

The South Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership Strategy 2026 - 2029

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end violence against
women & children
south ayrshire multi agency partnership



south
AYRSHIRE
COUNCIL
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Deas
Making a Difference Every Day

Our vision is
to ensure all women and girls
in South Ayrshire are Safe,
Respected and Empowered
and live in communities that
are Informed; and reject all
forms of violence against
women and girls



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Introduction

The South Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership (SAVAWP) remains firmly committed to addressing all forms of violence against women and girls as a fundamental breach of human rights and a barrier to equality. Violence against women is recognised as gender-based violence, rooted in inequality, power imbalances and societal attitudes.

Since the launch of our 2022–2025 strategy, partners across South Ayrshire have worked tirelessly to improve prevention, protection and provision. This has been achieved despite the challenges of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and increasing pressures on public services. Through strong partnership working, we have continued to deliver high-quality services, promote awareness, and strengthen our joint response to gender-based violence.

Looking ahead, our vision for 2026–2029 is clear: to ensure all women and girls in South Ayrshire are safe, respected and empowered, and to build communities that are informed, resilient and reject all forms of violence and abuse. SAVAWP will continue to be guided by the national Equally Safe strategy, embedding trauma-informed practice, amplifying the voices of women with lived experience, and ensuring early and effective intervention.

As Chair of SAVAWP, I would like to acknowledge the dedication of all our partner organisations and the communities we serve. Together, we will continue to challenge inequality, strengthen prevention, and support recovery and empowerment for women, children and young people across South Ayrshire.



Cllr Laura Brennan-Whitefield,
Chair – South Ayrshire
Violence Against Women
Partnership

National Context

The South Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership fully supports the national Equally Safe Strategy, Scotland's framework for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls. Originally published in 2014 and updated most recently in 2023, Equally Safe sets out a vision for:

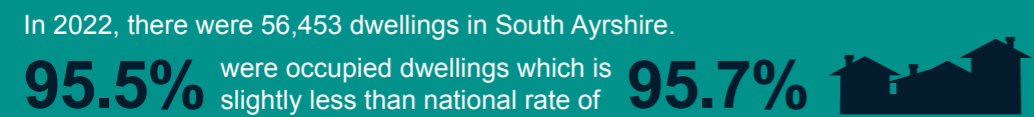
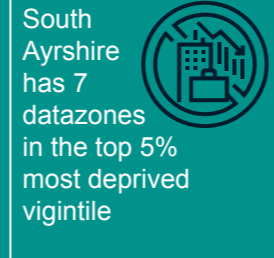
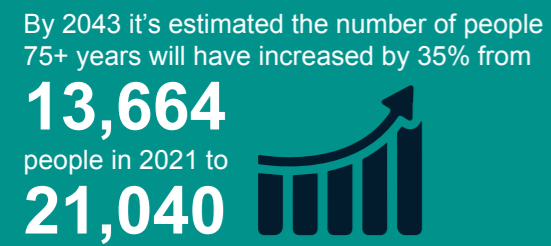
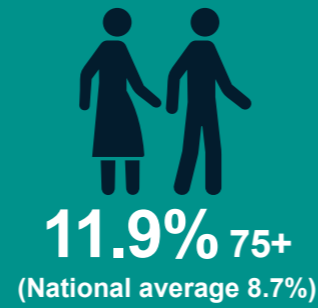
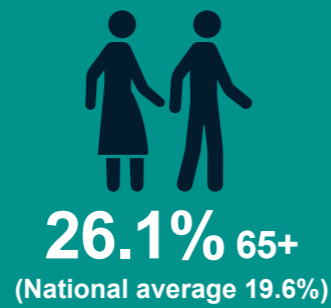
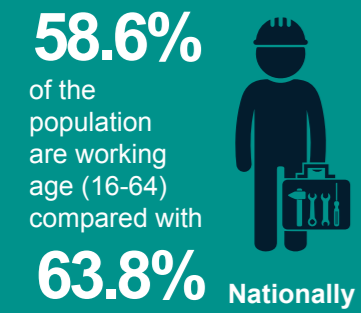
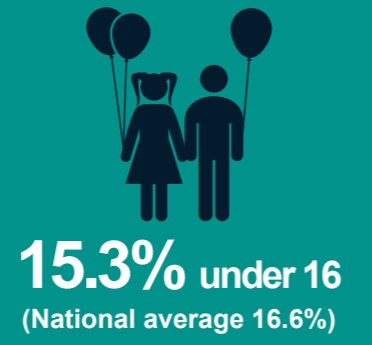
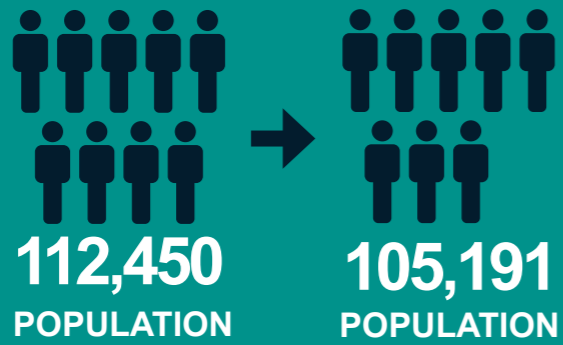
“A strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse, and the attitudes that help perpetuate it.”

