

# Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL



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## With thanks

The Commission co-chairs would like to extend their thanks to those who contributed to the workshop sessions which informed and influenced this report.

Organisations represented in the commission workshops include: Avon and Somerset Police, Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner, Beloved, BGSW Community Rehabilitation Company, Bristol City Council, Bristol Dementia Wellbeing Service, Bristol Women’s Commission, Bristol Women’s Voice, Community Access Support Service – Bristol, Family Nurse Partnership – Sirona Care and Health, Galop, IRIS, Kinergy, National Probation Service, Nelson Trust, Next Link Housing, North Bristol NHS Trust, Office of Thangam Debbonaire MP, One25, REPROVIDE, SARSAS – Somerset and Avon Rape and Sexual Assault Support, Shelter, Southmead Project, Splitz Support Service, University of Bristol, Bristol Medical School (Population Health Sciences), University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust, Victims of Image Crime and Womankind Bristol.

# The Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse

## Introduction from Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol

Domestic abuse and sexual violence affect the lives of too many people in our city.

Most victims and survivors are women, but these are crimes which threaten people in all walks of life and from all backgrounds. Domestic abuse threatens people's physical, mental and emotional health. It can have lifelong consequences for children growing up witnessing it in their home. In the most devastating cases, it kills.

We want to end it.

In our One City Plan, we set out a clear goal for Bristol: that by 2050 "Bristol will be a city free from domestic abuse and gender inequality."

Much has been written about the challenges Covid-19 have posed for supporting those experiencing – or at risk of experiencing – domestic abuse. It has created conditions for incidents of abuse to increase, with people feeling trapped and making it difficult for support services to reach those who need help. But for us, it was also a call to action: a moment to harness the city's expertise and energy and ensure that those experiencing abuse know it is unacceptable and that help is always available.

If we are to give survivors of abuse the support they deserve, we need tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence to be everybody's business.

We need the whole city to unite and feel confident in taking action when they witness or when someone discloses, they are experiencing abuse. We need businesses, community organisations, public services, support services, faith groups, neighbours, friends and families to join us in making it clear that Bristol is a Zero Tolerance City for domestic abuse and sexual violence.

I am grateful to all those who shared their time, their experiences, and their ideas during the course of the Commission's work – and to Cllr Asher Craig and Cllr Helen Godwin who co-chaired the commission. I also extend my thanks to Ann James, Claire Bloor, Christina Gray, Sue Moss, Police and Crime Commissioner Sue Mountstevens and Carol Metters for chairing the commission's workshops.

Their collective expertise has resulted in a report which sets out the principles and recommendations that will underpin our response to domestic abuse and sexual violence and ensure that Bristol is a city where everybody can feel safe and thrive.



## Preface by Cllr Asher Craig and Cllr Helen Godwin – Commission Co-Chairs

In March 2020, as the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic was being felt across the world, the UK was plunged into lockdown and for the first time in living memory people were ordered to ‘stay at home’.

Whilst this was an essential message for the public health of the nation, it was also terrifying for the many people for whom home is not a safe place.

Domestic abuse and sexual violence are prevalent in Bristol. Across our city there are people living in fear of the people they share their homes with. Lockdown was a dangerous development for many Bristolians.

Here in Bristol we have a proud record of working in partnership and our approach to supporting survivors of domestic abuse is no different. In Spring 2020 we were able to convene leaders from the police, health services, housing and the all-important voluntary and support services sector to come together and challenge ourselves to make significant progress in the prevention of domestic abuse and sexual violence, and the support we provide.

By Summer 2020, with the support of Mayor Rees, we launched the Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse.

Our aims are to ensure that we have a clear pathway for people who are affected by domestic abuse to follow, to reinforce the message that You Are Not Alone and that your city will support you, and finally, to commit as a city to ending Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse.

Through a series of virtual workshops, we engaged with more than 80 people, including those with lived experience. We encouraged our commissioners to be innovative, ambitious, and collaborative.

Our report includes 35 recommendations that the city will take forward. Moving us towards becoming a safer, kinder place where victims and survivors of domestic violence and abuse feel supported, safe, and empowered to move forward and build new lives.

We would like to thank all our commissioners and the Mayor of Bristol’s office for their time, support, and commitment.

This report is dedicated to all the victim-survivors of domestic and sexual violence and abuse in Bristol.

We see you.  
We hear you.  
You are not alone.



