60% - 75%	72%	64%
BME Referrals	45 (18.4%)	39 (15.5%)	33 (13.0%)	30%	12%	15%
Male Victims	6 (2.4%)	3 (1.2%)	3 (1.2%)	4% - 10%	5%	4.7%
Victims 16-17yrs	-	2 (0.8%)	5 (1.9%)		1.9%	1.7%

- There has been a small increase in levels of referrals over the last 3 years, but levels are still below that recommended by Safe Lives (260 referrals per year).
- The proportion of cases referred by the Police has increased to 54.9% but again this is still below the lower level target.
- There has been a reduction in the number of repeat cases to 38.3%, which is now inside the upper target of 40%.
- There is an underrepresentation of cases from both the BME community and male victims, with reductions in both over the last 3 years.

(c) Bedfordshire Police Emerald Team

This newly formed team replaces the Domestic Abuse Intensive Support Unit (DAISU) as listed in last year's report.

As of October 2016 the unit expanded to 60 officers. The new 'Emerald Team' will unite



the investigation of both domestic abuse and sexual offences across the county. The core role of specialist in the team will ensure the highest level of victim care.

Risk assessments for DA victims of all levels of risk will be undertaken by these specialist officers, this should result improved standards in recording.

(d) Domestic Homicide Reviews

In April 2011, the Government implemented Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Act 2004, resulting in statutory guidance being published for Community Safety Partnerships who have responsibility for Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs). The aim of a DHR is to identify where lessons can be learned in order prevent future homicides. The guidance has been successfully implemented.

(e) Sanctuary Scheme

Home security measures are made available to victims through the Sanctuary Scheme. Each case is assessed individually. The Scheme is available across Bedford Borough and is available via the Local Authority Housing Department.

(f) The Liberty Programme

The Liberty programme is a group programme that have experienced domestic abuse. It offers therapeutic support alongside activity based learning with a focus on rebuilding health relationships.

(g) Refuge Provision

Bedford Borough offers two refuges, one is a generic refuge for female victims and their children and the other is a specialist provision for Asian women fleeing domestic abuse.

(h) Training Programme

The Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership manages a comprehensive domestic abuse training programme which is available to all workers in Bedfordshire. The Programme consists of a foundation awareness course and a range of tier 2 courses designed to focus on more specific aspects of domestic abuse such as Forced Marriage, substance misuse and risk assessment among others. In addition to this the LSCB offers courses on the Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children & Young People and on Teen Dating Violence.

(i) Domestic Abuse Champion Scheme (previously DA Representatives)

A domestic abuse champion is a member of a service (statutory or voluntary) who has received additional training and has access to further information and support for domestic abuse. The purpose of a representative is to support their team if anybody has concerns about a victim of domestic abuse; they would support and advise them



appropriately. This may be advising them on how to complete a DASH risk assessment, making a referral to MARAC, or informing them of services that may help the victim.

The goal is to have a domestic abuse champion within all services that work with the public, to assist in the early identification of victims and to raise awareness of Domestic Abuse and the confidence to report it.

As of July 2016 the service that covers both Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire had 61 champions registered with the scheme. Of these 34 (55.7%) cover the Bedford Borough area.

(j) Project RELAY

Project RELAY is an initiative that runs in partnership with the Police, the Early Help team in Children's Services and local schools. The scheme was launched in the Borough in September 2015.

The scheme recognises the huge impact that DA has on young people. National guidance suggests that over two thirds of victims of serious domestic abuse have children and that as many as 1 in every 6 children in the UK is affected by DA. Within the Boroughs own MARAC process 303 children were affected by the highest risk cases of DA in the period.

The scheme operates by information being passed on, in a relay, from the Police force to the Early Help team and then onto the nominated 'Relay' representative at the local school. For children aged under 5 years this information is sent to the appropriate Health Visitor. For young people aged between 16-18 information will be shared with the safeguarding lead at the college.

Since the launch of the scheme 1750 referrals have been made to 'Relay' leads in the Borough.

- 29.8% related to children aged 0-5 years
- 67.2% related to school aged children
- 3% related to young people aged 16-18 years

Other Services:

Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership:

<http://www.bedsdv.org.uk/>

National Domestic Violence Helpline

0808 2000 247

<http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk/>

Men's Advice Line

0808 801 0327.

<http://www.mensadvice.org.uk/>



Broken Rainbow (LGBT victims)

0300 999 5428

<http://www.brokenrainbow.org.uk/help/helpline>

Respect (male & female perpetrator helpline)

0808 802 4040

www.respectphoneline.org.uk

Young Minds parents Helpline: 0808 8025544

Rape Crisis Free phone Helpline: 0808 802 9999

Victim Support Helpline 0845 30 30 900

Victim Support Vulnerable Victim Caseworkers – two full time caseworkers provide one-to-one support to people who have been assessed as vulnerable.

