

Safer Warwickshire Violence against Women and Girls Strategy

2023 - 2026



safe in...
warwickshire

Contents

Foreword	3	What we know	26
Executive Summary	5	What works	28
Section 1: Why is the VAWG Strategy required?	7	What we are already doing	29
Introduction	8	What more we will do	29
Warwickshire VAWG Board	9	Supporting Victims	31
Understanding VAWG	10	What we know	32
Definition of VAWG		What we are already doing	34
National Context	11	What more we will do	37
Domestic Abuse Act 2021		Pursuing Perpetrators and Reducing	39
Tackling Violence Against Women and		Re-offending	
Girls Strategy 2021		What we know	40
National Police Response to VAWG	12	What we are already doing	42
Criminal Justice Response to VAWG	12	What more we will do	44
Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022	12	A Stronger System	45
Wider Strategic Context	12	What we know	46
How and why the VAWG Strategy was developed	13	What we are already doing	47
How		What more we will do	48
Why do we need to address this?		Section 3: How will the VAWG Strategy	
Summary of VAWG in Warwickshire	17	be delivered?	49
What we have achieved so far	18	Governance	51
Domestic Homicide Reviews	20	Section 4: How will we know we are making a	
Victim-Survivor's Voice	21	difference?	
Our Approach	22	Acknowledgements	54
Our Vision and Priorities	23	Acronyms	54
Section 2: What will the VAWG Strategy achieve?	24	Endnotes	56
Prioritising Prevention	25	How to get help if you or someone you know is	58
		experiencing VAWG	

Foreword

“He stood over me as the police banged on the door and whispered ‘What have you done? You’re going to ruin my life’. Even in my semi-conscious state, I was shocked. This man, who had spent the previous thirty minutes beating, kicking and choking me... This man, who I was convinced intended to kill me... This man, thought that I was ruining his life?”

Three years ago, my relationship with an emotionally, physically, and sexually abusive man came to an abrupt end after a particularly violent assault forced me finally to seek help. He had hurt me before, of course, but I’d always covered it up. I kept hoping things would change. But that final night was different. As I was drifting in and out of consciousness, I imagined my family and friends waking up the next morning to a news story with my picture and name on the TV screen. Another murder victim; another dead woman; another male perpetrator.

I took advantage of a moment of distraction and dialled 999 when he wasn’t looking. The call operator realised I was in trouble and was able to trace the call. Police arrived quickly, and he was taken away. Just like that... gone. Years of suffering were over, but more trauma would follow. The processes I was subsequently subjected to were shambolic.

The investigation took months, far longer than it needed to.

It felt like every step of the process was a huge rock that I had to push up a steep hill. I was vulnerable and traumatised. I should have been focused on healing... I should have had the space to recover. Instead, I had to put all of my energy into catalysing action and drawing out information from agencies that were meant do it for me.

I am not unique. Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is commonplace. For the first time, though, VAWG seems to have found itself at the forefront of public consciousness. It’s raw, and there’s an urgent battle cry for change. This is a rare and critical opportunity for statutory agencies and partners to come together and make the changes necessary to support women victims and prevent others from being hurt in the future. It’s exactly the right time to launch Warwickshire’s VAWG Strategy, and I’m so pleased to see the wonderful commitments being made to protect and support women and girls.

I am proud to have survived and largely recovered from my experiences, and I am so grateful to the specialist counselling agencies that gave me the tools to do that. I would encourage anybody reading this who is a victim to get help – you don’t have to report to the Police if you don’t want to, you can still ask for support. Warwickshire has some fantastic organisations that can help you heal and stay safe. Don’t be afraid to use them, they’re here for you. Good luck.

Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Survivor

Violence and abuse, in any form, is unacceptable. Certain crimes, including domestic abuse, rape (and all other sexual offences), and honour-based violence disproportionately affect women and girls. **This must stop.** In the year ending March 2020, the Crime Survey for England and Wales estimated 1.6 million women aged 16 to 74 years in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse, representing around 7% of the female population. The survey also estimated that 3% of women aged 16 to 74 years in England and Wales experienced sexual assault (including attempts) and 5% experienced stalking. In Warwickshire, there were 3,140 referrals to the Warwickshire Domestic Abuse and Violence Service for outreach support between April 2021-March 2022, and 1,612 rape and other sexual offences reported to Warwickshire Police during the same period, of which 76% of victims were female.

The damage and devastation caused by violence against women and girls (VAWG) for the victim-survivor is enormous, wide-ranging, and can in many cases have severe lifelong consequences. VAWG crimes impact on the physical safety, health and emotional wellbeing of individuals and impacts on families, carers, children, and the community.

Over the last few years, we have made significant progress in improving our response to VAWG. However, we are increasingly aware that more needs to be done to tackle VAWG in Warwickshire. With this in mind, we are delighted to present to you the Warwickshire Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2023-2026, which sets out our three-year partnership approach to ending VAWG in Warwickshire. The safety of everyone in our county, is our priority. This strategy which has been developed in partnership with a range of statutory, community and voluntary organisations across Warwickshire, outlines how agencies will work together to tackle VAWG.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to create this strategy - particularly those Warwickshire individuals with lived experience of VAWG, who generously gave their time to share their stories with us.

To truly tackle VAWG, there must be a co-ordinated and cohesive response, whereby all partners, organisations, employers, education establishments, and individuals play their role in helping us to deliver our key priorities. We hope that in reading this strategy you will recognise the role that you, your school, organisation, or community can play to help us tackle VAWG.



Cllr Andy Crump

Chair of the Safer
Warwickshire Partnership
Board



Cllr Margaret Bell

Portfolio Holder for Adult
Social Care and Health
(Warwickshire County
Council)

Executive Summary

The Warwickshire Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy 2023-26 sets out Warwickshire's three-year partnership approach to ending VAWG in Warwickshire. Our vision is to ensure that everyone living and working in Warwickshire is able to contribute to making the county a safer place for victims and survivors of abuse, whether this is through working to prevent it from happening in the first place, supporting victims and their families, or through empowering victim-survivors to seek support themselves.

The damage and devastation caused by VAWG for the victim-survivor is enormous, wide-ranging, and can in many cases have severe lifelong consequences. Patterns of crime in the year ending September 2021 (as reported by ONS and Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)) were significantly affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic and Government restrictions around social interactions. There was a stark 700% increase in calls to mainstream domestic abuse charity helplines such as Refuge. Domestic killings increased two-fold in the first three weeks following the March 2020 lockdown, and police arrests for

domestic abuse-related crimes increased 24% between April and June 2020, compared with the same period in 2019².

Over the last few years significant progress has been made as to how public and voluntary sector partners in Warwickshire respond, raise awareness, and deliver support and prevention work in relation to the issue of domestic abuse and sexual violence. However, we have a long way to go to deliver this work effectively and to develop our response to other types of VAWG e.g. 'honour' based violence and sexual exploitation.

This document seeks to facilitate a co-ordinated and strategic response to tackling violence and abuse, with four priorities that will be embedded into strategic plans across partner agencies.

The priorities of this strategy have been developed in partnership with a range of statutory, community and voluntary organisations across Warwickshire. We have undertaken consultation exercises engaging with local victim-survivors and professionals working in local services.

The four key priorities and objectives of the strategy:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Prioritising Prevention |
| 2 | Supporting Victims |
| 3 | Pursuing Perpetrators and Reducing Re-offending |
| 4 | Strengthening the System |

We will know that the priorities within the strategy will have been delivered when:

- More victim-survivors are reporting VAWG incidents to the Police and are accessing Warwickshire's commissioned services.
- Warwickshire has comprehensive community based VAWG support services in place alongside safe accommodation.
- Adults and children report that their voices were heard; that they feel safer and support was provided at the right time.
- The numbers of victim-survivors experiencing VAWG related repeat victimisation have reduced.
- More perpetrators are brought to justice.
- More perpetrators are engaged in behavioural change programmes.

Why is the VAWG Strategy required?

1



Introduction

This strategy sets out a three-year partnership approach to ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Warwickshire.

Our vision is to ensure that everyone living and working in Warwickshire is able to contribute to making the county a safer place for victims and survivors of abuse, whether this is through working to prevent it from happening in the first place, supporting victims and their families, or through empowering victim-survivors to seek support themselves. This document builds on our existing partnerships to provide a co-ordinated and strategic response to tackling violence and abuse, with clear priorities that can be embedded into strategic plans across partner agencies.

The causes and consequences of VAWG are complex and multi-faceted and can only be tackled through a strong multi-agency response. The priorities of this strategy have been developed collaboratively with a wide range of statutory, community and voluntary organisations. We have undertaken consultation exercises engaging with both local victim-survivors and professionals working in local services.

We recognise that abuse and violence can affect anyone, although it is widely acknowledged that women and children carry by far the highest burden. Over the last few years significant progress has been made in terms of how public and voluntary sector partners in Warwickshire respond, raise awareness, and deliver support and prevention work in relation to the issue of domestic abuse and sexual violence. However, we have a long way to go to deliver this work and respond effectively to other types of VAWG, including forced marriage, female genital mutilation,

'honour' based violence, stalking, trafficking, sexual harassment, and sexual exploitation.

The Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Joint Strategic Needs Assessment highlights that a number of groups face additional barriers to accessing help and may be at increased risk of certain types of abuse and takes account of these intersecting needs. This includes older people, LGBTQ+ people, marginalised and minoritised communities/ minoritised ethnic communities, refugees, and adults with care and support needs. We are committed to ensuring that our services are inclusive and accessible to all. The strategy commits us to working together and strengthening our efforts to prevent and tackle VAWG in all its forms.



Warwickshire VAWG Board

This strategy has been produced by the Warwickshire VAWG Board and is linked directly to the Safer Warwickshire Partnership Board. Its remit is to create safer communities through the reduction of crime and the promotion of safety. The membership of the VAWG Board is as follows:

- Warwickshire County Council (WCC)

- North Warwickshire Borough Council

- Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

- Rugby Borough Council

- Stratford-on-Avon District Council

- Warwick District Council

- Warwickshire Police

- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Warwickshire

- Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service

- Warwickshire Safeguarding Partnership

- Commissioned providers of Violence Against Women and Girls Services (for example Domestic Abuse, Sexual Assault, Perpetrator, Counselling)

- Third Sector Organisations (for example WCAVA and Equip)

- NHS Coventry and Warwickshire

- Probation Service

- Local Criminal Justice Board

Throughout this strategy, the term **Warwickshire Partnership** is used to describe the organisations who are members of the VAWG Board. Further details on the Warwickshire VAWG Governance arrangements can be found in **Section 3 - Governance**.

Understanding VAWG

Definition of VAWG

VAWG is both a form of discrimination and a fundamental violation of human rights. Locally Warwickshire has adopted the following definition from the United Nations Declaration on Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls, which states:

“Any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in: physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women [or girls], including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (1993, United Nations Declaration, Article 1).

The definition incorporates a wide range of abusive behaviours including physical, sexual, financial, emotional or psychological violence, economic abuse and sexual exploitation with a focus on the following areas:

- ☐ Sexual Violence, Abuse and Exploitation
- ☐ Sexual Harassment and Bullying
- ☐ Stalking
- ☐ Trafficking and Forced Prostitution
- ☐ Domestic Violence and Abuse
- ☐ Coercive and Controlling Behaviour
- ☐ Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- ☐ Forced Marriage
- ☐ Faith Based Abuse
- ☐ So called ‘Honour’ Based Violence

VAWG can take place at home, work or in public places such as on the street or public transport, it describes violent and oppressive patterns of behaviour and practises which achieve power and control over women and girls. Whilst abuses can differ in how they are experienced, they are all the result of the misuse of power and control. For many victim-survivors, they may experience more than one form of VAWG at any given time.

As with the Government VAWG strategy⁴, our strategy has a clear focus specifically on the experiences of women and girls because of the gendered nature of the crime. It must be recognised however that men and boys are also affected by these crimes, as well as those that are transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming. Whilst Warwickshire's approach and response to male victims of violent crime (Domestic Abuse, Rape and Serious Sexual Assault, Stalking and Harassment, so called Honour Based Violence etc) is not included within this strategy, the Warwickshire Partnership is committed to ensuring the services we provide meet the needs of all victims/survivors regardless of their gender identity.