## Our Principles: an overview

- We will start with you and what's right for you.
- There are a range of support services available and ways in which we can build safety with you. There will always be a person available to talk to you and help.
- If you have children, we will work with you to support you, to help you care for your children and keep them safe.
- It's your home and we want you to be able to stay in your home, which means if you want the person who is hurting, scaring or controlling you to be told to leave and not return, we will take action so that you can be safe.
- If staying in your home isn't be right for you, or you need a safe home to go to, we will do everything we can to help you to make that happen. Your physical and psychological safety are important to us.
- In every corner of our city, we will work to eliminate sexual violence and abuse, and we will support survivors to feel safe, to recover, and to thrive.
- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence are everybody's business – we all have a role to play in making sure Bristol is a zero-tolerance city where domestic abuse and sexual violence are not tolerated, and victims and survivors are supported.

### A message for anyone experiencing domestic or sexual abuse or violence:

Domestic abuse and sexual violence are never acceptable. If you, or somebody you know is a victim, please report it. If you feel that you or your family are in immediate danger – call 999 (if it is not safe to speak, call 999 and press '55' – this will alert the phone operator that you are in need of assistance but cannot talk). You can also report abuse via the [Avon and Somerset Police website](#).

- The National Domestic Abuse helpline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 0808 2000 247
- Next Link provide support services locally for women experiencing domestic or sexual abuse, and can be contacted on 0117 925 0860, or via their website: [www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk](http://www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk)
- SARSAS (Somerset and Avon Rape and Sexual Abuse Support) is a support service for people who have experienced sexual violence at any point in their life – their helplines are 0808 801 0456 for women and girls and 0808 801 0464 for men and boys, or visit their website: [www.sarsas.org.uk](http://www.sarsas.org.uk)
- Victim Support help men who have experienced abuse - call 0300 303 1972 or email [bristolmens.dasupport@victimsupport.org.uk](mailto:bristolmens.dasupport@victimsupport.org.uk)
- You can also find information about other local and national helplines and support services on our website: [www.bristol.gov.uk/crime-emergencies/abuse-violence](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/crime-emergencies/abuse-violence).

If you feel that you must leave your home to remain safe, you can contact the council on 0117 352 6800 or come to our Citizen Service Point for advice. Support is available if you are experiencing abuse and need somewhere safe to go to on a temporary basis. For instance, services like Next Link provide safe house accommodation for women to stay for up to six months, including dedicated houses for single women and black and ethnic minority women and children.

If you are reading this report, and you are scaring, controlling, or hurting your partner or your family, help is available. You can contact the Respect Phonenumber on 0808 8024040. The REPROVIDE study is a local research trial which works with men who are worried about their behaviour in relationships with women, they can be contacted at [reprovide-men@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:reprovide-men@bristol.ac.uk).

Whatever you are experiencing, help is available. #YouAreNotAlone.

## Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence – The Facts

- In 2020, 7,382 offences were flagged as involving domestic abuse in Bristol.
- We estimate that in 2019, 17,000 adults in Bristol experienced domestic abuse (including over 11,000 women).
- The Home Office estimate that domestic abuse costs UK businesses over £14 billion from lost output related to time off work and reduced productivity.
- Approximately 176,000 older women living in the South West have experienced sexual violence at some point in their life. (SARSAS, *The Chilling Silence*, 2020)
- During the first lockdown between April-June 2020, the National Domestic Abuse Helpline logged 40,397 contacts – a 65% increase on the previous three months.
- In 2020, Somerset and Avon Rape and Sexual Abuse Support (SARSAS) handled over 1000 calls from Bristol residents through their helpline.
- In 2019, 3202 children known to Bristol’s Children and Family Services were living in a home where domestic abuse took place.
- In 2018, only 18% of women who experienced abuse from their partner reported this to the police.
- On average the police in England and Wales receive over 100 calls relating to domestic abuse every hour.
- 81 people from 28 local and national organisations contributed to the commission workshops and helped draft the principles and recommendations in this report.

## Our Principles

“We will start with you, and what’s right for you”

Anyone can be the victim of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

While most domestic abuse is perpetrated against women by men, as a city we stand ready to support all those who are suffering and have survived domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse can manifest in many forms. It does not always manifest in violence and is not always perpetrated by a romantic or sexual partner. The new Domestic Abuse bill when it is passed by Parliament, will define domestic abuse as “physical or sexual abuse” and “violent or threatening behaviour” as well as “controlling or coercive behaviour”, “economic abuse” and “psychological, emotional or other abuse”.

