



Domestic Abuse Factsheet

What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is a serious crime affecting the lives of many people living within County Durham; the impact of which cuts across all ages, and all social, geographical and cultural groups. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as:

Behaviour of a person ('A') towards another person ('B') is "domestic abuse" if—

- (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
- (b) the behaviour is abusive.

Behaviour is '**abusive**' if it consists of any of the following:

- (a) physical or sexual abuse
- (b) violent or threatening behaviour
- (c) controlling or coercive behaviour
- (d) economic abuse (see subsection (4))
- (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

'Economic abuse' means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B's ability to:

- (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
- (b) obtain goods or services

Although the above definition relates only to those aged 16 and over, it is recognised that domestic abuse has a significant impact on children and young people. Living with domestic abuse can seriously affect children's healthy development, relationships, behaviour and emotional well-being. Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 any reference in this Act to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who:

- (a) sees or hears, or experiences the effect of, the abuse, and
- (b) is related to A or B.

A child is related to a person for the purposes of subsection (2) if:

- (a) the person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child, or
- (b) the child and the person are relatives.

What is the issue?

Domestic abuse and sexual violence are hidden crimes that are significantly unreported. Most victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence are women and girls, but men and boys can also be victims.

Why is it important?

This violence and abuse have a major and long-lasting impact on victims, witnesses, children and young people, whole families and the wider community.

Durham Constabulary expects to see an increase in demand from domestic abuse incidents as more improvements are made in identifying victims and increasing confidence amongst victims to report abuse.

How does it impact people?

The harm of domestic abuse to the victim is substantial and is often linked to complicating factors such as alcohol, drugs and mental health.

Children are affected by witnessing Domestic Abuse in their households. Actions focus on the long-term impact and risks associated with children and young people who are affected by domestic abuse and information sharing processes across agencies.

County Durham context

- 12,362 domestic incidents were reported in County Durham during April – end February 2020/21. The end of year projection is 13,715.
- Of these, 9,700 were recorded as domestic related crimes.
- In the previous year (2019/20) 11,000 domestic abuse related crimes recorded in County Durham which is equivalent to 21 crimes for every 1,000 people.
- Durham Constabulary expects an increase in demand from domestic abuse with a projected 16.8% increase from 18,093 incidents at the end of 2019/20, to 21,134 incidents at the end of 2024/25.
- For the period April 2020 – end February 2021 the main aggravating factors were: alcohol in 43.1% of incidents (increase of 3.7% to same period 2019/20); mental health in 17.2% of incidents (decrease of 0.6% to same period 2019/20); and drugs in 4.6% of incidents (increase of 1.3% to same period 2019/20). *(Please note these figures are for the whole Durham Constabulary area which includes Darlington.)*

Key Insights:

(Data for County Durham Jan 2020 – Dec 2020)

- Stalking, harassment and malicious communications accounts for 29.4% of all recorded domestic related crime.
- Violence without injury accounts for 26.5% of all recorded domestic related crime.
- Violence with injury accounts for 15% of all recorded domestic related crime.
- Criminal damage and arson accounts for 11.3% of all recorded domestic related crime.

Office for National Statistics (ONS):

(Data refers to the Durham Constabulary area for 2019/20)

- ONS Data ranks Durham Constabulary 3rd nationally for overall volume of domestic abuse incidents.
- ONS Data identifies that 18% of crime was domestic abuse related. The same as 2018/19. The national figure for 2019/20 is 15%.
- Durham Constabulary ranks 7th nationally for the percentage of all crimes that were domestic abuse related.
- ONS Data identifies that the rate of all recorded domestic abuse related crime is 22 per 1000 population in the Durham Constabulary area. The highest rate amongst the North-East forces. The national figure is 13 per 1000 population. Durham Constabulary ranks 2nd nationally for the rate of all recorded domestic abuse related crime per 1000 population.

