

# Collaborating for Change

*Working to address domestic and sexual violence and abuse in  
the South Eastern Area*



## Strategic Plan (2025-2028)

Published July 2025

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## The South Eastern Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership...

Comments from SEDSVAP members  
Responses to online survey (April 2025)

*is a network of committed people and organisations who seek to eradicate domestic and sexual violence across the South East area.*

*reduces DSVAP in our area by educating young people, the community and judiciary of the harm and impact of domestic and sexual violence and abuse.*

*fosters awareness, understanding, and collaboration through shared learning and development that bring key voices together.*

*promotes safety, influences education and upholds human rights.*

*provides a coordinated and inclusive local response to sexual and domestic violence, ensuring survivors have access to justice, resources, and long-term support.*

*helps build a future where domestic abuse is not tolerated.*

*helps reduce domestic abuse and raise awareness particularly with young people.*

# Section one

## Introduction

This strategic plan details the purpose, vision, values, aims, strategic areas and strategic objectives of the South Eastern Area Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership (SEDSVAP) over a three year period.

## Consultation and approach

This strategic plan has been developed, subsequent to a robust consultation and planning process which included a survey distribution to all partnership members and facilitation of a full planning day with approximately 20 partnership members. Analysis of survey findings and key discussions at the planning event have been invaluable in the production of this strategic plan.

Additionally, this strategic plan has been developed against and informed by a backdrop of government policy, legislative change and regional initiatives in relation to domestic and sexual violence and abuse. It has also been informed by findings and recommendations presented in the Landscape Research into local Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnerships<sup>1</sup> conducted by the Innovation Lab, commissioned by the Departments of Justice and Health and published in January 2023. This provided the foundation for the review of Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnerships in Northern Ireland which is underway, focusing on how to strengthen the role of the Local Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnerships and maintain alignment with/compliment other structures and strategies as appropriate.

The development of this strategic plan utilised a strength based planning approach. As a result it has been based upon partnership successes and achievements, learning and development, perceived strengths, challenges and opportunities. It aims to harness the skills and expertise of all partnership members, to work collaboratively to address domestic and sexual violence and abuse, deliver on government policy, and maximise impact in the South Eastern area and beyond. This plan will provide the overarching framework for all partnership sub groups and will direct the development and delivery of collective and shared work. It sets the framework for annual action planning and will be accompanied by annual action plans, agreed at partnership steering group meetings. Overall this plan presents a commitment to working together within the South Eastern area, to provide the most effective and efficient response to domestic and sexual violence and abuse.

## Background to the SEDSVAP

In 2005 The Government launched “Tackling Violence at Home”, a multi agency response to addressing domestic violence in Northern Ireland. This strategy, along with action plans aimed to ensure a collaborative approach under the themes of Prevention, Protection and Support. As part of the delivery of this strategy, five domestic violence partnerships were established in each Health and Social Care Trust area to ensure implementation at a local level. In March 2016, “Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse” – a seven year strategy was launched which had a vision and focus on the elimination of **both** domestic and sexual violence and abuse in Northern Ireland. All local domestic violence partnerships extended their remit in line with Government strategy to include sexual violence and abuse.

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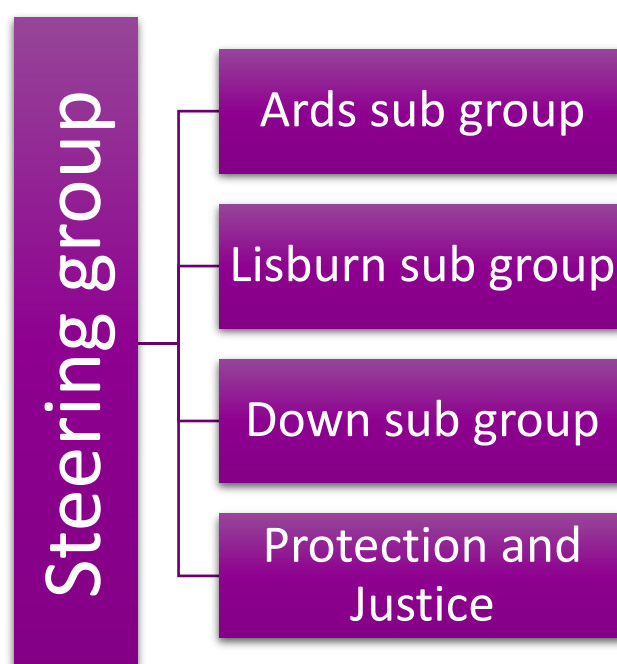
<sup>1</sup> Innovation Lab. (January 2023). *Local Domestic and Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnerships. Landscape Research*. Belfast: Department of Health, Department of Justice.

