

Stockton Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022–2028

Three-Year Progress Report (2023–2026)

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Stockton-on-Tees
Domestic Abuse Strategy
2022-2028

Executive Summary

Three years into the implementation of Stockton's Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022–2028, progress has been made across the strategic priorities of prevention, workforce development, victim support, perpetrator intervention, and data improvement. The partnership has strengthened support schemes for victims and survivors, expanded workforce capability, increased community awareness activity, and improved engagement of perpetrators in specialist programmes.

Key achievements include:

- Successful relaunch of the Safe at Home (sanctuary scheme).
- Increase in sanctuary provision.
- Significant growth in domestic abuse workforce training and awareness activities.
- Increased opportunities to identify domestic abuse.
- Improved perpetrator programme completion rates with Harbour.
- Improved data management and monitoring arrangements.
- Improved system collaboration on evidence-based interventions for children and families

Future priorities include accommodation capacity, exploring the provision of female-only temporary accommodation, sustainability of specialist services, support pathways for children and young people, and responding to other prevalent issues such as child-to-parent violence and abuse (CAPVA) and responding to the recommendations from local reviews on domestic abuse and the early years.

I. Strategic Vision

Locally, the DA Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees 2022-28 vision is for Stockton-on-Tees to be a place where:

- Everyone -children, young people and adults- at risk of, experiencing or affected by domestic abuse is listened to, supported, and protected to live their lives free from abuse.
- All victims of domestic abuse have access to inclusive, quality, affordable and appropriate safe accommodation and support.
- Perpetrators of domestic abuse are held to account and supported to change their behaviour.

Five system outcomes have been established as measures of change and effectiveness of activities implemented (**Figure 1**). They support the strategic priorities underpinning the strategy:

1. Preventing domestic abuse
2. Early intervention
3. Supporting and protecting victims
4. Stopping repeat domestic abuse
5. Holding perpetrators to account and preventing harmful behaviours
6. Ensuring data and intelligence are smart and shared.

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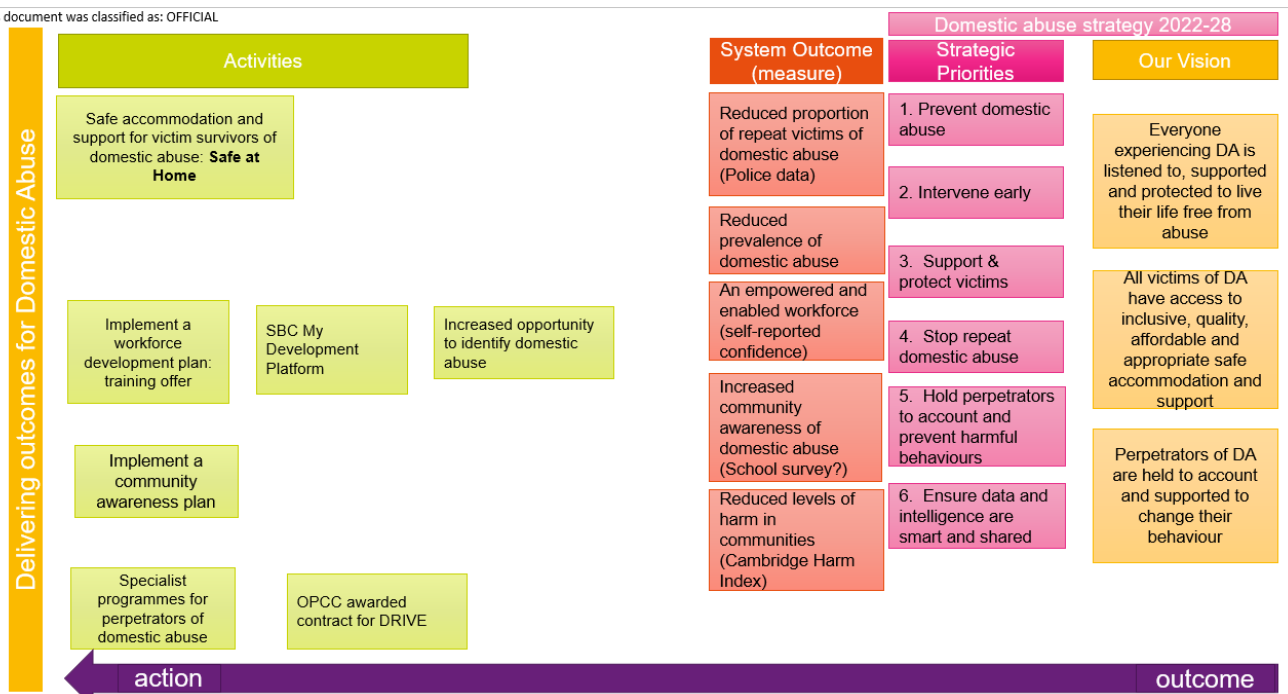


