

Sefton Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention Strategy 2007-2010

Vision Statement:

'To develop a community that does not tolerate domestic and sexual violence that affords effective support to all of its victims, whilst at the same time holding perpetrators to account'.

Mission Statement

In the short to medium term we aim to encourage victims to come forward and report violence and abuse, whilst at the same time reducing repeat victimisation, in the longer term we aim to eliminate domestic and sexual violence. The development of an over arching strategy, that brings together our vision and plans in a coordinated way, is crucial to our success.

Section 1: Background to strategy

This section introduces and defines, for the purposes of the strategy, exactly what is meant by 'domestic and sexual violence' It then draws a line to connect this with the Human Rights agenda before giving the reader a greater understanding as to the national and projected local prevalence of this very much 'hidden harm' combined with its associated social and economic costs which are very much 'not hidden'.

What is Domestic and Sexual Violence

Domestic and sexual violence affects many people, irrespective of class or demographic, but particularly women. As an issue violence and abuse very much factor and are reflected in the wider prevalence of crime and disorder in Sefton. However domestic and sexual violence are also much more than just crimes, they damage the lives of those people who are abused and their children as well as 'harm' the local economy and the social fabric of our community.

Whilst this strategy acknowledges that both men and women may experience domestic and sexual violence we know consistently from international, national and local research that overwhelmingly women are the main victims and men are the main perpetrators.

Domestic and sexual violence is reflective of a broad spectrum of issues, not all of which are reflective of the local picture, but which can include:

- Domestic Violence;
- Sexual violence and rape;
- Harassment and stalking;

- Forced marriage;
- Female genital mutilation
- Trafficking, including prostitution
- Honour killings

Understanding how and why domestic and sexual violence occurs has been crucial to the development of this strategy. Historically, unequal power relations between women and men have resulted in systematic discrimination, legacies of which remain despite the advances that have been made internationally, nationally and locally on gender equality issues. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women states that:

‘Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men.’

Therefore, essentially domestic and sexual violence occurs as a result of unequal levels of power that exist between men and women, and the misuse and abuse of control mechanisms. However, it is important to note that any violence and abuse which falls out of the violence against women framework will also be included in this strategic approach, as consistently research shows that where partnerships understand the gendered nature of this abuse and put in place strategies to tackle them, they also at the same time significantly improve awareness of and responses to other forms of violence and abuse including, quite correctly, that which is experienced by men.

In addition research suggests that women in particular demographic groups may be additionally susceptible to violence and abuse, for example those that have more limited resources to resist or find support, and/or may find themselves in contexts where there is a higher prevalence and risk of assault.

The same risk factors may also exist for some men and so, whilst this strategy focuses primarily on addressing issues of violence against women, particularly those who are most vulnerable, at the same time it ensures that where men are victims they will also be able to access safety and justice within a coordinated framework of processes, systems and interventions.

We are confident that Sefton’s strategy is in line with best practice and will be fully inclusive of all issues of diversity. (See *Appendix 1 for further information about this strategy and diversity issues*).

Domestic and Sexual violence as a Human Rights Issue

Violence and abuse is not a new phenomenon, it has been a feature of women and girls’ lives throughout recorded history – but over the last three decades it has been increasingly recognised not only as an issue of public concern, but also a matter of justice and human rights.

Kofi Annan stated that Violence Against Women is:

'... perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace'

Applying the human rights perspective to Sefton essentially means that Violence Against Women should not be viewed as a private matter but one of public concern, meaning agencies can and should be held accountable if they fail to take adequate steps to fulfil their human rights obligations to address, as well as prevent the issue, effectively.

These obligations are also underpinned by the introduction of the statutory duty to promote gender equality.

How Common is Domestic and Sexual Violence?

Violence and abuse is a common occurrence in the lives of women, and for a smaller but significant number of men, in our community. From national *lifetime prevalence* studies the data suggests that:

- Almost half of all adult women in England and Wales have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking.
- 1 in 4 women in England and Wales have experienced domestic violence, a crime that has the highest rate of repeat victimisation of all crime and of all violent crime. Applying this national prevalence estimate to Sefton suggests that up to 37,492 women living in Sefton may have a lifetime prevalence of domestic violence.
- Nationally in 2003, domestic violence accounted for a quarter of all recorded violent crime and a third of all violent incidents against women, with a woman is 9 times more likely to be attacked in her home than on the street.
- Nationally 2 women die as a result of domestic violence each week in England and Wales, which represents almost 50% of all female homicide victims. It is further estimated that 70% of all women murdered are killed by men who are known to them.
- Nationally 1 in 4 women experience rape, or attempted rape, with the most common perpetrator being a partner or former partner.
- Nationally 23% of women and 3% of men experience sexual assault as an adult.

