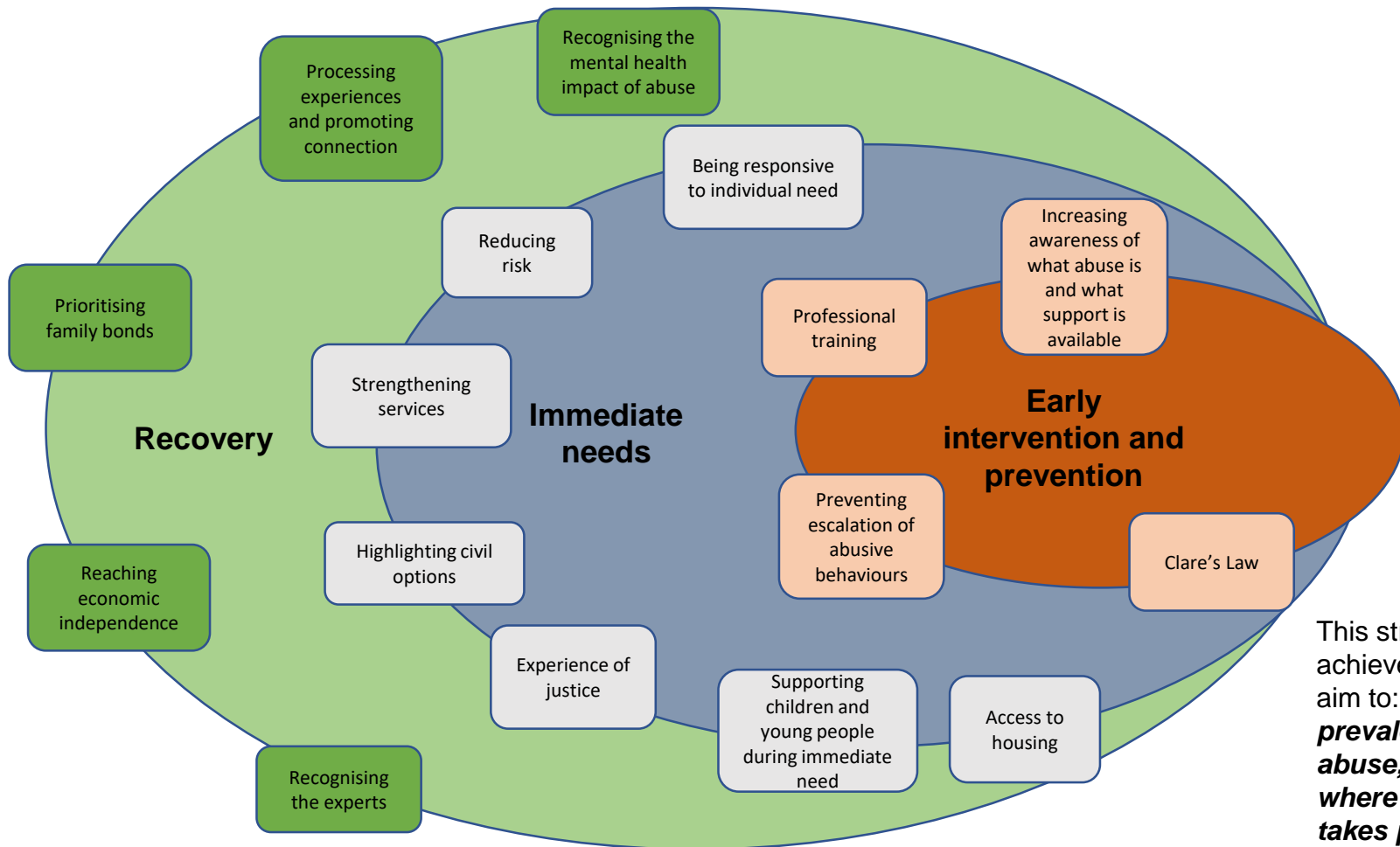




**Kent and Medway
Domestic Abuse
Strategy 2024-2029
Consultation**



This strategy works to achieve the joint collective aim to: ***'reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse, and ensure that where domestic abuse takes place, all those affected get the right support, quickly'***.

What is Safe Accommodation?

Kent County Council and Medway Council have a responsibility by law to assess the need for support in safe accommodation for all those impacted by abuse, both for those who live within area, and those who come from outside the area.

The definition of safe accommodation includes:

- refuge
- specialist accommodation (including dedicated specialist support for people with protected characteristics such as a disability).
- dispersed accommodation which includes self-contained accommodation.
- move on, or second stage accommodation, a place to move to when intensive support is no longer needed but a level of support is still beneficial.
- sanctuary schemes where physical security measures have been put in place into a person's home.

Safe Accommodation – data from our refuges and other safe accommodation - (2022/2023 KCC commissioned services data)

Kent

- 209 people accessed Kent County Council commissioned refuge.
- 48.8% of people in Kent refuges had accompanying children.
- 3% of people in refuge identified as lesbian, gay, or pansexual.
- Of those in refuge, 6.7% had a physical or sensory disability and 1.4% had a learning disability.
- 40 % of those in refuge identified as needing mental health support (as a secondary need).
- 63.3% of individuals in refuge identified as "White - British" and 25% identified as other ethnic groups.
- 36.7% of people in refuge came from outside Kent.