Figure 1. Schematic of the Domestic Abuse strategy showing activities prioritised in 2025-2026 as well as the overall system outcomes and priorities that they relate to.

II. Strategic priority: Supporting and Protecting Victims

Safe Accommodation Provision

Referrals into safe accommodation have remained similar throughout the three-year period (**Figure 2**). There is sustained demand for domestic abuse support in refuge and dispersed accommodation. Stockton-on-Tees has one refuge (7 self-contained units) and three dispersed properties (houses within established communities); therefore, capacity constraints remain a challenge. However, all victims are offered the same outreach opportunities/support as those in safe accommodation including safety planning, support to access services (e.g. welfare, wellbeing, health, police, etc.), advocacy, counselling, confidence building, play therapy for children, etc.

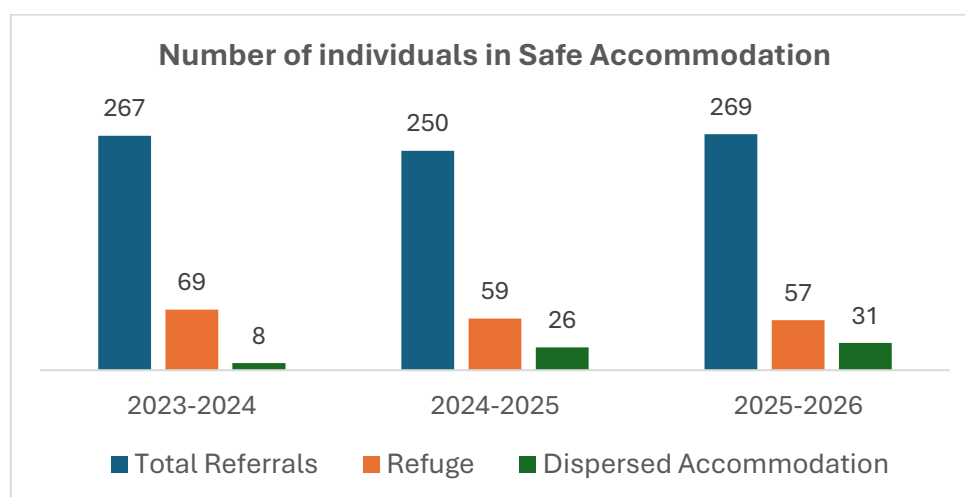


Figure 2. Number of referrals to and individuals supported in refuge and dispersed accommodation.
Source: Harbour

Safe at Home (Sanctuary Scheme)

The Safe at Home scheme (or Sanctuary scheme) constitutes another type of safe accommodation which enables victims and survivors of domestic abuse to remain in their homes (where it is safe to do so) through the provision of security measures (e.g., strengthened doors, locks, alarms) and specialist support. This scheme is delivered by Stockton Borough Council (a partnership between Homelessness Prevention, Community Facilities Services and Public Health) with support from Cleveland Police.

As seen in **Figure 3**, the number of sanctuary installations has increased by 263% since 2023/24, which has enabled more victims to remain safely within their own homes. This change reflects the implementation of recommendations from a service review conducted in 2023: the scheme has been relaunched and continues to be promoted across other services. In addition,

a Safe at Home Coordinator was recruited in 2025 to improve referral pathways and follow-up of clients.

Monitoring and data-sharing arrangements remain an area for further development (and actions taken can be seen in section V).

