



HM Government

**Domestic Abuse
Commissioner's Report:
“Victims in Their Own
Right? Babies, children
and young people's
experience of domestic
abuse”
- Government Response**

September 2025

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Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) is grateful to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Dame Nicole Jacobs, and her team for publishing the report: [*'Victims in their own right? Babies, children and young people's experience of domestic abuse'*](#). Their hard work and commitment to this report is welcome, and in particular their dedication to putting the voices of children and young people front and centre.

Domestic abuse is a heinous crime that affects far too many children. It can have a detrimental impact on a child's health and wellbeing, beginning as early as pregnancy, and continuing through childhood, adolescence, and into adulthood. Domestic abuse¹ is a contributing factor in nearly one third of all Children's Social Care 'Child in Need' episodes². Sadly, these numbers may be an underestimate of the scale of the problem, as many cases of domestic abuse go unreported.

Every child deserves to be safe inside and outside of their home with access to the right help and support at the right time, irrespective of where they live. The *'Victims in their own right? Babies, children and young people's experience of domestic abuse'* report is clear that children who experience domestic abuse are not always receiving the support that they need at the time that they need it.

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner's report is structured by seven key themes and draws on the experience of children and young people throughout:

- Centring children's voices
- Stronger cross departmental working and strategic leadership
- Holistic funding
- Data and evidence
- Specialist training for every frontline professional who may work with babies, children and young people
- Safeguarding
- Ensuring practice is informed by specialists

The government is already working to tackle the problems that cause children to need help and protection – including domestic abuse. The Department for Education's Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill is a significant step towards delivering the government's Opportunity Mission to break the link between young people's backgrounds impeding their future success. Underpinning this is the government's commitment to an enduring reduction in the number of children living in poverty in this Parliament as part of a ten-year strategy.

¹ Where the victim is a parent.

² [Children in need, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics](#)

The measures of this Bill will put in place a package of support to drive high and rising standards throughout our education and children's social care systems so that every child can achieve and thrive. It will protect children at risk of abuse and neglect, stopping vulnerable children falling through cracks in services. This includes children who are victims of domestic abuse, so that they are safe, healthy, happy and treated fairly.

Alongside this, the government is rolling out significant improvements to Family Help and child protection, including through new multi-disciplinary Family Help teams, multi-agency child protection teams and social worker lead child protection practitioners. Direct investment in preventative services has doubled, providing over half a billion pounds in 2025-26. Following the Spending Review in June, it was confirmed this funding will continue in full until 2029, along with additional investment of at least £300 million from the Transformation Fund in 2026-27 and 2027-28. The Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government (MHCLG) will set out details on distribution and further funding through the Local Government Finance Settlement later this year. In August, the government also announced an additional £18 million to support transformation activity, bringing total investment in the Families First Partnership programme to £541 million in 2025-26. This will help local areas to implement guidance on identifying risk factors in families and responding to children in need of help and protection, including those experiencing domestic abuse.

As set out in the government's manifesto, a key priority is reducing violence against women and girls. The government has committed to halving violence against women and girls within a decade as part of the Safer Streets Mission, through measures including targeting perpetrators, educating children and young people about healthy relationships and addressing the root causes of abuse and violence, including misogyny.

The upcoming Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy will set out the government's plans to improve support for victims of domestic abuse, including for babies, children and young people. The VAWG strategy will set out the vision, direction and key policy commitments that will enable the government to meet its ambition to halve violence against women and girls in a decade.

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner made 66 recommendations for government in her report. The government has carefully considered these recommendations and has outlined the planned government activity in response to each recommendation. However, included within this response are the flagship reforms which this government believes will have a significant impact on tackling domestic abuse for children at different stages of their interaction with services and professionals, namely:

- Reforming Family Help and child protection and scaling best practice through the Family First Partnership (FFP) programme with a focus on addressing family needs and risks including a response to domestic abuse through the system

- Updating the Relationship, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum, to equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need to build positive relationships and to recognise abusive behaviour
- Strengthening the skills and capabilities of child and family social workers to identify and address domestic abuse through a new Social Work Induction programme
- Implementing a new duty for information sharing that provides a clear legal basis to share information for the purposes of safeguarding and promotion of welfare, including domestic abuse

The government looks forward to continuing to work closely with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and her team on this important work.

Devolution

Section 16 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a statutory duty on the UK Government to respond to a report from the Domestic Abuse Commissioner published under section 8 of the Act. This response is issued by the UK Government. The proposed changes would apply to England and reserved matters in Wales.

UK Government Response to Recommendations in the Report

Centring Children's Voices (Recommendations 1 to 7)

The government recognises the importance of children being able to express their thoughts and feelings and knowing they will be listened to. For this to happen, they need to have safe places to talk as well as experienced and capable professionals around them to listen and respond to them appropriately, so that they get the right support at the right time. This should happen at every part of their journey, from the moment a disclosure is made, throughout their interaction with safeguarding and support services and, in some circumstances, their engagement with the criminal justice system.

Recommendation 1: Fund the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office to pilot the creation of a national youth panel.

Youth panels and boards are an important way of ensuring that children's voices, priorities and concerns are heard at the highest level of government. For a youth panel or board to be successful, it needs to have a clear scope, purpose and plan. There also needs to be alignment and consistency with existing panels or boards to ensure that efforts are not being duplicated.

The Children and Young People's Advisory Board, operating as a partnership between the DfE and National Children's Bureau, includes members aged 11-25 who have experienced care. The board enables children and young people to have a voice in shaping the services that affect them directly by creating opportunities to contribute to policy development. The board discusses a wide range of topics from the Family First Partnership programme to the Children's Social Care proposals within the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. It also had an active role in the recently published [children and young people's version of the multi-agency statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children](#). DfE would welcome the Domestic Abuse Commissioner joining this board and running sessions focused on domestic abuse.

The government is committed to working with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and her team to ensure that matters of domestic abuse remain a key focus of the Missions-led government work, recognising the unique perspective of child victims, and would be happy to explore further options for collaboration with her and other sector partners. For example, the Changemakers, supported by domestic abuse charity SafeLives, have used their voice to make a difference by engaging directly with government officials and Ministers on important issues like the RSHE curriculum, children as victims in their own right, child to parent violence and teenage relationship abuse, setting out what young people want and need based on their perspective and lived experience.

Recommendation 2: Update statutory guidance to require Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews to include the authentic voice of the child victim.

The government recognises the value of involving children and young people's voices in statutory guidance. This is particularly important where there has been significant harm or death related to domestic abuse. The Home Office (HO) consulted on an updated version of the statutory guidance that underpins Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) in 2024. The responses received, including the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's submission, are currently being analysed to understand how best to include further information on the voices of children in DHRs. The new statutory guidance is expected to be published in the coming months.

Recommendation 3: Every member department of the proposed cross-Government working group must review and develop their response to children as victims, to reflect that children's voice is paramount in any interaction or policy development.

Cross-government working is vital to supporting child victims of domestic abuse. This means having a joined-up approach to protecting all children from harm and addressing the underlying causes. The upcoming VAWG strategy is an important step towards reaching this ambition. As part of this, the government will develop a robust governance structure to accompany the strategy, including a cross-government VAWG Ministerial Group co-chaired by the Home Office's Minister for Safeguarding and VAWG and the Ministry of Justice's Minister for Victims and VAWG and attended by ministers from at least 14 government departments. This group will oversee the implementation of the strategy and any subsequent updates.

The government will consider whether a working group is needed to deliver a strategy that is shaped by the experiences of victims and holds the whole of government accountable for its delivery. Given their expertise in this area, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office will be central to these discussions. Reflecting the child's voice will also be a key part of the new Keeping Children Safe Ministerial Board (see recommendation 8). In addition, HO will be conducting a review of the response, risk assessment and training for policing in relation to domestic abuse (see response to recommendations 21 and 59).

Recommendation 4: Develop a national framework for pre-interview preparation and needs assessment of all children and vulnerable witnesses.