The Economic costs of Sexual and Domestic Violence

The 'harm' caused to victims is always of primary concern but this 'harm' can be qualified in economic and social terms as well, and Violence Against Women costs substantial amounts to the public purse.

The most recent research in the UK only addresses domestic violence in England and Wales but never the less estimates a yearly cost of £23 billion.

Based solely on the national average cost for domestic violence alone, and using the Government's formula this could represent a social-economic cost as high as £68,724,920.00 for Sefton.

Table 1: Cost of domestic violence in Sefton.

Cost of Domestic Violence in Sefton		
Type of cost	Cost in £	%
Criminal Justice System	3,056,244	4.45%
<i>Of which police</i>	1,472,527	2.14%
Health care	4,195,198	6.10%
<i>Of which physical</i>	3,666,291	5.33%
<i>Of which mental health</i>	528,908	0.77%
Social Services	685,176	1.00%
Emergency housing	474,815	0.69%
Civil legal	937,609	1.36%
Public services	9,349,041	13.60%
Economic output	8,029,778	11.68%
Human and emotional	51,346,101	74.71%
Total	68,724,920	100.00%
Which represent a cost per person of	£440.00	

In addition:

- Rape has the highest health-related costs of any violent crime at £73,487 per case.
- Violence against women is the most common cause of depression and mental health problems in women, and treating the related physical injuries and mental health problems costs the NHS nationally almost £1.4 billion a year.

Section 2: Applying a Strategic Model that best suits Sefton

The next section draws information from a number of international and national models and applies their relevance to what would best be suited and delivered in a Sefton context.

Global strategies to eliminate violence against women

In 1995, the UK Government signed the Beijing Platform for Action. This called for signatories to work towards ending violence against women by implementing national and local action plans containing the following elements:

- Effective and consistent **planning** across all agencies, policies and strategies
- A coherent and integrated approach to both short and long term **prevention**
- Devising and delivering effective **protection for victims** and their children
- Full access to, and provision of, **support** and **rehabilitation**
- Effective mechanisms for **prosecution**
- The provision of adequate and secure **resources**.

The Government's Strategic Approach to Sexual and Domestic Violence

The above principles have been endorsed and reflected in a number of recent Government policy and legislative initiatives, which include:

- The National Plan on Domestic Violence (2005)
- BVPI 225, and the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004)
- The Cross-Government Action Plan on Sexual Violence and Abuse (2007).
(Further policies and legislative initiatives that, in whole or part, aim to tackle violence against women can be seen at appendix 2).

The process of developing the local response to sexual and domestic violence continues to be informed by national policy directives. In addition to the above the new Public Service Agreement guidelines have been released based around the new 198 indicators on which Local Authorities and their 'partners' will be assessed.

Public Service Agreement (PSA) 23 (*published October 2007*) has as one of its 'Priority Actions to *'Reduce the most serious violence, including tackling serious sexual offences and domestic violence.'*

Further to this the Government, in its guidance on PSA 23, states that

"The most harmful crimes are undeniably those in which people are killed, seriously injured, and/or psychologically harmed. Protecting the public begins with tackling these most serious of offences. Serious violence can also be a

major cause and consequence of inequality, for example domestic and sexual violence, and are primarily committed against women by men.

An effective local response to tackling serious sexual offences and domestic violence should include:

- *action to reduce incidence*
- *the provision of effective victim care pathways to minimise harm.*

This indicator will support the drive to reduce the level of most serious crime nationally, focusing on the number of homicides, incidents of grievous bodily harm, including some of the most serious offences resulting from domestic violence.”

It is within this new context that Sexual and Domestic Violence will be assessed by any future Comprehensive Area Based Assessment, and this new PSA will replace all existing government requirements to report on Domestic Violence outcomes.

In addition, and to follow on from PSA 23, the Government will publish its Violence Action Plan which, by building on existing work, will outline the approach and key roles and responsibilities for Local Authorities and its ‘partners’ in reducing serious violence, including homicide and serious wounding, offences involving weapons, serious sexual offences, hate crime and domestic violence.

It is anticipated that the Government’s current strategy to tackle violence against women will be reflected in the new, as yet to be published, Violence Action Plan. The current policy has three driving principles:

- **Prevention** and early intervention
- **Protection, Prosecution and justice** – victim safety and holding perpetrators accountable
- **Provision** of adequate support for victims

By adopting the above principles (prevention, protection, prosecution and provision) the Government has developed their *Coordinated Community Response (CCR) framework* to tackle violence against women, a model they consider should inform the commissioning and delivery of an effective local response.