Victim Support – Children and Young Persons Caseworkers – this service is designed to provide an enhanced service to young victims of crimes across Bedfordshire.

FACES (BDASS) – one to one support in the family home by an experienced practitioner.

Families First Bedfordshire

Sunbeams – a therapeutic group for pre-school children of those women who attend the Liberty Programme. Led by a qualified Play Therapist, through appropriate play children are able to express and explore their feelings caused by the impact of domestic abuse.

Play Therapy Service – provides children and young people with up to 12 one to one sessions of therapeutic intervention. Available for children between 3 to 14.

Space Youth Group (pilot) – a project for children that have been affected by domestic abuse. Delivered through Families First and 229. It is available for children between the ages of 5-6 and 7-10. The group offers a range of therapeutic and physical activities.

Bedford Women's Centre – Freedom Programme – an 11 week programme for women who have experienced domestic abuse. It runs on a weekly basis as a rolling programme.



The Change Project – Relate North Essex and East Herts – an accredited Community Domestic Abuse prevention service for men or women who want to take positive steps to change the way they behave in relationships. Although not currently funded by Bedford Borough Council they are able to spot purchase places.

Bold Moves – an organisation commissioned through the Probation Community Rehabilitation Company (BeNCH) operating in Bedford Borough. They also offer programmes in HMP Bedford. Bold Moves offers a service to men within the criminal justice system though places can also be spot purchased.

Service Accessibility:

Services are provided via different channels. Initiatives to improve accessibility include:

- New publicity material made available which includes leaflets and an advice website <http://www.bedsdv.org.uk/> . The website includes links to specialist help lines e.g. in respect of LGBT people, men, perpetrators, forced marriage, Muslim women, rape, Asian children and child protection.
- Early intervention programmes with children and young people to tackle the underlying causes of teenage pregnancy. The Aspire programme is an evidence-based, early intervention programme that offers young people at risk of poor outcomes, including teenage pregnancy, small group support and individual coaching, with an emphasis on raising future aspirations. In the academic year 2013/14, the programme will be delivered across 2 middle schools and 2 upper schools, to 20 identified vulnerable young people in high teenage pregnancy areas in Bedford Borough. All those who join the programme will be closely monitored over the next year to measure the impact and outcomes of the intervention
- Nationally 30% of domestic violence starts during pregnancy. Bedford Hospital maternity department have implemented a Routine Enquiry policy and procedure which will increase referrals.
- A language barrier has been identified as very few members of staff working within domestic abuse are able to speak a second language. When a request for a service comes from someone whose first language is not English the Language Line service is used. This does not always provide the victim with the most personable service that is required and also comes at a cost.

Local views

- Due to the sensitivities around this client group, it is difficult to gain views on how



those services are received at this point in their lives.

- It is nationally recognised that Domestic Abuse is under reported.
- The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated in 2014/15 that 8.2% of women and 4.5% of men experienced domestic abuse in the last year.
- The Bedford CSP Plan 2017-20 includes a number of strategic objectives to raise awareness and increase the reporting of DA within the Borough.
- Increases in both DA crimes and incidents have been recorded in the last two performance years.
- This rise in reporting suggests a positive increase in awareness of the issue and confidence in those services that support victims, within the local community.

What are the key inequalities?

What are the unmet needs/ service gaps?

- Children are present at a significantly high proportion of domestic abuse incidents.
- The current Home Office definition of domestic violence relates to those aged 16 and over. The definition changed to include 16-18 year olds in April 2013.
- National and local research suggests that the rate of violence increases with the rate of unemployment.
- A growing population (combined with an economic downturn) could result in an increase in domestic abuse, placing greater demand on services and resources.
- Nationally domestic abuse is recognised to be under reported, with levels of reporting from BME and male victims being even lower.
- National research shows LGBT victims are less likely to report to the Police this is true in the majority of crimes not just domestic abuse.
- A language barrier has been identified for those whose first language is not English.
- Repeat victims and perpetrators may not be identified where data entry errors occur (e.g. spelling of names).
- The need for ongoing development of the work with perpetrators
- Lack of provision available for children and young people that have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse.
- Support for victims with additional barriers. SafeLives highlighted this ranges from those with learning difficulties, no recourse to public funds and those who speak English as a second language.
- Gap in services for females without children. Most services provided in Bedford



Borough are linked to Children Centres

This chapter links to the following chapter in the JSNA:

- Alcohol
- Children in Need