

Date:

Thursday 22 January 2026 at 4.30pm

Venue:

Council Chamber, Dunedin House, Columbia Drive, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees
TS17 6BJ

Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy (Chair)

Cllr Katie Weston (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Jason French, Cllr Ray Godwin,
Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Barbara Inman and Cllr Alan Watson

Agenda

1. **Evacuation Procedure** (Pages 7 - 10)
2. **Apologies for Absence**
3. **Declarations of Interest**
4. **Minutes** (Pages 11 - 16)
To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on
18 December 2025.
5. **Scrutiny Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse** (Pages 17 - 40)
To consider information in relation to this scrutiny topic from:
 - Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP)
 - Thirteen Housing Group
 - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Housing Services
6. **Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme 2025-2026** (Pages 41 - 48)

Members of the Public - Rights to Attend Meeting

With the exception of any item identified above as containing exempt or confidential information under the Local Government Act 1972 Section 100A(4), members of the public are entitled to attend this meeting and/or have access to the agenda papers.

Persons wishing to obtain any further information on this meeting, including the opportunities available for any member of the public to speak at the meeting; or for details of access to the meeting for disabled people, please.

Contact: Senior Scrutiny Officer, Gary Woods on email gary.woods@stockton.gov.uk

Key – Declarable interests are :-

- Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's)
- Other Registerable Interests (ORI's)
- Non Registerable Interests (NRI's)

Members – Declaration of Interest Guidance

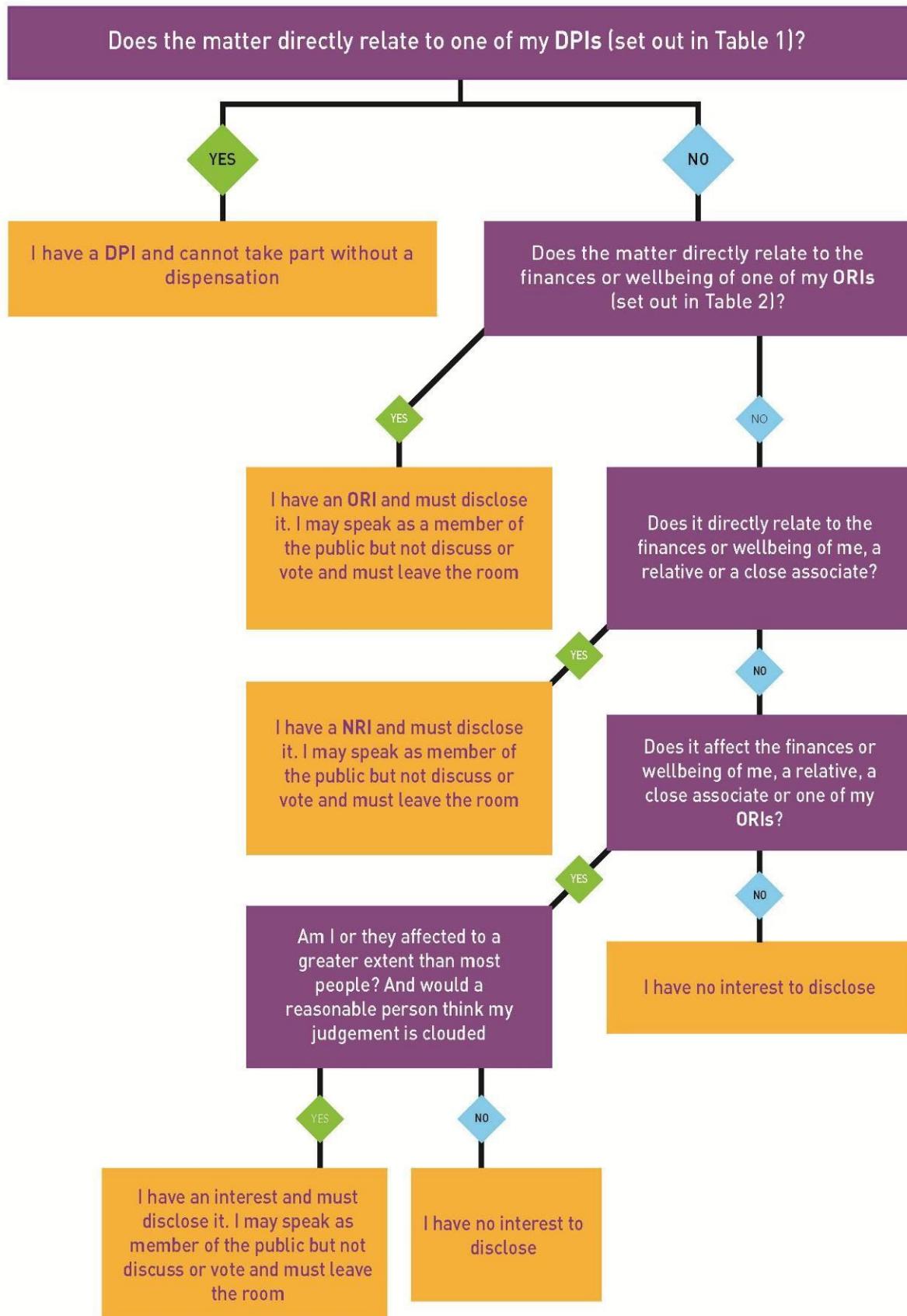


Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

| Subject | Description |
|--|---|
| Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation | Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain |
| Sponsorship | <p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p> |
| Contracts | <p>Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or</p> <p>a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council</p> <p>—</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p> |
| Land and property | <p>Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council.</p> <p>'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.</p> |
| Licences | Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer. |
| Corporate tenancies | <p>Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)—</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the council; and</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.</p> |
| Securities | <p>Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where—</p> <p>(a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and</p> <p>(b) either—</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p> |

* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2 – Other Registerable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

- a) any unpaid directorships
- b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- c) any body
 - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
 - (ii) directed to charitable purposes or
 - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

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Agenda Item 1

Council Chamber, Dunedin House Evacuation Procedure & Housekeeping

Entry

Entry to the Council Chamber is via the South Entrance, indicated on the map below.



In the event of an emergency alarm activation, everyone should immediately start to leave their workspace by the nearest available signed Exit route.

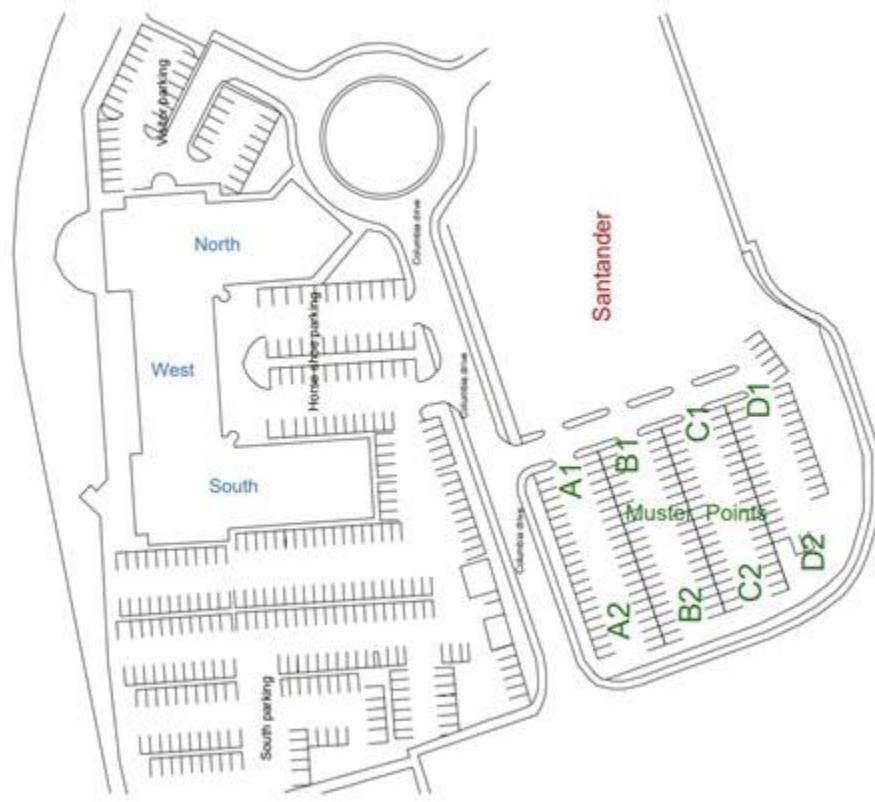
The emergency exits are located via the doors on either side of the raised seating area at the front of the Council Chamber.

Fires, explosions, and bomb threats are among the occurrences that may require the emergency evacuation of Dunedin House. Continuous sounding and flashing of the Fire Alarm is the signal to evacuate the building or upon instruction from a Fire Warden or a Manager.

The Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point is in the overflow car park located across the road from Dunedin House.

The allocated assembly point for the Council Chamber is: D2

Map of the Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point - the overflow car park:



All occupants must respond to the alarm signal by immediately initiating the evacuation procedure.

