

Domestic Abuse Strategy Workshop

May 2025



Housekeeping

- Introductions
- Fire alarm/exits
- Toilets
- Breaks



Aims and Objectives

- To promote statutory duties and responsibilities relevant to Domestic Abuse.
- To review and consider information and insight for Wirral.
- To develop a shared understanding of where we are as a partnership.
- To agree areas of priority focus; and how we can continue to improve.



Agenda

1. Introduction & Feedback from Workshop 1
2. Case Study
3. Wirral Context & Insight
4. Activity
 - Small group work – Strategy Themes
5. Survivor Perspective
6. Closing



Statutory Duties

- Each relevant local authority in England must—
 - (a) assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for accommodation-based support in its area,
 - (b) prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support in its area, and
 - (c) monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.
 - (d) A relevant local authority in England must appoint a domestic abuse local partnership board



Reviewing the strategy

- Regular reviews within the Alliance
- Workshop 1 December 2024
- We focused on what we have achieved in 2020-25 Strategy and what an 'ideal' response in Wirral would look like.
- We agreed the focus for the next workshop will be on simplifying the priorities and the structure of the strategy to ensure delivery plans are achievable and can be measured.



Domestic Abuse Alliance Structure

Domestic Abuse Alliance

Operational Group

VAWG
Violence against
women and girls

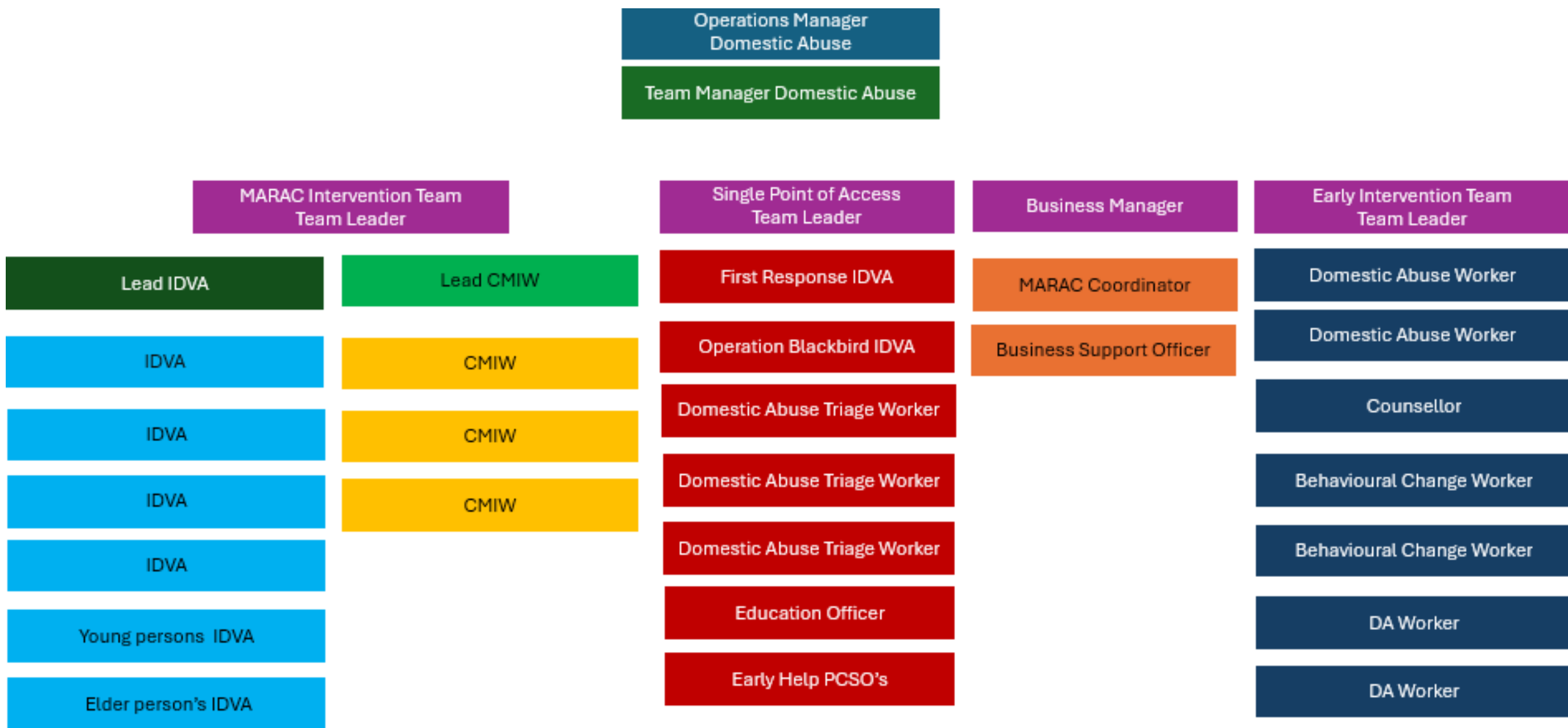
Harm Reduction
/ Behaviour
Change

Learning and
Practice
Development

Participation and
Engagement /
Partnership
Innovation

Performance,
Data and Impact

Accommodation



Case Study

Sarah Wood – RASA Merseyside



Case Study

DA Strategy Workshop



2024 RASA Merseyside received a referral from Merseyside Police for Jess (pseudonym) who had experienced sexual violence with her ex-husband and in childhood

Jess had been heard at MARAC in January and again in March 2024

Demographics

- Female
- Age 35-40 years
- White British
- Heterosexual
- Autistic
- Separated
- Has child/ren
- Employed
- Private rent accommodation



MARAC

- On/off 18yr relationship ended 2022
- History of sexual abuse within relationship, harassment, stalking, controlling and coercive behaviour, threats to kill
- Non-molestation order in place from 2023 to 2024
- Breached non-molestation order numerous times
- Had been to refuge on 2 x occasions during this time

Sexual Violence

Thought it was something she had to do as part of being in the relationship

She “went along with it” to prove that she wasn’t having an affair

She “didn’t make a sound” because she didn’t want to upset/frighten the children

She said “he didn’t pin me down and he wasn’t violent, so it wasn’t rape”

