

**Kent & Medway
domestic abuse
Strategy Group**

**Kent and Medway
Domestic Abuse Strategy
2010 - 2013**

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1 Foreword

As Chair of the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy Group, I am aware of the high quality service, the commitment and drive that a wide range of public services, charitable organisations and voluntary agencies apply to this extremely concerning criminal aspect of our society.

Domestic abuse blights too many lives, transcends class, race, religion and gender and occurs in a myriad of ways.

This strategy lays out a simple but clear focus on the ambitions of all those that address and deal with domestic abuse across the county.

The immediate challenge continues to be how to sustain, develop and improve those services that are working within the domestic abuse field. The long term aim is to reduce the number of people affected by domestic abuse across Kent and Medway.

With this in mind we must plan to continue to work closely together to positively focus resources and build upon the successes already in place.

I thank you for your contribution to this work.

Stuart Beaumont
Chairman KMDASG

2 Introduction

This Strategy aims to assist partnerships and agencies in delivering appropriate responses to those affected by domestic abuse across Kent and Medway, assisting people to live free from abuse.

The focus on local needs is informed by national research and takes into account recent national developments such as the 'End Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy,' which was issued in November 2009, along with the finding from the studies undertaken by the Audit Commission in Kent during the early part of 2010.

The Strategy will be accompanied with a Delivery Plan, which will be refreshed annually and will provide partners with a framework for domestic abuse work.

Tackling domestic abuse is a cross-cutting issue requiring varied responses across all sectors. This Strategy is underpinned by a recognition and commitment to partnership working and an understanding that no single agency can address domestic abuse in isolation. By working together more effectively agencies will be able to maximise the utilisation of existing resources and, where possible, seek to draw upon additional resources, to improve the response to domestic abuse across Kent and Medway.

3 Understanding Domestic Abuse

Whilst some agencies use the term 'domestic violence' others prefer to use 'domestic abuse,' both terms cover all forms of domestic violence and abuse.

For the purpose of this Strategy, the following definitions apply:

Home Office Definition 2004:

'Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.'

Women's Aid Definition:

'Domestic violence is physical, sexual, psychological or financial violence that takes place within an intimate or family-type relationship and that forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour. This can include forced marriage and so-called "honour crimes". Domestic violence may include a range of abusive behaviours, not all of which are in themselves inherently "violent".'

It is also important to remember that most research also suggests that domestic violence occurs in all sections of society irrespective of gender, race, culture, nationality, religion, sexuality, disability, age, class or educational level.

Both definitions would therefore also include incidents where extended family members may condone or share in the pattern of abuse e.g. forced marriage, female genital mutilation and crimes rationalised as punishing women for bringing 'dishonour' to the family.

4 Aims of the KMDASG

The Aims and Principles of the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy Group are:

- To set out a vision within the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy Group's (KMDASG) Strategy for effectively addressing the issue of domestic violence in the county and detail the steps that will be taken to achieve this within individual agencies as well as on a multi-agency basis.
- To identify and prioritise current gaps in service delivery as well as promoting and embedding current effective initiatives that have already been put in place.
- To encourage all agencies and partnerships to work towards providing the highest standards in the provision of services relating to domestic violence.
- Maximise the utilisation of existing resources and, where possible, seek to draw upon additional resources, to improve services further.
- To emphasis the continuing need to strengthen services that assist survivors of domestic violence throughout the county.
- To develop short-term and long-term preventative initiatives.
- To collate and distribute relevant information on best practice, new developments, policies, legislation, events and reports.

5 Kent and Medway's Ambitions

Reduce domestic abuse and change attitudes	Increase knowledge and understanding of impact of domestic abuse across communities and agencies highlighting the fact that it is everyone's responsibility whilst emphasising the effectiveness of early identification and intervention.
Provide support to victims of domestic abuse	Work in partnership to meet the needs of victims and their children of domestic abuse and enable access to specialist support, to reduce repeat victimisation and increase confidence in reporting.
Protect victims of domestic abuse	To support victims through the legal system and ensure offenders recognise and understand their behaviour, are held accountable and are encouraged to attend rehabilitation services.
Multi-Agency Working	To continue to improve joint working between agencies, including information sharing, to enable a co-ordinated approach to addressing domestic abuse.

Future domestic abuse service developments should aim to:

- Reduce the impact of domestic abuse in the community.
- Improve the quality of life and safety of victims of domestic abuse (women, men and children).
- Protect the public.
- Provide equitable access to services by victims, children and perpetrators, according to their level of assessed need and risk.
- Provide perpetrators of domestic abuse with programmes that help them to understand their behaviour, provide alternative behaviour and ensure that they are held accountable for their behaviour.