National Context

There have been a number of national responses to VAWG. A few significant examples are outlined below:

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021, introduced a number of tools and powers that partner agencies can use to positively impact on victim-survivors and their children. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 aims to:

- ❑ Raise awareness and understanding about the impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families.
- ❑ Improve the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection of victims and bringing perpetrators to justice.
- ❑ Strengthen the support for victims of abuse by statutory agencies.

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2021

The Government's "Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls" Strategy 2021 to 2024 sought to identify the issue of VAWG and outline it as a distinct area of policy within the wider policing and community safety agendas. It was shaped by a comprehensive Call for Evidence on VAWG which the Home Office ran 2020 - 2021. Following a number of high-profile tragic rape and murders of several women, the Home Office received over 180,000 responses.

The strategy emphasises the need to do more to prevent VAWG, support victims, and pursue perpetrators. Its ambition is to bring about 'real and lasting change', and aims to:

- ❑ Prevent these types of crimes
- ❑ Improve the experiences of victims and survivors
- ❑ Ensure perpetrators are brought to justice
- ❑ Improve the way organisations work together



The Domestic Abuse Act 2021, introduced a number of tools and powers that partner agencies can use to positively impact on victim-survivors and their children.

National Police Response to VAWG

The need for greater police presence has been emphasised to improve public trust and confidence in policing, whilst creating safer spaces for women and girls.

In 2021, the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) commissioned a report to assess the police response to VAWG. The Final Inspection Report⁵ concluded that

the police have made vast improvements over the past 10 years in how they respond to and investigate VAWG, with generally better identification of repeat victims and improved safeguarding measures and support⁶.

Despite improvements, this Inspection found inconsistencies at every level in how the police

respond to VAWG and set out five overarching recommendations. The police have unique powers, responsibilities, and opportunities to tackle VAWG and Warwickshire Police recognise this and will develop and implement actions which reflect current national policing strategy.

Criminal Justice Response to VAWG

The End-to-End Rape Review of the Criminal Justice System Response to Rape Report, identified a number of recommendations for the Crown Prosecution Service when dealing with VAWG;

in particular, improving the way rape cases are dealt with, increasing prosecution numbers, and updating legal guidance on addressing rape myths and stereotypes⁷.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022

National guidance for school and colleges highlights the zero-tolerance approach in creating a culture in which: "It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children, that are abusive in nature."⁸

Wider Strategic Context

Please see Supplementary Appendix 1 for a summary of key local documents, policies, and strategies that contribute to Warwickshire's response to VAWG. The key objectives of these include:

- ❑ A focus on improving the safety of women and girls in public spaces via more visible and effective policing.
- ❑ The need to rebuild trust and confidence in the criminal justice system by trying to deliver better outcomes
- ❑ Ensuring victims are treated with respect and dignity.
- ❑ Acknowledging the widespread traumatic impact of VAWG and protecting and supporting victims and their families and friends at the earliest opportunity.
- ❑ Enhancing the response to perpetrators of VAWG through emphasising the importance of early intervention and prevention, holding perpetrators responsible for their behaviours and actions and driving down re-offending.
- ❑ A commitment to achieving Levelling Up objectives and priorities for the county, which will be prioritised by groups of people and place. This includes a Levelling Up Mission of "reduced homicide, serious violence and crime".

How and why the strategy was developed

How

The Warwickshire VAWG Board commissioned a local 'Call for Evidence'⁹ across the county to directly contribute to the development of this Warwickshire VAWG Strategy 2023-26. Over 650 local members of the public, victim-survivors, and professionals were engaged in the following activities:

- Literature review: The review summarised both local and national key documents, policies, and strategies to provide insight into the current understanding, knowledge, and approach.
- Quantitative data analysis: 'Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Partnership Reports' between July 2020 and June 2022.
- Surveys: the surveys reached 622 people, including 184 victim-survivors, 26 respondents on behalf of someone with lived experience, 51 'other' (interested members of the general public) and 243 professional stakeholders.
- In-depth interviews: interviews with 12 victim-survivors, one individual participating on behalf of three people with lived experience, and 16 professional stakeholders.

Why do we need to address this?

The impact of VAWG

The damage and devastation caused by VAWG for the victim-survivor is enormous, wide-ranging, and can in many cases have severe lifelong consequences. VAWG crimes impact on the physical safety, health and emotional wellbeing of individuals and impacts on families, carers, children, and the community.



A VAWG Strategy Task and Finish Group was also established to develop the strategy and associated delivery plan. The Task and Finish Group includes a range of partners who are also members of the VAWG Board. Details of the VAWG Board and associated sub-groups governance structure can be found in **Section 3 - Governance**.

⁹ Independent consultants TONIC ran the Call for Evidence on behalf of the VAWG Board. TONIC are specialists in social research and public consultation with a focus on criminal justice and public health.

Impact on Adults

94% of respondents to a stalking survey noted their mental health had been negatively impacted by stalking.

The CSEW, found that 63% of female victims said they had suffered 'mental or emotional problems' as a result of the assault, and around 10% said they had attempted suicide.

Health consequences including sexually transmitted infections, sexual or gynaecological problems.

A recent meta-analysis concluded that sexual assault was strongly associated with heightened risk for all forms of psychopathology.

Physical and sensory impairments such as deafness or walking difficulties.

Abused women are 15 times more likely to abuse alcohol and 9 times more likely to use drugs.

Long term and chronic health problems including asthma, epilepsy, digestive problems, migraine, hypertension and skin disorders.

Impact on Children

At risk of developing an unhealthy view of relationships and misogynistic beliefs and behaviour.

At greater risk of developing mental health difficulties, drug and alcohol abuse and are at a higher risk of offending behaviour.

Are exposed to ongoing trauma which can impact their overall emotional wellbeing, development and life chances.

Increased truancy and lowered educational attainment.

Child victim-survivors are more likely to experience domestic abuse in adulthood, compared with those who have not suffered abuse.

More likely to become subject to statutory social care intervention.

Impact on Wider Community¹⁰

Negative impact on the freedom and equality everybody should value and be able to enjoy.

In 2019, the Home Office estimated a total cost of domestic abuse for victims who were identified in a single year to be £66 billion.

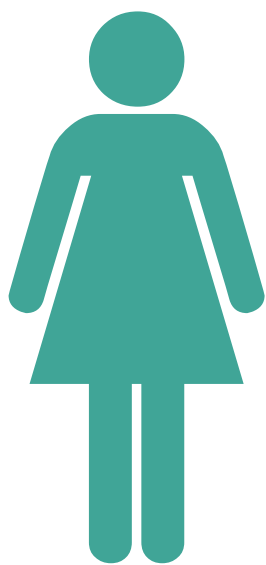
Social and economic costs to the economy, society, and taxpayer.

Loss of life, the destruction of homes, futures, and lives.

It is important to note that for victim-survivors, the impact of VAWG crimes does not just end when the physical effects heal, or the abuse or violence stops. The memory of the traumatic event can haunt the victim and cause adverse and long-lasting effects on their mental health¹¹.

VAWG has Increased

Data from the CSEW estimated that in the year ending March 2020 in England and Wales there were:



1.6
MILLION

Female Victims (aged 16-59)
of **domestic abuse** (prevalence of 7.3%)

618
THOUSAND

Female Victims (aged 16-74)
of **sexual assault** (including attempts:
2.9% prevalence)

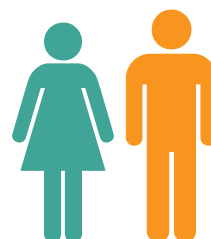
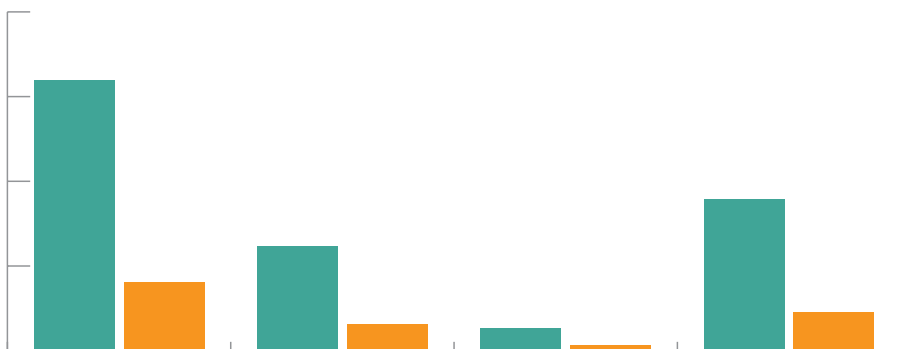
132
THOUSAND

Female Victims (aged 16-74)
of **rape** (including attempts: 0.8% prevalence)

892
THOUSAND

Female Victims (aged 16-59)
of **stalking**¹²

Almost **4 times** as many **female victims** of **sexual assault** as male victims, with females being significantly more likely than males to be victims of each type of sexual assault¹³



While statistics are not necessarily always specific to women and girls, there have been dramatic increases in demand on VAWG related crime helplines in recent years. In the year ending March 2021, there was a 22% increase in people supported by the National Domestic Abuse Helpline in England and calls to the National Stalking Helpline have risen – with 79% of victims supported by the National Stalking Helpline in 2020-21 identifying as female. These trends are not necessarily indicative of an increase in the number of victims, but perhaps an increase in the severity of abuse being experienced. It is important to note that VAWG offences are often considered 'hidden crimes' that are not readily reported to the police. The number of VAWG offences recorded by the police is well below the number of victims estimated by the CSEW. Improvements

in police recording practices and the increased willingness of victims to report offences (including non-recent or historic crimes) have contributed to increases in police recorded crimes in recent years, although this effect is thought to be diminishing. The figures do, however, provide a good measure of the crime-related demand on the police and the demand on police from VAWG offences is evidently rising.

Patterns of crime in the year ending September 2021 (as reported by ONS and CSEW) were significantly affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic and government restrictions on social contact. At the beginning of the pandemic and subsequent national and local lockdowns across the UK, there was a noticeable increase in violent crimes (with and without injury, including sexual violence¹⁴). The pandemic appeared to bring new challenges and

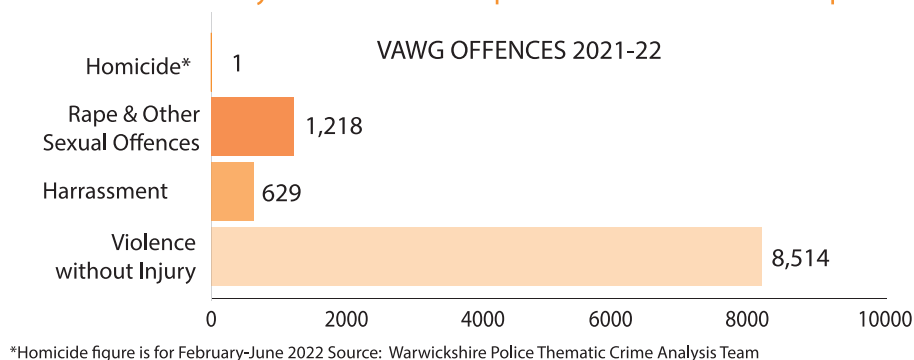
presented perpetrators with new opportunities as more people stayed at home and went online¹⁵. According to Victim Support, the number of victims seeking help for domestic abuse increased during lockdowns, at times reaching a 24% increase compared to previous baseline figures¹⁵. There was a stark 700% increase in calls to mainstream domestic abuse charity helplines such as Refuge¹⁶. Domestic killings increased two-fold in the first three weeks following the March 2020 lockdown, and police arrests for domestic abuse-related crimes increased 24% between April and June 2020, compared with the same period in 2019¹⁷. It is thought that the restrictions in movement enforced by lockdown and therefore, being unable to get away from perpetrators was a possible contributor to increases in VAWG related crimes¹⁵.

Summary of VAWG in Warwickshire

Given its hidden nature and under-reporting, it is difficult to ascertain a comprehensively accurate picture of the scale and extent of VAWG in Warwickshire. The past focus on domestic abuse, and more recently sexual violence, means that data is most readily available for these VAWG types in Warwickshire. The infographic opposite provides an overview of VAWG in Warwickshire¹⁸. Please see Supplementary Appendix 2 for further Warwickshire VAWG data.

