



FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE, FREE FROM ABUSE

SAFE STEPS STRATEGY

2023 - 2026

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Foreword

In our combined 40 year history, Safe Steps has grown and developed to meet the changing needs of our area.

We have become the lead domestic abuse service provider in Southend, reaching 8000 people each year through emergency accommodation, advocacy, recovery, child and family services, helpline, counselling, community prevention and awareness and training.

Our current position is in part due to the vision of local survivors of domestic abuse who set up Southend's first women's refuge, later becoming Southend Women's Aid in 1976. We would like to thank SOS Domestic Abuse Projects (formerly Southend Women's Aid) for their innovation and guidance which has helped to establish Safe Steps.

We recognise the importance and strengths that come from partnership working, we are one of the three founding members of the EVIE (Ending Violence in Essex) Partnership together with Changing Pathways and The Next Chapter.

Our 3 Year Strategic Plan aims to strengthen and deepen our impact as an organisation that has experienced tremendous growth since its launch in 2018; enhance our accessibility; and invest in our essential infrastructure.

The goals laid out in this plan will allow us to further our mission by meeting the needs of victims while also participating in transformative change that will support Southend, Essex and Thurrock respond to the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.



Our Vision

For a brighter future, free from abuse



Our Mission

Working with and for survivors,
and those at risk of, domestic
abuse in all its forms to be
and feel safer. Together with
our partners we will increase
awareness of domestic abuse
and advocate for change.



Our Values



Individuality

We recognise and value difference, placing client needs at the centre of all we do. We celebrate that people are individuals, appreciate the value of diversity and recognise some sections of community need different interventions to achieve equality.



Integrity

We understand the importance of an atmosphere of openness and honesty throughout Safe Steps that promotes confidence and collaboration with our clients, colleagues, stakeholders, funders and regulators.



Excellence

We review and improve our service delivery to ensure we remain a centre for excellence, going above and beyond, to support survivors of domestic abuse.



Empowering

Empowering survivors to drive positive change by listening, believing and being led by their experiences and insight. Empowering staff to achieve and reach their full potential, investing in staff talent and initiative.



Responsive

We strive to be responsive to survivors needs applying a trauma informed response to all we do. We are responsive to changing service demands and a changing landscape, by being an organisation that is sustainable and scalable.



Our purpose and impact

We are a specialist provider, delivering services in Southend, Essex and Thurrock. We offer a range of community and accommodation services to support adults, young people and children recover and rebuild their lives after domestic abuse. We have become the lead domestic abuse service provider in Southend, **reaching 8000 people each year** through emergency accommodation, advocacy, recovery, child and family services, helpline, counselling, community prevention and awareness and training.

On average,
our COMPASS
helpline
supports

5500
people a year

Each year
Break the Cycle
deliver healthy
relationship
workshops in
schools to

2800
children and
young people
each year

We support on
average
750 adult
survivors of
domestic abuse
each year

Every year,
360
children and
young people
affected by
domestic abuse
directly access
our support

Our specialist
programmes
of recovery are
accessed by over
500
adults, young
people and
children
every year



We will drive this strategy forwards by focusing on;



Our clients

are at the centre, at the heart, of all that we do.



Our services

are not only life changing, they're lifesaving.



Our organisation,

operating with integrity we require stability and sustainability.



Our partnerships

are essential to maximise the impact of the support we provide.