It is important that children feel supported and heard when engaging with professionals, especially in their interaction with the police and criminal justice system. Government is supportive of the work being conducted by the National Vulnerable Witness Advisor to develop a Pre-Interview Planning and Assessment Framework. Though the development

and implementation of this framework is an operational matter for policing, the government will explore whether further work on identifying and disseminating pre-interview preparations and needs assessment best practice should form part of future activity for the National Centre for VAWG and Public Protection. This means engaging with the work of the National Vulnerable Witness Advisor to develop a Pre-Interview Planning and Assessment Framework and use the expertise of the Centre to assess how this might integrate into existing Authorised Professional Practice, training and guidance, including the Achieving Best Evidence guidance, in the future.

Needs assessments allow criminal justice agencies to identify how a victim may need to be supported to understand and engage in the criminal justice process. The government recognises the importance of meaningful and robust needs assessments with victims, to inform the delivery of criminal justice agencies' service to them. This can be integral to victims with existing vulnerabilities, such as children, receiving the service they deserve. The government will be consulting on a new Victims' Code in due course to ensure that it gets the foundations for victims right.

Recommendation 5: Develop a Victims' Code for children and accompanying statutory guidance.

During passage of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, stakeholders and parliamentarians spoke out about the importance of tailored provision for child victims. As a result, this Act introduced a requirement for the Secretary of State for Justice to consider the needs of child victims and those with protected characteristics when deciding whether different provision is needed for these groups in the Victims' Code. The Victims' Code and Achieving Best Evidence guidance already provide professionals with guidance on supporting children in criminal investigations. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) intends to consult on a new code in due course.

The government is also working to improve awareness of the Victims' Code more generally, as it recognises that this is key to victims being able to understand what they can expect from the system. In January, MoJ launched the 'Understand your Rights' public communications campaign and once the new Victims' Code is in force, it will implement the Act's Code Awareness Duty, placing a legal responsibility on criminal justice agencies to promote the Victims' Code to the public and victims of crime. It is important that this captures the needs of different users of the Victims' Code, including children and young people, which will be carefully considered as part of the plans to increase awareness.

Recommendation 6: Ensure children's voices are represented within annual reports on domestic abuse support services.

The government supports having children's voices represented in decisions on accommodation-based services for children and young people. Since 2021, tier one local authorities in England have a duty under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to

support victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation. Under these duties, local authorities are required to assess and address the need for support within safe accommodation for all victims of domestic abuse, including children.

The MHCLG has already published [statutory guidance](#) which emphasises the importance of a child-centred approach, and is clear that the needs of children, who are victims in their own right, must be considered in their needs assessment and strategy for the provision of support services. The statutory guidance states that local authorities must include a representative of children's interests on their domestic abuse Local Partnership Board. This legal requirement is designed to ensure children's voices and perspectives are integrated into the board's discussions and decisions, enabling more effective and responsive support systems that properly address their needs.

The statutory guidance emphasises the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children affected by domestic abuse by tailoring support to address the specific needs of children. Local authorities are also required to monitor and evaluate local delivery. This should be based on quantitative and qualitative data, including the outcomes for victims accessing support, to ensure the support made available adequately meets the level and nature of need within the area.

Recommendation 7: Strengthen Family Test Policy to specifically include children's experiences of domestic abuse.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has recently reviewed the Family Test. The Family Test brings a family perspective into policy making and helps to ensure the impacts on family relationships and functioning, both positive and negative, are recognised in the process of policy development. The Family Test therefore encourages policy makers to consider the impact of domestic abuse on families.

As a part of this review process, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office was consulted. DWP is grateful for the feedback received during this consultation and have considered it carefully when developing proposals to incorporate into a strengthened Family Test.

Stronger Cross Departmental Working and Strategic Leadership (Recommendations 8 to 24, 30, 52)

The government is fully committed to working together to protect and safeguard children, including those who have experienced domestic abuse. It recognises the importance of a joined-up, multi-agency and whole-system approach to keeping children safe. Local authorities and their safeguarding partners, as well as education as strategic partners, are expected to work together to respond effectively to domestic abuse. This includes equipping children, and those who support them in frontline practice, with a better understanding of their experiences of abuse and what that might look like. For many children, this also means having their voice heard and responded to at the highest level of government to help drive meaningful change.

Recommendation 8: Appoint a domestic abuse strategic lead role.

The government agrees with the importance of having a clear focus on children across government. Domestic abuse is an issue that spans the responsibilities of many departments and therefore tackling it must be a shared endeavour. It is a key part of the Secretaries of States' roles who oversee statutory safeguarding partners: the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), HO and DfE. The Secretary of State for Education is also the lead Cabinet Minister for child protection and safeguarding and the Minister for Women and Equalities. The government is therefore of the view that an additional strategic lead role at the Cabinet Office (CO) would not constitute the most effective way of achieving this outcome. The Minister for Safeguarding and VAWG, working alongside the Minister for Children and Families, will also be driving forward the important work across government on reducing violence against women and girls, including domestic abuse, and strengthening child protection and safeguarding.

Furthermore, a new Keeping Children Safe Ministerial board will drive and mainstream the strong collective cross-government focus on children's wellbeing, safety and opportunity. This will bring together ministers from the government departments with a key role on issues affecting children. The board will lead the delivery of the Keeping Children Safe pillar of the government's Opportunity Mission, breaking the link between young people's backgrounds and their success. It will also oversee the work to strengthen post inspection accountability following multi-agency child protection inspections and the establishment of a Child Protection Authority and national accountability. This approach will strengthen government's national grip on child protection and ensure close collaboration across government to keep children safe.

The government has committed to a Mission-led approach precisely because this allows for more joined-up, sustained action to tackle the country's most challenging problems. Tackling domestic abuse forms a key part of the government's Safer Streets Mission, while the Opportunity Mission is working to ensure that every child has a safe, loving home. Recognition of the importance of cross-cutting issues is fundamental to the Mission-led approach.

Recommendation 9: Annual progress report on the child victims of domestic abuse and agreed metrics to assess accountability. This work should be underpinned by the creation of an operational cross-Government working group working across the Home Office and Department for Education.

As part of the upcoming VAWG strategy, government will be looking at governance and accountability and how to bring in the voices of different stakeholders, including those of children. This will include the development of a regular reporting mechanism and agreed metrics to assess accountability, overseen by the VAWG Ministerial Group, which is responsible for the implementation of the delivery of the government's violence against women and girls ambition. This group is attended by at least 14 government departments including DfE. Progress of the strategy will be monitored against key outputs, outcomes and impacts as set out in the VAWG Theory of Change. This will complement the existing Children's Social Care Dashboard which presents an existing set of key metrics. It supports local authorities as they work towards the outcomes defined in the National Framework, including on Outcome 3: Children and young people are safe in and outside of their home.

As the Domestic Abuse Commissioner has pointed out, to meet the government's ambition to halve violence against women and girls in ten years, and ensure lasting change, action is needed from every part of government. The VAWG strategy has been developed through extensive cross-government engagement, and robust governance will be in place to ensure a joined-up and coordinated response. This includes the VAWG Ministerial Group.

Recommendation 10: Develop a Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) taskforce to build greater governance and coordination in RSE development.

Recommendation 14: Fund a practitioner network to enable better delivery of the Whole School Approach and RSE locally.

Recommendation 52: Ensure that, where external, specialist experts are not available to deliver quality RSE, that teachers (or other school staff) are funded to access high quality RSE training, as part of their core teacher training, as one part of the overall effort to professionalise RSE teaching.

The government has published its ambitious [new curriculum for RSHE](#) and recognises that teachers will need support to deliver this. DfE wants to help all teachers to deliver a curriculum that makes a real difference to young people's lives. Starting in early 2026, it will be piloting a package of support for teachers, including a grant which participating schools can use to buy high-quality training to meet their teachers' needs. To ensure high quality delivery, DfE will be working with a range of experts to develop and co-ordinate

the pilot and to help identify additional resources that would be most useful to support teachers. DfE has already committed to a full review of the training programme for early career teachers, to ensure it continues to provide the best possible support for all new teachers, including those who teach RSHE, based on the most up-to-date evidence.

In Further Education settings, from autumn 2025 staff are able to draw on a new RSE toolkit developed by DfE's Further Education Student Support Champion. The toolkit includes training advice and proven effective practice, including for coercive control and relationship violence, to equip college staff with the skills and confidence to deliver RSE effectively and address misogyny directly.

In addition, DfE will be launching a communications behaviour change campaign to support parents and caregivers to reinforce positive behaviour and respectful relationships taught at school.