It also becomes evident that the delivery of this agenda requires more than just one agency, or department, and that an effective response requires a strong relationship between agencies to deliver a coherent series of mutually supportive interventions through which clients are seamlessly supported.

As such it recognises, and makes explicit, that no one agency can deal effectively and exclusively with the breadth of the domestic and sexual violence agenda.

Sefton has adopted the principles of the CCR-framework as representing a good foundation on which to develop its local response; one that is both informed by the national as well as local agenda. (For model *please see appendix 3*).

The above CCR-framework further breaks down the above principles of *prevention, protection, prosecution and provision* into a 4-tier model intervention-based model based around a common assessment framework of the severity and risk presented to the victim, enabling resources to be targeted appropriately and effectively. (*Please see appendix 4.*)

The 4 tiers of intervention are:

- **Tier 1-** this tier relates to universal strategies, polices and services that need to be in place for the whole community.
- **Tier 2-** this tier relates to situations where there is a standard or medium risk of violence and abuse, and the services and interventions that need to be in place for victims and those who are perpetrators.
- **Tier 3-** this tier relates to individual victims and perpetrators where the risk is judged to be high and what services and interventions need to be in place.
- **Tier 4-** this tier relates to victims who are very high-risk, and who need the maximum amount of service support to prevent and negate serious harm or risk of homicide.

Section 3: Developing a Strategic Approach in Sefton

Strategically Sefton has already begun to address domestic and sexual violence by already including it within some of its local policies and strategies. For example these include, but are not exclusively confined to:

- Sefton's Crime Reduction and Community Safety Strategy 2005-2008 in particular it is relevant to:
 - Key priority 1: Reduction of priority crime
 - Key priority 2: Reduce fear of crime and anti social behaviour
 - Key priority 4: Increase voluntary and community engagement
- Children and Young People's Plan for Sefton
- Sefton's Vulnerable Adult Strategy
- Sefton Supporting People Strategy 2005-10
- Sefton's Equalities Strategy

- Sefton's Equalities and Diversity Policy
- Sefton's Local Policing Plan
- Sefton's Health Plan
- Local Criminal Justice Board Priorities

Sefton's vision is to *'develop a community that does not tolerate domestic and sexual violence that affords effective support to all of its victims, whilst at the same time holding perpetrators to account'*.

In the short to medium term we aim to encourage victims to come forward and report violence and abuse, whilst at the same time reducing repeat victimisation, in the longer term we aim to eliminate domestic and sexual violence. The development of an overarching strategy, that brings together our vision and plans in a coordinated way, is crucial to our success.

Tackling and eliminating domestic and sexual violence has always been a priority for Sefton's Safer and Stronger Community Partnership, and through this new refreshed strategy we intend to harness the commitment of all our partners to state how in Sefton we will collectively address domestic and sexual violence and build a safer, stronger and healthier community, particularly those who are the most vulnerable in a single overarching document.

The benefits of further building on the current integrated approach to domestic and sexual violence for Sefton will be to help create a strong and effective partnership that will deliver:

- a safer, stronger, sustainable and healthier community
- inter-agency partnership working
- an understanding of domestic and sexual violence among the general public (including employees of all agencies) and a decrease in social acceptance and tolerance
- connections between the abuse of women, the abuse of children and the abuse of vulnerable adults
- effective and coordinated policies and procedures

The benefits of this 'partnership' will result in:

- information, support and services for all victims of domestic and sexual violence including men and people in same sex relationships
- information for the family and friends of abuse victims on what is available and how to access services

- a reduction in incidents and repeat victimization
- a reduction in the severity and dangerousness of domestic and sexual violence
- earlier identification of victims and effective and coordinated risk management
- a reduction in the long-term negative consequences of domestic and sexual violence for those who experience it
- perpetrators being made accountable for their behaviour ensuring that effective and coordinated sanctions are put in place
- an increase in service user satisfaction
- the upholding of human rights and the gender duty
- a reduction in the cost to the public purse.

To achieve this integrated approach Sefton's Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership have created a sub group, the **Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention Management Group (DVSVP)**.

This group will be responsible for the strategic lead on domestic and sexual violence prevention. They will report directly to the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership and will be chaired by the Strategic Director of Health and Social Care.

