



Meeting: Cabinet

Date/Time: Tuesday, 21 July 2026 at 2.00 pm

Location: Sparkenhoe Committee Room, County Hall, Glenfield

Contact: Miss. G. Duckworth (Tel. 0116 305 2583)

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Membership

Mr. D. Harrison CC (Chairman)

Mr. C. Abbott CC
Dr. J. Bloxham CC

Mr. K. Crook CC

Mr. H. Fowler CC

Mr. A. Hamilton-Gray CC

Mr. P. Harrison CC

Mr. C. Pugsley CC

Mr. M. Squires CC

Mr. A. Tilbury CC

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AGENDA

<u>Item</u>	<u>Report by</u>	<u>Key Decision</u>
1. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2026	(Pages 3 - 6)	
2. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.		
3. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.		

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4.	Tree Management Strategy.	Director of Growth, Environment and Transport	(Pages 7 - 56)	Yes
5.	Update on Local Government Reorganisation and Establishment of Voluntary Joint Committees.	Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer	(Pages 57 - 66)	Yes
6.	Strategic Plan (2027-2031) Consultation.	Director of Public Health, Communities, Law and Governance	(Pages 67 - 88)	Yes
7.	Annual Treasury Management Report 2025/26.	Director of Corporate Resources	(Pages 89 - 106)	
8.	Belonging in Education Strategy 2026-2029.	Director of Children and Family Services	(Pages 107 - 160)	Yes
9.	Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026-2029.	Director of Children and Family Services and Director of Public Health, Communities, Law and Governance	(Pages 161 - 290)	Yes
10.	Response to Blaby Regulation 19 Local Plan Consultation.	Director of Growth, Environment and Transport	(Pages 291 - 294)	
11.	Harborough District Local Plan.	Director of Growth, Environment and Transport	(Pages 295 - 298)	
12.	Action Taken by the Chief Executive to Approve the Procurement of Two Contracts in Relation to the Crisis and Resilience Fund.	Director of Public Health, Communities, Law and Governance	(Pages 299 - 302)	
13.	Items referred from Overview and Scrutiny.			
14.	Any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent.			



Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at County Hall, Glenfield on Tuesday, 26 May 2026.

PRESENT

Mr. D. Harrison CC (in the Chair)

Mr. C. Abbott CC
Dr. J. Bloxham CC
Mr. K. Crook CC
Mr. H. Fowler CC

Mr. A. Hamilton-Gray CC
Mr. P. Harrison CC
Mr. C. Pugsley CC
Mr. M. Squires CC

In attendance

Mr. A. Innes CC

Apologies

Mr. A. Tilbury CC

119. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2026 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

120. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

121. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting. No declarations were made.

122. Provisional Revenue and Capital Outturn 2025/2026.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources regarding the provisional revenue and capital outturn for 2025/26. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda item 4", is filed with these minutes.

The Director, in introducing the item, highlighted the revised Appendix F to the report. The revision was made to rectify a spreadsheet error that had resulted in capital values being understated which in turn affected the percentage income return cited.

Mr. Fowler CC noted that the underspend reflected well on the Council's financial management and that it would be used to good effect, including for highways schemes and the repayment of debt.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the 2025/26 provisional revenue and capital outturn be noted;
- b) That the prudential indicators for 2025/26 as shown in Appendix E to the report be noted;
- c) That the net revenue underspend be used for the additional commitments as specified in paragraph 86 of the report;
- d) That the East Midlands Shared Services (EMSS) Partnership Agreement addendum as set out at Appendix G to the report be approved.

(KEY DECISION)

REASONS FOR DECISION:

To note the provisional revenue and capital outturn for 2025/26 and make efficient use of the net revenue underspend.

To ensure the EMSS Partnership Agreement remains relevant and fit for purpose.

123. Efficiency Review - Outcomes and Revised Change and Improvement Programme.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources regarding the outcomes of the Efficiency Review and implications for the Council's Transformation Programme and Medium Term Financial Strategy. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda item 5", is filed with these minutes.

Comments of the Scrutiny Commission, which had considered a report at its meeting on 11 May were circulated separately and a copy is also filed with these minutes.

The Chairman, Mr. D. Harrison CC, referred to the need to tackle the budget deficit and maximise efficiency whilst protecting services, and noted that the Better Leicestershire Programme would also complement the Council's planning for local government reorganisation (LGR).

In response to questions, the Director advised members regarding pursuing the opportunities identified in the Review, and other issues that could affect the Council's finances, including LGR.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the views of the Scrutiny Commission be noted;
- b) That the revised Transformation Programme at Appendix A to the report be approved and re-named the Better Leicestershire Programme;
- c) That the relevant Chief Officers, following consultation with the relevant Cabinet Lead Members, be authorised to implement the initiatives in the Better Leicestershire Programme, subject to the usual Scrutiny and Cabinet process in relation to proposed service change;
- d) That the Chief Executive and the Director of Corporate Resources, following consultation with the Leader and the Cabinet Lead Member for Resources be authorised to;

- i) mobilise the internal and external resources required to implement the Better Leicestershire Programme,
- ii) undertake any procurement or contractual processes required to deliver i) above;
- e) That up to £20m of investment to fund the net implementation costs required to deliver the Better Leicestershire Programme be approved;
- f) That the Director of Corporate Resources, following consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member, be authorised to allocate the funding at e) above from the Council's reserves;
- g) That further reports be made to the Cabinet and the Scrutiny Commission later in the year.

(KEY DECISION)

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The revised Transformation Programme - the Better Leicestershire Programme - and delivery of the newly identified savings will support the Council in maintaining a sustainable Medium Term Financial Plan and make progress towards closing the current gap of £85m by 2029/30.

124. Response to Borough of Oadby and Wigston Regulation 19 Local Plan Consultation and Declaration of Unmet Housing Need.

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Director of Growth, Environment and Transport and the Director of Children and Family Services regarding Oadby and Wigston Borough Council's Local Plan and setting out the proposed responses to the Borough Council's Regulation 19 consultation and its declared unmet housing need. Copies of the report and a supplementary paper, both marked "Agenda item 6", are filed with these minutes.

Dr. Bloxham CC noted the complexity of Local Plan issues (several of which were under development in the County) and said that the Council would continue to work with partners to agree the best approach to addressing the declaration of an unmet housing need.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the proposed timetable for the progression of the Oadby and Wigston Borough Council (OWBC) Local Plan be noted;
- b) That the declaration of an unmet housing need by OWBC be noted;
- c) That the County Council's formal response to the OWBC's Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation, set out in paragraphs 33 to 60 and the Appendix to the report be approved, noting in particular:
 - i) That the County Council is considering the draft Local Plan as presented to it, and it considers that it is for OWBC to demonstrate to the Inspector(s) at

the Plan's Examination in Public why the Local Plan has been positively prepared in respect of the local housing need requirement (LHN), i.e. that the OWBC will need to demonstrate that there is a substantive evidence base to justify its conclusion that OWBC is unable to meet its LHN as calculated by the national standard method, based solely on highway reasons;

- ii) That the County Council has no fundamental issue with the Local Plan's Spatial Strategy, but as the Local Transport Authority (LTA) it considers that the transport evidence presented by the OWBC is not sufficiently granular in detail to be able to conclude that the OWBC's highway network would be severely congested if the area delivered housing over the Local Plan period equivalent to that calculated by the standard method;
- iii) The County Council's formal position on the matter of the OWBC's declaration of an unmet housing need, set out in paragraphs 46 to 57 of the report;
- d) The Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, following consultation with the relevant Cabinet Lead Members, be authorised to work with OWBC and other partners within the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area to seek to agree to the most appropriate approach to addressing the OWBC's declaration of an unmet housing need and work through any substantive issues to resolution, to demonstrate effective and on-going joint working.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The County Council's response sets out the key comments for consideration by OWBC in progressing its new Local Plan, seeking to influence the content of the Local Plan in the interests of local communities, including ensuring that the Local Plan provides an as robust as possible policy platform for securing the provision of the infrastructure and services that are required to support its successful delivery.

On 25 March 2026, new regulations came into force, which meant that the Duty to Co-operate would no longer apply to new, or emerging Local Plans. Notwithstanding this change, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024) still requires "maintaining effective co-operation" across administrative boundaries (paragraphs 26-29). Inspectors are expected to continue to examine plans in line with these policies.

The County Council is considering the draft Local Plan as presented to it. It does not intend to do any work of its own to demonstrate whether and if more than 240 homes per annum could be provided for and neither is it raising this as a matter in its proposed consultation response. Nevertheless, it is important that OWBC and other partners understand the County Council's position on this matter, in order to facilitate effective and ongoing joint working.

125. Items referred from Overview and Scrutiny.

There were no items referred from the Overview and Scrutiny bodies.

**CABINET – 21 JULY 2026****TREE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND
TRANSPORT****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Cabinet's approval of the revised Tree Management Strategy, which sets out the approach for the management of the County Council's trees and woodlands.
2. The Tree Management Strategy 2026-2031 is attached as Appendix to this report.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
 - a) Approves the revised Tree Management Strategy 2026-2031;
 - b) Notes the comments of the Environment, Flooding and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
 - c) Authorises the Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, following consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member, to make minor, factual, operational or consequential amendments to the Strategy as considered necessary, provided that any material change to policy, service standards, resource implications or legal/risk implications will be subject of a further report where required.

(KEY DECISION)

Reasons for Recommendation

4. The County Council is responsible for managing trees on land within its ownership or control and, as local highway authority, for managing tree-related risks affecting the public highway. The Strategy sets out a reasonable, proportionate and risk-based approach to inspection, maintenance, prioritisation and record keeping.

5. The Tree Management Strategy sets out standards and procedures for the management of the tree resource under the stewardship of the County Council. It is intended to assist the Council in protecting trees and woodlands as a valuable natural asset to Leicestershire while complying with recognised industry guidance and relevant statutory duties, mitigate legal and financial risk, including claims arising from tree failure.
6. The Tree Management Strategy will provide a framework to support delivery of the Council's ambition to plant a million trees for Leicestershire by 2032.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

7. The Environment, Flooding and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report at its meeting on 11 November 2025 and its comments are set out in Part B of this report.
8. The Environment, Flooding and Climate Change and Waste Overview and Scrutiny Committee will continue to receive annual reports on progress with the Strategy and target for tree planting to ensure that it continues to align with the broader Environment Strategy.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

9. The County Council's Strategic Plan recognises the importance of the natural environment and the countryside which makes Leicestershire an attractive place to live and work. The Tree Management Strategy establishes a clear vision for ensuring that Leicestershire County Council's trees and woodlands are appropriately managed and can provide multiple benefits that improve the quality of life for residents and communities.
10. The Tree Management Strategy accords with the Council's Environment Strategy 2018-2030. Set within this context, the underlying principle of the Tree Management Strategy is to ensure that the Authority's tree assets improve the quality of life for its local communities and ensures the Council meets its obligations under the Biodiversity Duty in relation to land that it owns and manages.
11. The previous revision of the Tree Management Strategy was approved by the Cabinet in March 2020 and covered the period of 2020 to 2025.

Resource Implications

12. There are no additional resource implications arising directly from the approval of the recommendations in this report.
13. Any future funding requirements that might emerge from the implementation of the Tree Management Strategy or measures to respond to the spread of Ash Dieback will require individual business cases to be developed and approved

by the Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, the Director of Corporate Resources or the Cabinet as appropriate.

14. Delivery of one million trees for Leicestershire will continue to be pursued through partnership working, the Council's tree nursery, external grant funding where available and existing budgets already allocated through the Medium Term Financial Strategy to support the response to Ash Dieback and the forestry maintenance programme.
15. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer have been consulted on this report.

Legal Implications

16. As owner/occupier of land containing trees and as local highway authority, the County Council must take a reasonable and proportionate approach to the inspection and management of trees, having regard to the level of risk, use of the site and recognised industry guidance. The Strategy assists the Council in evidencing a consistent risk-based approach to tree inspection, maintenance, recording and prioritisation.
17. Implementation of the Strategy will need to comply, where relevant, with statutory requirements, including the Highways Act 1980, the Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 and 1984, the Environment Act 2021 biodiversity duty and duty to consult before felling qualifying street trees, tree preservation order and conservation area controls under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, felling licence requirements under the Forestry Act 1967, protected species legislation and the Council's procurement and contract procedure rules.
18. The Strategy does not itself authorise any specific tree works, procurement, disposal, expenditure or operational decision. Any individual project or operation requiring statutory consent, consultation, procurement approval, landowner consent, additional funding or a separate member decision will need to be progressed through the appropriate process.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

19. A copy of this report will be circulated to all Members.

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PART B

Background

20. The County Council is responsible for managing an estimated 321,000 trees comprising of individual specimens, tree groups and woodlands, including over 400 hectares of woodland on County farms and Country Parks.
21. The County Council is responsible for managing its tree stock on County Council-owned or controlled land and, as Local Highway Authority, for managing tree-related risks affecting the public highway. This requires a reasonable and proportionate inspection programme and appropriate works to manage foreseeable risks to Council staff, visitors to Council premises and users of the public highway.
22. The County Council also has a wider responsibility to provide leadership in relation to climate resilience and to mitigate against the social, economic and environmental problems that are exacerbated by the changing climate. It also has a broader strategic role to provide leadership as an exemplar and to influence the behaviours of private landowners, schools, communities, and individuals to create a sustainable place, so that future generations enjoy a great quality of life.
23. The first Council's Tree Management Strategy was produced in 2008 and later revised in 2013 and 2020. The current revision of the Strategy ensures that tree management practice and procedures continue to align with industry best practice, reflect changing local and national policies and legislation and to align work with the Authority's own strategic priorities.
24. The Strategy continues to recognise the amenity value of all Council trees, which is calculated using the Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) system. This system is the principal method used in the UK to assign a monetary value to amenity trees. It treats trees as public assets rather than liabilities, making it highly effective for calculating compensation for trees damaged or lost. CAVAT has been successfully used by the County Council in recouping the value of individual trees lost from development or in litigation cases and the policy section of the Strategy has been updated to reflect the continued use of CAVAT to value the Authority's tree assets.
25. The purpose of the Tree Management Strategy is to recognise the importance of the tree resource under the stewardship of the County Council and identify standards for its management, setting out standards which comply with nationally recognised codes of practice.

26. The strategic aims of the Tree Management Strategy are to:
- a) Conserve and enhance the tree resource in terms of quality and numbers;
 - b) Promote public safety through appropriately resourced tree inspection and maintenance programmes;
 - c) Assist the Council in fulfilling its legal obligations as a tree owner by addressing safety and major nuisance issues effectively;
 - d) Inform customers of the Council's approach to tree-related legal obligations and manage enquiries and expectations appropriately;
 - e) Promote and increase the current level of tree planting on public and private land to address the recent decline of individual trees and mitigate the potential effects of Ash Dieback and other potentially harmful diseases;
 - f) Establish sustainable management programmes for Council woodland utilising external funding from Government agencies and other sources.
27. The Tree Management Strategy provides a framework within which the County Council can discharge its obligations to safeguard the trees under its stewardship. Adhering to the guidance contained within the Strategy will assist officers and Members in meeting the Council's legal obligations and to provide leadership in maintaining biodiversity across its landholdings. This ensures the County Council mitigates the risk (e.g. of insurance claims) as well as helping to protect trees and woodlands as a valuable natural asset to Leicestershire.
28. The County Council will continue to increase its tree planting activities to meet the objectives of the Tree Management Strategy and the target for one million trees for Leicestershire.
29. There is a need to strike a balance between incorporating both native and non-native species into a programme of tree planting. Work undertaken on the Value of Trees project, in particular, highlighted the need for the use of an appropriate range of naturalised and non-native species to create resilience to climate change. However, the Council will be mindful that a healthy variety of native trees is essential to make a significant contribution towards biodiversity and to reflect the appropriate landscape character of the County.

Comments of the Environment, Flooding and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee

30. The Environment, Flooding and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the draft Tree Management Strategy on 11 November 2025.
31. Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- a) It was noted that the County Council continued to develop its tree nursery, and the first batch of trees from the nursery was expected to be ready for planting later in 2025. These would be used for replanting areas affected by Ash Dieback and for highway schemes.
- b) In response to a Member query on tree values, it was noted that the Council used a tree inventory system to track the ecological and amenity value of individual trees. It was highlighted that figures were updated regularly and full CAVAT assessments had been done for development or litigation cases.
- c) It was highlighted that a previous project funded by DEFRA supported orchards in schools, but a lack of funding had slowed the progress made. It was suggested that plans were in place to restart the scheme using nursery tree stock for schools and plans were being developed to encourage children's understanding of food production.
- d) A Member raised concerns about the inspection of trees on disused railway paths like Brampton Valley Way suggesting some areas needed additional attention. It was noted that this fell under the Country Parks portfolio and would be inspected in due course.
- e) The Lead Member for Environment and Flooding commented that as the tree planting season approached, the County Council would be giving away free trees and encouraged everyone to take up this opportunity to plant a tree as this supported biodiversity and helped with flood prevention.

Conclusion

- 32. Trees are part of what makes Leicestershire a great place to live. As well as their aesthetic value, they provide enormous ecological and environmental benefits and make a huge contribution to the health and wellbeing of residents.
- 33. Through clearly defined guidelines, the agreed Tree Management Strategy will enable the County Council to preserve, develop and increase its tree stock and maximise the associated natural capital benefits. The Strategy considers the key activities required to manage an extensive tree population effectively, aims to guide future planning and ensure that a consistent, high-quality approach is taken across the County.
- 34. The Tree Management Strategy will provide the necessary framework

required to meet the challenge of planting one million trees for Leicestershire and the Council will continue to provide leadership across the County to deliver and encourage an increase in appropriate tree planting and tree management.

Equality Implications

35. There are no direct equality implications arising from approval of the Strategy. The equality implications of any future changes to the Council's policies, procedures, functions or services arising from the Strategy or associated action plans will be considered at the relevant time and, where required, will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

Human Rights Implications

36. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Any future operational decisions taken under the Strategy will need to be considered on their own facts and in accordance with the Council's usual decision-making process.

Background Papers

Report to Environment, Flooding and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 November 2025 and minutes of that meeting:

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1351&MId=8330&Ver=4>

Tree Management Strategy 2020-2025:

www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2021/2/16/Tree-Management-Strategy-2020-2025.pdf

Appendix

Tree Management Strategy 2026-2031

Tree Management Strategy 2026-2031



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Part 1 - Strategy overview

Introduction

Trees provide a significant contribution to the quality of our lives. In addition to the visual beauty they bring to our parks, gardens, road corridors, towns and villages they provide huge, but often unnoticed environmental benefits. They improve air quality and reduce air pollution, giving off oxygen as part of their natural growing process. They absorb carbon dioxide and contribute significantly to mitigating climate change, they retain water and stabilise soils, thereby reducing flood risk. Trees are very important for wildlife, hosting and providing food for a wide range of flora and fauna. They are the major components of forest eco-systems both locally and worldwide. Scientific research has now proven that trees provide huge benefits to physical, mental and social human health, providing calming and peaceful environments and promoting general well-being. Our trees are a very valuable and essential resource providing multiple benefits to the people of Leicestershire.

In 1994, the government first published 'Sustainable Development, the UK Strategy and Urban Tree Strategies'. This recognised the value of trees and the wide-ranging contribution they make to public well-being and our living environment. Following the publication of A Green Future: Our 25-year plan to improve the environment in 2018 and its objective to achieve 12% tree

cover by 2060, the Government launched the England Trees Action Plan (ETAP), setting out the actions Government and its partners will take to support unprecedented levels of tree planting, creating diverse treescapes across the country which benefit the environment, people and the economy. The ETAP highlights the need to protect and improve our trees and woodlands and connect people with trees so they can enjoy the many benefits they provide.

The development of Tree and Woodland Strategies are key actions to ensure that trees and woodlands are planted and protected. Most authorities have now produced their own tree management strategies and developed management systems to enable them to manage their tree assets.

Leicestershire County Council produced its first Tree Management Strategy in 2008, and this was later revised in 2013 & 2020. The County Council has also established an inventory of trees across its land holdings and the adopted highway network. This further revision of the tree management strategy, along with ongoing work to develop/maintain/widen a tree inventory, outlines the County Council's tree management procedures and policies and, provides a framework to enable the council to sustainably manage its trees in the long term.

Executive summary

The purpose of the Tree Management Strategy is to recognise the importance of the tree resource under the stewardship of the county council and identify standards for its management. This will ensure its long-term conservation and development for the people of Leicestershire and future generations.

The Tree Management Strategy for Leicestershire County Council will:

- provide a framework to establish a healthy, balanced and sustainable tree population capable of withstanding predicted climatic changes and the impact of diseases such as ash dieback
- reduce the risk to the public from potentially hazardous trees
- specify the authority's policy on levels and standards of tree management
- ensure the most efficient use of resources
- increase public awareness of the value of trees in the environment

Trees in Leicestershire

Trees contribute significantly to the character of the county. They provide social, environment aesthetic, ecological and landscape benefits all of which enhance quality of life.

All trees in the county are situated on land affected by human activities. These activities often impact and encroach onto their living environment and therefore some form of management is required during a tree's life span.

Tree management encompasses a range of different activities which:

- ensures the safety of the public
- resolves conflicts between the tree and its immediate environment
- promotes desirable growth characteristics and enhances amenity value
- benefits ecology and wildlife
- maximises the longevity of trees and the benefits they provide

The National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (Leicestershire) compiled by the Forestry Commission in 2002 recorded a tree population of between 5.5 and 6 million.

This is made up of 87% broad-leaved species and 13% coniferous species with 49% of the population being older than 50 years.

Many older mature trees, particularly in rural hedgerows are now in decline and have a limited life expectancy. Dutch elm disease and other disorders have had a significant detrimental effect on the county's landscape, and the impact of these diseases is still evident today. This effect is illustrated in the above census which records a 52% reduction in individual trees in Leicestershire between 1980 and 1998.

The potential adverse effects of climate change and invasive pests and diseases is likely to result in the further decline of some of our common native and naturalised tree species. Over the past two decades there have been a number of invasive pests and diseases introduced into the UK. The most significant of these is ash dieback.

Ash dieback

Since the decline of the elm tree in the late 1970s, the ash has become the most common native tree in Leicestershire. It is the main component of our rural landscapes, being found commonly in woodlands, field hedges and along our road corridors. Much of the ash population is mature, the health of this species has been declining for many years due to a number of factors contributing to a syndrome known as ash decline.

Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) was first reported in Britain in 2012 on imported nursery stock and was first observed in the wider environment in 2013. The disease has now spread extensively across the country, and the advanced effects of the disease are now evident in southern and eastern counties. The disease has been noted in Leicestershire for a number of years and ongoing monitoring is showing that it is now well established in the county's ash population. Ash dieback was first recorded in Europe in 1992 and many countries have now suffered up to 90 percent mortality in their ash trees.

The council is working closely with the Tree Council to support their work on managing the disease nationally.

Ash dieback will present a significant public safety risk on our road corridors and public open spaces and the council's ash dieback action plan will help to address these issues. The long-term effect of ash dieback on the county's rural landscape will, however, be substantial with many areas potentially becoming devoid of mature trees.

To monitor and manage the effects of the disease, Leicestershire County Council developed an action plan to inform and steer the authority's response to managing the disease and decline in our tree stock.

Tree planting

In order to mitigate the effects of the current decline in the county's trees, a substantial and sustained programme of tree planting is essential. Not only will this help to minimise the effect on the county's landscape, it would also contribute to mitigating the effects of climate change and help to achieve many of the objectives outlined in the council's Environment Strategy 2018-2030. A significant change in the character of the county's tree population is inevitable in the short term, before newly planted, young and middle-aged trees develop to maturity and impact fully on the landscape.

The beneficial effect of the National Forest is now very evident and demonstrates what can be achieved through a sustained tree planting programme. Since the impact of Dutch elm disease in the late 1970s, the council has introduced a number of tree planting initiatives and has supported the National Forest converting over 200 hectares of farmland and derelict land within Leicestershire into new woodland.