Ambition One:

Reduce domestic abuse and change attitudes

Increase knowledge and understanding of impact of domestic abuse across communities and agencies highlighting the fact that it is everyone's responsibility whilst emphasising the effectiveness of early identification and intervention.

- Improve knowledge and understanding by delivering regular multi-agency awareness events and training activities across Kent and Medway making use of relevant media links and exploring new opportunities as they arise.
- Work to ensure that children and young people have a greater understanding and awareness of domestic abuse and the support that is available e.g. through school-based awareness raising programmes.
- Raise the profile of partner violence in adolescence.
- Early identification of those affected by domestic abuse (victims, perpetrators, children) by healthcare professionals.
- Promote awareness of domestic abuse within the workplace.

Ambition Two:

Provide support to victims of domestic abuse

Work in partnership to meet the needs of victims and their children of domestic abuse and enable access to specialist support, to reduce repeat victimisation and increase confidence in reporting.

- Develop one generic pathway for all involved in domestic abuse to provide/access advice and support.
- Enable victims to access the appropriate support and information across Kent and Medway.
- Enable victims to stay safely in their own homes should they choose to do so and be supported if they wish to leave.
- To ensure that appropriate safe accommodation is available to people who are unable to stay in their homes.
- To ensure that the needs of victims from minority and vulnerable groups are incorporated in specialist and generic support services and that diversity is reflected in all activities.
- Enable children living with or experiencing domestic abuse to be signposted to services for appropriate advice and support at the first point of contact.
- Identify and support high-risk victims through the engagement of key agencies within the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) across Kent and Medway.

Ambition Three:

Protect victims of domestic abuse

To support victims through the legal system and ensure offenders recognise and understand their behaviour, are held accountable and are encouraged to attend rehabilitation services.

- Continue to support and develop specialist support services such as Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), floating support services, housing options and housing management teams, to support victims of domestic abuse through both criminal and civil justice routes.
- Establish effective offender management policies for convicted domestic violence perpetrators.
- To provide effective rehabilitation services for perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- Work with Kent Prisons to deliver a Through the Gate domestic abuse programme to prisoners being released to Kent – to provide continuity for wraparound support.

Ambition Four:

Multi-Agency Working

To continue to improve joint working between agencies, including information sharing, to enable a co-ordinated approach to addressing domestic abuse.

- Work with agencies to secure a sustainable level of financial and operational commitment to address domestic abuse issues.
- Work to maximise the links between multi-agency partnerships such as Local Community Safety Partnerships, Domestic Abuse Forums, Kent Criminal Justice Board, Kent Safeguarding Children Board, Medway Safeguarding Children Board, Children's Trusts, Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board, Supporting People Commissioning Bodies, Kent Housing Group (KHG) and Joint Policy and Planning Board for Housing (JPPB) and Kent Partnership, to ensure the implementation of the domestic abuse strategy and delivery plan.
- Work to improve multi-agency information sharing through statutory and non-statutory partnerships such as MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) and MARAC.

6 Implementation and Delivery

This Strategy is intended to be an overarching document setting out a common understanding and commitment from key stakeholder to address domestic abuse across Kent and Medway.

To accompany this Strategy a Delivery Plan will be produced detailing for each strategy priority:

- Aims and objectives
- Actions required for delivery
- Outputs
- Outcomes

It will also include agencies leading areas of work.

7 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Strategy and Delivery Plan will be regularly reviewed with KMDASG meetings to:

- Monitor progress against targets and objectives.
- Evaluate whether actions and activities are achieving the required outcomes.
- Establish the overall impact and effectiveness of the Strategy.
- Incorporate new legislation or government directives.
- Reflect local need and any other emerging priorities.

Agencies identified as leading on targets will provide information on performance monitoring against the delivery plan.

The indicators that will enable us to measure the success of this strategy will include:

- % of repeat victims of domestic abuse (DA) (within 12 months)
- % of MARAC cases where DA ceased (no further referrals within 12 months)
- % of cases where IDVAs involved where DA ceased (following provision on the service)
- % of cases where DA Floating Support involved where DA ceased (following provision on the service)
- % of DA perpetrators who attended perpetrator programmes and ceased DA behaviour (no further incidents within 6 months following completion of programme)
- % of families where the child is subject to a child protection or children in need plan and where DA was a component, where the DA ceased by the point the child ceased to be subject to the plan.

