



Our Strategy 2025 – 2028

Find what works. Help it happen.

SafeLives



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Introduction



Our mission

is to end domestic abuse.



Our vision

is that, collectively, we become a society that can prevent harm, reduce risk and support recovery.



Our strategy

that is, what SafeLives will be doing to help achieve this — is:

Find what works: Help it happen

We put this into practice through the way we do what we do — our method:



We are driven and guided by our values of being inclusive, human, rigorous and brave in a real and meaningful way in all that we do. The people we work with – inside and outside the charity – are fundamental to our work and developing this strategy has been a process of listening, reflection and co-creation.

SafeLives works with all organisations committed to ending domestic abuse, while also directly influencing policy and attitudes. We aim to bring insight and support to drive changes in systems and behaviours, always looking at the Whole Picture. We believe our strengths in achieving this are:



1

Authentic Voice

is at the heart of what we do — centring the voices of those affected by abuse, and the diverse organisations who work alongside them.



2

We are independent

with a broad spread of funding, and no service delivery directly or as a collective, we can speak impartially on what works, without the same commercial interests.



3

We speak across audiences

to all organisations involved in abuse prevention and response, and to society more widely.



4

We are known and trusted

our ‘brand awareness’ is strong among those seeking to prevent, respond to and end abuse.



5

We see the whole picture

we don’t just look at one aspect alone, we’re actively working on solutions to prevent harm, reduce risk and support recovery



It’s about ending abuse for the victims of today – but also the victims of tomorrow.

Drive Case Manager



I'm learning to love myself again. I never thought I could say that.

Survivor supported through a whole family approach.

Inclusion is fundamental to ending domestic abuse, and we will continue to challenge ourselves to do better.

Fundamental to our work is the recognition that domestic abuse is experienced differently, with different levels of intersecting and compounding harm, additional barriers and systemic failings for people whose characteristics are used to exclude and discriminate against them. For example, disability and ethnicity, where lived experience and data show

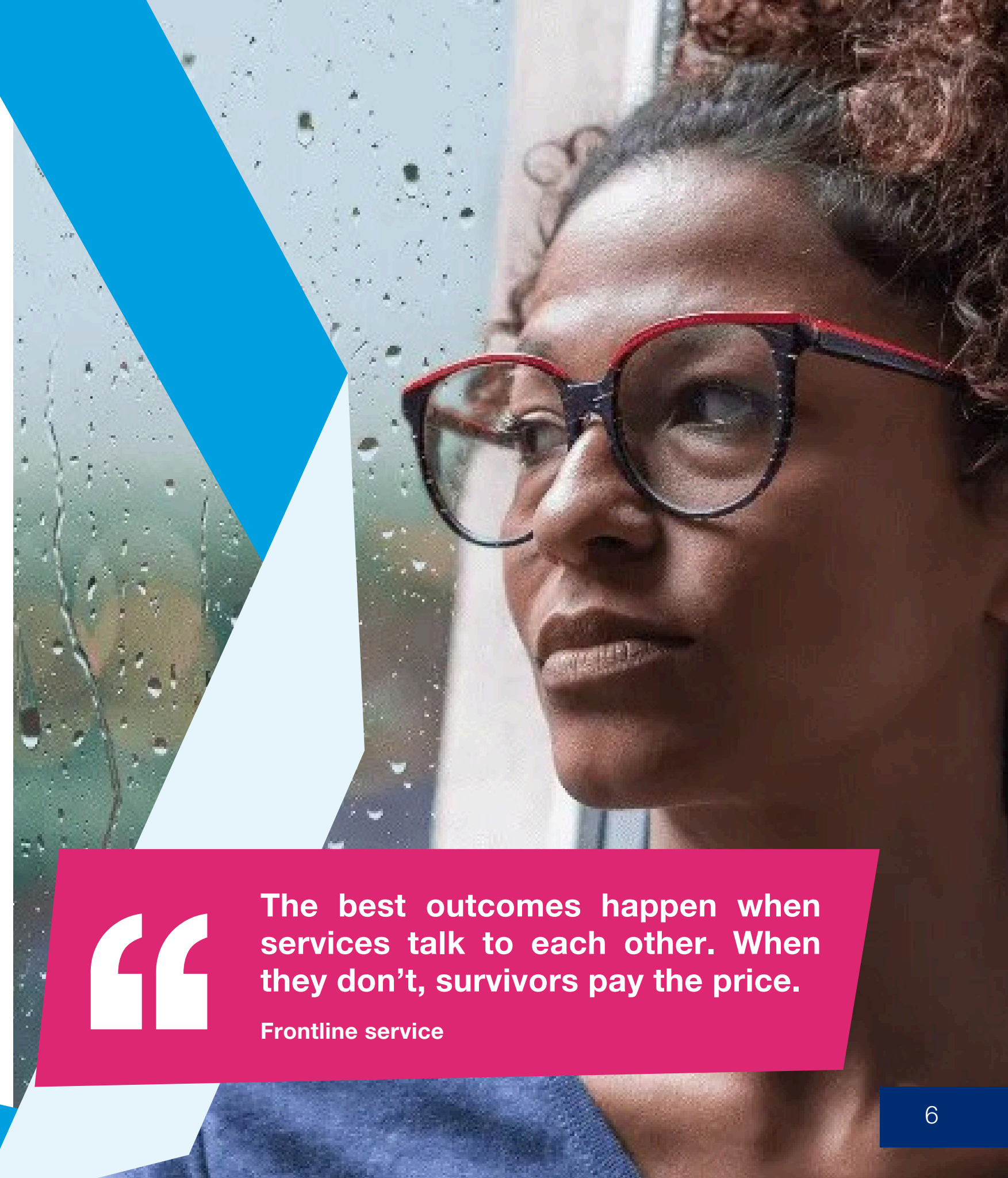
repeated systemic failures to prevent and respond to harm.