## SEDSVAP development, strengths and structure

Since its establishment in 2005, the SEDSVAP has developed significantly and has been the driver in many successful initiatives including the pilot of Operation Encompass and the development of innovative animations in relation to coercive control and technological abuse. It has worked to raise awareness of domestic and sexual violence and abuse through the coordination of high profile conferences and events which have been hugely successful. These events have shone a spotlight on key issues, drawn upon lived experience and have served to influence change at many levels.

SEDSVAP recognises the challenges that exist, internally and externally that have potential to impact upon all areas of work. The need to plan effectively is crucial and members of SEDSVAP are keen to build upon strengths to avail of opportunities that exist and to work with all members, other DVA partnerships, Government Departments, statutory and community organisations and the local community to bring about positive change in terms of addressing domestic and sexual violence and abuse.

The partnership has a core membership with representation from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors involved in providing services or responding to domestic and sexual violence and abuse. While the ongoing need to review and extend membership is acknowledged, the commitment of partnership members to play their part in addressing domestic and sexual violence and abuse is collectively valued as a strength. SEDSVAP currently delivers its work through a sub group structure. Three sub groups are locality based and one focuses on protection and justice issues across the whole South Eastern area:



The SEDSVAP Coordinator is responsible for supporting the work of the sub groups and the partnership as a whole and raises awareness of the work of the partnership, disseminating information internally across member agencies and externally with a range of agencies. The SEDSVAP works to a robust terms of reference which was revised and updated as part of this strategic planning process. This is attached as an appendix to this strategic plan.

## Domestic and Sexual Abuse

Every 18 minutes the Police Service of Northern Ireland attend a domestic abuse incident. In 2024/25 PSNI responded to 29,751 incidents of domestic abuse and recorded 18,393 domestic abuse crimes<sup>2</sup>.

**Domestic abuse can be defined as:** *threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member<sup>3</sup>.*

Domestic abuse is a hidden crime, surrounded by stigma and significantly under reported. Despite this, domestic abuse in NI makes up **20%** of all overall crime<sup>4</sup>.

Sexual abuse can be defined as: *any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitive, harmful, or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability).*

Sexual abuse can take place across different relationships including intimate relationships, acquaintances and strangers. It can happen anywhere and like domestic abuse is significantly under reported.

## Violence against Women and Girls

*Violence against women and girls is an umbrella term used to cover a wide range of harm, abuse, and violence against women and girls because of their gender.*

*Violence against women and girls is a systemic and deep-rooted problem in our society. It is a problem that is hidden in plain sight and every day we see we see how it is affecting the lives of women and girls, wherever they learn, live and work.<sup>5</sup>*

## Government Policy

Addressing domestic and sexual violence and abuse and violence against women and girls (VAWG) is everyone's business and responsibility sits across all government departments. This strategic plan has been developed at a pivotal point in time with the recent launch of two Government Strategies:

### Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy –

*Tackling Domestic and/or sexual abuse is everyone's business 2024 – 31*

Led by Departments for Justice and Health and launched on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2024, this strategy has a vision that Northern Ireland is a place where: *Domestic and/or sexual abuse is not tolerated, and everyone can be safe and free from fear. Domestic and/or sexual abuse is everyone's business, where partnership work and collaborative approaches create lasting change across our communities and provide hope. The voice of victims, including children and young people, is valued and central to decision making<sup>6</sup>.*

