



Ending  
domestic  
abuse

# Impact Report

2024–25





# Foreword

## from Ellen Miller, Chief Executive


This year SafeLives turned 21 and I marked my first full year as Chief Executive of this brilliant and bold organisation. Anniversaries invite reflection – not just on what’s been achieved, but on what must happen next. I’ve spent the year travelling across the UK and beyond, meeting survivors, frontline professionals, trustees, partners and staff. I have heard accounts of courage and frustration; hope and exhaustion; progress that felt hard-won and patchy; systems that shine in places and stutter elsewhere. Through it all, one conviction has only grown stronger: if we listen deeply, act together, and move with urgency, we can end domestic abuse.

When I joined SafeLives, I made two promises. First, that we would centre survivors’ rights and leadership at the heart of everything we do. Second, that we would keep our work relentlessly practical: rooted in evidence, designed with people who use it, and focused on the outcomes that matter – preventing harm, reducing risk and supporting recovery for every adult and child.

This year I’ve been privileged to work alongside Pioneers, AV Panel members and Changemakers as they shaped our thinking, to consult with hundreds of professionals under pressure and keen to do more, and to hear from commissioners and partners determined to build a joined-up response. Again and again I heard: we know a lot about what works. We need to help it happen consistently.

We also navigated a significant year for policy. The Victims and Prisoners Act became law, offering renewed opportunities to recognise the specialist roles of IDVAs and ISVAs and to strengthen the Victims’ Code. We welcomed a new UK Government and reiterated our invitation: work with us to embed a Whole Picture approach so families are safer sooner. In Scotland, we have been part of simplifying and strengthening civil remedies for domestic abuse. And we spoke clearly on the changes that matter: evolving risk pathways, investment in community-based services, trauma-informed and culturally competent practice, and quality-assured perpetrator responses with parallel support for survivors.





To everyone who has shared your experience, your expertise or your support with us this year – thank you. We will keep going until every adult and child can live full lives they want to – in safety and freedom.

A milestone birthday gave us time to look back with gratitude. Her Majesty The Queen accepted the Starfish Award for championing the voices of survivors. We said a huge thank you to our longstanding Chair, Isabel Boyer, and hello to the Rt Hon Dame Maria Miller DBE who has joined us as our new Chair. We celebrated the people – staff, trustees, associates, partners and survivors- who have built this charity through 21 years of determination, innovation and compassion.

And we launched our new strategy for 2025–2028, forged with the insight of hundreds of survivors and professionals. It sharpens our focus on six priorities: the Whole Picture Framework; Authentic Voice; evolving the risk pathway; workforce development; Safe Young Lives; and addressing perpetrators. The strapline says what we’re here to do: **Find what works. Help it happen.**

As CEO, I’m proud of what this report shows. It reflects a team that is brave, human, rigorous and inclusive; a sector that steps up every day; and survivors whose leadership changes everything. But I’m also restless. Domestic abuse remains at crisis levels, with children too often invisible in practice and people facing multiple barriers left waiting longest. The cost of living continues to bite; housing is scarce; mental health support is stretched; systems are not yet consistently joined-up.

We cannot call this a national emergency and then resource it as if it were anything less.

At the same time, we’re still learning, evolving and improving. In a tough climate, we have work to do as an organisation: listening more deeply to our people and partners, strengthening equity and inclusion, improving how we plan and prioritise, and making space for reflection and learning. We’ll invest in team wellbeing and development so our people can thrive and, in turn, sustain the quality and care survivors deserve.

So, my message this year is simple: the path to change is clear. We have the evidence, the models, the people. We need to back them – with funding that lasts, standards that are implemented, data that is used, and leadership that welcomes scrutiny and learns in public.

We will keep bringing data, voice and practice together; we will keep centring survivors and the whole family; we will keep challenging perpetrators to stop; and we will keep working with partners across policing, health, education, housing, justice and beyond so safety is a reality wherever people turn.



**Ellen Miller**  
CEO, SafeLives



# Who we are

SafeLives is a UK-wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse – for everyone, for good. We combine **data, voice and practice** to transform systems.



**We:**

- ✓ **Listen deeply** to survivors, professionals and data.
- ✓ **Analyse** systems, services and behaviours to understand what works.
- ✓ **Innovate** and embed real, lasting change with local areas, government and organisations.

Our **Whole Picture approach** brings prevention, risk reduction and recovery together around each individual and family. That is how we make people **safer, sooner**.





# Our year at a glance

## July 2024 – July 2025

### ✔ Strategy launched

We introduced our 2025–2028 strategy: Find what works and help it happen, cocreated with survivors and professionals, focused on preventing harm, reducing risk and supporting recovery.

### ✔ Victims and Prisoners Act

Welcomed this long-awaited Act becoming law; called for implementation that recognises IDVAs/ISVAs in statutory guidance, investment in community-based services, and ensures workforce training on the strengthened Victims’ Code.

### ✔ IDVA/ISVA guidance

Pressed for guidance that reflects the specialist nature of these roles, with clear qualifications, supervision and standards, including for child and young person IDVAs/IDAAs.

### ✔ Authentic Voice

Launched a new Hampshire survivor panel and Hertfordshire Coproduction DA panel; hosted our first survivor-led AV conference in Scotland; Echo sites strengthened local structures for survivor leadership.

### ✔ Addressing perpetrators

With the Drive Partnership, welcomed Home Office investment to expand the Drive Project across England and Wales; championed the launch of specialist Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programmes (DAPPs) co-designed in partnership with by-and-for-organisations and experts by experience as part of the Drive Partnership’s National Systems Change work; shared learning from earlier intervention project, Restart, to influence domestic abuse housing policy; and supported the launch of new Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO) pilots and the Drive Partnership’s role designing and delivering the triage model for the Positive Requirements element.

### ✔ MARAC development

Advanced the national data platform; supported Scotland’s MARAC to MARAC transfer toolkit and best practice guidance on counter allegations; delivered new data-driven webinars for professionals.

### ✔ Workforce development

Secured a renewed two-year licence to deliver the Domestic Abuse Matters culture change programme across policing; expanded specialist training in health, family law and military settings; continued growth in Leading Lights accreditation.

### ✔ Safe Young Lives

Published Verge of Harming – Phase 2 research on young people who harm and an accompanying Empowering Engagement practice resource; secured funding to extend our Children Affected by Domestic Abuse (CADA) programme to March 2026.

### ✔ New partnerships

Launched an armed forces programme with the Army Benevolent Fund; collaborated with commissioners to embed Whole Picture approaches across England and Wales.

### ✔ Influencing

Deepened engagement with political stakeholders across Parliament and the devolved nations, with MPs and officials drawing on our data and practice insight. Built new relationships in the children’s sector and promoted training opportunities for CHIDVAs. Strengthened ties with the DfE and NHS England, whose teams regularly use our data, submitted our Spending Review response and worked with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner’s office on the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill. In Scotland, the AV Panel and Head of team have been part of and influenced the development of the Domestic Homicide and Suicide Review TaskForce.

### ✔ Visibility and hope

Pioneers and Changemakers appeared in a national documentary about Her Majesty The Queen; we celebrated our 21st year; and we said goodbye to our outgoing Chair, Isabel Boyer, and welcomed the Rt Hon Dame Maria Miller into the role.



Our approach

A Whole Picture response to domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is preventable. The conditions that enable it can be changed. Our approach is practical and evidence-based. We work together in local areas with police, health, children’s services, housing, education, specialist services and community organisations around shared outcomes to drive system change. We co-create tools, standards and approaches with survivors and those who support them. We train and support a confident, trauma-informed workforce. And we combine UK-wide insight with local action so change lasts.



**Preventing harm**

Change norms and behaviours; intervene earlier; and challenge those causing harm to stop – with inclusive, quality-assured perpetrator responses and parallel support for survivors.



**Reducing risk**

Ensure consistent, evidence-based responses across agencies; use data to spot and manage dynamic risk; recognise children’s experiences and rights, so all adult and child victims and survivors get the right help at the right time.



**Supporting recovery**

Remove barriers to safety and stability; embed trauma-informed practice and the authentic voice of survivors as key parts of the response, upholding their dignity, choices and leadership and ensuring they are seen as equals in influencing systems change.