¹⁸Unless otherwise stated data covering the period April 2021 – March 22

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) affects many in Warwickshire - here are some key statistics that help to show the scale of the problem



DOMESTIC ABUSE

The following figures show some of the scale of domestic abuse in Warwickshire in 2021-22

11,000+ domestic abuse crimes reported to Warwickshire police every year**

7,529 police recorded domestic abuse offences

5,960 domestic abuse related violence

3,140 outreach referrals to Refuge

729 Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) cases

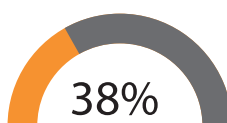
589 cases rated as high risk on DASH risk assessment, 7,144 graded medium, 3,057 as standard

372 households presented as homeless as a result of domestic abuse reported to district/borough councils

178 referrals to domestic abuse accommodation service, operating on average at 92% capacity

REPEAT VICTIMS

38% repeat victimisation rate for domestic abuse victims



HONOUR-BASED VIOLENCE

10 police recorded honour-based abuse offences in 2021-22

MODERN SLAVERY & HUMAN TRAFFICKING

20

crimes or incidents in relation to modern slavery or human trafficking being investigated in March 2021***

***Source: Warwickshire Council Council Community Safety Team

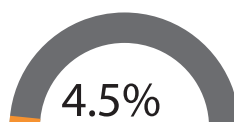
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough and Rugby Borough have a **higher rate of female victims per 1,000 population** for reported domestic violence, than other areas of Warwickshire.

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough have a higher rate of female victims per 1,000 population for reported rape offences, than other areas of Warwickshire.

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough and Rugby Borough have a higher rate of female victims per 1,000 population for reported other sexual offences, than other areas of Warwickshire.

CHARGES BROUGHT FOR SEXUAL OFFENCES

only 4.5% of sexual offences in 2021-22 resulted in a charge being brought****

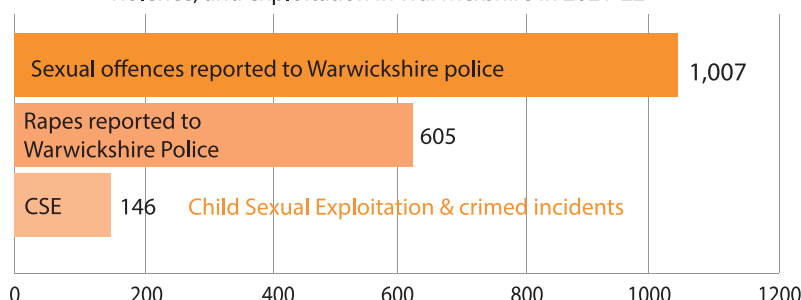


****Source: Warwickshire OPCC Victim Needs Assessment 2022

**Source: Warwickshire Police & Crime Plan 2021-25

SEXUAL ABUSE, VIOLENCE & EXPLOITATION

The following figures show some of the scale of sexual abuse, violence, and exploitation in Warwickshire in 2021-22



1,612 sexual offences reported to Warwickshire police in 2021-22

76% of victims were female

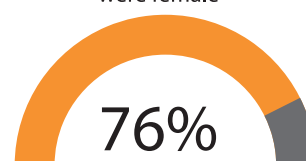


Figure 1. Scale of VAWG in Warwickshire

What we have achieved so far

Warwickshire's VAWG Strategy 2015-18 set out 4 key objectives:

Prevention	Preventing violence against women and girls from happening by challenging the attitudes and behaviour which foster it and intervening early where possible to prevent it.
Provision	Providing high quality, joined-up support for victims where violence does occur.
Protection	Taking action to reduce the risk of women and girls who are victims of violence and ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice and provided with opportunities for change in a way that maximises safety.
Partnership	Working in partnership to obtain the best outcome for victims and their families.

The objectives were to be achieved by protecting and enhancing what was already in place, whilst maximising efficiency and reducing duplication to enable resources to be freed up to support other areas for development. Warwickshire has made good progress in recent years, particularly regarding how

public, voluntary, and private sector partners respond, raise awareness, and deliver support and prevention work in relation to VAWG. The commitment, resources and collaboration across the public, voluntary and private sector has enabled us to be innovative and pilot new ways of working. This has allowed us to invest

and commission valuable services to support victim-survivors and their children. We are proud of what we have achieved, though we still have a long way to go to deliver this work effectively.



Below are some of our key achievements to date:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Warwickshire County Council, the OPCC and the NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) commission a major domestic abuse contract, which includes joint performance management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Developed a Single Point of Contact for access to domestic abuse support and refuge provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Implementation of the Safer Streets project, designed to reduce violence against women and girls and increase women and girls' feelings of safety in public spaces.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Funded a Children's Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (ChIDVA) to provide specialist support to children and young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Targeted communications campaigns, overseen and developed by a multi-agency VAWG communications group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Co-ordination and completion of Domestic Homicide Reviews, designed to enable agencies to improve their responses to domestic violence and abuse and work better together to prevent such tragedies occurring in the future.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Commissioned a specialist therapy and counselling service (DiAmond) to support adults and children who have been impacted by domestic abuse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Commissioned SafeLives to conduct an Independent Review of Warwickshire's Response to Perpetrators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Delivering the Caring Dads programme for men who have abused, neglected, or exposed their children to domestic abuse.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Acknowledging the widespread traumatic impact of VAWG and protecting and supporting victims and their families and friends at the earliest opportunity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Commissioned SafeLives to review the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and are working to implement its recommendations for improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Delivering multi-agency training aimed at raising awareness of domestic abuse, coercive and controlling behaviour and risk identification.

Domestic Homicide Reviews

In 2011, the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) process was established on a statutory basis under the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, so that lessons can be learnt to reduce the number of domestic homicides in the future.

A DHR is a review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by:

- (a) a person to whom they were related or with whom they were or had been in an intimate personal relationship, or
- (b) a member of the same household.

Additionally, recent amendments to DHR guidance include where a victim ended their own life and the circumstances give rise to concern, e.g., there is a history of domestic abuse in the current or previous relationship, a DHR should be undertaken. The Warwickshire Partnership commission independent chairs and authors to undertake DHRs on behalf of the Warwickshire Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). Following a review, the Home Office approves the content; and recommendations based on the learning from each DHR are produced, actioned, and monitored. Since 2011, 21 DHRs have been adopted in Warwickshire, 14 of which are underway (at November 2022).



Key learning points and recommendations from Warwickshire DHRs broadly mirror national recommendation themes concluding:

- ❑ The need to raise awareness, knowledge, and intelligences across the whole system so both professionals and non-professionals can identify the signs of domestic abuse and know how or where to get support from.
- ❑ The need for better communication between agencies, as well as greater awareness of the complexity of domestic abuse.
- ❑ There were general themes around there being no clear signs of domestic abuse happening, with more work required from health and social care services to carefully assess situations and identify warning signs.
- ❑ There were also themes of misunderstanding and breakdowns in communications, such as between police and victims, or victims, voluntary services, and health and social care services.
- ❑ A recurring key recommendation made in reviews was that greater training around domestic abuse and violence was needed for statutory services, to ensure victims are appropriately cared for and have their needs met.

Victim-Survivor's Voice

Hearing directly from victim-survivors from different backgrounds, with different experiences has been greatly important when shaping this strategy and our approach to tackling VAWG. 184 victim-survivors and 26 respondents on behalf of someone with lived experience engaged with

an online survey as part of the Warwickshire Call for Evidence. Additionally, 12 victim-survivors and one individual participating on behalf of three people with lived experience took part in an in-depth interview conducted by TONIC on behalf of the Warwickshire Partnership.

"Thank you for inviting us victims in to hear our voices, our experiences, it's really important."

(Domestic Abuse Survivor Interview)

TONIC engaged with victim-survivors to develop a local Warwickshire response to ambitions of the national Tackling VAWG strategy. The findings and recommendations from the Call for Evidence are embedded throughout this strategy, and some of the views of victims-survivors are highlighted here:

"The stories that are being told should shape policy and service delivery."	"Make people understand the lengths women go to feel safe."	"Please teach boys in schools about consent, starting at primary school. I was raped by a 14-year-old boy before sex education even began at school."
"There are so many things that could be improved so easily by individual organisations and it's so critical that they take responsibility for their own part of this."	"There needs to be more training and understanding around issues for marginalised communities, so they feel confident in accessing support, including LGBTQ+, BAME, sex workers, learning needs."	"I think there should be a big focus on getting men that aren't perpetrators to challenge men that do make comments, there should be a big focus on getting men involved - like you need to be challenging your friends."
"More work needs to be focused on perpetrators and children who have suffered the effects of living with domestic abuse to prevent them repeating the cycle in their own relationships."	"Looking at the crime rates across Warwickshire I would hope to see VAWG as a top priority in crime reduction. I would like to see the focus on young boys/men and changing beliefs and patterns of behaviour within families along with promotion and education of healthy relationships."	"It just needs to be accessible, and people need to be signposted to the relevant support services so they can start to formulate a safety plan and feel like they can control what's happening to them and get that support early to prevent them getting to the stage where I got to when it was too late really."
"There tends to be a lot of onus on the victim instead of services working with perpetrators to prevent them from abusing more victims and children."	"Support from charitable organisations like Refuge and RoSA was brilliant"	"The SARC were fantastic, as was the Safeline ChISVA. Subsequent and ongoing support from Safeline counsellor was beneficial"
"There needs to be more evidence of perpetrators being convicted to encourage victims to report to police and then to carry through with their statement and not retract it through fear"	"Regarding the children there just wasn't a lot of support for them, and that was probably the hardest thing, having to deal with the aftermath of what happened to them."	"Staff in areas where women go alone and healthcare professionals need to be trained in how to recognise domestic abuse and how to report it and signpost victims to support services... GPs, dentists, hairdressers, and beauty therapists should all be trained."

Going forward, it is imperative that the voices of victim-survivors are heard and responded to.

Our Approach



Figure 2. Our approach to tackling VAWG

Our Vision and Priorities

Our vision is to end violence against women and girls; and that everyone living and working in Warwickshire is able to contribute to making the county a safer place for victims and survivors of abuse, whether this is through working to prevent it from happening in the first place, supporting victim-survivors and their families, or through empowering victim-survivors to seek support themselves.

The four key priorities and objectives of the strategy are:

1

Prioritising Prevention

We will challenge the attitudes, behaviours and societal norms which foster VAWG by raising awareness and the understanding of them, and by intervening early where possible to prevent it. We will work to ensure everyone understands what healthy relationships look like and to recognise the signs of abuse, and work to better understand how to prevent the cycle of abuse.

2

Supporting Victims

We will provide high-quality, fit for purpose, joined up provision for victim-survivors, ensuring we meet the needs of all our communities. We will address the barriers that prevent people telling someone about the abuse and violence that they are experiencing.

3

Pursuing Perpetrators and Reducing Re-offending

We will continue to pursue perpetrators and reduce re-offending by working with those who offend. We will work in collaboration across the Warwickshire Partnership to engage those who offend in behavioural change interventions to stop the harm to victim-survivors, their families and the wider community.

4

Strengthening the System

We will continue to strengthen our partnership response to create a whole system approach to tackling VAWG. We will ensure that professionals across the partnership are consistent in their understanding and response to VAWG.



What will the VAWG
Strategy achieve?

2



This section considers how the Warwickshire Partnership will achieve the four key priorities and objectives of the strategy:

1 | Prioritising Prevention

2 | Supporting Victims

3 | Pursuing Perpetrators and Reducing Re-offending

4 | Strengthening the System

1 | Prioritising Prevention

***“Need to be a bit more preventative rather than reactive.”* (Stakeholder Interview)**

If our long-term ambition is to eradicate VAWG, that means a key priority in this strategy must be to prevent it from happening in the first place; to do this we must address the root causes of the problem and seek a change in societal attitudes and responses. Crimes of VAWG are many and varied, as are the underlying reasons for why they occur. While different types of VAWG have their own distinct contributing factors and impacts on victim-survivors, what these crimes share is that they disproportionately affect women and girls. International evidence illustrates that no one single factor causes abuse/violence, and there is no

single path to how individuals become perpetrators of these crimes. Overall, the literature suggests that a complex interplay of factors influences the likelihood of VAWG occurring, including individual, interpersonal and community factors²⁰. The complex nature of these crimes mean the interventions and measures which need to be put in place to prevent them also vary, for example prevention work should take place in a range of settings, to make our streets, offices, schools and homes safe for women and girls. Our approach must include challenging sexist and misogynistic attitudes early on, as the behaviours and beliefs

that can lead to VAWG are so often manifested in early years. This is why we must work preventatively with children and young people in education and other settings to promote healthy relationships, equality and respect. Throughout the Warwickshire Call for Evidence, there was an overwhelming consensus from both victim-survivors and professionals that in order to reduce abuse and violence, prevention needs to be at the core of any successful VAWG strategy. We want to support people to be allies in ending abuse and be active in improving our response to VAWG.