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) continues to be recognised as both a cause and consequence of gender inequality. It encompasses, but is not limited to:-

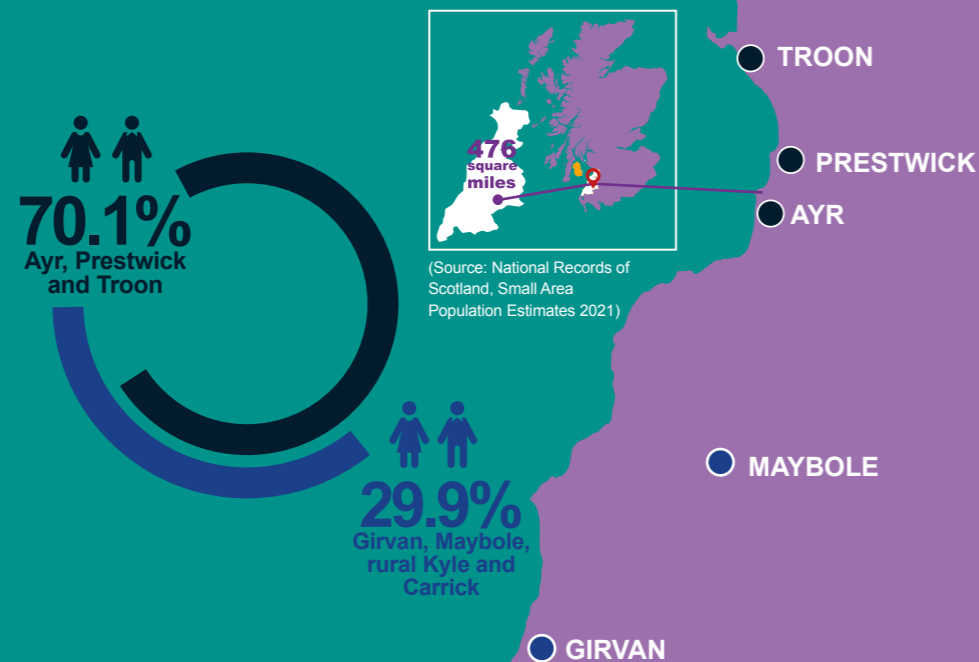
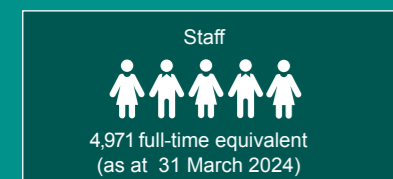
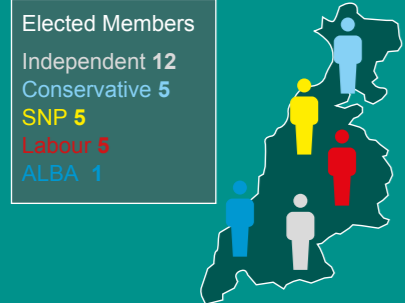
- › Physical, sexual and psychological violence within families, communities or institutions, including domestic abuse, rape and incest.
- › Sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation in public and private spaces, including the workplace and online platforms.
- › Commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, pornography, stripping and trafficking.
- › Child sexual abuse and exploitation, including online abuse.
- › So-called 'honour-based' violence, including female genital mutilation, forced marriage and 'honour' crimes.

South Ayrshire Overview

Between 2021 and 2043 the population of South Ayrshire is projected to decrease from 112,450 to 105,191. This is a decrease of 6.9% which compares to a projected increase of 1.7% for Scotland as a whole.