# Preventing harm



Challenging those who cause harm – and intervening earlier



## The Drive Partnership

Alongside our partners, Respect and Social Finance, in the [Drive Partnership](#), we work to end domestic abuse and protect victim-survivors by disrupting, challenging, and changing the behaviour of those who are causing harm. The Drive Partnership does this through the development of innovative responses to those causing harm and advocating for systems and policy change to develop sustainable, national systems that respond more effectively to all those causing harm to increase the safety and freedom of all adult and child victim-survivors.

## National Systems Change programme

The Drive Partnership National Systems Change programme identifies systemic gaps and brings together the insights of survivors, service users, practitioners, specialist organisations, researchers and policy makers to build solutions. The current focus is on improving responses to racialised communities and LGBT+ communities – and developing new pilots with by-and-for partners to pilot specialised interventions that meet the needs of minoritised and marginalised groups. In May 2025, three co-designed specialist responses to domestic abuse were launched, led by a consortium of delivery providers, to address systemic gaps in responses to domestic abuse across Black African, Caribbean and Mixed Heritage communities, South Asian communities, and LGBT+ communities.



Drive Project

The Drive Project is the Partnership’s flagship intervention for high-risk, high-harm and serial perpetrators of domestic abuse. The core mission of the Drive Project is to stop the cycle of domestic abuse and increase the immediate and long-term safety of adult and child victim-survivors. The Drive Project does this by partnering with agencies and local perpetrator services to disrupt, challenge, and change the behaviour of high-risk, high-harm and serial perpetrators, and working closely with IDVAs and victim-survivor services to always centre the safety and needs of victim-survivors, in line with the Respect Standard.

To deliver the Drive Project, the Drive Partnership works with local specialist domestic abuse organisations to design and deliver the project tailored for the locality, alongside strong working relationships with statutory partners such as the police, health and children’s social care.

Independent evaluations show significant reductions in abusive behaviours, reductions in risk to victim-survivors, reduced repeat and serial perpetrator cases heard at MARAC, and reduced police involvement. In 2024 to 2025, 1,100 service users were referred to the Drive Project, taking the total to more than 7,000.

This year we were pleased to secure renewed Home Office investment to expand the Drive Project across England and Wales, reaching a larger number of high-risk, high-harm and serial perpetrators, and an even larger number of associated adult and child victim-survivors. This will build a more consistent response to high-risk, high-harm and serial perpetrators across all areas to stop them slipping through the net and causing further harm, and is an important step towards our ongoing call for a full range of effective perpetrator responses available across all areas and designed for all communities.



**I have to say I’m feeling really good at the moment, I have been in and out of probation and youth services since I was a teenager and this is the first time I really see a future for myself, I think that’s because of you (case manager) really supporting me and making me feel like people care about me and believe in me, I’ve never felt that before.**

Drive Project Service User

**1,000**  
**service users were referred to the Drive Project in 2024 to 2025**





**I have found Restart very useful. It has allowed me to spend time reflecting on his past behaviour. I now think “What would my CM say” when I am approaching various situations. I have found the programme impactful and insightful. I feel that the activities have taught me what do and what not to do in various situations.**

Restart Service User

### Restart

Restart is an earlier intervention pilot from the Drive Partnership for families at risk of, or experiencing, domestic abuse. It brings together children’s social care, housing and domestic abuse services to identify and respond to harmful behaviour sooner. We deliver short, targeted one to one work with the person causing harm, and parallel, separate support for the non-abusive parent. It is designed to intervene earlier and works to address denial, minimisation, and partner blame to better prepare people for longer-term work.

**500+**

**service users were referred to Restart to date**

Temporary, alternative accommodation can also be offered to the person causing harm during the intervention, creating a breathing space for both parties to engage with the program. Restart published two evaluations this year, one with qualitative learning around the impact of the intervention on adult and child victim-survivors’ wellbeing and safety, and the other focussing on learnings from the housing pathway. Restart also worked with Foundations on a feasibility study of the project, published in October 2025 with a foreword from SafeLives Changemaker and other Pioneers, which found that “the programme addresses a critical gap in support for families affected by domestic abuse, providing timely, coordinated responses to low and medium risk perpetrators”. More than 500 service users have been referred to Restart to date.



**Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs)**

The Drive Partnership has been developing and delivering the DAPO positive requirements triage model across pilot sites in London and Manchester and for British Transport Police. The pilot will be expanded across Cleveland, North Wales and remaining Boroughs in Greater Manchester throughout 2025. Our emphasis remains on orders that are usable and enforceable in real life, backed by parallel support and clear lines of accountability between agencies.

**Legislative changes**

We supported stronger protection and accountability measures such as Raneem’s Law to put DA specialists in 999 control rooms and we welcomed progress to strengthen the coercive and controlling behaviour offence and keep pace with evolving evidence. Law reform must be matched by training and resourcing – especially for nonspecialist roles – to ensure change in day-to-day practice.

**Safe Young Lives – Verge of Harming (Phase 2)**

We published new research, produced with partners across five frontline services, on what effective support looks like for young people who use harmful behaviours in their intimate or family relationships. Young people told us they engage when practitioners are honest, consistent and nonjudgemental; when sessions are flexible and creative; and when support recognises trauma, mental health, neurodivergence and identity.

*Empowering Engagement*, our companion practice resource, turns those insights into clear, practical tools – including a preparation phase, and detailed guidance for beginnings, middles and endings of interventions. Families told us that parallel support for parents helps shift blame, build understanding and sustain change.

**Primary prevention and early help**

We worked with local partners through Family Voice, our project, funded by Department for Education and the Department for Work and Pensions, to amplify what families say they need and help local systems act on it. We supported professionals with practical guidance, webinars and tools so family insight could shape day-to-day practice in England and Wales.

Our team worked alongside several local areas to understand culture, context and connections. We identified good practice and areas for improvement, and we consulted with families and providers to map opportunities, strengths and gaps. Guided by SafeLives’ Authentic Voice principles, we turned this learning into resources for national use that help professionals create safe, inclusive spaces and empower families to use their voices.

Looking ahead, we want to see a stronger public health approach across Early Help, parenting support and youth services. That means reducing stigma, making help easier to reach, embedding routine enquiry in health, and joining up domestic abuse, mental health and suicide prevention so opportunities to save lives are not missed. We will keep sharing learning so practitioners can test ideas and improve practice together.



# Our calls to action

- ✔ We want to see government and commissioners invest in vital specialist support services and, alongside that, a consistent perpetrator response and earlier help models.
- ✔ We want local areas to provide effective responses to babies, children and young people, and include young people who harm within whole family support, ensuring risk pathways reflect the needs of adults and children at all risk levels.





# Reducing risk



Consistent, confident responses that support adults and children to be safer sooner.



# A Whole Picture response

Our ambition is for a whole picture response which looks at the risks and needs for every family member and ensures all adult and child survivors get the right help at the right time. We take a Public Health Approach (PHA) to whole systems work within local areas. Through this, we work intensively with agencies from across the system in local areas for nine months, engaging with victims and survivors, professionals, children and young people and those who harm through a variety of ways.

We embed ourselves in the local area observing MARACs and other multi agency meetings and forums, carrying out case audits and practice reviews, concluding with a collaborative workshop event where strategic and operational leads from across the system come together alongside local victims and survivors to develop recommendations for their local area.

We have now worked in more than 50 local areas in England and Wales, acting as a critical friend and walking alongside areas, defining the challenges, identifying the risk and protective factors, developing risk-led responses and co-creating solutions.

## What professionals and survivors say

We published headline findings from our Whole Picture approach datasets. Over 2,000 professionals across 21 areas told us the top needs for victims and families are support for mental health, children’s wellbeing and housing. For those who harm, professionals highlighted mental health, drugs/alcohol and children’s wellbeing – underlining the need for joined-up responses that address root drivers of harm.

380 survivors across 20 areas told us what they want most from services: someone to talk to in person, emotional support, mental health support, clear information and advice, legal help and financial guidance. Survivors also told us services need to ask routinely about domestic abuse – and that professionals need the training and confidence to ask.



**Data that leads to action**

We used ONS crime data and [National Audit Office \(NAO\) findings on VAWG](#) to make the case for early intervention, better data, and sustainable funding for community-based services. We began work towards a national domestic abuse data dashboard to bring a Whole Picture view into one place for commissioners and partnerships.