Recommendation 11: Ensure that new statutory guidance accompanying the forthcoming Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill includes clear guidelines and definitions for frontline practice on what Section 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act means in practice.

The government plans to issue guidance once the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill comes into force. [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2023\)](#) is the multi-agency statutory guidance that sets expectations for the system, giving practitioners clarity about what is required and how they need to work in partnership to deliver effective services. The guidance is reviewed on a regular basis, and we plan to update it in 2026 including strengthening reference to domestic abuse. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill measures, when implemented, will also be reflected in future updates of Working Together to help strengthen the system response to domestic abuse. This will include changes being made to information sharing between agencies, multi-agency child protection teams and strengthening the role of education in safeguarding arrangements that will all help keep children safe.

In addition, DfE has recently published the [Families First Partnerships \(FFP\) programme guide](#). The programme guide has been produced to support safeguarding partners to implement Family Help and multi-agency child protection reforms and make greater use of Family Group Decision Making. The guide specifies that local authorities and partners should consider domestic abuse when designing their front door Family Help and child protection services, by for instance including specialist practitioners in those services. The programme's learning materials, including the 'How To' guides, provide practical examples of how Pathfinder areas have designed and delivered services that respond to domestic abuse (see recommendation 63). DfE will continue to share learning from evidence and best practice over the course of the programme. These reforms are an important step towards delivering the government's Opportunity Mission to break the link between background and future success, and will benefit all children, including those who experience domestic abuse.

A lack of shared language and understanding about the roles, responsibilities and duties of safeguarding partners can impact the response to child victims of domestic abuse. DfE and HO are interested in the linguistic framework on domestic abuse that the Domestic Abuse Commissioner recommends and would like to explore this further with her office. In addition, the DfE has commissioned an internal analysis of the 2024-2025 safeguarding partner yearly reports, which will include a focus on the theme of specific harms, including how partnerships reference these, details around instances and learning that has taken place in child protection and safeguarding services and practice.

Recommendation 12: Make implementing ‘Minimum expectations’ and the ‘Go further’ sections of the Family Hubs Service Expectations document in responding to domestic abuse mandatory.

Recommendation 30: Ensure that Family Hubs invest in specialist domestic abuse work.

These recommendations will be considered as part of plans to roll out Best Start Family Hubs from April 2026. DfE will engage key stakeholders, including the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office, on the development of future guidance for local authorities.

Recommendation 13: Embed a Whole School Approach to domestic abuse, accompanied by clear guidance and strategic investment.

The government recognises the value of a Whole School Approach where policies, processes and the culture of a school, college or other educational setting are aligned so that they are embedded in everything that the school does. This is particularly important in efforts to address holistic, societal issues, such as those in relation to safeguarding which should be considered in all aspects of school life. This is already set out in statutory guidance, [Keeping children safe in education \(2025\)](#). The guidance provides a robust framework to support schools and other educational settings on a range of harms, including domestic abuse, and makes clear the importance of a whole school approach in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The government will consider, through public consultation, whether this could be strengthened further in the next iteration of the guidance. This is echoed in the RSHE guidance which identifies this is best delivered as part of a whole school approach, and that the values and skills that children learn about in RSHE should be reflected throughout the school. The department will also consider what more can be done to help schools embed a whole school approach to address misogyny to support efforts to reduce domestic abuse.

These values, attitudes and skills are reinforced for 16 to 18-year-olds in Further Education through a whole school approach to personal development. Education in healthy relationships is at the core of each college's programme. Students participate in debates about respect, consent, coercive control and relationship violence and reflect on the risks and implications of negative behaviours, misogyny and gender inequality. In

autumn 2025, the DfE will publish the Relationships and Sex Education toolkit to support consistency and impact in this important area.

Recommendation 15: Commit to creating a clear, evidence-based, framework that sets out how to sequence and order RSE topics.

DfE has published updated guidance for RSHE which will support children and young people to develop social and emotional skills from early on in primary school, as well as supporting young people to recognise the signs of abusive behaviour. The aim is to support the prevention of all types of abuse and violence, by equipping children and young people with the tools to manage their own emotions and to understand what counts as abusive behaviour in all contexts. The new curriculum will support children and young people to become kind and respectful citizens as they grow into adults.

The new guidance for RSHE is clear about the importance of responsive, careful sequencing that builds knowledge and skills throughout a pupil's school life, and DfE has commissioned Oak National Academy to provide resources for schools to support with sequencing. The guidance and the materials from Oak National Academy will be available in the coming months. It is vital that teachers are adequately supported to deliver this important work, and DfE will be considering how best to support the high-quality teaching that is essential.

Recommendation 16: Develop updated RSE guidance.

In the updated RSHE guidance, the content has been strengthened in relation to domestic abuse as well as sexual harassment and sexual violence. The new guidance emphasises the importance of building skills from primary school onwards, including communication skills, expressing and understanding boundaries, handling disappointment, and paying attention to the needs and preferences of oneself and others. The new guidance gives greater emphasis to:

- communication and ethics within relationships and supporting young people to think about what healthy sexual relationships involve beyond consent, including kindness, attention and care;
- the real-life complexities of romantic and sexual relationships, including the significance of power, vulnerability and how to manage difficult emotions that can relate to relationships, such as disappointment or anger;
- the influence of online misogynistic content and the impact of pornography on sexual behaviour, including what some young people perceive as normal behaviour.

Recommendation 17: Ensure that the Youth Strategy includes content on how the Government will improve joint working between domestic abuse and youth organisations.

The government recognises the importance of joint working between agencies, including those supporting victims of domestic abuse and those supporting young people. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is currently co-producing the National Youth Strategy with young people and cross-sector experts and DCMS will share this recommendation with them. The strategy will set a new direction for young people and will aim to better coordinate youth services across a number of outcomes, including when it comes to preventing harm, and facilitating access to the right support.

Recommendation 18: Publish a 10-year strategy to implement a Public Health Approach to Domestic Abuse.

Recommendation 19: Ensure ICB's Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence leads give adequate attention to child victims in their own right and that a public health approach to domestic abuse is taken across their areas.

Recommendation 20: Mandate relevant health professionals to attend Domestic Abuse Partnership Boards and Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences.

The government recognises that health care settings are a vital part of the response to child victims of domestic abuse. To effectively address domestic abuse requires a strategic, coordinated approach involving a range of partnerships between statutory and voluntary organisations, as well as a range of government departments. The approach must be informed by data and evidence, be focused on prevention, and monitor and evaluate its interventions. Therefore, it is suggested that recommendation 18 will be best achieved through the upcoming VAWG strategy working across government departments in delivering a whole system response.

Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) are a statutory safeguarding partner alongside local authorities and the police and are jointly responsible for the safeguarding and wellbeing of children in their local areas. ICBs have a legal duty to plan and commission health services to meet their population's physical and mental health needs, including addressing the particular needs of abuse victims. The planning and commissioning of these legal duties must align with the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act's inclusion of children as victims of domestic abuse and the Act's accompanying statutory guidance, and relevant safeguarding provisions.

As members of an ICB's Executive Team, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV) leads support evidence-based approaches to commissioning DASV services, both internally and working with partners beyond the NHS. The national network of DASV

leads share good practice, identify issues and develop solutions to tackling DASV which includes child victims, in line with the Domestic Abuse Act.

NHS England holds ICBs accountable for meeting the requirements of the Safeguarding and Accountability Assurance Framework (SAAF). The SAAF outlines the principles and legal frameworks for how health professionals safeguard children. For children who are victims of domestic abuse, the SAAF reminds NHS commissioned services and ICBs (as system leaders for statutory safeguarding programmes) of their obligation to adhere to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, including appropriate attendance at Domestic Abuse Partnership Boards (DAPBs) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs).

Recommendation 21: Authorised Professional Practice Guidance to clarify children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right and the roles and responsibilities of police officers and forces.

The government's manifesto committed to improving the training that police officers receive on crimes related to violence against women and girls to ensure that all victims, including babies, children and young people, receive a consistent response from policing. Therefore, this year, HO have provided £2m additional funding to policing through the National Centre for VAWG and Public Protection to deliver a comprehensive programme of training development and reform in violence against women and girls and public protection crimes and across all levels of policing. This includes a commitment to review the existing Authorised Professional Practice for VAWG and Public Protection. As part of this, the centre will review and amend the guidance where required to meet this recommendation.