Since 2021 the Council has stepped up its tree planting initiatives, increasing its offer of free trees for landowners and conservation projects in partnership with organisations such as the Woodland Trust. It is clear however that more needs to be done to increase woodland cover and the number of trees generally across Leicestershire and therefore the County Council launched the Leicestershire Tree Charter in conjunction with the National Forest. The Charter calls for a collective vision and partnership working across Leicestershire to enhance the treescape and identifies three key drivers for action: to support a secure and safe future, to enhance the wellbeing of communities and to facilitate sustainable enterprise.



The council's trees

The county council manages approximately 321,000 trees comprising of individual specimens, tree groups and woodlands. This includes 404 hectares of established woodland on its land holdings.

Percentage breakdown of trees on specific sites are as follows:

- trees on country parks - 37%
- trees on highways - 35%
- trees on county farms - 12%
- trees on schools - 10%
- trees on other properties - 6%

As the highway authority, the county council also has a duty to prevent the stopping up of the highway. The council also has powers to take action in respect of privately owned trees which overhang, or are a danger to, roads or footpaths. Consequently, the council monitors an estimated additional population of 420,000 privately owned trees adjacent to the highway.

The council's tree assets are managed by specialist technical staff with tree works undertaken by operational operational staff and supplemented by an external tree work contractor.

The Tree Management Strategy identifies the major activities and considerations required for the council to effectively manage its tree resource. It considers each activity in detail, identifying the main technical, operational, environmental, social and strategic elements associated with tree management. It identifies appropriate standards for each activity by reference to industry recommendations and codes of practice. Such standards form the basis of the council's tree management policy, which is stated in part 3 of the strategy. Tree management policy details are summarised on the council's website at www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/trees-for-leicestershire/tree-charter-and-our-tree-management-strategy

The Tree Management Strategy also provides a basis for the council to manage its tree resource in the future. An increasing need for new housing and other developments, alongside the expansion of Leicestershire's Road network and the effects of disease and climate change will put increasing pressure on the county's trees. The Tree Management Strategy aims to ensure that the council's tree resource is sustained and enhanced during these challenges, to protect it for future generations.

The management policies and procedures detailed in the tree management strategy accord with all relevant legislation and national codes of practice relating to the management of trees. As such these procedures could apply to any landholding containing trees within Leicestershire. The tree management strategy can therefore be used as a guide for all landowners across Leicestershire and is particularly relevant to any organisations who invite the public and employees onto its land and property as part of everyday business.

i-Tree study and CAVAT assessment

In 2018, a study of the council's trees was commissioned using an internationally recognised tree resource assessment system, i-Tree. This study covered the individually recorded trees across council owned land including schools, highways, etc. but excluded the 404 ha of woodlands on country parks and farmland.

The study calculates and evaluates the benefits the tree population provides in environmental terms.

In addition to the above i-Tree study, the council's individual trees have been assessed to calculate their current amenity value using the CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees) system. This system, developed by the London Tree Officers Association, is now recognised as a principal methodology for evaluating the amenity value of trees and has been used in a number of litigation cases.

The significant findings of these study are as follows:

Leicestershire County Council trees headline figures

Most common species
Ash, Oak and Sycamore
Number of trees assessed **82,599**
Replacement costs **£99,522,000**
Amenity valuation (CAVAT)
£428,678,777
No. of species recorded **277**

Environmental benefits and values

Carbon storage 25,202 tonnes value - £6,007,000	Carbon sequestration 625 tonnes p.a. £149,039 p.a.
Pollution removal 9.25 tonnes p.a. £161,783 p.a.	Water run-off prevention 31,740 m3 p.a. £48,129 p.a.
Total Annual Benefits £358,951	

Carbon storage - Equates to emissions from 19,700 cars/8060 homes

Carbon sequestration - Equates to emissions from 500 cars/134 homes per annum

Pollution removal - Equates to removal of sulphur dioxide from 9560 cars/25 homes and nitrogen dioxide from 298 cars/134 homes per annum

Avoided run-off (flood attenuation) - Preventing 32,000m³ of storm-water entering the sewerage system - value £48K p.a.

The findings of the i-Tree survey demonstrate the environmental and social value of the council's tree asset to the people of Leicestershire and the ongoing benefits they provide. It also highlights the importance the council's trees in light of the government's new Clean Air Strategy and the Public Health Agenda.

The CAVAT survey illustrates the value of the authority's tree asset in financial terms and demonstrates the need for a proactive and sustainable system of management to ensure the asset is maintained and enhanced in the future.

Ecology and trees

Enhancing and conserving biodiversity is a statutory duty and all public authorities are required to actively conserve and enhance biodiversity under the Environment Act 2021. Leicestershire County Council: Operates under the Action for Nature Plan to integrate biodiversity conservation across its landholdings and ensure alignment with nature recovery strategies.

In addition to the multiple environmental benefits trees provide, they are the major components of woodland and forest ecosystems both locally and worldwide. Trees support and host a vast range of flora and fauna. A single oak tree in Britain may host over 280 species of insect and support up to 30 species of birds including nuthatches, woodpeckers, warblers and flycatchers. Additionally, the oak can be associated with up to 300 species of lichen.

Trees also have a wide-ranging association with fungi and, whilst some fungal species are pathogenic, many have a symbiotic relationship with trees. Soil fungi such as mycorrhiza, in particular are vital for the tree's survival and well-being, converting organic matter into nutrients which the tree can absorb. These fungi form complex webs of fungal tissue (i.e. mycelium) in the soil which can transfer nutrients for considerable distances to specific areas of the forest. This highly sensitive fungal network has been termed the 'wood wide web' due to its ability to react to the changes and requirements of the forest eco-system.

Health and wellbeing

Trees provide multiple benefits which can improve health, wellbeing and overall quality of life. These include:

Improving air quality - Trees, woodland and other green infrastructure improve air quality by intercepting up to 24 percent of harmful particulates, which are a contributing factor to respiratory conditions such as asthma.

Reducing stress - Urban residents suffering from stress experience less anxiety when they live in the vicinity of trees. Physical signs of stress such as muscle tension and pulse rate are also measurably reduced when living in green surroundings.

Aiding recovery - Hospital patients with a view of trees and vegetation have been shown to recover more rapidly, and require less pain relief medication than those who are restricted to views of buildings.

Alleviating depression - Taking part in nature-based activities helps people who are suffering from mental ill-health and can contribute to a reduction in levels of anxiety and depression.

Shading us from the sun - Thinning of the protective ozone layer coupled with more extreme weather patterns is being linked to the increase in skin melanomas, the most rapidly increasing form of cancer in the UK. Dappled shade from trees provides a useful barrier to harmful ultra-violet radiation and a 40 percent tree cover can reduce peak temperatures by 6°C.

Encouraging physical activity - Green spaces provide a place to exercise which improves memory and cognitive function. People who use parks and other green spaces are three times more likely to achieve a suitable level of physical activity compared with non-users.

Reducing obesity - Children living in areas with good access to green spaces have been shown to spend less time in front of television screens, computers and smart phones and to have between 11 and 19 percent lower prevalence of obesity compared with children with limited or no access to green spaces.

Bringing people together - Trees and woods can help to promote social integration bringing people together and strengthening communities, thereby reducing loneliness and isolation.

Strategic aims and objectives

The Tree Management Strategy provides the council with a framework to manage its tree assets and to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) Conserve and enhance the tree resource in terms of quality and numbers.
- 2) Promote public safety through appropriately resourced tree inspection and maintenance programmes.
- 3) Fulfil the council's legal obligations as a tree owner by addressing safety and major nuisance issues effectively.
- 4) Inform customers of our legal obligations relating to trees and manage enquiries and expectations appropriately.
- 5) Establish sustainable management programmes for council woodland utilising external funding from central government agencies and other sources.
- 6) Promote and increase the current level of tree planting on public and private land to increase tree cover across the County to enhance biodiversity, address the recent decline of individual trees and mitigate the potential effects of ash dieback and other potentially harmful diseases.
- 7) Promote the role trees and hedges have in climate mitigation and adaptation.



Policy background

Leicestershire County Council's responsibilities

The council as a tree owner has a direct responsibility to ensure that its trees do not pose a danger to the public or property and are managed appropriately.

The National Tree Safety Group (NTSG), a multi-disciplinary body, has produced national guidelines for tree safety management entitled 'Common Sense Risk Management of Trees'. The guidelines are proportionate to the actual risk posed by trees and recognise the benefits trees provide to society and the wider environment. The NTSG guidelines are now recognised as an industry benchmark and have been referred to in a number of recent litigation cases.

All landowners are responsible for trees growing on their property. They should arrange for their trees to be inspected regularly and should maintain an inventory of the trees under their responsibility.

Inspection intervals should be proportionate to the degree of risk posed by trees according to the level of use on each site. Any recommended maintenance work resulting from the inspections should be implemented and recorded. The above measures are a necessary requirement to provide the council with a basis for defence if proceedings were brought as a result of a tree failure.

The council also has a duty of care under the Highways Act 1980 to ensure the safe use of the highway. The Highway Authority must have systems in place which ensure that all roads are inspected at reasonable intervals. Whilst the responsibility for privately owned trees adjacent to the highway lies with the landowner, defective trees may be identified during routine road inspections. As a result, tree owners may be contacted and requested to remove noted hazards.

Public authorities who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England under the strengthened 'biodiversity duty' introduced in the Environment Act 2021. This means that the council must consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity; agree policies and specific objectives based on that consideration & act to deliver those policies and achieve the objectives.

Trees and development

When a Local Planning Authority (LPA) is determining a planning application, trees are regarded as a material consideration and their integration in a new development is guided by the British Standard 5837:2012 'Trees in Relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations'. This standard provides guidance to both planning authorities and developers on the effective retention and integration of existing trees within new development. It has regard to the development potential of the site and to the value of integrating suitable trees. It provides guidelines to ensure that trees are adequately and effectively protected during the construction process.

Where development activities are likely to impact on council owned trees, the above standard should be applied to ensure they are adequately protected.

When it is agreed that a council tree has to be removed as a result of development, adequate compensation will be sought to cover historic maintenance costs, replacements costs and/or the amenity value of the removed tree. The Council will use Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) methodology for valuing its trees in relation to any removal of trees as a result of development. CAVAT is a tool used in the UK to assign a monetary value to amenity trees.

Where the council agrees to adopt trees on highway verges, sufficient space must be provided to accommodate large growing trees adjacent to development in accordance with National House Building Council Chapter 4.2 Building near trees 2018.

Other statutory considerations

A Local Planning Authority (LPA) has power to make new tree preservation orders (TPOs) if a tree has significant amenity value and/or is deemed to be under threat. The law on Tree Preservation Orders is in Part VIII of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended and in the Town and Country Planning (Tree

Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012 which came into force on 6 April 2012. Guidance on the administration and application of TPOs is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework in the Planning Practice Guidance document 'Tree Preservation Orders and Trees in Conservation Areas' - March 2014.

Trees in a conservation area that are not protected by a TPO are protected by the provisions in section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. That provision creates an offence of damaging trees in conservation areas.

Felling trees in woodlands requires a felling licence which is issued by the Forestry Commission under Section 9 of the Forestry Act 1967 (as amended). A licence is required for the felling of growing trees where more than five cubic metres of wood are to be felled in any calendar quarter.

Landscape and ecological considerations

The contribution of trees and woodlands to the county's landscape is addressed in the council's Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy, as amended in 2006. Similarly, the ecological value of trees and woodlands is documented in the Space for

Wildlife - Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Bio-diversity Action Plan, 2016.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that development should provide measurable net gains for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats to compensate for those that have been lost as a result of the proposed development. The Environment Act 2021 states that the development must provide a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain in addition to the baseline habitats recorded on site.

The council, when undertaking management work on its trees, has due regard to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (Amendment) Regulations 2000, which provide protection for bats and nesting birds. All appropriate pre-works checks are carried out to avoid disturbance to protected species and wherever possible works are postponed if bats and nesting birds are present. In such cases specialist advice will be sought.

Veteran trees (defined by Natural England as 'trees which are of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of age, size or condition'), are a valuable and increasingly scarce ecological resource. These should be managed and conserved, wherever possible, to maximise their habitat value and life span.





Trees and climate change

Climate change is one of ‘the greatest long-term challenge facing the world today’. Globally, trees and forest eco-systems play a key role in addressing our changing climate by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, intercepting harmful pollutants, producing oxygen, retaining water and mitigating against flooding.

The changing climate presents a challenge for the management of our trees and woodlands with projected increases in temperature, changes in the seasonality of rainfall, and an increased frequency of extreme events.

On a local level, trees and woodlands have an important role to play in mitigating climate change and it is essential that tree managers sustain and enhance this vital resource.

Trees counter the effects of climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide and other pollutants from the atmosphere and will play an important role in our environment, if temperatures rise as expected. In towns and cities, where temperatures are exacerbated by heat and light reflection from buildings, there will be an increasing need for effective areas of shade. Carefully positioned tree planting can provide effective cooling to buildings, decreasing the need for air cooling. Areas of shade will also be vital adjacent to outdoor facilities such as shopping precincts, roads and pavements, bus stops and car parks. Shade will benefit school playgrounds and the grounds of care establishments, providing a degree of protection to more vulnerable members of the population.

An additional consequence of climate change is the increasing possibility of flash flooding, the devastating effects of which are witnessed regularly around the world. In such cases, the presence of trees and woodlands retain large quantities of water, attenuating run-off and having a stabilising effect on the soil, thereby limiting erosion damage and reducing the possibility of landslides.

Climate change will inevitably have a detrimental effect on the present tree population. Shallow rooting species such as beech and hornbeam often suffer drought stress during hot periods. Trees can recover from drought conditions particularly if they occur as single one-off events, but if such conditions are repeated year on year, they can easily succumb to damage. Increased high winds, particularly when soils are waterlogged, and deciduous trees are in leaf, can have a very damaging effect on the local tree population. Warm summers and milder winters can favour the existence of harmful tree pathogens, which become more prevalent in such conditions.

It is important for tree owners to protect the current tree resource, ensure that it is sustained and where possible expanded. It is also important that those responsible for the management of trees have regard to the effects of climate change, particularly when selecting new trees for planting schemes.

i-tree appraisal and the positive impact of Council managed trees

i-tree is a widely recognised method of evaluating the benefits and values of trees across a large area. Using a combination of science and tools i-tree can establish the financial and environmental benefit of trees and woodlands.

The i-tree appraisal of 82,599 Leicestershire County Council managed trees indicates their benefit in tackling climate change, addressing airborne pollution and managing water run-off.

Carbon storage - 25,202 tonnes,
at a value of £6,007,000

Carbon sequestration - 625 tonnes per year,
at a value of £149,039 annually

Pollution removal - 9.25 tonnes per year,
at a value of £161,783 annually

Water run-off prevention - 31,740m³,
at a value of £48,129 annually

Total Annual Benefit £358,951

Increasing the Council's tree population could then be expected to improve and increase annual benefits in the long-term and as newly planted trees reach maturity.

**Total Annual Benefit of £394,846
if tree cover is increased by 10%**

**Total Annual Benefit of £538,426
if tree cover is increased by 50%**

**Total Annual Benefit of £717,902
if tree cover is increased by 100%**



The need for tree planting

The tree population of Leicestershire changed significantly in the late 1970s when Dutch elm disease accounted for the loss of more than 200,000 mature trees in the county's landscape. An ageing mature tree population and the incidence of other disorders such as ash decline in rural hedgerows have resulted in a continuing decline in our mature trees. The consequences of ash dieback will potentially have a further devastating effect on the county's rural landscape given that a high proportion of remaining hedgerow trees are ash. Additionally, mature trees continue to be lost through residential and commercial development.

Leicestershire County Council supports small scale tree planting through various tree planting initiatives. On Council land larger capital schemes have been implemented. These include several National Forest schemes and intensive landscape schemes on newly constructed roads. A substantial and sustained programme of planting is now required in Leicestershire to address the current long-term decline of our landscape trees and the potentially significant impact of ash dieback.

The County Council will continue to increase its tree planting activities to meet the objectives of the tree management strategy and the target for one million trees for Leicestershire. To ensure that the requisite numbers of trees are available, the Council has developed its own tree nursery, as well as continued engagement with nursery suppliers regarding production methods, stock requirements and availability.

Native, naturalised and non-native trees

The County Council currently plant a wide range of native, naturalised and non-native species. Where practical and appropriate the County Council will favour the use of native and naturalised trees. However, it is accepted that the use of non-native tree species may, on occasion, be required.

A diverse range of tree species and the avoidance of mono-culture planting will help to create a more resilient and robust tree stock, which is then better placed to withstand the predicted impact of climate change. The Council produced the Value of Trees matrix to assist with identifying and specifying trees suitable for a range of planting sites across the County.

Tree nursery

To meet the demands of increased tree planting and to ensure trees are grown to meet the requirements of the Council, a new tree nursery has been developed. Whilst in its infancy the nursery will continue to develop to meet the needs of the Council and its partners. The nursery will have a particular focus on local genotypes and conservation of local trees.

The County Council will also continue to engage with nursery suppliers and explore a range of procurement and partnership options to ensure that sufficient quantities of healthy stock are available each year to support the council's tree planting programme. seed provenance

The Council nursery and any suppliers will be required to grow stock produced from British origin seed sources. With adaptability to climate change in mind, there may be a preference with some species to select seed from European provenance zones. In such cases, demonstrable bio-security measures will have to be in place involving effective quarantine procedures and certification of imported material.

Design and aftercare

The design of new tree planting should ensure that it complements the local landscape character and enhances the immediate environment. Planting density and species selection should be guided by available space to ensure that each tree is compatible with its new site and has every opportunity to develop into a healthy, mature specimen. Appropriate levels of aftercare need to be employed to ensure that the tree can fully establish and develop. A new tree will only reach its potential as a mature specimen if adequate resources are available to maintain it through its life (Ref. BS 8545: 2014. Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape - Recommendations).

National and regional policy

In 2023 the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan set an objective to increase tree canopy and woodland cover in England from the current level of approximately 14.5% of total land area to 16.5% by 2050 and an interim target to increase tree canopy and woodland cover by 0.26% of land area (equivalent to 34,000 hectares) by 31 January 2028.

The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) was published in August 2025. LNRS are a mandatory requirement under the Environment Act 2021. The LNRS brings together landscape scale, multifaceted approaches focused on preserving, conserving and enhancing nature and meeting other environmental objectives such as climate change, flood mitigation and improved air and water quality".

The Environment Act 2021 sets out plans to protect and improve the natural environment in the UK and is one of the key vehicles for delivering the vision set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan. Section 115 of the Act places a duty of local highway authorities in England to consult before felling street trees within certain streets.

In 2018 the Urban Tree Manual was released by The Environment Secretary and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Created by Sir William Worsley, as the government's appointed "Tree Champion", the manual promotes the government's 25-year Environment Plan. This includes influencing and challenging decision makers to commit to planting 1 million urban trees.

In 2013, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs produced a forestry policy statement which sets clear priorities for future policy making relating to woodlands and trees. This document is focused on protecting, improving and sustainably expanding our public and private woodland resource.

In February 2008, Trees in Towns II was published. This document was commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to provide up-to-date information on the national urban tree stock and urban tree management by local authorities. The report recognises that local authority tree management programmes have a vital role to play in promoting the government's agenda for cleaner, greener, safer cities and the development of sustainable communities.

In 2017, the Charter for Trees, Woods and People was produced by a steering group led by the Woodland Trust and incorporating over 70 cross-sector organisations. This again promotes the sustainable management of trees and woodlands and recognises the cultural, social, environmental and economic benefits they provide.

In 2016 the UK Roads Liaison Group produced a new code of practice entitled 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure' to provide guidance to highway authorities on condition, inspection and maintenance procedures, including those applying to trees.





Part 2 – Tree management actions

1. Tree inspection

1.1 Inspection criteria

Appropriate and effective tree inspection procedures should ensure that changes in tree condition are noted and, if necessary, acted upon before the tree becomes hazardous and injury to persons or damage to property occurs. The council's tree inspection procedures take into account a range of criteria including species, age, size, health and condition, location, site usage, hazard risk and landscape and ecological value.

Our tree inspection programme aims to balance the management of trees for public safety with the ecological and landscape value of trees. Both management objectives are important, but the nature and use of each site normally dictates which one should take precedence. Different management prescriptions may therefore be applied depending on the tree's location. When managing trees for public safety reasons, only the minimum work required to remove the danger should be undertaken to ensure that the trees' multiple benefits are retained.

Trees are best inspected when in full leaf, from mid-summer through to autumn, before leaf fall. However, the scale of the council's tree resource dictates that inspections should continue throughout the year.

There are other factors which should be considered when formulating tree inspection procedures. For example, extremes of weather or construction work in a tree's immediate vicinity may necessitate a responsive inspection to monitor the effects on the stability of the tree.



There are other factors which should be considered when formulating tree inspection procedures. For example, extremes of weather or construction work in a tree's immediate vicinity may necessitate a responsive inspection to monitor the effects on the stability of the tree.

1.2 Inspection procedures

1.2.1 The council has adopted tree inspection procedures which provide information to minimise risk to the public and property.

Such procedures are considered reasonable; proportionate to the level of risk at a particular location, recognise the benefits of the trees and are acceptable in legal terms meaning they follow industry recommendations and codes of practice.

1.2.2 In addition to informal observations put forward by members of the public, site officers and other organisations, the county council provides the following two-tier approach to tree inspection:

Basic Inspections - carried out periodically by council staff who regularly frequent sites as part of their routine safety inspections by Highways inspectors. Basic tree inspection training is provided for such staff to ensure a grounding in tree awareness and hazard identification.

Detailed Inspections - carried out by appropriately qualified and knowledgeable arboricultural specialists. Such inspections are carried out at regular intervals which dovetail with the programme of basic inspections and are commensurate with the level of risk identified at a given location.

Detailed inspections will take into account the biological, pathological and bio-mechanical aspects of tree health and stability along with other considerations such as the effects of weather and site disturbance.

1.2.3 The nature and frequency of such inspections have regard to the criteria detailed at 1.1 and the size and distribution of the council's tree assets.

1.2.4 All detailed inspections and resulting maintenance/remedial works carried out are recorded on a dedicated tree asset management system to enable the council to maintain appropriate records relating to tree management.



1.3 Assessment of risk and inspection targeting

The Leicestershire Road Hierarchy produced by the Growth, Environment and Transportation Department is based on levels of traffic use and classifies the county's roads as follows:

- strategic routes
- main distributor roads
- secondary distributor roads
- locally important roads
- all other metalled roads

This provides useful information for targeting priority areas when planning tree inspections and ensuring that procedures are commensurate with the level of risk posed by trees. On other sites such as country parks, areas of high usage are identified (e.g. pedestrian routes, car parks etc) to target tree inspections.

In addition to targeting inspection regimes around the above priority areas, arboricultural officers also note high risk trees as part of detailed cyclical inspections. The assessment of risk is based on a range of data held on the council's tree asset management system which holds current and historic data relating to the authority's trees. This assessment takes into account factors such as age and condition, tree size, species, location and site usage. These trees are flagged and a more frequent inspection cycle is then applied.

The council's tree inspection and maintenance procedures are designed to ensure that:

- i) dangerous trees are identified
- ii) appropriate remedial measures are employed promptly to minimise the risk of injury to persons and/or damage to property
- iii) maintenance works safeguard the life expectancy, ecological value and amenity potential of the council's tree stock
- iv) private tree owners adopt appropriate standards of management

1.4 Privately owned trees adjacent to the highway

The council, as the highway authority, has a duty of care to ensure the safety of the road user. The council carries out a cyclic programme of routine inspections on the road network in Leicestershire. Where obvious hazards are identified on privately owned roadside trees the council would notify the tree owner and ensure that appropriate remedial work is carried out. The tree owner is always urged to carry out the minimum work necessary to remove the hazard.

