

PLYMOUTH'S VAWG DASV STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2023-26

VAWGDASV Strategic Lead: Safer Plymouth/DASV Partnership Board



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. From April to August 2023, the Plymouth DASV (Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence) Statutory Partnership completed a review of its mission, vision, values and ambitions. The review was done in collaboration with partners from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors and consolidates work to date, including the VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) Commission, work in progress and future plans to tackle VAWG and DASV across the City.
- 1.2. This report provides background information about the new VAWG DASV 2023-26 Strategy and Action Plan and requests cross-party support for its delivery ahead of an intended launch on 7 December, during 16 Days of Activism to end Gender-based violence¹.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. For over a decade, Plymouth has had a multi-agency partnership committed to preventing and addressing Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence – the DASV Board. This multi-agency partnership brings together partners from police, local authority, specialist voluntary sector organisations, housing and health. Historically, this group has met as a sub-group of Safer Plymouth – Plymouth's Community Safety Partnership.
- 2.2. As part of the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the DASV group agreed to fulfil the statutory duties of a Local Partnership Board under the Act. Whilst the DA Act 2021 necessitates certain partners to be a member of the partnership board, the DASV Partnership Board in Plymouth has a broader membership of partners reflecting the strength of the local commitment to a coordinated community response.
- 2.3. The Plymouth VAWG Commission in 2022 strengthened commitment in the city to prevent and address VAWGDASV, including the call to action of creating positive culture change that stops male violence against women and girls. The VAWG Commission concluded by producing a report and a set of recommendations which Safer Plymouth and the DASV Board have responsibility for implementing.
- 2.4. The DASV Board's compact had not been reviewed since 2019 and a considerable amount of change has occurred over the last 4 years, including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Covid-19 pandemic, the VAWG Commission and the introduction of the Serious Violence Duty.
- 2.5. Therefore, from April to August 2023, the DASV Board, chaired by Lyn Gooding (CEO, First Light) and Hannah Shead (CEO, Trevi) and coordinated by Verity Meeson (DASV Technical Lead), conducted a review of its compact (Vision, Mission and Values) and ambitions through a series of in-person and online facilitated workshops. The review process also took into consideration recent and current work to address VAWG DASV, local research and data collection, lived experience consultation, community engagement activities, DA systems leadership work and the findings and recommendations of the VAWG Commission. The review supported the Board to respond to local, regional and national developments and

¹ [UNITE to End Violence against Women Campaign | UN Women – Headquarters](#)

implement its statutory duties under the DA Act 2021. The review culminated in the 2023-26 Strategy and Action Plan for the City.

2.6. The DASV Board's new compact is:

A Partnership Board to... provide system-based community leadership for preventing and ending Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Plymouth.

By the means of... working collaboratively and innovatively to change culture, attitudes and behaviour and centring the voices of those with lived experience.

To achieve... an end to inequality and harm for everyone in Plymouth via a successful system-wide trauma informed and person-centred response to Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence and VAWG.

In the belief that... we can support people to live free from fear and abuse and those who harm will change their behaviour.

2.7. The Board will take a public health, trauma-informed, coordinated community response² to all of its work, which will be delivered around 8 strategic aims and monitored through its action plan:

- Increase system wide responsibility for VAWGDASV
- Promote positive culture change
- Deliver support for survivors
- Develop a systemic approach to people who harm
- Improve the City-wide response to justice
- Coordinate communications
- Improve intelligence, learning and impact
- Influence the wider system beyond Plymouth

2.8. The resulting Strategy and Plan provides a clear structure for the City to deliver on its commitments and statutory responsibilities around this agenda. It is clear, concise and consistent with the needs of those with lived experience of VAWG DASV and will support Plymouth to strengthen its response and reduce risk and increase safety for people in the City.

2.9. The Action Plan includes delivery of Plymouth City Council's **statutory responsibilities**:

2.9.1. Under Part 4, Section 57 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, every local authority area must regularly re-assess the need for domestic abuse safe accommodation and monitor the effectiveness of local delivery. To this end, the City has a Safe Accommodation Working Group, which reviews the DA Housing Response in Plymouth. The DASV Board is currently refreshing Plymouth's Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment, which will be finalised in April 2024. Additionally, in October 2023, the local authority initiated the re-commissioning of core DA services, including refuge and dispersed accommodation, following significant market engagement and consultation with people with lived experience. The expanded service will launch in May 2024.

2.9.2. Under Part 4, Section 58 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, every local authority area must convene a partnership board with representatives from the Council, specialist voluntary sector organisations, children's services, health, police and criminal justice

² [What is a CCR? — Standing Together](#)

sector and other relevant agencies. To this end, the Council administrates and coordinates the DASV Board and ensures appropriate and effective representation and buy-in across the City to ensure delivery of the strategy and action plan.

- 2.9.3. Under Section 9, Part 1 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 (and further updated by Section 2 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021), every local authority area must convene a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) in the case of homicide or suicide in the context of domestic abuse. To this end, the local authority coordinates the commissioning and convening of each DHR via Safer Plymouth and ensures that each review follows national guidance and provides learning to prevent future deaths. Plymouth currently have 4 ongoing DHRs and will commission 3 additional reviews in November 2023.
- 2.10. Additional priorities in the Action Plan include:
- 2.10.1. All outstanding recommendations from the VAWG Commission. For example: Expanding Plymouth's Whole Schools Approach to Healthy Relationships education; Roll-out of the online harm campaign launched by NSPCC in October 2023; Release of a VAWG Charter for the City in early 2024, supported by Plymouth-specific Bystander training; Creating safer places and spaces for women and girls throughout the City, including the refurbished Safe Bus; Supporting the work of M.A.N. Culture to challenge toxic masculinity and men's harmful attitudes to women.
- 2.10.2. Becoming the first area in the UK to achieve Coordinated Community Response Accreditation by March 2025.
- 2.10.3. Updating and launching PCC's VAWG e-learning and Domestic Abuse Policy including a roll-out of training and support for HR, managers and well-being champions (November 2023-April 2024).
- 2.10.4. Supporting wider workforce development by launching a rolling monthly training programme to increase City-wide VAWG DASV confidence, knowledge and skills.
- 2.10.5. Increasing our focus on addressing the root causes of domestic abuse, including misogyny and intersecting inequalities, and expanding our response to tackle people causing harm.
- 2.10.6. Centering the voices of those with lived experience, including via the Changing Futures Programme, and ensuring that appreciative enquiry runs through the delivery of the Action Plan.
- 2.10.7. Supporting colleagues from Children's Services to continue to respond effectively to Ofsted's concerns and working towards the introduction of the Safe and Together³ model in Plymouth.
- 2.10.8. Coordinating communications and awareness raising activities across the City via a VAWG Communications Group, starting with the 16 Days of Activism from 25 November 2023.

3. GOVERNANCE

- 3.1. The Strategy and Plan were signed off by the DASV Board in October 2023.
- 3.2. The DASV Board reports to the Community Safety Partnership, Safer Plymouth, which signed off this Strategy and Action Plan on 7 November.

³ [About the Safe & Together™ Model | Safe & Together Institute \(safeandtogetherinstitute.com\)](https://www.safeandtogetherinstitute.com)

4. LAUNCH OF STRATEGY

4.1. The Strategy and Action Plan will be launched at a City-wide Online Event on 7th December, 12pm as part of 16 Days of Activism.

5. APPENDICES

- 1) VAWG DASV Strategy
- 2) VAWG DASV Action Plan