Wasn’t sure what was and wasn’t SV

Had a history of SV

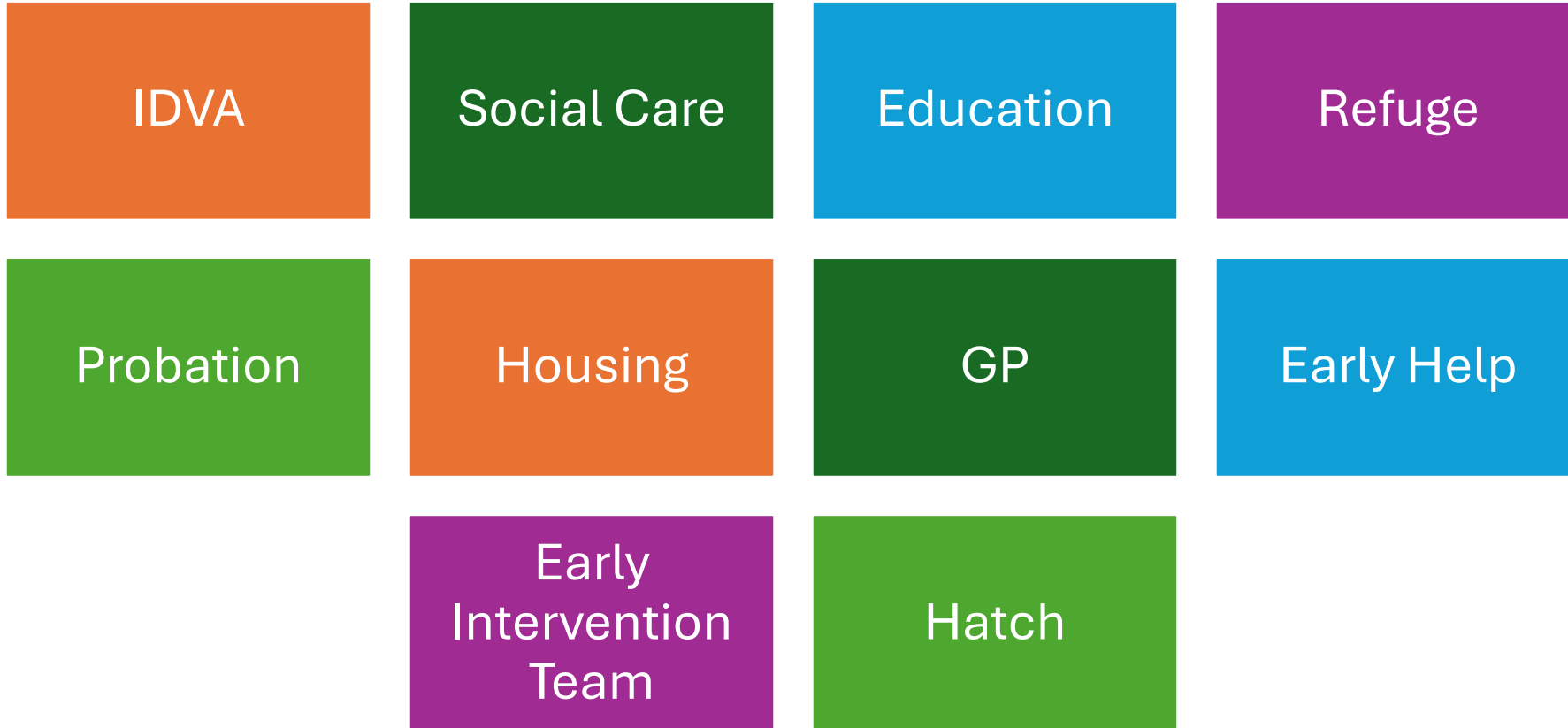
Sexual Violence within Domestic Abuse

Rape is often an indicator that domestic violence could escalate to homicide. Numerous studies have identified this, including the influential paper *Death by Intimacy: Risk Factors for Domestic Violence* (Johnson, Lutz and Websdale, 2000) in which the authors state that in a number of cases, prior to femicide, “usually within a month or so of the killing, there was a twist in the victimisation pattern, for example, marital rape”.

Laura Richards is a former violence adviser to the UK Home Office and the Association of Chief Police Officers and an expert on fatal domestic abuse. She explains that there is always a pattern of abuse which often includes rape prior to femicide. “Rape [when committed by domestic violence perpetrators] is often a high-risk factor to serious harm and femicide,” she says.

“Some of the men used horrific sexual violence as a way to punish women, often for leaving them,” explains feminist activist Liz Kelly who was involved in a small group of women’s aid activists who were campaigning to focus more attention on the sexual violence element within domestic violence cases that ended up in refuges.

Services Involved



Initial Assessment

- I started supporting Jess in May 2024
- No CSC involvement at this stage but had had support in the past
- Ex-husband now released but had been to prison regarding stalking
- Felt she had a robust safety plan due to support from IDVA
- Had a Victim Liaison Officer and they would support her until August 2024 when his sentence was due to end
- Restraining Order in place
- No current contact between her ex-husband and children
- Said she wouldn't hesitate to call the police if there were any further incidents
- History of SV with others which began in childhood

Impact of Domestic Abuse

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Chronic fear
- Low self-esteem
- Negative self-image
- Shame
- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Prescribed medication
- Hypervigilance
- PTSD


Initial Beliefs