- The rate of violence against the person domestic abuse-related offences is 17 per 1000 population in the Durham Constabulary area. The highest rate amongst the North-East forces. The national figure is 11 per 1000 population. Durham Constabulary ranks 2nd nationally for the rate of violence against the person domestic abuse-related offences per 1000 population.
- The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) has been unable to provide estimates on domestic abuse for the year ending June 2020 due to concerns around confidentiality and respondent safeguarding, however the ONS data highlighted above indicates a high prevalence in Durham Constabulary's area in comparison to other areas of the country on the basis of occurrence of overall domestic abuse and violence in the context of per 1000 population.
- In County Durham, domestic abuse was the most common factor identified at statutory social care assessment in 2018/19 (45%), statistical neighbours (49%) the north east (51%) and England (51%). Between 2017/18 and 2018/19 this proportion has increased locally from 38% to 45%, a change of 7%. This compares to a 6% increase in the North East, a 0% rise for England and a 5% increase for statistical neighbours.
- There were 8,237 referrals to Harbour during April - end of February 2020/21. This represents an increase on the two previous years with 7,250 referrals in 2019/20 and 6,982 referrals in 2018/19.
- There were 803 MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) cases heard during 2020/21 (to end of February). 125 of these are repeats which represents 15.6% of the total.
- During 2019/20, in County Durham, 684 households presented to Housing Solutions as homeless due to fleeing domestic abuse. 111 of the presentations were assisted through the Homeless Reduction Act into alternative accommodation.
- During 2019/20 242 households were assisted through the Remain Safe scheme for those experiencing violence and harassment from outside their home. The security of their homes was improved to avoid homelessness (for example – replacing locks, installing window locks and alarms etc.). 182 cases were domestic abuse related; 60 cases were due to harassment.
- During 2020/21 these figures reduced, 175 households were assisted through the Remain Safe scheme for those experiencing violence and harassment from outside their home. The security of their homes was improved to avoid homelessness (for example – replacing locks, installing window locks and alarms etc.). 157 cases were domestic abuse related, 16 cases were due to harassment and 2 were hate crime related.
- The drop in referrals was due to a budget cut for 20-21 meaning there had to be tighter restrictions on the number of households assisted. The budget has been increased again for 21-22 due to Government funding therefore there is an expectation of an increase in the numbers through Remain Safe.

National Context

- The 2019 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) reported that in England and Wales 28.4% of women and 13.6% of men reported that they had experienced DA at some point in their adult-lifetime
- SafeLives Insights National Briefing 2017 reveals that:
 - Two in five children (41%) in families where there is domestic abuse have been living with that abuse since they were born. For some children, this exposure to abuse does not only start early, but persists into later childhood. Of all the children in the dataset who had been living with abuse for their whole lives, over a third (37%) were more than five years old. Combined with information on the percentage of all children who have been exposed to domestic abuse in their homes, it is estimated that at least one child in every reception school class has been living with abuse for their whole life. In a minority of cases (76 of the 20,821 children in the dataset) the child was seventeen years old and had lived with abuse from birth to adulthood.
 - Families known to Children’s Services were more likely to have children under the age of 5 years old compared to those not known to services (65% vs 55%). National data on the ages of children who are referred to children’s services is not available, but the ages of children who are subject to a child protection plan indicates that younger children are more likely to receive this safeguarding intervention. Fifty children out of every 10,000 aged 1-4 were subject to a plan, compared with 44 of those aged 5-9 and 38 of those aged 10-15.
 - While older children may be at less physical risk, exposure to abuse has an effect on children of all ages, unrelated to their ability to keep themselves safe. For instance, children over ten were much more likely to try to intervene to stop physical abuse (27% of children over ten, compared to 15% of those under ten). Additionally, Children’s Insights data reveals that over half (52%) of children exposed to abuse said they found it difficult to sleep, and almost a third (30%) felt like the abuse was their fault. The same children exhibit higher rates of behavioural problems than their peers, and engage in more risk-taking behaviour, making them vulnerable to other forms of abuse, exploitation, and harm.
 - In 2017, only 57% of the children involved in Insights cases were known to have been referred to children’s services before the victim sought help. Additionally, a substantial proportion of these referrals (31%) had resulted in no action or had not proceeded beyond initial assessment or enquiries. This is consistent with government’s own data on all referrals, which shows that in 2015-16, one in ten referrals to children’s services in England (9.9%) resulted in no further action, and a further

quarter (25.4%) resulted in an assessment but the child was assessed not to be in need.