Although children are now legally recognised as victims in their own right across most of the UK, this is not yet universal. The experiences of children and young people — both within their families and in their own relationships — are still too often ignored or misunderstood.



The best outcomes happen when services talk to each other. When they don't, survivors pay the price.

Frontline service



Why is our work needed?

Because domestic abuse affects millions of adults

An estimated

10.4m 

adults in England and Wales have experienced domestic abuse since they were 16. This includes 7.1 million women and 3.3 million men¹.

In the year ending March 2024, police recorded

1.35m

domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes in England and Wales.²

In Scotland,

16.5%

of adults say they've experienced at least one incident of partner abuse since the age of 16.³

And yet,

fewer than

1 in 5 

victims report to the police, so the real scale is likely far greater.⁴

“

I had to tell my story so many times to different agencies. It made me want to give up.

Survivor

Why is our work needed?

Because many people face life-threatening risk

More than

75,000

people each year in the UK are assessed as at risk of being murdered or seriously harmed by domestic abuse.⁵

Every month, an estimated

8 women

in England and Wales are killed by a current or former partner.⁶

And the risk of serious assault and death is highest for a woman after she leaves an abusive relationship.

Between 2014 and 2023,

41%

of women killed in England and Wales were murdered by a partner or ex, compared to 4% of male victims.⁶

Of the women killed by partners or former partners, 43% of women were separated or attempting to separate from their partner.⁷

It is estimated that

1 in 8

women who take their own lives do so as a result of domestic abuse.

Every week, three women die by suicide, and nearly 30 women attempt it each day as a result of abuse.⁸



It made me realise I had been through coercive control. I didn't realise it had a name or that it was abuse.

Survivor, Public Health Approach survey.

Why is our work needed?

Because children are living with abuse every day

At the time they start school,
at least

one child

in every class will have been
living with domestic abuse
since birth.⁹



Over

105,000

children live in homes with high-
risk domestic abuse, and 78%
are directly harmed by the
perpetrator.¹¹



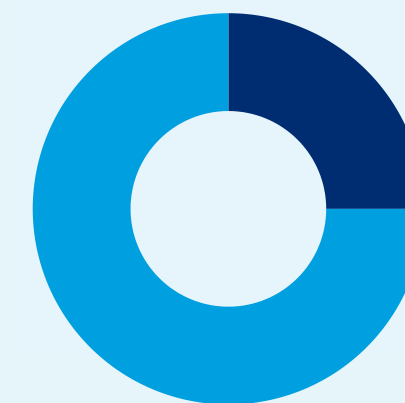
1 in 5



children in the UK experience
domestic abuse during childhood.¹⁰

25%

of 13–18-year-old girls report
physical abuse, and 33% report
sexual abuse in their own intimate
relationships.¹²



Why is our work needed?