It was my fault




I'm selfish




I should have
left earlier



I'm ugly



I'm a bad
mum



I didn't protect
the children



Bonding over shared trauma

Trauma Bond - 7 Stages

1

Love bombing

2

Trust and
Dependence

3

Criticism and
Devaluation

4

Manipulation and
Gaslighting

5

Resignation and
Giving Up

6

Loss of Self

7

Emotional
Addiction to the
Trauma Bond
Cycle



Forward and backward steps

EMDR



Started EMDR (Eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing) and engaged very well with the process



Installed some positive beliefs



Moved house with support from Housing



But then ...

Update

- In August she contacted me to advise she could not attend her session because she had received bad news and needed to support her children
- I thanked her for letting me know and advised I would book her in for the same time the following week
- She then replied and said she doesn't know when she'll be available because the police had just contacted her to advise her husband had been found dead and she was logged as his next of kin

Support resumed

- The next month she got in touch to say she wanted to return and resumed her sessions the following month
- Started by processing how she felt about her ex-husband's death

External Influences

- Found it hard to not be influenced by others
- She found it helpful to know that her feelings were **all** valid:
- It was understandable that she felt angry with him
- It was understandable that she had feared him
- It was understandable that she had cared about him
- It was understandable that she missed him
- It was understandable that she loved him

Beliefs installed through EMDR

I'm
okay
now

I'm
stronger
now

I am a
good
mum

I can
cope

I can give
myself
compassion

I am
good
enough

I am
believed

I am
happier
now

Only the abuser
is responsible
for the abuse

I deserve
to be
happy

I am
worthy of
love

How do we support victim/survivors?



VALIDATION



EDUCATION



LIBERATION

Impact of Multi-Agency Approach



Every service involved was instrumental in Jess's recovery from the domestic abuse.



She described feeling seen, heard and believed.