As such the management group will be responsible for:

1. Developing, monitoring and reviewing the Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy for Sefton to ensure that it sets a clear strategic direction for domestic and sexual violence prevention. It will be assisted in this function by ensuring that the strategy is informed *equally* by the national domestic and sexual violence prevention agenda as well as the work of all other relevant thematic partnerships in Sefton.
2. Driving both the implementation of the strategy and its associated performance management function. In particular,
 - Coordinate and support the subgroups responsible for the implementation of the strategy
 - Holding the subgroups accountable for delivering action plans and monitoring progress
 - Resolving cross cutting issues.
3. Co-ordinating and making available adequate resources so that the Sefton Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy can be delivered.
4. Ensuring that progress made on the delivery of the Sefton Domestic and Sexual Violence is reported regularly to Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership and all other relevant partnerships.

5. Ensuring that there is ownership of and commitment to domestic and sexual violence prevention abuse at all levels in the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership.

In order to discharge this responsibility the DVSVP Management Group has developed **5 sub groups** to enable more key people/agencies to be involved, and for them to focus on issues which concern them in greater detail.

The 5 sub groups are:

1. Support and Accommodation for Adult Victims Sub Group
2. Civil and Criminal Justice Sub Group
3. Health Economy Sub Group
4. Children and Young People Sub Group
5. Communications, Consultation and Public Education Sub Group

(For Sefton's Strategic Structure please see appendix 5)

Each of the 5 sub-groups allows colleagues to discuss the full breadth of issues relating to Domestic and Sexual Violence in detail, but in a way that ensures it is complementary and supportive and informed by the findings of the other sub-groups.

Each sub-group has a rationale in that it supports the practical translation of the *Coordinated Community Response (CCR) framework* into a working model for Sefton.

The next sections describe in detail the rationale and the strategic priorities for each of the 5 sub-groups in detail.

1. Support and Accommodation and Support sub group

The below exposition presents the national rationale that underpins the need to have an Accommodation and Support Sub-Group.

- Experiencing any form of violence and abuse has a massive impact upon the lives of its victims, and being able to access support and if necessary safe and suitable accommodation is vital for survival
- Domestic violence accounts for around 16% of homelessness acceptances every year.
- It is also emerging as a major factor for people who experience repeat homelessness, as a perpetrator may pursue the woman and her family, forcing them to move again.
- On average women will experience 35 physical assaults before seeking external help, this statistic increases to 50 assaults for Black and minority ethnic women.

- On average, victims contact between 7 and 12 agencies before receiving an appropriate service – this increases to 12 to 15 agencies for victims from a BME background.
- Women are most at risk of injury/death when they are attempting to leave, or seek help with a view to leaving violent and abusive relationships, and 2 women are killed each week by partners or former partners. Therefore, the provision of adequate, consistent and appropriate support is vital to reducing risk of serious assault or homicide.

2.Criminal and Civil Justice Sub Group

The issue of victimisation, repeat victimisation, and holding perpetrators to account are core issues for this group.

- In 35% of households where a first domestic violence assault has occurred, the second will occur within five weeks. [*The first is often dismissed by the abuser, the victim (and others) as a 'one-off', as a product of unusual stress, or a relationship problem. However, violence typically escalates in severity and frequency over time. Therefore, repeat victimization is common*].
- The results of the British Crime Survey (2000) found that more than half of all victims of domestic violence experiences more than one incident. In no other type of crime is the repeat victimisation rate so high.
- From January to December 2006 there were 4523 callouts to incidents of domestic violence in Sefton, of which 2063 (45.6%) were to repeat victims. Of these callouts 912 resulted in an arrest being made (20.1%).
- Sefton is currently working via a multi agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) to address the prevalence of high risk domestic violence incidents. [*Baseline data was an average of 45% per month (June 2007), reduced to 38% by October 2007*].
- Among female victims of sexual violence, less serious sexual assaults are most likely to be committed by a stranger (62%). Serious sexual assaults are most likely to be committed by a partner or former partner (51%).
- Only 16% of serious sexual offences against people over the age of 16 are reported to the police.
- Although reports of rape have increased considerably in the last 10 years the attrition rate has also reduced dramatically to less than 6% of reported cases resulting in a successful conviction.
- 112 women presented to the Rape and Sexual Assault Centre for Women in Merseyside as a result of being raped or sexually assaulted.
- Approximately 85% of forced marriage cases dealt with by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office involve female victims.
- While there has been no Government-funded prevalence study of FGM, based on extrapolations from data from the 1999 labour force survey, it is estimated that 74,000 women in the UK have been subjected to FGM and 7,000 girls under the age of 16 are at risk annually.
- Whilst Sefton does not have a huge street based sex industry it does have a substantial indoor sex industry and therefore sexual abuse and exploitation are an inevitable consequence for women working in this industry.

3. Health Economy Sub Group

The World Health Organisation has identified Violence Against Women as one of the most significant factors in women's ill health and health inequalities, and these impacts are compounded for those who suffer from more than one form of violence and abuse.