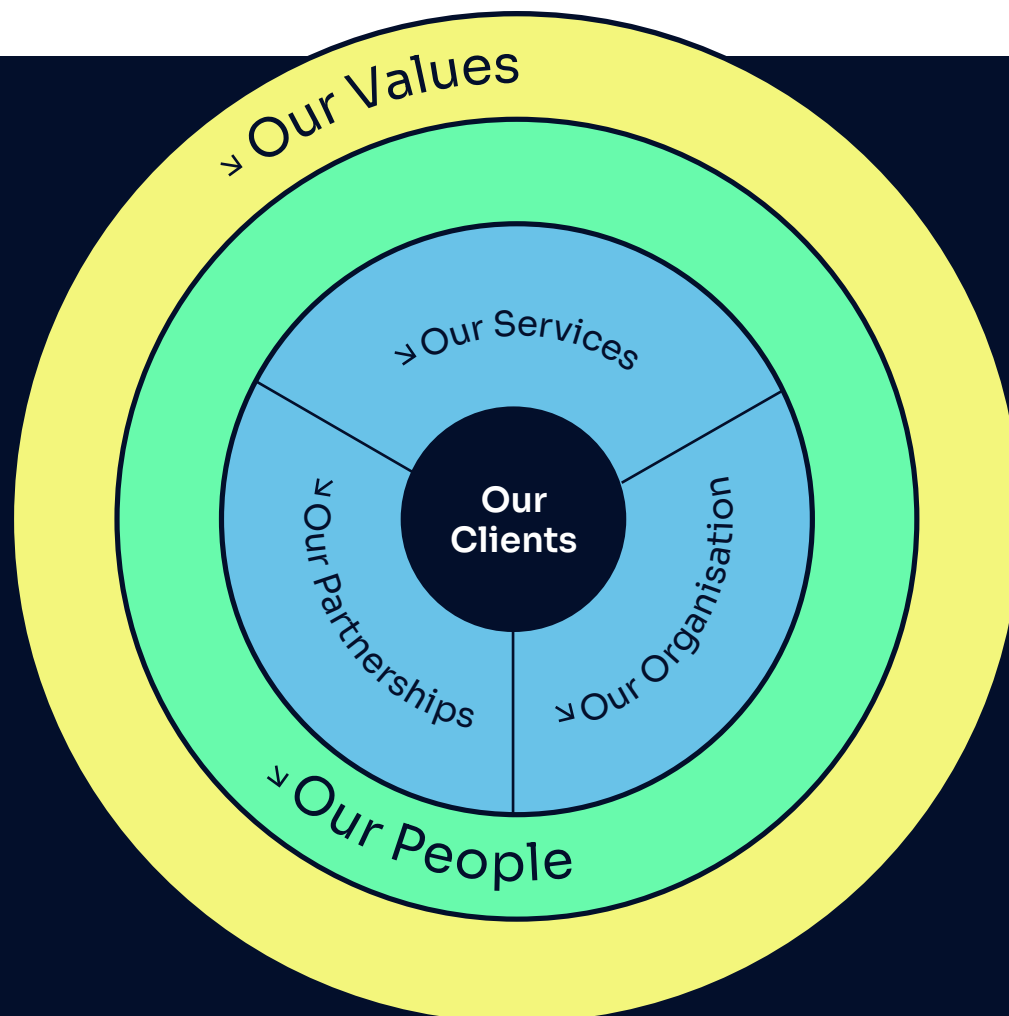
Our people

are vital to our success, our staff, volunteers and trustees.



Our values

And encompassing every aspect of Safe Steps life; how we operate, make decisions, how we work with clients and treat our employees are our values.



Our clients

The people we serve will experience an approach that is trauma informed, respectful of their individual needs and understanding of intersectionality in a trusting safe environment.

When clients face an intersection of challenges such as poverty, disability, mental health issues, addiction, homelessness, immigration status and a language barrier, their vulnerability can be significantly increased. A significant proportion of Safe Steps clients face one or more of these challenges.

We are committed to seeking out and listening to feedback about service delivery from our clients and partners, and to modifying our model, processes and practices accordingly.

We will do this by;

Increasing the visibility and accessibility of Safe Steps for all sections of our community through our community premises, varied co-location sites and online.

Making sure that our support is truly inclusive. Actively seeking feedback and meaningful participation from survivors to understand and remove any barriers to accessing our services, design more engaging, effective and equitable services for people who need them most.

Investing in domestic abuse specialist training and learning opportunities for our staff to improve their responses and practical approaches when working with survivors from marginalised sections of our community and create more opportunities for people from marginalised communities to shape our work.



**In 2022-2023
48% of survivors
we supported
told us they had
a mental health
need.**



**In 2022-2023
19% of survivors
were in unsecure
accommodation
when they
approached us for
support**



**In 2022-2023 for
1 in 10 of the clients
we supported,
English was their
second language.**



Our services

We are already one of the few services in the UK that provides a beginning to end service for survivors and their children. From crisis to recovery, for children, young people and adults, we provide support in community and in safe accommodation. We raise awareness in schools and train professionals building capacity in the local community.