308

professionals engaged  
with in the MOPAC review

**Evolving risk pathways**

Since SafeLives was founded two decades ago, we have worked to transform risk pathways for adult and child survivors across the UK, bringing survivor voice, evidence and frontline practice together so every person gets the right help at the right time.

In 2024/25, the Home Office commissioned us to run an initial insight exercise on multi-agency risk pathways across all risk levels. We are convening workshops and listening sessions with survivors, by and for organisations, frontline practitioners and statutory agencies, and will share our findings to inform forthcoming Home Office multi-agency guidance on assessing risk, expected in early 2026.

In Scotland, we have been funded since 2015 to strengthen and develop MARACs across the country. With a MARAC operating in every Scottish local authority area, and networks to support chairs, coordinators and other domestic abuse professionals – coverage is national, and our work is now focused on improving and evolving the risk pathways and MARAC, for example, to better include survivor voice and feedback.

Risk assessment must be embedded in a whole-system response that is survivor-led, grounded in professional judgement, recognises children as survivors in their own right, and coordinates action across agencies so perpetrators are managed effectively and consistently.

Looking ahead, we hope the UK Government’s upcoming VAWG strategy sets out a clear national risk pathway for victims at all levels of risk – one that is implemented consistently and measured transparently. It should invest in workforce capability and multi-agency capacity, strengthen perpetrator management alongside support for adult and child survivors, and use data and insight to drive continuous improvement, accountability and better outcomes for families.

We stand ready to play our part, with survivors, services and Government, to strengthen the system and keep people safer, sooner.

**Managing risk of serious harm in London (MOPAC review)**

Commissioned by the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime, we conducted an in-depth [review of how London can better manage and prevent the risk of serious harm](#), homicide and suicide due to domestic abuse. We engaged 308 professionals across sectors, complemented by a literature review and focus groups codesigned and delivered with SafeLives Pioneers. Professionals rated MARAC highly as a mechanism to discuss and manage risk when it is implemented well. But we found significant inconsistencies across boroughs: thresholds, frequency, agency representation, data sharing and survivor involvement vary widely.

Too often there is no shared definition of risk, outcomes are process-led rather than survivor-defined, and high demand pushes complex work into nonspecialist roles without adequate training or supervision. The message was clear: domestic abuse is everyone’s business – but only a coordinated, whole system response will be effective. Our recommendations focus on consistent standards, survivor leadership, data that drives action, and workforce support.





**The use of the final training case study being later revealed to be a DHR case was hugely powerful and impactful, and will remain a reminder to ensure the voice of the victim is listened to and that victim-blaming is challenged. I will ensure I drill down in terms of research and remain creative with multi-agency action planning.**

MARAC Chairs, Hertfordshire

### **MARAC: strengthening the national safeguarding response**

MARAC remains the UK's largest safeguarding response to high risk domestic abuse. In the year to March 2025, almost 130,000 cases were heard across the network, with over 150,000 children linked to those cases. We progressed phase two of the **national MARAC data platform** to improve data quality, access and usability so local partnerships can benchmark, spot trends and target improvement. In Scotland, we launched a **MARAC to MARAC transfer toolkit** to support safe transfers when families move between local authorities, and published **best practice guidance on counter allegations**, developed with MARAC professionals to reduce service-generated risk and ensure the right person is supported. We also introduced new data webinars for London and Scottish professionals, showcasing how to use MARAC data to inform decisions and improve safeguarding.

### **Championing IDVAs / IDAAs**

Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates (IDAAs) are fundamental to risk identification and reduction. This year we advocated for guidance that reflects the specialist nature of these roles, including clear training and qualification standards, robust supervision, and recognition of child and young person practitioners. We continued to strengthen practice through training, communities of practice and the Leading Lights quality standard securing 59 accredited IDVA/IDAA services.

**≈130,000**  
**cases were heard across the network (MARAC)**



# Training that builds confidence and grows capability

Every day, professionals tell us that SafeLives training gives them the confidence and skills to act sooner and more safely. Our courses equip learners to recognise and understand domestic abuse and respond with skilled, trauma-informed care. We blend survivor voice, evidence and practice so professionals can apply skills immediately.

In 2024/25, we delivered more than **700 sessions to over 15,000 learners** across the UK in policing, health, housing, justice, education and the specialist sector. We also expanded e-learning, reaching **5,000+** additional learners this year.

We keep scaling what works so, wherever someone turns for help, they meet skilled professionals who know how to respond.

## Partnerships that shift systems

We work with partners to keep content current, inclusive and practical. With **Age UK** and **Dewis Choice** we relaunched **OPVA** training for older people’s domestic violence advisors; with SignHealth we co-designed a one-day course on responding well to Deaf victims; and with **Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA)** we refreshed economic abuse content for our *Workshop for Cops*. We signed agreements with Loving Me, **Look Ahead MIDAAS**, **Hourglass** and **Refuge** to enrich accredited pathways and guest teaching. New commissions included the **Irish Probation Service** (non-fatal strangulation with the Institute for Addressing Strangulation – **IFAS**) and a major programme funded by the **Army Benevolent Fund** starting March 2025.

We continue to work in partnership with **NatWest** through The Circle Fund, which provides fast, flexible grants of up to £500 to meet the urgent, individual needs of survivors and their children.

Co-designed with services and survivors, the fund is delivered through a network of frontline organisations, helping to make sure support is there at the right time, in the right way. In January 2024, NatWest renewed The Circle Fund for a further three years with a £1 million donation, enabling even more survivors to overcome practical barriers to safety, stability and recovery.

Demand for bespoke courses rose significantly, with **MARAC** and **DASH** remaining our most requested, especially from housing providers responding to rising domestic abuse in casework. Our work in Scotland continues to be strengthened by multiple formal partnerships; with Scottish Women’s Aid, ASSIST and the Improvement Service, and many others. And international interest grew too, with enquiries from Denmark, Slovenia, Malta and Latvia about adopting MARAC and embedding DASH.

## Children Affected by Domestic Abuse (CADA)

CADA supports children and young people to be seen, believed and helped sooner, with responses that fit their age, culture and circumstances. Working with small and specialist services in Sheffield and Bolton, we have helped adapt mainstream interventions so they meet the needs of racially minoritised communities, co-designing practical tools with local partners and families. Across the programme more than 600 children have been supported, and we are working to strengthen the wider system by providing anti-racism and cultural competency training to 100 professionals.

We are delighted that CADA funding has been extended to March 2026, so we can scale what works and reach more children.





**Really useful tools for working with families and also supporting our caseholding colleagues to understand that it isn't as simple as they think for a victim to leave. I think I will be more mindful in supporting victims, and recognising patterns of behaviour.**

Learner, 'Working With Families Affected by Domestic Abuse' course

**70,000+**

**officers and staff have been trained across forces**

### Policing

We secured a renewed two-year licence from the **College of Policing** to deliver **Domestic Abuse Matters**, our cultural-change programme. Since inception, **70,000+** officers and staff have been trained across forces in England and Wales and beyond, with evaluations showing improved understanding of coercive control and safer disclosure. The **Champions** model sustains change by creating trusted points of contact in every force.

### Specialist training

Alongside the **Institute for Addressing Strangulation (IFAS)** we extended specialist training on non-fatal strangulation and refreshed our trainer pool. This year we delivered introductory webinars, advanced one-day courses for **IDVA/ISVA** and Social Care professionals, bespoke sessions for **CAFCASS**, and a Welsh Government-funded webinar with **Stori**. Our new introductory e-learning on non-fatal strangulation has already reached **1,800+** learners. We also developed bite-size, role-specific learning so non-specialists can recognise and respond confidently.

### Armed forces

With funding from the **Army Benevolent Fund**, the Army's national charity, we launched a major national programme to improve the response to domestic abuse across serving and veteran communities. Year one is focused on insight and training: we will be producing an Army Spotlight Report, a Multi-Agency Toolkit and a specialist training offer for welfare workers from the Army Welfare Service and the Defence Medical Welfare Service, as well as for IDVAs/IDAAs. Following the project's pilot phase, training will roll out nationally alongside a coordinated awareness campaign – strengthening collaboration between Army and civilian partners, so Army families receive the same high standard of care wherever they turn.



Training in Scotland

Across Scotland we deliver a broad programme of learning for frontline and non-specialist staff. From bespoke in-house courses to open sessions and accreditation, we support professionals in health, justice, housing, education and local authorities to recognise risk sooner and respond with confidence.