Because survivors need the right support, at the right time

High-risk victims live with abuse for an average of

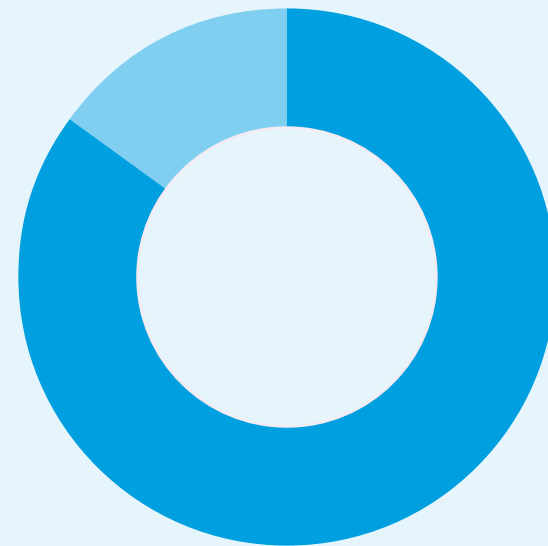
2.3 years

before getting effective support.¹³

In the year before receiving help,

85%

had sought support
five times on average.¹³



On average, victims experience

50     

incidents of abuse before getting the help they need.¹³

Many victims face additional barriers to accessing support because they are marginalised and minoritised and can feel 'hidden' from services.¹⁴

What is the problem?

Domestic abuse touches every part of a person's life. It's happening at epidemic levels, cutting across the work of multiple agencies, and manifests differently for every adult and child affected.

Tackling it isn't simple — it requires complex systems-thinking, determination, and collaboration. In shaping this strategy, we've listened to hundreds of survivors, practitioners, and partners. Their experiences highlight four key ways the current response is falling short.



1. Harmful behaviour

Domestic abuse is caused by the people who choose to harm those close to them. That is the root cause and preventing this behaviour and stopping repeat perpetration are central to ending domestic abuse. This is compounded by...





2. Responders' values and behaviours

Sadly, too often we still see victims being blamed, not taken seriously, their trauma unrecognised, and their rights, needs, and dignity overlooked. This happens when reporting to the police, presenting to health or housing services, during court proceedings (both civil and criminal), when a young person is underperforming or misbehaving in school, and in the way cases are portrayed in the media and on social media.

It is particularly stark for victims who already experience exclusion or discrimination, and who are treated as 'different', 'difficult', or 'damaged'. This is cruelty upon cruelty. It is unsafe, and it is unjust.

3. Response systems

As well as being judged and blamed, victim/survivors are too often let down by systems that are creaky and disconnected. Organisations aren't consistently working together; they aren't effectively exploring and reducing risks; they aren't thinking about the "whole family" — for example, the children and the person who harms may not be considered for support or action.

The conditions for recovery — like having a secure home — often aren't met, meaning people can't move from surviving to thriving, and harm becomes intergenerational.

This can be hugely frustrating — both for victim/survivors and for those working in and with organisations.



4. Resources

For years, work to end abuse has been under-funded. While funding does come from multiple organisations and government departments, it's usually part of larger, un-ringfenced budgets that also have to cover other critical services.

The result is a postcode lottery and often only partial responses.

For charities working directly with survivors — especially those supporting people with less trust in “the authorities” — funding is often competitive, making collaboration and the sharing of ideas and energy even harder.