When the Alarm sounds:

1. **stop all activities immediately.** Even if you believe it is a false alarm or practice drill, you MUST follow procedures to evacuate the building fully.
2. **follow directional EXIT signs** to evacuate via the nearest safe exit in a calm and orderly manner.
 - o do not stop to collect your belongings
 - o close all doors as you leave
3. **steer clear of hazards.** If evacuation becomes difficult via a chosen route because of smoke, flames or a blockage, re-enter the Chamber (if safe to do so). Continue the evacuation via the nearest safe exit route.
4. **proceed to the Evacuation Assembly Point.** Move away from the building. Once you have exited the building, proceed to the main Evacuation Assembly Point immediately - located in the **East Overflow Car Park**.
 - o do not assemble directly outside the building or on any main roadway, to ensure access for Emergency Services.

5. await further instructions.

- **do not re-enter the building under any circumstances without an “all clear”** which should only be given by the Incident Control Officer/Chief Fire Warden, Fire Warden or Manager.
- do not leave the area without permission.
- ensure all colleagues and visitors are accounted for. Notify a Fire Warden or Manager immediately if you have any concerns

Toilets

Toilets are located immediately outside the Council Chamber, accessed via the door at the back of the Chamber.

Water Cooler

A water cooler is available at the rear of the Council Chamber.

Microphones

During the meeting, members of the Committee, and officers in attendance, will have access to a microphone. Please use the microphones, when invited to speak by the Chair, to ensure you can be heard by the Committee and those in attendance at the meeting.

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Agenda Item 4

Community Safety Select Committee

A meeting of the Community Safety Select Committee was held on Thursday 18 December 2025.

Present: Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy (Chair), Cllr Katie Weston (Vice-Chair), Cllr Bob Cook, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Jason French, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Alan Watson

Officers: Mandy MacKinnon (A,H&W); Louise Hollick (ChS); Aishah Waithe, Gary Woods (CS)

Also in attendance: Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE (SBC Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety); Alan O'Donoghue (Cleveland Police)

Apologies: None

CSS/37/25 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CSS/38/25 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

CSS/39/25 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Community Safety Select Committee meeting which was held on 27 November 2025 for approval and signature.

AGREED that the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 27 November 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CSS/40/25 Scrutiny Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse

The fifth evidence-gathering session for the Committee's review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse focused on a submission from Cleveland Police and an update on the survey recently issued to the Borough's early years providers.

CLEVELAND POLICE

As a key partner in relation to this scrutiny topic, Cleveland Police was approached for a contribution to this review. The force had provided a response to the Committee's lines of enquiry, and this was presented by the Stockton District Commander as follows:

- What are Cleveland Police's main roles / responsibilities around domestic abuse (specifically cases involving children)?: The force's core responsibilities were protecting life and wellbeing, investigating all reports, holding offenders

accountable, and adopting a multi-agency approach. Safeguarding was child-centred (via a 'through the eyes of a child' principle and a specific Child Strategy commitment), with specialist measures and support in place around early intervention and referral, protective orders (Cleveland Police was one of a few forces using Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPNs) and Orders (DAPOs) for longer-term safeguarding), and training and awareness. This was all within the context of a national legal framework (Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Children Act 2004, Working Together 2023), including emergency powers where officers could enter premises and remove children to safety if they believed a child was suffering, or was likely to suffer, significant harm.

In summary, Cleveland Police's responsibilities combined protection, investigation and prevention, underpinned by a child-first approach and strong multi-agency collaboration. Children were treated as victims, not bystanders, and safeguarding measures extended beyond immediate response to include school notifications, protective orders, and trauma-informed practices.

- How do force personnel identify at-risk individuals / families? How confident do they feel about spotting signs of domestic abuse?: Cleveland Police used a multi-layered approach, combining structured tools (officers applied the DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-Based Violence) framework during initial contact, with risk graded as standard, medium or high (though officers were trained not to rely solely on tick-box scoring)), professional judgement and contextual indicators (looking beyond physical injuries and considering behavioural cues, emotional state, and environmental factors), and information-sharing with other agencies (e.g. *Operation Encompass*, where schools were notified when children were present at domestic incidents).

Skills in relation to this issue were enhanced by the roll-out of Domestic Abuse Matters (DA Matters) training to all officers and staff. Developed with SafeLives and the College of Policing, this programme focused on recognising coercive / controlling behaviour and improving cultural attitudes. Over 1,500 personnel had completed the training thus far which aimed to give staff the confidence to recognise domestic abuse and respond compassionately (though it was acknowledged that challenges remained in consistently identifying subtle signs like psychological abuse).

- Are force staff aware of how to report domestic abuse? How does the Trust promote reporting routes and local support services?: Significant force-wide emphasis was placed on domestic abuse training so that staff knew how to address incidents (bearing in mind the majority of incidents were reported to Cleveland Police as opposed to reported by it). The force's domestic abuse policy dealt with the responsibilities of each and every individual involved in the domestic abuse process from start to finish – this was regularly reviewed and was currently in the process of being updated to emphasise no crime / no disclosure did not negate submission of a Public Protection Notice (PPN) and other recent developments including the use of DAPOs.

The Cleveland Police Protecting Vulnerable People (PVP) Hub had developed a decent working relationship with the Vulnerability Desk, and provided advice and support in terms of how they handled domestic abuse risk assessments, particularly in light of the introduction of rapid video response (RVR). All shifts had been visited by PVP staff at least once (giving support in the submission of a

PPN), and made it quite clear in all feedback that the office was available to offer advice and support regarding domestic abuse incidents. There were compliance measures within PVP using Power Bi to determine those PPNS that were not submitted timely, with immediate measures taken to identify and process those high-risk incidents. Feedback was given to officers regarding this to improve future submission.

- How does Cleveland Police support its staff around dealing with the issue of domestic abuse (e.g. training course options and any available date on the uptake of these)?: See previous comments.
- Any data on the number of domestic abuse-related referrals made to the Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub (CHUB) by Cleveland Police in the last three years?: The CHUB would be able to provide this data.
- Who / what is the responsible person / role within your organisation regarding written safeguarding policies / training / submitting referrals?: The responsibilities for domestic abuse and child safeguarding were overseen by Superintendent Strategic Leads (Supt Murphy-King and Supt Motson respectively) who, as portfolio leads, had overall responsibility for policy, training and referrals.
- Working with SBC and its partners with regards domestic abuse – how does this operate; is this effective; is there anything that could strengthen current arrangements?: Locally, the CHUB managed the operational teams from the partnership working together. Staff were co-located to improve working relationships and the timeliness of the responses – this in turn led to the improved safeguarding of children. Shortly, the 'front door' arrangements were to split (Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees), however, Cleveland Police would still be co-located with partners.

At a tactical level, the partnership was managed via the engine room – this included all partners joining together to manage governance, performance, and learning and development, alongside the operational business. The partnership arrangements were currently split across north and south Tees, however, they often covered the same themes and issues which occurred across Tees. Looking ahead, a central team structure would cut down on duplication and make things more streamlined – this would also mean learning and good practice was shared on a Tees-wide basis.

- Awareness of any national / regional / local developments which will / are likely to impact upon this scrutiny topic and how will this affect services?: Several developments were highlighted, including the Families First (Children's Social Care Reform) initiative, the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 – Section 20 implementation (police must notify schools if a child was suspected to be a victim of domestic abuse), and the continued expansion of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This was in addition to the new DAPOs (Cleveland Police was a pilot force for this 2025 national scheme), as well as the Tees-wide Domestic Abuse Perpetration Strategy (a 10-year plan to reduce repeat offending and improve multi-agency collaboration, it aligned with the Government's commitment to halve violence against women and girls over the next decade).

Welcoming the informative report, the Committee initiated a discussion around *Operation Encompass*. In response to concerns about the timeframe for informing schools when a child had been present at a domestic abuse incident, Members were notified that a case would be reported to an educational provider on the morning of the next day (even if the incident took place late on the previous evening). A further query confirmed that pre-schools / nurseries were not part of this operation and would instead be picked up through the local Children's Hub (CHUB) where staff would contact a relevant early years setting / health provider / GP after a referral.

Continuing this theme, the Committee asked about safeguards around data when liaising with other agencies. Members heard that the force adhered to the established data protection rules and also had information-sharing protocols in place – it was therefore confident that sensitive details were not being passed around. Further updates in terms of the current situation with *Operation Encompass* could be provided by the force's strategic lead for domestic abuse after the meeting.

Regarding identification of at-risk individuals, the force stressed with its officers the importance of looking for signs of domestic abuse even if attending a property for other reasons. When dealing with a case involving a child, the Committee asked if ages were recorded by officers and, if so, requested a breakdown of age-ranges for incidents across the Borough. Members were informed that ages were logged and that officers were expected to physically attend a property to assess and record a situation (this report was then checked by other force personnel as part of internal quality control / assurance). It was also confirmed that Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) were included in the roll-out of domestic abuse-related training.

The Committee enquired about the prevalence of domestic abuse-related cases across the Borough and heard that around 18% of all recorded incidents involved this type of abuse (it was also noted that there was an average of 30-40 domestic incidents across the Cleveland footprint per day). There had been a slight increase in cases over the past year, though comparisons to national data would need to be sought after this meeting.