We will develop our existing life changing services and create new in response to identified unmet support needs of survivors experiencing, or at risk of, domestic abuse.

This will be achieved by;

Ensuring we constantly deliver high quality, needs led, trauma and evidence informed services.

Increasing the opportunities and platforms to actively consult with survivors and stakeholders in the review of our services.

We'll use the expertise and experience of survivors to design and develop a range of recovery focused interventions for adults and children.

IDVA support has been my go-to and helped through the whole situation. With your support, I was able to take positive steps to not be in the situation anymore. I wouldn't have been able to get through it especially going to court. I have referred other people to Safe Steps based on my own experience and I understand the full impact on my children more than I did before.

Sam

Survivor of domestic abuse

Safe Steps has been incredibly supportive every step of the way. I have been given valuable insights into my children's behaviour and ways to manage their feelings and behaviour in positive ways going forwards. It was a very supportive and positive experience.

Julia

Survivor of domestic abuse

Our organisation

Financial stability enables flexibility for investment in infrastructure, people and services. Our priority is to maintain our commissioned services whilst additionally forward planning to develop other sources of revenue. We are committed to improving lives. We want to continue making a positive impact on the people we serve while keeping our negative impact on the environment as low as possible.

We'll build a sustainable and scalable organisation that considers our current and longer-term needs. We'll develop and diversify our different revenues that enable us to grow our resources and by continually improving to reduce the environmental impact of our operations and service delivery so we can deliver quality services, meet our contractual and legislative obligations, now and in the future.

Some of the ways we will achieve this;

We'll continue to deliver services to a high standard and maintain positive, collaborative working relationships with Contract Managers and Commissioners to meet or exceed their expectations.

We'll build on our culture of openness and integrity, operating as a learning organisation. With open communication and a collaborative approach to identification, responding to and managing risks effectively by continuously improving.

We'll develop a collaborative approach to 'horizon scanning' to detect and assess emerging opportunities enabling us to develop additional streams of revenue.

We will focus and commit to becoming a Greener Charity by involving staff and partners to achieve a reduction in waste and carbon emissions.

The Dove Centre, Southend-on-Sea



We value our collaborative relationship with Safe Steps, made possible thanks to the money raised by National Lottery players. We continue to work closely with the Safe Steps team to help them grow and showcase their successes

Helen Bushell

Senior Head of Regional Funding for London, the South East and East of England at The National Lottery Community Fund

Our partnerships

Our partnerships are centred around improving the safety and wellbeing of survivors. By identifying new partnerships and strengthening the links with existing ones we will provide the most effective support, close service gaps, inform local policy and improve all of 'our' learning.

We will work collaboratively, communicate and engage with a range of strategic and operational partners to build and strengthen our performance and influence.



EVIE (Ending Violence in Essex) is a consortium of three domestic abuse specialist providers in Essex, as a collective we provide services in all 14 districts of Essex that can be accessed through the COMPASS helpline and gateway service. By sharing specialist expertise, skills and resources we are able to increase the resilience of our collective services and ensure that survivors have access to a wide-range of specialist services dependent on their needs. Our shared approach ensures that all survivors of domestic abuse are provided with a consistent, high-quality, needs-led service which is informed by our collective knowledge of the local area in which we deliver.

Sarah Conlon

CEO, Safe Steps

How will we achieve this?

We will share our knowledge and best practice with the community and professionals to increase awareness, inform of the impact and promote the pathways to support. We intend to be valued locally as knowledge leaders.

We'll work to increase the opportunities and platforms to amplify stories and voices of survivors and children.

We'll continue to develop the success of the EVIE Partnership, a consortium of Essex Domestic Abuse Support Services, to increase our voice and influence locally and regionally.



A Better Start Southend and the Early Years IDVA project, managed by Safe Steps, has demonstrated through partnership working a number of benefits and impacts to not only families in Southend experiencing domestic abuse, but also to the early years workforce through a suite of domestic abuse training which has increased their confidence and competence in identifying, responding and supporting parents to access Safe Steps.