So, we understand that if someone experiences domestic abuse, their needs, their concerns and their hopes will be unique.

Our message is, wherever you seek help in Bristol, **we will start with you and with what is right for you.**

- **RECOMMENDATION 1:** Bristol City Council, partners and support services to develop and promote diverse support pathways that show the range of services available, and that ensure that whoever and wherever survivors are, they will be listened to, believed, and supported in Bristol.

In practical terms this means this means that we will highlight the range of support services that are available – whether someone is concerned for your immediate safety and well-being, whether they have experienced abuse recently or over a long period of time, or whether they want to find support to recover from experiences they have survived.

- **RECOMMENDATION 2:** Bristol City Council, partners and support services to work with individuals and communities across Bristol to overcome barriers and ensure victims and survivors of all backgrounds and identities can access support that is right for them.

Evidence tells us that many people experience real barriers in getting the support they need to end or recover from abuse:

- There is a correlation between poverty and the likelihood of experiencing domestic and sexual abuse.
- Domestic abuse may take different forms for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women, and survivors may be deterred from accessing support due to specific family pressures and from fears about the response from support services.
- Disabled people in England are both more likely to experience domestic and sexual abuse, and they are more likely to experience barriers in accessing services.
- Older people are often overlooked in campaigns and are less likely to speak openly about past and present experiences of abuse.
- LGBTQ+ people have specific experiences of domestic abuse which differ from other survivors, such as the threat of having their sexuality or gender identity used against them by their abuser.
- Those who do not speak English (or for whom English is an additional language) can find it difficult to disclose that they are experiencing abuse.

- Victims and survivors with insecure immigration status can have this used against them by perpetrators, and can be prevented from accessing certain statutory support services due to the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' policy.

Unless we work proactively and reach out to those experiencing abuse in different communities and contexts in Bristol, we will not succeed in ending domestic and sexual abuse in our city.

- **RECOMMENDATION 3:** Develop and strengthen interventions and support services that are community-based and help provide effective training and support pathways across the city's diverse communities.

Services that are active in and built and trusted by local communities are likely to be the services that people need if they need help and support. We will work to support and strengthen community-based services across Bristol alongside accommodation-based services.

- **RECOMMENDATION 4:** When supporting survivors of domestic and sexual abuse through recovery, partners and support services should respect individual needs and support choices in how best to build safety for them, their family, and those around them.

The process of building safety and recovering from domestic abuse will be different from person to person – we want to make sure we are putting survivors' needs first at every stage of our response to domestic abuse and sexual violence.



“If you have children, we will work with you to support you”

We understand that for many experiencing domestic abuse, the desire to keep their children safe and to provide stability for them is the overwhelming priority. However, unfortunately many people experiencing domestic abuse are afraid to speak about their situation because they are worried about the impact this may have on keeping their family together. We want to reassure survivors that telling someone about the situation will only unlock further support to help them and their children build safety together. As a city, we want to help survivors and children remain safe, and to recover from any abuse they experience or witness.

- **RECOMMENDATION 5:** Bristol City Council, schools, partners and support services to ensure that wherever those experiencing abuse seek help, we will work with them and their children to support their choices and help keep their family safe.

Though tackling domestic abuse is a [key priority for Avon and Somerset Police](#), we understand that not everyone will feel comfortable contacting the police if they experience abuse. Schools and health services are key places where people can disclose, they are experiencing abuse, and signs of abuse can be noticed. So, wherever survivors seek support, we will work to understand them and their children’s situation, and work with them to keep them and their family from harm.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6:** Ensure children have a meaningful voice in Bristol’s response to domestic abuse and violence, including helping design services that ensure the needs of children who are experiencing or witnessing domestic and sexual abuse are met.

In the Bristol Children Charter, we have pledged to not only ensure children are protected from all forms of violence and abuse, we have also pledged to give children opportunities to influence and help shape the decisions we take as a city. We want to make sure that children’s needs and voices are reflected in the services we provide to protect them from domestic abuse and help them recover from any abuse they experience or witness.

- **RECOMMENDATION 7:** Ensure that children affected by domestic abuse can access dedicated support from services that can be accessed by anybody in the city (wherever they are, whatever their background or identity). We will work to ensure that these services are able to build strong and supportive relationships with survivors and their family to help children recover and build stability over time.

We understand that children who have experienced domestic abuse will need specific and tailored support to help them recover that will differ from support needed by adults.