8 Consultation Processes

Representatives from the following KMDASG partners participated in the initial development of the Strategy and Delivery Plan:

- Community Safety – Kent County Council
- Safeguarding Adults – Medway Council
- Supporting People – Kent County Council
- Children and Families - Eastern and Coastal Kent PCT
- Kent Police
- Kent Probation
- Rising Sun Domestic Violence Project
- Women's Support Service

A three-week consultation then took place during August 2010.

Responses to the consultation were received from the following agencies:

- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
- Children and Families - Eastern and Coastal Kent PCT
- Directorate of Commissioning, Child Health – NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent and NHS West Kent
- Sevenoaks LCSP
- Community Safety Unit – Sevenoaks District Council
- Family Action
- Casa Support
- Kent Probation
- North Kent Women's Aid
- Kent Housing Group
- Teenage Pregnancy Commissioner – Kent County Council
- Housing – Dartford Borough Council
- Children and Adults Directorate – Medway Council
- Supporting People Team – Kent County Council
- Rising Sun Domestic Violence Project
- Kent Joint Policy and Planning Board (Housing)
- Kent Criminal Justice Board
- Medway Community Healthcare
- Medway NHS Foundation Trust
- EPIC Trust
- Kent Safeguarding Children Board
- Medway Safeguarding Children Board

All views and comments were taken into consideration, with the majority of suggestions being included within the final documents.

Appendix A: Domestic Abuse Prevalence in Kent and Medway

1. Reported Incidents of Domestic Abuse

All domestic abuse incidents reported to Kent Police (crimes and non-crime secondary incidents) are recorded.

From 2006 onwards, over 20,000 domestic abuse incidents have been reported to Kent Police every year.