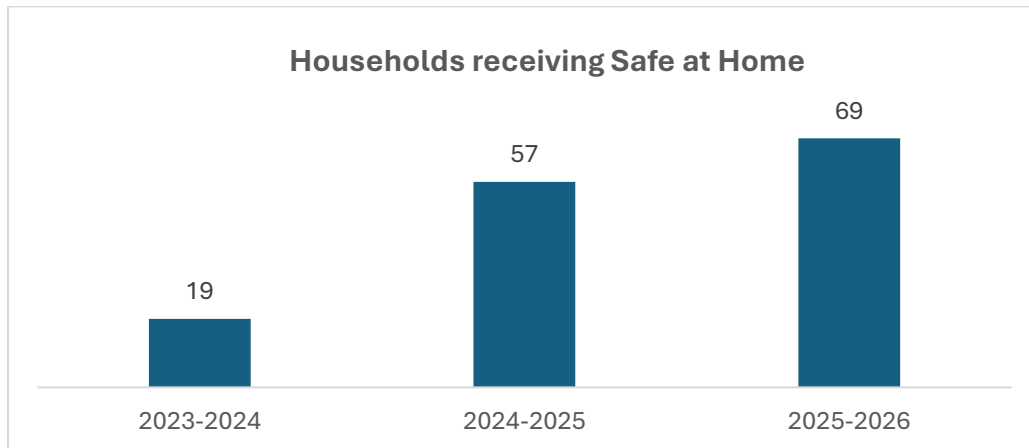


Figure 3. Number of households receiving sanctuary scheme. Source: Community Facilities Services

Homelessness Presentations involving Domestic Abuse: Improved identification

The number of unique homelessness cases with Domestic Abuse as a factor has increased over the last year (**Figure 4**). Data indicates better identification and recording of domestic abuse within the Homelessness Prevention Team. This can be partly explained by the integration of activities of the Safe at Home Coordinator with this team and enhanced capacity to provide support. The upward trend suggests better awareness, screening, and reporting mechanisms rather than necessarily an increase in prevalence.

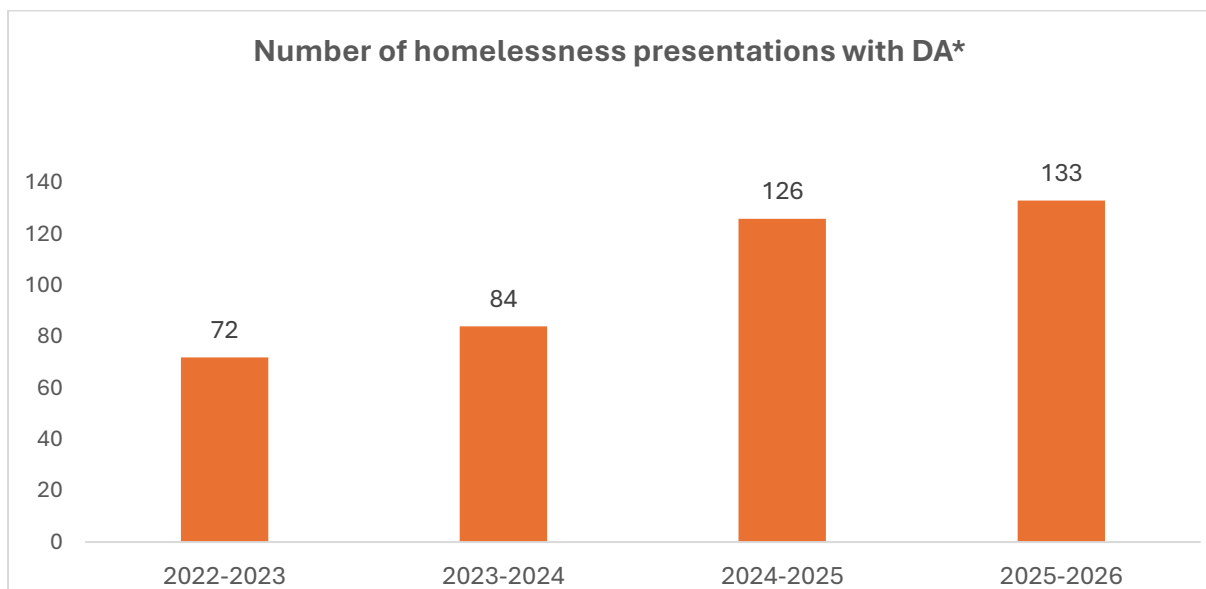


Figure 4. Number of homelessness cases with Domestic Abuse as a contributing factor. *Each case represents a unique presentation. Source: Homelessness Prevention Team.