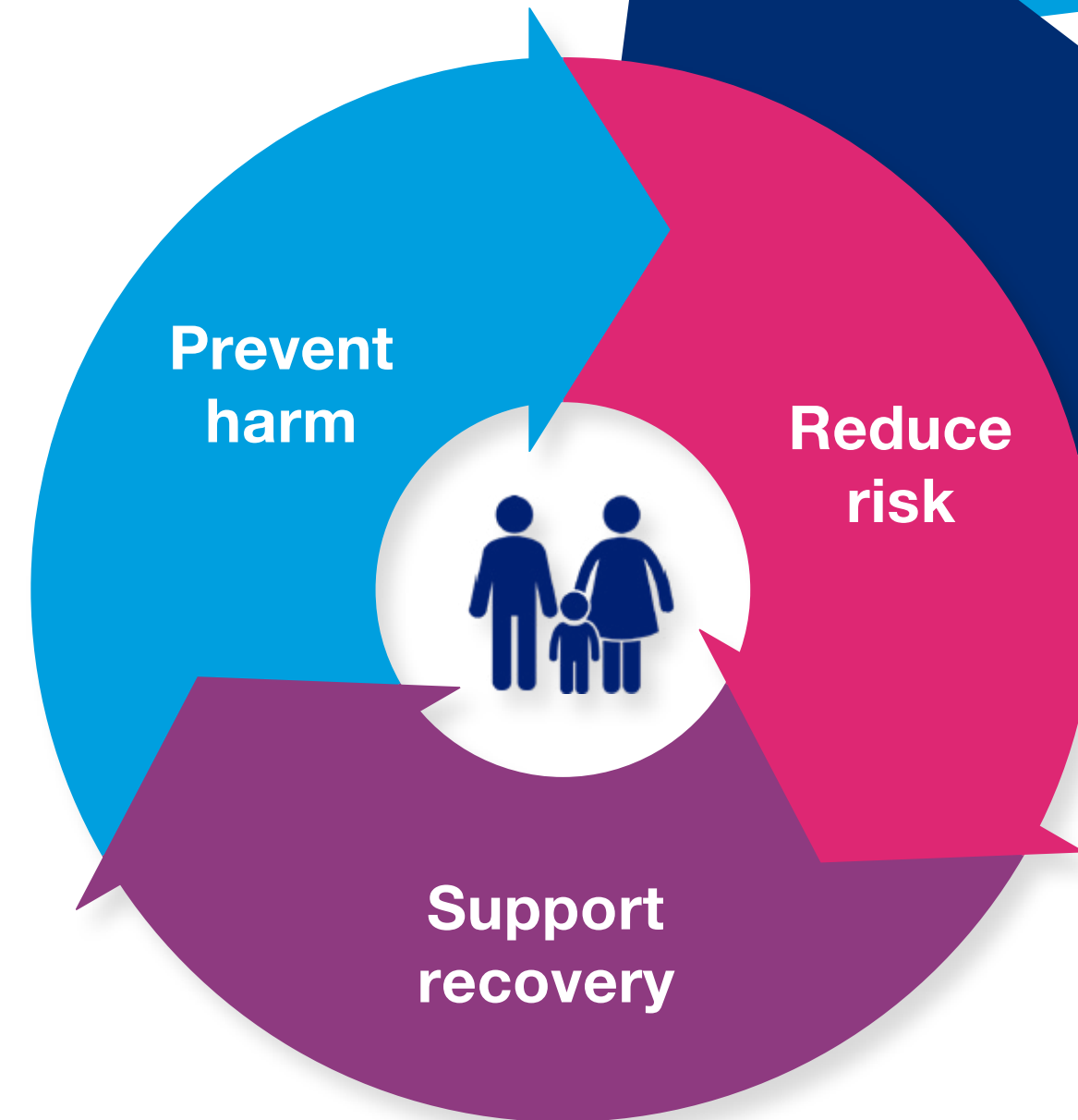
**It doesn't have
to be this way.**

How should things be?

Our mission is clear — to reduce and end domestic abuse. We have long advocated for a ‘Whole Picture’, multi-agency approach, working across many areas of the UK to drive understanding and action to look at the whole person and the whole family.

This strategy sets out a clear model for the three interrelated ways in which systems and organisations must work together around families and individuals to prevent harm, reduce risk, and support recovery — all three are essential to ending the epidemic of domestic abuse.

But this work is hard. The responsibility sits with many organisations and individuals, and the complexity and scale of the problems can feel overwhelming. We want to help make it easier.



To explain what an effective, person-centred approach should look like in practice, we're building on years of working with local and national organisations to create a simple, new 'Whole Picture Framework' — a set of statements about what should be happening.

It is organised into three sections:

1

Survivors' rights

These are survivor-identified descriptions of the moral rights that everyone should have, such as "I have a right to be safe" and "I have the right to justice."

2

Actions

Based on our extensive experience, we are gathering clear descriptions of what should be delivered in every area to form a connected 'whole system/whole picture' response. We are being specific about what should be delivered — for example, in housing, preventative programmes, and collaborative risk reduction processes.

We will also set out the actions needed to operate effectively as a multi-agency team, building on our experience of designing multi-agency responses to reduce risk, support recovery, and prevent harm, and drawing on simple, effective multi-agency best practice models from across different fields of social action.

3

Results

Building on the actions, and reflecting the requirements of legislation and national strategies, the framework will set out a simple set of metrics to measure progress.

We know this is an ambitious framework, and we expect it to be a live, regularly updated model.

It will recognise children and young people both as victims and, in some cases, potentially as perpetrators, and it will hardwire in the need for survivor voice and recognition of the intersectional impact of abuse to be central.

We have no intention of reinventing the wheel — many organisations have already done

phenomenal work in defining what different parts of the response to ending abuse should look like.

We want to use our position as a known and connected sector leader — at the forefront of best practice and workforce development — to bring that wealth of knowledge and great ideas together into a Whole Picture model, making it easier for everyone in the field to work collectively to prevent harm, reduce risk, and support recovery.