Refuge gave her and her children the respite that she needed. They were able to offer her empathy around the difficulties of leaving an abusive partner. At the time she engaged with Refuge she did not feel ready to make that permanent break but to know they were there when she needed them was a huge help and knowing about the outreach support was helpful.



IDVA not only created the robust safety plan with Jess but gave her the encouragement she needed to link in with other services. She also knew that she could contact the DA Hub whenever she needed to and had received support from the Early Intervention Team.



Early Help, Education and Hatch gave invaluable support to her children. As supportive as Jess was to the children, she really encouraged them to speak with professionals as she knew they may prefer to open up to someone else.



Housing helped her and her children to move into a new property where they could all start to feel safe and rebuild their lives.



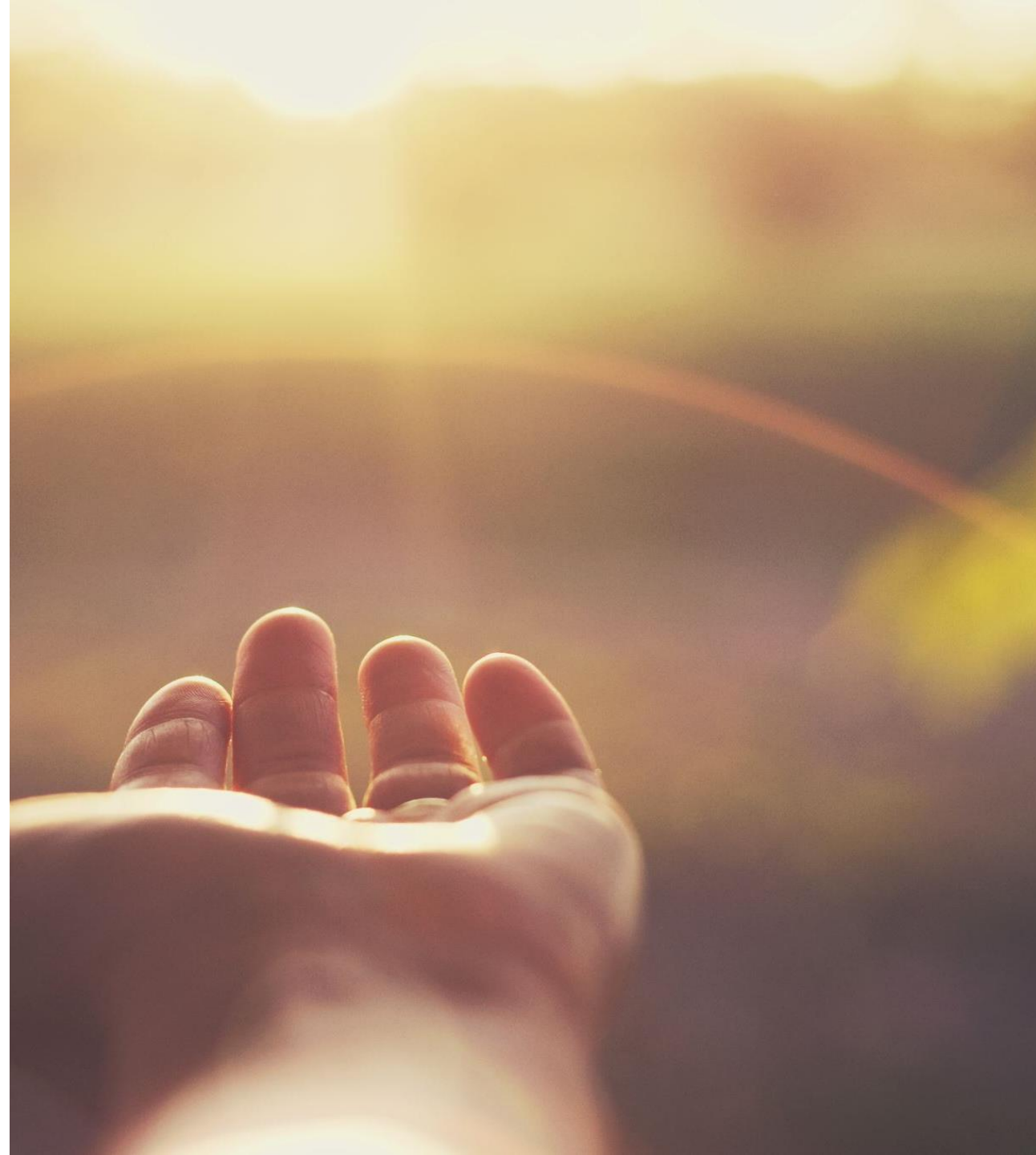
Making her GP aware of the abuse helped to give them context of her mental health difficulties and so they were better equipped to support her.