III. Strategic Priorities: Preventing Domestic Abuse and Stopping Repeat Domestic Abuse

Community Awareness

SBC Public Health has led and supported a range of activities to increase community awareness of domestic abuse and improve the identification and support for victims. This work is the result of an integrated and joined-up approach, comprising different teams and responsibilities built around a shared objective.

Community Health and Wellbeing Champions

Community Health and Wellbeing Champions play a key role in raising awareness of domestic abuse within local communities. Training activities are in place so that champions can influence community awareness plans by:

- 1) Identifying people who may be victims of DA (including hidden victims)
- 2) Knowing how to create opportunities for disclosure
- 3) Learning what services are available for victims (Harbour) and signposting them to these.

Targeted Prevention Campaigns

Licensing, Community Safety partners and Harbour deliver domestic abuse prevention messages during high-risk periods and major events, such as the World Cup.

Raising Awareness of the link between Domestic Abuse and Animal Abuse

Harbour has developed a *Safeguarding Animals Policy* in recognition of the established links between domestic abuse and animal abuse¹. Plans are in place to share this policy with veterinary practices across Stockton, supporting greater awareness of domestic abuse and encouraging further training within this sector. A new collaboration between Harbour and the Council's Animal Welfare Team will strengthen this work.

Workforce Development

The introduction of domestic abuse training on the Council's personal development platform (MyDevelopment) creates a key mechanism for increasing awareness, knowledge and confidence amongst frontline staff. SBC's Cabinet has endorsed the training as mandatory for all staff; work is underway to ensure this is implemented.

Harbour's 2026-2027 Workforce Development Plan includes:

¹ Barbosa-Torres, C., Bueno-Galán, M.M., Bueso-Izquierdo, N. *et al.* Intimate partner violence and domestic violence linked to animal abuse: a review of the literature. *Curr Psychol* **43**, 32200–32209 (2024).

- Integrating *Domestic abuse in the elderly* into Level 2 in response to local needs identified by Adult Safeguarding.
- Embedding learning from Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDs) as well as Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) in Level 1, particularly *concerning coercive-controlling behaviours*.
- A new session on *the impact of language and communication* was launched in April 2025. This session has been the result of better working links between Harbour and Children Services.
- Embedding the *Voice of the Child* in different activities: through Harbour's expertise, help professionals recognise and respond to the needs of children exposed to domestic abuse. This work follows recommendations from the scrutiny review of Children Affected by Domestic Abuse by Stockton Borough Council's Community Safety Select Committee and includes, the role of the GP IDVA² in strengthening links with primary care services.

Workforce Reach

Training between 2023 and 2026 was delivered to a broad range of organisations, services and professionals, including:

- Dental staff (41 people from 2 dental practices)
- North Star Housing
- Bridges Family and Carer Service (families and carers affected by someone else's substance use).
- ARC- Stockton Arts Centre
- Citizens Advice Bureau Stockton
- Daisy Chain (supporting autistic and neurodivergent CYP, adults and their families)
- Holme House prison staff
- Creative Support – (promoting independence, inclusion and wellbeing of people with care and support needs).
- Recovery Services Stockton (supporting individuals with substance use)



A word cloud of partner organizations and services. The words are arranged in a cluster, with 'Dentists' being the largest word in the center. Other prominent words include 'Citizens Advice Bureau Stockton', 'North Star Housing', 'Bridges', 'Creative Support', 'Daisy Chain', 'Holme House staff', 'Recovery Services Stockton', and 'The ARC'.

This highlights successful outreach to a wide range of sectors, extending beyond those typically associated with safeguarding responsibilities such as schools, nurseries, social services, and libraries.

Training Uptake

Data in **Figure 5** indicates that from 2023 until July 2026, more than 1,000 professionals have received some level of training in Domestic Abuse. The training offer encompasses 6 sessions

² IDVA= Independent Domestic Violence Advocate

(see **Figure 6**), lasting 5hrs each. In addition, Harbour has delivered over 37 hours of bespoke training to schools, nurseries, childminders and SEND teams.