Without SafeLives' data we wouldn't have had the evidence to push for a new service.

Local Commissioner



A woman with red hair is looking out a window, holding a cup. The image is partially obscured by blue geometric shapes at the bottom left.

What are we going to do about it?

SafeLives delivers change, and all our work is informed by survivor voice.

We are not a frontline service providing direct support to people affected by abuse. Instead, we work with organisations, governments, and wider society to bring insight, voices, and practical transformation to end domestic abuse.

We've summarised our approach as:

Find what works: Help it happen

There are three ways we do this — our 'core activities'...

“

Despite what I've been through, I don't wish [the perpetrator] harm. I would like for them to get help and for something to be put in place to protect other women.

Survivor

Our core activities

Best practice

We research, design, and share practical tools, systems, and guidance for domestic abuse work.

Within the context of the Whole Picture — and increasingly ensuring the detail behind this is clear — this includes prevention (e.g. supporting the [Drive Partnership](#) to work with those who harm), reducing risk (e.g. creating pathways for those at risk), and supporting recovery.

We also undertake bespoke projects — including research, reviews of practice for local areas, and co-creation projects. These may involve convening different voices for reflection and innovation, or developing information products for a variety of audiences (e.g. our [Insights](#) and [Spotlight](#) reports). Our aim is to bring ideas and insight that drive real change in practice.

Finally, we offer quality awards, such as our [Leading Lights](#) accreditation scheme for frontline domestic abuse services.



You listened to us and you showed us the numbers – that gave us credibility in front of commissioners.

Service Lead



“

I felt validated for the first time in years. The practitioner believed me and didn't make me feel like I was overreacting.

Survivor

Our core activities

Workforce Development

We are the leading specialist trainer on domestic abuse in the UK, offering a wide range of courses and cultural change programmes — including accredited training (such as the Idva and Idaa programmes) — to organisations across the public, voluntary, and private sectors.

We also take a broader approach to workforce development — thinking about the types of roles, organisations (including those set up by and for the communities they serve), and people who should be involved in preventing and responding to abuse. Our court advocacy work in Scotland is one example of this wider approach.

Our core activities

Influencing

We aim to be a “quiet:loud” voice — influencing governments and wider society with practical solutions.

We raise up the voices of survivors and those working in the field, and highlight positive, innovative actions that can move us closer to ending domestic abuse.

We also spotlight where investment is needed, and where smarter or more collaborative working can help reduce and ultimately end abuse.

Wherever possible, we look for opportunities to influence wider society — through our work in the media, with our Patron, Her Majesty The Queen, and through specific funded projects.



When I see how sharing my voice has influenced national campaigns, services and laws...I feel powerful and proud of what we have achieved.

SafeLives Changermaker



We believe our reputation and impact are built on the way in which we work, which is summarised in our ‘method’ above:

Our strategy therefore sits within the context of multiple harms and an epidemic of domestic abuse.

In response, we will help make Whole Picture responses happen through providing best practice, workforce development, and influence. In developing each of these, we will listen, analyse, and innovate.

This is ambitious, and we know we can’t deliver everything with the same energy and pace within the resources we have.

While continuing to promote Whole Picture responses across the sector, we want to focus our development efforts on delivering projects and change in a select number of areas.

We have therefore chosen to prioritise specific areas of focus that we believe will make the most difference over the course of this three-year strategy, which will be reviewed annually.

Our priorities

We have identified six priorities that will shape our work over the next three years, ensuring we remain focused, effective, and accountable.

1



Whole Picture Framework for ending domestic abuse

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.

Our priorities

2



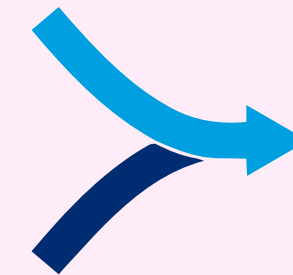
Authentic Voice

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.

Our priorities

3



Evolving the risk pathway

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.

Our priorities

4



Workforce development, and sector support and engagement

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.

Our priorities

5

Safe Young Lives



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.

Our priorities

6



Addressing perpetrators of domestic abuse

Through our Drive Partnership with Respect and Social Finance.

So safety is increased 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.

Together, we want to end domestic abuse for everyone by finding what works and helping it happen.

Find out more about our work.

Join our SafeLives community.

Discover opportunities to support us.

Supporting data and references

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If you would like to support
the work we do, visit us at
safelives.org.uk/support-us or
scan the QR code.

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

- Ursula, SafeLives Pioneer



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