"I'd like to see education, addressing and breaking the cycles of misogyny, and deep-rooted perceptions that young boys have towards girls."

(Domestic Abuse Survivor Interview)

**Partnership
Objective:**

We will challenge the attitudes, behaviours and societal norms which foster VAWG by raising awareness and the understanding of them, and by intervening early where possible to prevent it. We will work to ensure everyone understands what healthy relationships look like and to recognise the signs of abuse, and work to better understand how to prevent the cycle of abuse.

What we know

- Younger males are more likely to commit VAWG crimes, though there are many other factors influencing whether someone becomes a perpetrator, including: having a criminal history, having a lower level of educational attainment, having peers who endorse sexual violence and societal norms that condone violence, abuse, misogyny, and gender inequality.
- People who have substance misuse or mental health difficulties or who have experienced child abuse are more likely to be involved in violence, however the relationship between these factors is complex, and experiencing any of these factors in isolation or conjunction does not necessarily mean that violence will occur.
- Individual and societal attitudes toward gender roles is at the heart of VAWG and need to be addressed. Large scale multinational studies have demonstrated inequitable gender beliefs and permissive attitudes about VAWG as important risk factors for males becoming perpetrators of VAWG. Linked to this, initiatives should not be targeted at changing the behaviour of women and girls, but at working with men and boys who perpetuate misogyny either intentionally or inadvertently.
- Early intervention in childhood/adolescence is key to prevention. Education has to start early, and it has to address boys/young men due to the risk of unhealthy attitudes and inappropriate behaviour being modelled, and consequently becoming the 'norm' for people if they are not taught otherwise.
- Online/cyber-enabled abuse has and continues to increase, prevention efforts must also target online forms of VAWG.
- Certain activity has become commonplace for some young people, including receiving unsolicited nude images, sexist name-calling, and sexual assault. Incidents of sexual harassment and online sexual abuse have become so commonplace for some children and young people that they often see no point in reporting them.²²
- There is also a need for better support to be offered to children and young people exposed to VAWG, such as those

experiencing domestic abuse within their home environment. Without this, there is a risk that the unhealthy attitudes and inappropriate behaviour that has been modelled to them, may become learned behaviour unless they are taught otherwise. Supporting the children of victims and perpetrators will hopefully help to break the intergenerational cycle of crime.

-
- National and local evidence highlights that experiences of violence in the family home is one of the key causal factors leading to risk taking behaviour in childhood, adolescence and early adulthood. Assessing these risks early and developing interventions that reduce them is at the core of our serious violence prevention approach.

-
- There needs to be a whole system approach to work with perpetrators, that includes prevention, pursuance, and therapeutic intervention.
-

Respondents to the Warwickshire Call for Evidence discussed:

- That historically the onus was placed upon girls/young women to protect themselves or discourage violence (such as where they go, who they are with, what they wear, how much they drink, etc). This must change. **“There needs to be a very determined move away from women and this is what you can do to keep yourself safe, because actually it’s not women who are the problem. I totally understand from a pragmatic point of view why it’s helpful to talk to women about how to keep themselves safe, but actually focussing on the perpetrator is the important thing.”** (Domestic Abuse Survivor Interview).

-
- The need for improved education. The majority of respondents to the Warwickshire Call for Evidence considered education to be the most important aspect for preventing VAWG – mentioning it at some stage during their engagement with the consultation. Indeed, within the survey, when victim-survivors were asked ‘what more can be done to prevent VAWG in Warwickshire’, a third (33%, n = 146) mentioned education as key for preventing VAWG.

-
- The importance of teaching people that it is ok to say no. Respondents mentioned educating women and girls on the different types of VAWG, the types of support that are available, and empowering them to report incidents and not feel ashamed, as well as helping young people to recognise when the behaviour of adults around them is unacceptable.

-
- Concerns about pornography, which are considered to be noticeably influencing trends in harmful sexual behaviour amongst children and young people. – **“I do think that porn is a really corrupting and disturbing influence... The way that relationships are portrayed in porn, it’s excessively violent.”** (Child Abuse Survivor Interview). Respondents highlighted the importance of educating young men that pornography is not an accurate representation of sex in real life.
-

□ The need for local and national campaigns and media adverts to raise awareness to the general public about VAWG, its different types, and associated impacts. This was considered to be important as it was felt by some, that perpetrators may not realise their behaviour constitutes VAWG or may lack understanding of the impact their actions have on women and girls, while simultaneously, some victims may not recognise themselves as someone who is experiencing/has experienced VAWG.

□ That campaigns should be targeted at men and boys, and in typically 'male dominated areas'- e.g., football matches. To get this right, respondents felt men and boys should be consulted on the approach to ensure communication is effective and reaches the right cohorts.

□ Wanting to see people being encouraged to and commended for calling out and challenging others on unacceptable comments, attitudes, or behaviour- **"I think it's twofold. I think it's firstly about broader education around sexual consent and appropriate behaviour, for girls and**

for boys, but it's also that campaign around challenging bad behaviour." (Domestic Abuse Survivor Interview).

□ The need for more targeted work to be done with boys displaying harmful (sexual or disrespectful) behaviours, and men identified as first-time perpetrators, as well as those displaying risk factors, or perpetrating 'lower level' VAWG, to prevent escalation and future victimisation. Concerns were raised about the lack of dedicated harmful sexual behaviour services commissioned in Warwickshire.

□ Feeling unsafe walking in public spaces, especially after dark. This concern is raised when high profile incidents appear in the national media.

What works

□ There is evidence to show that environmental improvements such as improved lighting in specific locations such as parks, CCTV and management of vegetation can reduce both incidents of VAWG and the fear of crime.

□ A variety of long-term interventions at schools and educational establishments. Education initiatives have been found to have positive effects on changing attitudes related to VAWG, though the evidence is limited on their effectiveness at decreasing violence or changing behaviours of perpetrators.

□ Interventions that address the individual behaviour of VAWG perpetrators or potential perpetrators show promising evidence of the potential to prevent VAWG, although nationally more evidence is required to understand the long-term impacts.



What we are already doing

Agencies in Warwickshire secured **£249,000** from Round 3 of the Home Office Safer Streets fund in 2021-22.

This funding was for projects designed to reduce violence against women and girls and increase women's and girls' feelings of safety in public spaces.

Environmental improvements have been delivered in areas of Atherstone, Nuneaton, Rugby, Leamington and Alcester alongside a communications and awareness raising campaign. Information on the interventions in each area can be found here: <https://safeinwarwickshire.com/safer-streets/>

Through its Annual Grant Award Scheme, the OPCC has provided funding to CSPs; new and established community, voluntary or third sector organisations or groups; and statutory organisations; to undertake projects, pilots or initiatives that seek to prevent VAWG related crime and abuse from occurring in the first place, including educational initiatives with young people.

Commissioning partners work closely to identify and access funding streams to support activity and initiatives seeking to address VAWG.

Partners work closely with the media/communications leads from each partner agency to support campaigns and awareness raising initiatives.

The Reducing Parental Conflict approach offers a broader prevention offer within Children and Families.

Use of the Safer Streets funding was focused on locations in the county where women and girls told us they feel unsafe and incorporated community feedback to create safer spaces for all. It also funded the development of an education programme looking to raise awareness of misogyny and inappropriate behaviours towards women and girls.

A new Serious Violence Prevention Strategy and approach has recently been adopted by the Warwickshire Partnership. This is based on three pillars;

- Preventing violence before it happens
- Responding to immediate risks
- Developing long term support-to create an environment where serious violence is challenged and does not become a social norm.

What more we will do

□ Commissioning partners will:

- o Continue to work collaboratively to identify and access funding streams to support activity and initiatives seeking specifically to: 1) ensure women and girls feel safe in public places/spaces, on public transport, at work, and when

online and 2) prevent the generational cycle of VAWG and achieve societal change; in particular those targeted at schools and educational establishments, and those targeted at existing or potential perpetrators.

□ VAWG partners will continue to work together to:

- o Develop and support campaigns and awareness raising initiatives that seek to prevent the generational cycle of VAWG, increase awareness and understanding of VAWG and support available, and achieve societal change.

- o Consider and implement initiatives that better engage with men and boys in Warwickshire, linked to this we will further develop our communication campaigns specific to men and boys.

- o Develop proposals for community engagement and events that seek to reassure communities and improve feelings of safety in public spaces in relation to VAWG.

- o Develop a shared understanding across partner agencies of the adverse experiences of violence, this is vital to ensure all agencies work together in co-designing their response. This approach will ensure that any agency working in the areas of prevention, detection or providing services recognise the interdependencies so that one intervention does not impact on the work of other partner agencies.

- o Allocate further funding totalling over £350,000 that has been secured through Round 4 of the Safer Streets fund, to deliver environmental improvements in areas of Nuneaton, Rugby, Leamington and Stratford alongside additional communications and awareness raising.



- The Sexual Assault and Abuse Service (SAAS) Coordinator will undertake a mapping exercise with schools across the county to ascertain what information / messages are being delivered and by whom. This will be in partnership with colleagues in the Safeguarding Board and Education.
- The SAAS Coordinator will, using the mapping exercise information, identify any gaps in provision to schools or particular young people and then work with services (this will include youth justice / probation, drug and alcohol services and children and young people mental health) to ensure the right resources and information is available.
- Communications to promote the role of an 'active bystander' to encourage the public to intervene in appropriate circumstances when they encounter / experience VAWG.
- Warwickshire Children and Families are developing the Caring Dads approach in an Early Help context.
- Warwickshire Children and Families will continue to develop the offer with regards to Reducing Parental Conflict, developed within the Early Help area.

2 | Supporting Victims

Whilst our long-term ambition is to eradicate VAWG crimes and have far fewer victims, our ambition in the immediate term is to support victim-survivors across Warwickshire.

Our Call for Evidence demonstrated the devastating and life changing impact VAWG related crimes have on victim-survivors.

Respondents with lived experience of VAWG were asked to describe in three words how the incident(s) had made them feel or affected them in the immediate

"Straight afterwards, I was completely traumatised and couldn't really function on a day-to-day level."

(Domestic Abuse Survivor Interview)

"You feel powerless."

(Domestic Abuse Survivor Interview)

"Disorientated, shocked, scared... then years later you feel the full impact."

(Rape, Sexual Assault and Child Sexual Abuse Survivor Interview)

aftermath. They were asked the same question again, but this time in relation to how they 'currently feel about the incident(s)' to gain an understanding of the long-

term impact. The word clouds in figure 3 depict responses to these questions; the larger the word, the more frequently this was provided as an answer to that question.



Figure 3. Warwickshire VAWG Call for Evidence 2022 – Impact of VAWG on Victim-survivors

VAWG crimes can also negatively impact the victim-survivors' families and friends and may limit individuals' ability to engage in and contribute to society. This is why supporting the needs of victim-survivors and their families forms a core part of Warwickshire's approach to tackling VAWG.

Partnership Objective:

We will provide accessible, high-quality, fit for purpose, joined up provision for victim-survivors, ensuring we meet the needs of all our communities.

We will address the barriers that prevent people telling someone about the abuse and violence that they are experiencing.