The council is committed to promoting a responsible approach to tree management, particularly adjacent to the county's highways, and will ensure that:

- i) tree owners will be contacted only if a tree poses a risk of obstructing the highway or endangering the public
- ii) tree owners are advised to adopt best arboricultural practice
- iii) tree owners are advised not to undertake unnecessary work
- iv) tree owners are encouraged to replant when dangerous trees have to be felled

2. Tree maintenance operations



2.1 Identification and generation of work

Tree maintenance work originates from the following internal and external sources:

- a) Programmed detailed inspections by specialist arboricultural staff - as part of the inspection procedures outlined in Section 1.
- b) Ad-hoc inspections by specialist arboricultural staff - as a result of enquiries received from the general public and members relating to tree safety and actionable nuisance issues.
- c) Enquiries from other Leicestershire County Council officers
- d) Reports from the Customer Service Centres
- e) Reports from the Highways Management System (HMS)
- f) Enquiries from other local authorities
- g) Cyclical maintenance (e.g. re-pollarding of street trees)
- h) Emergency Works (e.g. resulting from high winds)

2.2 Tree management priorities

An assessment is made of all incoming enquiries relating to trees before appropriate maintenance work is specified and ordered. Such an assessment takes into account factors such as tree safety implications, risk of potential claims relating to actionable nuisance, proposed remedial work, the effects of any proposals on long term tree health, the nature of the enquiry and the most efficient and cost-effective courses of action. To ensure that current resources are utilised most effectively and work programmes are effectively targeted, the different types of tree enquiry are prioritised in accordance with the following criteria:

Category 1 - Matters of safety where there is an imminent, significant danger to the public and property – i.e. urgent works

Category 2 - Remedial and preventative work which removes potential hazards – i.e. high priority works

Category 3 - Remedial and preventative work which removes potential hazards or annual schedules maintenance – i.e. low priority works

Category 4 - Proactive but non-essential works and works which address minor nuisance.

Works to remove or alleviate a nuisance to property which could potentially cause damage and/or result in action against the council will be placed in the categories above depending on the severity of the issue.

The significance of tree nuisance issues is often dictated by personal perception. For example, an issue of shade to a garden may be regarded as a significant nuisance by one individual and a significant benefit by another. Some nuisance issues may only be effectively resolved by either:

- a) substantial tree work (e.g. heavy crown reductions) which is potentially detrimental to tree health, safety and amenity
- b) tree removal

The council will only consider such issues against the benefits of the tree to the immediate locality, the nature of the enquiry, the significance to the public/property and the extent of potential remedial work.

The prioritisation of incoming enquiries aims to ensure that:

- i) all high priority work identified or requested is undertaken promptly
- ii) existing resources are utilised efficiently and most effectively
- iii) the council respond to appropriate requests for work to be carried out
- iv) council staff are empowered to refuse unreasonable requests to carry out work on trees
- v) the council's tree maintenance operations meet high standards of arboricultural practice (e.g. BS 3998 :2010 Tree Work - Recommendations)

2.3 Duty to consult

The duty to consult on felling street trees ("Duty to Consult") has been introduced to ensure local people can express their views over the proposed management of street trees in their locality. The duty will ensure the decision-making process is more transparent and considers the views of local people. In this respect S115 of the Environment Act 2021 inserted S96A into the Highways Act 1980 to ensure that local highways authorities consult members of the public ("Duty to Consult") before felling any tree on an urban road (a "street tree") pursuant to certain exceptions.

2.4 Procurement

Leicestershire County Council provides tree maintenance contracting services through the following arrangements:

- a) internal team based in Highways Operations undertaking works on the adopted highway network
- b) external tree work contractors undertaking works on Highways, schools, country parks and other county council property
- c) partnership working between the in-house team and the appointed external contractor

Regardless of the source of provision, such arrangements will be periodically scrutinised through market testing and regular procurement to ensure value for money.

3. Standards of work

Modern arboricultural practice

Modern arboricultural practice is based on the most recent scientific research into tree biology, pathology and physiology. This research has concentrated on a number of specific areas including:

- effects of maintenance works on tree biology and functioning
- the tree's response to wounding (i.e. pruning)
- timing of maintenance operations in relation to seasonal fluctuations in tree energy reserves
- structural/mechanical properties of trees

Modern tree maintenance techniques have been formulated to minimise any possible adverse effects on the tree and promote its healthy development.

Perceptions of tree management

Tree maintenance is often judged purely on the visual effect of the work rather than the effects of the work on long term tree health. There is, therefore, sometimes a conflict between good practice and what is perceived as “a good job”. The county council provide advice on tree management and refer members of the public to industry advisory literature, where appropriate.

3.1 Leicestershire County Council specifications

The county council undertakes all tree maintenance work in accordance with its own forestry and arboricultural works specifications. These require a high standard of forestry and arboricultural practice which takes into account the principles of modern arboriculture and embraces the findings of recent and current arboricultural research.

3.2 British Standard 3998: 2010 'Tree work - Recommendations'

The national standard for tree surgery work is defined in British Standard 3998: 2010 'Tree Work - Recommendations'. This standard is regularly quoted by the council and should be the basic standard followed by all tree work contractors.

3.3 British Standard 5837: 2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction' - Recommendations

There is often a conflict between maximising the development potential of a site and retaining existing trees. Consequently, construction activities throughout the country account for the loss of many trees each year. The retention of suitable existing trees is highly desirable, often enhancing the quality of the development and facilitating its integration into the surrounding landscape. It is important to ensure that retained trees and new dwellings exist compatibly, well beyond the completion of the development. If trees are to be retained effectively, measures to protect them need to be thorough and should be understood by all parties involved in the construction process from architect to site operative. B.S. 5837: 2012 forms the basis of advice the council provides to its own planning officers and other planning authorities. The council is committed to promoting best practice when managing and integrating trees in association with new development.



3.4 Highway works and trees

Highway maintenance and improvement works can have a damaging impact on highway and roadside trees. It is often very difficult to accommodate the space required for a tree to be retained within highway improvements because of the linear nature of road corridors.

The council has produced the Leicestershire Highway Design Guide to provide guidelines to developers on highway matters. Information is given at Part 7 Appendix F on the 'Preservation of Trees'. Many trees on or adjacent to highway verges suffer significant damage due to the excavation of trenches to accommodate services and highway drainage. This can seriously impair stability and normal biological function and can have a direct effect on the safety of a tree and the hazard it poses to passing traffic. The appropriate working methods to successfully install a trench through a tree's rooting zone are detailed in the National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) Guidance Volume 4.

The use and storage of road salt can have a significant toxic effect on trees particularly if concentrations leach into the soil within a tree's root system. Road salt should only be stored on highway verges in sealed containers well away from the potential rooting zones of nearby trees.

3.5 Tree planting

The council undertakes all tree planting work in accordance with the relevant section of its own work specifications. These specifications include the following standards:

- i. B.S. 8545: 2014 Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape - Recommendations
- ii. Leicestershire Highway Design Guide – Part 7 Appendix G Landscaping on new developments and in highway-improvement schemes
- iii. The Value of Trees Project report

When designing new native tree planting, the council will specify stock produced from seed collected and grown on the British mainland. Where the primary aim of a new tree planting scheme is to conserve or enhance nature conservation nursery stock should be produced from seed collected from local sources, if such seed is available.

4. Sustainability

4.1 Environmental sustainability

Any tree population, regardless of size and character, should be managed sustainably to conserve or enhance its status. As a minimum standard, any losses should be replaced with at least a one for one basis. Failure to achieve this will result in the decline and deterioration of the tree population. The importance of this principle has been recognised on a global scale because of indiscriminate logging of primary forests in various parts of the world which do not include plans to conserve, protect or regenerate the forest environment. The impact of non-sustainable forest management continues to be a major concern today and consequently, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has been set up as an international non-governmental organisation with the aim of developing an independent system for the certification of timber and timber products from sustainable sources. This provides a market mechanism to reward sustainable forest management and allows consumers of wood products to make a choice and influence the management of forests.

The UK Forestry Standard was published in 1998 and sets out the government's approach to sustainable forestry. This encourages woodland owners to achieve woodland certification in accordance with the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) 2018. This is an independent certification standard for verifying sustainable forest and woodland management in the United Kingdom. The UKWAS standard is currently the central component of the forest certification programme operated in the UK by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Sustainable woodland management plans are now a pre-requisite to obtaining woodland management grants through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, administered by the Forestry Commission. Sustainable management is therefore essential both on a global and local scale and should be adopted by all local authorities responsible for managing both individual tree populations and woodlands.

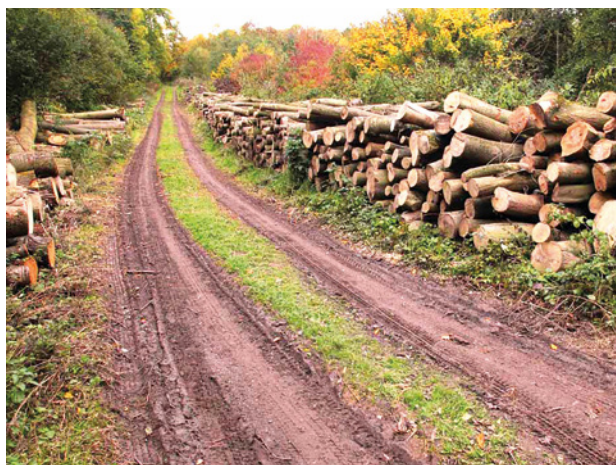
Sustainable systems of management should:

- maintain or enhance the tree population
- facilitate the removal of dangerous or potentially hazardous trees
- promote biodiversity and conserve the tree/forest eco-system
- conserve veteran trees with significant ecological, historical and amenity value
- establish a tree population with a balanced diversity of age-classes
- optimise the use of timber and other products of tree management

4.2 Economic sustainability

Utilisation of timber

The council will continue to maximise the financial value of timber harvested as part of its woodland management operations. All timber harvesting will be part of an approved management plan which will be scrutinised by the Forestry Commission as part of the assessment process when the council applies for felling licences or grants under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. This assessment process will include consultation with district councils and other bodies such as Natural England, when appropriate. The council will also continue to identify a wide range of potential markets to maximise the economic value of its woodlands.



Use and re-cycling of wood waste

The council produces 3 - 5 cubic metres of wood waste each day from its tree surgery and maintenance operations. This equates to an annual total of approximately 1,000 cubic metres (approx. 600 tonnes), 800 cubic metres of which is wood chipped during clearance operations. The remainder takes the form of tree trunks, large logs and tree roots. If this material were to be disposed of at a refuse tip, costs in excess of £30,000 would be incurred each year. These costs are currently saved as the council processes all its wood waste into wood chip and supplies this material as wood fuel.

4.3 Social sustainability

The county council manages its trees and woodlands to provide a positive influence on public well-being and the local community. This can be achieved by the following:

- i) Effective tree inspection/maintenance procedures to maximise public safety
- ii) Well planned tree planting design to maximise landscape benefits, minimise potential conflicts and enhance the local environment
- iii) Careful selection and retention of established trees on new developments to maximise aesthetic benefits and minimise potential conflicts with new residents.

4.4 Bio-security

The council recognises and follows all national guidelines relating to the control and prevention of invasive pathogens which affect tree health. All works recommended and undertaken will have regard to these guidelines and all necessary measure will be implemented to prevent and restrict the spread of such pathogens.

5. Woodland management

Trees in woodland areas have traditionally been, and continue to be, planted at close spacing. This enables the new woodland to dominate surrounding vegetation and establish much quicker. Initially the young trees provide shelter for each other, but eventually start to compete for light, space, soil moisture and nutrients. This triggers a natural selection process where the stronger trees start to dominate. At this point the forester will start thinning works to provide the space for the best trees to continue to develop. If management works are not implemented at this stage, competition between trees forces them to become tall and drawn. This ultimately will cause the trees to become unstable and dangerous, particularly in windy conditions. There is a significant public safety implication if woodlands/plantations are not managed through their life, particular if public access is provided through the woodland or it adjoins an area of high public use for example a plantation on a highway verge.

The council therefore adopts a policy of ongoing management in all its woodland areas. If these woodlands are to be retained in the county's landscape in the long term, such management should include periodic re-stocking in order to accord with the sustainability policy detailed in the sustainability section of this strategy. This form of management will eventually provide a wide diversity of age-structure within the council's woodlands. This will enable the council's tree managers in the future to adopt management systems which provide a high proportion of mature tree cover at any one time.



Perceptions of woodland management

Systems of woodland management are designed to secure the long-term retention of the woodland and enhance its landscape and nature conservation value. These long-term objectives will only be achieved if there is an ongoing programme of woodland management. This may require works which drastically change the appearance of the woodland in the short term. Woodland management works particularly involving harvesting can appear devastating. However, these works are often judged on the initial visual impact of the work rather than its long-term benefits to the woodland.

Highways - There are approximately 10 ha of woodland plantations in highway verges in Leicestershire. Much of these woodland areas are young or semi-mature and are a result of planting initiatives implemented during the last 25 years including verge planting in the National Forest, the Young Persons Forest at Wymeswold and various by-pass schemes. Many of these areas are now in need of thinning to allow retained trees to develop into well formed, stable specimens.

Country Parks - There are 300 ha of established woodland on the council's country parks estate. The country parks maintenance budget provides some funding for woodland management. This is supplemented by grants from relevant organisations such as the Forestry Commission, Countryside Stewardship Scheme and occasionally from timber sales, when there is sufficient demand from the timber market.

Consequently, there is a periodic programme of woodland management on country parks which covers health and safety work, harvesting, thinning, re-stocking and other desirable operations such as coppicing. Much of this work is carried out in accordance with documented management plans, which form part of grant applications to the Forestry Commission and as such, are subject to a thorough consultation process.

Farms - There are 104 ha of woodland on the council's county farms estate. The county farms estate budget provides some funding for tree management which is mostly utilised undertaking health and safety related work on estate trees adjacent to roads.

Schools and other council sites - There are many small, dispersed areas of woodland on schools and other council sites amounting to approximately 15 ha in area. On schools, works may be recommended for woodland areas as part of the on-going inspection programme for schools. In such cases, the costs of any recommended work would be met by the school from devolved budgets. On other sites, woodland management work would be funded from site maintenance budgets held by the managing department such as plantation areas on industrial estates.

6. Tree related subsidence

The incidence of tree related subsidence damage to buildings has increased significantly during the last 30 years. This is partly due to an increased understanding of the complex interactions between the tree, the soil, the building, and more significantly, an increasing litigious approach to these occurrences.

Subsidence damage associated with trees occurs when a tree extracts moisture from a shrinkable soil such as clay, through its root system, causing the clay to shrink and/or subside. If the foundations of a building are constructed on such a soil, subsidence damage can occur to the fabric of the building. When assessing subsidence risk or considering tree related subsidence cases, the following factors are taken into account:

- size and age of tree
- typical water demand
- time of year
- seasonal climatic conditions - (e.g. drought periods)
- type of soil - (e.g. clay)
- reaction to water (i.e. hydrology)
- capacity to shrink/swell (i.e. plasticity)
- age and quality of the building
- depth and type of foundation
- distance from tree to building
- tree/building site history

Cases of alleged subsidence damage implicating trees are often complicated and require a wide range of information to be properly considered.

Case law has established that in managing subsidence risks councils are entitled to take into account the risk of damage, the seriousness of the potential damage, the cost of removing the risk and social value that trees provide.

Trees have a high amenity value and, unless or until there is reason to believe that a particular tree is likely to be causing damage, it is not considered to be reasonable or appropriate to deal with subsidence risks simply by felling healthy trees.

Accordingly, it is not the policy of the council to fell healthy trees on a precautionary basis because they stand in close proximity to residential or commercial property and there is a theoretical risk that they may during their natural lives cause damage to adjacent properties.

Enquiries

The council receives approximately 20 enquiries each year relating specifically to trees and potential damage to adjoining property structures. Each enquiry is followed by a site inspection and when appropriate, preventative tree maintenance may be carried out where the potential for further damage exists. If actual damage to an adjoining property exists which could possibly be associated with a council tree, the property owner is at liberty to submit a formal insurance claim to the council's insurance section.

Insurance claims

At a pre-action stage, the council is obliged to deal with all civil claims in accordance with a practice direction on pre-action conduct and protocol. This practice direction provides a timetable which allows the claim to be investigated and identifies when responses should be given.

In order for each case to be considered, claimants should provide evidence to suggest a linkage between trees and property damage. When evidence indicating subsidence issues likely to be connected with council owned or controlled trees is received, the council's forestry group will visit the site, assess the evidence provided and advise the insurance section accordingly.

Subsidence risk

There has recently been an increasing demand from mortgage lenders, insurance companies and others for standardised assessments of the risk of subsidence damage to structures from nearby trees.

Attempts have been made to produce subsidence risk formulae, but these have been unsuccessful due to the high range of variables, the lack of scientific data and the probability of unnecessary tree loss. The council does, however, refer to industry recognised published data when assessing a likely case of subsidence.

7. Response to emergencies

These are those incidents or defects which, due to their nature, size and/or location, represent an immediate hazard or serious risk to the public.

Emergency incidents/defects, usually reported via the emergency services, will be corrected, or made safe at the time of inspection, if reasonably practicable. In this context, making safe may constitute displaying warning notices, coning-off, fencing-off or closing the highway or other suitable action, to protect the public from the defect.

If the inspection team cannot make safe the incident or defect at the time of inspection, then they will instigate the relevant emergency call procedures to ensure appropriate resources are mobilised to make the incident/defect safe. In some situations, it may be necessary for the inspector to remain on site until the response team arrive and the incident/defect is made safe. These procedures aim to ensure initial attendance to the incident/defect as soon as practicably possible and are given the highest priority.



Call out procedures

During periods of extreme weather, a suitably equipped and skilled tree surgery response team should be available outside working hours to deal with any tree related emergency situations. This enables the council to deal with any incident promptly after it is reported. When weather conditions are severe, a high number of incidences can be reported in a short period of time. In such circumstances, a means of assessing and prioritising work can be extremely beneficial. It may also be too hazardous to deal with some situations during the night and a temporary road closure should therefore be established until conditions allow the clearance work to be undertaken.

8. Review and monitoring

After the introduction of the Tree Management Strategy, the implementation of the specified policies will be regularly monitored to ensure that the objectives of the strategy, detailed in the Executive Summary, are met. Monitoring should consider the appropriateness of each policy to ensure that it maintains appropriate standards of tree care, whilst also considering the needs and concerns of the public. The work the council undertakes in implementing the strategy should raise the council's profile as a tree manager.

There will also be a need to periodically review the strategy itself to take into account the development of the county's tree population, changes in research, work techniques and codes of practice, public opinion on the council's tree management, tree health issues and the progress of climate change. A major review of the strategy will therefore be undertaken every five years.

Part 3 – Tree management policy

The council has adopted the following policy in order to achieve the stated strategic aims and objectives included in the Tree Management Strategy.

Tree inspection

The council's tree inspection programme takes into account the criteria and procedures detailed in Section 1 - 'Actions and Policy'

The county council will target the following tree inspection frequencies:

Trees in the adopted highway

Road Hierarchy Description	Highways Inspectors – Routine Inspections	Tree Inspector – Specialist Inspections
Strategic routes (road hierarchy)	Inspected as part of highway Safety Inspection	Every three years
Main distributor roads (road hierarchy)	Inspected as part of highway Safety Inspection	Every three years
Secondary distributor roads (road hierarchy)	Inspected as part of highway Safety Inspection	Every three years
Locally important roads including residential streets (including towns and villages)	Inspected as part of highway Safety Inspection	Every three years
All other metalled roads rural roads	Inspected as part of highway Safety Inspection	Every six years
High risk trees (i.e. flagged)	Inspected as part of highway Safety Inspection	Every 18 months

Trees on schools, country parks and other council properties

Premises	Basic Inspections	Tree Officer Inspector – Specialist Inspections
Schools		
All trees	Annual basic inspections by School Premises Officers	Every three years
High risk trees	Annual basic inspections	Every 18 months
Country parks		
Highly developed areas	Inspection by Ranger staff based on site zoning	Every three years
Medium developed areas	Inspection by Ranger staff based on site zoning	Every three years
High risk trees	Inspection by Ranger staff based on site zoning	Every 18 months
Adult and young person care premises		
All trees	No formal basic inspections - observations reported by site staff	Every three years
High risk trees	Annual basic inspections	Every 18 months
County farms		
Areas of highest risk (e.g. roadside & premises)	No formal basic inspections - observations reported by tenants	Currently being quantified. Target for a cycle of every three years by 2027
Areas of lowest risk (e.g. internal to farm site)	No formal basic inspections - observations reported by tenants	Every three years
High risk trees	Annual basic inspections	Currently being quantified. Target for a cycle of every 18 months by 2027

Tree maintenance

The council has adopted the following tree maintenance policy which takes into account the following priority issues detailed in Section 2 – ‘Actions and Policy’.

Public safety

The council will undertake all work to remove actual hazards to safeguard the public and property.

Duty to consult

The council will comply with the requirements of S115 of the Environment Act 2021 to consult on felling highway trees with certain exemptions.

Remedial/preventative works

The council will undertake all work which:

- a) remove potential hazards that may subsequently threaten public safety or property
- b) prevent or minimise the effects of a tree on the structure of a property

Management of veteran trees

The council will, where public safety is not compromised, undertake all work which will:

- a) conserves trees with high ecological value
- b) preserves trees with significant local historical and/or aesthetic value

Young tree maintenance

The council will undertake all work which:

- a) assists the establishment of young trees with significant life expectancy
- b) enables new tree planting to reach its full potential

Nuisance management

- i) The council will undertake remedial work where it is considered that its trees are causing an actionable nuisance to a neighbouring property.

For example:

Root/branch encroachment over property boundaries where damage has occurred or is likely to do so imminently.

- ii) When a tree is thought to be causing a nuisance which does not require immediate remedial action, the council will consider appropriate remedial works during the next programmed detailed inspection of that tree.

The county council will not undertake one-off, reactive inspections to deal with minor inconveniences such as:

- shade onto a garden or property
- deposits of seed/leaf/fruit/blossom
- tree is considered 'too large'

- summer honeydew deposits
- droppings from roosting birds
- TV reception interference
- shading of solar panels
- contact with telephone wires
- pollinating insects

The council will aim to undertake works expediently through its procurement arrangements and will execute work in accordance with the following response times relating to the priority categories detailed in paragraph 2.2.

Category 1 - urgent works to be completed as soon as possible within 24 hours

Category 2 - high priority works to be completed within 3 months

Category 3 - low priority or annually programmed works to be completed within 12 months

Category 4 - Pro-active but non-essential works to be completed as budgets allow.

Standards of work

The council has adopted the following policy relating to standards of work to ensure that it achieves high standards of forestry and arboricultural maintenance.

- 1) The council follows the requirements of all appropriate British standards and industry codes of practice relating to tree maintenance and other works which affect trees.
- 2) The council has provided its own work specifications relating to forestry and arboriculture. These are revised and updated, when appropriate, to take into account the findings of current research and advances in modern arboricultural practice.
- 3) The council promotes good tree management practice with the general public, based on the latest research in tree biology, pathology, and biomechanics.



Sustainability

The council will aim to achieve the following sustainability targets:

a) Woodlands

The council will adopt standards of woodland management in all its woodlands commensurate with the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS).

b) Tree planting

- i) The council will, as a minimum standard, replace all individual, non-woodland trees which are felled on a one for one basis on all its sites.
- ii) The council will seek to increase its tree population by implementing appropriate tree planting schemes on suitable sites. Such planting will include landscaping on capital schemes and woodland establishment in target areas such as the National Forest.
- iii) The council will encourage private tree owners to plant new trees and provide replacements when mature trees adjacent to the highway have to be removed for safety reasons.
- iv) The council will continue to support and encourage other authorities and developers to implement well planned tree planting schemes which promote sustainable tree management.

c) Long term maintenance and aftercare

The council will provide appropriate long-term maintenance to new tree planting on its land holdings to ensure that these features reach their full potential in environmental terms and maximise initial investment.

d) Recycling of wood waste and utilisation of timber

The county council shall continue to explore various options relating to the utilisation of timber and the recycling of wood waste. Possible partnerships with other producers will be investigated to identify future viable markets for timber and other by-products of tree maintenance operations.

Woodland management

The county council will manage its woodlands to achieve the following management objectives:

- 1) Produce management plans for all main woodland areas.
- 2) Aim to diversify the age-class of trees within woodlands by adopting a policy of periodic thinning, harvesting and restocking which in the long term will create diverse, uneven aged tree populations.
- 3) Continue to carry out low key operations such as coppicing as part of long term management systems to conserve and enhance the nature conservation value of woodlands.
- 4) Ensure that sufficient funding is available from revenue budgets, external grants and timber sales to ensure that appropriate on-going woodland management can be undertaken on all council woodlands.