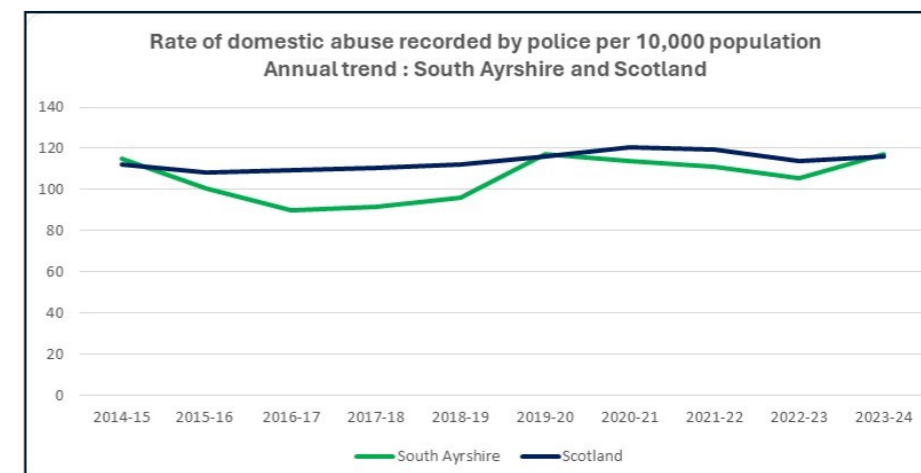
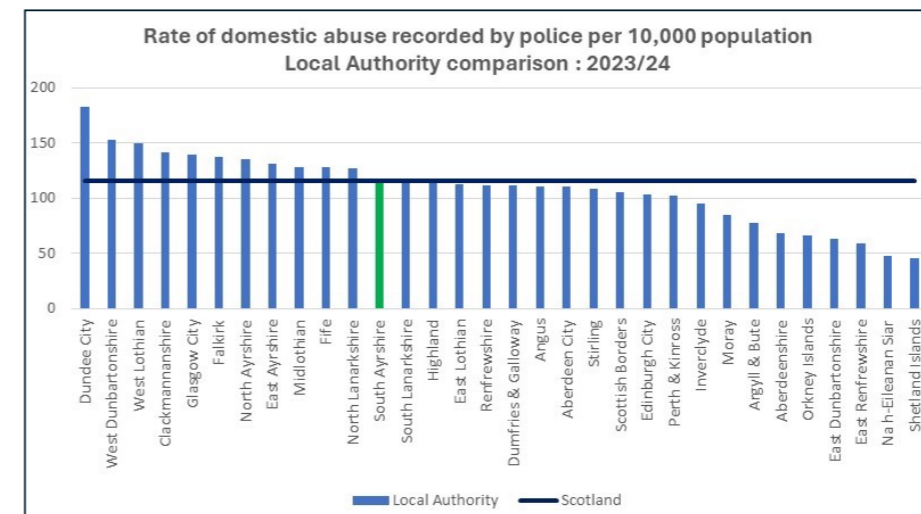


About The Council



What we know

- › In 2023/24 the rate of police recorded domestic abuse incidents in South Ayrshire was 117 per 10,000 population compared to the Scottish average of 116.
- › The rate in South Ayrshire is higher than the previous year (2022-23) and highest it has been since 2019-20.
- › This represents an increase of 11.2% in the last year. (Scotland 2.3% increase)
- › This represents an increase of 2.7% over last three years. (Scotland 3.5% decrease).
- › In 2023-24 South Ayrshire ranked 12th out of 32 local authority areas in Scotland for the rate of domestic abuse incidents.
- › 41.5% of domestic abuse incidents recorded by police in South Ayrshire in 2023/24 include a crime or offence. (Scotland 38.7%).
- › South Ayrshire has followed similar trend to Scotland over the last 10 years but with larger increases over this time.