- **RECOMMENDATION 8:** Continue work to ensure nobody grows up in Bristol with Adverse Childhood Experiences, and to promote opportunities to help people recover from trauma, whenever they may occur during their lifetime.

If someone experiences domestic abuse as a child, it can have a long-lasting impact on their psychological wellbeing and their health. If, as a city, we fail to help children recover from the trauma that domestic abuse, this can severely affect their life-chances and hamper their opportunity to flourish in Bristol. Through our One City Plan and the Bristol Children’s Charter we have pledged to make Bristol an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) aware city. As well as helping survivors and their children build safety together and recover from abusive experiences, we want the whole city to take action so that all survivors of abuse can thrive and achieve their goals.

“It is your home... if you want the person who is hurting, scaring, or controlling you to be told to leave and not return, we will take action”

Your home should be the place where you feel safe and loved. And we know that a home is more than a front door, a sofa, a kitchen. Home is community, local shops, children’s schools, the conversations people have with the friends they meet during the day.

For so many who experience domestic abuse, the fear of having to leave their home can be one of the biggest things preventing them from telling anyone what is happening. We also recognise that many victims will wish to remain in their home to benefit from remaining near family and friends or local community support.

We want to give families stability and to help people to stay and feel safe in their home and their community wherever we can. Children and young people need to feel safe and supported. Therefore, the role of schools as protective and stabilising factors should try to be protected.

- **RECOMMENDATION 9:** Ensure that staff across the housing sector are trained to help people who are experiencing domestic abuse, or who have survived abuse in the past. This includes helping staff across the sector learn how to recognise abuse, how to support residents in reaching out for help that meets their needs, and how to work confidently across different cultural contexts in Bristol.

Those who work in housing – whether within the city council, housing associations, social housing providers or in the private rented sector – are well-placed to spot signs that abuse is taking place, and should be trained to be confident in offering practical support whenever it is needed to residents experiencing domestic abuse or sexual violence.

- **RECOMMENDATION 10:** Bristol City Council Housing and Landlord Services and social work teams to have a specialist domestic abuse support worker within the team.

For our part, we want to make sure that staff in our housing and social work teams work hand-in-hand with domestic abuse support services so that if residents tell us someone is making them feel unsafe in their home we can link them to wider sources of support in addition to helping meet their housing needs. This includes working with the police to put in place measures to make homes more secure – this is known as “target hardening”. More information about the accommodation and security options available to those experiencing domestic abuse are available on the [Bristol City Council website](#).

- **RECOMMENDATION 11:** The Council, police and services to develop clear pathways to help everyone involved understand the processes that will be put in place if a perpetrator is removed from the home. This includes being clear about what services are informed when allegations of abuse have been investigated (even if this results in no further action being taken by the police) and helping survivors and their families connect to appropriate support services.

If those experiencing abuse tell us that telling the person who is hurting, scaring, or controlling them to leave is what will make them feel safe, we will take action. This may involve information being shared with other services, such as safeguarding professionals, to help make sure that we can keep families safe. We understand that this can be a complex process, and if the police need to take action to remove someone from the home, it can be difficult to understand the legal processes that can be set in motion. We will work to make sure that these processes are always clearly explained, and that options for survivors are clearly set out.

“If staying in your home isn’t right for you, or you need a safe home to go to, we will do everything we can to make that happen.”

For many survivors of domestic abuse, finding a new home to feel safe in can be vital to recovery.

- **RECOMMENDATION 12:** Bristol City Council to conduct a needs analysis for housing and accommodation needs for survivors from diverse groups to help support services meet the needs of people from different communities across the city.

We know that different people will have different accommodation needs depending on their background, identity, and circumstances. As a city, we want to develop and support a range of accommodation options to help survivors of domestic abuse find somewhere safe where they can recover.

- **RECOMMENDATION 13:** Explore new ways of working to provide very short-term accommodation for survivors within local communities (such as through community places of safety which can provide homes in the community which complement traditional refuges).

Many people’s first port of call will be their personal and local support network: friends, family, and local community. We want to empower local communities provide practical help for people experiencing domestic abuse.

These recommendations sit alongside our city’s wider effort to ensure that by 2050 everyone in Bristol will live in a home that meets their needs within a thriving and safe community. We remain committed to our goals set out in the [One City Plan](#) to help families across Bristol find a safe and secure home.

“There are a range of support services available... There will always be a person available to talk to you and help.”