Medway

- 59 people accessed safe accommodation services in Medway.
- 47 children were supported whilst in safe accommodation.
- 15 adults and children accessed counselling and play therapy in refuge.
- 21% of people accessing refuge accommodation in Medway identified as black or from a minority ethnic group.
- 13% of people were between 16 – 25 years old.
- 51 % of people reported as having a mental health need.
- 16% of people had a disability in refuge.
- Over a year 113 people have benefited from Sanctuary Scheme adaptations to enable them to remain safely in their homes.

“Because I called the council out on [the unsuitable housing] and they were like you can't bully your way through the system. So, what your two options are, we will find you somewhere else, and you will have to go there. You cannot turn it down. And then they said it will be disgusting. It will be pokey. But that's how temporary accommodation is, which is disgusting because it shouldn't be that way. Or you go back to the house that you were abused in, and you stay there until we find you somewhere. So I went back to the house that I was abused in because at least I knew it was clean.”

“If you've got money, whether it's joint money or not, there's not much help for you. People perceive that you can go and get a good solicitor, or you can leave him. Pack your bags and just leave and get in the car and go. And also, if you've got a home, you're not getting housing, they aren't gonna give you a home because you've got a home.... I think there's a lot of women probably like me who can never get out.”

“I've been put into temporary accommodation, away from my friends and family because of something that he's done. Now I'm being moved even further away...It was just temporary accommodation to get me safe and if I didn't take it, they wouldn't have helped me.

I like it here. I've just settled and now I'll be moved again. In the long run it's a good thing, because I'll be safe, and I haven't got to look over my shoulder. But the other side of it is that I'm away from everyone which will do me good in the long run, but to start with, it gets quite lonely and it's hard.”

When my mum died, I succeeded her tenancy. She died in the property, and it was all very dramatic. There was a really nice lady that was at the council and she was adamant that they would be able to get me a management move based on the circumstances. They took so long to get me the management move like six or seven months processing it that when it got put forward to whoever it gets put forward to, they were like, she's lived there for 7 months now, she'll be fine. If they got me that management move, then I probably would have left him. Because I would have left the house and left him."

"That's the issue with the whole refuge situation, it's too long. I know there's a housing crisis and these things, but, like I was saying to you earlier about the emotions, you then start falling back into depression because you're still [in refuge]. Because you should have been moved on by now... There needs to be something in place for that, because even to get on the housing register. They were so unhelpful. They said I can't go on the housing register because I haven't lived in this whole area for two years and I was like, well, obviously I haven't because I've just fled domestic violence."

"I wasn't able to get housing and I think housing is massive. It's such a massive, massive part of leaving because when you've got two children in an abusive situation like that, you do everything to protect them...'

Safe Accommodation commitments - Being responsive to individual need

To support those who flee abuse and seek support in safe accommodation the Partnership will:

- have the right safe accommodation options, and specialist support, that meets the needs of anyone experiencing abuse whether they are male, female or nonbinary, non-disabled or disabled, whether they are experiencing abuse from a partner or family member and whatever their sexual orientation or ethnicity.
- strengthen options for people facing multiple barriers when trying to access safe accommodation, which may include dependencies or mental health support needs.
- ensure safe accommodation options for all family types, including those with older male children and larger families are available.
- increase awareness of options for support where people may own assets.
- explore opportunities to provide short-term accommodation for people at risk of facing multiple barriers, such as homelessness and domestic abuse.

Strengthening Services

- work to identify lobbying opportunities to support services which help people in the community or in other accommodation options including temporary accommodation.

Children in Safe Accommodation

Tier 1 authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that children have access to support who are in safe accommodation.

To improve access to services for children in safe accommodation, the Partnership will:

- offer support for children in safe accommodation, both for children from Kent and Medway who stay in area, and those who are living in safe accommodation in Kent and Medway from other local authority areas.
- ensure that all children and young people in safe accommodation have access to support that is age appropriate and meets their needs, which may include access to ongoing education, counselling, play therapy, advocacy services and other opportunities.
- minimise time out of education for young people fleeing with an adult experiencing abuse.

Access to housing

To strengthen our housing response, the Partnership will:

- work across our services to understand need and demand for housing for those fleeing domestic abuse.
- explore projects which strengthen the housing response including options for specialised referral and support routes.
- further explore why people are having to be housed in temporary accommodation or may be choosing to move into temporary accommodation rather than safe accommodation options.
- work with the Kent Housing Group as they explore action across temporary accommodation to support availability and quality.
- recognise the importance of social and family networks and how this impacts accommodation choices.
- continue to support those leaving refuge or dispersed accommodation and temporary accommodation to find more permanent, settled accommodation.
- extend training to staff on domestic abuse and homelessness legislation, working to reduce the amount of people impacted by domestic abuse identified as intentionally homeless.

Activity Indicators

Immediate Needs

- Average time it takes to wait for children to gain a school place after moving to safe accommodation.
- Number of people who have settled accommodation destinations from refuge.
- Number of people refused safe accommodation.
- Number of people accessing safe accommodation who have multiple barriers such as dependencies or mental health support needs.
- Number of people who are presenting themselves as homeless due to domestic abuse
- Number of people impacted by domestic abuse identified as intentionally homeless
- Number of people being offered housing through Kent and Medway housing reciprocal agreements.

Recovery

- Number of children and young people who access therapeutic support in safe accommodation.

**The Kent and Medway
Domestic Abuse Strategy
2024 - 2029**
Consultation

Easy
Read



Consultation closes 16 October 2023
kent.gov.uk



**Kent and Medway
Domestic Abuse Strategy
2024 - 2029:**
Executive Summary



**Kent and Medway
Domestic Abuse Strategy
2020 - 2023:**
Progress made



Consultation 24th July to 9th October