Police Scotland Update

1 April - 30 September 2025



Sexual Crime has increased 10.5% in the reporting period and up 9.6% compared with the 5-year average. Rape crimes have reduced slightly compared to the previous year to date, with 12 crimes reported (14 in the previous year). Sexual assaults reports remain consistent, with 37 offences recorded. The overall increase in sexual crime aligns with national trends, largely driven by a rise in online/internet communicating indecently offences alongside other online/cyber related offences, which account for much of the reported increase. Domestic Abuse crimes remain consistent, with 47 in the reporting period. Officers in South Ayrshire attended 609 domestic incidents, a reduction of 12.8% in overall domestic incidents reported to police. This is in contrast with the national increase in domestic abuse incidents which rose 2.1%. 47% of domestic abuse incidents resulted in criminality being established. Proactive policing of domestic bail requirements has resulted in 46 offences being identified relating to perpetrators breaching bail conditions. This proactive approach also includes continual victim liaison and safeguarding measures being implemented, both within the police service and in conjunction with partner agencies.

Sexual Crime – Dedicated Public Protection officers are based in Ayrshire to investigate Sexual offences and are supported by specialist officers dedicated to helping the victims of such crimes. Rape crimes are down 22% on the 5-year average which

represents a positive trend. Locality officers continue to work proactively to reduce the number of victims of sexual crime, collaborating closely with partners in the Violence Against Women and Girls network to strengthen prevention and early intervention. ‘Sextortion’ offences have increased 1200% in the reporting period, which reflects greater victim confidence in reporting such incidents to police. It is noted however that many of these offences are domestic related, are perpetrated from abroad or involve young offenders and victims, for which campus officers continue to provide online safety inputs at schools. Online offending remains a priority for officers within Specialist Crime Division, who continue to support us locally, deploying the latest technology and investigative techniques to identify and act against offenders residing in, or targeting victims across South Ayrshire communities.

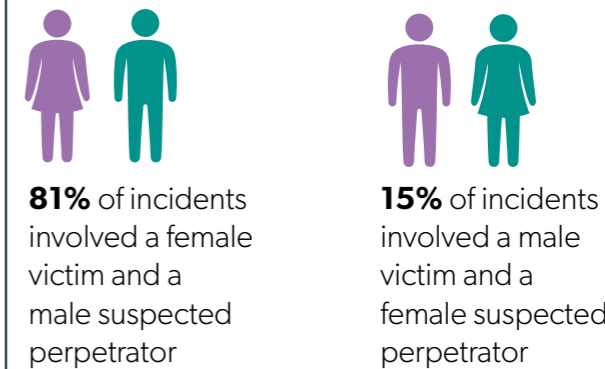
Domestic Abuse Crimes remain a daily operational focus, ensuring victims are protected, supported and confident to report to police. Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland (DSDAS) referrals in South Ayrshire for the Q2 period (50 disclosures made) continue to rise, demonstrating the commitment and effectiveness of the Domestic Abuse Safeguarding Team. Across Scotland the number of applications has soared by 17.7 per cent, highlighting its continued use, greater awareness of its existence, and its value in Scotland to aid prevention of domestic abuse.

WHO were the victims?



In 2023-24, more than 4 out of 5 (83%) victims of domestic abuse were female, where known

WHAT was the gender of the victims & suspected perpetrators?



In the remaining 3% of cases, victim and suspected perpetrators were the same gender

WHERE did the incidents occur?



90% of domestic abuse incidents occurred in a home or dwelling (where location was known)

WHEN did the incidents occur?



31% of domestic abuse incidents occurred at the weekend

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
14%	13%	14%	13%	14%	16%	16%

Local partners, including South Ayrshire Women’s Aid, Moving on Ayrshire, ASSIST, NHS Ayrshire & Arran, Police Scotland, South Ayrshire Council and the Health and Social Care Partnership, continue to provide essential services and collect intelligence to inform prevention, protection, and recovery.