Tree related subsidence

When enquiries are made regarding the possibility of subsidence damage, the council will:

- 1) Respond by inspecting the site and perceived damage, liaising directly with the property owner or their specialist representatives and when appropriate, arranging for work to be carried out.
- 2) Deal with all subsidence related insurance claims through its own insurance section in accordance the requirements of the Civil Procedure Rules and associated Pre-Action Protocols.
- 3) Consider subsidence related insurance claims only when sufficient evidence has been provided to accurately assess the legitimacy of the case.

Response to emergencies

- 1) The council will provide a call out procedure to deal with tree related highway emergencies which will involve a tree surgery response team, available during periods when high winds are predicted. The response team will be located to ensure that they can deal with any tree-related emergency in Leicestershire within two hours.
- 2) Enquiries will be prioritised to ensure that high priority situations are dealt with immediately and lower priority situations are dealt with during daylight when working conditions are safer.
- 3) Follow-up inspections will be undertaken by a forestry officer in emergency situations involving personal injury, damage to property or where only part of a tree has failed and the remaining part requires a safety assessment.

Appendices

Appendix A - References

- 1) **Government Forestry and Woodlands Statement -**
A Green Future: Our 25 year plan to improve the Environment
www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan
- 2) **Urban Tree Manual - The Environment Secretary and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**
www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/urban-tree-manual/
- 3) **2013 Forestry Policy Statement - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**
www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-forestry-policy-statement
- 4) **2008 - Trees in Towns II**
https://committeeadmin.lancaster.gov.uk/documents/s21579/Appx2_TreesInTowns.pdf
- 5) **2017 - Charter for Trees**
<https://treecharter.uk/>
- 6) **UK Roads Liaison Group - 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure'**
www.ukroadsliasongroup.org/en/codes/
- 7) **NTSG - Common Sense Risk Management of Trees**
[www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS024.pdf/\\$FILE/FCMS024.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS024.pdf/$FILE/FCMS024.pdf)
- 8) **Space for Wildlife - Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Bio-diversity Action Plan (amended 2016)**
www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2017/1/25/LLR_BAP_Space_for_Wildlife_2016-26
- 9) **Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy**
- 10) **Leicestershire Environment Strategy 2018 - 2030: delivering a better future**
www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/environmental-policies-and-reports
- 11) **Leicestershire County Council's Ash Die-back Action Plan**
www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/tree-for-every-person/ash-dieback-and-other-threats
- 12) **Forestry Commission (England) Biosecurity guidance - August 2012**
www.forestryengland.uk/biosecurity
- 13) **Leicestershire Highways Design Guide**
www.leicestershirehighwaydesignguide.uk
- 14) **Woodland Trust Tree Charter toolkit**
www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/50957/tree-charter-toolkit.pdf

Appendix B - Useful contacts

If you have an enquiry relating to trees, please contact the appropriate section of the County Council as detailed below:

Management of trees on highways, schools and other County Council sites

Forestry and Arboricultural Group
Growth, Environment and Transport Department
Corporate Resources Department

Tel: 0116 305 5000

Email: Forestry@leics.gov.uk

The Forestry Group in the Growth, Environment and Transport Department are responsible for tree management planning, inspection, specification and supervision of works and the provision of technical advice to all LCC Departments, external authorities and the general public

Forestry/arboricultural contracting services

Forestry Section
Leicestershire Operational Highways
Growth, Environment and Transport Department
Tel: 0116 305 7300

The Forestry Contracting Unit in the Growth, Environment and Transport Department are responsible for providing arboricultural contracting services on the highway network

Management of county tree preservation orders and landscape design/management

The Environmental Policy & Strategy team TPOs

Tel: 0116 305 0001

Email: leicestershiretpo@leics.gov.uk

The Environmental Policy & Strategy team are responsible for managing and advising on tree preservation orders.

Document management

The tree management strategy will be reviewed at a maximum frequency of 5 years. Additional reviews may be undertaken to take account of changing circumstances or changes in national policy.

For example, the progress of Ash die back and/or the publication of national tree strategy guidelines may necessitate a revision of the County Council's tree management policy and procedures.

Author	Team	Department	Date Created	Approved by	Target Review Date
Nick Fell	Forestry Group	Corporate Resources	Mar-20		Mar-25
Adam Goodall	Forestry Group	Corporate Resources	Nov-25		Nov-30





CABINET – 21 JULY 2026

**UPDATE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION AND
ESTABLISHMENT OF VOLUNTARY JOINT COMMITTEES**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND THE MONITORING
OFFICER**

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Government's plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (LLR) and to outline proposals and recommendations relating to the establishment of one or more Joint Committees across LLR. The report also seeks authorisation for the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader and the Monitoring Officer, and the Section 151 Officer where financial implications arise, to undertake preparatory and implementation activity associated with the Government's decision on Local Government Reorganisation, including taking such decisions as are necessary to support the establishment and operation of voluntary Joint Committee arrangements.
2. If the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government reaches a decision on LGR for LLR before the Cabinet meeting, this will be the subject of a supplementary report.

Recommendations

3. The Cabinet is recommended to:
 - (a) Note the current position regarding Local Government Reorganisation in LLR;
 - (b) Approve, in principle and subject to similar approvals by the relevant LLR councils, the establishment of one or more voluntary Joint Committees under section 101(5) of the Local Government Act 1972, to support transition planning for Local Government Reorganisation in LLR.;
 - (c) Authorise the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader, the Monitoring Officer and, where financial implications arise, the

Section 151 Officer, to take such steps as are necessary or expedient to support preparatory and implementation activity arising from the Government's decision on Local Government Reorganisation in LLR, including agreeing implementation arrangements, participation in joint committee arrangements, deployment of staff and resources, responding to Government requests, approving transition documentation and making consequential non-material amendments, provided that the exercise of this delegation shall be subject to the Council's Constitution, Financial Procedure Rules and any other relevant legal requirements.

- (d) Authorise the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader and the Monitoring Officer, to approve the terms of reference for the voluntary Joint Committee(s), and to agree any non-material amendments, provided that the terms remain consistent with the purpose and scope set out in this report and do not confer functions beyond those required for transition planning and implementation preparation.
- (e) Authorise the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader and the Monitoring Officer, to nominate representatives, including substitute members, to serve on the voluntary Joint Committee(s), subject to any applicable requirements relating to political balance and the Council's Constitution.
- (f) Note that the exercise of the delegated authority referred to in paragraph 3(c) above shall be undertaken within existing approved budgets and that any additional expenditure, or commitment of resources, shall be subject to the necessary approvals in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.
- (g) Note that whilst the Joint Committee(s) is established by resolution of all current councils in the geography of LLR, on a voluntary basis, upon the enactment of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (Structural Changes) Order 2026/7 the Joint Committee(s) shall become the Joint Committee(s) required to be established under the provisions of that legislation and that this will be constituted and established under the provisions of section 101(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and pursuant to the requirements of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structural Changes Order 2026/7.
- (h) Note that, if and when the anticipated Structural Changes Order is made for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, the voluntary Joint Committee arrangements approved under this report are intended, so far as legally permissible and subject to the terms of that Order, to provide continuity with any statutory joint committee arrangements required by the Order. Any further decisions required to give effect to the Order will be brought forward or taken under existing delegations as appropriate.

- (i) Authorise the Monitoring Officer to make any necessary and consequential amendments, arising from the resolution of Cabinet to the Council's constitution.

(KEY DECISION)

Reasons for Recommendation

- 4. As LLR transitions to new unitary local authorities, all councils remain committed to maintaining openness and transparency with residents and wider partners, which includes regular updates to members on LGR.
- 5. The recommendations in this report support the desire to be well prepared for LGR and the establishment of Shadow Authority/s from May 2027.
- 6. The establishment of voluntary joint committees has been adopted in other areas progressing through Local Government Reorganisation and is regarded as good practice, as it enables preparatory work and transition planning to begin before the relevant Structural Changes Order is in force. They allow direction to be given on the establishment of the new authorities without the Structural Changes Order (SCO) being in place.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

- 7. All local authorities in LLR are being asked to approve similar reports.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

- 8. A letter was received from the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution on 5 February 2025 setting out the formal invitation to develop a proposal for LGR.
- 9. The Cabinet on 25 November approved the County Council's final business case for submission to the Government. The business case was subsequently submitted to the Government before the deadline of 28 November 2025. Leicester City Council also submitted a business case, as did the district councils in Leicestershire and Rutland Council.
- 10. On 24 March 2026 the Cabinet approved the County Council's response to the Government consultation on the three proposals for LGR in LLR.

Resource Implications

- 11. There are no direct financial implications arising from recommendations in this report. Some limited expenditure may be incurred in relation to the administration, servicing and member expenses associated with the voluntary Joint Committee(s). The Chief Finance Officers of the existing councils are discussing how any such costs should be apportioned. Any material financial

implications will be reported through the appropriate decision-making process. The Government is expected to give a grant to each new authority to support with the transition. However, this will not be sufficient to cover all costs.

12. The exercise of delegated authority will be undertaken within existing approved budgets. The delegation is intended to enable preparatory and implementation activity to progress efficiently, including participation in joint committee arrangements, officer support, responding to Government requests and the development of transition documentation. Where any activity gives rise to additional expenditure, requires the commitment of resources beyond existing approved provision, or otherwise requires financial approval under the Council's Financial Procedure Rules, the necessary approvals will be obtained before the expenditure is incurred or commitment entered into.
13. The three proposals submitted to the Government across LLR contained forecasts in relation to the financial implications of LGR in LLR.
14. As the Council transitions through reorganisation and gains more certainty, financial implications will be refined and updated.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

15. This report has been circulated to all members of the Council

Officers to Contact

Jane Moore
 Chief Executive
 Tel: 0116 305 6000
 Email: jane.moore@leics.gov.uk

Fiona McMillan
 Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer
 Tel: 0116 305 2024
 Email: Fiona.mcmillan@leics.gov.uk

PART B

Background

16. Since the submission of the LGR proposals in November 2025 work has been continuing on LGR. The timetable, including for phases which are already complete, is set out below.

2025 – Development and Decision Phase

- **21 March 2025** – Interim proposals submitted to Government.
- **3 June 2025** – Government feedback received on interim submissions.
- **Summer 2025** – Local engagement activity undertaken with residents, stakeholders, and partners.
- **29 October and 10 November 2025** – Final proposal considered by Scrutiny Commission
- **12 November 2025** – Final proposal endorsed by the full County Council.
- **25 November 2025** – Final proposal submitted to Cabinet for approval.
- **28 November 2025** – Deadline for submission of full proposals to Government.

2026 – Government Consideration and Decision

- **Early 2026** – Formal Government consultation on proposals.
- **July 2026** – Government decision on the preferred reorganisation model.
- **Dec 2026** – Draft SCO expected

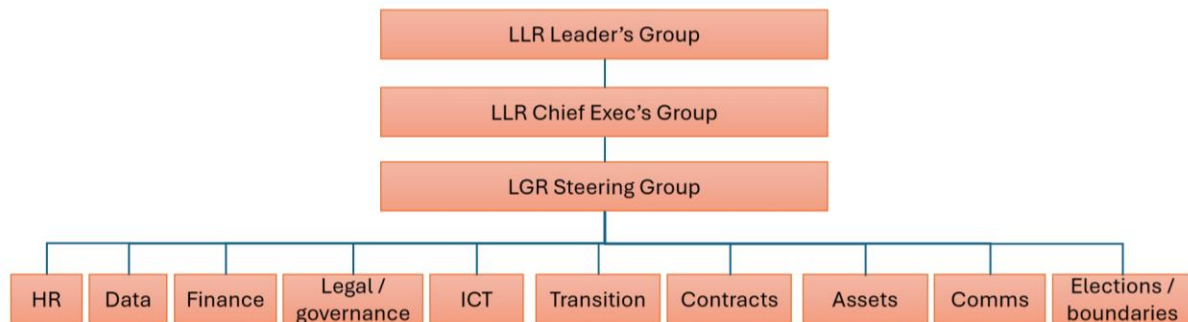
2027 – Transition Arrangements

- **March 2027** – SCO expected to be made
- **May 2027** – ‘Shadow’ councils established to begin transition to new structures.
- **During 2027** – Recruitment to key senior posts within the new authorities.

2028 – Implementation

- **April 2028** – New unitary authorities formally take effect and become operational.

17. During 2026, local authorities across LLR have been focusing on 'no regrets' activities based on work that will be required irrespective of the decision made by Government. This work has been undertaken through the workstream structure outlined below, informed by MHCLG advice and experience from other areas progressing through the current LGR programme. The County Council has representation on all these groups and continues to work collaboratively with partner councils across LLR on the development of transition arrangements. Once the decision has been made by the Secretary of State, workstreams will also be established to oversee service change and transition.



Government Decision and Next Steps

18. At the time of publication of this report, a decision from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to create new unitary local authorities for LLR has not been received, although it is expected to be made in July 2026. If a decision is announced before the Cabinet, the implications of that decision will be reported in a supplementary report.
19. Once the Secretary of State has made his final decision, the proposals for reorganisation will be implemented by way of a Structural Changes Order (SCO), which provides the legal basis for LGR in LLR to happen. The SCO will be subject to the applicable Parliamentary procedure and, if approved and made, will provide for matters such as the set-up of the new unitary authority/s, initially as shadow authority/s, elections to the new shadow authority/s and the responsibilities both the current and successor councils will have in implementing LGR. It also provides for the transfer of statutory functions, property and land, contracts, rights and liabilities and staff. It sets out arrangements relating to finance and council tax such as budgeting, council tax harmonisation and the close down of accounts. Where the Secretary of State considers it necessary, the transition arrangements may be accompanied by a Section 24 Direction controlling significant disposals, contracts and reserve decisions by predecessor councils. This is technically separate from the SCO but closely linked to the reorganisation process
20. The SCO is expected to be laid before Parliament in late 2026 and is anticipated to come into force in March 2027, pending Parliamentary approval.

21. The current composition of all LLR Councils will remain unchanged until April 2028. All councillors will continue to serve in their existing roles throughout this period.
22. Following the Government's decision, transition arrangements will need to be put in place to support implementation of the new unitary authority or authorities. The Government has indicated that transition governance arrangements, which may include one or more Joint Committees, are expected to be provided for in the Structural Changes Order and has encouraged councils to establish voluntary arrangements in advance where appropriate.
23. The voluntary Joint Committee arrangements would provide the governance framework for transition planning and implementation activity. The intention is that, so far as possible, and subject to the eventual terms of the Structural Changes Order, the terms of reference for any voluntary Joint Committee would align with those expected to be contained in the Order, thereby supporting continuity between the voluntary and statutory arrangements.
24. Subject to approval by the constituent councils, the Joint Committee or Joint Committees would oversee the preparation of transition arrangements, including implementation planning and the establishment of appropriate officer support arrangements. The Joint Committee(s) would not take decisions on behalf of any future shadow authority or successor council, and any proposals developed would be subject to consideration by the relevant Shadow Authority or Authorities once established.

Proposal

25. In light of the above, it is proposed that the County Council supports the establishment of such voluntary Joint Committee arrangements as are necessary to facilitate implementation of the Government's decision on Local Government Reorganisation and to enable the Council to influence and support the transition to the new unitary authority or councils for LLR. The voluntary Joint Committee(s) would not exercise functions on behalf of any future unitary authority or shadow authority and would be expected to operate in a way that does not fetter the discretion of any shadow authority once established.
26. Until the Government's decision is announced, the number of new councils, their geography and the corresponding Joint Committee arrangements are not known. It is therefore recommended that the County Council's representatives on any voluntary Joint Committee(s), including substitutes, be determined by the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader and the Monitoring Officer, once the Government's decision and proposed terms of reference are known.
27. Subject to approval by the relevant LLR councils, it is anticipated that the voluntary Joint Committee(s) would be established at the beginning of

October 2026, with first meetings taking place thereafter in line with the agreed LLR implementation timetable.

Other Options Considered

28. The Cabinet may not wish to establish a Joint Committee/s on a voluntary basis and may prefer to wait until the Council is mandated to do so by the SCO. However, this is not recommended as it would reduce the time available for transition planning and could delay the establishment of an agreed governance framework for preparatory work ahead of the statutory arrangements created by the Structural Changes Order. Experience from areas already progressing through LGR indicates that voluntary joint committees assist authorities in maximising the available transition period and provide an established governance framework ahead of the statutory arrangements created through the Structural Changes Order.
29. The Cabinet may also wish to appoint a Joint Committee but on different terms of reference from those expected in the draft SCO. Officers have considered the likely scope of functions in the Structural Changes Order, informed by previous local government reorganisation orders for other areas, and consider that there is no advantage in conferring wider functions at this stage. There is benefit in aligning the voluntary arrangements as closely as possible with the expected statutory arrangements, while preserving flexibility to respond to the final terms of the Order.

Equality Implications

30. The establishment of voluntary Joint Committee arrangements is primarily a governance measure. However, given the scale and potential impact of Local Government Reorganisation, the Council will adopt a strategic approach to equality impact assessment during all programme phases and stages, with more detailed assessments undertaken as specific proposals and implementation decisions are developed.

Human Rights Implications

31. There are no direct human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Any future substantive proposals arising from Local Government Reorganisation will be considered for human rights implications as appropriate.

Background Papers

Report to the Cabinet - 25 November 2025 – “Local Government Reorganisation: Draft Business Case”

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=8321&Ver=4>

Exempt Report to the Cabinet – 24 March 2026 – “Local Government
Reorganisation: Response to Consultation”

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=8305&Ver=4>

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CABINET - 21 JULY 2026

STRATEGIC PLAN (2027 – 2031) CONSULTATION

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, COMMUNITIES,
LAW AND GOVERNANCE**

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval to consult with residents, stakeholders and employees on the key elements of the draft Strategic Plan (2027 – 2031), which is attached as Appendix A to this report.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet
 - (a) Approves the draft Strategic Plan (2027 – 2031), appended to the report, for consultation;
 - (b) Considers a further report at its meeting on 17 November 2026 presenting the outcomes of the consultation and seeking approval for the revised draft Strategic Plan (2027 – 2031) to the County Council for approval.

(KEY DECISION)

Reasons for Recommendation

3. The current Strategic Plan expires at the end of 2026 and therefore a revised draft Plan, covering the period from 2027 – 2031, has been developed.
4. Consultation on the key elements of the draft Strategic Plan (2027 – 2031) will help to ensure that the Council's ambitions for Leicestershire are informed by local insight, reflect community priorities and support effective and deliverable outcomes.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

5. It is intended that the public consultation on the Strategic Plan (2027 – 2031) will begin on 27 July 2026 and close on 9 October 2026.
6. It is intended that the Scrutiny Commission will receive a report as part of the consultation exercise at its meeting on 2 September 2026.
7. A further report detailing the responses to the consultation will be presented to the Cabinet on 17 November 2026. The Strategic Plan (2027 – 2031) will require approval by full Council on 2 December 2026.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

8. The refresh of the Strategic Plan supports the Council's long-term vision for Leicestershire and ensures it reflects current priorities.

Resource Implications

9. The costs associated with undertaking the consultation will be met from within current budgets and using existing consultation and engagement resources and communication channels.
10. The outcomes identified within the Strategic Plan will be delivered within existing resources.
11. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on the contents of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

12. This report will be circulated to all members of the County Council.

Officer(s) to Contact

Mike Sandys, Director of Public Health, Communities, Law and Governance (0116 3054239, mike.sandys@leics.gov.uk)

Rosemary Whitelaw, Head of Service – Governance and Strategy (0116 305 6098, rosemary.whitelaw@leics.gov.uk)

Joanna Morrison, Head of Communications and Digital (0116 305 5850, Joanna.morrison@leics.gov.uk)

PART B

Background

13. The Council's current Strategic Plan was approved in 2022 to cover a four-year period to 2026. The Strategic Plan forms part of the Council's Policy Framework as set out in the Constitution and provides the overarching framework for decision making and service planning.
14. As the current Strategic Plan (2022 – 2026) approaches the end of its lifecycle, the Council has undertaken development of a new Strategic Plan covering 2027 – 2031. A refreshed Strategic Plan provides an opportunity to establish a revised vision, outcomes and priorities that maintains a focus on delivering positive outcomes for Leicestershire residents.
15. A refreshed Strategic Plan (2027 – 2031) has been developed, and consultation of the key elements of the draft Plan is proposed to ensure it is informed by the views of residents and stakeholders before the final Plan is submitted for approval.
16. The draft Strategic Plan (2027 – 2031) brings together a shared vision for the county: a place that is strong and resilient, where communities thrive, the economy grows, and people are supported to live well.
17. The draft Strategic Plan (2027 – 2031) acknowledges that Local Government Reorganisation presents a period of significant change. The Plan aims to provide a clear and stable foundation during that transition, setting out priorities for maintaining strong day-to-day services and ensuring the County continues to be well governed. It maintains a focus on stability and resilience, while supporting the organisation to adapt and prepare for the future.

Consultation

18. The Strategic Plan consultation will take place from 27 July to 9 October 2026, and will provide Members, partners, stakeholders and residents the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Plan. The consultation will seek views on the draft vision, outcomes and priorities.
19. The consultation will target residents, local business leaders, community groups, partners organisations and staff members. It will utilise multiple communication channels, including a webpage, video explainer, media release and social media activity. A survey will be published on the County Council's website, seeking feedback on the vision, outcomes and priorities.

20. Appendix B sets out the proposed questions for the online survey.

Equality Implications

21. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken as part of the development of the Strategic Plan (2027 to 2031). The draft Plan is intended to support positive outcomes for all residents of Leicestershire. The EIA will be considered throughout the consultation.

Human Rights Implications

22. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Background Papers

Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan (2022 – 2026) (previous plan)
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s168909/Appendix%20A%20-%20LCC%20Strategic%20Plan%202022-26.pdf>

Appendices

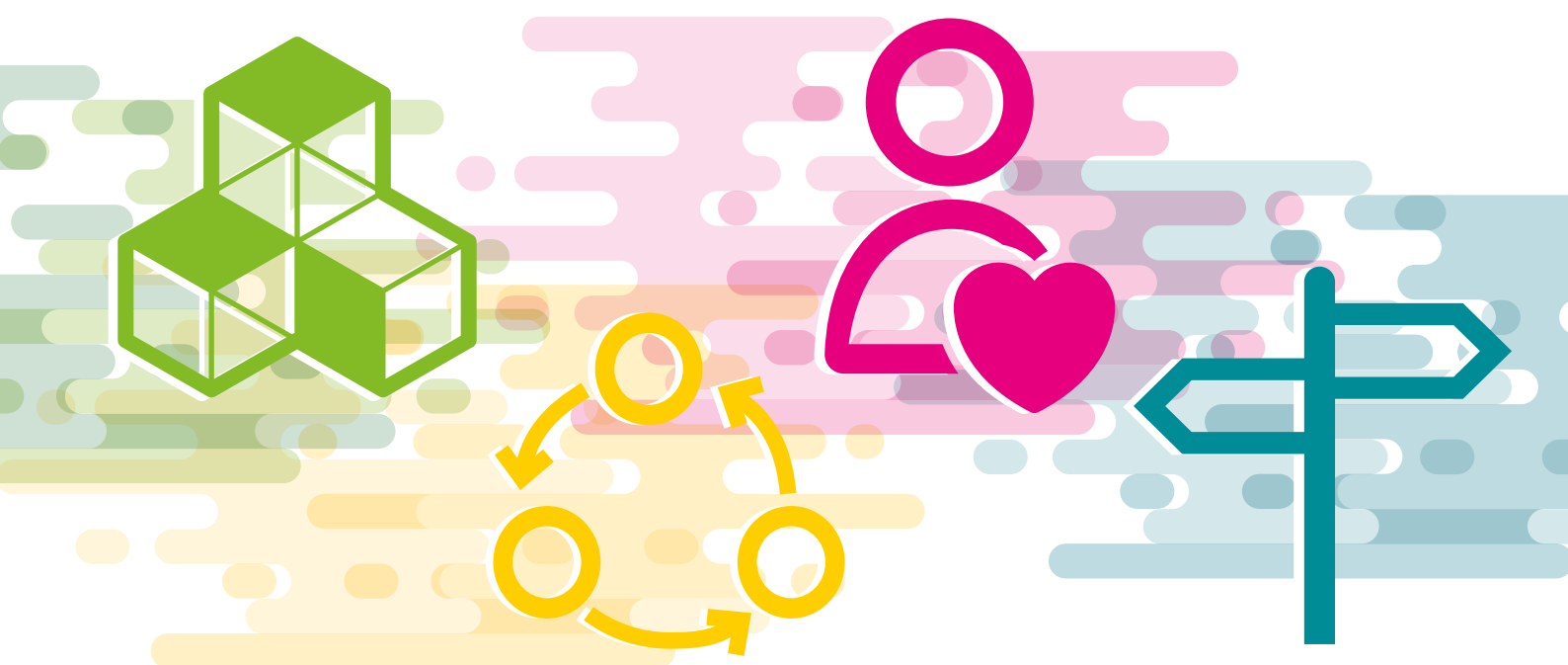
Appendix A: Draft Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan (2027 – 2031)

Appendix B: Strategic Plan (2027 – 2031) Online Survey.