<sup>2</sup> Domestic Abuse Statistics | PSNI

<sup>3</sup> [health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-dom-sex-abuse-strategy-24-31.pdf](https://health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-dom-sex-abuse-strategy-24-31.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Domestic Abuse Statistics | PSNI

<sup>5</sup> [executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/strategic-framework-evawg.pdf](https://executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/strategic-framework-evawg.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/dsa-strategy-09-24.pdf](https://justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/dsa-strategy-09-24.pdf)

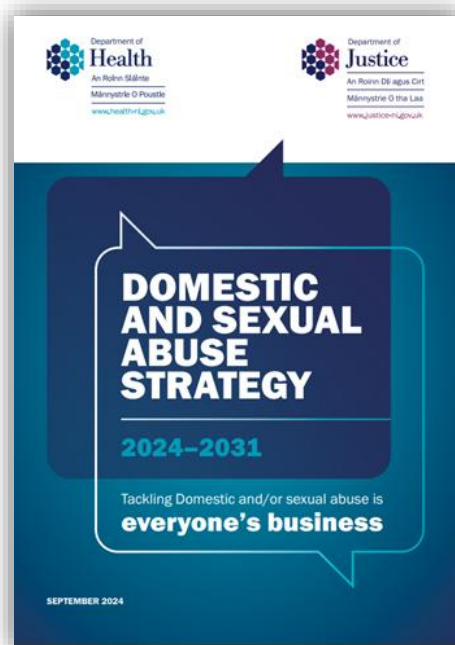
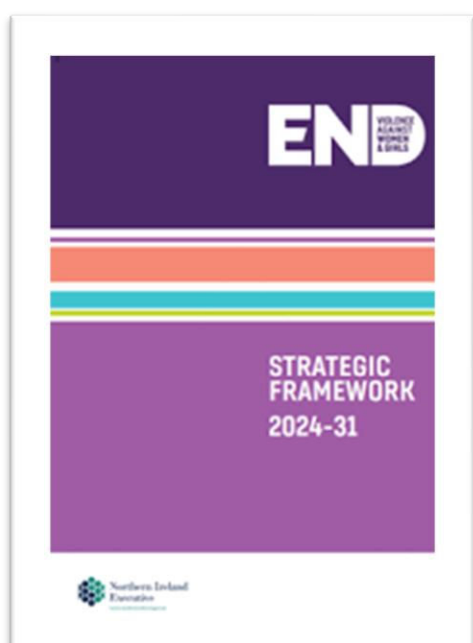
The strategy is based around five pillars of Partnership, Prevention, Support and Justice and Children and Young People. Each pillar has outcomes and key priority areas. A clear action plan sets out timebound outputs and activities to deliver against the pillars and priorities identified.

### **End Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework - 2024-31**

Led by The Executive Office (TEO) and launched on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2024, this strategic framework has a vision of *a changed society where women and girls are free from all forms of gender-based violence, abuse and harm. Including the attitudes, systems and structural inequalities that cause them*<sup>7</sup>. Co-designed with Subject Matter Experts, the framework sets out a multi-pronged approach towards a changed society and presents a seven-year road map to address VAWG. Launched in September 2024, this framework presents four overarching themes of Prevention, Protection and Provision, Justice System and Working Better together. The strategic framework will be supported by delivery plans, the first of which is a two-year plan which will *drive delivery, support collaboration and embed a focus across government and wider society on prevention and early intervention*.<sup>8</sup>

In September 2024, the Programme for Government<sup>9</sup> *Doing What Matters Most (2024-2027)* was launched by the Northern Ireland Executive. VAWG was recognised as one of the nine key actions. These important government policy and legislative developments represent a seismic shift in the recognition of domestic and sexual violence and abuse and VAWG and set the context for the development of this strategy and the work of the South Eastern Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership.