Violence and abuse can result in serious trauma, ranging from cuts and bruises to grievous bodily harm, miscarriages, broken bones, permanent disability and death. Violence can also cause lasting psychological harm to women and their children who witness assaults. The rationale for the Health and Economy sub-group is further evidenced below:

- 68% of women experiencing domestic violence do not seek medical help at the time of their injuries and only 25% of women seeking medical help for domestic violence injuries actually reveal that they have been assaulted.
- Women suffering violence and abuse are more likely to have gynecological problems.
- About 50% of women presenting with chronic pelvic pain have no identifiable pathology, and research studies indicate that some of these presentations are more likely to have a history of childhood sexual abuse, sexual assault, and/or domestic violence.
- The impact of violence and abuse has been found to have psychological parallels with the impact of torture and imprisonment on hostages. For example domestic violence is a factor of at least one in four suicide attempts by women. In addition, one study found that one in seven women experiencing domestic violence was in a psychiatric hospital or was referred to psychiatric services.
- Abused women are:
 - 15 times more likely to abuse alcohol;
 - 9 times more likely to abuse drugs;
 - 3 times more likely to be diagnosed as depressed or psychotic;
 - 3 times more likely to attempt suicide ;
 - 6 times more likely to self-harm.
- 23% of women are at risk of domestic violence during pregnancy, 37% of women physically assaulted are assaulted for the first time during pregnancy, with the abdomen being the main focus of the assault (Mooney, 1994)
- An abused women is twice as likely as a non-abused woman to experience termination, miscarriage, pre-term labour, stillbirth, post natal depression, and/or death of a baby in the first year of life.
- The confidential enquiry into maternal deaths findings identified the links to domestic violence and the need for routine enquiry to be conducted with all women, and the need for protocols to be in place for health professionals is now a statutory requirement by 2008.

4.Children and Young People's Sub Group

It is clear that the needs of children and young people needs to be considered within the wider context of the domestic and sexual violence agenda. The supporting evidence for this is clear, some of which is highlighted below.

- It is estimated that in 90% of all domestic violence incidents, a child is in the same or next room, and that 10% of these children also witness serious sexual assaults on their mothers.
- The legal definition of harm to children now includes the impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another (*particularly in the home; even though the children themselves may not have been directly assaulted or abused as there is now evidence that children can suffer serious long-term damage by living in a household where domestic abuse is taking place*).
- There is a association between domestic abuse and direct child abuse. Research suggests that the presence of domestic violence is an indicator that there might also be an increased risk of child abuse in the home (*it is estimated that between 50% to 70% of children living in a home where domestic violence is taking place may/will also be abused physically and/or sexually*).
- Abuse or threats of abuse in the home can cause children and young people to suffer emotional and psychological damage. (*research suggests that abuse may be linked with alcohol and drug misuse, teenage pregnancy, mental health issues, poor and anti-social behaviour, offending behaviour, eating disorders, and running away from home and truancy*).
- Witnessing domestic and sexual violence can also seriously affect children's educational development and achievement.
- Of the 90 or so children who are murdered each year in Britain, around 80 are killed by a relative. In addition, one research study found that 40% of children living with an abused mother had been sexually abused by her male partner.
- For children under threat of a forced marriage, or girls under threat of female genital mutilation, these will have a profound impact upon all aspects of their lives including their education, safety, health and well being.

5. Communications, Consultation and Public Education Sub Group

It is essential that local services reflect and respond to the needs of the 'local picture' in a way that allows clients to be able to be confident about disclosure and know that they will be effectively supported. Information on services and on a commitment to support victims is a critical element of this process. Currently:

- Sefton is required (Best Value Performance Indicator: BVPI 225) to have in place a domestic violence training strategy to enable staff to respond effectively and sensitively to victims of domestic violence.
- The BVPI also requires Sefton to develop and maintain a directory of services to enable victims to access services, as well as enabling staff from various agencies to refer clients to the most appropriate service provider.
- The BVPI also requires Sefton to have in place education strategies and materials for children and young people to provide support and advice, as well as contributing to the longer-term prevention agenda.

- Sefton also has a duty to ensure that all of its policies, strategies and services reflect locally identified need and provided as a direct result of the systematic analysis of the data alongside service user consultation and participation

Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention: Strategic Priorities

The five sub-groups, as described in the previous section, will be responsible, both collectively and individually, for delivering on five key strategic priorities that are considered to underpin the effective co-ordination and delivery of services in Sefton.

The individual sub-groups have specific terms of reference and will be charged with the responsibility to ensure that services are delivered in line with each strategic priority within the Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention Management Group (DSVPMG) setting.