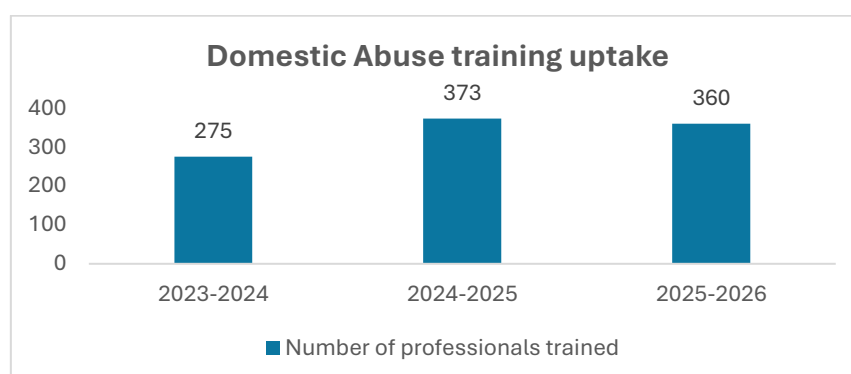


Figure 5. Number of professionals trained in Domestic Abuse between 2023 and 2026. Source: Harbour

Training Uptake by Topic: some challenges

Actions taken to promote the courses have resulted in a greater number of professionals registering an interest in receiving DA training with Harbour. Data from the last financial year (April 2025- March 2026), shows that 530 professionals were registered to receive training. However, only 309 professionals (58%) attended a session during this period. As seen in **Figure 6**, *Domestic Abuse Level 3* and the *Children* sessions are amongst the least attended. The language session was launched recently, and numbers reflect attendance after delivery of only one session.

Different strategies have been discussed with Harbour to mitigate unattendance, some of these include:

- Reducing the advance booking period from three months to two months.
- Improving the booking calendar system to ensure invitations and joining links are automatically added to attendees' calendars in advance.
- Increasing participant engagement through networking and professional development opportunities to identify Domestic Abuse training needs.
- Gaining a better understanding of any Domestic Abuse training already completed by participants.
- Collecting managers' contact details and, where necessary, notify them of non-attendance.

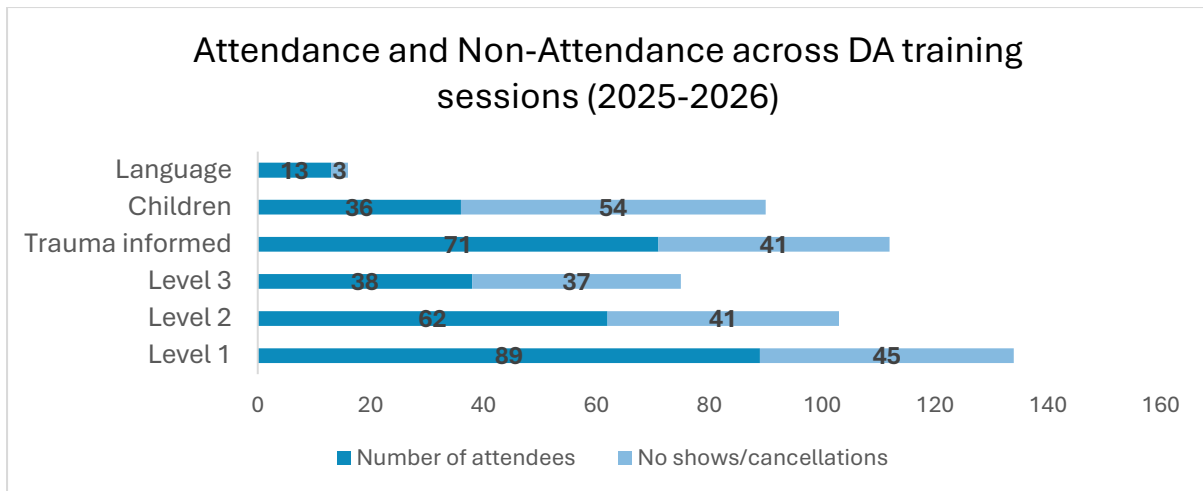


Figure 6. Number of attendees and no shows across DA sessions in 2025-2026. Source: Harbour

IV. Strategic Priorities: Holding Perpetrators to Account and Preventing Harmful Behaviours

Perpetrator Interventions

The proportion of perpetrators who remained engaged from the start to the end of an intervention with Harbour has increased considerably over the last three years (**Table 1**). In 2025-26, 30 of 42 adult perpetrators (71%) completed an intervention with Harbour, compared with 30% in previous years. This compares to national completion rates of 33%.