What we know

- Demand for support for certain services often outweighs the support that is available.
- Victim-survivors who are engaged with the criminal justice process are significantly more likely to remain engaged throughout if they are receiving specialist support.
- The numbers that are accessing rape and sexual offences support services across Warwickshire continues to increase; this mirrors the national picture. It is thought that the increase is as a result of increased awareness of services and confidence to access them, along with the delays in the criminal justice system meaning people are staying in services for longer.
- There needs to be clear step-down services to enable people to move away from intensive support when appropriate.
- A third of victim-survivors nationally think their personal characteristics (sex or gender, sexuality, ethnicity, culture or religion, illness or disability, age), their socio-economic status, and/or their personal history (e.g. being a prostitute or sex worker) was a barrier to them accessing support.
- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals are twice as likely as heterosexual individuals to experience domestic abuse and intimate partner violence. This risk is increased for those who identify as transgender, and further increased when the individual is also from a minoritised ethnic background.
- Victim-survivors need to be better supported throughout the criminal justice system.
- Independent Sexual Violence Advocates (ISVA) can decrease attrition rates of victims throughout the criminal justice system.
- Partners and families of men participating in perpetrator programmes, can be more at risk at this time.



Respondents to the Warwickshire Call for Evidence discussed:

- ❑ Concerns about the availability of support (even if those concerns arise out of a lack of knowledge of what is on offer) and not being confident they would know how to access support if they or a friend or family member experienced VAWG. *"I wouldn't have known where to turn, I wouldn't have known where to ask for any support."* (Domestic Abuse Survivor Interview).
- ❑ The need for improved signposting and referrals to support, with a clear understanding that support does not rely on victim-survivors being willing to report the matter to the police and pursue a prosecution. *"I had to seek my own support. After 3 months, I finally found a charity that were able to help me and my family. There should be more information the authorities could pass on to families in need of direction."* (Sexual Assault/Abuse Survivor Survey Respondent)
- ❑ Feeling least satisfied with the service received from the police and social services, in comparison to other services. (Victim-Survivors)
- ❑ Feeling that barriers to accessing support remain. Much of the discussions about supporting victim-survivors in Warwickshire centred around the barriers to accessing and engaging with services. Many of the barriers outlined or experienced by victim-survivors of VAWG were felt to largely be consistent regardless of which specific types of service they required, and generally mirror some of the barriers victim-survivors face when deciding whether or not to report their experience of VAWG to the police.
- ❑ Wanting services to provide flexibility in their approach, and the need to streamline provision and enhance collaboration between different organisations, as well as exploring assertive outreach to typically minoritised groups, such as those from the LGBTQ+ community. *"In Black, Asian, and Travelling communities it is so much more difficult for women to come forward because of the pressure from their own communities."* (Domestic Abuse Survivor Interview).
- ❑ A need for holistic support, whereby victim-survivor needs are met not only psychologically but also practically to safeguard them.
- ❑ Being unaware of the Victims' Code of Practice (2021) and therefore, not knowing their rights as a victim of crime. (Victim-Survivors)
- ❑ Feeling that Warwickshire has a good range of support, but gaps remain including support for children and young people.
- ❑ The need for dedicated support for victim-survivors of stalking.
- ❑ The need for an increased awareness of and support for child-to-parent abuse, as well as exploration of how commonly this occurs in Warwickshire.
- ❑ The importance of workplace awareness and support to encourage earlier intervention to enable employers to be able to spot and recognise signs of someone being a victim of VAWG and then know where to signpost them.

What we are already doing

Commissioning partners and local service providers work closely together to identify and access funding streams seeking to support, strengthen or provide services to victims and survivors of VAWG.	OPCC Warwickshire chairs both the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) and the Victim and Witness Forum; and also contributes to the regional Crime Prosecution Service (CPS) Local Scrutiny & Involvement Panel for VAWG.	Probation practitioners are trained to work with women in a trauma informed way to support them through their journey on probation and not contribute to those reports of feeling retraumatised.
Warwickshire has strong partnership arrangements in place to share information and develop joint plans to protect victim-survivors and hold perpetrators to account – Warwickshire Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings take a joint approach to risk assessment and safety planning for victim-survivors living in Warwickshire. Agencies work together to consider the wishes of the victim, options for keeping individuals safe in their own home and powers that can be used to hold perpetrators to account for their behaviour.	Working with the VAWG communication sub-group – communications officers review and refresh target groups to ensure messaging is reaching the right audience with the best impact possible. Additionally, each communication campaign is comprehensively evaluated.	Every woman who is on probation is given the offer of being managed by a female Probation Practitioner.
	Warwickshire Police have launched a VAWG scrutiny panel that involves key partners and will be expanded out to include persons with lived experience of VAWG. The aim of the panel is to build trust and confidence with partners and public concerning the police response to VAWG.	Probation work to ensure victim-survivors report during a time when their perpetrator is not present, in order to protect them in the building.
		Probation operates female only groups for addressing any criminogenic needs they may have.
		Female only Approved Premises are operated by Probation for those assessed as posing a significant risk as they need additional monitoring on release from custody.
Warwickshire Police have enhanced the Domestic Abuse Performance dashboard, the dashboard includes a section on victim satisfaction that allows for satisfactions levels to be scrutinised based on age and ethnicity to identify those groups that could require additional support.		

Commissioned Services and Funded Schemes

Warwickshire has a comprehensive community based Domestic Abuse Service which is jointly funded by WCC, the OPCC Warwickshire and the NHS Coventry & Warwickshire Integrated Care Board (ICB). The service provides a range of support to all victim-survivors over the age of 16, at all levels of risk. Warwickshire's Domestic Abuse Service includes:

- o A helpline / single point of contact (SPOC) for anyone requiring advice and support about domestic abuse.
- o 1:1 support by Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA), outreach workers and health based domestic abuse workers.
- o Specialist Health Advocate Educators.
- o Drop-in sessions in community venues across the county and group recovery programmes.
- o Sanctuary Scheme provision (home adaptations that seek to improve security of a home).

24 units of refuge accommodation in the county. This is commissioned by WCC and the OPCC Warwickshire. The refuge accommodation is:

- o Open to women and children.
- o Open to Warwickshire and non-Warwickshire residents as per the Domestic Abuse Act.
- o A mix of self-contained and communal accommodation.
- o The provision includes Domestic Abuse Support Workers and re-settlement support
- o 1:1 support for children and young people by specialist Children's Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (ChIDVA).
- o Support for children and young people through play therapy.

WCC commissions multi-agency training sessions on Understanding Domestic Abuse, Risk Identification & Assessment and Safety Planning and Understanding Coercive or Controlling Behaviour for professionals in Warwickshire to access.

Via the SPOC, any victim-survivor or professional in Warwickshire can call Warwickshire's Domestic Abuse Service to access Domestic Abuse Support and refuge provision within or outside of the county. The SPOC is signed up to "Routes to Support" which provides a database of refuge provision available nationally, including specialist provision. Victim-survivors are also able to access 1:1 support, access an immediate risk assessment and support to develop a safety plan. This can include plans for leaving an abusive partner and / or safety measures to enable the victim-survivor to remain in their own home such as use of the Sanctuary Scheme.

WCC commission a British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) accredited Specialist Domestic Abuse Counselling and Therapy Service. The service is divided into two parts, with part 1 providing specialist counselling and therapy for children and young people (up to the age of 18) and part 2 providing counselling and therapy to adults (from the age of 16).

NHS England and OPCC Warwickshire co-commission the provision of a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) for victim-survivors, located at George Elliot Hospital, along with crisis services for adult victims of rape and sexual assault.

NHS England, OPCC Warwickshire and the OPCC's of the West Midlands region, co-commission a regional Children and Young Persons Sexual Assault Recovery Service for victim-survivors, which utilises the SARC network in the region in a hub and spoke model.

WCC commissions ISVA provision for those that have accessed the SARC, known locally as the Blue-Sky Centre. This is a consortium of providers and covers Coventry and Warwickshire. Also funded is an organisation that provides support for victims of rape and serious sexual offences, this includes counselling, therapies, online and web-based support and a helpline.

OPCC Warwickshire commissions:

- o A community based Sexual Violence and Abuse service for victim-survivors, which includes ISVA, outreach and counselling services for both adults and children.
- o A Child Exploitation service for victims and survivors, which works closely as part of a multi-agency co-located team that includes Warwickshire Police, Children's Social Care, and Health.
- o An Independent Modern Slavery Advocate (IMSA) Service to support victims and survivors of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

In 2018, NHS England (NHSE) launched a document titled 'Strategic Direction for Sexual Assault and Abuse Services: Lifelong care for victims and survivors 2018 – 2023'²³. This document outlines how services for victim-survivors of sexual assault and abuse, in all settings of the health and care system, need to evolve. It sets out six core priorities that NHS England will focus on to reduce inequalities experienced. To ensure the response to the document, a Sexual Assault and Abuse Services (SAAS) Coordinator was appointed. This post covers Coventry and Warwickshire and works to break down barriers and improve pathways to services. The work of this post and the priorities of the NHS SAAS Strategy have now been incorporated into the Action Plan of the Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) Steering Group, which reports to the VAWG Board.

OPCC Warwickshire, WCC and the District/Borough Councils, have worked closely together and with the Home Office to secure national Safer Streets²⁴ funding to improve the feeling of safety of public green spaces, town centres and other locations perceived to present a risk of danger to vulnerable people, including lone women and girls.

Through its Annual Grant Award Scheme, the OPCC has regularly provided funding to CSPs; new and established community, voluntary or third sector organisations or groups; and statutory organisations; to undertake projects, pilots or initiatives that support victims and survivors of VAWG related crime and abuse.

OPCC Warwickshire has worked closely with the Ministry of Justice to secure additional national funding to extend the provision of support services in Warwickshire for adult and child victim-survivors of Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence/Assault, and Child Exploitation. This includes additional ISVA, Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ChISVA) and ChiDVA roles, Sexual Violence Support and Sexual Violence Counselling, and specialist Domestic Abuse Outreach, and Domestic Abuse Counselling.

What more we will do

□ Commissioning partners will:

- o Continue to commission or grant fund services providing support to victim-survivors of VAWG and will work together and with other partners in the county to secure additional national funding where possible.
- o Identify gaps in provision of specialist services (e.g stalking) and seek to identify and access funding streams as necessary to provide the identified support need.
- o Link with local service providers to ensure contracted service providers and grant recipients provide holistic services and work together in a coordinated way, to properly meet the psychological and practical needs of survivors.
- o Link with local service providers to ensure the removal of barriers to access services. Linked to this, partners will continue to review monitoring data, highlighting any over or under-represented groups, and using this information to target communications to specific groups.
- o Identify and access funding streams seeking to support, strengthen or provide services to child victim-survivors of domestic abuse recognising their new status in law.
- o A commitment has been made within the Warwickshire Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021–2024²⁵ to commission 36 units of dispersed self-contained safe accommodation for domestic abuse victim-survivors and their children. WCC have been working with Refuge to develop this dispersed model of accommodation, which is expected to go live in 2023. It is anticipated it will take around two years to get all 36 units of dispersed accommodation up and running.

□ **VAWG partners will continue to work together to:**

- o Develop and support campaigns and awareness raising initiatives that specifically seek to promote engagement with support services, and which highlights that reporting to the police is not a condition of support.

-
- o Add pressure to the national conversation to improve court timescales.

-
- o Commit to developing/updating their own workplace policies. All partners should have policies in place to protect, support and guide staff and volunteers in the workplace. Warwickshire Police will refresh domestic abuse policy/ procedure to ensure that victim-survivors of VAWG are police officers or staff are properly supported.

□ **Warwickshire Police will:**

- o Launch a RASSO scrutiny panel that will involve key partners and those with lived experience. The aim of the panel is to build trust and confidence with partners and public concerning the police response to RASSO.

-
- o Refresh the Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedures to improve the police response to Police Perpetrated Domestic Abuse (PPDA) to build trust and confidence in the public that incidents of this nature will be robustly investigated.

-
- o Prioritise the examination of digital devices recovered from the victim-survivors of RASSO to reduce the impact on the victim and to enable the criminal investigation to be progressed in a timelier manner.

- o Produce a further learning package to raise awareness amongst frontline staff of the Victim's Code based around the lived experience of a survivor of VAWG.

-
- o Promote the Victims' Right to Review (VRR) scheme with victim-survivors to empower them to challenge where the police or CPS have made a decision to take no further action against an identified perpetrator.

-
- o Put measures in place to ensure that the use of a Stalking Protection Order is considered in relevant cases.

-
- o Continue to monitor data on children who are arrested as a result of child-to-parent abuse.

