**Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment 2020**

**1. Background**

The Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment was commissioned by Andrew Scott Clarke as a member of the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive to the Kent Public Health Observatory (KPHO).

Input has been provided by Kent Police, the PCC, KCC Commissioning teams, KCC Adult Social Services, KCC Public Health, Medway Council, the Kent Integrated Dataset, the Kent Community Safety Partnership, Prison and Probation services, KSS CRC, Kent Fire and Rescue, Maidstone Council, Swale Borough Council, and Sevenoaks Council.

The brief was completed in the context of the Domestic Abuse Bill currently moving through parliament. This will create a statutory requirement for local authorities to provide a needs assessment (updated yearly and re drafted every 3 years), this assessment must influence the commissioning of services across the partnership, with oversight from the Local Partnership Board[[1]](#footnote-1).

**2. Key Findings**

1. **Domestic abuse (DA) is highly prevalent across Kent and Medway.** Modelled estimates, based on national survey data, suggest some 75,000 to 80,000 individuals (circa 5.7% of the adult population) are affected by DA annually across the county. Taking into account that police recorded incidents are higher in Kent and Medway than national averages in England and Wales, the figure could be even higher at around 92,000 individuals.
2. **The economic and social costs of domestic abuse incidents is estimated to be some £2.6bn per year across Kent and Medway.**



1. **Domestic abuse has probably been in decline over the last decade but may now be increasing again.** Overall, rates of DA nationally have declined over the last 8 years, although this picture is slightly complicated by the trend increasing in the most recent 3 years. It is thought that the Coronavirus pandemic is likely to increase incidents of DA
2. **Up to 40% of DA in the community could be going unreported to the Police.** Kent Police reported some 45,000 incidents of DA in 2019, 34,000 of which led to a crime being recorded. This means that approximately 60% of estimated domestic abuse cases in Kent are reported to the police. Just under half (46%) of the estimated prevalence leads to a crime being recorded.
3. **There may be scope for commissioned support (e.g. IDVA, refuge, community outreach) services to further appeal and cater to males, and younger or older clients.** Around 95% (or more) of commissioned service users are female. Clients age 20 to 40 make up approximately two-thirds of service users, with 25 to 35-year olds being the age groups with the highest usage. Those age 25 to 45 are more likely to receive support than those younger or older, when comparing to the rates of incidents and crimes reported to the police.
4. **Utilisation of (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) MARACs could be low in Kent, but further information would be needed to be certain of this conclusion.**SafeLives83 report that nationally there are 4.0 adult females per 1,000 experiencing DA and discussed in a MARAC in 2019, which is also the rate they consider to be the minimum safe level. Locally in Kent, the calculated figure is around 3 per 1,000 females. When comparing Kent to the remainder of the country more needs to be known about rates of recorded crime and also the seriousness of incidents and suitability of individual cases to be discussed at MARAC.
5. **A series of ‘lock-down’ measures announced by the UK Government to tackle the Coronavirus outbreak are widely considered to have increased the general risk of domestic abuse.**  Kent Police have been monitoring and reporting on volumes of received calls to assess the impact of the lockdown in the local area.  Call volumes have been higher than that normally seen and showed an increase as the quarantine period progressed. In particular non-crime calls have increased by over 30% from 17th May to 14th June. Kent Police report that increases have been fairly evenly distributed across Medway and the Kent districts.



**3. Housing Specific Issues**

### Homelessness[[2]](#footnote-2),[[3]](#footnote-3)

Domestic abuse is inextricably linked with housing. Most domestic abuse occurs at home, and housing is a key barrier to people escaping domestic abuse. Due to financial difficulties that survivors face when fleeing domestic abuse (e.g. housing, food, childcare and transportation costs) many find themselves facing the very serious risk of homelessness if they are to flee perpetrators**. Official statistics for England show that 12% of all homeless acceptances granted by local authorities are because of a violent relationship breakdown.** Victims of domestic abuse can then be left at risk of ongoing homelessness if they are not given appropriate support.

Under current legislation, people who are homeless due to domestic abuse are not automatically considered to be in priority need for settled accommodation. In order to access many services, applicants are required to prove a series of prioritised vulnerabilities. Without such access, there is a risk that survivors will be left with no option but to return to a dangerous situation or sleep rough putting themselves at risk of further abuse and exploitation. The DA Bill 2019-21 seeks to address these access issues.

### Household characteristics and Prevalence – from Crime Survey for England & Wales

Other equity characteristics have been demonstrated to be associated with higher or lower rates of DA, but limited local data means accurate quantification is not possible at Kent and Medway level.

* **Urbanity:** Those in urban settings are more likely to report DA at 6%, compared to rural settings at 4.2%.
* **Owner/renter:** Renters are more than twice as likely to report DA than house owners at 8.5% for social renters and 8.3% private renters compared with 4% for house owners.
* **Dwelling type:** Those living in ‘flats/maisonettes’ showed higher rates at 8.1% than those in terraced houses (6.8%) semi-detached (4.9%) and detached (3.8%).

Figure 52: Characteristics of clients in commissioned services



Sources: CSFEW (Refuges & Community: Women’s aid annual survey July 2017; IDVA: Insights IDVA dataset 2017/18, SafeLives)

Figure 55 – Referral source for KCC commissioned services



1. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/58-01/124/5801124_en_5.html#pt4-l1g55> Part 4 (55). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ‘A Safe Home’: Breaking the link between homelessness and domestic abuse. All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness. <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/240459/cri0198_domesticabusebill_appg_report_2019_aw_web.pdf>, last accessed July 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Nowhere to turn project, Women’s Aid.

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/women-escaping-domestic-abuse-left-at-risk-of-homelessness/>, last accessed July 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)