Domestic abuse is never acceptable, and we want to make sure help is always available.

- **RECOMMENDATION 14:** Support and develop services and train staff so that we offer many different opportunities for people to tell someone about their experiences who can help.

There are many different services people can contact if they are experiencing domestic abuse – we want to make sure even more people and places in the city are able to offer trained support if someone needs help.

- **RECOMMENDATION 15:** Develop recovery pathways within and between services that avoid the need for survivors to have to explain their experiences multiple times.
- **RECOMMENDATION 16:** Commit to the principle of co-located services and better information-sharing facilities, to help make it easier for people to share their experiences, and to help signpost survivors to the most appropriate support services for them and their family.

Telling someone about experiences of abuse can be deeply distressing – even if they happened a long time ago. Survivors often tell services in the city that they would find the process of recovery a lot easier if health and support services were able to share information (with permission) more effectively.

- **RECOMMENDATION 17:** Continue to support programmes such as [IRIS](#) who help train staff in GP practices to be aware of domestic abuse, and make sure all GP practices in the city have a consistent approach to referring people experiencing abuse to further support.
- **RECOMMENDATION 18:** Improve information-sharing and record-keeping both within different parts of the health service, and with other agencies and services.
- **RECOMMENDATION 19:** Ensure health and care services work confidently and with cultural sensitivity, recognising the barriers that different people may have in disclosing abuse, and different ways abuse may manifest across different communities in the city.

For many people, their local GP practice can be a confidential place where they can tell a professional that they are experiencing domestic abuse. Health care staff are also well-placed to help survivors find support that is appropriate to their needs, and to notify other agencies who might also be able to help safeguard those experiencing abuse and their family from any further harm.

“In every corner of our city, we will work to eliminate sexual violence and abuse”

As a city, we have pledged to make sure everyone in Bristol knows we have a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and abuse.

- **RECOMMENDATION 20:** Maintain [a clear pathway](#) for victims, survivors, and anyone who is at risk of sexual violence and abuse. This includes information about trauma recovery services, offers different opportunities for victims and survivors to access support in a way that works for them, and provides support for those who experience multiple risks that increase vulnerability (such as homelessness, substance misuse, or mental health conditions).

We know, however, that sexual violence can take place anywhere – in the home, in the workplace, in venues and businesses, or in public spaces. We want to make sure that anyone who experiences sexual abuse in Bristol is supported to recover from their experience – whenever or wherever it has occurred.

- **RECOMMENDATION 21:** Ensure training is available for employers to help organisations respond appropriately to disclosures of sexual abuse and violence in the workplace. This includes supporting employers to develop sexual violence and abuse policies that help safeguard staff and help victim-survivors to recover and thrive.

Businesses and employers can have a significant impact in helping prevent sexual violence and helping victim-survivors to recover – we will support businesses to build safety with and for their staff.

- **RECOMMENDATION 22:** Work through [Thrive Bristol](#) to improve access to mental health support for victim-survivors.

We recognise the importance of mental health support to help recovery and to help reduce trauma from experiences of sexual abuse and violence. This is partly about being able to access specialist support and recovery services, but it is also about improving mental health support across the city, reducing stigma and discrimination, and creating a mentally healthy and thriving city.

## “Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence are everybody’s business”

Anyone in Bristol can experience domestic abuse; everyone in Bristol needs to take action so we can support survivors and end domestic abuse for good.

- **RECOMMENDATION 23:** As a city, ensure that tackling domestic abuse is everyone’s business and commit collectively to challenging abusive behaviour and supporting survivors across the whole city to find help that meets their needs.

On their own, the police, the NHS, support services and statutory support services cannot end domestic abuse. Businesses, employers, universities, colleges, community organisations, venues, media outlets, transport providers and more Bristol organisations and institutions can help survivors find support and to challenge abusive behaviour wherever it may occur.

### Prevention

- **RECOMMENDATION 24:** Strengthen our city-wide commitment to education about healthy relationships in schools.
- **RECOMMENDATION 25:** Work across the whole city to spread the message of zero tolerance, promote healthy gender norms, and help people in every community to take action if they experience domestic abuse and sexual violence and to challenge abusive behaviour wherever they encounter it.

We can best support survivors of domestic abuse by taking collective action to prevent abuse taking place at all.

Perpetrators of domestic abuse exist at all levels of society and come from all walks of life. If we are to end abusive behaviour, we need to commit to early interventions that challenge harmful gender norms and that make it clear to residents – in all communities and across all ages – that domestic abuse will never be tolerated in Bristol.