-
- **OPCC Warwickshire will review the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) Victims Charter in light of the Victims Bill and the new Victims Code of Practice 2021, with a view to the refreshing and relaunching of the Charter as appropriate, ensuring it is clear and jargon-free.**

-
- **Through the PCC as chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB), the OPCC Warwickshire will support the board members to map the journey of victims through the criminal justice system to identify areas for improvement in relation to their experience, confidence and satisfaction, and seek to identify and access funding streams in order to provide identified support needs.**

-
- **Through the work of the Sexual Assault and Abuse Coordinator funded by NHSE, work will continue to involve victim-survivors experience to shape services and to address barriers to accessing services.**
-

□ Probation will ensure staff are trained and working in a trauma informed way.

□ District & Borough Housing teams are working towards employing Domestic Abuse Co-ordinators who will work to ensure effective access for victim-survivors of domestic abuse and encourage their engagement within the service.

□ Children and Families Services have offered the commissioned Warwickshire Domestic Violence and Abuse Service a place on Risk Assessment for Children training to upskill staff on potential risks to children.

3 | Pursuing Perpetrators and Reducing Re-offending

“We need more positive police action in the interim, better recognition and understanding of VAWG, especially first response officers, holding perpetrators accountable and putting preventative measures in place to disrupt their behaviour, less victim blaming and more understanding of victim survival skills.”

(Survivor Survey Respondent)

“More access for perpetrators to get help to hopefully reduce the victims.”

(Survivor Survey Respondent)

Overall, our aim is to stop VAWG offences from happening in the first place, but when they do happen, all perpetrators of all forms of VAWG must be brought to justice. We want all victim-survivors of VAWG offences to have the confidence to come forward and report what has happened to them. In order for this to happen, we recognise there must be an increase in the number of perpetrators brought to justice, and for such perpetrators to receive tougher sentences. In addition to pursuing perpetrators, Warwickshire recognises there is a need to work with those who perpetrate abuse, to encourage them to understand and reflect on the

impact of their behaviour both on adult victim-survivors and any children involved either directly or indirectly. This is with a view to encourage better future behaviour and regulation of their needs to express, anger and control. This work is designed to minimise future behaviour and ultimately reduce the number of victims. Whilst perpetrators are going through programmes it is recognised that this can be a particularly vulnerable time for their victims and there is always a need to ensure that support is in place for victims whilst perpetrators are going through a programme designed to bring about change.

Partnership Objective:

Partnership Objective: We will continue to pursue perpetrators and reduce re-offending by working with those who offend. We will work in collaboration across the Warwickshire Partnership to engage those who offend in behavioural change interventions to stop the harm to victim-survivors, their families and the wider community.

What we know

Pursuing Perpetrators

- VAWG is significantly under-reported, so many perpetrators are not being brought to justice.
- A significant proportion of VAWG investigations are closed by the police with the outcome 'evidential difficulties, victim does not support action'. Victim-survivor withdrawal has most often been linked to the lengthy and often intrusive investigation process, impacting on the ability of victim-survivors to 'move on', and often as a result of the perpetrator being released with no bail conditions and therefore free to harass or intimidate victim-survivors into withdrawing.
- The lack of accountability and punishment for perpetrators discourages victim-survivors from reporting crimes, as there is the understanding that they will have to relive a traumatic event and go through the distress of an investigation without any action coming of it.
- The vast majority of VAWG crimes are committed by someone known to the victim-survivors.
- Repeat perpetrators of VAWG incidents and crimes need to be identified, monitored, and receive appropriate interventions and proactive policing.
- Many perpetrators deny or significantly underestimate the impact of domestic abuse on children living in their household.
- 76% of children who are open cases to Warwickshire Children and Families are living in a household where domestic abuse has occurred.
- There is increasing concern with regards to levels of adolescent abuse towards a carer.

Respondents to the Warwickshire Call for Evidence discussed:

- That Warwickshire's response to pursuing perpetrators could be improved. Only a quarter of professionals (24.8%) felt Warwickshire's current approach to pursuing perpetrators of VAWG is 'good' or 'very good', a third (33.1%) rated this as 'ok', and the remaining 42.2% selected 'poor' or 'very poor'.
- That the number of VAWG perpetrators charged, prosecuted and convicted has been falling and this had resulted in putting people off engaging with the criminal justice process. When individuals did persevere with the criminal justice process, they felt they had been left unsupported throughout, were distressed by trials frequently being cancelled, were often disappointed in the charge that ended up being brought, and specific issues were identified due to the domestic abuse court being located in Coventry.
- That it is helpful and reassuring for victim-survivors to have and know their addresses are flagged on the Police National Computer, ensuring a faster response to any 999 calls from them.

- How they hoped to see a shift in focus from women to men and from victim-survivors to perpetrators in recognition of the fact that VAWG is largely a men and boys issue as opposed to a women and girls issue. *“There tends to be a lot of onus on the victim instead of services working with perpetrators to prevent them from abusing more victims and children.”*

(Domestic Abuse Survivor Interview).

- How essential an efficient criminal justice system is for pursuing perpetrators and emphasised that this is an area that requires significant improvement in Warwickshire, acknowledging that many of the issues stem from lack of resources. *“A lot of people are dropping out of court proceedings because you re-traumatise the victim every step of the way, especially when court cases are delayed and postponed and delayed and postponed - that’s a national issue but also a local issue.”*

(Stakeholder Interview).

- That the current set up of the criminal justice system is having the devastating effect of re-traumatising victim-survivors (contributing to high attrition rates) and is not punishing perpetrators adequately.

- Wanting to see improvements in terms of more proactive and reactive action being taken from the police, and more robust follow up. Many victim-survivors spoke about incidents they had reported to the police that had never been investigated, this seemed to anecdotally be particularly common in the case of breaches to restrictions placed on perpetrators like non-molestation orders. *“She then got a non-molestation order from that incident, and he just continuously breached the non-molestation order - it didn’t mean anything - every time she reported it to the police, they would take the report and wouldn’t do anything with them.”* (Interview on behalf of a Domestic Abuse Survivor)

- The desire for a dedicated specialist team within Warwickshire Police to deal with VAWG-related offences, saying that this would give the *“best chance with the Crown Prosecution Service and for getting convictions.”*

- Experiences with the police. The Call for Evidence showed there was very little positive feedback provided by victim-survivors of VAWG about Warwickshire police, however those who felt like they were taken seriously by the police, had a quick response to their report, or experienced effective communication, were most likely to have a more optimistic perception.

- The need for better training for all professionals operating within the criminal justice system. Respondents felt having a specialist VAWG police response could be beneficial, as well as better information sharing between organisations to identify repeat offenders.

Reducing Re-offending

- A significant proportion of incidents and crimes reported to the police involve a perpetrator who has consumed alcohol and/or drugs and/or who suffers from poor mental health.
- Following a separation, issues of child access appear to be a factor that leads to an escalation in perpetrator behaviour.

Respondents to the Warwickshire Call for Evidence discussed:

- That there is a need to both support victim-survivors and work with the perpetrators **“without encouraging and helping perpetrators to change their behaviour, ultimately, we will be creating more victims of VAWG long-term.”**
- The need to support perpetrators through a contextual safeguarding model, taking into account past trauma and complex needs i.e., mental health and drug or alcohol problems.
- The need to invest more into perpetrator programmes both in prison and the community, catering to everyone regardless of their background and targeted at a wider range of VAWG types.
- That perpetrator programmes should be empirically evaluated, so that they can be fully utilised, with sufficient capacity to meet the demand. Victim-survivors wanted to see improvements made in the way perpetrators' eligibility to undertake a programme is assessed to ensure meaningful engagement. **“I think they should have to engage with mental health services in order for them to then recognise what they've done isn't acceptable, you could arrest them, and they could go to prison but all they're going to do is sit in prison and then be released again, they're not actually doing anything to change their behaviour.”** (Interview on behalf of a Domestic Abuse Survivor)

What we are already doing

Pursuing Perpetrators

PCC hold the Chief Constable to account for delivering an efficient and effective police service and has been particularly focusing on VAWG.

Commissioning partners work closely together to identify and access funding streams to support activity and initiatives seeking to address VAWG.

Warwickshire Police have developed a Violence, Abuse and Intimidation against Women and Girls Strategy (VAIWG) and delivery plan. The strategy includes a section dedicated to criminal justice and offender/suspect management.

Warwickshire Police have Managing Offenders Board (MOB) chaired by the Detective Superintendent responsible for Prevent. One of the aims of the MOB is to improve the police response to perpetrators of VAWG. The MOB will look to make more effective use of the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) to more effectively manage perpetrators of VAWG.

From April 2023 the Warwickshire Police will have DART teams (Domestic Abuse & RASSO).

Warwickshire Police developed an investigative response plan to deal with the increase of needle spiking type incidents being reported, this initiative, called Operation Biscay, ensures a professional response to any incidents reported by the public with a view to trying to identify the perpetrators of these incidents.

Reducing Re-offending

OPCC Warwickshire has worked closely with the Home Office to secure national funding to provide a Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme in Warwickshire. This service is undertaken by a local delivery partner and includes a number of strands that provide a holistic offer to individuals of all risk levels, who are genuinely seeking support to cease their abuse behaviour, including early intervention options. This service also includes a parallel offer of therapeutic counselling and support to connected victim-survivors

Through its Annual Grant Award Scheme, the OPCC Warwickshire has regularly provided funding to CSPs; new and established community, voluntary or third sector organisations or groups; and statutory organisations; to undertake projects, pilots or initiatives that support perpetrators who genuinely wish to cease their continuing cycle of crime and abuse.

Offenders assessed as having domestic abuse risks are subject to a separate risk assessment which looks at their risk of harm to family members, children, and spouses, this is called Spousal Assault Risk Assessment and helps to inform the wider risk management of Perpetrators.

Internal Policies set out expectations that Probation Practitioners should review child safeguarding and domestic abuse concerns with Police and Children's Services when there is a new concern and every 3-6 months based on risk assessment and circumstances.

Warwickshire Children and Families strives to ensure that a core component of assessments is to consider the adverse effects of domestic abuse on children. Targeted Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment for Children (DARAC) assessments are part of this approach.

Probation run accredited programmes to address domestic abuse, these are run in a group to encourage challenge from others and seek to address domestic abuse, reduce the risk posed by offenders and assist with rehabilitation. Probation also run Structured Interventions (SI) which address domestic abuse – these are not accredited but are still run in groups, usually smaller and have the same aims as the accredited programmes. If an offender does not meet the criteria for a programme of an SI the Probation Practitioner can complete 1-1 work with them.

Warwickshire Children and Families has an established Caring Dads programme, which targets men who are in contact with children subject to child protection or legal proceedings. The aim of this programme is to work with fathers to change behaviour and avoid future victims. At all stages of delivery, independent support for victim-survivors is an inherent part of the programme.

There is a drive within Warwickshire Children and Families Service to engage with fathers and recognise the significant contribution they make to child development, whilst recognising power and control dynamics within families.

Family time arrangements will pay due regard to domestic abuse issues.

What more we will do

Pursuing Perpetrators

□ OPCC Warwickshire will:

- o Work closely with commissioning partners to ensure contracted services and grant recipients have plans in place to support and encourage victims and survivors who have not yet reported to the police to do so.

-
- o Work together with Warwickshire Police to establish pathways for the reporting, with consent, of anonymised intelligence regarding perpetrators of VAWG, where this is safe to do so.

-
- o Support LCJB members via the PCC who operates as the Board's chair, to ensure that the arrangements for VAWG victims-survivors at court do not lead to the perpetuation of abuse. This includes the facilities available and the use of special measures. In addition, they will support the board members to identify their plans for improving conviction rates for VAWG cases, including any increases in capacity and capability of resources where this is necessary.

□ Warwickshire Police will:

- o Explore the feasibility of launching project Vigilant, this initiative, linked to the night-time economy, will look to equip police officers with enhanced training so they are better able to identify those perpetrators who could pose a risk to women and girls.

-
- o Seek to make more effective use of the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme (DAPP) commissioned by the OPCC Warwickshire.

- o Become an Operation Soteria²⁶ force aimed at the improving the response to RASSO.

-
- o Prioritise the examination of digital devices recovered from the victim-survivors and perpetrators of RASSO to reduce the impact on the victim and to enable the criminal investigation to be progressed in a timelier manner.