Recommendation 22: Carry out bi-annual joint thematic inspections of local areas focused on domestic abuse.

The inspectorates Ofsted, Care Quality Commission (CQC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP), are supportive of the report by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner in relation to child victims of domestic abuse. In September 2017, they published ['the multi-agency response to domestic abuse: prevent, protect and repair'](#). This was based on findings from the second Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) programme, examining the multi-agency response to children living with domestic abuse. The inspectorates have revisited the multi-agency response to domestic abuse multiple times, including in the 6 JTAs which commenced in autumn 2024.

The inspectorates were supported by stakeholders in the development of the scope and evaluation criteria for the thematic JTAs. They received support in the development of the methodology and training for inspectors through the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office. They are also currently receiving support from the Commissioner's team in terms of gathering the voice of victims in relation to their JTAI report. These inspections were completed in the summer of 2025, and the overall findings will be published in a thematic

report in January 2026. They will then organise a roundtable on domestic abuse to continue to support improvements in this critical area of practice.

JTAIs cover a wide range of themes of abuse, neglect and exploitation. The JTAI themes are decided through consultation with stakeholders about the areas of child protection practice that will add most value, both locally and nationally, and cover a range of harms. These are then reviewed in consultation with government departments and agreed by ministers. As such, the next themes have now been determined until the autumn of 2027. While inspectorates fully understand the rationale for the recommendation, this would limit the inspectorates' ability to return to other themes to measure sector progress and support improvement in child protection work and therefore limit the overall impact of the JTAI programme.

In addition, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published a paper on multi-agency safeguarding and domestic abuse. It sets out their findings from a thematic analysis of rapid reviews and local child safeguarding practice reviews where domestic abuse featured.

Responses to children who are victims of domestic abuse are included across a range of other inspection activity across the inspectorates. For example, in the 'front door' JTAs, inspectorates always evaluate the initial multi-agency response to the identification of initial need and risk, which includes the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse. In Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS), local authority recognition of and support and protection of children who are victims of domestic abuse will always be covered as part of the inspection. HMICFRS child protection inspections also have a focus on this issue. HMIP inspections assess how domestic abuse and child safeguarding are addressed in probation services. Recommendations for all of these are made to drive improvement and ensure victim's safety.

Recommendation 23: Broaden Ofsted inspection criteria to assess school's response to domestic abuse.

Ofsted inspectors already consider many of the areas which the report discusses as part of the inspection process. These areas include looking at how schools work to prevent sexual harassment, online sexual abuse, sexual violence through a Whole-School Approach that includes an effective behaviour policy with appropriate sanctions, pastoral support and a carefully planned RSHE curriculum that teaches about healthy relationships and consent.

Building on the Big Listen, where Ofsted heard from thousands of parents and carers, children and learners, and professionals working in education, skills and children's social care, it recently consulted on changes to the way it inspects schools. The renewed framework, for use from November 2025, includes a specific and separate evaluation of safeguarding. This continues to include all aspects outlined above as well as drawing on

relevant professional, statutory, and non-statutory guidance (for example 'Keeping children safe in education (2025)' and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)'). If any changes were made to relevant guidance because of this report, Ofsted would consider how to reflect these in this new evaluation area.

Recommendation 24: Capture local information about Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) curriculum and share findings with the Department for Education.

School inspections always include looking at a school's RSHE curriculum, and the findings are shared publicly through the inspection reports. This will reflect the latest update to the RSHE curriculum. DfE also has powers to require Ofsted to carry out a thematic study on any aspect and to report to it nationally.

Holistic Funding (Recommendations 25 to 35, 62)

The government is committed to tackling domestic abuse and delivering meaningful change for victims impacted by this horrendous crime. Where it is possible to act quickly, this government is already doing so but also recognises that more needs to be done to support victims, particularly children. The upcoming VAWG strategy, of which domestic abuse will be an important part, will be a key step towards achieving this goal. This will set out the actions that the government will take and, as with all the decisions this government makes, will need to be in line with our commitment to economic stability and sound public finances.

Recommendation 25: A statutory duty to fund community-based services to ensure that every child and adult victim of domestic abuse can access much needed support.

The government recognises that community-based services play an important role in supporting adult and child victims of domestic abuse. MoJ provides funding to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to commission local community-based services to support victims, based on an assessment of need, including services for children and young people. PCCs can utilise this funding, and any other additional funding they receive, for the services they deem are best placed in their area, and can co-commission or collaborate with other local agencies, including pooling funding where appropriate, on these services.

The Duty to Collaborate in the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, once commenced, will require local commissioners to have regard to the particular needs of child victims when producing their joint needs assessment and local strategy. This should result in the commissioning of specialist services for adult and child victims of domestic abuse if local commissioners decide these services are required to meet local need.

Recommendation 26: Update the guidance on commissioning services to support victims and survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls, to strengthen the content related to child victims of domestic abuse.

HO will consider this recommendation as part of the upcoming VAWG strategy with the aim that local areas ensure their response to violence against women and girls' issues is as collaborative, robust and effective as it can be so that all victims and survivors can get the help they need.

MoJ and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) jointly published the refreshed [Victim Services Commissioning Guidance](#) in December 2024, which specifically includes a section focused on commissioning support services for children and young people who are victims of crime, including domestic abuse. The section emphasises the importance of including the children's voice as part of service design,

ensuring wrap-around support exists and considering the different needs of children when compared to adults.

In May 2025, the Secretary of State for Justice also issued [statutory guidance on Independent Domestic Violence Advisers \(IDVAs\)](#) under the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024. The guidance includes a chapter on how IDVAs can support the needs of victims, this includes how IDVAs or Child IDVAs (CHIDVAs) can tailor their communication and work flexibility to meet the needs of children and young people. This chapter also covers how IDVAs/CHIDVAs can support children and young people by working with wider family or support networks.

Recommendation 27: Scope the development and availability of gender-specific and masculinity aware interventions for male child victims of domestic abuse.

As part of the upcoming VAWG strategy, HO and DfE will consider opportunities for interventions to prevent harm and support children, including boys, who have experienced domestic abuse.

HO has allocated £15.6 million between 2022-23 and 2024-25 through specialist support funding for children affected by domestic abuse. This financial year, the government uplifted the funding by over £1.2 million, providing a total of £5.3 million in 2025/26. This enables eight organisations across England and Wales to deliver specialist, community-based services to children affected by domestic abuse. These services are designed to support all children affected by domestic abuse, including boys.

This year, DfE has provided additional funding to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) Helpline to further strengthen their domestic abuse support offer which is available to all adults and children that they have concerns for. As part of this, NSPCC will be developing additional learning materials on domestic abuse, such as the increased risk of domestic abuse in pregnancy and the impact on young boys growing up in a home where there is domestic abuse. This will include a learning podcast focused on male victims, men as allies, and the broader issue of toxic masculinity. NSPCC will also be reviewing their Domestic Abuse Service and will consider the impact on young people's mental health where there is teenage relationship abuse.

Recommendation 28: Fund comprehensive provision of behaviour change interventions for perpetrators of domestic abuse.

HO continues to make funding available for financial year 2025-26 to PCCs to commission interventions locally for perpetrators of domestic abuse and stalking, recognising their vital importance to tackling domestic abuse and stalking. HO is also investing £53 million over four years to roll out the Drive Project to every PCC area in England and Wales. The funding will see up to 15 new areas going live by March 2026,

with a full roll out to England and Wales to follow. The Drive Project works with high risk, high harm, serial perpetrators of domestic abuse to prevent abusive behaviour and protect victim-survivors.

The upcoming VAWG strategy will set out commitments to deliver the government's ambition to halve violence against women and girls within a decade and will include a specific focus on perpetrators and reducing reoffending and repeat perpetration, alongside victim support.

Recommendation 29: Fund delivery of prevention programmes for children in schools by the specialist sector.

The government wants all schools to provide high-quality RSHE, delivered by well-trained and confident teachers. Delivery of these subjects can be enhanced by schools having a variety of different models for delivering RSHE and working with external organisations who can bring in specialist knowledge and different ways of engaging with young people. Where schools choose to use external provision, as with other curriculum subjects, this is a matter for school prioritisation from the school's core budget.