This year we delivered 30 bespoke and open courses to 600+ learners, working with 118 organisations and building 10 new commissioner partnerships. Through our partnership with Scottish Women’s Aid and ASSIST, the Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy (IDAA) accreditation trained a further 47 learners, validating their practice and strengthening the support they provide on the frontline.

In partnership with ASSIST, the Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy (DACA) Accreditation project trained 50% of the Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy workforce, delivering 200 hours of specialist training so IDAAs can give the best possible support to victims through the court process.

50,000 people to date have accessed our Domestic Abuse Awareness Raising Tool (DAART) e-learning, funded by the Scottish Government. DAART is a free online resource designed as a first step in understanding, identifying and responding to domestic abuse and coercive control.

50,000  
people have accessed  
our Domestic Abuse  
Awareness Raising Tool  
in Scotland

“

**It has reminded me how valuable the DACA role is to those going through the court process. Also the depth of knowledge and experience that we, as DACA workers have, to support people and help them to navigate this complex system at one of the most difficult times of their lives**

Learner on DACA course



# Our calls to action

- ✔ We want local partnerships to deliver a joined up, multi-agency response that centres survivor voice, applies consistent standards, and uses data to drive continuous improvement.
- ✔ We want to see the whole system response strengthened to support the whole family.
- ✔ We want to see sustainable multi-year funding for services and ask commissioners to fund IDVA/IDAA and specialist support capacity.
- ✔ We are eager to see vital IDVA and ISVA roles properly recognised in accompanying statutory guidance.
- ✔ And we want Government to support the evolution of risk pathways at all levels of risk, set shared standards for risk identification and fund the workforce and the skills it needs to meet them, so we can build capability across the whole workforce responding to families.





# Supporting recovery

Centring survivor leadership,  
rights and dignity



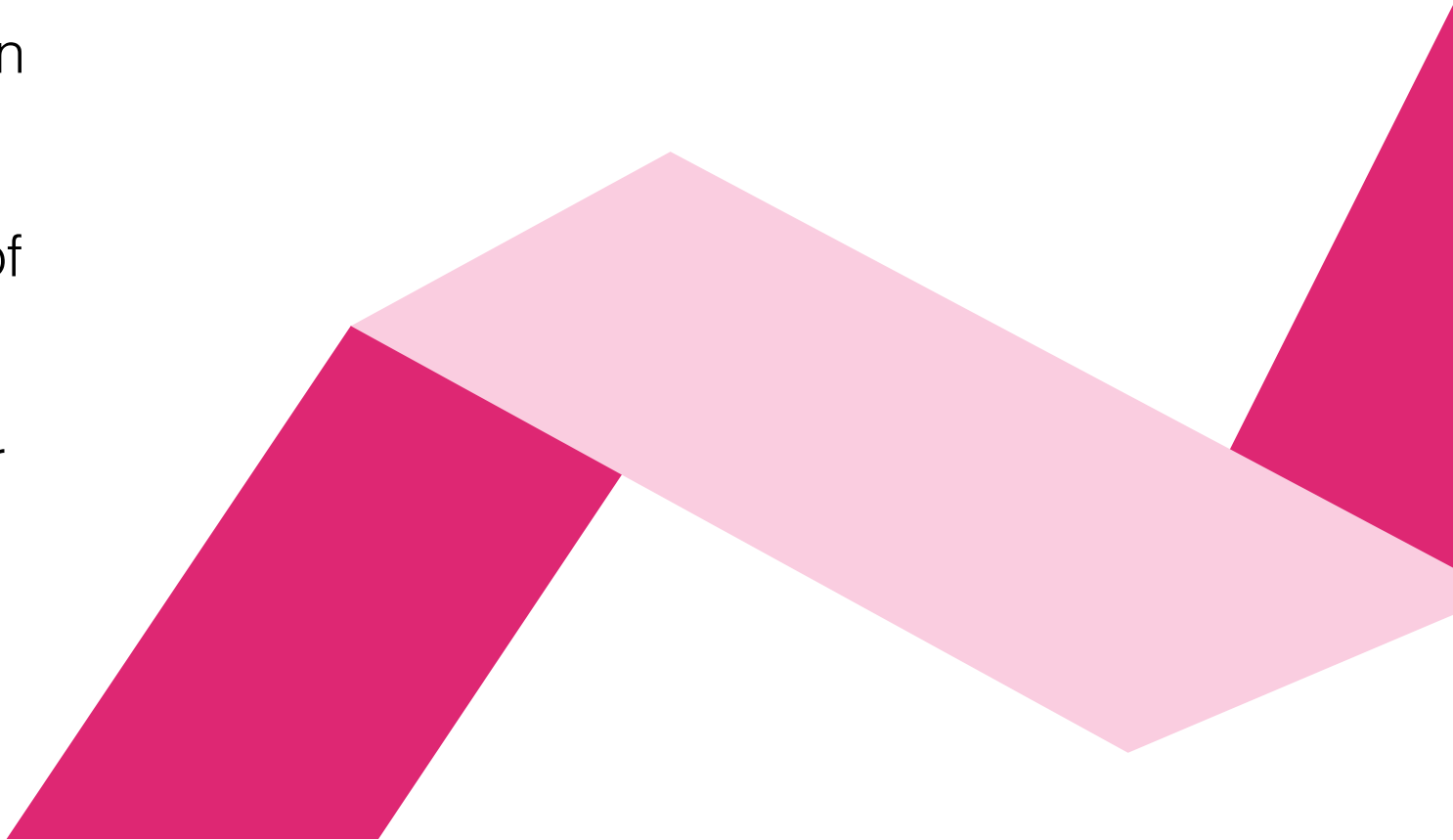
## Authentic Voice

Survivor leadership is the engine of change. Our [Authentic Voice Panel](#) in Scotland hosted **our first survivor-led conference**, bringing together services and decisionmakers to commit to practical steps that embed survivor expertise. In England, we launched a new **Hampshire Authentic Voice Panel** to influence local policy and practice, including safe ways to hear from children and young people. Across Bolton, Sheffield and Leicestershire, our **Echo** programme helped partnerships move from consultation to coproduction – building structures that make survivor voice part of everyday governance, not an add-on.

### Pioneering at SafeLives

[SafeLives Pioneers](#) are survivors who turn lived experience into action, shaping services, policy and public attitudes so survivor voice sits at the heart and start of everything we do. We are recognised nationally for the quality of our Authentic Voice approach, with Pioneers and other experts by experience involved in local projects, commissioned by partners to inform practice, and speaking directly to decision makers.

This year, Pioneers helped power change through our Authentic Voice project in Hampshire and drove Project Echo across Bolton, Leicestershire and Sheffield to help services listen, learn and improve. They spoke out on national issues with our Changemakers in an open letter calling for leadership and solidarity in the face of racist violence. They also reached wider audiences, appearing in an ITV documentary that highlighted survivor voice and our Patron’s advocacy, and joining us at Clarence House as Her Majesty The Queen marked SafeLives’ 21st birthday. Their leadership continues to turn insight into action so every adult and child can get the right help at the right time.







**Being a SafeLives Pioneer has been life changing. At so many points in my life I felt I did not have a voice, but now, with the support of SafeLives, I can use my experience and be that beacon of hope to others. In sharing our voices and being heard we are not just helping change one- or two-people's lives, but thousands. As a survivor of domestic abuse, you don't often have the opportunity to share what you've been through. But with SafeLives' support, it's incredible to think that by using your voice you are not only being heard, but changing lives.**

### **Our Changemakers and Young People's Authentic Voice**

SafeLives Changemakers are a passionate group of young people who want to shape services, policy and public attitudes to domestic abuse. They bring fresh ideas, ask brave questions and keep us focused on what young people need to feel safe, believed and supported sooner. It has been an incredibly busy, fulfilling and inspiring year. Through consultations, talks and practical guidance, the Changemakers have helped hundreds of professionals work more safely and compassionately with young people.

They powered Project Echo from the outset, naming and branding the project, co-facilitating the launch, and co-producing surveys across Bolton, Leicestershire and Sheffield. In research, they partnered with City St George's, University of London on 'Too Soon, Too Late', research exploring whether the age of 16 (the age in which a young person is legally recognised as a victim of domestic abuse in their own relationships) is "too late".