Strategic Priority 1: Safety, Protection and Justice

Aims

Working with key partners we will ensure that perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence are held accountable for their actions through a coordinated criminal and civil justice interventions that does not compromise the safety of victim/survivors and their children, and that victims are fully engaged and supported through this process.

We will do this by:

- Ensuring that clear and consistent messages are provided to the community that domestic and sexual violence is not acceptable and that criminal and civil justice agencies will hold all perpetrators accountable for their actions
- The delivery of all criminal and civil justice interventions will continue to place the needs of the victim/survivor and children's safety as the core condition
- Minimising the potential for re-offending by putting in place initiatives to reduce the risk of repeat victimisation, including introducing Police Watch, MARAC and improving and enhancing evidential collection
- Ensuring that risk assessments in line with the MARAC process are done routinely across all agencies
- Ensuring an effective criminal justice response when victims report violence and abuse
- Ensuring that all criminal justice staff are trained in domestic and sexual violence by the provision of a rolling programme of training and development initiatives
- Ensuring that evidence located in medical files can be retrieved speedily and used to support criminal and civil justice processes;
- Ensuring that all criminal justice agencies have specialist trained and dedicated domestic and sexual violence staff
- Ensuring that victims have appropriate access to Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA) services

- Making sure the civil and criminal law offer the maximum protection to all victims to stop the abuse reoccurring
- Ensuring that a Homicide Review process is established for all homicides and attempted homicides and that recommendations from Domestic Violence Homicide Reviews are implemented as well as integrated with Part 8 reviews where domestic and sexual violence is involved

Evaluation

The success of the above measures will be evaluated by the Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention Management Group which will assess and report on the

- The effective prosecution of domestic and sexual violence cases
- The victim support pathway that accompanies all stages of the civil and criminal justice process
- Measures designed to address and reduce risk, change behaviour and hold perpetrators accountable for their action.

Strategic Priority 2 –Access to Safety & Support

Aims:

Working with key partners we will ensure that the safety and support needs of those experiencing domestic and sexual violence in Sefton are met through high quality, well resourced, safe and accessible statutory and specialist services.

We will do this by:

- Implementing best practice as reflected in the National Service Standards for Sexual and Domestic Violence across *all* services, including specialist services
- Ensuring that anyone experiencing violence and abuse can access good quality sustained, coordinated and flexible support which meet their needs, particularly those who may have diverse or complex needs
- Ensuring victims can continue to access good high quality specialist services
- Ensure that services are available for victims that have a range of complex needs, including:
 - People who misuse drugs and alcohol
 - People with mental health problems
 - Pregnant or post-natal women
 - Service users with no recourse to public funds
 - Women
 - Men
 - BME
 - People in same sex relationships
 - Young people
 - Older people

- Sex workers

- Developing and implementing a Common Assessment Framework across all specialist violence and abuse services;
- Working with Housing Associations and Registered Social Landlords to ensure that appropriate sanctions and support is in place
- Where homelessness is unavoidable, ensuring that there is sufficient and appropriate temporary accommodation, and that women have access to transport to enable them to access it
- Ensuring that where women have to leave their home because of violence and abuse that every attempt is made to secure their furniture and belongings to prevent hardship later on
- Ensuring that people who are homeless due to violence and abuse are re-housed in appropriate, permanent accommodation as quickly as possible
- Reducing repeat homelessness due to violence and abuse;
- Ensuring that victims who have been re-housed have their details removed from the electoral role (*if they wish to*)
- Supporting service users to re-build their lives free of violence and abuse by ensuring the following support needs are met:
 - The identification and management of risk, including safety planning
 - Financial
 - Housing
 - Educational
 - Gaining employment
 - Interpretation
 - Immigration advice
 - Legal advocacy and advice
 - Therapeutic and counselling
 - Childcare and support to meet the needs of their children
 - Screening and referral for drug and alcohol problems
 - Screening and referral for general and mental health problems
- Developing and implementing policies to support staff experiencing domestic and sexual violence as well as those who are perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence.
- Increasing the number of service users who have not experienced any further abuse at 6 months and 12 months after intervention by support agencies has finished.

Evaluation

The success of the above measures will be evaluated by the Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention Management Group which will assess and report on:

- The number of people who are enabled to access specialist domestic and sexual violence provision.
- Preventing homelessness presentations due to violence and abuse
- The number of service users who have not experienced any further abuse at 6 months and 12 months after intervention by support agencies has finished.