Recommendation 31: Ensure that the Victims and Prisoners Act allows local areas to select the best placed agency within the Duty to Collaborate to hold convening powers.

Recommendation 32: Ensure national oversight and accountability of the convening power role for the implementation of the Duty to Collaborate.

The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 does not specify who should convene the activity required under the Duty to Collaborate (the Duty), however, MoJ will consult on the draft statutory guidance for the Duty in due course.

Recommendation 33: Build flexibility in funding to allow local areas to use Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) funding as needed for domestic abuse services.

DWP is committed to supporting local authorities to tailor support to meet the needs of their communities. In recent years, the programme has taken steps to enable more flexibility in Reducing Parental Conflict grant funding by including the option to support children directly, where safe to do so, who are experiencing parental conflict; and supporting local authorities to upskill their workforce in identifying the differences between conflict and abuse, including working with specialist providers.

The government recognises the importance of addressing both parental conflict and domestic abuse, however, it acknowledges that these are complex and distinct challenges. The programme values greater local decision making and to support areas

deliver what is best for families. DWP will continue to work closely with partners to ensure funding supports the best outcomes for families and children.

Recommendation 34: Invest in embedding domestic abuse and other types of VAWG expertise and specialism into health settings - by funding provision of specialist domestic abuse services within health settings to support prevention activity and response work to child victims of domestic abuse.

Health has an important role to play in providing services for all victims of domestic abuse who have physical or mental health needs, and for identifying and referring victims on to specialist services. ICBs are the strategic commissioners of local health services responsible for improving their population's health and reducing health inequalities. They are expected to address the particular needs of victims of abuse, whether children or adults, collaborating with local partners as they develop their plans.

Recommendation 35: Ensure adequate provisions of counselling and therapeutic support for child victims of domestic abuse.

Recommendation 62: Increase Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) capacity to understand and respond to child victims of domestic abuse with mental health needs and ensure all Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service professionals have a solid understanding of domestic abuse.

Children and Young People Mental Health Services provide support for those who have experienced domestic abuse and have a clinical need. NHS community services for children take a trauma-informed, child-centred approach, utilising National Institute for Health and Care Excellence approved, evidence-supported interventions for helping children to cope and recover from trauma.

Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) in schools and colleges in England will be expanded to provide full coverage by 2029-30. DHSC will also fund pilots to provide additional training for MHST staff to offer compassionate, evidence-based care to children and young people who have experienced trauma.

For child victims of domestic abuse without mental health conditions, as the report recommends, therapeutic support and counselling services are best provided by Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise specialist community services.

Children who have suffered domestic abuse are one of many vulnerable groups of children whose multiple needs require integrated support from a number of services. The Duty to Collaborate in the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 will require local policing bodies, local authorities and ICBs to collaborate when commissioning support services for all victims of domestic abuse in England.

Data and Evidence (Recommendations 36 to 48)

The government acknowledges the importance of comprehensive data in highlighting the prevalence and extent of childhood exposure to abuse. Strengthening data on child victims of domestic abuse will enable government to have a better understanding of the scale of the issue facing children and in turn ensure that informed and consistent decisions are made about support services for children locally and nationally.

Recommendation 36: Roll out the Child Abuse Prevalence Survey, with specific questions on childhood exposure to and experience of domestic abuse.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is developing and testing a survey to measure the prevalence of child abuse, known as the Safety During Childhood Survey. There are plans to pilot both the schools' component of the survey (for children aged 12-16), and the online component of the survey (for young people age 16-25). Subject to appropriate funding being made available, ONS will then be able to run the live survey in 2026-27.

Recommendation 37: Continue to explore the development of questions about babies and children experiencing domestic abuse within the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

ONS previously surveyed respondents' perceptions of children witnessing domestic abuse as part of the 'Nature of Partner Abuse' follow-up module to the Crime Survey for England and Wales and recently completed a project to develop core domestic abuse questions. There are plans in place to review the 'Nature of Partner Abuse' follow-up module and consider how it will sit alongside the new domestic abuse questions. Questions about children witnessing domestic abuse will be reviewed as part of this piece of work.

Recommendation 38: Duty to Collaborate statutory guidance must be clear that partners include annual data on children subject to domestic abuse in Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs).

Recommendation 39: Duty to Collaborate statutory guidance must be clear that Joint Strategic Needs Assessments include data on child victims of domestic abuse not known to statutory services and the barriers they face in accessing support.

Recommendation 47: Include Early Help data in the requirements for Joint Strategic Needs Assessments under the Duty to Collaborate in the Victim and Prisoners Act. This should include the number of

children subject to domestic abuse referred into, and accessing, Early Help services.

The Duty to Collaborate, once commenced, will require duty holders to give regard to the particular needs of child victims, including victims of domestic abuse, when preparing their joint strategy, informed by joint needs assessments.

The statutory guidance will set out clearly and comprehensively how the Duty should be discharged. MoJ will consult on the statutory guidance in due course.

Recommendation 40: Amend the Child in Need categories to ensure that children who are victims of domestic abuse are categorised as so, and not just as experiencing 'neglect', to understand the prevalence of child victims and to ensure that their needs are properly identified.

DfE is committed to understanding the prevalence of harm to children who are subject to Children's Social Care involvement. As part of this, it agrees that there is a need to strengthen the Child in Need data on children who are victims of domestic abuse. DfE has started working with stakeholders to clarify and improve Child in Need data collection and categorisation, and strengthen relevant guidance if needed, so that it can better understand the prevalence of domestic abuse nationally. DfE will consult with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office on this work.

Recommendation 41: Commit to analysing outcomes for children and young people on a Child in Need plan, to understand the impacts the plans are making by area and reasons for case closure.

As part of the Family Help reforms, DfE is asking local authorities to implement a Single Family Help plan, which will stay with families as their needs or circumstances change and they move through the system. The plan will be developed in collaboration with the family and clearly outline key milestones and the support and services to be delivered, including the range of agencies which will work with the family. The plan should be accessed and jointly managed by all agencies involved with the family.

DfE already collects data on 'factors identified at assessment' which includes domestic abuse categories. Data is also collected on reasons for case closures and for 'all episodes with assessment factor information' which helps to paint a picture of outcomes for children and young people.

DfE also publishes analysis on [outcomes for children in need annually](#), which includes educational attainment, absence, suspensions and exclusions as well as Free School Meal eligibility and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities breakdowns for all children's social care groups.

Recommendation 42: Conduct a rapid evidence review of the experience of children bereaved by domestic abuse, including a review of the statutory and voluntary sector provision available to them.

Deaths that take place following domestic abuse leave a devastating impact on families and children. Every death linked to domestic abuse that meets the criteria should be considered for a Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) to ensure that national and local agencies, local communities, and society as a whole learn from domestic abuse related deaths and treat every death as preventable.

HO funds the organisation Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse (AAFDA) to provide direct support to families bereaved by domestic homicides, suicides, and unexplained deaths that have taken place following domestic abuse. AAFDA's specialist children's advocates support children to understand the purpose and process of DHRs and explain how they will be supported to have their voices heard. HO has increased funding to AAFDA to £450,000 in 2025/26 to reflect the increased demand for their services.

In addition, the MoJ commissioned National Homicide Service supports families, including children and young people bereaved by homicide, and delivers a consistent level of support across England and Wales. It is a caseworker-led service which offers emotional, practical, specialist, advocacy and peer support. The service is free of charge to users, can be accessed regardless of when the homicide occurred, and supports users through processes such as DHRs.

Furthermore, children bereaved by domestic abuse may also be affected by the imprisonment of their remaining parent/primary carer. Parental imprisonment is recognised as an adverse childhood experience and increases the risk of mental and physical health issues, financial difficulties, substance misuse, low educational attainment and unemployment in adult life. At present, DfE and MoJ are working to deliver the government's manifesto commitment on children affected by parental imprisonment to ensure that this cohort of children are identified and receive swift, appropriate support.

Children bereaved by domestic abuse will continue to be considered in the government's approach to tackling violence against women and girls.

Recommendation 43: Roll out a phased approach (to evaluating community-based services for children) that enables capacity building, creating a shared understanding across the sector that prioritises embedding the views and needs of children, domestic abuse specialist expertise, and then evaluating interventions when they are ready.