Probation keeping her updated through the Victim Liaison Officer helped her to manage her fears about his release

Voice of the Victim/Survivor

- It's 100% made a positive impact. I'd be worried where I'd be now if I hadn't had support. I only wanted to feel 'alright' but I feel more than okay. It's a massive gift and I really appreciate it.
- It's been about ME! It's been individualized. I felt completely understood by the services that supported me.
- I'm actually looking forward to the future now rather than living in fear.
- I can't thank everyone enough!

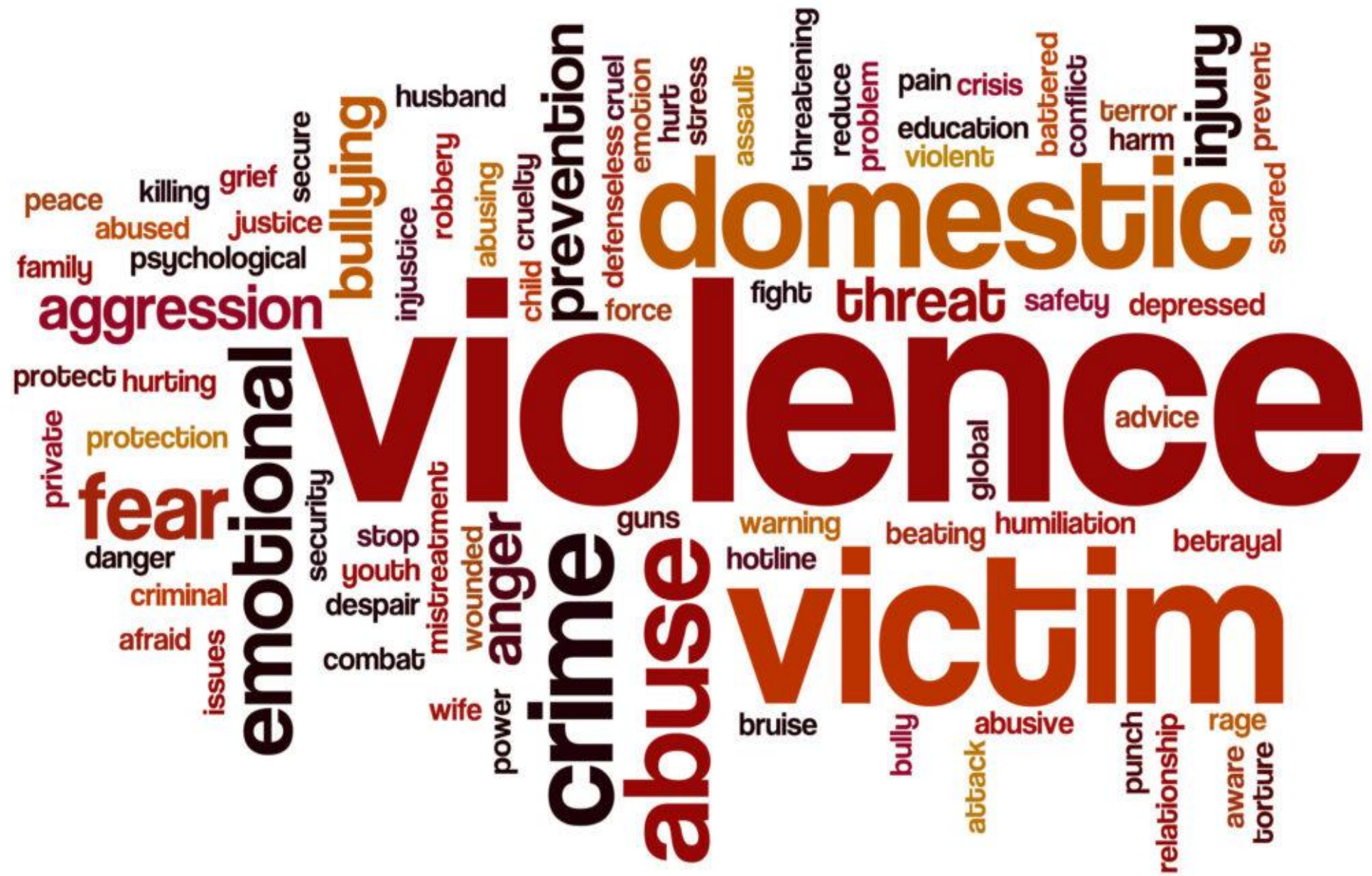




Context & Insight

Keith Billington & Gill Jones

May 2025



Extent of Domestic Abuse and Violence

- 1 in 5
- 2.4 million
- 1.5 million
- 30 seconds
- 24 %
- Adults who experience DA in their lifetime.
- Last year – number of Victims
- Police recorded related incidents & crimes (2022/23 – England & Wales)
- Police receive a call re DA
- Less than 24% DA crimes reported