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Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan

2027-2031



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Foreword

A strong and resilient Leicestershire, where people come first and every pound delivers more for residents, communities and the local economy – that’s our goal for Leicestershire and this new plan sets out how we aim to achieve it.

From supporting vulnerable children and adults, to maintaining roads, managing waste, and providing valued cultural and community services, our services support every one of our 700,000 residents. At a time of increasing demand and change across local government, this plan provides a clear focus on the outcomes that matter most and where effort will be prioritised.

We’re committed to delivering high-quality services and making every pound work harder. A focus on innovation, efficiency and strong performance will support delivery, alongside continued work with partners, communities and businesses across Leicestershire.

Local government reorganisation presents a period of significant change. This Strategic Plan provides a clear and stable foundation during that transition, setting out priorities for maintaining strong day-to-day services and ensuring the Council continues to be well governed. It maintains a focus on stability and resilience, while supporting the organisation to adapt and prepare for the future.

This Strategic Plan brings together a shared vision for the county: a place that is strong and resilient, where communities thrive, the economy grows, and people are supported to live well.

I hope you can spend time reading our Strategic Plan and share our vision.



**Councillor
Dan Harrison**
Leader of
Leicestershire
County Council

The Council

over        

300,000

households    



Leicestershire's
**visitor
economy**
is worth

**£2.4
billion**



with a GVA of

£21
billion

Receive
130,000
phone calls a month,
which is
6,500
calls per working day
on average into the Council.



Support around



10,595 and **4,210**

individuals with **long-term needs** with **short-term support.**

The Council
employs
around

5,000

staff



The Council maintains

78 schools

and

16 libraries

across the county.



Challenges and Opportunities

Local government continues to operate in an extremely challenging financial environment following more than a decade of austerity and spending pressures, particularly from social care and special education needs, and more recently from the cost-of-living pressures. There is also significant uncertainty and risk around future funding levels. Leicestershire is no exception, and while we continue to be one of the lowest funded county councils in the country, there is also a growing pressure on services that could create a £91m budget gap by 2029. We know that action is needed to bridge a budget gap and are committed to being innovative in driving down costs. The Better Leicestershire efficiency programme has helped to identify opportunities to close the gap, including a saving of £60m on top of the £44m in the four-year MTFS.

Leicestershire is one of the fastest-growing areas in the UK, with a 9.5% population increase over the last 10 years and a projected rise of 19% by 2045. This growth is placing increasing pressure on key services, including social care, school places and SEND provision, as well as infrastructure such as transport, housing and waste. We will continue to focus on prevention and early intervention to reduce escalation of need, while ensuring that residents who rely on services can access appropriate support. We are taking a proactive approach to managing demand, supporting the sustainability of vital services in the context of continued population growth.

We are working towards local government reorganisation (LGR) in line with the ambitions set out in the English Devolution White Paper. This includes working towards the establishment of a unitary local government structure that will strengthen capacity, improve efficiency and support resilience to financial pressures, while ensuring the Council continues to operate as a safe, lawful and well-governed organisation throughout the transition.

Devolution will enable greater local decision-making powers, freedoms and flexibilities, supporting more responsive and effective service delivery that reflects the needs of residents and communities. We aim to ensure that devolution in Leicestershire delivers improved outcomes, drives economic growth, and strengthens partnerships across the area.

We will continue to engage proactively with government, stakeholders and local communities to ensure that the benefits of local government reorganisation and devolution are realised for all residents.

Our Future for Leicestershire



Our Vision

We lead the way and put our people first. We're strong and resilient, we care, celebrate our heritage, and make every pound work harder for a better Leicestershire.



To achieve this vision, our aspirations are



Better Leicestershire for residents

- We care by supporting people to live well and achieve their full potential



Better Leicestershire for communities

- Leicestershire is safe, connected, and our communities look out for one another



Better Leicestershire economy

- Our economy is innovative and thriving



Better Leicestershire County Council

- We are a forward-looking Council that is efficient, responsive and ready to meet future challenges

1.

Better Leicestershire for residents

This outcome seeks to ensure that people are supported to live well and achieve their full potential at every stage of life. The focus will be on early intervention, prevention, and enabling independence, and prioritising support for children, young people, and families to create strong foundations for the future. This includes ensuring that all children benefit from high-quality early years provision, education, and development opportunities, and that families are equipped to provide safe, stable, and nurturing home environments.

Through collaborative working with partners, needs will be identified earlier to ensure timely, tailored support that reduces escalation of need. Alongside this, wellbeing and independence will be promoted for adults by improving access to preventative services, strengthening community-based support, and enabling people to maintain their independence.

Outcome:

**We care by supporting people to live well
and achieve their full potential**

“ Ensuring families are
equipped to provide safe,
stable, and nurturing
home environments



Our areas of priority:

- We will ensure children have access to good developmental support, childcare and education
- We will provide families with the right support, so children can live in safe and loving homes
- We will give people opportunities to improve their wellbeing and independence

What will success look like?

- More children reach expected developmental milestones and are ready for school, with improved access to childcare and education.
- Children with SEND receive support at the right time and can access an education provision that is most appropriate for their needs.
- More families receive support early, reducing the need for statutory intervention and enabling more children to live in safe, stable homes.
- People are supported with their health and wellbeing, with earlier identification of risks and support provided.
- Overall demand for higher level and crisis services reduces, as needs are identified and addressed earlier

“Residents will be supported to improve their physical and mental health

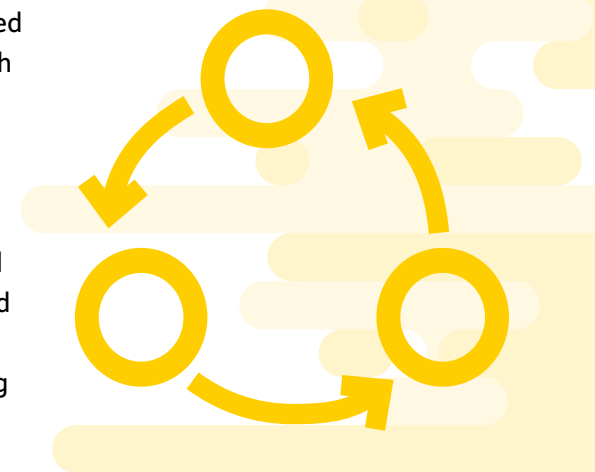


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2.

Better Leicestershire for communities

Leicestershire is a place where people feel safe, supported and connected to one another. Strong and resilient communities will be enabled through partnership working, early support and opportunities for residents to come together and build social connections. This includes recognising and supporting the vital role of our farming community, volunteers and groups who contribute significantly to the county's sustainability and sense of place. Residents will be supported to improve their physical and mental health and given access to opportunities that promote health and active lifestyles. A culture of mutual support will be supported, where people are encouraged to look out for one another, while also protecting and celebrating the county's culture, heritage and environment to strengthen local pride and identity.



Outcome:

Leicestershire is safe, connected and our communities look out for one another

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Our areas of priority:

- We support communities to be safe and resilient
- We bring people together, help them to be healthier, and encourage people to help one another
- We celebrate and preserve the best of our county, protecting our culture, heritage and natural environment.

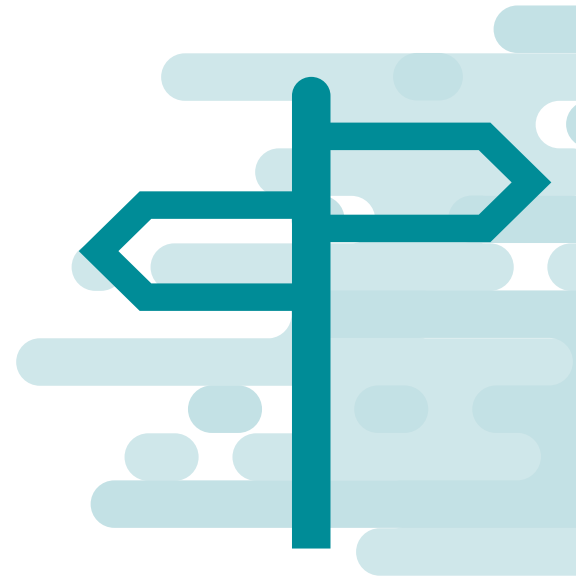
What will success look like?

- Leicestershire's heritage and natural environment are protected and enhanced, so residents and visitors can access and enjoy spaces.
- More people are engaged in volunteering and community activity and there are opportunities to create locally led support networks.
- Increased access to preventative health and wellbeing support, with residents reporting good levels of physical and mental health.

3. Better Leicestershire Economy

This outcome focuses on building an innovative and thriving economy that supports sustainable growth and prosperity across Leicestershire. It emphasises strengthening the county's economic position by attracting investment, enhancing infrastructure, and enabling businesses to grow and succeed.

Leicestershire will be promoted as a competitive place to live, work and invest, supported by modern, resilient infrastructure and strong connectivity. Alongside this, the outcome seeks to develop a skilled workforce and create employment opportunities that respond to the needs of a changing economy. This approach will help to ensure that economic growth benefits communities and contributes to Leicestershire's long-term economic resilience.



Outcome: Our economy is innovative and thriving

Our areas of priority:

- Putting Leicestershire on the map to attract visitors and investment
- Driving growth through modern and fit for purpose infrastructure
- Boosting jobs, support a skilled workforce, and offer a prosperous environment for businesses

What will success look like?

- There is a growth in visitor numbers to key destinations and cultural assets in Leicestershire, supporting local businesses and economy.
- More residents access employment opportunities, and there is closer alignment between skills provision and employer demand.
- Increased delivery of infrastructure improvements that unlock housing and employment opportunities

“ To develop a skilled workforce and create employment opportunities



4.

Better Leicestershire Council

This outcome sets out the Council's ambition to be forward-looking, efficient and responsive, with the capability and resilience to meet future challenges. It reflects a commitment to delivering high-quality, value-for-money services while adapting to a changing local government landscape and increasing demand for services.

Achieving this outcome will require the Council to listen to and act on the needs of its residents, ensuring that services are shaped by meaningful engagement and that feedback is used to drive continuous improvement.

The Council will also need to successfully navigate local government reorganisation, ensuring service continuity and good governance. At the same time, financial sustainability and efficiency will remain a core priority, with a clear focus on maintaining balanced budgets, effective medium-term financial planning and ensuring that resources are used efficiently to deliver strategic priorities.

Outcome:

We are a forward-looking Council that is efficient, responsive and ready to meet future challenges



“Listen to and act on the needs of its residents”

Our areas of priority:

- Listening and Responding to the needs of our residents
- Adapting to local government reorganisation
- Ensuring the Council is financially fit, reliable and make every pound work harder

What will success look like?

- Services are responsive to resident needs, with visible improvements based on feedback.
- Complaints and queries are resolved promptly and effectively
- The Council is well-prepared for local government reorganisation, maintaining service continuity and strong governance.
- The Council continues to operate within a sustainable financial position, with balanced budgets and effective medium-term financial planning.



Supporting Strategies

The Council's Strategic Plan (2027-2031) is enabled by a number of key corporate strategies, including:

- Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2024-2028)
- Adults and Communities Strategy (2025-2029)
- Customer Experience Strategy (2024-2028)
- Environment Strategy (2018-2030)
- Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Growth Strategy (2021-2030)
- Leicestershire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2022-2032)
- Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy (2022-2050)
- Local Transport Plan (LTP4)
- People Strategy (2024-2028)
- Public Health Strategy (2022-2027)



Partner Organisations

Working with Partners is important to the success of the Council's Strategic Plan, as we work to achieve our ambitions for Leicestershire. The Council will continue to collaborate with key partners to achieve shared priorities, strengthen outcomes and ensure effective partnership working across the county.

- Children and Families Partnership
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Integrated Care Board
- Integrated Care Partnership
- Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Leicestershire Safer Communities Strategy Board
- LLR Flood Risk Management Board
- Local Health Resilience Partnership
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy Partnership
- Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership
- Safeguarding Adults Board
- Youth and Justice Management Board
- Local Resilience Partnership

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Delivering the Plan and Monitoring Performance

The outcomes and priorities in the Strategic Plan are delivered through a corporate implementation plan. This ensures clear accountability and coordination across departments. They allow the broader vision of the plan to be broken down into actionable steps, aligning efforts at different departments and services.

Monitoring the Plan is captured through the Council's Annual Delivery Report. This report details the progress made by departments against each strategic outcome over a 12-month period.

The Council's Strategic Planning Framework can be found below.



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Have your say on our Strategic Plan 2027 - 2031

This Strategic Plan (2027–31) sets out the County Council's ambitions and priorities for the coming years, including what it aims to achieve for Leicestershire and how this will be delivered.

The Plan is built around a shared vision and four strategic outcomes, which describe the long-term results to be achieved for residents, communities and places across the county. Each outcome is supported by a set of priorities that will help deliver these ambitions.

The survey below seeks to gather the views of residents, partners and stakeholders on the Council's vision, outcomes and priorities.

Your feedback is important to help ensure the Strategic Plan reflects the needs and priorities of people across Leicestershire.

The closing date for this consultation is midnight 9 October 2026.

Thank you for your assistance. Your views are important to us.

If completing on a phone or tablet do not use the back button on your device as you may lose your response.

Please note: Your responses to the main part of the survey (including your comments) may be released to the general public in full under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Any responses to the questions in the 'About you' section of the questionnaire will be held securely and will not be subject to release under Freedom of Information legislation, nor passed on to any third party. To find out more about how, why and what information we use please visit <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/about-the-council/data-protection-and-privacy>

Your role

Q1 In which role(s) are you responding to this consultation? Please select one option only.

- ☐ I am a Leicestershire resident
- ☐ I am an interested member of the public
- ☐ I represent/own a local business
- ☐ I represent a voluntary and community services (VCS) organisation or social enterprise
- ☐ I represent another stakeholder e.g. district/borough/parish council, health, police, school/education etc.
- ☐ I am an employee of Leicestershire County Council
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Please specify 'other' below

- Q2 If you indicated that you represent an organisation, business, community group, school/other educational establishment, please provide your details.

Routed if they tick that they a representative (options 3~6) in Q1

Name:

Organisation:

- Q3 Are you providing your organisation's official response to the consultation?

Routed if they tick that they a representative (options 3~6) in Q1

☐ Yes

☐ No

Our vision

Our vision below summarises our ambitions for Leicestershire and we believe it puts us on the right path to secure the best possible future for local residents.

"We lead the way and put our people first. We're strong and resilient, we care, celebrate our heritage, and make every pound work harder for a better Leicestershire"

- Q4 To what extent do you agree or disagree with our vision?

Strongly agree

☐

Tend to agree

☐

Neither agree nor disagree

☐

Tend to disagree

☐

Strongly disagree

☐

Don't know

☐

Why do you say this?

Our strategic outcomes

The Strategic Plan is based on four Strategic Outcomes, which outline our aspirations for Leicestershire. We have identified specific priorities we will work towards over the next four years to deliver the outcomes.

The outcomes are set out below:

1. Better Leicestershire for residents - We care by supporting people to live well and achieve their full potential
2. Better Leicestershire for communities - Leicestershire is safe, connected, and our communities look out for one another
3. Better Leicestershire economy - Our economy is innovative and thriving
4. Better Leicestershire County Council - We are a forward-looking Council that is efficient, responsive and ready to meet future challenges

More information on each of our strategic outcomes can be found in the supporting information.

Outcome: Better Leicestershire for residents - We care by supporting people to live well and achieve their full potential

Q5 To what extent do you agree or disagree with this outcome?

Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Why do you say this?

Q6 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following priorities under this outcome?

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Ensuring children have access to good developmental support, childcare and education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Providing families with the right support, so children can live in safe and loving homes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Giving people opportunities to improve their wellbeing and independence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Do you have any comments on the above?

Strongly agree Tend to agree Neither agree nor disagree Tend to disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

--

[illegible]

--

Strongly agree Tend to agree Neither agree nor disagree Tend to disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

--

Q8 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following priorities under this outcome?

[illegible]

Do you have any comments on the above?

[illegible]

Outcome: Better Leicestershire County Council - We are a forward-looking Council that is efficient, responsive and ready to meet future challenges

Q10 To what extent do you agree or disagree with this outcome?

Strongly agree Tend to agree Neither agree nor disagree Tend to disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Why do you say this?

Q9 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following priorities under this outcome?

[illegible]

Do you have any comments on the above? 88

Any other comments

Q7 Is there anything you think we've missed from our Strategic Plan 2027-31?

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Q9 Do you have any other comments about our Strategic Plan 2027-31?

Characters left: left

Thank you for your time. Your views will be considered before the Strategic Plan is finalised.

Data Protection: Personal data supplied on this form will be held on computer and will be used in accordance with current Data Protection Legislation. The information you provide will be used for statistical analysis, management, planning and the provision of services by the county council and its partners. Leicestershire County Council will not share any personal information collected in this survey with its partners. The information will be held in accordance with the council’s records management and retention policy. Information which is not in the ‘About you’ section of the questionnaire may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

**CABINET – 21 JULY 2026****ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2025/26****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the action taken and the performance achieved in respect of the treasury management activities in the final quarter of 2025/26 and the overall position for 2025/26.

Recommendation

2. The Cabinet is asked to note this report.

Reason for Recommendation

3. The Authority's full adoption of the CIPFA Code of Practice for treasury management requires an annual report on Treasury Management activity and performance to be considered by both the Cabinet and the Corporate Governance Committee before the end of September each year.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

4. Under the CIPFA Code of Practice it is necessary to report on treasury management activities undertaken in 2025/26 by the end of September 2026.
5. The Corporate Governance Committee considered the matter at its meeting on 26 June 2026.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

6. The Authority has adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice for treasury management. Treasury management issues are reported to either the Corporate Governance Committee or the Cabinet. Approval of the Annual Treasury Management Strategy remains the responsibility of the full Council which it considers as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) each year.

Resource Implications

7. The interest earned on revenue balances and the interest paid on external debt impact directly onto the resources available to the Council. The budgeted income for interest generated by treasury management activities for 2025/2026 was £12m, excluding the Investing in Leicestershire Programme treasury investments (pooled property, pooled infrastructure, private debt and bank risk sharing investments). The actual interest received from treasury management activities at year end was £16.6m. This overperformance is due to the BoE base rate levels being higher and for longer than forecast, and higher than estimated average cash balances.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert procedure

8. None.

Officers to Contact

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PART B

Background

9. The term treasury management is defined as: -

“The management of the organisation’s investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks”.

10. The Director of Corporate Resources is responsible for carrying out treasury management on behalf of the Council, under guidelines agreed annually by the Council.

Action Taken during Quarter 4 to March 2026

Economic Background

11. The Council’s treasury management adviser, MUFG Pension & Market Services (formerly Link Asset Services), provides a periodic update outlining the global economic outlook and monetary policy positions. An extract from that report is attached as Appendix A to this report. The key points are summarised in the following paragraphs.
12. Like 2024/25, UK inflation has proved stubborn throughout 2025/26. Having started the financial year at 3.5% y/y (April), the CPI measure of inflation peaked at 3.8% from July to September, before dipping to 2.8% in March 2026. The recent upward pressure on energy costs could see CPI inflation reach 4.5% later this year.
13. Against this backdrop and the potentially negative implications for global growth as a consequence of the implementation of US tariff policies, Bank of England Base Rate reductions look limited for the remainder of 2026 (as they do in the euro-zone). The Bank Rate currently stands at 3.75%.
14. Moreover, borrowing has become more expensive in 2025/26. UK gilt yields have risen materially by year end, and into May 2026 to their highest yields this century. Additionally, the public finances have remained under pressure. The higher than expected public net sector borrowing of £14.3bn in February was £2.2bn above last February’s outturn. But that borrowing overshoot was mainly due to timing effects relating to the £13bn government debt interest payments which were the highest payment since June 2025, causing a 12.3% y/y jump in spending. On the flip side, sitting at £8.1bn, tax revenues were also higher than last February, largely on the back of solid growth in self-employment incomes in 2024/25, boosting self-assessment income tax receipts and stronger capital gains tax receipts.

Short Term Investments

15. A summary of movements and key performance indicators (KPIs) in the Council’s investment loan portfolio can be viewed in the table below which details the Annual

Percentage Rate (APR) of the portfolio, the average APR of loans matured, and new loans placed. The table also shows the Weighted Average Maturity (WAM) of the portfolio.