Conscious of previous cuts to police budgets over the past decade and more, Members questioned whether the force could deal with this rise in identified domestic abuse. The Stockton District Commander expressed confidence that Cleveland Police was managing demand and gave assurance that domestic abuse was a force priority – this involved ensuring the right resources were available at the right times, with highly-skilled call-handlers an integral part in identifying and categorising issues which could then be acted on promptly. There were also flexible options to meet with domestic abuse victims when it suited them. The key message was that an individual would get an effective response if contacting Cleveland Police, with the force doing what was right for the victim and their family. Mindful of upcoming decisions around the latest police precept, Members felt it was important for the public to understand that it had to pay for good quality services and that this was a relatively small price to prevent much more significant issues arising.

A Committee query was raised around whether domestic abuse tended to happen more in certain areas (e.g. deprived locations). It was acknowledged that poor socio-economic factors could be a driver, though it was stressed that this type of abuse happened within all settings and that it would not be appropriate to target one particular group / community. Members also referenced the ongoing national priority on violence against women and girls (VAWG), along with past concerns around

victims withdrawing complaints due to the fear of repercussions from their abuser. Whilst it was acknowledged that some did not want to proceed through the criminal justice system, the force did not need the support of victims to go through this route.

Noting discussions at previous evidence-gathering sessions for this review, the Committee asked about the force's relations with Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs). Members heard that these were strong and that IDVAs played an invaluable support role outside criminal investigations (indeed, one was embedded within the Cleveland Police control room).

Questions were then directed at the benefits of DAPOs and what these brought over and above the court system. The Committee was informed that these orders had been extremely effective thus far and did not require perpetrators to be charged with a criminal offence (a DAPN could be served whilst a criminal investigation was ongoing). A significant number of orders had been applied for and served within the Cleveland Police footprint this year, and these provided an extra layer of protection for victims and their families. DAPOs could cover zones (not just individual properties) and be indefinite – should an order be breached, the offender would be put before the next court. Importantly, third parties could also apply for an order to be served (e.g. family member, neighbour, social worker) which also included potential positive requirements such as behavioural change programmes.

The Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety stated that Cleveland Police had been highly criticised for its poor response to domestic abuse in the past, but that there was now confidence in the work of the force and its partners around this issue. Clarity was then sought on whether the force's call-handlers were trained to listen to background noise for any clues of domestic abuse (as ambulance staff were reportedly skilled in doing) – this would be confirmed after the meeting, though it was pointed out that the force had the facility to listen back to a call so any signs of abuse could be retrospectively identified.

Concluding the item, the Committee queried what single development would make the biggest difference in terms of local domestic abuse matters from a police perspective. Increasing awareness of applying for a DAPO so this was not always a force-led process (particularly given not everyone reported abuse to the police) was identified as a key aim moving forward – this was another avenue of support for victims which all organisations could better utilise.

EARLY YEARS PROVIDERS

The Committee was informed that the survey sent out to early years providers across Stockton-on-Tees in November 2025 had elicited only one response. As such, the survey deadline had been extended to February 2026, and SBC Children's Services staff were now supporting efforts to get feedback from this important sector.

AGREED that the information provided by Cleveland Police and the update on the early years provider survey be noted, and further information be provided as requested.

CSS/41/25 Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP) – Previous Minutes (October 2025)

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP) meeting which took place in October 2025. Attention was drawn to the following:

- Recorded Crime & Disorder Report: Whilst some of the recorded crime and disorder statistics had risen over the August 2024 to August 2025 period, the Committee was encouraged by the stated increase in active policing and the sense of greater trust between victims and the force which had resulted in more cases being reported.

Members also highlighted the attendance of some police cadets at recent Councillor ward surgeries and praised them for being a credit to the force. The Committee asked if they were recognised by Cleveland Police and heard that the force internally acknowledged the work they undertook within the community. In addition, although the cadets were not usually involved at the SSP, they could be invited to the public element of a future meeting to have the opportunity to be part of discussions.

AGREED that the minutes of the Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP) meeting which took place in October 2025 be noted.

CSS/42/25 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme 2025-2026

CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair had no further updates.

WORK PROGRAMME 2025-2026

Consideration was given to the Committee's current work programme. The next meeting was due to take place on 22 January 2026 and would involve the sixth evidence-gathering session for the ongoing Scrutiny Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse featuring contributions from housing services (Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Thirteen Housing Group) and the Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership.

AGREED that the Chair's Update and Community Safety Select Committee Work Programme 2025-2026 be noted.

Chair:

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF CHILDREN AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC ABUSE**Summary**

The sixth evidence-gathering session for the Committee's review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse will consider submissions from the Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership, Thirteen Housing Group, and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Housing Services.

Detail

1. Mindful of the need to understand overarching 'system' co-ordination and accountability around this scrutiny topic, the **Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership** (HSSCP) was asked to respond to the following lines of enquiry:

- *Brief overview of HSSCP (purpose, structure, etc.).*
- *Any data regarding the prevalence of children's (particularly those in their early years) exposure to domestic abuse across the Borough over the last five years.*
- *Does HSSCP highlight this issue and promote reporting routes / local support offers? If so, how / how often?*
- *Previous / current / future planned work undertaken by / involving HSSCP in relation to this scrutiny topic.*
- *Working with SBC and its partners – how does this operate; is this effective; is there anything that could strengthen current arrangements?*
- *Any organisation/s not regularly attending multi-agency meetings, actively participating in meetings / contributing to assessments and support plans? What assurance is there that the overall 'system' around domestic abuse is working (monitoring / evaluation)?*
- *Any views on key areas of future focus relating to this scrutiny topic (e.g. existing challenges that need to be addressed; national / regional / local developments that will / are likely to have an impact).*

A briefing paper has been prepared and is included within these meeting papers. The HSSCP Chair and HSSCP Business Manager are scheduled to be in attendance to give a summary of this submission and address Committee comments / questions. It is intended that the HSSCP Independent Scrutineer will also be present in a virtual capacity to join the discussions.

2. Housing services were identified during the scoping process for this review as an important area to consider regarding this scrutiny topic. As the Borough's key housing association, **Thirteen Housing Group** was asked to respond to the following questions:

- *Thirteen Housing Group's role / responsibilities in relation to this scrutiny topic.*
- *How do Thirteen staff identify at-risk individuals / families? How confident do they feel about spotting signs of domestic abuse?*
- *Are Thirteen staff aware of how to report domestic abuse? How does Thirteen promote reporting routes / local support service offers?*
- *Who / what is the responsible person / role within your organisation regarding written safeguarding policies / training / submitting referrals?*
- *Data on the number of domestic abuse-related referrals made by Thirteen to the Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub (CHUB) in the last three years.*
- *How are staff supported in relation to domestic abuse (e.g. training course options and any available date on the uptake of these)?*

- *Working with SBC and other partners with regards domestic abuse – how does this operate; is this effective; is there anything that could strengthen current arrangements?*
- *Any views on key areas of future focus relating to this scrutiny topic (e.g. existing challenges that need to be addressed; national / regional / local developments that will / are likely to have an impact).*

A presentation has been prepared and is included within these meeting papers. Thirteen Housing Group personnel are scheduled to be in attendance to give a summary of this submission and address Committee comments / questions.

3. To ascertain the Council's housing-related role in relation to this scrutiny topic, **SBC Housing Services** was also asked to contribute to this session, with responses sought to the following:

- *SBC Housing Services' role / responsibilities in relation to this scrutiny topic.*
- *For any SBC housing staff required to visit properties across the Borough, do they feel confident about spotting signs of domestic abuse, and do they know how to report it?*
- *Data on the number of domestic abuse-related referrals made by housing services in the last three years.*
- *Working with local social housing partners regarding domestic abuse considerations – how does this operate; is this effective; is there anything that could strengthen current arrangements?*
- *Any SBC oversight of private sector housing in relation to domestic abuse (e.g. awareness-raising, promotion of reporting routes, etc.)?*
- *Any views on key areas of future focus relating to this scrutiny topic.*

A paper has been prepared and is included within these meeting papers. The SBC Assistant Director – Housing & A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees and the SBC Service Lead – Homelessness, Lettings & Nominations are scheduled to be in attendance to give a summary of this submission and address Committee comments / questions.

4. In advance of this session, Members may again wish to familiarise themselves with some associated background material in relation to this scrutiny topic:

- **Home Office: Domestic Abuse – Statutory Guidance (Jul 22)**
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62c6df068fa8f54e855dfe31/Domestic_Abuse_Act_2021_Statutory_Guidance.pdf (see pages 98-103: Agency Response to Domestic Abuse – Housing; pages 127-141: Multi-Agency Response to Domestic Abuse)
- **GOV.UK: Victims in their own right? Babies, children and young people's experiences of domestic abuse**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/babies-children-and-young-peoples-experiences-of-domestic-abuse/victims-in-their-own-right-babies-children-and-young-peoples-experiences-of-domestic-abuse-accessible#chapter-six-the-multi-agency-response-in-universal-and-targeted-support> (see Chapter six: The multi-agency response in universal and targeted support)
- **Stockton-on-Tees Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2028**
https://www.stockton.gov.uk/media/3841/Domestic-Abuse-Strategy-2022-28-Accessible/pdf/Stockton-on-Tees_Domestic_Abuse_Strategy_2022-28_Final_Accessible.pdf?m=1674053753577

5. A copy of the agreed scope and plan for this review is included for information.

Name of Contact Officer: Gary Woods
Post Title: Senior Scrutiny Officer
Telephone No: 01642 526187
Email Address: gary.woods@stockton.gov.uk

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide the Community Safety Select Committee with a HSSCP response to the key questions raised as part of the 'Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse'.