Harbour delivers three perpetrator intervention pathways:

1. Brief interventions (4 to 6 sessions) aimed at promoting behaviour change and developing prevention strategies;
2. One-to-one interventions for individuals requiring tailored support;
3. Respect accredited 27-week programme for low-risk perpetrators, which includes ongoing risk assessment, participant and follow-up, and victim-survivor safety monitoring.

The increase in completion rates is likely attributable to a combination of cohort composition, the positive influence of peer support, and improved multi-agency collaboration. The latter is the result of strengthened partnership working to improve engagement strategies: working *with* potential participants to ensure the purpose and benefits of engagement are clear.

Table 1. Adult perpetrators engaging from start to end of an intervention between 2023-2026

Year	No/Total (%)
2023-2024	16 / 53 (31%)
2024-25	17 / 49 (34%)
2025-26	30 / 42 (71%)

Source: Harbour

OPCC³ commissioned the DRIVE project in 2026, which is an internationally recognised, evidence-based approach to working with high harm, serial perpetrators of domestic abuse. Launching in August 2026, DRIVE will complement the existing programme provided by Harbour.

A complete view of the number of victims and perpetrators engaging from start to the end of intervention with Harbour can be found in **Appendix 1**.

Convictions

Cleveland Police data on proportion of withdrawals from pursuing a conviction shows a reduction: from 63.4% of 3,924 domestic abuse crimes in 2023 to 57.3% of 3,900 DA crimes in 2025 (**Figure 7**). Monitoring data from subsequent years is required before it can be reported as a downward trend, however this reduction may suggest an improvement in advocacy and support through the process of conviction.

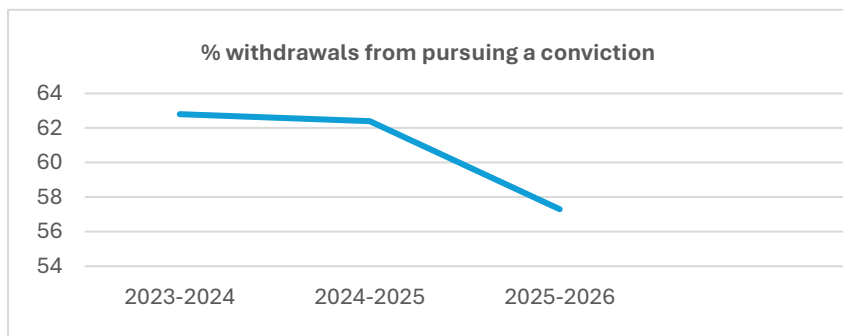


Figure 7. Proportion of withdrawals from pursuing a conviction [usually victim is unsupportive or withdraws support for the investigation]. *Source: Cleveland Police*

³ Office of Police and Crime Commissioner

V. Strategic Priority: Data and Intelligence

Several initiatives are underway to improve data quality, monitoring and oversight. These include:

- Development of a digital solution for the *Safe at Home* scheme. Currently the service relies on exchange of e-mails between services involved, and information is fragmented, making difficult to monitor outcomes. Therefore, the digital solution will enable quicker follow-up with clients and capture the effectiveness of the scheme to make them feel safe and prevent further abuse.
- Introduction of a revised Harbour data collection template.
- Regional work to harmonise domestic abuse data and reporting with Harbour.