### Building Awareness

- **RECOMMENDATION 26:** Design campaigns to raise awareness about domestic abuse that are inclusive and relevant for diverse communities across Bristol (particularly BAME residents, older residents, LGBT+ residents and disabled residents).

We want to make sure that residents across the whole of Bristol are aware that help is available if they are experiencing domestic abuse. To do this, we need to build campaigns that reach people across the city, using a range of media, and that reflect the diversity of our communities and particularly those we know experience the most barriers to seeking and accessing support. We encourage all businesses and services to help raise awareness about support services. We particularly welcome those who have advertising space in the city (whether in our transport hubs, or at high-traffic locations in the city) who can work with us to encourage those experiencing abuse to seek support.

- **RECOMMENDATION 27:** Services and partners to build relationships with local media outlets to encourage positive narratives around disclosure and support.

Local and national broadcast, print and online media have important roles to play in helping people understand what forms domestic abuse can take, and in providing information to survivors seeking help. Trusted media

sources can also help create a positive environment that encourages disclosure by telling stories that demonstrate that if survivors tell someone about their experiences, they will be believed, and that support is available.

### Businesses and Employers

- **RECOMMENDATION 28:** Support training in a wide variety of business to help staff spot the signs of domestic abuse and know where they can point people to receive support.

Building on the pioneering work of [Bristol Zero Tolerance](#), we want to make sure even more individuals and organisations across the city are trained in how to recognise signs that domestic abuse is taking place, and to help survivors access specialist support.

For instance, during the coronavirus lockdowns, pharmacies across the country encouraged people experiencing abuse to [“Ask for ANI”](#) so that they could be offered a private space and get help. We believe that more businesses are well-placed to spot signs of abuse and provide a safe place for their customers to get help. Customer-facing and client-focused businesses such as dentists, hairdressers and beauty services, veterinary surgeries, banks, supermarket and retail businesses, letting agents transport providers and more could all help people experiencing domestic abuse, and helping us to end it in our city.

- **RECOMMENDATION 29:** Work across all sectors to help businesses develop domestic abuse policies that promote safe and effective disclosure, signpost to specialist support, and provide clear pathways and procedures for survivors and perpetrators.
- **RECOMMENDATION 30:** Encourage individuals within workplace to become Domestic Abuse Awareness Champions, who can help survivors disclose their experiences and find support.
- **RECOMMENDATION 31:** Develop a local kitemark that employers can sign up to that demonstrates their commitment and action towards ending domestic abuse and supporting survivors.

There is also growing awareness of the role that employers can play in both the prevention of domestic abuse and helping survivors access support. Support is available to provide training and to ensure your business has appropriate responses in place so you can make sure any employee experiencing abuse can receive the support they need. The [Everyone’s Business Advice Line](#), run by national domestic abuse charity Hestia, offers advice to employers about how to approach disclosures of domestic abuse, and to help employees make contact with local specialist support services.

### Night-time Economy

Many restaurants, bars, venues and other parts of the night time economy have supported [Bristol Zero Tolerance](#) and have promoted schemes like [‘Ask for Angela’](#) to help protect their customers from sexual abuse and violence. We want to support more businesses to develop similar initiatives and help make Bristol’s night-time economy safe and abuse-free for everyone.

- **RECOMMENDATION 32:** Work proactively with businesses and with the Bristol@Night board to provide training opportunities for staff and help promote awareness of – and prevent – domestic and sexual abuse in the night-time economy.

## Legal Representation

- **RECOMMENDATION 33:** Encourage lawyers and legal firms in the city to promote opportunities to volunteer to increase the legal representation available in the city for survivors of domestic abuse.

We know a specific barrier that many survivors face is getting access to appropriate legal support to help pursue measures that can keep their family safe or pursue legal recourse through the criminal justice system. While the [Law Society](#) has called on the government to provide more help and support to domestic abuse victims, we also call to the wider city to help us make legal expertise and support more readily available and affordable for survivors of domestic abuse. This is particularly urgent in the context of more stringent requirements for accessing legal aid, and of some survivors not being eligible for public legal support.



## Changing Behaviour

Our overriding priority as a city is to keep survivors of domestic abuse safe. We know, however, that to end domestic abuse and keep survivors safe, we need to help change the behaviour of those who harm, control or scare their partners, families or loved ones.