The government recognises the importance of purposeful, effective and evidence-based community-based services for children and their families. As part of ongoing monitoring and evaluation work, MoJ is looking at how to improve evidence on the effectiveness of

victim support interventions. Subject to funding, DfE will also be considering how to strengthen research to address key evidence gaps including effective support for children, young people, and families who are subject to domestic abuse. Departments are already in discussion about the implementation of these strands of work to ensure effective join-up on any future evaluations.

The government acknowledges that it is important to learn from a wide range of sectors about the barriers and enablers to evaluating domestic abuse-related child and family focused interventions. There has already been significant learning gathered from the ongoing and existing evaluation of specialist support services for children affected by domestic abuse funded by the Home Office. Foundations - the What Works Centre for Children & Families, is also continuing to develop an understanding about how to evaluate domestic abuse services through their programme of evaluation, funded by DfE and the Evaluation Taskforce. This includes [recently published work](#) which has identified a tool to measure two of the outcomes (family relationships and feelings of safety) within the common outcomes set developed by University College London. This work has also found that the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, a tool designed to assess mental wellbeing, can be used for children who have experienced domestic abuse. These studies are building an understanding about how to evaluate domestic abuse services and develop causal evidence about what works to improve child outcomes. This learning will inform any future evaluation work funded by the government.

Recommendation 44: Strengthen data collected on child victims of domestic abuse residing in safe accommodation. This should include outcomes for children and families, the ages of children, reasons why children cannot be supported, and the type of child-specific support service accessed in the accommodation.

Under the Part 4 duty of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, tier one local authorities in England must report to MHCLG on a yearly basis detailing how they have delivered their duties to support victims of domestic abuse, including children, residing in safe accommodation.

MHCLG is continuously working with local authorities to improve the annual data collection processes to enhance insights into the needs of all victims, and propose to work in partnership with local authorities to examine how they assess local demand for, and make decisions about, the provision of children's specialist support services as part of their assessment of local need. This will also explore improvements in how local authorities can collect and use data to support better outcomes.

In addition, MHCLG is commissioning an independent research project to identify the most effective methods for measuring outcomes from support provided in safe accommodation, for both adults and children. This research will build on findings from the recent [independent evaluation](#) on the duty under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021,

which highlighted inconsistencies in whether and how children's outcomes are currently measured.

MHCLG publishes the monitoring data submitted by local authorities on an annual basis. Data for 2023/24 is available here: [Support in domestic abuse safe accommodation: 2023 to 2024](#).

Recommendation 45: Conduct a review of the Safe Accommodation Duty and the response to children and young people subject to domestic abuse, including the type of child-specific support offered in safe accommodation, how that support can be extended, the reasons why children are turned away, as well as, specifically, the experience of teenage boys accessing support.

MHCLG commissioned Ipsos and their partners Ecorys to evaluate the effectiveness of the Safe Accommodation Duty, and has published the [evaluation report](#).

The evaluation included an assessment of the types of support offered to children residing in safe accommodation, and the extent to which support within safe accommodation was meeting the needs of children. It included interviews with victim-survivors of domestic abuse and their children, service providers, and local authorities from 19 local authority case study areas. These were conducted following a trauma-informed approach.

The evaluation found that the Domestic Abuse Act recognition of children as victims in their own right has improved visibility of children in commissioning. This has led to an overall increase in support for children in safe accommodation, with children increasingly counted separately from their parents. However, provision remains uneven as most, but not all, areas enhanced their support offer and long-term outcome tracking remains more limited for children.

Findings from the evaluation will be carefully considered, including recommendations to better support children and young people seeking refuge from domestic abuse in safe accommodation.

Recommendation 46: Ensure that adult and child victims and survivors who are living in temporary accommodation are included in the Safe Accommodation Duty data, concerning families who were unable to be supported in safe accommodation to ensure an accurate measure of the scale of the problem. At present, these families are not included in the data, representing a significant undercount.

Homelessness statistics indicate that domestic abuse is the most common reason for households with children being owed a relief duty, and captures the numbers placed in temporary accommodation by tier two local authorities for this reason.

MHCLG's safe accommodation annual monitoring return aims to monitor tier one local authorities' delivery of the Part 4 Duty, including the outputs delivered and limits of dedicated funding for implementing the Part 4 duty provided by the department. If those placed in temporary accommodation were to be included, the focus on how tier one local authorities deliver Part 4 would be lost.

However, the importance of better understanding how and why temporary accommodation is being used to support domestic abuse victims and survivors, and how this affects the access to, and effectiveness of support, is recognised. MHCLG has commissioned a process evaluation to explore how homelessness and rough sleeping, and related domestic abuse duties are being implemented in practice which is due to report in summer 2026. This will include how and why temporary accommodation is being used to support domestic abuse victim-survivors, including children, and how this affects access and effectiveness of the support.

Recommendation 48: Commission research that undertakes a systematic review of domestic abuse cases in public law proceedings. This research should mirror the Harm Report and consist of a literature review, consultation and published findings.

MoJ will consider the best approach to understanding the experience of domestic abuse victims in public law proceedings and how these cases are handled.

Specialist Training for Every Frontline Professional who may Work with Babies, Children and Young People (Recommendations 49 to 53)

It is important that those who work with babies, children and young people are able to identify and respond appropriately to all forms of domestic abuse, including coercive and controlling behaviour. As highlighted in the Commissioner's report, all those who play a vital role in multi-agency safeguarding, including social work, health, police and education, will want to consider how their training and guidance includes domestic abuse.

Recommendation 49: Fund the development and delivery of comprehensive and specialist training for every frontline professional who may work with babies, children and young people, including identifying domestic abuse and responding safely through a tiered, building block approach.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) is clear that all practitioners working with children and families should receive appropriate training so that they understand their role in identifying emerging problems. This should cover all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, including domestic and sexual abuse. Working Together is also clear that this should include multi-agency and multi-disciplinary training to support a collective understanding of the demographics and needs of the local community, the local practice framework, and the services available to support children.

The government wants to ensure that training delivered to practitioners is based on robust evidence before committing to a national rollout and intends to support the evaluations of promising training programmes (e.g. Safe & Together) to build the evidence on what works.

The responses to recommendations 50, 51 and 53 set out the actions DfE and Social Work England are taking to embed awareness of domestic abuse, including controlling and coercive behaviour, in social worker training programmes. DfE is also investing in strengthening the skills and capabilities of child and family social workers to enable them to recognise violence and abuse earlier and provide timely support to prevent future harm.

Through the National Centre for VAWG and Public Protection within policing, the HO will work to explore how the curriculum for frontline officers can improve the response to children affected by domestic abuse to ensure that all children receive a consistent policing response and are recognised as victims in their own right.

The youth workforce and trusted adults play an important role in preventing harm to young people. Funding from DCMS will support the National Youth Agency to develop online resources and practical guidance over 2025 and 2026, which will support youth

workers in becoming more able to recognise and tackle harmful behaviour. DCMS will also encourage access to relevant training for both paid and volunteer youth workers.

The government is also researching a new Multi-Agency Executive Leadership Programme for safeguarding partners to strengthen their roles in safeguarding across England. It will explore the learning and support offer for senior leaders in children's social care, health, and policing with the consistent skills and shared values needed to lead collaboratively in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The programme will be co-designed with academic experts and those with lived experience.

Recommendation 50: Commit to a rigorous inspection of social work degrees and the domestic abuse content in degree programmes and ensures that those delivering the curriculum are themselves trained in domestic abuse. The inspection criteria should be developed in close collaboration with the specialist domestic abuse sector and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner.

Social Work England has completed assurance of all providers of initial social work education in England in line with the Education and Training Standards and expects to publish findings in 2025. Social Work England expects to bring a set of Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours, against which providers should prepare students, into regulation in 2027. These statements are expected to require providers to ensure students can understand the signs of domestic abuse. The content of initial social work education is primarily determined by Higher Education Institutions, which are autonomous, aligned to standards set by Social Work England, the Office for Students, the Quality Assurance Agency, Skills England and Ofsted. The Social Work England Education and Training Standards require an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff, with relevant specialist subject knowledge and expertise, to deliver effective courses.

Recommendation 51: Review the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviour standards through a domestic-abuse informed lens to ensure that course providers understand what must be done to achieve the standards.