Chart 1: Domestic Abuse Incidents Reported to Kent Police

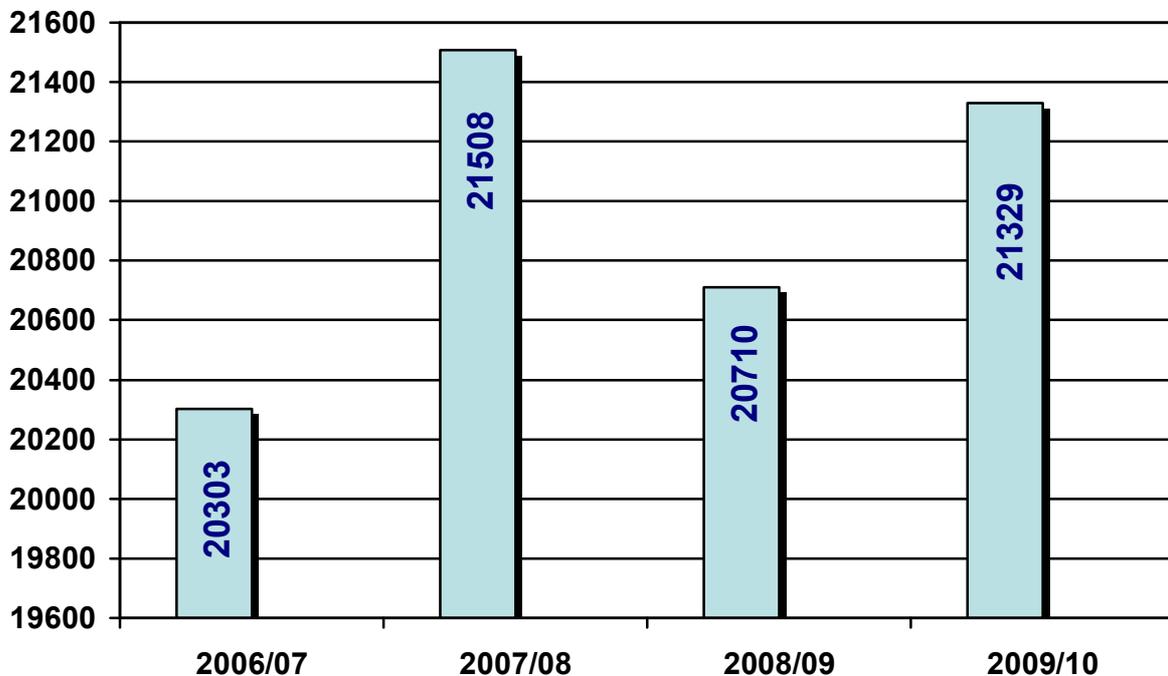
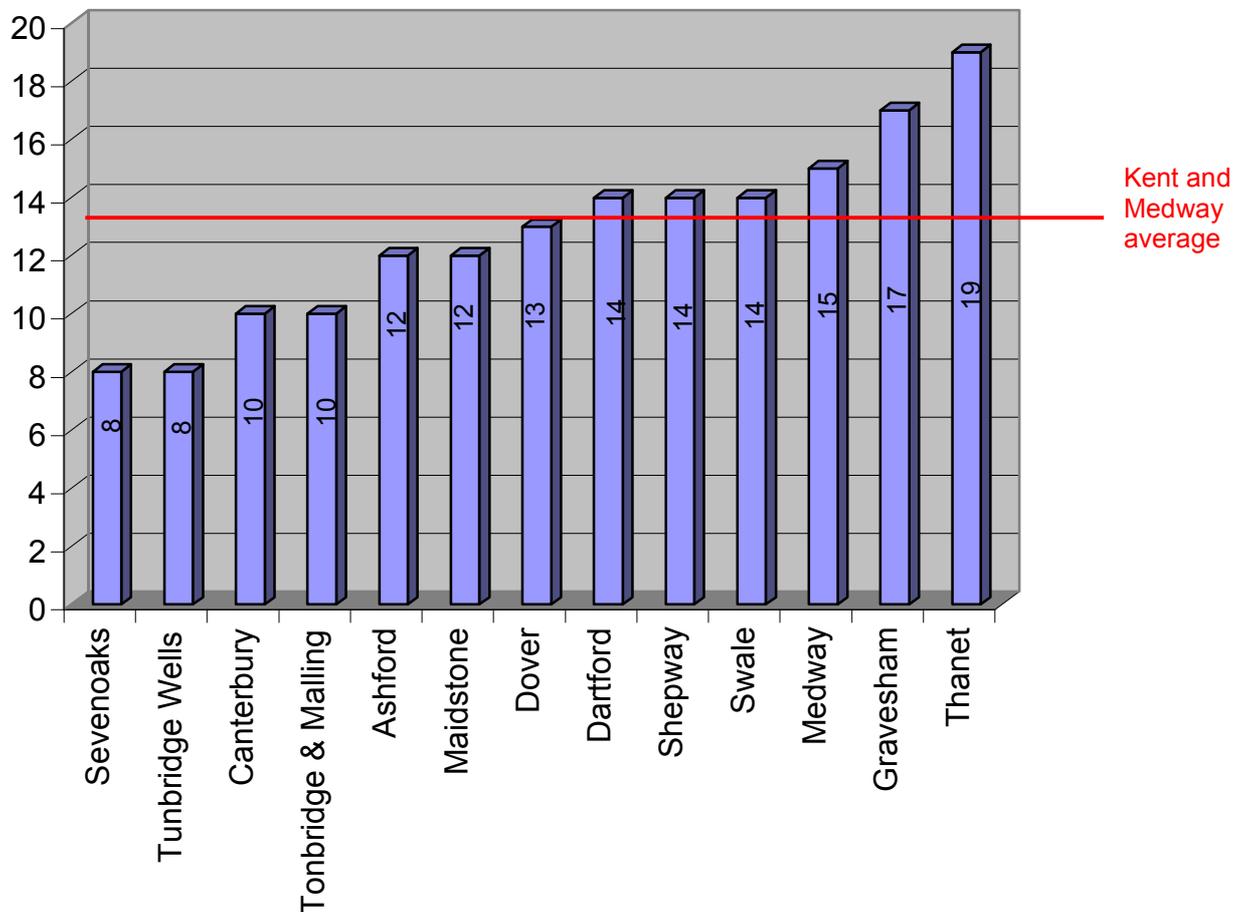


Chart 2: Domestic Abuse Incidents Reported to Kent Police 2009/10 Per 1000 Population