2. Introduction – An Overview of HSSCP

2.1 The Hartlepool and Stockton on Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP) was first established in April 2019. It is a multi-agency partnership made up of statutory and non statutory partner agencies from a cross Hartlepool and Stockton that have responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

2.2 The statutory safeguarding partner agencies, as defined under the Children Act 2004 (amended by the Children and Social Work Act, 2017) and in accordance with Working Together 2023, include the following:

- a) Hartlepool Borough Council
- b) Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- c) North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
- d) Chief Officer of Cleveland Police

2.3 The four lead safeguarding partners (LSPs) have an equal and joint responsibility for their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements / partnership. They set the strategic direction, vision, and culture of the partnership, including agreeing and reviewing shared priorities and the resource required to deliver services effectively.

2.4 HSSCP's vision is to ensure: "*Every child in Hartlepool and Stockton feels safe, secure and protected from harm; enabling them to reach their full potential.*"

3. Key Questions Posed by the Children's Community Safety Select Committee as part of its review into 'Children Affected by Domestic Abuse' and HSSCP's response to them

3.1 **What data regarding the prevalence of children's (particularly those in their early years) exposure to domestic abuse across the Borough over the last five years does HSSCP hold?**

3.1.1 HSSCP do not hold any data specifically in relation to prevalence of children's exposure to domestic abuse. HSSCP receive data on this from the Local Authority.

3.1.2 Over the past 5 years, for the period of 2020-2024 HSSCP's Performance Management Framework (PMF) included two key performance indicators in respect of domestic abuse, namely:

- The rate of domestic abuse incident with a child present in the year-to-date.
- The percentage of domestic abuse incidents with a child present within 12 months of a similar incident out of all domestic abuse incidents in the year-to-date.

Stockton Borough Council collected and reported these indicators on behalf of and to HSSCP on a quarterly basis.

3.1.3 In 2025 a new Performance Framework was agreed which included five key performance indicators in respect of domestic abuse, namely:

- Local Authority Assessment Factors (Domestic Abuse)
- Children subject to repeat plans where Domestic Abuse is a factor
- Children subject to a Child Protection plan longer than 12 months where Domestic Abuse is a factor
- Number of children referred to Domestic Abuse support services
- Number of children supported Domestic Abuse support services

Responsibility for collection and reporting of this data transferred over to Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council in 2025.

3.1.4 The domestic abuse data reported to HSSCP under the above indicators over the past 5 years was not broken down into age ranges to enable HSSCP to specifically comment upon early years prevalence.

3.1.5 The domestic abuse data reported in the HSSCP annual report over the past 5 years (at year end), including direction on travel, is as follows:

- 2020-21: 2003 children witnessing a domestic abuse incident ↑
- 2021-22: 2153 children witnessing a domestic abuse incident ↑
- 2022-23: 2058 children witnessing a domestic abuse incident ↓
- 2023-24: 2121 children present during a domestic abuse incident ↑
- 2024-25: 2305 children present during a domestic abuse incident ↑

3.2 **Does HSSCP highlight this issue and promote reporting routes / local support offers? If so, how / how often?**

3.2.1 Between 2021 and 2024, Neglect was HSSCP's key priority. From 2024 to date the key priorities are Harm Outside the Home and Trauma. The vast majority of work undertaken by HSSCP during this time period is in relation to its key priorities.

3.2.2 Despite domestic abuse not being one of the partnerships priorities over recent years, HSSCP monitor and respond to this issue in a number of ways:

- Receiving and scrutinising key performance indicators regarding domestic abuse and tasking actions to existing groups where required.
- Receiving minutes and assurance reports from Domestic Abuse Partnership and updates from OPCC re Perpetrator Strategy
- When undertaking Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews of serious child safeguarding cases, identifying where domestic abuse is a feature, highlighting key learning and responding to this learning through the HSSCP Engine Room, Training Sub-group and Procedures sub-group
- Regularly reviewing, updating and promoting training and guidance on domestic abuse across the multi-agency work force

3.3 What previous / current / future planned work has been / will be undertaken by / involving HSSCP in relation to this scrutiny topic?

3.3.1 HSSCP Partner agencies and partner representatives have been involved in development, review and implementation of domestic abuse strategies such as via the OPCC (Perpetrator strategy) or the Domestic Abuse Partnership (Domestic Abuse Strategy).

3.3.2 The Tees Procedures group, a sub-group of both HSSCP and South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership, undertook a review of the 'Assessing and Responding to the Impact of Domestic Abuse' in 2023, which was updated and uploaded to the Tees procedures website.

3.3.3 In 2025, when the Domestic Abuse JTAI theme was announced, the HSSCP Engine Room undertook a multi-agency audit on domestic abuse. Key findings were:

Evidence of Cross-Cutting Good Practice:

- Multi-agency commitment, passion and dedication in seeing the child as a victim and striving for best outcomes for the child.
- Good communication between multi-agency professionals involved
- Children seen as victims and were able to access therapeutic sessions / support

When it Works Well, Best Practice is:

- When a perpetrator is held to account by all agencies
- Partnering with the victim
- Strong relational approaches

What are the Barriers?

- When a perpetrator is such high risk and professionals are fearful - how do we still hold the perpetrator to account, partner with the victim and effectively engage?

The three recommendations are being progressed via the Engine Room's combined learning action plan. They are to explore:

- When a perpetrator is such high risk, how can we support professionals to work together to effectively engage?
- How to strengthen approaches to recognising risk, hold the perpetrator to account, partner with the victim and keep the child at the centre?
- How to promote best practice principles across two Local Authority areas with differing DA approaches / models

3.4 Working with SBC and its partners – how does this operate; is this effective; is there anything that could strengthen current arrangements?

3.4.1 HSSCP received an annual assurance report from the Domestic Abuse Steering Group in September 2025 which provided strong assurance regarding the effectiveness of arrangements, demonstrating that agencies from across the system are working to prevent, intervene early and respond to domestic abuse.

3.4.2 As per the HSSCP domestic abuse themed audit, current arrangements could be further strengthened by considering:

- When a perpetrator is such high risk, how can we support professionals to work together to effectively engage?
- How to strengthen approaches to recognising risk, hold the perpetrator to account, partner with the victim and keep the child at the centre?

3.5 **Any organisation/s not regularly attending multi-agency meetings, actively participating in meetings / contributing to assessments and support plans? What assurance is there that the overall 'system' around domestic abuse is working (monitoring / evaluation)?**

3.5.1 There was and is an indicator in the HSSCP performance framework around attendance from each agency at multi-agency meetings (strategy / ICPC for example) however this is not broken down specifically to domestic abuse.

3.5.2 There are partnership escalation processes in place that enables any professional to challenge another agency should there be concerns regarding attendance at multi-agency meetings or their contribution to assessment and planning. No issues regarding this has been escalated to the HSSCP Executive.

3.6 **Any views on key areas of future focus relating to this scrutiny topic (e.g. existing challenges that need to be addressed; national / regional / local developments that will / are likely to have an impact)?**

3.6.1 As per the HSSCP domestic abuse themed audit, Existing challenges and future areas of focus are:

- When a perpetrator is such high risk, how can we support professionals to work together to effectively engage?
- How to strengthen approaches to recognising risk, hold the perpetrator to account, partner with the victim and keep the child at the centre?

4. Key Officers

Majella McCarthy
DCS Stockton Borough Council and HSSCP Chair
majella.mccarthy@stockton.gov.uk

Leanne Stockton
HSSCP Business Manager
Leanne.stockton@hartlepool.gov.uk

Children Affected by Domestic Abuse

Fiona Heighton – Care and
Support Manager

Our role

- Provide safe homes and support for victims of domestic abuse
- Raise awareness among staff
- Offer referrals to specialist agencies
- Adopt a victim-centred approach
- Work in partnership with local authorities and agencies (MARAC, MATAC, Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership)
- Domestic Abuse/ Safeguarding Policies reviewed every 3 years