The Knowledge, Skills and Behaviour statements were published by Social Work England this year following a rigorous, multi-agency approach, with consideration given to existing curricula and frameworks, as well as the requirements expected of social workers on completion of their qualifying course, to ensure they are equipped to meet the professional standards.

Recommendation 53: Mandate specific curriculum and assessment criteria about domestic abuse, including coercive and controlling

behaviour, through the 2025 Early Careers Framework and develop practice directions to accompany this.

Domestic abuse, including coercive and controlling behaviour, features prominently in the new Post-Qualifying Standards (PQS) for social workers which the government has recently consulted on. An expert writing group is now reviewing the comments that were received on the PQS. There were comments relating to domestic abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour and the group will look again at the PQS to consider whether there is more that can be said in the standards on this. DfE plans to publish the updated PQS in the autumn.

DfE is looking to implement a new 2-year induction programme for new social workers to bring the PQS to life. As part of that, a supplier will be recruited to develop high-quality materials that unpack the knowledge, skills, theories and tools that are contained within the PQS. Domestic abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour will be part of this, and it is likely that, given its importance, it will be one of a small set of topics that local authorities will be expected to cover as part of an initial foundation period when new social workers take up their role. These materials could cover the content outlined in the ‘tailored for professionals’ training set out in the Domestic Abuse Commissioner’s report.

The assessment is against the 26 outcomes of the PQS and, while the domains of the PQS are thematic and follow the arc of social work (communication, planning, assessing, intervening), the evidence that new social workers gather will be about their work with families and will include addressing harms, including domestic abuse.

In addition, an advanced professional standard in Child Protection is being explored, and domestic abuse expertise will be drawn on as this is taken forward. As part of all this work on social work training, DfE will be working with stakeholders on what this will look like, including the Domestic Abuse Commissioner.

Safeguarding (Recommendations 54 to 61)

The government is committed to protecting children from harm and ensuring that there is a strong and robust system in place to safeguard all children. It is of critical importance that children living in households affected by domestic abuse receive timely, effective, and coordinated support. Practitioners working with children and families must be empowered to find, receive, and share relevant information to assess risks and safeguard children effectively.

The Children's Wellbeing and School's Bill will introduce a raft of measures to protect vulnerable children, including:

- an enhanced role for education and childcare settings in multi-agency safeguarding, recognising their crucial role in spotting signs of abuse and neglect;
- the establishment of multi-agency child protection teams which bring together social work, health, police and education, to ensure decisive action is taken to protect and support children where there is actual or likely significant harm. These teams will work with specialist agencies such as domestic abuse services to remove barriers to providing targeted, timely and accurate support for families;
- introducing an information sharing duty that provides a clear legal basis to share information for the purposes of safeguarding and promotion of welfare, and provision to enable the specification of a consistent identifier (also known as 'Single Unique Identifier' (SUI));
- requirements for local authorities to give consent before parents can withdraw their child from school to home educate if their child is subject to a Section 47 enquiry, on a Child Protection Plan and / or in a special school arranged by the local authority;
- strengthening the school attendance order process so that local authorities can serve a preliminary notice on parents whose children are subject to Section 47 enquiries or on a child protection plan and where it would be in their best interest to get them back in to school.

The information sharing duty seeks to end misconceptions around legal barriers to information sharing. A new statutory duty will clarify and reinforce the circumstances under which information must be shared to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Statutory guidance issued as part of this duty will support practitioners in discharging their duty, including consideration of other factors such as domestic abuse.

This Bill will also lay the legislative foundation for the future introduction of a SUI — referred to in legislation as a "Consistent Identifier." This provision will enable regulations to specify the identifier and the organisations required to use it at a later date. Alongside this, the government is piloting the use of the NHS number as the SUI to understand if this improves identity management and data linking across services.

These legislative changes are part of a broader programme of work aimed at strengthening multi-agency information sharing, reforming Family Help and child protection systems and ultimately protecting children. The government's goal is to ensure

that all professionals working to safeguard children can access and act on relevant information, identify needs early, and provide the right support at the right time.

Recommendation 54: Make education settings the fourth statutory safeguarding partner through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

The government acknowledges that the role of education needs to be strengthened in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including improved integration with the existing safeguarding partners. That is why through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, the government will place a duty on safeguarding partners to fully include and represent education at all levels of their multi-agency arrangements. This is a crucial step in ensuring consistency nationally for how education is involved in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and will ensure that opportunities to keep children safe are not missed and will give educational settings a clear role in safeguarding locally.

Recommendation 55: Publish guidance setting out the expected response that child victims of domestic abuse will receive as part of the new Child Protection and Family Help offer.

The Family First Partnership (FFP) programme guide (published March 2025) states the support and services that families receive will look different depending on specific circumstances, but it should always be underpinned by a whole-family approach, where multi-disciplinary professionals wrap support around the family to address challenges at the earliest opportunity.

The FFP programme guide recognises it will be important for multi-agency child protection teams to be equipped to identify, understand and respond effectively to all harm types, inside and outside of the home and online, including domestic abuse. Children can also experience more than one type of harm, and it will be important for those teams to recognise this when helping and protecting children.

The FFP programme guide is underpinned by the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), which states the purpose of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is to ensure that, at a local level, organisations and agencies are clear about how they will work together to safeguard children and promote their welfare. This includes “when a child is identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm there is a prompt, appropriate and effective response to ensure the protection and support of the child.”

Recommendation 56: Fund the introduction of Education Domestic Abuse Advisor roles as part of the Local Safeguarding Children

Partnership who can provide training and guidance to schools and share best practice across local areas.

Whether to fund the introduction of an Education Domestic Abuse Advisor role would be a local decision by the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership, based on local need.

Strengthening the role of education in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, as set out in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, will enable the voice of education to influence safeguarding partner decisions, reflecting the key role they take in keeping children safe. DfE has appointed three national facilitators to provide multi-agency support and advice to local areas alongside national policing and health facilitators to support the implementation of these reforms.

Recommendation 57: Introduce dedicated safeguarding provision in every school. Department for Education should fund a two-year pilot of 'Dedicated Safeguarding Leads' whose role is solely safeguarding (across all harm types) and family liaison and support work within schools and building effective partnerships.

Every school and college governing body, or proprietor is already required to appoint an appropriate member of their school leadership team to the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead. It is a matter for each school or college, as to whether they choose to have one or more Designated Safeguarding Leads and/or Deputies, depending on their size and safeguarding context. Guidance on their specific duties is set out in full in Annex C of Keeping children safe in education (2025) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023).

Recommendation 58: Consider plans to amend the homelessness legislation to change the definition of temporary accommodation, for households found to be in priority need because they are deemed to be homeless as a result of domestic abuse, to mirror the definition of safe accommodation as per the Domestic Abuse Act (2021).

Temporary accommodation should be suitable for the needs of those who are placed in it, including children. The government acknowledges that bed and breakfasts should not be used for families, regardless of the cause of homelessness and is committed to ending this practice.

Chapter 21 of the [homelessness code of guidance](#) currently contains guidance on providing homelessness services to people who have experienced, or are experiencing, domestic violence or abuse. This includes guidance on the suitability of accommodation, including providing refuge accommodation where appropriate.

There are, however, scenarios where someone who is a victim of domestic abuse may not require safe accommodation, including when individuals have been in safe

accommodation and are ready to move on. Therefore, making this a requirement on local authorities in all situations would not be appropriate.

MHCLG will explore opportunities to update the guidance to ensure local housing authorities are clear on the interaction between homelessness legislation and the duties on tier one authorities to provide support in safe accommodation, including clarifying that a homelessness temporary accommodation duty can be fulfilled by providing safe accommodation where that meets the need of the applicant and their household.

Recommendation 59: Conduct a review of full risk identification tools and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) through a whole-systems lens, including the extent to which the needs and risk to child victims are considered and have a voice in decisions that affect them. This must extend to research into, and the development of, child-specific tools and guidance to assess both risk and need alongside each other, with age-appropriate variations to cover all babies, children and young people.

Effectively managing the risk posed to victims of violence against women and girls is an essential element of the government's approach. A joined up, multi-agency response to identifying, assessing and managing risk and the needs of victims, including babies, children and young people affected by domestic abuse, is vital to effectively support victims of violence against women and girls to reduce the risk of further harm. That is why HO is working with the National Centre for Violence Against Women and Girls and Public Protection (NCVPP) to review how risk related to victims of violence against women and girls is identified and assessed across policing to identify areas for improvement. This will include consideration of how police identify risk in relation to children affected by domestic abuse.