Impact on Children

- Review of Child Abuse cases 2011-13 found 97% of children had been exposed to DV while two thirds had been directly harmed – emotionally abused or neglected.
- Physical
- Delayed Development
- Impact on School attendance and attainment
- Increased attendance at out of school activities
- Use of Alcohol/Drugs
- [Domestic Abuse: statutory guidance \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK](#)
- [Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse - GOV.UK.pdf](#)

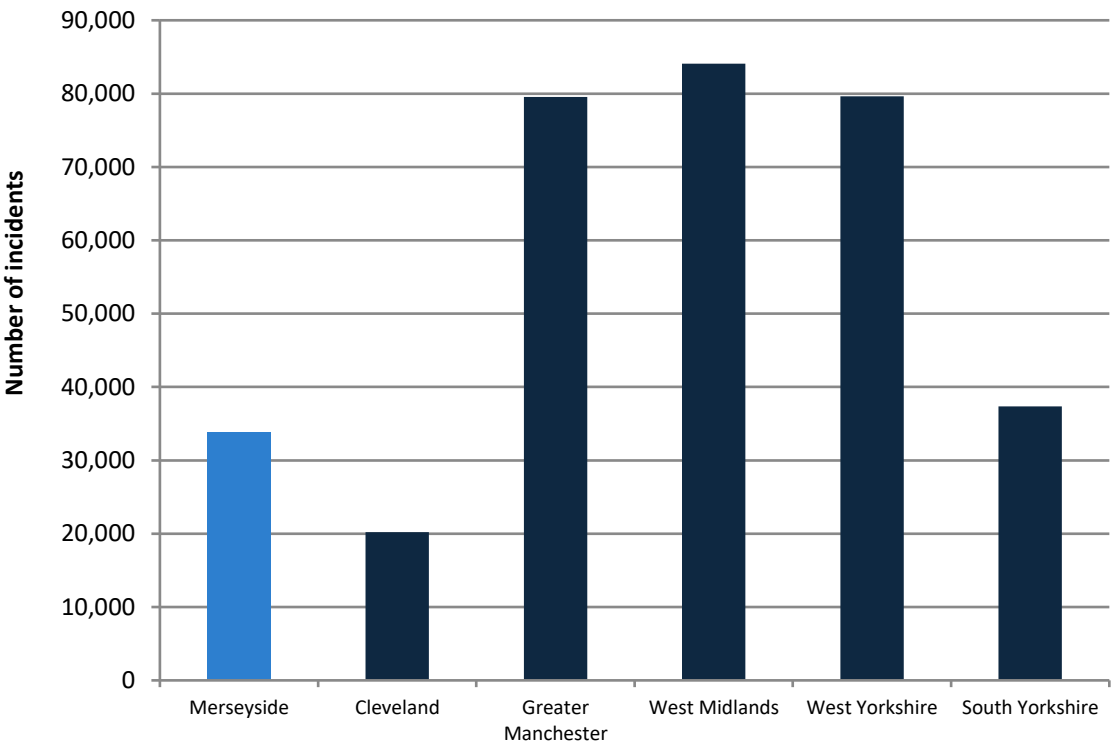


Regional comparisons – Police data

Number and rate of police recorded domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes, selected areas, year ending March 2024

Area	Number	Rate per 1,000 population
Merseyside	33,885	23
Cleveland	20,218	35
Greater Manchester	79,532	27
West Midlands	84,072	28
West Yorkshire	79,621	33
South Yorkshire	37,373	27
North West	183,286	24
England and Wales	1,350,428	22

Number of domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes combined, as recorded by the police