This strategic plan has been benchmarked against both government Strategies. Strategic priorities are aligned directly to the five pillars in the **Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy** and encompass all four themes presented in the **End Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework**.



<sup>7</sup> [executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/strategic-framework-evawg.pdf](https://executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/strategic-framework-evawg.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/action-plan.pdf](https://executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/action-plan.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-03/programme-for-government-2024-2027-our-plan-doing-what-matters-most\\_1.pdf](https://northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-03/programme-for-government-2024-2027-our-plan-doing-what-matters-most_1.pdf)

# Section two

## Strategic Plan

### Purpose, vision and values of SEDSVAP

#### Purpose

Work collaboratively, combining the commitment, skills and expertise of people and organisations, to end domestic and sexual violence and abuse in the South Eastern area and build a safer future for all.

#### Vision

The SEDSVAP works towards the vision of the Northern Ireland Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy – *Tackling Domestic and/or sexual abuse is everyone’s business 2024 – 31*, Led by Departments for Justice and Health. This strategy has a vision that Northern Ireland is a place where: *Domestic and/or sexual abuse is not tolerated, and everyone can be safe and free from fear. Domestic and/or sexual abuse is everyone’s business, where partnership work and collaborative approaches create lasting change across our communities and provide hope. The voice of victims, including children and young people, is valued and central to decision making*<sup>10</sup>.

#### Values

SEDSVAP values and principles are inherent in all aspects of development and delivery of work strands are upheld and promoted by all partnership members.

Our values are:

- **Collaboration:** We will work collectively and collaboratively as a partnership, to bring about positive societal change in relation to ending domestic and sexual violence and abuse.
- **Best practice:** We are committed to identifying and sharing best practice in addressing domestic and sexual violence and abuse, across the South Eastern community and beyond.
- **Equity, diversity and inclusion:** We are committed to promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion across our membership and will challenge all forms of discrimination.
- **Holistic approach:** We value the expertise of all members and harness skills and experience to ensure the strength of the partnership as a whole is greater than the sum of individual members.
- **Accountability:** We recognise addressing domestic and sexual violence and abuse requires a coordinated response and we are committed to playing our part and taking collective action.
- **Innovation:** We understand that complex problems require creative solutions and are committed to thinking outside the box to identify innovative approaches.
- **Lived experience:** We understand victims and survivors must be at the heart of everything we do and will ensure our work is informed by their voices and experience.
- **Transparency:** We will work collectively to promote the work of the partnership and develop transparent and trusting relationships.

<sup>10</sup> [justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/dsa-strategy-09-24.pdf](https://justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/dsa-strategy-09-24.pdf)

## Partnership aims and pillars

### Partnership aims

- **Harness** the skills, expertise and knowledge of members to ensure a high-quality multi-agency response to domestic and sexual violence and abuse in the South Eastern area.
- **Work collaboratively** to deliver upon the Government Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy and the End Violence against Women and Girls Strategic Framework.
- **Increase** awareness of domestic and sexual violence and abuse across the public, challenging attitudes, dispelling myths and promoting effective sign posting.
- **Provide** quality education and training opportunities to upskill professionals and increase capacity to respond effectively to domestic and sexual violence and abuse.
- **Promote** the work of partnership members in preventing and addressing domestic and sexual violence and abuse, sharing best practice across the South Eastern area and beyond.
- **Contribute** to the development of preventative education approaches to promote healthy relationships and enable children and young people to make informed choices.
- **Engage** with victims and survivors, through partnership members who are front line service providers, to give voice to lived experience in development and delivery of all work strands.
- **Monitor, influence and respond** to government policy, strategy and legislation as a partnership, drawing upon member expertise and giving voice to lived experience.
- **Work** collaboratively with other DSVAP partnerships across Northern Ireland, sharing expertise, to ensure a joined-up response to domestic and sexual abuse.