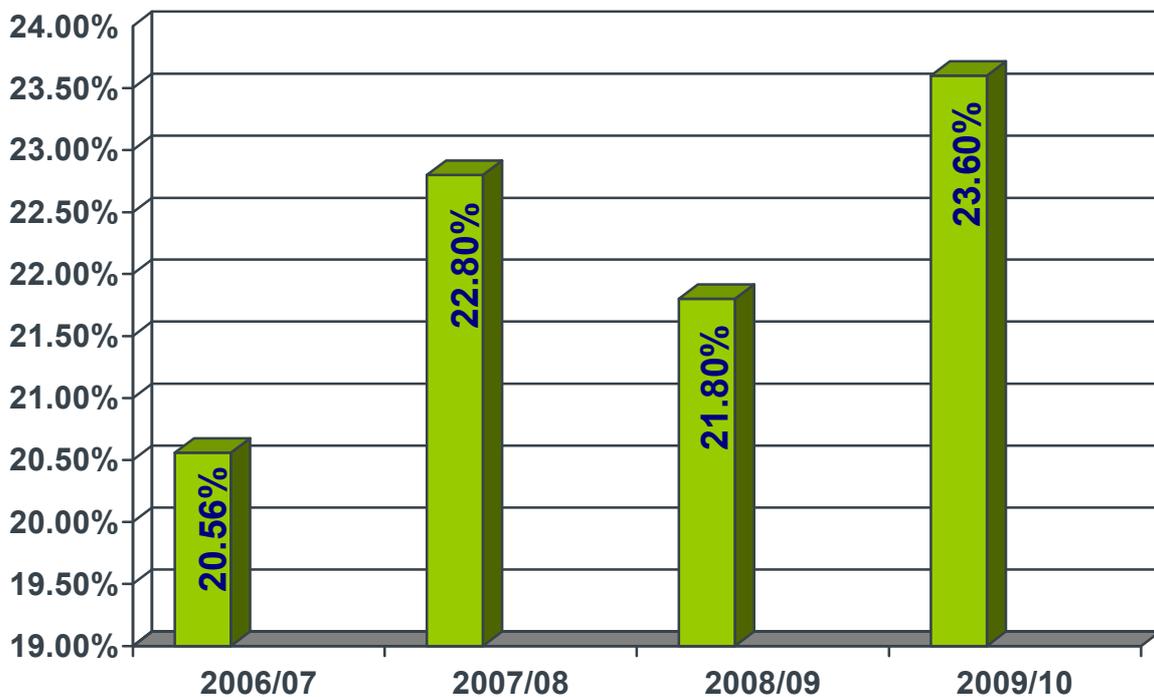
Kent Police figures demonstrate that reported incidents have been increasing over recent years rather than decreasing, this could be due to:

- Increased awareness and publicity of services that can assist domestic abuse victims in Kent and Medway.
- Increased public confidence in reporting incidents of domestic abuse to Kent Police.
- Enhanced multi-agency working and training around domestic abuse, to enable front line practitioners more easily identify victims of domestic abuse and refer on to appropriate services e.g. referrals to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences and/or Independent Domestic Violence Advisors.
- Development of specialist domestic abuse services in recent years; providing more pathways and support to report incidents.

2. Repeat Victims of Domestic Abuse

Kent Police also record repeat victims of domestic abuse, by repeat we mean that the victims are subject to abuse two or more times during a 12-month period.

Chart 3: Repeat Victims of Domestic Abuse Reported to Kent Police



From the Kent Police data we find that during 2009/10:

- Shepway, Dover, Thanet and Ashford had the highest repeat victimisation rates:
 - Shepway – 25.2%
 - Dover – 24.9%
 - Thanet and Ashford – 24.6% both areas
- Canterbury and Sevenoaks had the lowest repeat victimisation rates:
 - Canterbury – 21.8%
 - Sevenoaks – 22.0%

We can also note that from the data that 2009/10 saw an increase in the repeat victimisation rate when compared with that in 2008/09.

3. Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Data

MARACs started running in Kent and Medway during July 2008, going live across all areas by August 2009. At MARAC agencies will have shared information and be asked to commit resources to those victims and families accessed at highest risk of future serious abuse/ danger.

GOSE set a target for the MARACs in Kent and Medway to achieve a repeat victimisation rate of less than 28% by 2011; as seen in Table 1, this target is currently being achieved.

Table1: MARAC Data - April 2010

	Medway	Mid Kent	South Kent	East Kent	North Kent	West Kent
Total nos. cases (since implementation)	170	182	79	64	44	93
% repeat victimisation (in last 12 months)	10%	10%	5%	11%	5%	16%

4. Under Reporting of Domestic Abuse

It is widely acknowledged that most incidents of domestic abuse are still not reported to the Police.¹ The Home Office issued the Ready Reckoner Tool to estimate the numbers of likely female victims of domestic abuse based on population and using the most current research.²

Using this tool it is estimated that across Kent and Medway:

53,953 women and girls aged 15 – 59 have been a victim of **domestic abuse** in the past year.

27,392 women and girls aged 15 – 59 have been a victim of a **sexual assault** in the past year.

66,902 women and girls aged 15 – 59 have been a victim of **stalking** in the past year

The total cost to Kent and Medway services in dealing with the effects of domestic abuse and sexual assault = **£317,125,587.**²

¹ British Crime Survey 2008/09; Crime in England and Wales, Home Office, 2002

² www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/domesticviolence/domesticviolence072.htm ; website also details cost of domestic abuse and sexual assault to agencies.