VI. Future Opportunities and Priorities

In order to continue to deliver the 2022-2028 Domestic Abuse Strategy, these are areas of focus for future delivery and development:

Strategic Priority: Supporting and protecting victims

1. **Exploring provision of female-only temporary accommodation:** repurchase is underway within Stockton Borough Council and includes provision for [a limited number of] female only units.
2. **Meeting demand for safe accommodation:** a strategic housing needs assessment is being conducted to inform SBC Local Plan on housing provision for the next 10 years. As part of this exercise, the demand and specific needs for domestic abuse safe accommodation will be taken into consideration.
3. **Domestic Abuse in the Early Years:** there is further work to be done around amplifying the voice of the child across services so that babies and CYP are truly understood and recognised as victim-survivors of Domestic Abuse. Different initiatives have been led by Harbour, including a collaboration on the national *Tell Nicole* report⁴ which helped Dame Nicole Jacobs (Domestic Abuse Commissioner) gain insight on the access of CYP to domestic abuse support services across England and Wales. Harbour received national recognition for their work to promote the voice of the child. Further work in this area will align to the recommendations from the recent JTAI⁵ report in Redcar & Cleveland and respond to the Community Safety Select Committee's scrutiny report on Domestic Abuse and the Early Years.
4. **Sustaining good practice through the Hospital IDVA:** as a specialist domestic abuse practitioner embedded within acute settings at North Tees hospital, this role provides

⁴ Tell Nicole "Our feelings matter": Children's views on the support they need after experiencing domestic abuse; [dac_bryp_tell-nicole_report_FINAL-DIGITAL-2.pdf](#)

⁵ JTAI = Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse

immediate specialist support to patients experiencing domestic abuse, often at a point when they present to hospital for treatment or crisis support. Evidence by Harbour has highlighted the effectiveness of the IDVA to create opportunities for disclosure and to facilitate tailored support for survivors of Domestic Abuse. The funding for this post is short term (ending Autumn 2027) and has been provided by the OPCC and latterly by Hartlepool and Stockton Borough Councils.

Strategic Priority: Holding perpetrators to account and preventing harmful behaviours

5. **Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA):** recognised by Hartlepool and Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership, CAPVA is evident in families in the borough. Identification of family need and a service response is at best inconsistent. On behalf of Tees partners delivering the Tackling Domestic Abuse Perpetration strategy, the OPCC has led a mapping of understanding, awareness and service provision of CAPVA across Cleveland. A clear, shared pathway for responding to CAPVA is needed.

Strategic Priority: Preventing Domestic Abuse and Stop repeat Domestic Abuse

6. **Challenging misogyny:** the Domestic Abuse Steering Group has committed to exploring its role in challenging misogyny both as individual organisations and as a collective responsible for delivering Stockton's Domestic Abuse strategy.
7. **Addressing workforce development challenges:** working together, partners will identify and address barriers to participation in Harbour's domestic abuse training, with a view to improving uptake and strengthening the local response to domestic abuse.
8. **Prevalence of Domestic Abuse:** trends of recorded DA crimes remained unchanged across the 3-year period of 2023-2026 with ~ 3800 crimes pa. This may indicate a consistent level of crime or an increase in trust and reporting and a reduction in prevalence.
9. **Prevalence of Repeat Victims of domestic abuse** remained unchanged across the 3-year period of 2023-2026 with ~1200 repeat victims pa (42.5% of DA crimes). The DRIVE project launched in Cleveland in August 2026. One of the key objectives of is to reduce repeat perpetration of domestic abuse.

Conclusion

Three years into delivery of the *Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022–2028*, partners have made measurable progress across prevention, workforce development, victim support, perpetrator intervention, and safe accommodation measures. Demand for services remains high, but there is evidence of improved identification of domestic abuse and confidence in the local workforce, as well as increased engagement with support services.

Priority focus areas for the period 2026-2028 include

- Safe accommodation capacity
- Sustaining specialist support for victims and for perpetrators of domestic abuse
- Ensuring that babies, children and young people are recognised and supported as victim-survivors in their own right and that their voices are heard
- Developing a coordinated response to child and adolescent- to parent-violence and abuse
- Responding to the recommendations from local reviews on domestic abuse and the early years.

Appendix 1

Table 1. Number of victims and perpetrators engaging from start to the end of an intervention with Harbour in 23/24, 24/25 and 25/26.

	Victim		Perpetrator
	Adult No/Total (%)	CYP No/Total (%)	Adult No/Total (%)
2023-24	752 / 965 (78%)	110 / 127 (87%)	16 / 53 (31%)
2024-25	757 / 958 (79%)	111 / 131 (85%)	17 / 49 (34%)
2025-26	717 / 982 (73%)	117 / 156 (75%)	30 / 42 (71%)