- The length of time that people stay in temporary accommodation due to violence and abuse
- The number of people who move on to more-permanent, more-independent accommodation
- Repeat homelessness presentations due to violence and abuse
- Assessment of services against the National Domestic and Sexual Violence Service Standards.
- Client satisfaction reviews on all stages of structured generic and specialist support

Strategic Priority 3 - Prevention & Early Intervention

Aims

Working with key partners we will ensure that in every part of the community, domestic and sexual violence is confronted and challenged, and where possible prevented from occurring in the first instance. Where violence and abuse is occurring then we will set out to ensure that its victim/survivors are enabled to access support as early as possible.

We will do this by:

- Providing consistent and clear messages that Domestic and Sexual violence, in all its forms, will not be tolerated
- Ensuring that all victims of violence and abuse continue to access good quality information, advice and services by the provision of public education initiatives and campaigns;
- Ensuring that all relevant staff working within our agencies can access training and development opportunities that enable them to effectively identify and respond to both victims and perpetrators of violence and abuse in line with the national domestic and sexual violence service standards
- Ensuring that routine enquiry and direct questioning is introduced across all agencies settings.
- The provision of a central information bank which disseminates good practice

Evaluation

The success of the above measures will be evaluated by the Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention Management Group, which will assess and report on:

- The campaign, information, advice and support material developed in line with a service directory
- Numbers of staff trained to recognise and support clients disclosing domestic and sexual abuse
- Implementation of routine enquiry
- The development of the central information bank
- The development of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence Web-Site.

- Client satisfaction reviews on all aspects of the above information and support package.

Strategic Priority 4 – Protection and Support for Children & Young People

Aims:

Working with key partners we will ensure that children and young people exposed to domestic and sexual violence have access to the services they need, and have the skills to build relationships based on respect and equality.

We will do this by:

- Ensuring that issues of violence against women are reflected and where appropriate integrated into all existing, and new, strategies, policies and procedures that relate to children and young people
- Identifying children who are living with domestic and sexual violence as early as possible
- Ensuring effective information protocols ensure that within the necessary data protection guidelines the Police, when investigating domestic and sexual violence and children are involved with the family, that appropriate health services are informed
- Continuing to ensure that children and young people affected by domestic and sexual abuse can access high quality services as early as possible
- Ensuring that all services continue to protect and support children and young people affected by domestic and sexual violence and abuse
- Ensuring that risks to both women and children are identified simultaneously and that all interventions are based on reducing these risks;
- Ensuring that systems and process do not put children at further risk post separation (*e.g. applications for child contact, residency etc*)
- Ensuring the children and young people have access to good education materials that will enable them to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and awareness to build relationships that are based on equality and respect;
- Developing domestic and sexual violence specific protocols on information sharing, referrals, risk assessment, multi-agency monitoring and data collection across all service for children and young people
- Ensuring that all relevant staff have access to training and development opportunities that makes the links between violence against women and the links to the direct and indirect abuse of children, neglect, and sexual exploitation.

Evaluation

The success of the above measures will be evaluated by the Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention Management Group, which will assess and report on:

- The number of children and young people who are identified as living with a mother who is experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence.
- The number of children and young people who are assessed as being at risk of serious or significant harm as a direct result of domestic and/or sexual violence, and are subject to statutory interventions.
- The number of children and young people who access specific domestic and sexual violence services.
- The number of children and young people who are enabled to access specific public education materials that enable them to build relationships based on equality and respect.
- Children and young people satisfaction reviews on all stages of structured generic and specialist support.

Strategic Priority 5: Developing a Coordinated Community Response to Domestic and Sexual Violence across Sefton

Aims

To ensure a coordinated, co-operative and comprehensive response to domestic and sexual violence between all agencies in Sefton based on collaborative partnership working.

We will do this by:

- Developing and maintaining the Sefton Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention Management Group (DVSPMG) and all of its supporting sub groups;
- Ensuring that the DVSPMG has formal links to all relevant strategic partnerships and boards and reports directly to the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership
- Developing and implementing a strategy that meets all of the requirements of the Government's Coordinated Community Approach to violence against women
- Ensuring that domestic and sexual violence is embedded into all relevant policies and strategies in Sefton
- Ensuring that services are jointly commissioned
- Ensuring robust monitoring to track the effectiveness of this strategy
- The collection, collation and analysis of data to ensure the effective performance of partners as set against the 5 key priorities
- Enabling the development of multi-agency protocols in domestic and sexual violence on information sharing, data collection and a common needs and risk assessment framework

Section 4: Sefton's achievements to date, and work already in progress

Agencies in Sefton have had a long history of working in partnership to tackle domestic violence, and the establishment of a Domestic Violence Steering Group in the early 1990's ensured the establishment of positive working relationship between many of the key agencies, both in the statutory and voluntary sector.