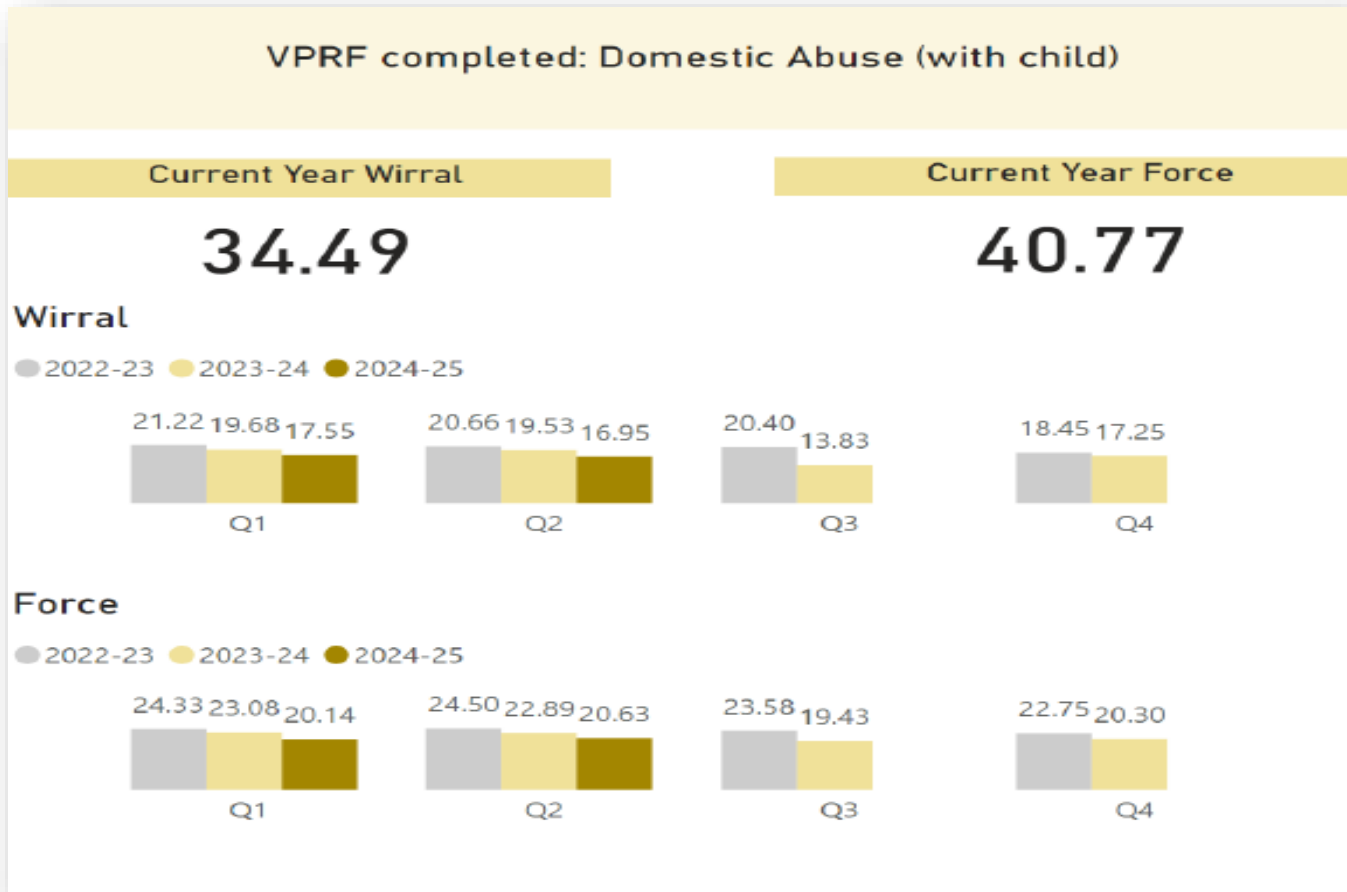


Headlines

- Wirral averages just over four hundred domestic abuse crimes per month.
- Across the region, Wirral account for 19% of the recorded domestic abuse crime.
- Wirral has the lowest domestic abuse crime rate per ten thousand head of population.
- This sat at 219 cases per ten thousand head of population, compared to 264.9 cases/10,000 residents, as a Merseyside average.