According to [UNICEF](#) *“the single biggest predictor of children becoming either perpetrators or victims of domestic violence later in life is whether or not they grow up in a home where there is domestic violence.”*

This is not an excuse for domestic abuse, and not everyone who harms people in their home has experienced abuse themselves. We understand, however, that if we want to encourage those who are hurting, scaring or harming people in the home to change their behaviour, we need to be aware that they may have, at one time, been a victim or witness of abuse. We want to break that cycle of abuse and violence at the earliest possible opportunity to keep victims and survivors as safe as possible.

- **RECOMMENDATION 34:** Partners and services to continue to support specific work that focusses on programmes that support and challenge people who hurt and harm others in their home, and develop a strategic plan to support focussed work across a number of settings: informal, formal, commissioned and within the criminal justice system. This work should align with our aspiration for Bristol to be an Adverse Childhood Experience-aware city.

There are several local programmes that work with people who are behaving in a harmful way to help them understand and take responsibility for their behaviour and support them to make changes. This can help reduce the risk of harm for victims and requires a strong multi-agency approach to ensure information about risk is assessed and shared appropriately to ensure survivors are kept safe. It is also important that we have programmes that are accessible to people across different backgrounds and communities and that we offer several different ways that people can reach support.

- **RECOMMENDATION 35:** Collectively examine ways our housing system can provide accommodation for people that have harmed others through domestic abuse, to allow families time to work on safety plans without additional pressures such as homelessness influencing their decision-making.

We are conscious that the scarcity of housing options in Bristol creates specific pressures in terms of removing those who are causing harm from the family home if this is the wish of victims. Limited accommodation provision for single men, and the likelihood of those harming family members being found to be intentionally homeless, create specific emotional pressures on victims to allow loved ones who are harming them back into the home. We want victims and survivors to have the opportunity to build safety with this pressure reduced, and to give space for rehabilitative programmes to work to reduce the future risk of harm where possible.

# Appendix

## Our Principles

- We will start with you and what's right for you.
- There are a range of support services available and ways in which we can build safety with you. There will always be a person available to talk to you and help.
- If you have children, we will work with you to support you, to help you care for your children and keep them safe.
- It's your home and we want you to be able to stay in your home, which means if you want the person who is hurting, scaring or controlling you to be told to leave and not return, we will take action so that you can be safe.
- If staying in your home isn't be right for you, or you need a safe home to go to, we will do everything we can to help you to make that happen. Your physical and psychological safety are important to us.
- In every corner of our city, we will work to eliminate sexual violence and abuse, and we will support survivors to feel safe, to recover, and to thrive.
- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence are everybody's business – we all have a role to play in making sure Bristol is a zero-tolerance city where domestic abuse and sexual violence are not tolerated, and victims and survivors are supported.

## Recommendations from the Mayoral Commission on Domestic abuse

### We will start with you and what's right for you

1. Bristol City Council, partners and support services to develop and promote diverse support pathways that show the range of services available, and that ensure that whoever and wherever survivors are, they will be listened to, believed, and supported in Bristol.
2. Bristol City Council, partners and support services to work with individuals and communities across Bristol to overcome barriers and ensure victims and survivors of all backgrounds and identities can access support that is right for them.
3. Develop and strengthen interventions and support services that are community-based and help provide effective training and support pathways across the city's diverse communities.
4. When supporting survivors of domestic and sexual abuse through recovery, partners and support services should respect individual needs and support choices in how best to build safety for them, their family, and those around them.

### If you have children, we will work with you to support you

5. Bristol City Council, schools, partners and support services to ensure that wherever those experiencing abuse seek help, we will work with them and their children to support their choices and help keep their family safe.
6. Ensure children have a meaningful voice in Bristol's response to domestic abuse and sexual violence, including helping design services that ensure the needs of children who are experiencing or witnessing domestic and sexual abuse are met.
7. Ensure that children affected by domestic abuse can access dedicated support from services that can be accessed by anybody in the city (wherever they are, whatever their background or identity). We will

work to ensure that these services are able to build strong and supportive relationships with survivors and their family to help children recover over time.

8. Continue work to ensure nobody grows up in Bristol with Adverse Childhood Experiences, and to promote opportunities to help people recover from trauma, whenever they may occur during their lifetime.