Local Policies & Procedures

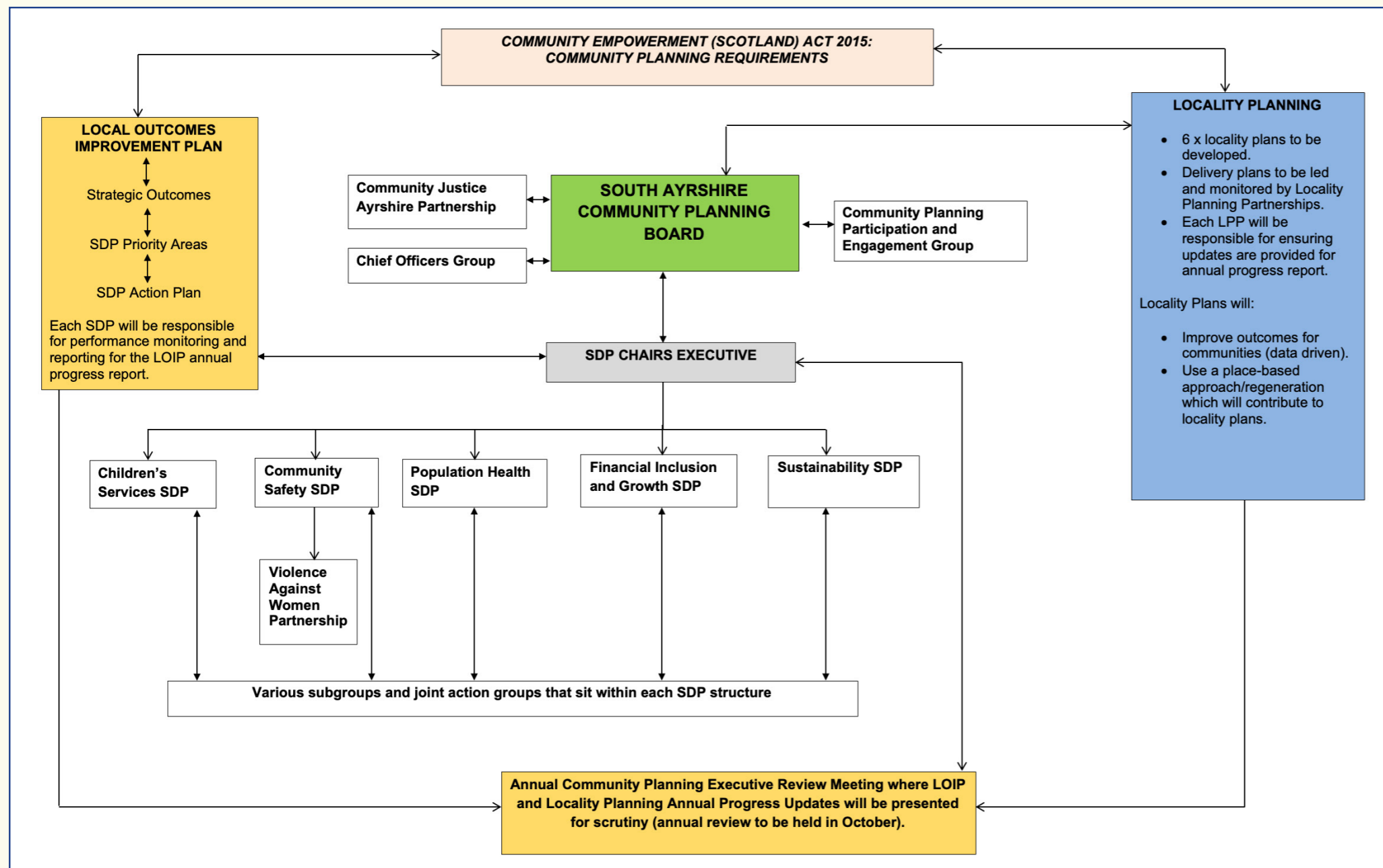
The Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2024–2029 for South Ayrshire [Local Outcomes Improvement Plan \(south-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://south-ayrshire.gov.uk) sets out the key priorities [priority areas](#) that underpin strategic planning and partnership working across the area. The LOIP focuses on two high level outcomes, Place and Wellbeing, incorporating key priorities including Community Safety, Population Health, Children’s Services, Sustainability, and Financial Inclusion and Growth.

The South Ayrshire Council Plan 2023–2028 further supports these priorities through its overarching themes of Spaces and Places, Live, Work and Learn, and Civic and Community Pride, recognising the vital link between our environment, communities, and overall wellbeing.

The Violence Against Women (VAW) Partnership operates within the Community Planning framework, providing strategic leadership and coordination of work to prevent and address all forms of violence against women and girls. The Partnership reports directly to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), ensuring alignment with wider priorities around safety, wellbeing, and equality.

Supporting the Partnership, the Violence Against Women Joint Action Group (JAG) lead on the delivery of the priorities within the VAW Strategy. The JAG reports to the VAW Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership, strengthening links between violence prevention, community safety, and local wellbeing outcomes.

Through these interconnected structures, South Ayrshire’s VAW Partnership ensures a coordinated, multi-agency approach that contributes to the delivery of the LOIP outcomes and the wider Community Planning vision for a safer, more equitable South Ayrshire.