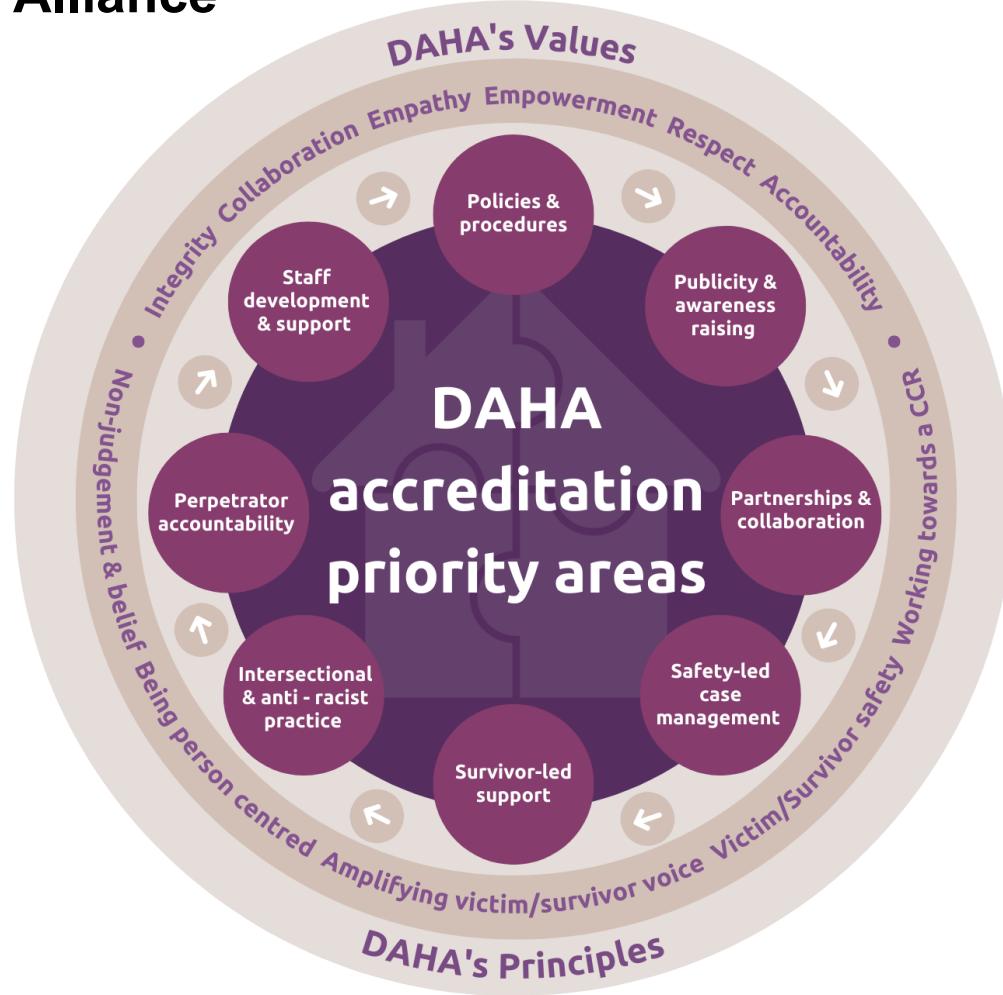


Domestic abuse and Regulator of Social Housing standards

- Awareness and training for all staff, including specialist courses
- Victim-centred approach to support tenants experiencing domestic abuse
- Clear reporting and referral processes using DASH risk checklist
- Access to specialist support and advice for customers
- Partnership working with local authorities and multi-agency forums
- Data monitoring and continuous improvement of services
- Compliance with Consumer Standards: Neighbourhood, Transparency, Safety



Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA)



Importance of Thirteen-wide awareness

- Domestic abuse affects our staff and our customers
- Reinforces staff awareness of their safeguarding duties and the importance of promptly reporting any concerns or issues
- Reassures colleagues to trust their instincts and reinforces that their professional judgement is valid
- Awareness empowers everyone to recognise signs of abuse, respond safely, and provide support effectively



Reporting domestic abuse

Staff awareness

- Clear internal guidance and mandatory training
- Victim disclosure alone triggers immediate support
- Designated Domestic Abuse Champions - in every service directorate to drive awareness, lead advocacy, and cultural change



Promotion of reporting routes

Website, social media campaigns, and policy transparency
Signposting to local services (e.g., Harbour, My Sisters Place, Halo Project)



Tenancy Support

- Supported 664 Thirteen customers experiencing domestic abuse
- Sustained 139 tenancies through our stay-at-home (target hardening) scheme



Working in Partnership

- Strong relationship between Stockton Housing Homeless Team and our Domestic Abuse (DA) team
- Regular collaboration on DA cases
- Mirrored banding process to avoid victim-survivors undergoing two separate assessments
- Active participation in the DA Strategic Group
- Newly involved in the Teesside Perpetrator Strategic Group
- Exploring opportunities to link in on target hardening provision in Stockton



Future focus and challenges

- Under-reporting and stigma
- Complex needs requiring multi-agency response
- Housing pressures and safe accommodation
- Digital abuse and technology-facilitated harm
- Funding pressures
- National developments: Domestic Abuse Act 2021, VAWG Strategy, Criminal Justice reforms
- Local connection changes
- Future priorities: early identification, enhanced training, improved data sharing, child safeguarding, perpetrator programmes



Questions?

SBC HOUSING SERVICES

Question: SBC Housing Services' role / responsibilities in relation to this scrutiny topic.

Service response:

- The **Homelessness Service** will have direct contact and provide support to individuals who are homeless because of domestic abuse. And/or will be supporting individuals who have experienced domestic abuse.
- The wider **Housing Service** will also have officers visiting residents in their homes (including our Private Sector Housing and Disabled Facilities Grants Teams).

Question: For any SBC housing staff required to visit properties across the Borough, do they feel confident about spotting signs of domestic abuse, and do they know how to report it?

Service response:

- We aim to ensure all team members receive sufficient training so they feel confident in identifying signs of domestic abuse (levels of training will vary depending on role).
- All new starters are required to complete Introduction to Safeguarding training. Each team member is required to refresh this training every 2 years.
- We are currently reviewing our employee Training and Development plans. Rather than encouraging colleagues to attend Safeguarding Adult and Children's refresher training (every 2 years) our intention is to make this mandatory for all Housing and Fairer Stockton-on-Tees team members (regardless of role).
- Wider TSAB training courses are shared with Service Managers who will review and identify suitable training for their team members.

Question: Data on the number of domestic abuse-related referrals made by housing services in the last three years.

Service response:

We are unable to provide this information. Whilst referrals will be made, we do not record the number of referrals made.

Question: Working with local social housing partners regarding domestic abuse considerations – how does this operate; is this effective; is there anything that could strengthen current arrangements?

Service response:

There is limited direct working with social housing providers regarding domestic abuse regarding domestic abuse considerations. Engagement is undertaken for example via the following routes:

- The Homelessness Service brings together partners who are working/supporting those experiencing homelessness via a Multi-Agency Forum, the Forum is attended by social housing providers and organisations supporting those who are experiencing domestic abuse.
- We will also engage with tenants of Registered Providers and provide advice and support (via the Homelessness Service and the Lettings & Nomination service).

Question: Any SBC oversight of private sector housing in relation to domestic abuse (e.g. awareness-raising, promotion of reporting routes, etc.)?

Service response:

All visiting officers complete a service Safeguarding Visit Form when they visit a property which also provides additional information on how to report.

Question: Any views on key areas of future focus relating to this scrutiny topic (e.g. existing challenges that need to be addressed; national / regional / local developments that will / are likely to have an impact

Service response:

Government has recently published 'A National Plan to End Homelessness', section 3.4.7 includes a specific reference to Domestic Abuse [A National Plan to End Homelessness - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-national-plan-to-end-homelessness)

Additional information:

- During the period 1.4.24 to 31.3.25: there were 78 presentations to the Homelessness Service from families fleeing domestic abuse (which included 6 presentations from families fleeing domestic abuse from an associated person).
- The Homelessness Service is looking to explore how it can support children who may be placed in temporary accommodation when a homelessness presentation is made (regardless of the reason for the presentation) and will be meeting with Family Action.
- The Homelessness Service Manager represents the wider service at the corporate Domestic Abuse Steering Group.

January 2026

Community Safety Select Committee

Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse

Outline Scope

| | |
|--|---|
| Scrutiny Chair (Project Director): Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy | Contact details: ann.mccoy@stockton.gov.uk |
| Scrutiny Officer (Project Manager): Gary Woods | Contact details: gary.woods@stockton.gov.uk 01642 526187 |
| Departmental Link Officer: Louise Hollick (SBC Assistant Director – Early Help, Safeguarding and CIOC) Mandy MacKinnon (SBC Strategic Health & Wellbeing Manager) | Contact details: louise.hollick@stockton.gov.uk mandy.mackinnon@stockton.gov.uk |
| Programme Management Office Link Aishah Waithe (SBC Senior Project Manager – Early Intervention & Prevention) | Contact details: aishah.waithe@stockton.gov.uk |

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

The review will contribute to the following Stockton-on-Tees Plan 2024-2028 priorities:

- *Priority 1: The best start in life to achieve big ambitions:* We will support all children to have the best possible start in life, within a safe and inclusive community where everyone can thrive.
- *Priority 2: Healthy & Resilient Communities:* We will continue to work with our partners through the Safer Stockton Partnership to make Stockton-on-Tees a safer place, where people are protected from serious harm and live in communities that are safe and welcoming (Building safe and connected communities).

The outputs from this review will also contribute to the SBC *Powering Our Future* transformation review of 'Early Intervention and Prevention'.

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

In December 2023, Foundations (the national What Works Centre for Children & Families) reported figures which revealed that at least 827,000 children in England and Wales may have suffered domestic abuse by the end of 2023. Amid concerns that the numbers of children affected by domestic abuse had escalated, the organisation called for an urgent focus on testing the most promising approaches to strengthen support for children.

The impact of domestic abuse is felt by children regardless of their age, and this is now recognised in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Children exposed to domestic abuse or experiencing domestic abuse in their own relationships are regarded as victim-survivors in their own right.