Zoe Hill

Project Manager, A Better Start Southend

Our people

A skilled, passionate and sustainable workforce is vital to our success. Through recruiting, training, supporting, retaining and ensuring the right environment is around them, our staff will be in the best possible position to support survivors of domestic abuse.

We'll continue to work to achieve a culture across all services that supports and enables a skilled and sustainable workforce that is resourced, informed and responsive.

How will we achieve this?

Through a comprehensive learning and development framework for all trainees, staff and managers, we will invest in the workforce enabling us to 'grow our own' talent.

We'll develop an inclusive organisational culture of team working, joined up learning and well-being. With staff working together sharing knowledge and supporting each other through a range of new learning, communication and engagement events such as our all teams away days.

Increasing the recruitment of skilled volunteers to compliment the delivery of our vital services. By creating opportunities for survivors to take part in our work, we'll develop our 'by and for' services to meet the needs of our community.

I am passionate about our organisation, I feel we have an exceptional ethos with our staff and the clients we support. I began as a volunteer, I had no knowledge, no experience but I knew I wanted to learn and work in this sector. I am now a qualified IDVA and IDVA Manager, I'm a designated safeguarding lead, a qualified ISAC and our Stalking Lead. I manage a service with eight team members and I feel incredibly proud of what I have achieved and to be a part of all this.

Emma

Service Manager, Safe Steps

The Safe Steps Team



Supporting children and young people



a spotlight

Children are not passive witnesses

Our vision is to achieve a brighter future free from domestic abuse and for our community, that needs to start with the youngest and often most vulnerable people.

It is important to spotlight the specialist work we do with children and young people at Safe Steps. Our 3YR Strategy focuses on how we will work with all our clients and survivors, but we feel it is essential to draw particular attention to children and young people.

Being exposed to domestic abuse has serious consequences for children and young people; it can affect how they feel, think and behave in harmful ways. It can have significant impact on a child's development, health and wellbeing.

Children are not passive witnesses, a position we have always held, the law now states they are direct victims.



I liked that I was able to speak about different things and [my worker] would listen and then give me options and this really helped with making good choices, it made me feel I was happy and confident with these choices.

Sophie, aged 15



I liked meeting new friends, knowing that they had been through similar experiences. Also being given ideas to help calm down. I liked the games we played and we play this a lot at home now, I like it.

Manny, aged 11



I felt listened to and like I had a safe place to off load how I felt without fear of it being spread around the school.

Chloe, aged 16

What we do:

Dedicated Early Years IDVAs working with families who are pregnant or have an under 5yr in the home.

Our Break the Cycle project has increased support not only for pupils but for parent, teachers and other school staff. We've built close links with Essex University and Southend based colleges, helping students identify unhealthy relationships and access support for their own, and that of their peers, safety.

A full range of domestic abuse recovery programmes and 1-1 support for the child or young person and non-abusing parent delivered by our pioneering Fledglings team.

Specialist CYP IDVA team for victims of domestic abuse aged 13-19yrs.

Coordinated programme of support for children and young people in Safe Accommodation, continuing into their resettlement.

Specialist counselling by a team of BACP accredited, and clinically supervised, Counsellors.

The 5 main focuses of Safe Steps Strategy; our people, our clients, our services, our organisation and our partnerships will build on our extensive knowledge and experience taking the needs of children and young people into account. A spotlight of 3 of these priorities;

- We'll create more opportunities for young people to shape and influence our services and statutory responses, amplifying their stories and voices.
- How children and young people access our support will be varied, we'll increase the platforms for engagement, working proactively to identify 'hidden victims'.
- We'll continue to work in collaboration with our partners to achieve consistent pathways to specialist domestic abuse support for children and young people.

➤ **1 in 5 children grow up with domestic abuse in the home.**

(Radford et al (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. London: NSPCC)

➤ **Children's outcomes significantly improve across all key measures after support from specialist children's services.**

(CAADA Impact on Children 2014)

➤ **There is a major overlap between direct harm to children and domestic abuse: 62% of children exposed to domestic abuse are also directly harmed.**

(CAADA Impact on Children 2014)

Our Children's Team



Contacts



SAFE STEPS

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BREAK THE CYCLE

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COMPASS

COMPASS

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