They presented findings at a European conference, and progressed new studies with the University of Lancashire and the University of Sussex. They also helped evaluate our Young Person's Violence Advocate (YPVA) training to keep learning relevant and accessible, supporting the frontline to keep thousands of young people safer each year. Through our Family Voices project, they brought youth perspectives on mental health and stigma to national audiences.

Changemakers continue to influence research, training and programme design, through consultations on our strategic priorities and participating in interview panels for our Chair of Trustees. They are also contributing to projects such as the Restart evaluation and the VISION Consortium's work on adolescent domestic abuse. Their energy, insight and creativity are helping systems move from talking about youth participation to doing it well, so young people get the support they deserve.



# Authentic Voice in Scotland

Survivor leadership sits at the heart of our work in Scotland. This year we completed our West Dunbartonshire project with the Women’s Safety & Support Service, producing a discovery report with practical recommendations for local services. We supported the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit to establish a lived experience panel with safe recruitment and accessibility resources, contributed to Scottish Government work on domestic homicide reviews, and worked with the Improvement Service on a VAWG needs assessment for local authorities.

We also grew our Authentic Voice Peer Network, a space for professionals in the VAWG sector and participation roles to explore how best to embed lived experience across policy, practice and leadership. More than 100 people have signed up, with member-led sessions on power, remuneration and evaluation.



“

**I knew it would be special and it really was. It was empowering, invigorating and emotive – perfectly executed to make it impactful but also very chilled. Already looking forward to the next one!**

A milestone last December was Scotland’s first survivor-led Authentic Voice conference, designed and hosted by our AV Panel in Glasgow during the 16 Days of Activism. Attendees heard powerful survivor testimony that made clear why lived experience must shape decisions. The day closed with a call to action led by the panel, asking services and decision makers to take practical next steps and report back on progress – moving hearts as well as minds, and setting a shared commitment to turn insight into change.



Routes to Safety

Funded by the Nuffield Foundation, our Routes to Safety research explores how identity shapes a survivor’s journey – and where referrals and pathways fall short for people facing intersecting barriers such as racism, disability, immigration status or LGBTQ+ identity. The project centres lived experience alongside professional insight to identify where people get stuck, what helps movement, and where commissioning and practice need to change so no one is left behind. This new insight will inform practical guidance and policy recommendations in the year ahead.

Family courts and recovery

We continued constructive work with Cafcass, through our secondment, to improve practice in the family justice system. Together we are challenging beliefs, assumptions and decisions that leave adult and child survivors in harm, while highlighting and embedding the exceptional practice we see every day. This change must be matched across the wider family justice system, crucially the judiciary. Survivors need processes that are trauma informed, safe and timely. Our focus remains on survivor-centred policies, better data, and approaches to contact that prioritise safety and wellbeing. We have spoken publicly about the need to address retraumatisation and delays, sharing practical evidence on what helps. We will keep pushing for survivor leadership, confident professional practice and decisions rooted in evidence, not presumption.

Our calls to action

- ✓ We want to see services embed survivor leadership in design, delivery and governance; make trauma-informed practice the norm.
- ✓ We ask commissioners to invest in practical recovery support – alongside safety interventions.
- ✓ And we want to see courts and family and criminal justice systems act on survivor-centred reforms and the evidence of what works.





“

**I want to be visible and finally have a voice after 43 years of feeling like I don't matter. I want to change things for everyone, things cannot stay the same. Change is needed for survivors and surviving children. I want my voice to help end domestic abuse. Just talking to you about my experience has helped me feel validated after years of being ignored. I want to do this for the panel and voices of Hampshire.**

Survivor, Hampshire Authentic Voice Panel



“

**Knowing that the Changemaker group has played a part in helping other young people feel stronger, less alone, and more confident in seeking help has been one of the most meaningful aspects of this work. I truly believe the work Changemakers are involved with has a positive, lasting impact that will continue to benefit young people experiencing domestic abuse.**

Changemaker



# Influencing for impact

What we said this year –  
and why it matters



## Victims and Prisoners Act

We welcomed the Act and called for implementation that recognises IDVAs/ISVAs in statutory guidance, invests in community-based services, and ensures mandatory training on the strengthened Victims’ Code. We pressed for an information-sharing firewall so survivors with insecure immigration status can report abuse safely.

## IDVA/ISVA guidance

We contributed to the development of the guidance and responded constructively to proposals, advocating for clarity on role definition, supervision, training and qualification standards, and dedicated pathways for child and adult survivors.

## New Government

We welcomed the new Labour Government’s commitment to halving VAWG and we set out what a Whole Picture approach requires – sustainable funding, consistency across systems, investment in the workforce and better data.

## Autumn Budget

We called for investment that matches the scale of the national crisis – prioritising early help, community-based support, and quality assured perpetrator interventions with parallel support for survivors.

## ONS crime data

We highlighted persistent prevalence and urged long-term funding and standards. Prevention pays – in human terms and public value.

## NAO findings on tackling VAWG

We echoed the National Audit Office’s call for clearer accountability and measurable outcomes across government; offered practical models from our programmes to make systems join up.

## National Centre for VAWG and Public Protection

We supported the launch of a coordinated police national centre, and called for a strong role for specialist services and survivor leadership.

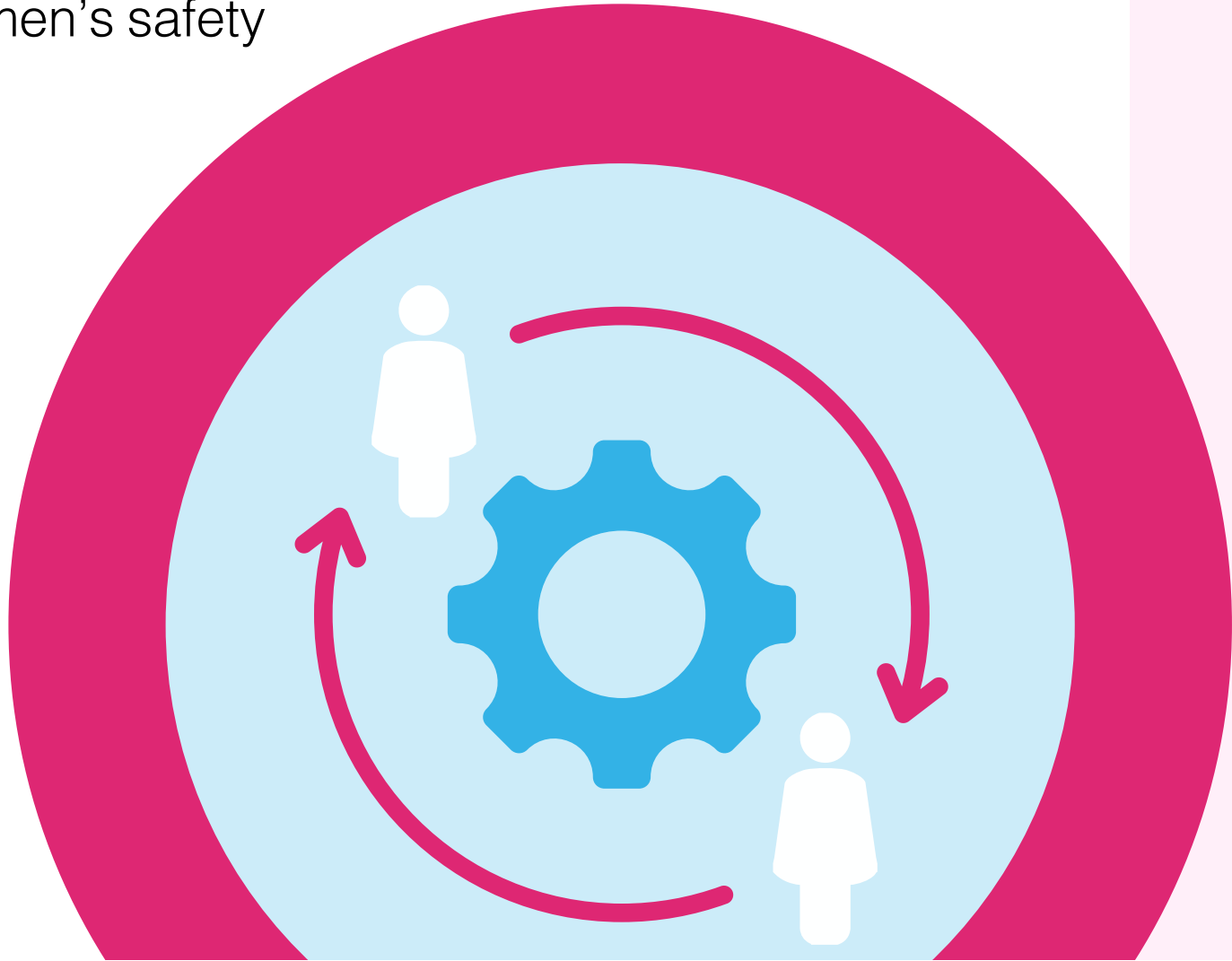


**Raneem’s Law to ensure better DA awareness in 999 control centres and the rollout of the new Domestic Abuse Protection Orders**

We supported stronger protection and accountability, and helped advise on implementation, informed by learning from pilots and survivor evidence.