HO is also working closely with policing partners as they scope the issues and challenges throughout the system. HO has funded SafeLives to improve the multi-agency approach to all levels of risk and domestic abuse for adults, including during pregnancy, and for babies, children and young people. SafeLives will collect and analyse national data to underpin effective interventions. HO is developing guidance on the multi-agency response to domestic abuse, to be published by the end of 2025, which will be aimed at all relevant agencies including police, health, education, and social services. SafeLives has conducted extensive engagement with stakeholders and experts to gather insights and evidence, which will underpin the guidance.

Recommendation 60: Place a duty on education settings to act on Operation Encompass notifications and put in place support for the child that best suits their needs and takes their views into account.

This support should include a referral to a specialist domestic abuse service, additional support in school and be backed by guidance.

Keeping children safe in education (2025) statutory guidance is clear that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children, including those who are victims of domestic abuse, is everyone's responsibility. It acknowledges that school and college staff play a particularly important role as they are positioned to identify concerns early, provide help for children, promote children's welfare and prevent concerns from escalating. All staff working in educational settings should understand the processes to follow when they are informed about children who are victims of any form of abuse or exploitation, whether through Operation Encompass notifications or otherwise, including making referrals to other services in the best interests of the child whenever appropriate. The government is therefore of the view that a separate duty is not necessary. Ahead of commencement of the duty on police forces to issue Operation Encompass notifications to educational settings, HO and DfE are working closely together to provide additional support to educational settings on their safeguarding role.

Recommendation 61: Expand the statutory duty for Operation Encompass notifications to early years provision.

HO has commissioned a process evaluation of Operation Encompass. The aims of this evaluation were to understand how the scheme has been implemented, the feasibility of extending to early year settings and expanding the scheme to additional harm types. HO is working through the findings before mandating a specific model across England and Wales.

The ability to expand into early years settings has been built into the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 so that the legislative route exists for doing so if/when it is appropriate. The government is carrying out work on the feasibility of expanding Operation Encompass to early years settings.

Ensure Practice is Informed by Specialists (Recommendations 63 to 66)

The government acknowledges the crucial role that the specialist domestic abuse sector plays in supporting babies, children and young people who are victims of domestic abuse. This means that those with the right expertise can provide the necessary support to meet children's needs in a timely way.

Recommendation 63: Implement learning into the new Child Protection and Family Help offer, including models that partner with the non-abusive parent and hold the perpetrator to account, such as Safe & Together.

Family Help and multi-agency child protection reforms are being rolled out as part of the FFP programme, which began national rollout in April 2025. As the system embarks on these reforms, sharing learning and good practice across local partnerships will be key. This will include drawing on the experiences of the 10 Families First for Children pathfinder local partnerships, three of whom have been designing and testing these system reforms since July 2023.

The FFP programme guide (published March 2025) is clear in its expectations that local partnerships should draw on interventions that have the strongest evidence base as part of its delivery of these reforms. There are also strong expectations of co-design activity to have the voices of children, young people and families at the heart of new service design.

The FFP programme will take forward learning from the 10 pathfinder local areas, along with best practice and evidence from across children's social care, including Foundations and other specialist organisations. To support delivery, the DfE is publishing a set of 'How to' guides, providing examples and support on how to design and implement reforms, alongside webinars and other publications. This includes a specific 'How to' guide on 'responding to cohorts and harms', which incorporates examples of good practice in how pathfinders have responded to domestic abuse within families. These resources are being hosted on a national digital platform run by [the Local Government Association's \(LGA\) Knowledge Hub](#) to enable local partners to access learning and resources. The programme will also place sector-led support at the core of its offer, using existing regional and direct support for areas to discuss and work through opportunities and challenges posed by the reforms.

Recommendation 64: Fund co-located independent specialist domestic abuse services in the new Family Help and Child Protection Teams.

Recommendation 65: Fund the co-location of domestic abuse specialist services in children's social care.

Family Help and multi-agency child protection teams are being rolled out as part of the national FFP programme from April 2025.

The programme is backed by £541m of funding in 2025-26, including an additional £18m announced in August, to support local authorities to invest in transformation and expansion of preventative support. This will build on the extensive existing spend from local authority, partner and other agency budgets on preventative services.

As part of the Spending Review in June 2025, it was announced that the £523 million initially invested in 2025-26 for rollout of the FFP programme will continue each year until 2028-29. This will deliver the commitments within the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, deliver the Kinship Financial Allowance Pilot, and will improve help and protection for children and families across the country. This will be increased by at least £300m over the next two years, as part of the £555m investment in Children's Social Care confirmed by the government for 2026-27 and 2027-28.

The FFP programme guide recommends that local partnerships should carry out an area-based population needs assessment to determine the different agencies, services and practitioners that should be part of their multi-disciplinary teams. This is to ensure they understand the needs, characteristics, challenges and opportunities within their communities to ensure the right services, workforce and partners are in place as part of their reforms. For many of the partnerships, there will be data and evidence to support the need for specialist domestic abuse services in Family Help and multi-agency child protection teams. Both are increasingly being structured to include specialist practitioners who bring targeted expertise into these multidisciplinary, community-facing settings.

The pathfinders are embedding roles such as Domestic Abuse Practitioners into their locality-based teams, reflecting a wider shift across the programme toward building integrated, proactive and responsive local systems. The pathfinders have also been testing how they respond effectively to different types of harms, such as domestic abuse, which requires local systems to move beyond a "one size fits all" approach. Pathfinders are developing tailored pathways within their Family Help and protection offers, so that children and families can access the right kind of support for the risks they face. Some specific examples include:

- Lewisham domestic abuse teams/services are fully embedded in Family Help multi-disciplinary teams and are a key part of the support offer.

- Dorset adult practitioners specialising in domestic abuse are embedded within locality teams - and both victim and perpetrator workers operate at the local level, providing comprehensive support.
- Redbridge are recruiting a Domestic Abuse Intervention Specialist - the postholder will carry out initial screening, complete safety planning, and provide ongoing emotional and practical support to victims and survivors.
- Warwickshire are recruiting several Domestic Abuse Practitioners to be part of Family Help teams.
- Wirral deliver domestic abuse training for practitioners as part of multi-agency staff training offer.

Recommendation 66: Ensure that all multi-agency child protection teams are fully domestic abuse informed through robust guidance, strategic leadership and the funding of support services to provide clear referral pathways to independent specialist services.

The precise membership of multi-agency child protection teams, beyond the minimum members – social worker, police officer, healthcare professional and person with education experience – should be aligned with local demographics, needs, and patterns of harm including where harm comes from outside the home or online. The local authority will have the flexibility, dependent on local requirements, to add other individuals and agencies to the multi-agency child protection teams as it considers appropriate, after consulting with other safeguarding partners. It is expected there will be domestic abuse expertise present in a number of local areas.

Conclusion

The government would like to thank the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and her team for their work in producing this report, and most importantly to recognise those victims who ensured their voices were heard in informing the report's recommendations. This government response seeks to demonstrate its continued commitment to tackling the root causes of domestic abuse and supporting child victims.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, Families First Partnership programme and the upcoming VAWG strategy highlight that prioritising prevention, strengthening multi-agency working, and protecting and supporting children at risk of abuse are a priority for this government.

The significant investment in reforms to Family Help and multi-agency child protection services will bring about the biggest overhaul to Children's Social Care in a generation. With funding available to local areas up until 2028-29, it aims to strengthen the whole safeguarding system so that more children get the right support at the right time, including victims of domestic abuse.

Cross-government work to deliver local services that are responsive to children and families' needs must have the horrendous ordeal of domestic abuse in mind. This needs to be a common thread and inform data collections and statutory guidance; workforce training and development; strengthening of multi-agency information-sharing; and identification and spreading of best practice. Prevention is of course essential, which is why the role of RSHE is so central to this government response.

Every child deserves the best start in life. Being safe inside their own home should be something all children can take for granted.

Like the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and her team, this government is committed to ensuring that children and young people get the support they need whatever the circumstances and wherever they live. The government looks forward to continuing to work with her to deliver for all young victims of domestic abuse.



HM Government

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