Domestic abuse can seriously affect families and the physical, mental and emotional health, wellbeing and development of children and young people. Children and young people can develop emotional, behavioural and developmental issues such as anxiety, challenging and aggressive behaviour or withdrawal, delayed speech, language and communication and low self-esteem, affecting their ability to form healthy relationships and educational attainment. In 2020-2021, the local domestic abuse service found that children were exposed to three-quarters of domestic abuse incidents, whilst a third of referrals to Children's Services were related to domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse can be experienced by anyone and disproportionately affects children and young people. Domestic abuse can be one of the factors resulting in child exploitation and can contribute and exacerbate multiple disadvantage. In 2020-2021, services in Stockton-on-Tees reported that 17% of homeless presentations were related to domestic abuse and 20% of substance misuse service users had experienced domestic abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2028 for Stockton-on-Tees highlights the importance of intervening early to minimise the impact of domestic abuse on children. As such, the main aims for this review will be to:

- Understand the impact of domestic abuse on children, the extent of this issue across the Borough, and the ways in which those who experience this are identified. In particular, explore how domestic abuse impacts children in their early years, and the extent of the lasting impact as they grow older.
- Articulate the current local offer for children and young people affected by domestic abuse, providing clarity for frontline professionals, families and children / young people.
- Explore opportunities for early intervention (focusing on those services engaging with children / families with children in their early years) to protect children from the enduring impacts of domestic abuse.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

When children experience domestic abuse in their early years, how does this then impact them throughout their lives (immediate and longer-term)? Are there variations in terms of a child's experience / impact of domestic abuse across different cultures?

What local data exists in relation to children experiencing domestic abuse and / or the subsequent impact of this?

How are children at risk of / experiencing domestic abuse identified locally? What are the reporting routes for professionals and how are these reinforced with staff?

What is the Local Authority's offer for children affected by domestic abuse in Stockton-on-Tees? Has this evolved over time and is it effective? How are support services promoted?

What is in place across local partners (particularly those engaging with children / families with children aged 0-5) to identify and mitigate the effects of domestic abuse on children in the Borough (including involvement in multi-agency arrangements)?

How does the Council and its partners capture the voice of children themselves when considering / reflecting upon their service offer?

Does the existing service offer from individual organisations contribute effectively to a whole 'system' approach to the provision of domestic abuse support for children?

What evidence-based practice exists to tackle and reduce the impact of domestic abuse on children who have been exposed to or experienced this in their early years?

What national / regional / local developments will / are likely to impact upon this scrutiny topic and how will this affect services?

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Council, Cabinet, health sector, police, schools, early years providers, families and young people.

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

8 months (report to Cabinet in March 2026)

What information do we need?

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

- Home Office: Domestic Abuse – Statutory Guidance (Jul 22)
- GOV.UK: Victims in their own right? Babies, children and young people's experiences of domestic abuse (part 3: opportunities to identify and intervene early)
- SBC Children and Young People Select Committee: Scrutiny Review of Domestic Abuse and its Impact on Children – Final Report (Jan 20)

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

- Children's Services (Early Help, Safeguarding and CIOC)
- Public Health

What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?

- What domestic abuse is and how it involves / can involve children
- Known impact of domestic abuse on children
- Identification / reporting routes / local data
- Local Authority support offer / future plans
- Capturing the voice of the child
- Evidence-based practice to tackle this issue

Domestic Abuse Steering Group

- Previous / current / future work re. this topic

Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP)

- Previous / current / future work re. this topic
- 'System' co-ordination / accountability

Cleveland Police

- Identification of at-risk individuals / families
- Working with partners

Early Years Providers

- Identification of at-risk individuals / families
- Awareness / promotion of reporting routes

| | |
|---|--|
| North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) | ➤ 'System' considerations around this topic ➤ National / regional developments re. this topic |
| Primary Care Networks (PCNs) | ➤ Identification of at-risk individuals / families ➤ Awareness / promotion of reporting routes ➤ Working with the Council / NHS partners |
| North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (Maternity) | |
| Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (Health Visitors) | |
| Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust | ➤ Mental health impact of domestic abuse |
| Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Office (Regional Lead) | ➤ National / regional developments re. this topic ➤ Views on local offer / strategies |
| Harbour | ➤ Local data / support offer ➤ Capturing the voice of the child ➤ Working with partners |
| Housing Services (SBC / Thirteen) | ➤ Identification of at-risk individuals / families ➤ Awareness / promotion of reporting routes |

How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)

Committee meetings, reports, research, case studies.

How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?

Committee meetings, information submissions.

How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. This review will be mindful of these factors.

How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

Stockton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA): The current Stockton JSNA includes a (now dated) section on 'Domestic abuse victims' – references to children are incorporated throughout.

Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2030: *All children and families have the best start in life* – Commitments (Safe from harm): Children and young people are safe from harm and safe in their communities, protected from bullying, neglect and abuse in the home, online and in the community. *Everyone lives in healthy and sustainable places and communities* – Commitments (Domestic Abuse): We want everyone living or working in Stockton-on-Tees to feel safe, supported and protected from domestic abuse, regardless of their age, sex, gender, sexuality, disability, socio-economic status, faith or background.

Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and / or transformation:

This review will seek to make recommendations which contribute to the provision of an effective multi-agency approach towards supporting children and young people who experience domestic abuse in Stockton-on-Tees.

With a focus on early intervention, reducing the impact of domestic abuse on individuals may reduce the need (demand) for services. This review will contribute to greater understanding of interventions and approaches which are effective at protecting children and young people from harm. The review will also identify where services and practice can be improved.

Project Plan

| Key Task | Details/Activities | Date | Responsibility |
|----------------------------|--|--|---|
| Scoping of Review | Information gathering | May 2025 | Scrutiny Officer Link Officer |
| Tri-Partite Meeting | Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review | 07.05.25 | Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer |
| Agree Project Plan | Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee | 22.05.25 | Select Committee |
| Publicity of Review | Determine whether Communications Plan needed | TBC | Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer |
| Obtaining Evidence | <p>SBC • Children's Services • Public Health</p> <p>DA Steering Group Harbour</p> <p>NTHFT (Maternity) HDFT (Health Visitors) TEWV (CAMHS)</p> <p>NENC ICB Primary Care Networks</p> <p>Cleveland Police Early Years Providers</p> <p>HSSCP Housing Services</p> | 26.06.25 31.07.25 25.09.25 30.10.25 18.12.25 22.01.26 | Select Committee |

| | | | |
|--|---|-------------------|---|
| Members decide recommendations and findings | Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations | 26.02.26 | Select Committee |
| Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders | Circulation of Report | March 2026 | Scrutiny Officer |
| Tri-Partite Meeting | Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations | TBC | Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer |
| Final Agreement of Report | Approval of final report by Committee | 26.03.26 | Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director |
| Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee | Consideration of report | [19.05.26] | Executive Scrutiny Committee |
| Report to Cabinet / Approving Body | Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet | 16.04.26 | Cabinet / Approving Body |

Agenda Item 6

COMMUNITY SAFETY SELECT COMMITTEE Work Programme 2025-2026

| Date (4.30pm unless stated) | Topic | Attendance |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| 1 May 2025 | CANCELLED | |
| 22 May | Monitoring: Action Plan – Welcoming and Safe Town Centres Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (Draft) Scope and Project Plan | Sharon Cooney Louise Hollick / Mandy MacKinnon |
| 26 June | Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Early Help, Safeguarding and Children in our Care (Children's Services)◦ Public Health (Adults, Health and Wellbeing) | Louise Hollick Mandy MacKinnon |
| 31 July | Monitoring: Progress Update – Outdoor Play Provision Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Domestic Abuse Steering Group• Harbour Minutes of the Safer Stockton Partnership (March & May 2025) | Neil Mitchell Sarah Bowman-Abouna Samantha Neil / Kelly Thomson |
| 25 September | Stockton-on-Tees Community Safety Strategy Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harrogate & District NHS Foundation Trust (Health Visitors)• North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (Maternity)• Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (CAMHS) | Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE / Marc Stephenson / Richard Bradford Sarah Massiter Lindsay Britton-Robertson / Beth Swanson Gemma Sharpe |
| 30 October | Monitoring: Progress Update – Outdoor Play Provision Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NHS North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB)• Primary Care Networks (PCNs) | Reuben Kench Kimm Lawson Rebecca Warden / Dr Clare Hodges |

COMMUNITY SAFETY SELECT COMMITTEE
Work Programme 2025-2026

| Date (4.30pm unless stated) | Topic | Attendance |
|--|---|--|
| 27 November | SBC Air Quality Strategy 2025-2030 Minutes of the Safer Stockton Partnership (July 2025) | Stephen Donaghy |
| 18 December | Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleveland Police • Early Years Providers: Survey Feedback Minutes of the Safer Stockton Partnership (October 2025) | Alan O'Donoghue |
| 22 January 2026 | Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership • Housing Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SBC ○ Thirteen Housing Group | Majella McCarthy / Leanne Stockton / Melanie John-Ross Jane Edmends / Julie Lathan Suzanne Halliwell / Fiona Heighton |
| 26 February (informal) | Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of Evidence / Draft Recommendations | Louise Hollick / Mandy MacKinnon |
| 26 March | Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Draft) Final Report Review of Community Participation Budget and Ward Transport Budgets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Draft) Scope and Project Plan Minutes of the Safer Stockton Partnership | Cllr Clare Besford / Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE / Sarah Bowman-Abouna / Majella McCarthy / Louise Hollick / Mandy MacKinnon |

2025-2026 Scrutiny Reviews

- Children affected by Domestic Abuse
- Community Participation Budget and Ward Transport Budgets

Monitoring Items (scheduled / to be scheduled)

- Fly-Grazed Horses (Progress Update) – TBC
- Welcoming and Safe Town Centres (Progress Update) – TBC (mid-2026)

COMMUNITY SAFETY SELECT COMMITTEE Work Programme 2025-2026

OTHER INFORMATION SOURCES / UPDATES

- **Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP):** The SSP is the local community safety partnership and works together to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) – meeting dates, agendas and minutes can be accessed via <https://moderngov.stockton.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=1144&Year=0>. Every three years, the SSP undertake a Crime and Disorder Audit and, following public consultation, produce a Community Safety Plan which sets out how agencies within the Partnership intend to achieve targets in crime reduction – the latest version is the [Stockton-on-Tees Community Safety Strategy 2022-2025](#).