**Standing against hate**

In the wake of national events and rising racist rhetoric, we reiterated our values of inclusion and antiracism, rejecting the weaponisation of women’s safety to justify division.



**Our calls to action**

**For Government:**

- ✓ Embed a Whole Picture, Whole Family approach in the UK VAWG strategy and fund it sustainably across departments. Ensure a joined up, whole system response across health, justice, housing, education and social care so agencies work together effectively and perpetrators are held to account.
- ✓ Lead a UK Government, survivor co-created update of the whole risk response covering tools, workforce capability, pathways, perpetrator management and data standards, with independent oversight, and set a clear national risk pathway.
- ✓ Transform the workforce through consistent, high quality training for police, social workers, courts and the NHS so risk is identified early and action is taken.
- ✓ Guarantee multi year funding for specialist services, including by and for services, so no adult or child survivor is turned away. Improve data collection and use, and publish transparent measures of progress.

**For Scotland:**

- ✓ Work alongside us and the wider Scottish VAWG sector in the new Government (May 2026) to build on the Equally Safe VAWG strategy, putting violence against women and girls at the heart of Scotland’s public health approach and investing in what works to end domestic abuse.

**For commissioners and funders:**

- ✓ Provide multi-year funding for core capacity and survivor-led innovation, with specific support for small specialist and by and for services. Commission whole-system, whole-family pathways that hold perpetrators to account, require high-quality training, and use shared data to improve.

**For the sector:**

- ✓ Keep collaborating across differences. We are stronger, and families are safer, when we move together.





# Our 21st year: visibility, gratitude and resolve

This milestone birthday was an important moment to look both back and forward.



“

**For 21 years, SafeLives has stood with survivors to challenge the systems that failed them and to build new approaches rooted in care, safety and dignity. Her Majesty The Queen has been a central part of that story — sitting with survivors, listening to their experiences, and making it clear that they are seen, heard, and valued. This Starfish Award is our way of recognising the ripple effect she has created by doing what abusers fear most: believing survivors. And as we look ahead, our new strategy will focus on stopping abuse before it starts, responding earlier, and supporting recovery — so that every person affected by domestic abuse gets the help they need to be safe and thrive.**

Ellen Miller, SafeLives CEO



We celebrated two decades of building evidence for IDVAs and MARAC, championing whole system approaches, and putting survivor leadership centre stage. Her Majesty The Queen received our Starfish Award for championing domestic abuse survivors. We welcomed the Rt Hon Dame Maria Miller as Chair. Our Pioneers and Changemakers featured in a national documentary, bringing truth and hope to new audiences. The message for the next chapter is clear: scale what works, with the urgency this crisis demands.



# Evidence and impact highlights

## Drive Project

Independent evaluations show large reductions in multiple forms of abuse for cases closed, with over half reporting no abuse at exit. New investment will expand delivery and tackle postcode lotteries in perpetrator responses.

## MARAC

Nearly **130,000** cases heard in the year to March 2025, with **150,000+** children linked. Phase two of the national data platform is strengthening quality, access and usability; new toolkits and guidance in Scotland support safe transfers and counter allegations.

## DA Matters (police)

Since inception, **70,000+** officers and staff trained; evaluations across multiple forces show improved understanding of coercive control and greater confidence to ask the right questions.

## Safe Young Lives

*Verge of Harming – Phase 2* published and *Empowering Engagement* resource released to support earlier, safer and more meaningful support for young people who harm; Children Affected by Domestic Abuse (CADA) programme, which has supported more than 600 children, funded to March 2026.

## Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy (DACA) standards

We have trained more than half of the existing DACA workers in Scotland on our accredited training since the project began in 2022 and launched new training in 2024 to give professionals skills and knowledge to manage domestic abuse court advocacy cases, from referral into the service to case closure.

## Authentic Voice

Our first survivor-led conference held in Scotland; new Hampshire panel launched; Echo sites building sustainable structures for survivor leadership.

## Public health datasets

Over **2,000** professionals and **380** survivors across more than **20** areas informed Whole Picture datasets – highlighting mental health, children’s wellbeing, housing, information and advice, legal and financial support as core needs.

## Quality and improvement

Growth in **Leading Lights** accreditation and practice communities; insights and case management tools under redevelopment with ‘by and for’ organisations to better capture outcomes and equity.

## Armed forces

New programme launched with the Army Benevolent Fund; spotlight report, toolkit and specialist training developed for national rollout.

**130,000**  
MARAC cases heard, with  
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children linked.

**600+**  
children supported  
through CADA

**70,000+**  
Police officers and  
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Picture datasets



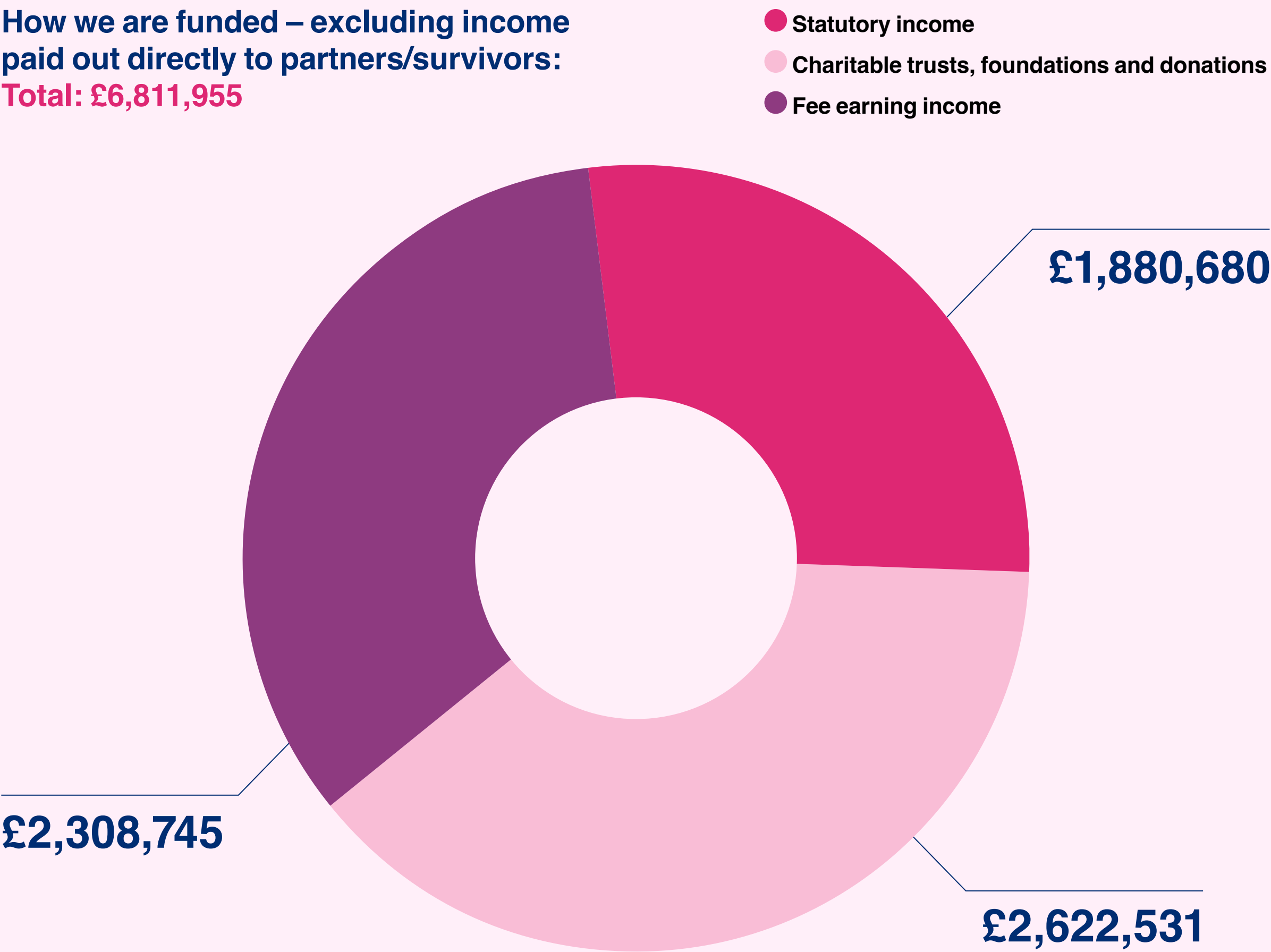
# Finance

Our total income, including funding for partners and survivor grants, was £10,629k, an increase of 7.3% over the previous financial year.