-
- o Ensure that the response to VAWG related incidents will be prioritised in accordance with risk. A THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability, Explanation) risk assessment will be conducted in all cases where a member of the public contacts the police to report an incident, where there is a delay in police attendance the incident will be reviewed at regular intervals.

-
- o Look to place HARMS markers on victims' addresses where appropriate to ensure that incidents involving those at most risk are prioritised.

-
- o Ensure that serial perpetrators of VAWG are flagged on the Police National Computer.

-
- o Conduct reasonable line enquiries into any breaches of bail conditions or civil orders and where appropriate explore whether the actions of the perpetrator would amount to a further crime (for example harassment or stalking).

Reducing Re-offending

- Commissioning partners will work closely to identify and access funding streams to support activity and initiatives seeking specifically to prevent the generational cycle of VAWG and achieve societal change, in particular those targeted at existing or potential perpetrators.
- Probation will ensure referrals and use of Programmes, SI and 1-1 work is utilised for all domestic abuse perpetrators and monitor the quality of this.
- Warwickshire Children and Families will seek to develop and implement bespoke interventions to address adolescent to parent/carer violence and aggression (APVA).
- Within the Caring Dads programme, there are development plans to target men who are part of families in contact with Early Help services.
- The partnership Reducing Re-Offending Board, accountable to Safer Warwickshire Partnership Board (SWBP) are currently working to develop a new strategy and approach to reducing re-offending in Warwickshire.

4 | Strengthening the System

“There is very effective partnership working taking place at both statutory and voluntary levels across the county”

(Stakeholder Survey Respondent)

A whole system approach must be in place to truly tackle VAWG. There should be zero tolerance for VAWG to occur anywhere, including at home, at work, at school, online, or on the streets. As highlighted throughout this strategy, VAWG is a complex issue and for us to respond effectively, every organisation must play their role. This can mean health and social care professionals and specialist organisations supporting victim-survivors, teachers and other professionals working in education raising awareness, criminal justice professionals ensuring all victim-survivors see justice, or members of the community calling out unacceptable behaviour. We must take action to tackle VAWG and this can only be achieved by working together to do so. There are always challenges to working effectively in a partnership, including working with limited resources and capacity, differing working cultures, and competing priorities. Nonetheless, the Warwickshire local VAWG partnership has already been effective in working to tackle VAWG.

Partnership Objective:

Partnership Objective: We will continue to strengthen our partnership response to create a whole system approach to tackling VAWG. We will ensure that professionals across the partnership are consistent in their understanding and response to VAWG.

What we know

- All the pieces of the system have to work properly to make it effective. This requires a cross-cutting, multi-agency, partnership approach. A 'coordinated community response'.
- Health and Education providers have a critical role to play.
- There is an inconsistent, fragmented, uncoordinated approach to funding, which starts right at the top in central government department.
- There is a need for improvement in data collection in order to understand the full scope, scale and impact of VAWG in the county.

Respondents to the Warwickshire Call for Evidence discussed:

- Feeling that partnership working in Warwickshire is strongest at the highest strategic levels, while joint working on an operational level and amongst different service providers could be improved.
- Feeling that organisations, in particular Warwickshire Police could work to improve data recording and reporting practices in order to have a better understanding of the scale of VAWG locally.
- That the 'Emerging Trends' group, which was set up by WCC during the COVID-19 pandemic, had been 'a game changer' in bringing relevant partners together- "**The involvement of a wide range of multi-agency organisations is very positive. I think the work we do around emerging trends is really good - it's certainly helped shape some of the direction we're going in. Overall, I think the partnership's commitment to this agenda is very strong.**" (Stakeholder Interview)
- That there is scope for wider partners to be involved in the implementation of this strategy.
- That VAWG Board has good buy-in from a range of key partners, and that those currently engaged are motivated to make a real difference.
"We are really lucky because we have such a wide range of organisations who want to be part of this." (Stakeholder Interview)
- The need for the VAWG Board to review who their existing partners are, and consider who additional partners could be.
- Wanting to see more opportunities for those with lived experience to be involved. This could include participating in discussion forums, communications work, or other initiatives, and should take place both virtually and in person to encourage engagement from representatives of all communities.
- Concerns about the lack of resources, time and funding needed to deliver this new VAWG strategy. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, workloads have drastically increased with no extra resource to meet the demands.

What we are already doing

Warwickshire has an established VAWG Board, which is a subgroup of the Safer Warwickshire Partnership Board (SWPB). The VAWG Board's purpose is to oversee the delivery of activities that prevent, protect and reduce violence against women and girls. The board meets quarterly and has members from a range of organisations as detailed in [Section 3 – Governance](#). To enable the Board to be effective, a number of subgroups develop areas of work in more detail, engaging with a wider range of agencies and specialist teams. These subgroups report into VAWG Board as detailed in [Section 3 - Governance](#).

Warwickshire Police have launched a VAWG scrutiny panel that involves key partners and will be expanded out to include persons with lived experience of VAWG. The aim of the panel is to build trust and confidence with partners and public concerning the police response to VAWG.

The partnership collaborated effectively to secure Safer Streets funding to address issues affecting the local community, for example lighting and enhanced CCTV. Through this funding, the partnership also developed several VAWG specific virtual reality videos designed to raise awareness of misogyny and inappropriate behaviours towards women and girls. These will be delivered to young men and boys in education and other settings.

The Warwickshire VAWG Strategy and the Warwickshire Serious Violence Prevention Strategy have been co-produced, with shared outcomes and objectives. The Warwickshire Serious Violence Prevention Strategy attracts a legal duty on named agencies to prevent and reduce serious violence and prepare and implement a strategy to do so.

In developing a stronger system, partner agencies are working together to adopt a common assessment framework, based on the principles of contextual safeguarding. Our ambition is to share this framework across all agencies involved in the Serious Violence and VAWG partnerships to deliver interventions that have greater outcomes in terms of violence prevention.

The Warwickshire Serious Violence Prevention Strategy recognises that to create a stronger system there needs to be direct engagement with local communities affected by violence. Developing an eco-system between schools, partner agencies, the voluntary sector and local community leaders, which challenges all forms of violence is a vital part of our violence prevention approach.

Partners have adopted a shared risk approach to the funding and delivery of DHRs. This ensures a consistent process is followed wherever a DHR occurs in the county and enables the provision of a dedicated officer post to co-ordinate this work. This approach ensures reviews are comprehensive and can fulfil their purpose of enabling agencies to improve their responses to domestic violence and abuse and work better together to prevent such tragedies occurring in the future.

Commissioning partners, WCC, Coventry and Warwickshire ICB and the Warwickshire OPCC already jointly commission several VAWG support services.

Where services are not jointly commissioned, partners still work together on commissioning activity, for example are evaluation panel members for VAWG related tenders.

What more we will do

□ Commissioning partners will:

- o Review the Home Office's refreshed 'National Statement of Expectations' in relation to the commissioning of VAWG services (when published).

-
- o Ensure that data from commissioned services and other relevant grant recipients contributes to a richer picture of the scale of VAWG locally.

-
- o Pool resources wherever possible and explore co-commissioning to increase capacity.

□ VAWG partners will continue to work together to:

- o Ensure that those with lived experience have the opportunity, either directly or through their advocate, to provide feedback on their experiences, confidence, and satisfaction; to identify good practice that can be built upon; and to highlight areas for improvement.

-
- o Identify regional and national good practice for consideration of implementation in the county, in particular where this will help prevent the generational cycle of abuse, and where this will close identified gaps in services or support.

-
- o Review data recording and reporting practices to fully understand the scale of VAWG locally and put processes in place to report relevant data into the Analysts supporting VAWG.

- o Review existing partners, subgroups, and community safety partnerships and consider their corresponding roles to ensure these are being used effectively and efficiently.

□ Warwickshire Police will:

- o Launch a RASSO scrutiny panel that will involve key partners and those with lived experience. The aim of the panel is to build trust and confidence with partners and public concerning the police response to RASSO.

-
- o Ensure key relevant learning and best practice emanating from the National Policing Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) is shared with partners to help to develop a stronger response to VAWG. The VKPP works with the NPCC, the Violence and Public Protection (VPP) lead and funded by the Home Office to undertake a range of direct engagement with forces and key partners to understand current practice, identify promising practice, gaps and share knowledge and shape future responses.

-
- **Through the PCC as chair of the LCJB, the OPCC will** support the board members to ensure that all the required data from Criminal Justice partners is made available to contribute to a full understanding of the local VAWG attrition rates at each step of the Criminal Justice process.

How will the VAWG
Strategy be delivered?

3



The effective implementation of this strategy depends on a cross-system approach. To truly tackle VAWG, there must be a co-ordinated and cohesive response, whereby all

partners, organisations, employers, education establishments, and individuals play their role in helping us to deliver our key priorities.

□ **The VAWG Strategy Task and Finish Group will:**

- o Develop and implement a delivery plan, that is annually refreshed and reviewed by the VAWG Board on a quarterly basis. This will identify short-term arrangements and improvements as well as medium to long-term work that is required to deliver the strategy.

-
- o Develop a set of measures to monitor the impact of the strategy.

-
- o Identify, develop, and undertake joint commissioning and service development opportunities to prevent and reduce VAWG; and will identify and apply for funding opportunities where appropriate.

-
- o Undertake regular consultation to ensure that the delivery plan reflects the on-going thoughts and concerns of the professionals, the public and victim survivors.
-

□ **As VAWG related crimes are constantly evolving, the Warwickshire partnership will:**

- o Continue to keep pace with changes, by continually reviewing and monitoring intelligence, data and insight and by working with VAWG sector specialists to further develop and implement the commitments detailed in this strategy.

□ **A shared risk/investment approach will:**

- o Continue in some areas of work as appropriate e.g., DHRs and MARAC. All partners need to commit to these funding streams.
-

Governance

- The VAWG governance structure will: be reviewed by the VAWG Strategy Task and Finish Group as part of the delivery plan.

- Initially, the strategy and delivery plan will: be overseen by the VAWG Board. This reports into the SWPB, the strategic level body which oversees community safety work in Warwickshire. The current VAWG Board governance structure is shown in figure 4.

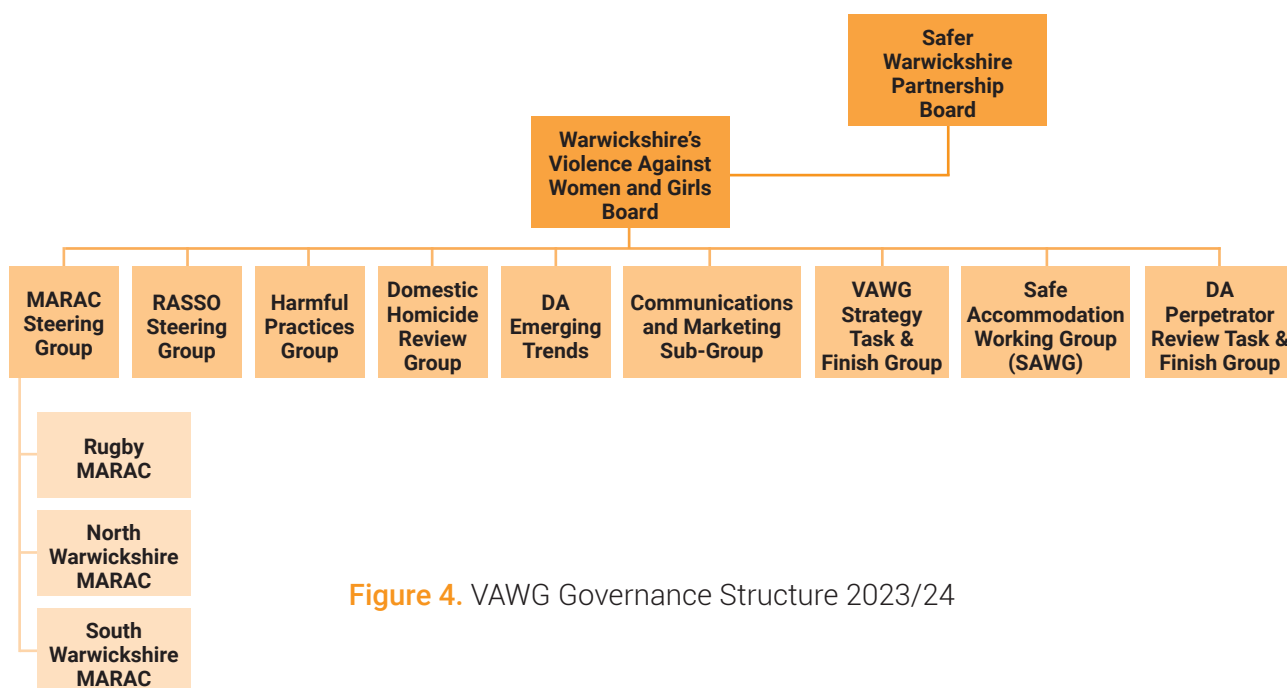


Figure 4. VAWG Governance Structure 2023/24

- The SWPB has three strategic ambitions, all of which link directly to the work set out in the VAWG strategy. They are:
 - o Address the causes of violence
 - o Tackle discrimination in all its forms
 - o Safe, Healthy and Empowered communities

- There are a number of subgroups that report in to VAWG Board. An overview of these groups is provided in Supplementary Appendix 3.