Part two of the [Police and Crime Commissioner Review](#), recommended that the Home Office undertake a full review of Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) across England and Wales. The CSP review ran from March 2023 to January 2024 and has now concluded – it sought to clarify the role of CSPs, and improve their transparency, accountability, and effectiveness, making it easier for them to serve the needs of their communities in tackling crime, disorder, and antisocial behaviour. As a result of the review, the Home Office will be developing new guidance for CSPs, which will reflect the context CSPs currently work within and set out recommended minimum standards, as well as suggestions for good practice.

- **Serious Violence Duty:** The Duty (Aug 22) [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-bill-2021-factsheet](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-bill-2021-factsheets/police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-bill-2021-serious-violence-duty-factsheet) and associated guidance (Dec 22): https://www.gov.uk/government/news/efforts-to-tackle-serious-violence-and-homicide-stepped-up?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications-topic&utm_source=66d44b4c-9d22-4f1d-aed7-517818847183&utm_content=immediately. The Home Office plan to update the guidance to the Serious Violence Duty (SVD) – the LGA will be giving views (Councils have contributed to this).
- **Martyn's Law:** The Home Office has [released new guidance materials](#) to support public understanding of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025—commonly known as Martyn's Law—by publishing a myth buster and a one-page leaflet aimed at clarifying the Act's scope and dispelling common misconceptions.
- **Modern Slavery:** [New modern slavery risk assessment and due diligence guidance for local authority commissioners of adult social care](#), produced by the University of Nottingham Rights Lab in tandem with the LGA, was published in October 2023 - it provides advice on how to set up effective local systems to identify and manage the risks of modern slavery in adult social care. The LGA has established a modern slavery network for Council officers leading on work to tackle modern slavery – the network meets quarterly via Teams and aims to share good practice and discuss current issues. In March 2025, the Home Office [published its end of year summary for the National Referral Mechanism \(NRM\)](#) and Duty to Notify Statistics in 2024. The statistics provide a breakdown of the number of potential victims of modern slavery referred into the NRM. 19,125 potential victims of modern slavery were referred to the Home Office last year, representing a 13 per cent increase compared to the preceding year. The [Home Office has published their Action Plan on modern slavery](#), which sets out the Home Office and partners' actions to tackle modern slavery over the next 12 months, and long-term ambition over the coming years. It sets the strategic approach for the next financial year, reflecting current parameters and constraints (including resourcing and budget). Middlesex University and Anti-Slavery International have completed [research exploring the role of local authorities as first responders](#). The report looks at the challenges and opportunities facing Councils, and focuses on the need to improve training, awareness, and collaboration to strengthen the local response to modern slavery.

COMMUNITY SAFETY SELECT COMMITTEE Work Programme 2025-2026

The LGA has [updated its councillor guide on tackling modern slavery](#). The guide provides advice to Councillors on how they can increase awareness and understanding of modern slavery across their Council and community, as well as how Councillors can scrutinise the work of the Council and its partners on modern slavery, ensuring accountability.

In November 2025, the Human Trafficking published updated [Slavery and Trafficking Survivor Care Standards \(Care Standards\)](#) which aim to improve service provision by ensuring that adult survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery consistently receive high quality care wherever they are in the UK.

- **Youth Offending:** *Turnaround* is a voluntary youth early intervention programme led by the Ministry of Justice. The programme provides multi-year grant funding to Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) across England and Wales until March 2025, enabling them to intervene earlier and improve outcomes for children on the cusp of entering the youth justice system. The eligibility criteria for *Turnaround* includes; children involved in anti-social behaviour (ASB) – ranging from coming to notice for repeated involvement in ASB up to and including receiving a Civil Order for ASB. The Ministry of Justice is encouraging all community safety teams to engage with their local YOT Manager or Management Board to discuss a referral pathway for eligible children so they can be offered support via *Turnaround*.
- **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB):** The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman issued a press release in August 2023 expressing concern that [Councils were not doing enough to help victims of ASB](#). The Ombudsman has also produced a [learning lessons from complaints about antisocial behaviour](#) document which includes scrutiny questions for Councillors. The [ASB Action Plan](#) has since been updated (March 2024).

The Victims and Courts Bill includes new powers for the Victims' Commissioner to scrutinise the treatment of victims of anti-social behaviour. The Commissioner has already taken a close interest in ASB but to date, her focus has been on the criminal justice system. This additional power will enable future Commissioners to look more widely at the victim experience. In preparation for this, the Office of the Victims' Commissioner is undertaking a mapping exercise, to look at the victim journey across all agencies, identifying sources of data, gaps in policy and obstacles to victims reporting and getting support. The Commissioner is keen to receive any case studies and feedback about current processes.

The Home Office has updated the ASB statutory guidance for frontline professionals to housing providers and LAs which has been updated on [gov.uk](#). These changes have been made following the recommendations of the Victims' Commissioner's 2024 report, "[Still living a nightmare: Understanding the experiences of victims of anti-social behaviour](#)". Key updates include:

- Enhanced recommendations for victim participation and support throughout the ASB Case Review process.
- Clearer guidance on the role of a single point of contact for victims
- Stronger emphasis on the use of independent chairs for case reviews.
- Alignment with the Victims Code to ensure victims of criminal ASB are referred to support services, regardless of whether criminal charges are pursued.
- Additional guidance on the interface between ASB and safeguarding, including domestic abuse and exploitation.

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- **CONTEST:** In July 2023, the Government published its [updated counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST](#), which judges that risks from terrorism are rising. In related matters, SBC rolled-out mandatory staff training around the Prevent and Protect duty at the end of April 2023. In March 2024, the Government [published a new definition of extremism](#), updating the one in the 2011 Prevent Strategy and to reflect the evolution of extremist ideologies and the social harms they create. The Government also recently published a [progress report one year on from the publication of the Independent Review of Prevent](#). This sets out that 30 of the 34 recommendations are now complete, including updated statutory guidance, training and the assessment framework, the launch of a new [Standards and Compliance Unit \(STaCU\)](#) to handle complaints and provide oversight.

On 30 September, Counter Terrorism Policing launched ACT for Local Authorities. Led by National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO), ACT for Local Authorities uses CTP's regional network of Counter Terrorism Security Advisers and Prepare Officers to enhance the capabilities of local authorities in delivering the Protect and Prepare elements of the [national counter terrorism strategy](#). ACT for Local Authorities strengthens local authority capabilities in protective security across five key areas: planning and development, licensing, community safety, transport and highways, and emergency planning. ACT complements the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, offering tailored information, guidance, and access to specialists. Local authorities will be able to access resources – including toolkits and videos for each of the five priority areas – primarily through [the ProtectUK website](#) to support their consideration and understanding of terrorist risks, protective security and preparedness.

- **Fire & Rescue:** [State of Fire & Rescue 2022](#) - His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England. Arson and deliberate fire setting remain a significant issue for Cleveland Fire Brigade with Cleveland being the arson capital of the UK – in October 2022, Cleveland Fire Brigade [appealed for everyone to become a FireStopper in a new bid to reduce arson and violent attacks on Firefighters](#).
- **Shoplifting:** Police to treat shoplifting like organised crime (BBC online article published in October 2023): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-67191793>. In November 2024, it was reported that incidents of shoplifting had reached a 20-year high, according to figures recorded by the police. A survey of shopkeepers by the Association of Convenience Stores found that 94 per cent felt that the problem had worsened in the last 12 months: [Sky: 'We need help': Workers say shoplifting is 'out of control' after surge in brazen thefts](#).
- **Dangerous Dogs Act 1991:** The Government has added the XL Bully breed type to the list of dogs banned under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 in England and Wales. From 31 December 2023, breeding, selling, exchanging, advertising, rehoming, gifting, abandoning, and allowing an XL Bully dog to stray will be illegal, and these dogs must be muzzled and on a lead in public. From 1 February 2024 it will be a criminal offence to own an XL Bully in England and Wales unless the owner has a Certificate of Exemption. [Defra has published further information about how to prepare for the ban which will be updated regularly](#), and they will continue engagement with stakeholders. In March 2024, the LGA wrote to Council chief finance officers on behalf of DEFRA about new burdens funding relating to the XL Bully Ban for 2023-24.
- **Licensing:** [Legislation has been introduced into Parliament to amend the Licensing Act 2003](#) so that it is easier to get changes to licensing hours for special events or occasions, such as significant sporting events, through Parliament. The Bill is more concerned with parliamentary process than the contents of the Licensing Act itself. The Local Government Association (LGA) understands this legislation has Government support, so is likely to complete its parliamentary stages and become law.