7.3%

increase in income over the previous financial year

How we are funded – excluding income paid out directly to partners/survivors:  
Total: £6,811,955

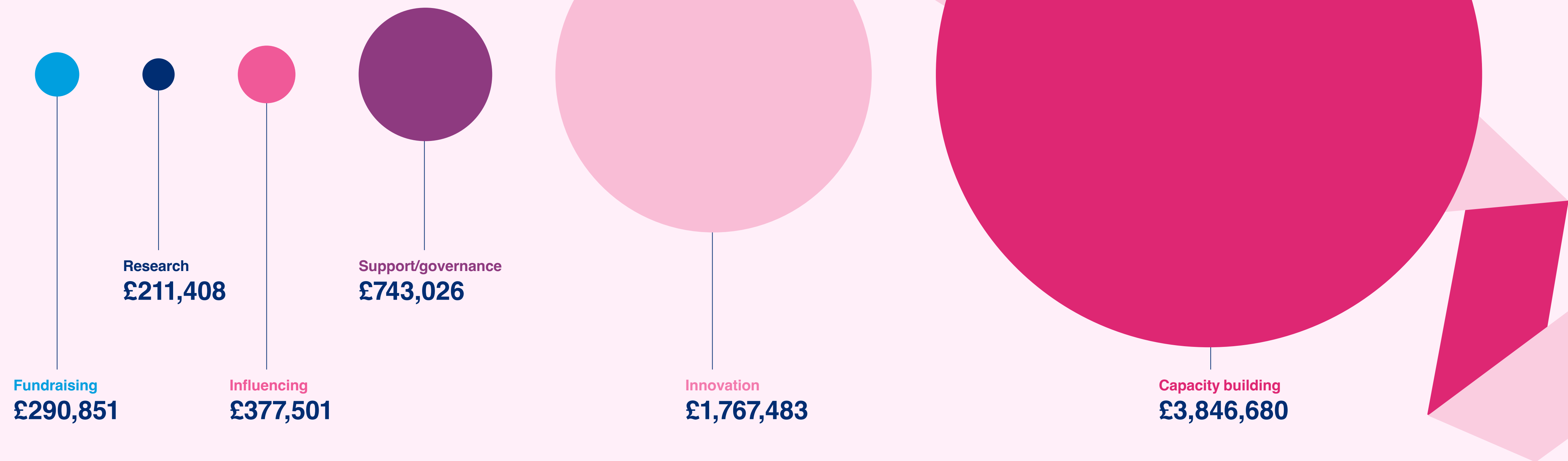


This is largely due to Government investment in the Drive Partnership with Respect and Social Finance to support the new DAPO pilots and the national roll out of the Drive Project.

We saw a small reduction in training income as our DA Matters programme moves into a refresher phase and a reduction in unrestricted grants following several significant one-off donations the previous year.



How we spend our funding:  
Total: £7,236,949



Following a strong year in 2023-24, where we were able to build up reserves thanks to careful cost management and support from funders and partners, we have been able to draw on those reserves to support planned costs and ensure stability in 2024-25. Total reserves have decreased from £3,584k at June 2024 to £2,911k at June 2025; unrestricted reserves now represent just under 4 months of core costs.

As we enter 2025/26, we will continue our priority work, underpinned by our new strategy, launched in 2024/25. Though we are facing a challenging external operating environment with a lot of changes to the landscape across local government and health, we have a strong focus on innovation, business development around our Whole Picture Framework and income generation through fundraising and fee earning training and services.

With the agreement of Trustees, we plan to draw on reserves again in year of c£539k as we plan a full management review to ensure a sustainable budget in future years.

We have built new partnerships this year and hope statutory funding will continue, with the long-anticipated Westminster Government's strategy to halve violence against women and girls in the next decade.



# Naming the problem

Domestic abuse is caused by people who choose to harm those close to them.

Preventing that behaviour and stopping repeat perpetration is central to ending abuse. Yet too often victims and children carry the burden while those who harm face few consequences.

Harm is compounded by attitudes and behaviours across the system. Victims are still blamed or not believed. Trauma goes unrecognised. Rights and dignity are overlooked in policing, health, housing, schools and the courts. This is even starker for people who face discrimination and intersecting barriers, who are too often treated as different or difficult.

Systems meant to protect are creaky and disconnected. Agencies do not consistently work together. Risk is not explored or reduced in a joined-up way.

The whole family is not considered, and the conditions for recovery, including a secure home, are not always in place. Harm becomes intergenerational when support is partial or delayed.

All of this sits on top of chronic underfunding. Services face a postcode lottery, with capacity spread thin and collaboration made harder for specialist charities. The result is inconsistency, gaps in provision and survivors repeating their stories while help arrives too late. It does not have to be this way.

Our 2025 to 2028 strategy sets out to change this picture, with six priorities that strengthen pathways, invest in the workforce, centre survivor voice and improve outcomes for families. Finding what works and helping it happen so every adult and child is safe, supported and able to recover.





# Looking ahead

Our strategy is focused and practical. We will deliver six priorities that use evidence, survivor voice and practice to drive change.

1

## Whole Picture Framework for ending domestic abuse.

We are developing a blueprint for local areas of what works and how to make it happen for all survivors, particularly those furthest from support, so everyone at risk of or harmed by domestic abuse can be confident in a strong and consistent whole system person-centred response, with a pathway for every family.

2

## Authentic Voice.

We are centring the authentic voice, expertise and rights of people with lived experience of domestic abuse, so survivors from all backgrounds, including those most marginalised, are heard and believed, and authentic voice is embedded as a key part of the response, with survivors seen as equals in influencing systems change.

3

## Evolving the risk pathway.

We are ensuring it better addresses the needs of adult and child victims and survivors at all risk levels, is inclusive across all communities, and reflects the realities of intersectionality through co-development with those who face additional barriers to safety, so more people can be supported to safety sooner through earlier intervention, and gaps in safety and support are closed through a more responsive risk model.

4

## Workforce development, and sector support and engagement.

We are increasing understanding and improving the response to domestic abuse across all agencies, so survivors have a response which meets their individual needs, and more responders are able to identify domestic abuse at an earlier stage and have greater confidence in their response to victims and to those who harm.

5

## Safe Young Lives.

We are finding what works for children and young people to keep them safe from harm in their family or their own intimate relationships, so more children and young people are supported to safety and provision is more inclusive, reducing gaps for those who have been historically overlooked or forgotten and improving the knowledge and capabilities of people working with them.