Education and Community Learning & Development (CLD)

Education and Community Learning & Development (CLD) play a vital role in delivering early intervention and prevention activity that supports the aims of this strategy. Through collaborative work with schools and community organisations, Education, Police Scotland and Thriving Communities contribute to raising awareness, challenging gender inequality, and promoting healthy, respectful relationships across South Ayrshire.

This work aligns with the priorities outlined in the South Ayrshire CLD Partnership Plan (2024–2027) [South Ayrshire Community Learning & Development Partnership Plan 2024-2027](#), which focuses on improving life chances, empowering communities, and fostering inclusion. Through the CLD Partnership, targeted programmes and learning opportunities are delivered in schools and community settings.



Trauma Informed Practice



South Ayrshire’s approach to tackling violence against women is underpinned by a trauma informed and responsive approach to practice and policy. This ensures that all services and practitioners resist re-traumatisation by working within systems that realise the prevalence of trauma; recognise it’s impacts; and can respond appropriately and provide compassionate, empowering support to all those affected, through a relational approach that builds resilience and supports recovery. Partners across the Violence Against Women Partnership are committed to embedding trauma informed principles in policy, service design, and front-line practice, ensuring that women, children, and young people are supported in safe, and respectful way, and experience safety, choice, collaboration, trust, and empowerment throughout their journey. In practice, this means ensuring that all interventions, whether advocacy, risk assessment or multi-agency planning, are delivered in ways that recognise the impact of trauma, prioritise emotional safety and empower survivors to make informed choices without fear of re-traumatisation

[Roadmap for Creating Trauma Informed and Responsive Change National Trauma Transformation Programme](#)

Mental Health and Wellbeing

The strategy recognises the close link between experiences of violence, trauma, and poor mental health. In alignment with the [South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership \(HSCP\) Strategic Plan 2021–2031](#), partners are committed to promoting positive mental health through prevention, early intervention, and accessible, person-centred support.

Partnership working between VAW services, HSCP, Education, and CLD helps to build supportive networks that reduce isolation, improve wellbeing, and empower survivors to recover and thrive.



Children, Young People and Families

This strategy supports the priorities outlined in the [Children and Young People’s Services Plan \(2023–2026\)](#), particularly the themes of The Promise, Families, and Voice. It recognises the importance of early intervention and safeguarding, ensuring that children and young people affected by gender-based violence are listened to, protected, and supported.



Alcohol and drug use are recognised both as risk factors for experiencing or perpetrating violence and as consequences of trauma linked to gender-based violence. The South Ayrshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) plays a key role in prevention, early intervention and recovery. [Our Strategy | South Ayrshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership](#)

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

South Ayrshire operates a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) to jointly manage the highest-risk cases of domestic abuse. MARAC brings together Police Scotland, Women’s Aid, ASSIST, NHS Ayrshire & Arran, HSCP, Housing, Education, and relevant third sector partners to:-

- Share risk-critical information
- Improve safety planning
- Reduce repeat victimisation
- Coordinate actions to support survivors and their children

The MARAC process in South Ayrshire aligns with SafeLives national guidance and contributes directly to the Equally Safe priority of strengthened early and effective intervention.



Justice Services

South Ayrshire Justice Social Work (JSW) contributes to the protection of women and children aligning public protection work with the wider aims of the VAW Partnership. Criminal Justice services support the aims of this strategy through:-

- Delivery of the Caledonian System for men convicted of domestic abuse offences
- Delivery and support of the Caledonian Women’s and Children’s Service to offer women linked to the Caledonian Service are offered the opportunity of support and intervention.
- Robust risk management through MAPPA where relevant
- Court reports and assessments that incorporate trauma, gender-based violence and child protection
- Close partnership working with Police Scotland, ASSIST, Women’s Aid, and children’s services to enhance safety planning
- Implementation of the Safe and Together model across Children’s Health, Care and Justice Services as a domestic abuse informed approach to child welfare and protection and to ensure domestic abuse is recognised as a parenting choice; that perpetrators are held to account and that we work with non-abusing partners to meet the needs and goals of children and families impacted by domestic abuse.
- We will continue to review other interventions in relation to working with the perpetrators of domestic abuse where the Caledonian System is not suitable.