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In July 2025, the Transport Select Committee launched [a new parliamentary inquiry looking at taxi and private hire vehicle licensing](#). This inquiry will examine whether the current licensing framework provides authorities with the tools they need to successfully regulate the sector. The Committee will consider the implications of uneven rules between areas, the growing role of digital ride-hailing platforms, and the challenges that can arise from cross-border working. It will also explore what reforms may be needed to improve standards for passengers and drivers. Councils are encouraged to respond to this inquiry, and the deadline for responses is Monday 8 September.

Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire Trading Standards are working together to push for a national change to the Licensing Act by gathering national support and evidence via a short survey: [Licensing Act loophole survey](#). The goal is to close the loopholes which undermine the work from Local Authorities and regulatory services to protect communities and public health. One major issue is the transfer of alcohol licences during a review or appeal. Organised crime groups are exploiting this by passing licences to individuals with no known links to the criminal activity.

October 2025 saw calls for better monitoring of gambling venues, following investigation by the BBC which found that more than a third of Councils have not been able to carry out an inspection in the past year. The LGA said Councils struggled to fund proactive inspections, and welcomed plans to give it new powers to block new gambling premises opening on high streets. The Government also launched a [call for evidence](#) on what will be significant alcohol licensing reform, building on the recommendations of the [Licensing Taskforce recommendations and the government's response](#) (the LGA will be responding, but Councils are encouraged to submit their own response by 6 November), and [launched a call for evidence to inform their plans to introduce a licensing scheme for the retail sale of tobacco](#) (Councils are encouraged to respond by 3 December and the LGA will also be submitting a response).

The Government has since [published its national licensing policy framework](#), which only applies to on-sales premises. Whilst this is not statutory guidance, Government is clear that licensing authorities should demonstrate how they have had regard to the guidance when next reviewing their licensing policy. It has also produced an [analysis of the responses received](#) to the call for evidence on alcohol licensing reform.

- **Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs):** The LGA and DAC conducted a survey regarding DHRs - [the results can be found on the LGA website](#). The LGA, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC) formed a Domestic and Related Deaths Review (DARDR) forum for those who are involved in commissioning DARDRs or DHRs. There are currently 195 members of the forum from Councils, police, Offices of Police and Crime Commissioners and health. The forum set up a task group to give recommendations to government to consider in the forthcoming output from a review of DARDRs. The second phase will begin shortly where access to qualified chairs and costs will be considered.
- **Fires involving e-bikes and e-scooters:** The Office for Product Safety & Standards (OPSS) has written to heads of trading standards, asking that, where resources and prioritisation allow, Trading Standards services identify and inspect bike repair businesses and where possible inform OPSS of their findings.
- **Khan Review:** Dame Sara Khan has published her [independent review into social cohesion and resilience](#). Recommendations include the establishment of a new Office for Social Cohesion and Democratic Resilience (OSCDR), a 5-year Social Cohesion and Democratic Resilience Strategy (SCDR) and Action Plan, and that Government should better engage with Local Authorities over actions that could undermine social cohesion – for example in relation to asylum dispersal.

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- **Safe Access Zones Around Abortion Clinics:** Councils have been contacting the LGA regarding Safe Access Zones around abortion clinics. The LGA have been engaging with government to ensure safe access zones can be established. Legislation will come into force from 31 October 2024 and will make it illegal for anyone to do anything that intentionally or recklessly influences someone's decision to use abortion services, obstructs them, or causes harassment or distress to someone using or working at these premises. The law will apply within a 150-metre radius of the abortion service provider. The College of Policing and the Crown Prosecution Service will be publishing operational guidance to ensure there is clarity and consistency with the enforcement of the new offence. Further information is available at: [Protection zones around abortion clinics in place by October - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/protection-zones-around-abortion-clinics-in-place-by-october).
- **Trading Standards:** Illegal imported sweets which contain banned additives linked to cancer and behavioural problems are "flooding UK high streets", councils have said (see February 2025 article: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/feb/13/imported-sweets-american-candy-flooding-uk-high-streets-councils-banned-additives?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery). The warning first came from the Chartered Trading Standards Institute, which said that demand for American confectionery was being driven by influencers on social media platforms, leading to high street shops and smaller convenience stores stocking the products.
- **Crime and Policing Bill:** Early-2025 saw the UK Government introduce the Crime and Policing Bill to Parliament. Key provisions include:
 - **Powers for Theft Recovery:** Police can now enter properties without a warrant to recover stolen items located via electronic tracking, such as 'find my phone' apps. This change enables swifter action during critical investigation periods.
 - **Protection for Retail Workers:** The bill introduces a specific offence for assaulting retail workers, ensuring better safeguards for employees in shops and supermarkets.
 - **Addressing Antisocial Behaviour:** New "Respect Orders" will ban habitual offenders from town centres, and police are empowered to seize vehicles like off-road bikes and e-scooters used irresponsibly in public spaces.
 - **Combatting Knife Crime:** Measures include increased penalties for selling dangerous weapons to minors and the creation of a new offence for possessing a blade with intent to cause harm.
 - **Violence Against Women and Girls:** The bill strengthens Stalking Protection Orders, criminalises spiking incidents, and restricts registered sex offenders from changing their names to evade detection (note: publication of a new VAWG government strategy is expected later in 2025).
 - **Child Protection:** A new duty mandates adults in specific roles to report instances of child sexual abuse, implementing recommendations from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.
 - **Public Order Enhancements:** The legislation bans face coverings used to conceal identity during protests and criminalises climbing on designated war memorials, promoting respect for public monuments.
- **Young Futures Programme:** The Young Futures Programme is a national, cross-government plan to prevent youth violence by proactively identifying and supporting young people most at risk. Central to the strategy are Young Futures Hubs, local centres that bring together mental health services, education, career advice, youth workers and police. Prevention Partnerships, which are multi-agency panels, will be introduced where there are Violence Reduction Units. This will work with communities, charities, schools, health services and police to map risk, co-ordinate early interventions and tailor support packages. These panels harness VRU expertise and local knowledge to spot vulnerabilities early, reduce youth involvement in crime (including knife crime and violence against women and girls), and offer continuous, evidence-based support. Each area with a VRU area will introduce a Prevention Panel from October 2025. Roll out to further areas is expected from April 2026.

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- **Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG):** The Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy publication is scheduled for September 2025.
- **Domestic Abuse:** A Sanctuary Scheme is a victim survivor centred initiative which aims to enable households at risk of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes (if it is safe and their choice) and reduce repeat victimisation through the provision of enhanced security measures (sanctuary) and support. The Local Government Association (LGA), the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse (STADA) are working in partnership to clarify current practice. In September 2025, surveys were sent to all Council Directors of Housing to delegate to relevant colleagues to complete.

A national reciprocal housing scheme is being developed, led by Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse and Clarion Housing, to provide secure housing options for domestic abuse survivors who need to relocate while retaining their tenancy rights. Building on the Whole Housing Approach toolkit, several local schemes already exist, and the national initiative aims to expand this support across England. With 2.4 million people experiencing domestic abuse in 2022, housing remains a key barrier to safety, making reciprocal moves a vital lifeline that prevent re-victimisation, reduce homelessness pressures, uphold tenancy security under the Domestic Abuse Act, widen rehousing options, and offer consistent support for both survivors and landlords. Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse would appreciate if councils completed this [survey](#).

- **Civil Resilience:** In November 2025, the [LGA updated guidance](#) designed to support Councillors in strengthening their approach to civil resilience. It provides an overview of the Council's responsibilities in this area, along with targeted sections outlining the role of Ward Councillors and portfolio holders. A new section also outlines how officers can support Elected Members in fulfilling their civil resilience roles.
- **Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Cleveland:** Further information on the office of the PCC can be found on via <https://www.cleveland.pcc.police.uk/commissioner/office/> - this includes engagement with the **Cleveland Police and Crime Panel (PCP)**. Access to PCP agendas and papers can be found via <https://www.cleveland.pcc.police.uk/commissioner/office/the-work-of-cleveland-police-and-crime-panel/>.

On 13 November 2025, Government announced the abolition of PCC elections when current terms end in 2028. It is intended that where there are directly-elected Mayors, the Deputy Mayor for policing model will continue. This will also be the case for where new Strategic Mayoral Authorities (SMAs) will be established. Where there are not Mayors, it is expected a new local Policing and Crime Board is established to local government leaders together to oversee the police force. These Boards are said by government to not be a return to the bureaucratic and invisible committee-based oversight of policing that existed before the establishment of PCCs. Government proposes these Boards include the leaders of each upper tier authority from the force area and up to two co-optees. The LGA is working with the Home Office with regards to how these police boards might operate.