6

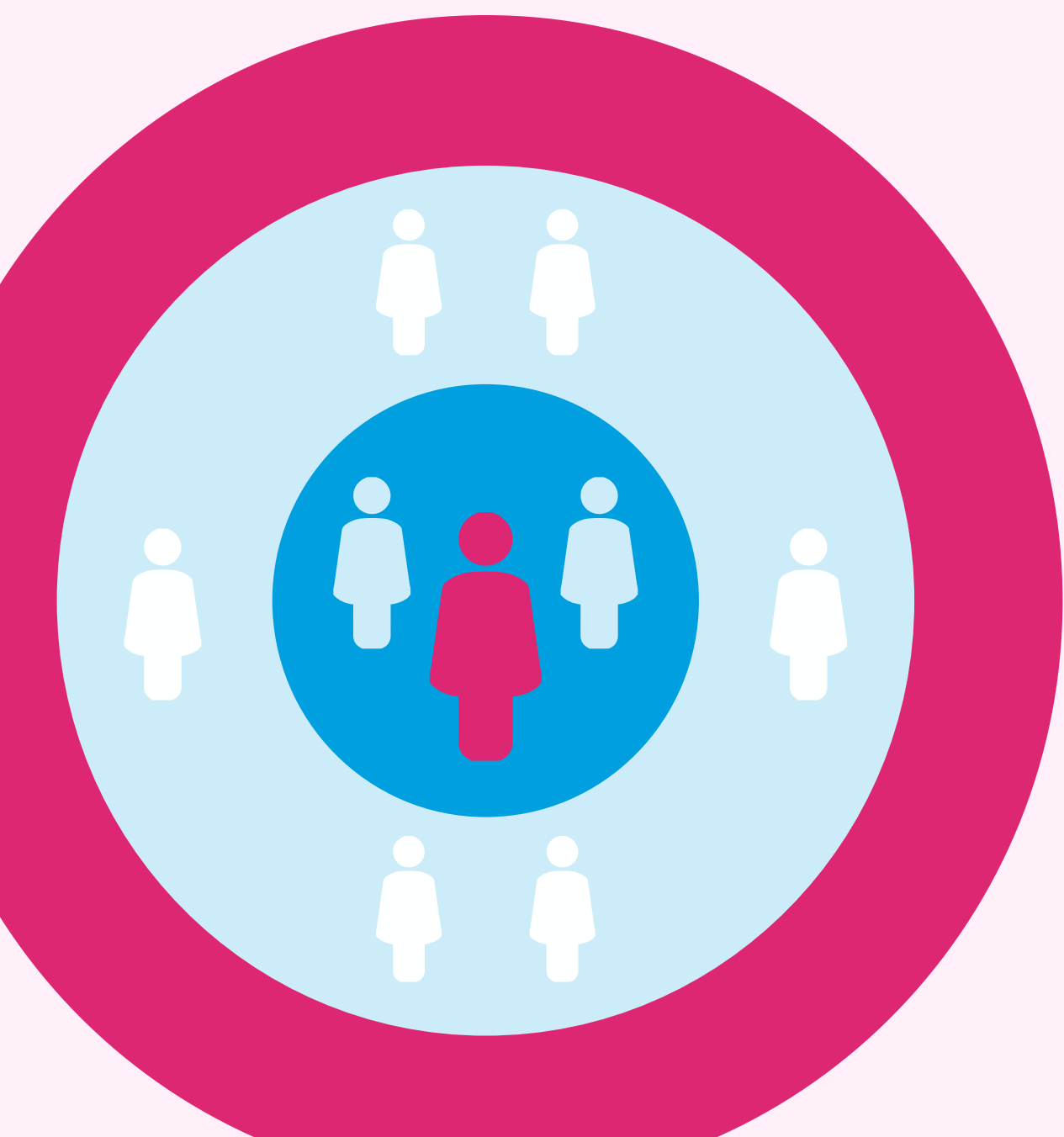
## Addressing perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Through our Drive Partnership with Respect and Social Finance, we will increase safety for adult and child survivors as more perpetrators are held to account and challenged and supported to change, and support for underserved communities is increased.



# What success looks like

- ✔ **More families are safer sooner:** earlier help reaches people who need it, particularly those facing intersecting barriers.
- ✔ **Risk is consistently identified and managed:** shared standards, robust supervision and better data drive practice.
- ✔ **Recovery is real:** survivors access mental health, housing and financial support without retelling their story at every doorway.
- ✔ **Perpetrators are challenged to stop:** quality assured interventions are available across the country, with clear accountability.
- ✔ **Survivor leadership is routine:** authentic voice structures are embedded in commissioning, delivery and governance.
- ✔ **The workforce is confident and connected:** training and communities of practice support colleagues to do their best work and stay well.



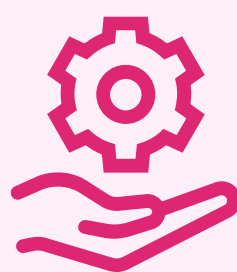


# Being a well-managed, values-led organisation



## People and culture

We developed a new People and Culture strategy, strengthening leadership and line management, investing in wellbeing and learning, and embedding reflective practice. Inclusion is explicit in our values and our anti racism work continues inside our culture and across our partnerships.



## Governance

We thanked Isabel for her stewardship as Chair and welcomed Rt Hon Dame Maria Miller to lead our Board through the next strategic phase. Our Scottish Advisory Group continue to inform and guide our work in Scotland.



## Financial stewardship

We maintained prudent, sustainable finances while investing in the infrastructure needed to scale impact. We diversified income and developed new services for new markets.



## Digital and data

We improved information management, cyber security and insights tools. We progressed the MARAC data platform and began development work towards a national domestic abuse data dashboard.



## Brand and communications

We are in the process of refreshing our brand to reflect who we are today and where we're going – accessible, evidence-led and survivor-centred. Our statements and commentary connect research, voice and practice to the issues of the day.



# Thank you

To survivors who share your expertise to make systems better – your leadership drives everything we do. To frontline professionals and specialist services – you are the backbone of the response to domestic abuse. To partners in policing, health, education, housing, justice and beyond, thank you for your commitment to collaboration and change. To our funders – from the growing number of individuals who fundraise for us to trusts and foundations who fuel our innovation – thank you for your trust and support.

**Together, we can end domestic abuse.  
For everyone. For good.**

## Our funders

*Our principal funders and supporters this year include the following, as well as other organisations who chose to remain anonymous:*

Army Benevolent Fund  
Aurum Trust  
Bleu Blanc Rouge Foundation  
City Bridge Foundation, the funding arm of the City of London Corporation's charity, Bridge House Estates (1035628)  
Epic Foundation  
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation  
Charles Russell Speechlys Foundation  
Garfield Weston Foundation  
Greater Manchester Combined Authority  
Kate Wilkinson & Harry Gaskell  
The National Lottery  
Community Fund Scotland

Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime  
Nuffield Foundation  
Peter Cundill Foundation  
Private family foundation managed by Greenwood Place  
Queen Anne's Gate Foundation  
Rayne Foundation  
The Department for Culture, Media and Sport  
The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
The Home Office  
The Ministry of Justice  
The National Lottery Community Fund (England & Wales)  
The Scottish Government  
The Welsh Government  
Vision Foundation



## Your Majesty, Ladies and Gentlemen.

As a lived experience Trustee and Pioneer, I am delighted to have this chance to say a few words about the development of Authentic Voice at Safe Lives

Authentic Voice has been a combination of dialogue and co-creation and has offered the potential to change not only domestic abuse policy and services but also the culture in which power imbalances and abuses are located.

Part of this dialogue included an immersive presentation by the then Family Friends and Survivors group to Your Majesty in 2016, after which we wanted to further push the boundaries of survivor-led work and so the Pioneer group emerged.

Together with Michelle Phillips as Head of Innovation, we developed a Pioneer manifesto which we named Authentic Voice. This aimed to avoid the tick box approach to consulting survivors by involving them at the point of design rather than just recording their feedback on delivery.

This concept has flowered, encompassing staff pioneers, the voices of the Scottish Authentic Voice panel and the remarkable young Changemakers.

Together we are now planting the seeds for change, but we aim to grow a forest.

Although small in number, we represent so many unheard voices and unknown experiences.

We do this work for the long term. For our children, their children, and for all the people we will never meet.

Our work will always be challenging and to do it well, we require support, resources and understanding.

But it is a unique partnership that is worth fighting for.

Authentic voice can reach in, empowering not only individual survivors, but also grassroots and by & for services that are so often the crucibles of expertise borne of experience, but who rarely have a seat at the table.

We live with trauma in this space, and that trauma is the reverse alchemy that can spin all the gold in our lives to straw.

But I see Authentic Voice as an agent of healing and justice and your support for this, your Majesty, and from all those gathered here, is golden.

Thank you.

**Ursula Lindenberg, SafeLives Pioneer speaking at SafeLives 21st birthday celebration at Clarence House in April 2025.**







## Support us

Help us improve the UK's response to domestic abuse, so no one has to face it alone – support SafeLives today

**[safelives.org.uk/support-us](https://safelives.org.uk/support-us)**

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