### Five pillars for change

The SEDSVAP has aligned its strategic plan with the five pillars presented in the *Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy for Northern Ireland*. It is widely acknowledged there is overlap with the *End Violence against Women and Girls Strategic Framework* and this strategic plan will also dovetail with this strategic framework, with a strong focus on prevention. The pillars identified are all inter-linked and inter-dependent. Pillars and the associated key deliverables are based upon a model of collective working across the partnership internally, and externally with a wide range of stakeholders including the VCSE sector, the statutory sector, the business community, Government Departments and political representatives.

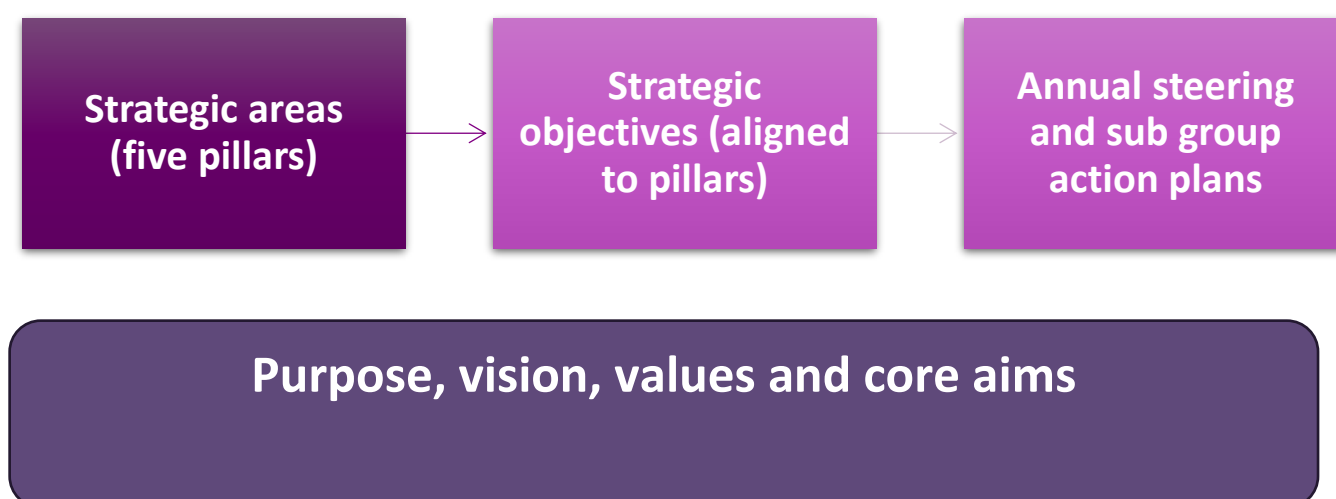


## Delivery model

### Strategic areas (five pillars)



Strategic objectives attached to the five pillars will be based upon the partnership **purpose, vision, values and core aims**. This provides a strong foundation for strategic development and ensures clear alignment between values, vision and delivery.