This level of partnership working also ensured that Sefton achieved significant changes in relation to awareness of the issue of domestic violence, most notably in the criminal justice and children's and young person's partnerships with effective links made to the various thematic partnerships.

Sefton can be very proud of its achievements to date in relation to tackling domestic and sexual violence, and the advent of the Domestic and Sexual Violence Management Group, the development of the strategy document moves the agenda on again, building and recognising the firm foundations that have been built over previous years.

Most importantly over the last year Sefton, with the support of partners in the public and third sector, have implemented a range of services and interventions to help and support those most at risk from domestic and sexual violence, in line with the current strategy.

Of particular note are:

- The introduction of the Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC) Programme in June 2006. In line with government best practice initiatives this is a 'fast-track' criminal justice process that ensures that victims are supported and that perpetrators are brought to justice. In December 2006, following a successful visit from the Home Office, Sefton's SDVC was granted national SDVC status. As a result of the work that has been achieved, Sefton is currently developing a pilot pathway for victim support on behalf of Merseyside Police and its partner agencies.
- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC's) were established in June 2007. These bring key agencies (such as police, probation, council services, health, and others, such as SWACA) together to share information on very high-risk cases of domestic and sexual violence, and to agree an action plan to reduce risk. The MARAC in Sefton now deals with 15-20 new very high-risk cases each month.
- Sefton Council launched its *Sanctuary Scheme* as a pilot project in April 2007 for people who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic violence and feel at risk in their own home to the extent that they are likely to become homeless. The Sanctuary Scheme helps people to consider their options, and helps people to feel safe to remain living in their home by installing additional or enhanced security measures tailored to their individual needs. The Sanctuary Scheme is a free service and is available to anyone who is experiencing domestic violence (*irrespective of tenure*) as long as they no longer live with the person who has been abusing them. The project team provides a holistic service to assess needs and risks related to someone's individual circumstances, as well as conducting a security survey of the

service user's home. From April to June 2007 the Sanctuary Scheme worked with 23 women, resulting in a net saving of £125, 489.25 to the local authority as a result of preventing possible homelessness.

- Sefton has recognized that victims of domestic and sexual violence at high or very risk of harm need an enhanced, speedy and sensitive service to enable them to survive and the risks to be reduced. Therefore, Sefton has created a multi-agency Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) team made up of workers from Health and Social Care and SWACA, to provide this high level support. This team is co-located with the Protecting Vulnerable People Team in Marsh Lane Police Station. This team provides support to victims of domestic and sexual violence who are engaged with the SDVC, MARAC or Sanctuary Scheme.
- Sefton's Supporting People Team is currently mapping all service provision to establish not just those who provide specialist services, but also to ascertain what services currently exist and assesses whether there are gaps. Victims of violence and abuse will need a wide range of service provision to enable them to consider their options whilst accessing the support and advice that will need to consider all their options. This process will enable Sefton to develop its directory of services, sustain and where necessary and commission new services that meet the needs of vulnerable service users. This is an important aspect of the work of the new Management Group as there is considerable pressure to sustain and maintain existing services in the light of current finance and grant determinations.
- Sefton has also successfully bid for Tackling Violent Crime Programme funding, and is therefore undertaking a number of activities which will significantly enhance and improve services provided to both victims and perpetrators. These activities include:
 - Providing all front line police officers with training to help them improve evidential collection;
 - The purchasing of digital cameras to enable photographs to be taken at the scene of domestic violence incidents;
 - The development of a database to support the work of the MARAC;
 - And the development of a website for the community that will provide information, advice, access to support services, and a directory of available support services.
- Due to almost 50% of female homicides and 7% of male homicides being as a direct result of domestic violence the Government has introduced a statutory duty under section 9(3) of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 for local bodies to conduct domestic violence homicide reviews. Sefton is currently working across its agencies to bring together a homicide review process for domestic violence that will sit alongside existing homicide and death review processes e.g. part 8 child death reviews, death of people in custody, deaths that occur as a result of drug misuse etc.

- Following a successful bid for Government funding Merseyside is planning to open a Sexual Assault Referral Centre in 2008, supported and funded by Health agencies and Merseyside Police.

Section 5: Appendices

Appendix 1	Domestic and Sexual Violence and Diversity
Appendix 2	Legislation and Policies that underpin Sefton's Strategic Responses to Domestic and Sexual Violence
Appendix 3	Government's model of Coordinated Community Responses to Violence Against Women
Appendix 4	Government's 4 Tiers of Intervention
Appendix 5	Sefton's Strategic Structure