Housing

Housing Services play a critical role in preventing homelessness and supporting women affected by violence and abuse. The service is aligned with key local policies and plans, including the [Local Housing Strategy](#), Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, and Housing Management Policies Housing, Operations and Development Directorate – Housing Services, all of which reference domestic abuse and promote trauma informed practice.



The work of the NHS Ayrshire and Arran (NHS A&A) Gender Based Violence (GBV) Steering Group informs the delivery and implementation of the NHS A&A GBV Action Plan (2021-2026). The plan focuses on the health system tackling GBV. The

recently published refresh of Equally Safe “Scotland’s Strategy preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls” demands a whole systems approach with a substantial and sustained effort and commitment from all to tackling violence against women and girls in any shape or form. The NHS as a front line service is a key partner in the delivery of Equally Safe.

An Inclusive Health Approach to Violence and Violence Prevention details an understanding of how life-course events shape and influence the risks/likelihood of people being impacted and harmed, or become a perpetrator of violence. The approach outlines the opportunities to understand need and risks through a developmental, trauma-informed and human-rights lens, with related consideration of gendered influences on women and girls, and boys and men. This approach supports an understanding for those impacted by violence and those who are involved with perpetrators, through family life/community life/experiences. Additionally it highlights that gender based violence disproportionately effects women and girls, but does not dismiss the impact that it has on men and boys.



Child Poverty

Violence against women and girls and child poverty are closely linked through shared drivers of inequality and disadvantage. The [South Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy \(2024–2029\)](#) aims to reduce poverty and promote inclusion, goals that complement the ambitions of this strategy. Addressing poverty, improving financial inclusion, and supporting economic empowerment are key to enabling women and children to live free from violence and abuse.

Summary

The Violence Against Women Strategy for South Ayrshire is informed by and contributes to a range of interconnected local strategies and plans. Through collaboration with partners in the 3rd Sector, Education, Thriving Communities, Police Scotland, HSCP, Children’s Services, and Community Planning, the VAW Partnership ensures that work to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls is trauma informed, evidence-based, and embedded within the wider wellbeing and equality priorities for South Ayrshire.

Consultation and Engagement Process

In developing the Violence Against Women Strategy, a consultation and engagement process was undertaken to ensure that the voices of partners and the wider community were reflected in the final strategy. Initial engagement took place with key partners through Community Planning, Community Safety Partnership, Violence Against Women Partnership, and Joint Action Group, followed by a wider opportunity for feedback during South Ayrshire Council’s 16 Days of Action campaign.

The findings from the consultation highlight a clear need for increased awareness, improved access to services, and stronger community involvement to support women and girls across South Ayrshire. Feedback also emphasised the importance of early education, partnership working, and addressing stigma and harmful attitudes that prevent women and girls from seeking help.

The insights gathered through this process have directly informed the development of the strategy priorities and associated actions, ensuring alignment with the national Equally Safe framework and a strong local evidence base.

A summary of the consultation findings can be accessed [here](#).



Our Priorities

The South Ayrshire Violence Against Women Strategy is underpinned by the four national priorities set out in the equally safe strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls.

These priorities form the foundation for all local action delivered through the Violence Against Women Joint Action Group (JAG). The JAG leads on the development and delivery of the Equally Safe Local Action Plan, ensuring that actions directly contribute to South Ayrshires Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP).

Equally Safe Priorities	South Ayrshire Outcomes
Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls	We will support our, schools, and workplaces to promote equality, respect, and inclusion — rejecting all forms of violence, discrimination, and harmful behaviour towards women and girls.
Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically, and politically	We will ensure that Women and girls in South Ayrshire are empowered to participate fully in community life, have equal access to opportunities, and are supported to reach their potential without barriers linked to gender or inequality.
Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children, and young people	We will ensure that women, children, and young people affected by violence and abuse receive early, effective trauma informed support that promotes safety, recovery, and wellbeing.
Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response	We will empower men and boys to challenge harmful attitudes and behaviours, and we will work with partners to ensure effective and consistent responses to those who cause harm.



Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

SAVAWP is committed to continuous improvement and accountability. Progress on the delivery of the Equally Safe priorities and VAWP Outcomes will be reviewed quarterly through the Violence Against Women Partnership and reported annually to the Community Safety Partnership.

This reporting process allows South Ayrshire to demonstrate impact, share learning and good practice, and ensure that local activity remains aligned with both the Equally Safe Quality Standard and Performance Framework and the locally defined VAWP Outcomes.

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