- Insights data suggests that families with Children’s Services involvement are more likely to be experiencing physical violence (71% vs 57%); one of the most visible forms of abuse. But there are many other forms of abuse that can more easily remain hidden, such as coercive and controlling behaviour. Families known to Children’s Services are also significantly more likely to have disclosed complex needs, including drug misuse (6% vs 2%), alcohol misuse (8% vs 3%) and/or mental health issues (36% vs 26%), compared to families with children who are not known to children’s services. However, many victims do not disclose these needs, as identified by SafeLives’ report Cry for Health. Where there are children in the family, this can be an added barrier to disclosing both domestic abuse and other needs.

Note: CSEW data looked at the extent and nature of child abuse (dated 2019). It looks at proportion of the population aged 18-74. The outcomes are similar to Radford et al 2011 – cited below which remains key research in this field.

- Child abuse extent and nature, England and Wales: year ending March 2019 – Findings:
 - 20.7% of adults aged 18-74 have experienced abuse before the age of 16 (Male – 16.5%, Female 24.8%)
 - 9.8% of adults aged 18-74 have witnessed domestic abuse or violence before the age of 16
 - The main abuse reported by male victims was physical abuse 17.4%
 - The main abuse reported by female victims was sexual abuse 22.1%
- The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) 2019 estimated that one in five adults aged 18 to 74 years experienced at least one form of child abuse, whether emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or witnessing domestic violence or abuse, before the age of 16 years (8.5 million people).
- In addition, an estimated 1 in 100 adults aged 18 to 74 years experienced physical neglect before the age of 16 years (481,000 people); this includes not being taken care of or not having enough food, shelter or clothing, but it does not cover all types of neglect.
- An estimated 3.1 million adults aged 18 to 74 years were victims of sexual abuse before the age of 16 years; this includes abuse by both adult and child perpetrators.
- Prevalence was higher for females than males for each type of abuse, with the exception of physical abuse where there was no difference.
- Many cases of child abuse remain hidden and do not enter the criminal justice system; around one in seven adults who called the National Association for

People Abused in Childhood's (NAPAC's) helpline had not told anyone about their abuse before.

- It is possible to identify around 227,500 child abuse offences recorded by the police in the year ending March 2019 of which around 1 in 25 (4%) resulted in a charge or summons.
- The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) 2019 indicates that the national prevalence rates in the year to March 2019 for experiencing domestic abuse in one year is higher for women (7.5%) than men (3.8%).
- Almost 5.6% of women and around 2.8% of men who reported domestic abuse in the CSEW 2019 reported partner-related abuse. The most common form of domestic abuse reported in the survey (by 4.8% of persons) was partner-related: non-sexual abuse (including verbal threats and/or actual force).
- The national prevalence rate for experiencing lifetime domestic abuse is higher for women (28.4%) than men (13.6%).
- The national prevalence rates from the CSEW illustrates that the prevalence of domestic abuse is higher for women than men across all age bands. The range for women shows a high of 15.1% in the 20 to 24 age group to a low of 4.0% in the oldest group, with the next highest being the 16 to 19 age group (9.6%) For men, prevalence ranges for a high of 6.5% in the 16 to 19 years age-group to a low of 2.1% in the 60 to 74 age-group.

Resources

National Services

Female victims

Refuge www.refuge.org.uk

Women's Aid www.womensaid.org.uk

Male victims

Men's Advice Line www.mensadviceline.org.uk

Specialist support

Harbour Support Services are a specialist domestic abuse service who can help people who live in County Durham and Darlington.

Tel: 03000 20 25 25.

Website: <http://www.myharbour.org.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020>

[Quality Standard \(QS116\) on Domestic Violence and Abuse](#)

[Domestic violence and abuse: multi-agency working \(PH50\)](#)

[Insights National Dataset Briefing 2017 - children.pdf \(safelives.org.uk\)](#)