KPIs Loans only:

	Total Loans (£m)	APR (Loans Only)	WAM (Days) ¹	Maturities (£m)	APR Maturities	New Loans (£m)	APR New Loans
Current Qtr	335.6	4.15%	109	41.2	4.10%	31.0	3.85%
Prior Qtr	345.8	4.19%	167	135.8	4.37%	86.2	4.05%
Change	↓ 10.2	↓ 0.04%	↓ 58	↓ 94.6	↓ 0.27%	↓ 55.2	↓ 0.2%

¹WAM excludes Money Market Funds as these have overnight maturity

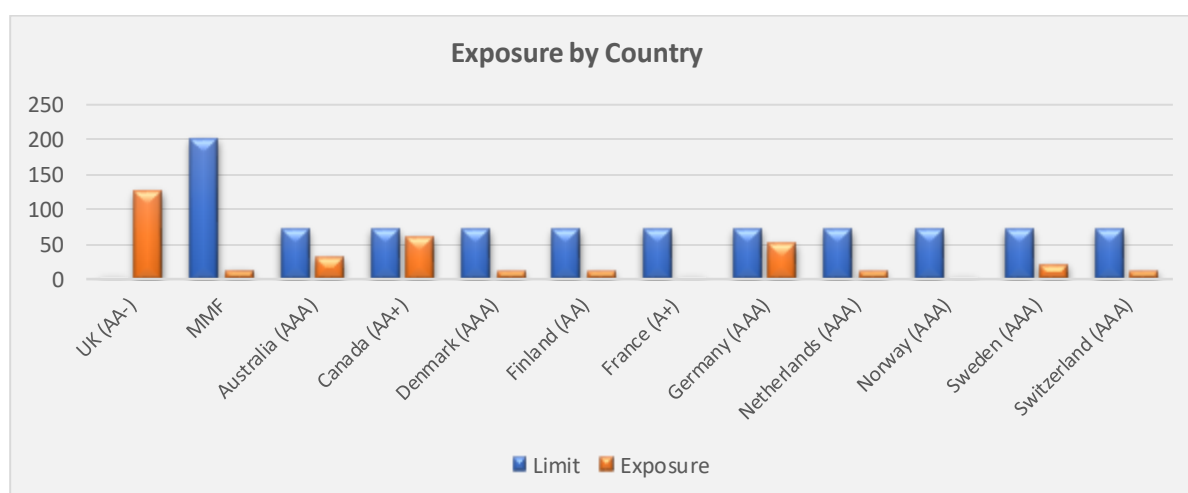
16. The total balance available for short term investment decreased by £10.2m during the quarter.
17. As a result of the falling base rate, the APR on new loans has reduced by 0.04% quarter on quarter.
18. The loans WAM reduced by 58 days quarter on quarter as the County Council retained liquidity to repay PWLB loans.
19. The loan portfolio at the end of March was invested with the counterparties shown in the table below, listed by original investment date:

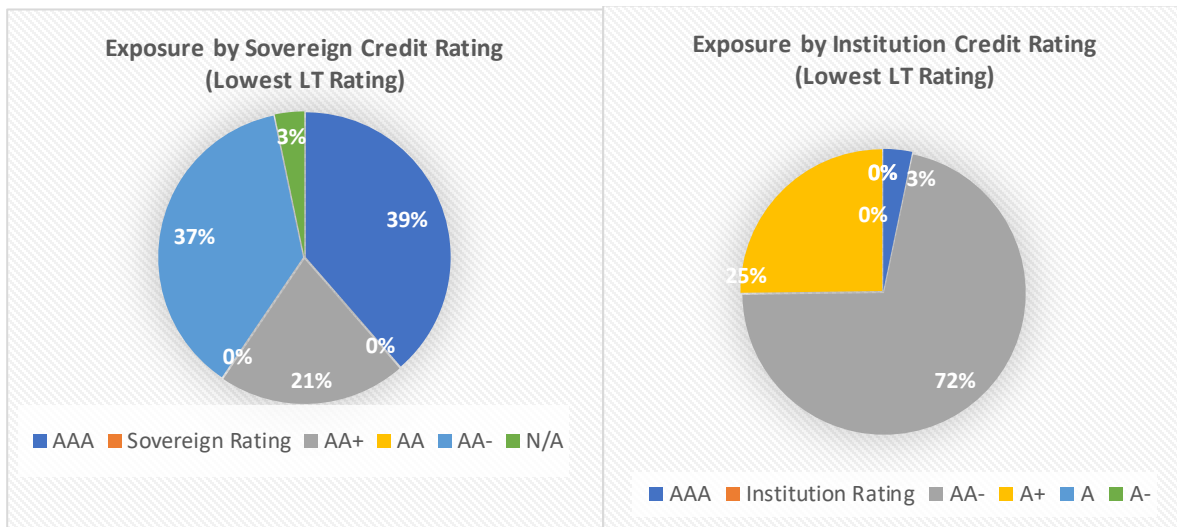
	<u>£m</u>	<u>Maturity Date</u>
Instant Access		
Money Market Funds	11.0	April 2026
6 Months		
Goldman Sachs	15.0	April 2026
12 Months		
Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken AB (SEB)	20.0	April 2026
Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS)	10.0	April 2026
Macquarie Bank	9.6	April 2026
Toronto Dominion Bank	20.0	May 2026
Bank of Montreal	20.0	May 2026
Nordea ABP	10.0	May 2026
Deutsche Zentral (DZ)	20.0	May 2026
Australia & New Zealand Bank	20.0	May 2026
National Westminster Bank Plc	10.0	July 2026
Lloyds Bank Plc	40.0	July 2026
Royal Bank of Canada	20.0	September 2026
National Westminster Bank Plc	10.0	September 2026
Landesbank Hessen Thuringen	10.0	September 2026
Landesbank Baden Wurtember	10.0	October 2026

Landesbank Hessen Thuringen	10.0	October 2026
Lloyds Bank Plc	15.0	October 2026
National Westminster Bank Plc	25.0	October 2026
National Westminster Bank Plc	10.0	February 2027
Cooperative Rabobank UA	10.0	February 2027
Beyond 12 Months but included in short term investments		
Danske Bank [#]	10.0	May 2026
Short term investments total	335.6	
Beyond 12 Months		
Partners Group (Private Debt) 2021	8.8	Estimated 2029
Partners Group (Private Debt) 2023	7.6	Estimated 2030
CRC CRF 5 (Bank Risk Sharing) 2022	8.7	Estimated 2030
CRC CRF 6 (Bank Risk Sharing) 2025	8.8	Estimate 2032
Pooled Property	9.2	Open ended/ Est.2026/27
Pooled Infrastructure	8.8	Open ended fund
TOTAL PORTFOLIO BALANCE:	387.5	
31 March 2026		

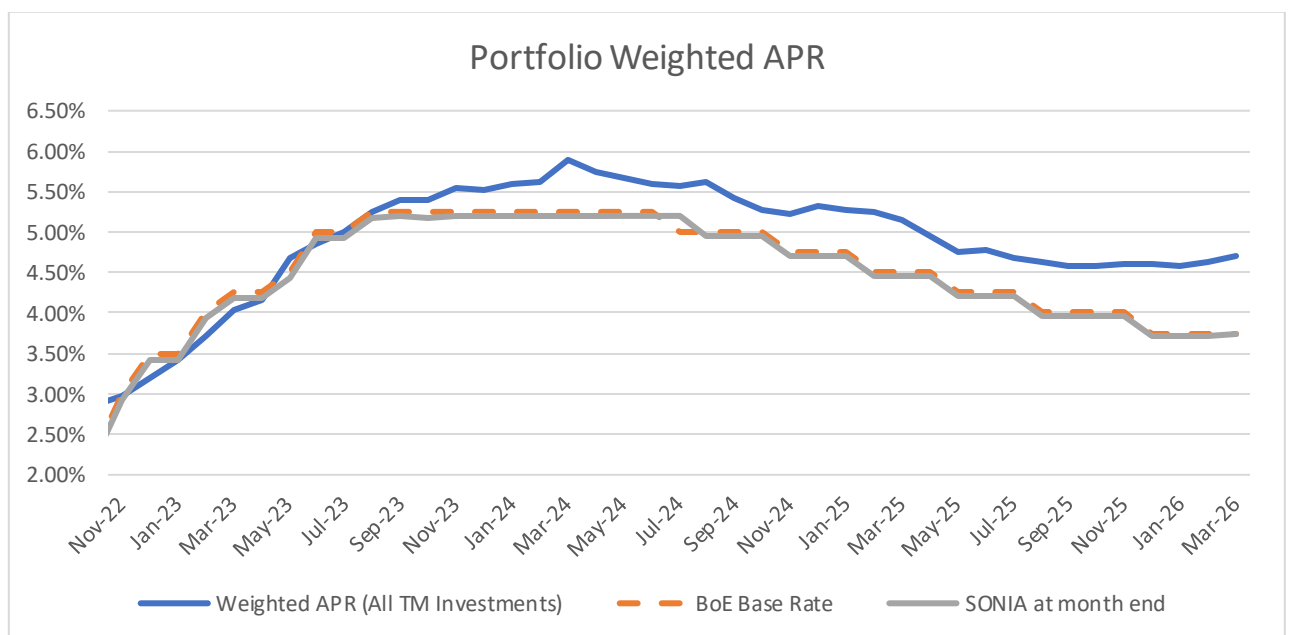
[#]Danske Bank loan is included in short term investments for reporting in the tables above as the interest fixing is every six months.

20. The graphs below show the exposure of the short-term investments by country, sovereign rating and institution rating:





21. These graphs provide an indication of the Council's exposure to credit risk but it should be noted that long term credit rating is just one of the components used to determine the list of acceptable counterparties; short-term ratings, ratings outlook, rating watches, credit default swap movements (the cost of insuring against a default) and general economic conditions are also factored into the counterparty list.
22. The loan portfolio weighted APR decreased from 4.19% in Quarter 3 to 4.15% Quarter 4. This is due to reductions in the rates available in the market, in anticipation (at the time) of reductions to the Bank of England (BoE) base rate. The chart below shows the weighted APR achieved by the treasury portfolio compared to the BoE base rate and the Sterling Overnight Index Average (SONIA) rate – the primary risk free reference rate for sterling markets. This highlights that following the base rate increases to August 2023, the weighted APR of the portfolio has since achieved a higher return in every month that followed. Most investments within the portfolio are on a fixed interest basis so changes in base rate do not immediately have a material impact on the APR achieved.



Investments Beyond 12 Months

23. The table below provides an overview of the investments made that were beyond 12 months when placed. This shows the current capital invested within each fund. The table also shows the Net Asset Value (NAV) and Internal Rate of Return (IRR) for each fund.

	As at end of Q4				During Qtr	
	Capital invested (remaining) (£m)	NAV (£m)	IRR (Since Incep'n)	Total Income Rec'd (£m)	Capital Repaid (£m)	Income (£m)
<u>Private Debt</u>						
2021 MAC VI	8.8	10.1	6.85%	-3.3	-0.4	-0.2
2023 MAC VII	7.6	8.6	8.30%	-0.3	-0.9	-0.3
<u>Bank Risk Share</u>						
2022 CRC CFR 5	8.7	8.9	12.57%	-6.3	-1.4	-0.3
2025 CRC CRF 6	8.8	8.9	12.66%	-0.3	-0.9	-0.3
<u>Pooled Property</u>						
2015-19 Hermes, DTZ, Lothbury, Threadneedle	9.2	7.8	2.2%	-7.9	-0.1	-0.1
<u>Pooled Infrastructure</u>						
2023 JPM Infra	8.8	9.2	6.94%	-1.6	-	-0.1
Total	51.9	53.5		-19.7	-3.7	-1.3

24. The Council received distributions from the MAC VI fund during the quarter comprising a return on invested capital of £437,000 and £163,000 income.
25. The Partners MAC VII is a relatively new fund that was calling capital until September 2025. During Q4 2025/26 the Council received capital repayments of £904,000 and £333,000 income.
26. Distributions from the Christofferson Robb and Company's (CRC) Capital Relief Fund 5 (CRF 5) were received during the quarter; £1.4m return on invested capital and £283,000 income. In addition, distributions from the CRC CRF 6 fund were also received of £872,000 return on invested capital and £338,000 income.
27. Four UK commercial Pooled Property funds were committed to between 2015 and 2019. Two of the funds, Hermes and Lothbury have now been liquidated, following large investors requesting redemptions. The liquidations come at a time when property prices have fallen as interest rates rose through 2022 and 2023. During 2025/26 the final returns of capital were received which resulted in the Council recognising a loss on capital of £0.5m as at 31 March 2026. This has been funded through a charge against reserves. However, it should be noted that the Council has received over £4.7m in income from these two funds over the time of the investment.

28. The pooled infrastructure investment with JP Morgan is a globally diversified product investing in largely developed infrastructure. The commitment to this fund in 2022 was for £8.8m which was called by JP Morgan in January 2023. The fund pays regular quarterly distributions.

Loans to Counterparties that breached authorised lending list

29. During quarter 4 2025/26 there were no loans which breached the authorised lending list.

External Debt Repaid

30. During quarter 4, gilt yields, which underpin PWLB rates, rose to new 20+ year highs sufficient to consider further longer-term debt rescheduling opportunities. After consultation with the Council's Treasury Management advisors a decision was taken to repay the following loans (based on the discount rate achievable on the repayment):

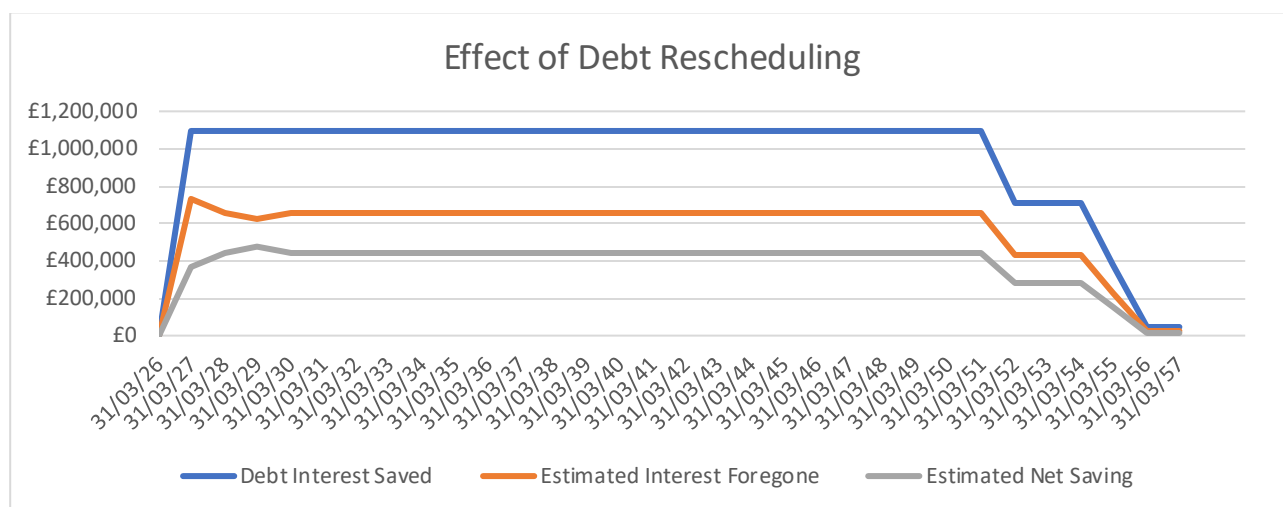
		Start Date	Maturity	Principle	Interest Rate	Interest PA	Premium/ (discount)	Premature repayment rate	Repayment Date
476844	PWLB	21/12/1995	13/12/2050	4,836,500	7.88%	380,874	1,534,134	5.51%	31/03/2026
479773	PWLB	07/08/1997	31/07/2053	4,836,500	6.88%	332,509	919,425	5.52%	31/03/2026
479772	PWLB	07/08/1997	31/07/2054	4,836,500	6.88%	332,509	933,617	5.52%	31/03/2026
480371	PWLB	29/12/1997	13/12/2056	567,057	6.25%	35,441	60,908	5.52%	31/03/2026
480372	PWLB	29/12/1997	13/12/2056	206,783	6.25%	12,924	22,213	5.52%	31/03/2026
				15,283,340	7.16%	1,094,258	3,470,298		

31. Repaying the above loans resulted in a premium of £3.5m, overall there was still a projected net saving to the authority to repay these loans early. This is because the effective rate of saving achieved (7.16%) significantly exceeds MUFG's forecast long-term earning rate (3.50%) per the table below.

Average earnings in each year	Now %	Previously %
2026/27	3.90	3.40
2027/28	3.50	3.30
2028/29	3.30	3.30
2029/30	3.50	3.50
Years 6-10	3.50	3.50
Years 10+	3.50	3.50

32. By repaying external loans the Council will save nearly £1m pa in fixed interest payments. However, with lower cash balances there will be a reduction on the interest that can be earned. The graph below shows the estimated net benefit to the authority over the remaining life of the loans.
33. The Council's actual level of external debt at 31st March 2026 was £130m, the lowest level for over 20 years. Compared with the capital financing requirement (CFR - the level of historic capital expenditure required to be funded) the Council was forecast to

be £63m under borrowed as at 31 March 2026, which can be funded using internal investment balances rather than more expensive external borrowing. Part of Treasury Management activities is to manage this position – i.e. the forecasting of cash balances and the amount required to finance the CFR.



Treasury Management 2025/26

34. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2025/26 was approved by the Cabinet and the Council in February 2025 as part of the MTFSS.
35. The Council is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council's risk appetite, prioritising security, liquidity and investment return in that order of importance.
36. The second main function of treasury management is the funding of the Council's capital programme. The capital programme sets out the borrowing need of the Council and the longer-term cash flow planning, to ensure that it can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans or using longer-term cash flow surpluses. It will also, when it is prudent and economic to do so, restructure existing long-term debt to reduce risk or costs.
37. The TMSS includes the Annual Investment Strategy and Investment Policy. The Council's investment policy has regard to the following:
 - Government Guidance on Local Government Investments
 - CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes 2021 ("the Code")
 - CIPFA Treasury Management Guidance Notes 2021.
38. The Council's investment priorities are security first, portfolio liquidity second and then yield. The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security, liquidity, inflation

expectations and with regard to the Council's risk appetite. The above guidance places a high priority on the management of risk. The Council's policy in respect of deciding which counterparties are acceptable has always been stringent. In broad terms the list of acceptable counterparties uses the list produced by the Council's treasury management advisors.

39. During the year all outstanding loans were repaid on time with the interest due.
40. In 2016 it was agreed that any counterparty that was downgraded whilst a loan was active, and where the unexpired period of the loan, or the amount on loan, would then breach the limit at which a new loan could be made to that counterparty, this would be included in the appropriate quarterly treasury management report to the Corporate Governance Committee. There were no breaches during 2025/2026.
41. Investment returns have steadily reduced throughout 2025/26 as interest rates and prospects for future interest had reduced. Starting in April 2025 at 4.5%, the BoE base rate moved down in stepped increases of 0.25%, reaching 3.75% by March 2026. MUFG Pension & Market Services latest forecasts advise that rates will remain at 3.75% until summer 2027.
42. The Council has taken a cautious approach to investing and is fully appreciative of changes to regulatory requirements for financial institutions in terms of additional capital and liquidity that came about in the aftermath of the Financial Crisis of 2008/9. These requirements have provided a far stronger basis for financial institutions, with annual stress tests by regulators evidencing how institutions are now far more able to cope with extreme stressed market and economic conditions. Nonetheless caution still needs to be exercised and the council continues to monitor credit ratings and watches on a daily basis and confirm the counterparty list before any new loans are placed.
43. The strategy and decisions relating to the Council's long term investments (those greater than 12 months) are managed through the Council's Investing in Leicestershire Programme (liLP) and are reported regularly to the Cabinet.

Debt Position at 31 March 2026

44. On the debt portfolio, no new loans were taken out in 2025/26. A total of £44.5m was repaid in the year, comprising:
 - £44.0m Early repayment of PWLB debt on favourable terms
 - £0.5m PWLB equal instalment of principal loans (EIP)
45. The Council's external debt position at the beginning and end of the year was as follows: -

	31 March 2025			31 March 2026		
	Principal	Average Rate	Average Life	Principal	Average Rate	Average Life
Fixed Rate Funding - PWLB	£81.5m	7.78%	26 yrs	£37.0m	8.39%	20 yrs
Variable Rate Funding: - Market (1)	£ 93.5m	4.41%	38 yrs	£ 93.5m	4.41%	37 yrs
Total Debt	£175.0m	5.98%	32 yrs	£130.5m	5.54%	32 yrs

(1) These lenders have an option to increase the rates payable on these loans on certain pre-set dates, and if they exercise this option the Council can either repay or accept the higher rate.

46. The Authority has not raised any new external loans since August 2010. The most recent MTFS capital programme, for 2026-2030, includes a funding requirement of £65m to be funded from prudential borrowing. However, due to the strength of the County Council's balance sheet, it is expected to be possible to use internal balances to fund this on a temporary basis instead of raising new loans.

Investment Position at 31st March 2026

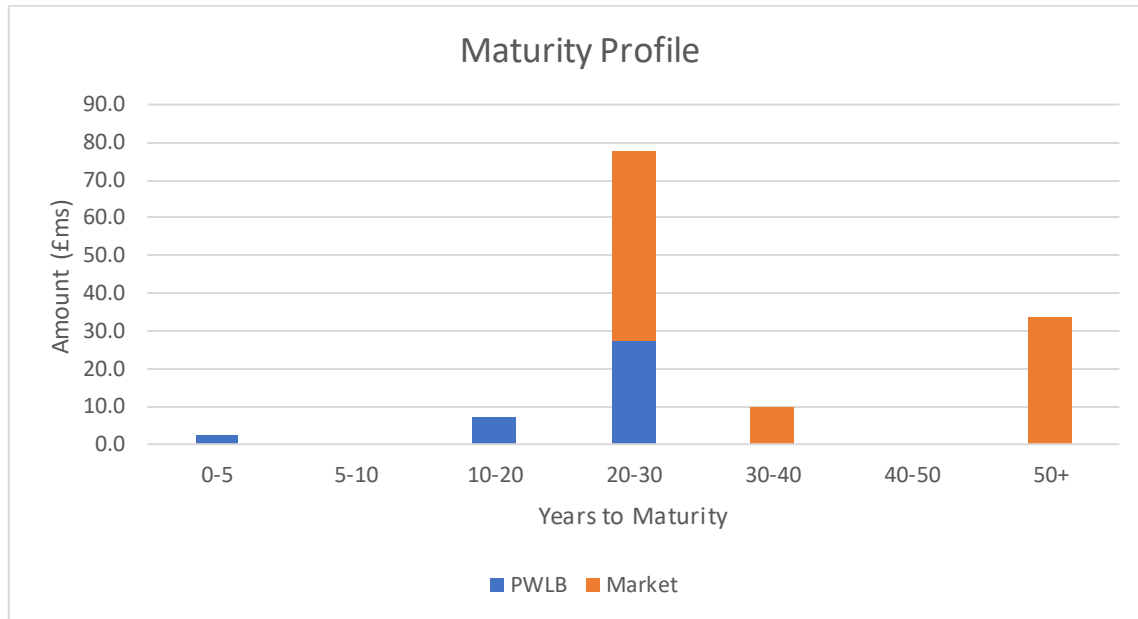
47. The position in respect of investments varies throughout the year due to the large inflows and outflows of cash that occur. Over the course of the year the loan portfolio varied between £387m and £477m and averaged £439m. Investments as at 31 March 2026 were £387.5m.

Debt Transactions

48. The Council began the financial year £22m under borrowed (actual debt) compared with the CFR - the amount required to fund the historic capital programme. This means that the Council is internally funding the difference from its cash balances – called internal borrowing – which is often at a lower cost than what it would incur on external loans. For example, current investment returns on Treasury Management balances are around 4% compared to a 30 year external loan interest rate of more than 6%. Managing this position is a key activity of the Treasury Management team.
49. At the end of the financial year, after the repayment of two tranches of external debt, in September 2025 and March 2026, and setting aside funding for the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) of £4.1m (to ensure that loans raised to finance capital expenditure are paid off over the longer term) the Council was £63m under-borrowed. With cash balances of £388m this position can be managed.
50. During the year, there were two favourable opportunities to reduce the Council's debt portfolio, as reported in quarterly treasury management updates. These opportunities

arose due to the prevailing economic conditions at the time of repayment, with Gilt yields (which underpin PWLB rates) remaining at levels sufficient to consider long term debt rescheduling opportunities. The total debt repaid was £44.5m, all of which related to PWLB. At the end of the financial year, the debt portfolio stood at £130.5m with an average pool rate of 5.54%, as shown in the table above.

51. The maturity profile of the Council's external debt portfolio is shown in the chart below. This illustrates the long-term nature of the historic debt.



Investments

52. The overall investment portfolio produced an average return of 4.69% in 2025/2026, compared to an average base rate of 4.04% and a Sterling Overnight Index Average (SONIA) of 4.01% published daily by the BoE. The SONIA rate is based on actual transactions and reflects the average of the interest rates that banks pay to borrow sterling overnight from other financial institutions and other institutional investors. It is therefore a good proxy for the risk-free rate of investing surplus cash.
53. The loan portfolio has outperformed both the average base rate and the average SONIA in four of the last five years. The average rate of interest earned on the portfolio in the last five years is 3.49% which compares favourably to average base rate and the SONIA which have reported returns of 3.3% and 3.26% respectively.
54. The variability of balances makes it difficult to calculate the excess interest that the over performance has achieved over the whole of the five-year period, but it is estimated to be at least £4.5m.
55. The above paragraphs exclude investments greater than one year – those relating to private debt, bank risk sharing, pooled property and pooled investments which are managed as part of the liLP. The capital value of these investments as at 31st March 2026 was £53.4m compared with the principal invested held of £51.9m, a £1.5m unrealised gain. In addition to the capital valuation since inception (December 2015)

the Council has received interest payments totalling £23.6m from these investments and the current performance as measured by the internal rate of return is 4.88%.

Compliance with Prudential and Treasury Indicators

56. The Council is required to set and keep under review prudential and treasury indicators to ensure that the Council's capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable. Appendix B compares the indicators with those set and agreed by the Council at its budget meeting in February 2025. These are all within the limits set except for the 'actual capital financing costs as a percentage of net revenue stream' indicator – the increase is due to premiums on the early repayment of debt, reducing future interest costs, explained earlier in the report.

Resource Implications

57. The interest earned on revenue balances and the interest paid on external debt impact directly onto the resources available to the Council. The budgeted income for interest generated by treasury management activities for 2025/2026 was £12m, excluding the liLP treasury investments (pooled property, pooled infrastructure, private debt and bank risk sharing investments). The actual interest received from treasury management activities at year end was £16.6m. This overperformance is due to the BoE base rate levels being higher and for longer than forecast, and higher than estimated average cash balances.
58. Average balances remain strong due to earmarked reserves, the latest phasing of spend on the capital programme and government grants received in advance. Such a significant level of interest is unlikely to be sustainably achieved in the medium to long term though given the market expectation of intertest rate reductions and as reserves are used to fund the MTFS and the capital programme.