## Strategic areas (five pillars) and strategic objectives

Partnership	Support and provision	Prevention	Justice	Children and young people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Secure</b> funding to support the work of the partnership.</li> <li>• <b>Further implement</b> effective and efficient finance systems to enable SEDSVAP to avail of and manage funding.</li> <li>• <b>Ensure</b> all relevant agencies are represented and active at all levels of SEDSVAP .</li> <li>• <b>Review</b> subgroup structure and pilot new subgroups as identified.</li> <li>• <b>Ensure</b> partnership meetings are focused, effective, efficient and deliver upon actions.</li> <li>• <b>Promote</b> effective communication across subgroups and with all members.</li> <li>• <b>Hold</b> partnership members/their organisations accountable to play their part in delivery of the SEDSVAP strategic plan.</li> <li>• <b>Increase</b> community awareness of SEDSVAP via communication channels including website and social media.</li> <li>• <b>Develop</b> links with local business community to support the work of SEDSVAP and highlight domestic and sexual violence and abuse as an employer responsibility.</li> <li>• <b>Monitor</b> and evaluate the work of SEDSVAP to ensure it is effective, efficient and inclusive.</li> <li>• <b>Establish</b> standardised evaluation tools for use across all subgroups to capture feedback and impact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promote</b> services offered by SEDSVAP members, especially front-line services to ensure awareness of and access to, effective support provision.</li> <li>• <b>Participate</b> in local one stop shop initiatives to raise the profile of SEDSVAP and promote the work of member agencies.</li> <li>• <b>Provide</b> conferences, events, webinars etc.to increase learning, develop skills and build capacity among professionals to respond to domestic and sexual violence and abuse.</li> <li>• <b>Share</b> expertise and best practice models across SEDSVAP and externally, to increase understanding of roles within partnership, enhance service provision, promote collaboration, effective signposting and maximise impact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Engage</b> with political representatives locally to raise awareness of domestic and sexual violence and abuse and encourage collective action.</li> <li>• <b>Support</b> and deliver campaigns to challenge public attitudes and highlight domestic and sexual violence and abuse as everyone’s business.</li> <li>• <b>Develop</b> awareness raising tools and initiatives including animations, publications and information resources.</li> <li>• <b>Raise</b> awareness of bystander approach and promote active bystanding.</li> <li>• <b>Support and raise awareness</b> of preventative education programmes in schools and community settings.</li> <li>• <b>Engage</b> with local schools and youth settings to promote services, highlight relevant campaigns and raise awareness of initiatives available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Utilise</b> collective SEDSVAP expertise and knowledge for better justice outcomes.</li> <li>• <b>Make</b> better use of data collection and data sharing to bring about increased awareness and collective action.</li> <li>• <b>Continue</b> to highlight relevant legislative developments across the partnership and externally.</li> <li>• <b>Harness</b> the expertise of SEDSVAP members on protection and justice subgroup to create positive change.</li> <li>• <b>Utilise</b> the expertise of SEDSVAP members to influence and respond to emerging government policy and legislation.</li> <li>• <b>Harness</b> the voices of lived experience inherent in SEDSVAP member agencies, to inform legislative developments and improve justice outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promote</b> support services offered by SEDSVAP members to children and young people affected by domestic and sexual violence and abuse.</li> <li>• <b>Utilise</b> opportunities to challenge misogynistic culture with young people.</li> <li>• <b>Deliver</b> conferences and events on emerging issues relating to children and young people to build capacity among professionals to respond.</li> <li>• <b>Develop, support and raise awareness of</b> initiatives aimed at early intervention and the importance of attachment.</li> <li>• <b>Capture</b> voices of children and young people safely and creatively, utilizing expertise of partnership members and work to ensure these voices are heard.</li> <li>• <b>Be aware and raise awareness of</b> emerging issues including social media, technology etc.</li> </ul>

# Section three

## Conclusion

This strategic plan presents an innovative vision and road map for the SEDSAP and clearly outlines direction over a three-year period. It has outlined the history, development and strengths of the partnership. It has presented the government strategy and policy backdrop against which the strategic plan has been developed, and which governs and influences the work of the partnership.

This strategic plan has clearly set out the partnership purpose, vision, strategic areas and priorities. It seeks to harness the power of collaboration between all partnership members to ensure provision of high-quality services and to bring about change in addressing domestic and sexual violence and abuse in the South Eastern community.

The SEDSVAP is fully committed to working collectively with all partnership members and externally with all relevant agencies to deliver this strategic plan. Delivery will be closely monitored utilising a performance management and evaluation framework. This will ensure that strategic progress will be continuously assessed and benchmarked. Annual operation plans will be developed by the SEDSVAP steering group, based upon this overall strategic framework to ensure continued strategic focus, direction and development.

