

Executive Summary

Somerset Domestic Abuse Strategy

2026–2029

Accessing support

If you are concerned for yourself or someone else, you can get in touch and get help. Somerset's local, confidential helpline will provide advice to anyone seeking help with domestic abuse. This includes relatives, friends and work colleagues as well as those who are causing harm.

Call: **0800 69 49 999**

Email: domesticabuseservice@somerset.gov.uk

Visit our [Contact us](#) page for more ways to contact including access to the webchat

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, please contact the police: call 999. You can press 55 if you are unable to speak so that the operator knows you need help.

Purpose and Context

The Somerset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2026–2029 sets out the statutory response to domestic abuse under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. It builds on the previous 2021–2024 strategy and is informed by the 2024 multi-authority Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment.

Domestic abuse remains a significant and often under-reported issue, affecting individuals across all demographics. The Act strengthened the framework by introducing a statutory definition of domestic abuse and recognising children as victims in their own right, placing new duties on local authorities and partners.

This strategy provides a partnership-wide framework to:

- Prevent domestic abuse earlier
- Improve system-wide responses
- Support victims and families effectively
- Hold perpetrators to account

Scale and Local Need

Domestic abuse is widespread and complex, frequently under-reported and often only identified at crisis point.

Key local indicators:

- 21,084 people (16+) estimated to have experienced domestic abuse in Somerset (2023–24)
- 2,435 referrals received by the Somerset Domestic Abuse Service (2023–24)
- 25 Domestic Homicide Reviews recorded in Somerset (2021–2024)

The Needs Assessment highlights:

- Persistent under-reporting and hidden harm
- Barriers to accessing services, particularly for minoritised groups
- Increased complexity of cases (coercive control, trauma, multiple needs)
- Gaps in data, training, and multi-agency consistency

Strategic Approach

The strategy adopts a public health and whole-system approach, focused on prevention, early intervention, and recovery.

Core principles:

- Domestic abuse is preventable through early intervention
- Services must be accessible to all, including those with protected characteristics
- Children are victims and must be supported accordingly
- Effective delivery requires coordinated multi-agency partnership working

A Coordinated Community Response (CCR) underpins delivery, bringing together health, housing, social care, education, criminal justice, and community partners to provide a consistent and safe response.



Achievements to Date

Progress from the 2021–2024 strategy includes:

- Development of the Sanctuary Scheme and expanded safe accommodation
- Variety of specialist programmes for people who cause harm (including accredited provision)
- System-wide review of domestic abuse response
- Increased focus on equity and protected characteristics

The Somerset Domestic Abuse Service has also again achieved Leading Lights Accreditation, reflecting high-quality service delivery.



Key Priorities (2026–2029)

The strategy identifies six strategic priorities, supported by measurable outcomes:



1. Prevention and Awareness

- Strengthen public understanding of domestic abuse
- Deliver targeted campaigns (e.g. older people, men, specific abuse types)
- Build workforce capability across agencies



2. Understanding Familial Abuse

- Raise awareness of abuse within families (not just intimate partners)
- Develop targeted communication and engagement



3. Access to Safe Accommodation and Support

- Expand and diversify safe accommodation provision
- Improve referral pathways and remove burden from victims
- Address gaps (e.g. disability-accessible provision)



4. Holding Perpetrators to Account

- Strengthen identification and engagement with those who cause harm
- Increase use of legal tools and behaviour change programmes



5. Targeting Inequalities and Protected Characteristics

- Improve access for under-represented groups (e.g. older people, disabled people, men, LGBTQ+)
- Strengthen data quality and inclusivity in services



6. Supporting Children as Victims

- Embed recognition of children as victims across all agencies
- Expand specialist support and referral pathways
- Increase training across education and safeguarding systems

Children and Young People

The strategy places a strong emphasis on children, recognising:

- Rising referrals to children's services (209 increasing to 308 between 2021 and 2024)
- Gaps in identification, training, and consistent practice
- Need for a whole-family, trauma-informed approach

Key commitments include:

- Early intervention across the pathway
- Support for non-abusive parents
- Stronger accountability for abusive parents

Governance and Delivery

Delivery is overseen by the Somerset Domestic Abuse Board (the statutory Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board), which:

- Provides strategic oversight and assurance
- Reports to the Safer Somerset Partnership and safeguarding boards
- Monitors progress against a robust performance framework

A multi-agency Strategic Action Plan underpins implementation, setting out:

- Actions, responsibilities, and timelines
- Outcomes for victims and survivors
- Mechanisms for continuous improvement



Key Success Factors

Successful delivery will require:

- Strong multi-agency collaboration and shared accountability
- Improved data quality and performance monitoring
- Embedding survivor voice in service design and governance
- Whole-system adoption of trauma-informed practice
- Sustained focus on prevention and early intervention

Conclusion

The Somerset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2026–2029 represents a shift toward a system-wide, prevention-focused, and survivor-centred approach. It aims to deliver measurable improvements in safety, access to support, and long-term outcomes for victims, families, and communities, while ensuring perpetrators are held accountable

Somerset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2026-2029

To read a copy of the strategy, please visit [Somerset Domestic Abuse website, document and resource library](#).

For domestic abuse support and information, please visit the [Somerset Domestic Abuse website](#).