Summary

59. Treasury Management is an integral part of the Council's overall finances, and the performance of this area is very important. Whilst individual years obviously matter, performance is best viewed on a medium to long term basis. The action taken in respect of the debt portfolio in recent years has been extremely beneficial and has resulted in significant savings. Short term gains might, on occasions, be sacrificed for longer term certainty and stability.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

60. There are no equality or human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Background Papers

Report to County Council on 19 February 2025 – 'Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2025/26 - 2028/29. Appendix N, 'TMS 2025-26:

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/g7391/Public%20reports%20pack%20Wednesday%2019-Feb-2025%2014.00%20County%20Council.pdf?T=10>

Appendices

Appendix A – Economic Update from MUFG Pension & Market Services

Appendix B – Prudential and Treasury Indicators

The Economy and Interest Rates (From MUFG Corporate Markets: Annual Treasury Management Review 2025/26)

UK Economy

As with 2024/25, UK inflation has proved somewhat stubborn throughout 2025/26. Having started the financial year at 3.5% y/y (April), the CPI measure of inflation peaked at 3.8% from July to September, before dipping to 3% in January and February. Core inflation picked up to 3.2% in February, from 3.1%, and the recent upward pressure on energy costs could see CPI inflation breach 4.5% later this year.

Against this backdrop, the continued lack of progress in ending the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the potentially negative implications for global growth as a consequence of the implementation of US tariff policies, Bank Rate reductions look limited for the remainder of 2026 (as they do in the euro-zone). Bank Rate currently stands at 3.75%.

Moreover, borrowing has becoming more expensive in 2025/26. Gilt yields have risen materially in March 2026, more than reversing the falls earlier in the financial year. Additionally, the public finances have remained under pressure. The higher-than-expected public net sector borrowing of £14.3bn in February was £2.2bn above last February's outturn. But that borrowing overshoot was mainly due to timing effects relating to the £13.0bn government debt interest payment. That came in as the highest payment since June 2025, causing a 12.3% y/y jump in spending. On the flip side, sitting at £8.1bn, tax revenues were also higher than last February, largely on the back of solid growth in self-employment incomes in 2024/25, boosting self-assessment income tax receipts and stronger capital gains tax receipts.

However, the combination of some energy price support and pressures from higher inflation amid the ongoing energy price shock, higher interest rates and a weaker economy will ultimately put borrowing on an upward trend. With the rise in energy prices possibly pushing the Retail Prices Index inflation up to a peak of 5.7%, debt interest repayments will increase by about £10bn. A weaker growth profile, higher inflation, higher interest rates and gilt yields could erode about £11bn of the Chancellor's £23.6bn headroom.

The loosening in the labour market continues to bear down on wage growth. The 3myy growth rate of average earnings including bonuses slowed from 4.2% in December to 3.9% in January. Meanwhile, excluding bonuses, private earnings growth continued to fall from 3.4% to 3.3%.

The table below provides a snapshot of the conundrum facing central banks: inflation pressures remain, labour markets are still relatively tight by historical comparisons, and central banks are also having to react to a fundamental re-ordering of economic and defence policies driven largely by the US administration.

	UK	Eurozone	US
Bank Rate	3.75%	2.0%	3.5%-3.75%
GDP	0.1%q/q Q4 (1.0%y/y)	+0.2%q/q Q4 (1.2%y/y)	0.7% Q4 Annualised
Inflation	3.0%y/y (Feb)	1.9%y/y (Feb)	2.4%y/y (Feb)
Unemployment Rate	5.2% (Jan)	6.2% (Jan)	4.4% (Feb)

The Bank of England sprung no surprises in their March meeting, leaving Bank Rate unchanged at 3.75% by a vote of 9-0, but suggesting rates may need to rise if inflation picks up markedly. The vote could best be described as moderately hawkish. The MPC stated it "stands ready to act as necessary" and "is alert to the increased risk of domestic inflationary pressures through second-round effects in wage and price-setting". Even so, we suspect the committee is likely to put equal weight on higher inflation and weaker

Appendix A

growth, particularly the poor macroeconomic backdrop prior to the energy shock, keeping interest rates at 3.75% this year.

10-year Gilt yields have been exceptionally volatile in the final weeks of 2025/26, troughing at around 4.23% in late February before shooting up to 5.00% (and well through that on an intraday basis). That spike was driven by the outbreak of war in the Middle East, which prompted a dramatic reassessment of investors' Bank of England policy rate expectations. Having been pricing in rate cuts in late-February, as many as four rate *hikes* were discounted by late-March. The 10-year yield ended the quarter at 4.92% with around 65bp of rate hikes priced in over the coming year. In addition to more hawkish monetary policy expectations, part of this increase in yields probably reflected an increase in term premia amid concerns that the government may react by loosening the fiscal purse strings.

As for equity markets, the FTSE 100 experienced another volatile quarter, surging to an all-time high of around 10,900 in late February, leaving it up 10% from the start of 2026, before giving back most of those gains in March after the outbreak of the Middle East conflict. That pullback leaves the index at around 10,176 at the end of the quarter. For context it was at 8,582 at the start of April. The £ has stayed relatively resilient also at \$1.33, strengthening from \$1.29 back in April.

US Economy

Despite a weak finish to 2025, the US economy has generally been the strongest among the developed economies, but with uncertainties growing surrounding President Trump's central economic tenet of being able to apply tariffs on an ad-hoc basis, and bend the FOMC Fed Funds rate decision-making to his will, there is something of a stalemate in place at present over when, and if, rates will be cut further in 2026.

Inflation is currently stuck at around 2.5%, unemployment is only a little above 4%, and tax refunds are in the process of being facilitated for many households. But will those refunds be – at least partially – offset by higher gasoline prices?

The S&P500 started April 2025 at 5,633 and finished March 2026 at 6,528 having peaked at just over 7,000. The 10-year Treasury yield finished March at 4.30% having been 4.17% back at the start of April, and during the year has been both above 4.50% and below 4.00%.

EZ Economy

The Eurozone economy has run pretty much in parallel with that of the UK. A slightly stronger finish to 2025 (GDP of 0.2% q/q) than that of the UK cannot hide the fact that the economy has been negatively impacted by German economic stagnation until late in 2025. France has also struggled against a difficult political backdrop, but managed to post GDP growth of 0.3% q/q for October to December.

With Eurozone headline inflation close to 2%, the ECB has been able to reduce its Deposit Rate to 2%. Whether it rises from that low point will very much be driven by how energy prices trend over the coming months. The Euro has appreciated against the dollar from 1.08 at the start of April 2025 to 1.16 at the end of March.

APPENDIX B**PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2025/26**

	Original Indicator 2025/26	Provisional Actual as at 31/03/2026
Capital Expenditure (including Schools devolved formula capital)	£164m	£140m
Capital Financing Requirement	£196m	£193m
Actual Capital Financing Costs as a % of Net Revenue Stream	2.2%	2.6%
Net income from commercial activities as a % of net revenue stream	1%	1%
Operational Limit for External Debt	£207m	£207m
Authorised Limit for External Debt	£217m	£217m
Liability Benchmark – Gross loans requirement	£-186m	£-211m
Actual debt as at 31/3/2026 (£000's)	£176m	£130m

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**CABINET – 21 JULY 2026****BELONGING IN EDUCATION STRATEGY 2026-2029****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to present the outcomes of a six-week public consultation on the Belonging in Education Strategy 2026-2029 and seek approval for the final Strategy (attached as Appendix A to this report), which has been updated to reflect stakeholder feedback.

Recommendations

2. The Cabinet is recommended to:
 - (a) Note the outcomes of the public consultation on the Belonging in Education Strategy 2026–2029;
 - (b) Approve the final Belonging in Education Strategy 2026–2029, as set out in Appendix A.

(KEY DECISION)

Reasons for Recommendation

3. The Strategy establishes a robust strategic framework designed to align all related policies, practices, and education improvement initiatives. It articulates clear aims and objectives for educational leaders and the broader Children's Partnership across Leicestershire to enhance outcomes for all children and young people. This Strategy has been developed collaboratively with stakeholders since the beginning of the academic year, with much of the strategic direction and themes also reflected in the recently published White Paper, 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving'.
4. The consultation findings demonstrate broad support for the strategic priorities, alongside clear feedback on the need for greater clarity on delivery, strengthened inclusion for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and a stronger emphasis on the voice of

children, young people and families. The final Strategy has been updated to reflect these findings.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

5. School leaders have coproduced the Strategy with the County Council and provided detailed feedback, which has been incorporated into the final version in Appendix A.
6. Health colleagues and representation from parent/carer forums have also had the opportunity to have early sight of the Strategy and provide feedback which has been incorporated.
7. Following the Cabinet's approval in March 2026, a six-week consultation was held on the Belonging in Education Strategy between 22 April and 3 June 2026.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

8. One of the primary pieces of legislation regarding children and young people is the Children and Families Act 2014. This sets out the duties that local authorities and Integrated Care Boards must fulfil.
9. A key interdependency for the Strategy is improvements in attendance rates for all pupils. This aligns with the statutory guidance 'Working together to Improve School Attendance' (August 2024).
10. The Alternative Provision Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (February 2025) establishes a statutory framework for children and young people accessing alternative provision. Those participating in alternative provision will be identified as a distinct group within the Belonging in Education Strategy cohort.
11. In February 2026, the Department for Education published the Education Reform White Paper, 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving', which aligns with the strategic vision of this Strategy and the department. In Every Child Achieving and Thriving, belonging is a key strategic theme:
 - A core condition for learning and achievement
 - A key indicator of system health
 - A justice issue, especially for disadvantaged and SEND pupils
 - Something schools must actively build, measure and improve
 - Central to the government's vision of inclusive, high performing education.
12. On 3 March 2026, the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the delivery of the Building Education Services Together Plan, to improve the service offer.

13. The Cabinet, on 17 June 2025, approved the SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2025-2028, after a consultation period. Both the SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2025-2028 and the draft Belonging in Education Strategy 2026-2029 are aimed at providing the framework for additional support.

Resource Implications

14. The Strategy will be implemented within existing resources, supplemented by additional reform grant funding provided by the Department for Education Reform Grant, to support the implementation of the published White Paper – Every Child Achieving and Thriving.
15. The Assistant Director of Law and Governance and the Director of Corporate Resources have been consulted on this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

16. This report has been circulated to all Members of the County Council.

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PART B

Background

17. The Belonging in Education Strategy 2026 to 2029 sets out the education vision and priorities for the County Council and its partners for children and young people aged 0-18 and 19-25 for those young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in Leicestershire.
18. This Strategy provides the strategic framework and direction for the Education system within Leicestershire between 2026-2029. The Strategy has been developed in consultation with local area partners, parents and carers.
19. The Strategy sets out a shared commitment for the Children's Partnership to work together to ensure all children and young people feel a sense of belonging in their educational setting and in implementing the Government's White Paper. Like all authorities, the County Council continues to face increasing demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), with attendance continuing to be an issue, alongside suspensions and exclusions, in line with national figures. The Strategy will provide a strong strategic vision and framework to address these issues, with 'Belonging' as the key driver. The Strategy has a focus on how partners can work together to better meet the needs of all children and young people, adapt to the natural variability of children and young people and help them feel a sense of belonging.
20. The actions and activity identified within the Strategy will be implemented within existing resources, supplemented by any additional reform grant funding provided by the Department for Education Reform Grant, to support the implementation of the Government's published White Paper – Every Child Achieving and Thriving.
21. Through co-production, the Strategy identifies four key priority areas over the next three years. These are:
 - **Priority one** – Every Child and Young Person has a sense of belonging in the Education setting they attend
 - **Priority two** – Building Relationships as Foundations
 - **Priority three** – Schools and professionals ensure children and young people feel autonomy and the authors of their own life stories.
 - **Priority four** – Schools feel equipped to support, especially when a sense of belonging breaks down and can reach out for appropriate external support, when needed.
22. Implementation of the Strategy will be monitored by the 'Building Education Services Together' Programme Board and, once established, the 'SEND Reform Implementation Board'. These will jointly report to the Children and Families Partnership, which comprises of the Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Family Services and representatives from the Council's Children and Family Services, Adults and Communities, and Public Health Departments, the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Integrated

Commissioning Board, the Leicestershire Partnership Trust, Special, Primary and Secondary Schools, Further Education and the Leicestershire Parent Carer Forum.

23. The Strategy is supported by a comprehensive work plan that specifies deliverables, outcomes for each priority area, and key implementation roles. Progress will be monitored through a robust performance management framework and reported into the governing boards outlined above. Reviews of progress against the deliverables and outcomes for each priority area will be undertaken regularly. Subsequent reports will be made to the Children and Families Partnership.
24. Progress in implementing the Strategy will be communicated to key partners through existing feedback routes. Feedback from parents/carers and children/young people will be sought on an on-going basis.
25. All service areas within the Education, Inclusion and Additional Needs are aligned to the new Strategy and strategic direction outlined, ensuring future development work adheres to this.

Consultation

26. A six-week public consultation on the draft Belonging in Education Strategy 2026–2029 was undertaken between 22 April 2026 and 3 June 2026. The consultation was conducted primarily through an online survey, with accessible versions available on request.
27. A total of 24 responses were received. Respondents included parents/carers (54%), school staff (29%), Leicestershire County Council staff (13%) and others (including a childminder).
28. There was strong overall support for the four strategic priorities:
 - (a) Priority 1 (Belonging): 21 of 24 respondents agreed or strongly agreed.
 - (b) Priority 2 (Relationships): 22 of 24 respondents agreed or strongly agreed.
 - (c) Priority 3 (Autonomy): majority agreement, though more mixed views.
 - (d) Priority 4 (Support systems): 18 of 24 respondents agreed or strongly agreed.
29. Overall, 15 of 24 respondents felt the Strategy reflected needs well (very/fairly well), while 6 felt it did not (not very/not at all well), and 2 were unsure.
30. There was strong support for the concept of Belonging. Respondents widely agreed that belonging is critical to wellbeing, attendance and outcomes. However, feedback highlighted that “belonging” needs to be clearly defined and experienced positively, not just assumed.
31. Amongst the responses, there was a strong consensus that trusted relationships between staff, children and families are essential, but there were

some concerns that were raised about inconsistent staffing, time pressures, and lack of capacity to build relationships in schools.

32. While respondents supported the principle of children having autonomy, feedback highlighted the perceptions of inflexible systems and curriculum; concerns about over-emphasis on attendance and the need for more personalised approaches.
33. There were some concerns raised on whether schools feel equipped. Although the priority was supported, many respondents felt schools are not currently equipped to deliver this consistently. The key issues that were noted included access to specialist support, workforce capacity, and variation in how inclusive practice is applied.
34. Significant feedback highlighted concerns about the suitability of mainstream provision for some children with SEND, the need for specialist expertise, environments and resources and pressures on schools and families where needs are not met. This does reflect parent carer community concerns over the national direction of travel, as laid out in the SEND Reforms: putting children and young people first.
35. A consistent theme was that priorities, particularly 1–3, were viewed as high-level and lacking clarity on implementation, accountability, resources and funding. Priority 4 was seen as stronger where it included more practical delivery detail.
36. Respondents highlighted the need for stronger and ongoing involvement of children, young people and parents in design, governance and monitoring of impact.
37. In response to consultation feedback, the Strategy has been strengthened to:
 - (a) clarify expectations and delivery across all four priorities
 - (b) strengthen focus on inclusion, particularly for children and young people with SEND
 - (c) emphasise relational practice and consistency across settings
 - (d) include clearer expectations for partnership working and external support
 - (e) reinforce the role of children, young people and parent/carers voice in ongoing governance and implementation
38. Consultation feedback highlighted the importance of ensuring sufficient capacity, workforce development and access to specialist support to deliver the Strategy effectively. These considerations will be addressed through the detailed implementation plan.

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

39. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive an update report at its meeting on 1 September 2026.

Equality Implications

40. The development of the Strategy will have a positive impact on equality, diversity, and inclusion for people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and more widely. Improvements to partner services will support all children and young people in Leicestershire to thrive and feel a sense of belonging in the educational provision that they attend. This Strategy aims to deliver the Council's vision for all children to thrive, fulfil their potential, belong, and live their best lives within their communities. Improvements to service provision should also benefit the parents, carers and families of children and young people in Leicestershire.
41. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed on the Strategy and consultation approach and is attached as Appendix B to this report. It concluded that the Strategy would have a positive impact for all protected groups and other communities which are of special interest to the Council.

Human Rights Implications

42. The EIA concluded that the continued work of the Partnership would benefit all protected groups and is expected to have a positive impact.

Other Implications and Impact Assessments

43. The partnership implications of the refreshed Strategy are set out in paragraphs 18-19 and 22-24 of this report.

Background Papers

[Report to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 03 March 2026 Building Education Services Together: Programme Plan](#)

[Report to Cabinet on 24 March 2026 Belonging In Education Strategy 2026-2029](#)

Appendices

Appendix A – Belonging in Education Strategy 2026-2029
 Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment
 Appendix C – Belonging Strategy Consultation Summary

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Leicestershire's Belonging in Education Strategy

Leicestershire is a place where children can build strong foundations; be safe and belong, enjoy and achieve



2026-2029



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Statement of Intent

In Leicestershire, partners work together to ensure a shared and explicit commitment to belonging across all education settings.

All children and young people, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and additional vulnerabilities, will feel a strong and sustained sense of belonging in education so they can live their best lives.

This strategy sets clear expectations for schools, partners and the Local Authority to consistently deliver inclusive, relational practice and to be accountable for impact. It establishes a shared framework for how we work together to ensure every child and young person is seen, heard, valued and supported.

Forward

Every day in Leicestershire, I see the extraordinary potential within our children and young people. Their curiosity, courage, and resilience remind us why education matters—not just as a pathway to achievement, but as a place where identity, confidence and hope are shaped. It is this belief in possibility that underpins *Leicestershire's Belonging in Education Strategy 2026–2029*.

Belonging is powerful. When a child truly feels they belong—when they are seen, heard, valued and celebrated—everything changes. They take risks. They grow in confidence. They learn with greater purpose. They form relationships that anchor them through challenge. And they begin to imagine futures that feel within reach. Belonging is not a “nice to have”; it is the foundation on which lives are built.

This strategy represents a shared vision for a county where every child and young person has that foundation. It calls us to be bold, compassionate and united in our commitment to inclusion. It asks us to listen deeply to our children—because their voices show us the way. And it challenges us to work differently across schools, families, services and communities, so that no young person ever feels alone or overlooked within their educational journey.

What inspires me most is that this strategy is not built from theory alone, but from the hearts, experiences and contributions of those who know our system best—children and young people, parent carers, educators, and partners from across Leicestershire. It is a collective promise to stand with our children and young people, especially when they face barriers, and to create environments that lift them up rather than hold them back.

Together, we have the opportunity to shape an education system where belonging is woven into every interaction, every decision, every classroom and every relationship. A system where children walk through the school gates knowing: *This is a place for me. I matter here. I can be myself here. I can thrive here.*

My hope is that this strategy ignites our shared purpose and reminds us of the difference we can make—one child, one family, one school community at a time. Thank you to every partner who has contributed to its development and who continues to work tirelessly for our children and young people.



Let us move forward with ambition, compassion and unwavering belief in what is possible for the children of Leicestershire. Because when we do, belonging stops being an aspiration and becomes a lived, powerful reality - ensuing no-one is left behind – with life being about what each child or young person can be; not about where or how their journey began.

Tim Browne

Director of Education, Inclusion and Additional Needs

Introduction

One of the most cited definitions of Belonging arrives from Goodenow and Grady, who term it as “the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment” (Goodenow & Grady, 1993, p. 80)

In Leicestershire we want all our children and young people to feel a sense of belonging in Education, so they can live their best lives and be the author of their own life stories.

When children start their educational journey, social communities have a powerful impact on shaping their future. Extensive national research (Allen, KA., 2025a, 2025b; Allen et al., 2018a, 2018b; Basarkod et al., 2024a, 2024b; Korpershoek et al., 2020) shows that children and young people who feel safe, valued, and cared for at school are more likely to achieve academically, build strong social connections, and develop a confident sense of belonging. In contrast, those who feel out of place often face unnecessary learning barriers and may experience significant feelings of alienation. The [Schools Week](#) article (2026) summarises why belonging is important and the cultural shift that needs to occur; *“Children show us belonging is simple. If we see them, hear them, know them and accept them for who they are, everything changes. And when that happens, they try, they learn, and they come back tomorrow. Not because of a sticker chart. But because they belong.”*

In the current climate, we have a responsibility to work together as partners to support children to gain a sense of belonging through inclusive practice and adapting our responses to new challenges. Recent research showed that 40% of children and young people do not feel a sense of belonging at school, and 15-year-olds in the UK report one of the lowest levels of life satisfaction across the 38 countries that form the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Ingram et al, 2023)

To develop a sense of belonging in school, children and young people need to feel accepted and valued for who they are and to be offered a curriculum that is accessible and designed to help all children and young people successfully learn. All our schools and educational settings need to work relentlessly to establish and maintain a community that has the determination and flexibility to ensure every



young person can thrive. We recognise that this work is particularly paramount for those with certain protected characteristics, which may include those with additional needs (Equality Act, 2010). In addition to the protected characteristics, it is highly likely also to benefit those that have experiences trauma or Adverse Childhood Experiences, as belonging is so integral to attachment theory as a strong social work theory that sets the foundations for positive relationships, health and wellbeing.

Leicestershire's Belonging in Education Strategy sets out how we aim to achieve this goal for every child and young person in all educational settings across Leicestershire.

This strategy is the framework to guide action planning at both a strategic Local Authority level and at an individual educational setting level. As such, the establishment of this strategy has been born out of a range of work with partners, including:

- Children and young people
- Parent and carers
- Schools
- Post 16 institutions
- Early Years providers
- Professional from across the system, including health, social care and the 'Leicester Leicestershire and Rutland SEND and Inclusion Alliance'

Why is Belonging Important?

The belonging in education strategy is embedded in Leicestershire's Trauma-Informed Relationship Policy. The policy is entrenched in strong relationships being the foundation of a successful school, where all learners are valued, included and respected

As school and educational providers are fundamentally institutions; their impact depends on those who form their communities—the students, their families, staff members, and leadership. The approaches leaders take in thinking, decision-making, action, reflection, and application of expertise to develop strategic directions are vital to the well-being of both students and adults within the school environment.

Belonging is underpinned by how children and young people feel, and is often unseen, so ensuring opportunities to gather children and young people voice is paramount.

Key aspects of belonging in education include:

- **Feeling accepted and respected:** children and young people feel valued for who they are and respected holistically.
- **Feeling included:** children and young people feel like they are part of the school and wider community and that their contributions are valued.
- **Feeling supported:** children and young people feel that they have the resources and support they need to succeed academically and socially.
- **Feeling safe:** children feel physically and emotionally safe in the school environment.
- **Strong relationships:** positive relationships with teachers and peers are crucial for fostering a sense of belonging.

Using experiences of other Local Areas and the vast array of academic reading (Allen et al., 2021; Chenge et al., 2021; Solomon, 1996), we understand that enabling a child and young person to feel a sense of belonging is likely to improve:

- **Academic achievement.** A sense of belonging can positively impact student motivation, academic performance, and retention.

- **Social-emotional development.** Belonging can promote positive self-esteem, reduced anxiety, and improved mental health.
- **Increase attendance and presence.** Children and young people who feel a sense of belonging are more likely to attend school regularly and stay in school.
- **Positive classroom environment.** Belonging can create a more engaging and supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable taking risks and expressing themselves.

Fostering belonging in educational settings involves building strong relationships between staff and children and young people and facilitating opportunities for peer and friendships to blossom. Establishing a safe and inclusive environment is essential to ensure that every child and young person feels physically and emotionally secure, with their voices heard and respected.

Providing access to academic and social resources further supports children and young people throughout their educational journey. It is also important to celebrate diversity by recognising and appreciating the unique abilities and perspectives that each individual contributes.