Finally, this strategic plan presents a commitment to working together, to ensure the issues of domestic and sexual violence and abuse and violence against women and girls remain high on the public agenda and best practice services are delivered, developed, and sustained. It presents opportunities to drive forward real social and strategic change, at a local and regional level through sharing learning, raising awareness and working in partnership.

SEDSVAP looks forward to harnessing the opportunities presented in the strategic plan, to fulfil its purpose of *working collaboratively, as a partnership of committed people and organisations to end domestic and sexual abuse in the South Eastern area.*

# Terms of Reference

## South Eastern Area Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership



*Reviewed May 2025*

These Terms of Reference have been discussed, reviewed and agreed by the members of the South Eastern Area Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership. They are applicable to all subgroups and all members of the South Eastern Area Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership.

It has been agreed that:

### Subgroup meetings and planning

- The (Subgroup name) will convene a minimum of 4 meetings annually.
- Meetings will be face to face where possible or via zoom.
- Additional meetings can be held if required to deliver on the three-year Strategic plan *Collaborating for Change 2025-2028* and annual action plans.
- An annual planning day/meeting will be held to review the work of the sub-group and agree the action plan for the forthcoming year, based upon delivery of the strategic plan.
- The Chair of the (Subgroup name) will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- The (Subgroup name) will be committed to uphold the values of good practice in multi-disciplinary and inter-agency working and the values of the partnership.
- Members will commit themselves to working in partnership to ensure a coordinated response to promote joint working, co-operation and mutual support and respect.

### South Eastern Area Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnership values

As an individual and a group, we will endeavor to meet these values:

- **Collaboration:** We will work collectively and collaboratively as a partnership, to bring about positive societal change in relation to ending domestic and sexual violence and abuse.
- **Best practice:** We are committed to identifying and sharing best practice in addressing domestic and sexual violence and abuse, across the South Eastern community and beyond.
- **Equity, diversity and inclusion:** We are committed to promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion across our membership and will challenge all forms of discrimination.
- **Holistic approach:** We value the expertise of all members and harness skills and experience to ensure the strength of the partnership as a whole is greater than the sum of individual members.
- **Accountability:** We recognise addressing domestic and sexual violence and abuse requires a coordinated response and we are committed to playing our part and taking collective action.
- **Innovation:** We understand that complex problems require creative solutions and are committed to thinking outside the box to identify innovative approaches.
- **Lived experience:** We understand victims and survivors must be at the heart of everything we do and will ensure our work is informed by their voices and experience.
- **Transparency:** We will work collectively to promote the work of the partnership and develop transparent and trusting relationships.

## Expectations and responsibilities of members

- A person of sufficient seniority from each member agency will be expected to attend sub-group meetings. If they are unable to attend, then an apology will be required.
- If appropriate and necessary, the member can submit any written comment on issues included on the agenda for that meeting.
- Attendance at meetings is crucial to the delivery of the strategic plan and associated action plans. If a person is not in attendance for 3 consecutive meetings, their membership will be reviewed and discussed with them, and they may be asked to nominate a new member from their organisation/agency.
- Members of the Sub-group will be encouraged to share relevant information and provide updates at meetings, and where appropriate, with the rest of the partnership.
- Members will inform their own agency/organisation of any implications from decisions made at sub-group meetings.
- Members are encouraged to actively play their part and to take away and deliver upon actions as deemed relevant and appropriate.
- Members will recognise the role they play as ambassadors for the partnership and will avail of all opportunities to represent the partnership, promoting the work of the partnership and services available from member organisations.
- Member agencies must ensure their representative on the sub-group has a formal mechanism in place to exchange information and to provide feedback between the sub-group and their own organisation. This will allow for reciprocity of information and ensure the meaningful contribution of each agency, both to the sub-group and the wider partnership.

I agree for this document to be held on file electronically by the South Eastern Area Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership Co-ordinator.

<b>Signed:</b>	
<b>Print name:</b>	
<b>Role:</b>	
<b>Organisation:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Review Date:</b>	
<b>Chair signature:</b>	