How will we know we
are making a difference?

4



The VAWG Strategy Task and Finish Group will develop and agree measures to monitor the impact of the VAWG strategy. The objectives of the strategy will have been delivered when:

- More victim-survivors are reporting VAWG incidents to Warwickshire Police and are accessing Warwickshire's commissioned services.
- Warwickshire has comprehensive community based VAWG support services in place alongside safe accommodation.
- Adults and children in contact with services report that their voices were heard; that they feel safer and support was provided at the right time.
- That the numbers of victim-survivors experiencing VAWG related repeat victimisation is reduced.
- More perpetrators are brought to justice.
- More perpetrators are engaged in behavioural change programmes.

We aim to involve victim-survivors to help us evaluate our progress with the strategy and to ensure we achieve our desired outcomes.

Work will be undertaken to explore the best way to do this, but this may involve setting up a Warwickshire victim-survivor forum. Additionally, we will continue to review qualitative and quantitative data from our commissioned providers, utilising case studies to gather feedback and measure impact.

We will also utilise our communication campaigns to monitor the impact of this strategy. This includes monitoring:

- Engagement with social media – based on clicks, likes and shares of content
- Visits to the Talk2Someone and the Safe In Warwickshire websites
- Referrals to provider services
- Column inches from newspaper articles
- Comments via Facebook Messenger – at WCC these are monitored daily via the News Team
- Feedback to Councillors during constituent visits

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Warwickshire individuals with lived experience of VAWG and their friends and family, who generously chose to give their time to share their story with us during the Call for Evidence. By sharing their stories, they are helping Warwickshire's VAWG partners to ensure we are supporting victim-survivors and their families,

empowering victim-survivors to seek support themselves, and working towards our vision of ending violence against women and girls in Warwickshire.

We would like to thank members of the VAWG Task and Finish Strategy Group for their continual commitment, work, support and guidance to assist in the development

of this strategy.

We would also like to thank wider stakeholders including local support services who provided their time, knowledge and expertise during the Call for Evidence and ongoing development of this strategy to help inform its objectives.

Acronyms

APVA	Adolescent to Parent/Carer Violence and Aggression
BACP	British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy
ChISVA	Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advocate
ChIDVA	Children and Young People's Independent Domestic Violence Advocate
CPS	Crime Prosecution Service
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CSEW	Crime Survey for England and Wales
CSPs	Community Safety Partnerships
DA	Domestic Abuse
DAPP	Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme
DARAC	Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment for Children
DHR	Domestic Homicide Review
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
ICB	Integrated Care Board
ICS	Integrated Care System
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advocate
IMSA	Independent Modern Slavery Advocate



ISVA	Independent Sexual Violence Advocate
LCJB	Local Criminal Justice Board
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning and “plus,” which represents many other sexual identities
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MOB	Managing Offenders Board
NHSE	NHS England
NPCC	National Police Chiefs' Council
ONS	Office for National Statistics
OPCC	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner
PPDA	Police Perpetrated Domestic Abuse
RASSO	Rape and Serious Sexual Offences
SAAS	Sexual Assault and Abuse Services
SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
SI	Structured Intervention
SPOC	Single Point of Contact
SWPB	Safer Warwickshire Partnership Board
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VKPP	Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme
VPP	Violence and Public Protection
VRR	Victims' Right to Review
WCC	Warwickshire County Council

Endnotes

¹ Refuge, 2020 as cited in Adisa, O., & Khan, R. (2021). The story of H.O.P.E. How a group of Black and Brown women reshaped domestic abuse support networks in lockdown. Domestic Abuse Research Network (DARNet), University of Suffolk & Honour Abuse Research Matrix (HARM), University of Central Lancashire.

<https://hopetraining.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/H.O.P.E.-Network-Report.pdf>

² Adisa, O., & Khan, R. (2021). The story of H.O.P.E. How a group of Black and Brown women reshaped domestic abuse support networks in lockdown. Domestic Abuse Research Network (DARNet), University of Suffolk & Honour Abuse Research Matrix (HARM), University of Central Lancashire. <https://hopetraining.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/H.O.P.E.-Network-Report.pdf>

³ <https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-1350011118-3054>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy>

⁵ <https://www.npcc.police.uk/documents/VAWG/Policing%20VAWG%20national%20framework%20for%20delivery.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/police-response-to-violence-against-women-and-girls/>

⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1001417/end-to-end-rape-review-report-with-correction-slip.pdf

⁸ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101454/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2022.pdf

⁹ Independent consultants TONIC ran the Call for Evidence on behalf of the VAWG Board. TONIC are specialists in social research and public consultation with a focus on criminal justice and public health.

¹⁰ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/918897/horr107.pdf

¹¹ Banyan Mental Health. (2019). Psychological effects of sexual abuse. <https://www.banyanmentalhealth.com/2019/10/02/psychological-effects-of-sexual-assault/>

¹² Office for National Statistics. (2021). Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2020. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/cabuseprevalenceandtrendsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2020>

¹³ Office for National Statistics. (2021). Sexual offences in England and Wales overview: year ending March 2020. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/sexualoffencesinenglandandwalesoverview/march2020>

¹⁴ Almeida, R. (2020) Crime and Covid-19: How victims and survivors have been impacted by the pandemic. Victim Support.

¹⁵ HM Government. (2021a). Tackling violence against women and girls: The safety of women and girls across the country is our priority. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1033934/Tackling_Violence_Against_Women_and_Girls_Strategy_-_July_2021.pdf

¹⁶ Refuge, 2020 as cited in Adisa, O., & Khan, R. (2021). The story of H.O.P.E. How a group of Black and Brown women reshaped domestic abuse support networks in lockdown. Domestic Abuse Research Network (DARNet), University of Suffolk & Honour Abuse Research Matrix (HARM), University of Central Lancashire. <https://hopetraining.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/H.O.P.E.-Network-Report.pdf>

¹⁷ Adisa, O., & Khan, R. (2021). The story of H.O.P.E. How a group of Black and Brown women reshaped domestic abuse support networks in lockdown. Domestic Abuse Research Network (DARNet), University of Suffolk & Honour Abuse Research Matrix (HARM), University of Central Lancashire. <https://hopetraining.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/H.O.P.E.-Network-Report.pdf>

¹⁸ Unless otherwise stated data covering the period April 2021 – March 22

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/domestic-homicide-review>

²⁰ Risk Factors for Men's Lifetime Perpetration of Physical Violence against Intimate Partners: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) in Eight Countries. PLOS ONE 10(5): e0126676.

²¹ 73 Risk Factors for Men's Lifetime Perpetration of Physical Violence against Intimate Partners: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) in Eight Countries. PLOS ONE 10(5): e0126676.

²² HM Government. (2021). Tackling violence against women and girls: The safety of women and girls across the country is our priority. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1033934/Tackling_Violence_Against_Women_and_Girls_Strategy_-_July_2021.pdf

²³ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/strategic-direction-sexual-assault-and-abuse-services.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/safer-streets-fund-continues-to-make-streets-safer>

²⁵ <https://safeinwarwickshire.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/warwickshires-safe-accommodation-strategy-2021-2024-.pdf>

²⁶ <https://www.college.police.uk/research/projects/operation-soteria-bluestone>

How to get help if you or someone you know is experiencing VAWG

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, ring or text 999.

If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have any speech impairment, please dial:
Minicom/Textphone 18001.

If you're worried a friend, family member, neighbour or colleague might be a victim of VAWG you can report your concerns anonymously to Crimestoppers online here: <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/keeping-safe/personal-safety/domestic-abuse>

We know this can be daunting but the services below will support you every step of the way.

Refuge - Warwickshire Domestic Violence Service

If you are experiencing domestic abuse or violence in Warwickshire, Refuge's domestic violence and abuse service can support you and your children to keep safe. Refuge is a county-wide service that provides support to women, men and children experiencing domestic violence in Warwickshire.

T: **0800 408 1552**

W: <https://refuge.org.uk/i-need-help-now/refuge-domestic-violence-service-warwickshire/>



Listening Ear – DiAmond Counselling and Therapy Service

Listening Ear – DiAmond Counselling and Therapy Service is now accepting referrals for all victim-survivors of domestic abuse who would like counselling and therapy sessions. The trauma informed service is a free to access and confidential service, available for all victim-survivors who are engaging with Refuge / The Warwickshire Domestic Violence and Abuse Service. The service offers both face-to-face and virtual appointments (as determined by the victim-survivor) for up to 10 sessions with group sessions after the completion of the 10 sessions.

T: **01514 886 648**

W: <https://listening-ear.co.uk/diamond/warwickshire/>



Domestic Abuse Counselling Service

The Domestic Abuse Counselling Service works to reduce domestic abuse by providing free therapeutic intervention, working one-to-one with victims of domestic abuse from a 'preventative perspective' providing therapy that educates – with the purpose of increasing safety and reducing the risk of repeat victimisation. DACS services are provided from safe, accessible locations across Warwickshire.

T: **02476 351 137**

W: <https://dacservice.org.uk/>



Family Intervention Counselling Service

The Family Intervention Counselling Service (FICS) are a specialist counselling agency based in Warwickshire. They work with families and individuals who have experienced domestic abuse.

T: **01926 429628**

W: <https://www.interventionservice.co.uk/>



Galop – Galop is a charity offering advice and support to LGBT+ people who have experienced violence or domestic abuse.

T: **0800 999 5428** W: <http://www.galop.org.uk/>



Mankind – A confidential helpline is available for male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence across the UK as well as their friends, family, neighbours, work colleagues and employers.

T: **01823 334 244** W: <https://www.mankind.org.uk/>



Respect Phoneline - Is your abusive behaviour costing you your relationship? Help is available.

T: **0808 802 4040** W: <https://respectphoneline.org.uk/>



Rights of Women – aims to increase women's understanding of their legal rights and improve their access to justice enabling them to live free from violence and make informed, safe, choices about their own and their families' lives by offering a range of services including specialist telephone legal advice lines, legal information and training for professionals.

T: **020 7251 6577** (family law helpline – other numbers are available on the website)

W: <https://rightsofwomen.org.uk/>



RoSA – RoSA is an independent charity working throughout Warwickshire, offering free confidential support for anyone who has experienced rape, sexual abuse, or sexual violence.

T: **01788 551151** W: <https://www.rosasupport.org>



Safeline – Safeline is a specialist charity providing a range of services across Warwickshire to support all survivors of rape and sexual abuse.

T: **01926 402498** (or text **07860 027573**)

W: <https://www.safeline.org.uk/>



The Blue Sky Centre (Sexual Assault Referral Centre) –

The Blue Sky Centre is a SARC where any victim of rape or sexual assault will receive medical care, police intervention (if they wish to report the crime), and various other support services.

T: **01926 507805** W: <https://blueskycentre.org.uk/>



Warwickshire CSE Team –

Something's Not Right is Barnardo's child sexual exploitation (CSE) awareness campaign in Warwickshire. Get a greater awareness of CSE, advice and links to support on their website.

T: **01926 684 490** W: <https://www.somethingsnotright.co.uk/>



A full range of support options are available at:

<https://www.talk2someone.org.uk/>

Or check out the Safe In warwickshire website at:

<https://safeinwarwickshire.com/support/>.