It is your home... if you want the person who is hurting, scaring or controlling you to be told to leave and not return, we will take action

9. Ensure that staff across the housing sector are trained to help people who are experiencing domestic abuse, or who have survived abuse in the past. This includes helping staff across the sector learn how to recognise abuse, how to support residents in reaching out for help that meets their needs, and how to work confidently across different cultural contexts in Bristol.
10. Bristol City Council Housing and Landlord Services and our social work teams to have a specialist domestic abuse support worker within the team.
11. Bristol City Council, police and services to develop clear pathways to help everyone involved understand the processes that will be put in place if a perpetrator is removed from the home. This includes being clear about what services are informed when allegations of abuse have been investigated (even if this results in no further action being taken by the police) and helping survivors and their families connect to appropriate support services.

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12. Bristol City Council to conduct a needs analysis for housing and accommodation needs for survivors from diverse groups to help support services meet the needs of people from different communities across the city.
13. Explore new ways of working to provide very short-term accommodation for survivors within local communities (such as through community places of safety which can provide homes in the community which complement traditional refuges).

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14. Support and develop services and train staff so that we offer many different opportunities for people to tell someone about their experiences who can help.
15. Develop recovery pathways within and between services that avoid the need for survivors to have to explain their experiences multiple times.
16. Commit to the principle of co-located services and better information-sharing facilities, to help make it easier for people to share their experiences, and to help signpost survivors to the most appropriate support services for them and their family.
17. Continue to support programmes such as [IRIS](#) who help train staff in GP practices to be aware of domestic abuse, and make sure all GP practices in the city have a consistent approach to referring people experiencing abuse to further support.
18. Improve information-sharing and record-keeping both within different parts of the health service, and with other agencies and services.

19. Ensure health and care services work confidently and with cultural sensitivity, recognising the barriers that different people may have in disclosing abuse, and different ways abuse may manifest across different communities in the city.

#### In every corner of our city, we will work to eliminate sexual violence and abuse

20. Maintain [a clear pathway](#) for victims, survivors, and anyone who is at risk of sexual violence and abuse. This includes information about trauma recovery services, offers different opportunities for victims and survivors to access support in a way that works for them, and provides support for those who experience multiple risks that increase vulnerability (such as homelessness, substance misuse, or mental health conditions).
21. Ensure training is available for employers to help organisations respond appropriately to disclosures of sexual abuse and violence in the workplace. This includes supporting employers to develop sexual violence and abuse policies that help safeguard staff and help victim-survivors to recover and thrive.
22. Work through [Thrive Bristol](#) to improve access to mental health support for victim-survivors.

#### Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence are everybody's business

23. As a city, ensure that tackling domestic abuse is everyone's business and commit collectively to challenging abusive behaviour and supporting survivors across the whole city to find help that meets their needs.
24. Strengthen our city-wide commitment to education about healthy relationships in schools.
25. Work across the whole city to spread the message of zero tolerance, promote healthy gender norms, and help people in every community to take action if they experience domestic abuse and sexual violence and to challenge abusive behaviour wherever they encounter it.
26. Design campaigns to raise awareness about domestic abuse that are inclusive and relevant for diverse communities across Bristol (particularly BAME residents, older residents, LGBT+ residents and disabled residents).
27. Services and partners to build relationships with local media outlets to encourage positive narratives around disclosure and support.
28. Support training in a wide variety of business to help staff spot the signs of domestic abuse and know where they can point people to receive support.
29. Work across all sectors to help businesses develop domestic abuse policies that promote safe and effective disclosure, signpost to specialist support, and provide clear pathways and procedures for survivors and perpetrators.
30. Encourage individuals within workplace to become Domestic Abuse Awareness Champions, who can help survivors disclose their experiences and find support.
31. Develop a local kitemark that employers can sign up to that demonstrates their commitment and action towards ending domestic abuse and supporting survivors.
32. Work proactively with businesses and with the Bristol@Night board to provide training opportunities for staff and help promote awareness of – and prevent – domestic and sexual abuse in the night-time economy.
33. Encourage lawyers and legal firms in the city to promote opportunities to volunteer to increase the legal representation available in the city for survivors of domestic abuse.

## Changing behaviour

34. Partners and services to continue to support specific work that focusses on programmes that support and challenge people who hurt and harm others in their home and develop a strategic plan to support focussed work across a number of settings: informal, formal, commissioned and within the criminal justice system. This work should align with our aspiration for Bristol to be an Adverse Childhood Experience-aware city.
35. Collectively examine ways our housing system can provide accommodation for people that have harmed others through domestic abuse, to allow families time to work on safety plans without additional pressures such as homelessness influencing their decision-making.