Police Referrals to Childrens Services Regional Comparison



VPRF - Vulnerable Persons Referral Form



Referrals to Childrens Services

2023/24

- 24,100 Contacts at Integrated Front Door (IFD)
- 4,649 Domestic Abuse
- 976 Referrals
- 261 Re-referrals

2024/25

- 26,533 Contacts at IFD
- 5,268 Domestic Abuse
- 1,014 Referrals
- 277 Re – referrals



Domestic Abuse Hub Context & Insight

- Referrals into MARAC have remained stable
- Repeat referrals into MARAC have decreased by 8%
- Referrals into DA Early help have increased by 51% over a 12-month period.
- Referrals for target hardening have increased by 22% over 12 months.
- A 12-month pilot for supporting children at the highest risk has been successful resulting in the new children's team



Housing Options DA Referrals

Date range 04/02/2025 – 25/04/2025

Date Range	Referrals
04/02/2025 – 25/04/2025	32
Outcomes	Count
Male	5
Female	27
Young Victim (16-25)	*Less than 5
Older Victim (65+)	*Less than 5
Households with children	5
Mental health support needs	*Less than 5
Alcohol support needs	*Less than 5
Drug support needs	*Less than 5

Please note: clients could be recorded in multiple topics therefore numbers will not match referral total

Harmful Practice

Harmful practices reflect the values and beliefs held by members of a family and/or a community that have been there for generations. Some values and beliefs are beneficial to all members, while others are harmful and a violation of human rights.

Some examples are:

'Honour based abuse'

Child/forced marriage

Female genital mutilation

Son preference

Conversion therapy



Home Office: Key Findings from Analysis of Domestic Homicide Reviews

October 2024



- Staff are supported to reflect on the importance of professional curiosity
- Services consider barriers to access to service
- Information about support should be provided to all victims
- Services should undertake training / refresher training
- Information sharing between agencies can be improved in all areas (MARAC, Police, MASH), highlighting importance of historical information in risk assessments.
- Increased publicity re who to talk to if you are concerned about someone's mental health and/or home situation

MARAC – Equality & Diversity

Diversity	SafeLives Recommended level	Local Marac	Merseyside	UK-Wide
<i>ethnic minority groups</i> referrals %	Local <i>ethnic minority groups</i> - population	2.4%	8.4%	15.3%
Local BME population	-	7.6%	12.7%	22.4%
LGBTQI+ referrals %	2.5% - 5.8%	1.1%	1.6%	1.6%
Disability referrals %	19%+	0.5%	10.8%	9.6%
Male referrals %	5% - 10%	2.2%	4.5%	6.4%



Activity

- Strategy Themes –
 - Prevention
 - Children
 - Perpetrator Victim/Survivor
 - Governance & Workforce
 - Equality, Equity & Diversity
 - Insight
 - High Risk
 - Housing

See associated Workshop document with collated results

Domestic Abuse in Wirral	
Strengths?	Even Better if? - Priorities?
Links to other forums and strategies?	Challenges?

Survivor Perspective

This is a poem one of The Lighthouse Centre clients has written. She finds writing poetry helps to get her through difficult times.

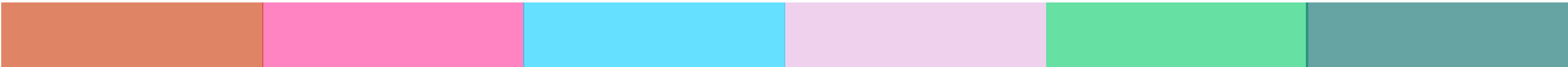
She has said it's ok to share with you all and explained it as follows:

“Lie is about the supposed good times when it was easier to stay, accept blame, minimise and pretend all will be ok”



Making sense of it all

- Recorded crime lowest rate in the most similar family. Just under Northwest and on par with England.
- Lowest rate of referrals to social care in Merseyside.
- Violence rate - Decreasing 3 years trend for Wirral.
- Raised awareness of DA with families across Wirral.
- Increased demand for support at Early Help level.
- Raised Confidence of Professionals to identify, address and support incidents of DA.
- Incidents of Repeat referrals to MARAC have dropped.
- Volume of MARAC has steadied and dropped slightly.
- DA referrals for social care remain high, also the highest repeat reason for coming back.
- Next - Completing our Needs Assessment



Lie

A lie of a secret I struggled to keep
A lie of the shame that you hold so deep
A lie to protect you despite all the pain
you lie to destroy me, it isn't the same.

A lie to keep grounded, keep routine, keep face
To keep the mind focused, at times with some haste

A lie to enjoy life, to hope and to dream,
But nothing is ever quite what it seems

A lie for the sanity I strive to preserve,
A lie of a life I'm told I deserve.

A lie of an image so grand and so real
A mind so broken, no feelings to feel.

A lie of the promises that you made to change,
discussions gave hope but you
wouldn't engage.

A lie that can change perceptions and thought
A lie that was safer and often was bought.

Lies make you question your worth, make you ask
was any of you real, or all just a mask.