Promoting positive behaviour entails supporting and acknowledging constructive actions while addressing challenges in a thoughtful manner. To cultivate a sense of belonging across the entire educational community, institutions should embed relationship-centred policies, assist children and young people struggling with attendance in forming trusting relationships with staff, and maintain consistent routines that reinforce safety and support.

Encouraging participation in activities outside the classroom such as sports or the arts, in addition to offering students the opportunity to propose new clubs, can further



enhance engagement. Constructive peer relationships can be promoted through mentoring and collaborative group work, while diversity may be honoured through multicultural events, inclusive curricula, and the display of diverse materials within classrooms.



When fostering a sense of belonging, leaders and staff are encouraged to consider whether all individuals, including children and young people, flourish in every setting or if some may face challenges or feel overlooked within certain areas of the provision. If such issues exist, it is imperative for leaders and staff to identify and implement changes that ensure belonging becomes an intentional practice rather than an incidental outcome.

Ofsted Inspection Framework

The sense of belonging is explicitly part of the new Ofsted inspection framework (November 2025), which focuses on the refrain of 'Achieve, Belong, Thrive'; the triad emphasising that academic achievement, attendance and behaviour is tied to feeling valued and connected to the school community.

For the first time, belonging isn't implied — it's explicitly part of the inspection lens. Inspectors will consider whether pupils:

- feel valued
- feel safe
- feel part of the community
- contribute and are heard

Inspectors, under the new framework, will look for evidence of a culture of belonging, not just written policies. This includes analysing pupil/staff voice, attendance data, and how well schools tackle barriers for, SEND, or, disadvantaged, pupils.



Vision, Ethos and Principles



Our Priorities

Working in partnership with schools, professionals, parent/carers and children and young people, we will deliver this strategy through four priority areas.

Across all priorities, the following principles apply:

- Inclusion, particularly for children and young people with SEND, is central to all practice
- Relational, trauma-informed approaches are consistently applied across settings
- Children, young people and parent/carer voice actively informs decision-making
- Partnership working is a shared responsibility across education, health and care

Priority 1

Every Child and Young Person has a sense of belonging in the Education setting they attend

Priority 2

Building Relationships as Foundations



**Belonging
Priorities**

Priority 3

Schools and professionals ensure children and young people feel autonomy and the authors of their own life stories.

Priority 4

Schools feel equipped to support, especially when a sense of belonging breaks down and can reach out for appropriate external support, when needed.

Priority 1

Every Child and Young Person has a sense of belonging in the education settings they attend.

As dictated by the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC), Article 28, every child and young person is entitled to an education and for this education to be positive.

The national direction of travel, as detailed in the Education Reforms '[Every Child Achieving and Thriving](#)' (2026), emphasises that children and young people should, wherever possible, be educated as part of their community in their local mainstream school or setting.

Establishing a supportive learning environment in which children and young people feel secure and valued helps to address foundational needs, including those related to belonging and self-esteem. When this is achieved, children and young people can be the best versions of themselves and live their best lives.

What this means in practice?

All children and young people experience inclusive environments where they feel safe, valued and able to thrive. This includes a strong focus on ensuring children and young people with SEND are successfully included within their local setting wherever possible.

Deliverables:

Schools and educational providers will:

- Provide inclusive provision that meets a wide range of needs, including through Universal Design for Learning
- Complete and maintain a self-assessment of belonging and inclusion within their SEF from 2026/27 onwards
- Reduce in-year transfers wherever possible and evidence this through local monitoring

- Ensure full-time education is the default entitlement, with part-time timetables used only appropriately and time-limited
- Demonstrate how children and young people's voice is captured and informs provision

The Local Authority will:

- Provide a standardised self-assessment framework and locality-level data to support evaluation
- Work with schools to develop consistent approaches to assessing need and inclusive practice
- Support the implementation of Universal Design for Learning across the system
- Monitor key indicators at locality and system level to support improvement

How will we measure success?

- Reduction in fixed term and permanent exclusions, including for pupils with SEND
- Reduction in in-year transfers
- Increase in the number of children accessing full-time education
- Evidence of inclusive practice and belonging within school self-evaluation and inspection

Priority 2

Building relationships as foundations.

Maslow (1943), highlights belonging as a fundamental need to be fulfilled. Positive relationships within schools and communities and between local areas ensures effective support for all children and young people.

Humans have a core social motive to engage in positive interactions with others. These interactions should occur within a framework of mutual consideration and respect (Baumeister et al, 1995). As a system we need to work collaboratively to get it right for children and young people.

What this means in practice

All settings adopt a consistent, relational and trauma-informed approach, ensuring children, young people and families experience strong, respectful and trusting relationships across all interactions.

Deliverables:

Schools and educational providers will:

- Embed a whole-school relational approach across policies, practice and culture
- Ensure all staff apply consistent approaches to behaviour, attendance and inclusion
- Implement training for staff to support relational and trauma-informed practice
- Ensure relational practice is SEND-informed, recognising differences in communication, sensory needs and social interaction
- Maintain open, regular and transparent communication with parent/carers

The Local Authority will:

- Provide guidance and training to support consistent relational practice across settings

- Align policies and frameworks to support a relational approach
- Support workforce development, including supervision and staff wellbeing
- Ensure consistency of approach across localities and services

How we will measure success

- Improved feedback from children, young people and families on relationships with schools
- Increased consistency in approaches across settings
- Improved collaboration and trust between families and professionals

Priority 3

Schools and professionals ensure children and young people feel autonomy and the authors of their own life stories.

Fostering a sense of autonomy can not only build independence for children and young people, but it also pushes children and young people to understand that their choices and actions have outcomes, that they are responsible for. Autonomy has direct routes into fostering a sense of belonging for both children and young people and for educational providers (Ryan and Deci, 2000, 2017).

Learning, understanding, and expressing independence are significant steps to feel autonomous. Professionals must continue to work with and listen to the educational providers as they too need to have a sense of autonomy to be able to support all children and young people to feel a sense of belonging.

What this means in practice

Children, young people and parent/carers are actively involved in decision-making at individual, setting and system level. Approaches are inclusive and accessible, particularly for children and young people with SEND.

Deliverables:

Schools and educational providers will:

- Implement structured approaches to capturing and responding to child and parent/carer voice
- Ensure children and young people with SEND can communicate their views using appropriate and adapted methods
- Demonstrate how feedback from children and families influences decisions and provision
- Ensure effective information sharing so families do not need to repeatedly share their story
- Support children and young people to develop autonomy and independence

The Local Authority will:

- Support the development of consistent approaches to capturing voice across the system
- Embed co-production within strategy delivery and evaluation
- Ensure community-based approaches support families and networks
- Align this work with SEND reforms and locality-based models

How we will measure success

- Evidence that children and young people's voice influences planning and provision
- Increased participation of children with SEND in decision-making
- Positive feedback from children, young people and families on being heard

Priority 4

Schools feel equipped to offer timely support, especially when a sense of belonging breaks down and can reach out for appropriate external support, when needed.

While most priorities focus on helping young people succeed in mainstream schools, there is a small group whose sense of belonging breaks down or whose needs require more support than a mainstream setting may be able to provide without holistic support. It's important to make sure that high-quality, suitable support is available for schools, and that appropriate alternatives are offered when necessary.

Appropriate external support can include Early Years Inclusion and Childcare services, Virtual Schools, Inclusion services, Public Health, Health support through Leicestershire Partnership Trust, teaching school hubs, English/maths hubs, governor support, Education Effectiveness, Specialist Teaching services, Educational Psychology and Oakfield outreach, amongst others.

What this means in practice

Schools and partners work together through clear, locality-based arrangements to provide early, coordinated and effective support. This ensures needs are identified and addressed promptly, particularly for children and young people with SEND.

Deliverables:

Schools and educational providers will:

- Access support at the earliest opportunity through agreed pathways
- Engage actively in locality forums and partnership working
- Work collaboratively with external services to support children and families
- Maintain a sense of belonging for children accessing alternative provision

The Local Authority will:

- Publish clear pathways for accessing support, including thresholds and referral routes

- Establish or strengthen locality-based forums to support joint planning and decision-making
- Ensure services operate with clear expectations, including response times
- Work in partnership with schools as equal partners with shared accountability
- Align external support with SEND reform and inclusion priorities

How we will measure success

- Increased school confidence in accessing support
- Improved timeliness of interventions
- Reduced escalation to specialist provision
- Reduction in exclusions and improved reintegration outcomes

Implementation

Governance and Voice

Children, young people and parent/carers will play an active role in governance and implementation of this strategy.

- Representation will be embedded within key governance groups
- Structured feedback mechanisms will inform decision-making and evaluation
- Evidence will be required to demonstrate how feedback has influenced change
- Co-production will underpin ongoing development and review

Key Roles

All partners are expected to participate in structured locality and strategic forums, share relevant data, and jointly plan and review support for children and young people. Everyone within the system will have a role to play within implementing the 'Belonging in Education' strategy. All partners will engage in ongoing dialogue to proactively address potential barriers and ensure effective solutions remain a priority.

- The Local Authority will:
 - Provide clear frameworks, tools and expectations for implementation
 - Monitor delivery and impact at system and locality level
 - Provide data and intelligence to inform local planning
 - Ensure alignment with SEND reform and inclusion priorities
 - Support workforce development and access to services
- Schools/educational providers will:
 - Embed a culture of belonging in their schools/provisions to enable staff and children and young people to take risks, speak honestly, ask for help, and try again after they fall short.

- o Evidence implementation through self-evaluation and improvement planning
 - o Participate actively in partnership and locality working
 - o Ensure relational and inclusive practice is consistently applied
- Parent/Carers will:
 - o Make sure that their children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any additional needs the child may have (Section 7 of the Education Act, 1996).
 - o Work in partnership with schools and professionals
 - o Support children and young people to engage with education
 - o Contribute their views to support improvement and development

How will we know the Strategy is working?

Monitoring success measures ensures we achieve our key objectives as a system. Success will be measured through a balanced framework of quantitative and qualitative evidence.

This includes:

- Impact for children and young people with SEND. Children and young people first and foremost tell us they belong. The Local Authority will work with educational providers to understand the best way to capture this voice in a meaningful way.
- Attendance, exclusions and transition data
- Feedback from children, young people and parent/carers
- Evidence of inclusive and relational practice in settings

Children, young people and parent/carers will routinely inform evaluation of the strategy and demonstrate measurable influence on decisions made across the system.

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*Thank you to all schools,
Parent/Carers and
professionals that inputted into
Leicestershire Belonging in
Education Strategy 2026-2029*



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Equality Impact Assessment Form

1- Policy details	
Name of policy	Belonging in Education Strategy
Department and service	Children and Family Services, Education Strategy and Transformation
Who has been involved in completing the Equality Impact Assessment?	Liv Dale, Head of Service - Education Strategy and Transformation
Contact numbers	01163050287
Date of completion	24 February 2026 (reviewed 12/06/2026)

2- Objectives and background of policy or practice change	
What is the proposal?	A new Belonging in Education Strategy for Leicestershire covering the period from 2026-2029.
What change and impact is intended by the proposal?	The Strategy will aim to ensure that in Leicestershire, partners work together to ensure there is a commitment to belonging. All Leicestershire children and young people feel a sense of belonging in Education, so they can live their best lives. The Strategy sets out the Council's strategic approach to ensure children and young people feel a sense of belonging in the educational provisions they attend. The Strategy will clearly set out to stakeholders the four key priority areas, aligned to deliverables and outcomes for each and key responsibilities for implementation.

What is the rationale for this proposal?	In Leicestershire, the council wants all county children and young people to feel a sense of belonging in Education, so they can live their best lives and be the author of their own life stories. In the current climate, the council have a responsibility to work together with partners agencies to support children to gain a sense of belonging through inclusive practice and adapting our responses to new challenges. To develop a sense of belonging in school, children and young people need to feel accepted and valued for who they are and to be offered a curriculum that is accessible and designed to help all children and young people successfully learn. Leicestershire’s Belonging in Education Strategy sets out how the council aim to achieve this goal for every child and young person in all educational settings across Leicestershire. This work aligns considerably to the Education Reforms White Paper “Every Child Achieving and Thriving” (February 2026)
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3- Evidence gathered on equality implications - Data and engagement

What equalities information or data has been gathered so far? What does it show?	Leicestershire’s population was 712,336 at the latest census in 2021, a 9.5% increase to the county’s population over the last 10 years. This makes Leicestershire one of the fastest growing areas in the country in terms of population (national average 6.6%). Understandably, this has placed added pressures on services for Children and Young People in the County. The County has approx. 143,063 children and young people aged up to 19 years (including 36,154 0- to 5-year-olds). There were 296,400 households within the county. A further 10.2% growth in population is projected by 2031.
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There are 101,247 children and young people educated in Leicestershire schools (aged 3-18) during the Autumn term census for 2025/26. This includes 54,454 Primary aged pupils, 44,722 Secondary aged pupils and 1,992 pupils in Special Schools. Children and Young People from minority ethnic groups account for 43.6% of all children living in Leicestershire, compared with 38% in the country as a whole. The largest minority ethnic groups are Asian or Asian British and Mixed.

From our School Census in Spring 2025, we know that	
Percentage of Black, Asian and other ethnic communities of the total school population (excluding unclassified)	24.6%
Pupils eligible for free school meals	17.2%
Pupils needing SEN support	13.4%
Pupils with EHCPs	4.7%

The latest School Census, which includes all pupils on roll at a school within Leicestershire (aged 4 to 16 years), reports that there are now 13,983 pupils on a SEN Support plan and 7,196 with an Education, Health and Care Plan. SEND pupils account for 18.1% of the Leicestershire school population. Leicestershire has a proportion of children and young people with SEND (identified through EHCPs and SEN support) broadly in line with the English average.

In 2025, the annual school census (Spring term) reported that 13.4% of children and young people were identified at SEN Support level in the County, just below the England average. Previous longer-term trends had indicated a lower-than-average level in Leicestershire, but this gap has now largely closed.

What engagement has been undertaken so far?	The strategy has been developed in conjunction with key stakeholders and responsible bodies.
What does it show?	The Department have used their feedback to help us to shape the strategy, ensuring it reflects shared priorities and processes and is aligned with the current educational landscape.

4- Benefits, concerns and mitigating action

Group	What are the benefits of the proposal for those from the following groups?	What are the concerns identified and how will these affect those from the following groups?	How will the known concerns be mitigated?
Age	The Strategy is all encompassing for all children and young people known to the Department. Improvements to children and young people feeling a sense of belonging will be beneficial to all age groups.	None identified. None identified.	As part of the development work of the strategy, young people's direct voices have been fed into the work to help us understand impact of 'Belonging' in them. Further work is underway to understand where and when children and young people feel a sense of belonging. This work will also seek to identify if there are issues, themes or patterns (particularly related to intersectionality) that indicate children of specific ages and living

			is specific areas of Leicestershire may be disadvantaged in experiencing the delivery of the Belonging Strategy.
Disability	The Strategy is all encompassing for all children and young people known to the Department. Improvements to children and young people feeling a sense of belonging will be beneficial to all, however may be particularly paramount to those individuals who have a protected characteristic.	Children with disabilities are likely to find standard forms of communication and engagement difficult and there is a risk that in implementing the strategy, they are not engaged, their voice heard and as such implementation does not address issues that reduce a sense of belonging for them	As part of the 'Lived Experience Framework', we are exploring creative ways to capture children's voice when their disability means it is harder to capture using traditional methods.
Race	The Strategy is all encompassing for all children and young people known to the Department. Improvements to children and young people feeling a sense of belonging will be beneficial to all, however may be particularly paramount to those individuals who have a protected characteristic.	Children from global majority backgrounds may not feel the same sense of belonging in their educational provisions than those from global minority backgrounds. This is unknown until KPIs are starting to be gathered specifically to measure belonging.	We will ensure that all child voice and family lived experience gathered with regards to Belonging (including ensuring all children feel a sense of belonging in their educational setting) are representative of Leicestershire's population, including those from global majority backgrounds.
Sex	The Strategy is all encompassing for all children and young people known to the Department. Improvements to children and young people feeling a sense of belonging will be beneficial to all.	None identified.	None identified.

Gender Reassignment	The Strategy is all encompassing for all children and young people known to the Department. Improvements to children and young people feeling a sense of belonging will be beneficial to all.	None identified.	None identified.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No direct impact identified.	None identified.	Not required.
Sexual Orientation	The Strategy is all encompassing for all children and young people known to the Department. Improvements to children and young people feeling a sense of belonging will be beneficial to all.	Children with particular sexual identities may not feel the same sense of belonging in their educational provisions than with alternative sexual identities. This is unknown until KPIs are starting to be gathered specifically to measure belonging.	We will work with schools to understand localised implementation plans that will seek to identify the required activity.
Pregnancy and Maternity	No direct impact identified.	None identified.	Not required.
Religion or Belief	The Strategy is all encompassing for all children and young people known to the Department. Improvements to children and young people feeling a sense of belonging will be beneficial to all.	Sense of marginalisation in school communities could impact on the general wellbeing and sense of belonging.	Where localised assessment identifies need impacting on a child's sense of belonging, specific activity will be identified.
Armed Forces (including veterans)	No direct impact identified.	None identified.	Not required.
People with lived care experience	The Strategy is all encompassing for all children and young people known to the	None identified.	None identified.

	Department. Improvements to children and young people feeling a sense of belonging will be beneficial to all.		
Other groups: e.g., rural isolation, deprivation, health inequality, carers, asylum seeker and refugee communities, looked after children, deprived or disadvantaged communities	The Strategy is all encompassing for all children and young people known to the Department. Improvements to children and young people feeling a sense of belonging will be beneficial to all.	Sense of marginalisation in school communities could impact on the general wellbeing and sense of belonging. This may be particularly apparent for asylum seekers and refugee communities.	Where localised assessment identifies need impacting on a child's sense of belonging, specific activity will be identified.

5- Action Plan

Produce a framework to outline how identified risks/concerns identified in section 4 will be mitigated.

What action is planned?	Who is responsible for the action?	Timescale	Expected outcome
Where localised assessment identifies need impacting on a child's sense of belonging, specific activity will be identified. We will work with schools to understand localised implementation plans that will seek to identify the required activity.	Liv Dale	January 2027	To understand if children with protected characteristics the same sense have of belonging than others. Further actions will need to be designed following this initial intel.
We will ensure that all children's voice and family lived experience	Liv Dale	January 2027	To understand if children with protected characteristics the same

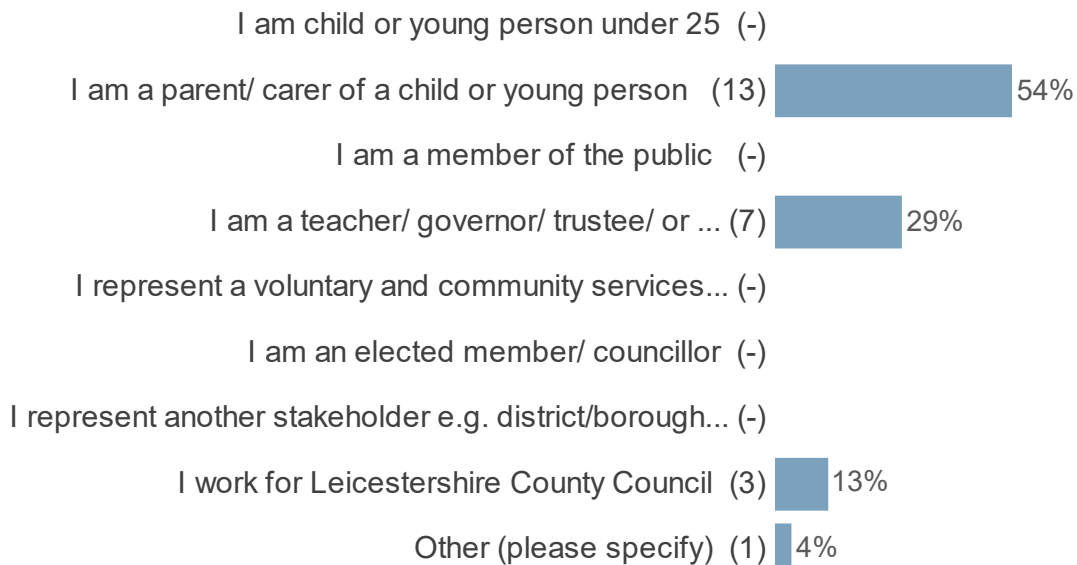
gathered with regards to Belonging (including ensuring all children feel a sense of belonging in their educational setting) are representative of Leicestershire's population, including those from global majority backgrounds.			sense have of belonging than others. Further actions will need to be designed following this initial intel.
As part of the 'Lived Experience Framework', we are exploring creative ways to capture children's voice when their disability means it is harder to capture using traditional methods.	Caroline Davis	January 2027	All children and young people are able and encouraged to give their views using preferred communication styles.

6- Approval Process	
Departmental Equalities Group	
Corporate Policy Team	
Sign off by the Senior Responsible Officer for the Project.	

Have your say on our draft Belonging in Education Strategy 2026-2029

This report was generated on 08/06/26. Overall 24 respondents completed this questionnaire. The report has been filtered to show the responses for 'All Respondents'.

In what role are you responding to this consultation? Please select one option only.



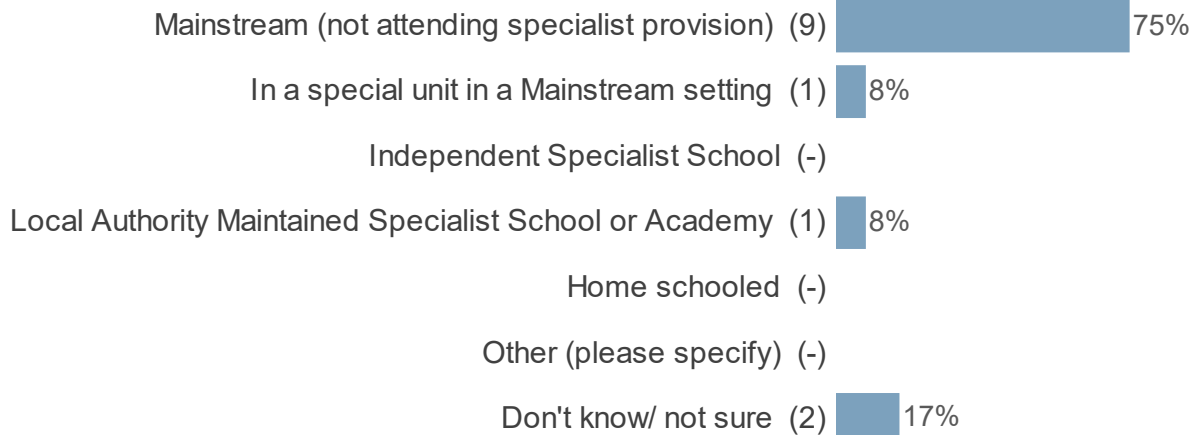
Please specify 'other'

Childminder

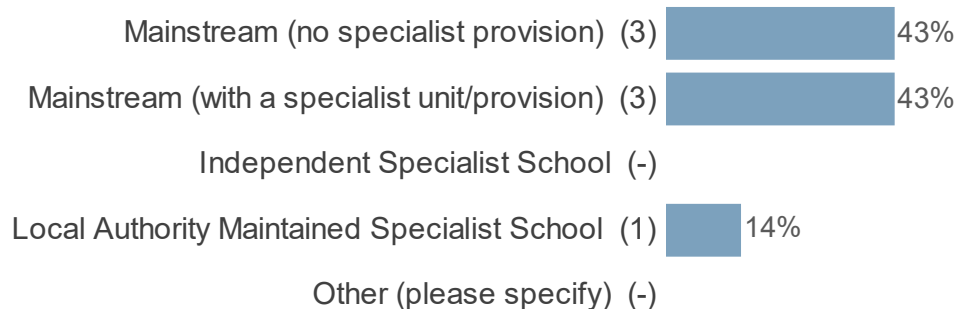
Do you have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)? Please select one option only.

- Yes (-)
- No (-)
- Don't know/ not sure (-)

Are you a parent / carer of children aged 0-25 with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) in any of the following settings? Please tick all that apply.



In which setting are you a teacher/ governor/ trustee/ or other employee of a school/provider? Please select all that apply



If you indicated that you represent an organisation, business, community group, school/other educational establishment, please provide your details. (Organisation:)

Childminder

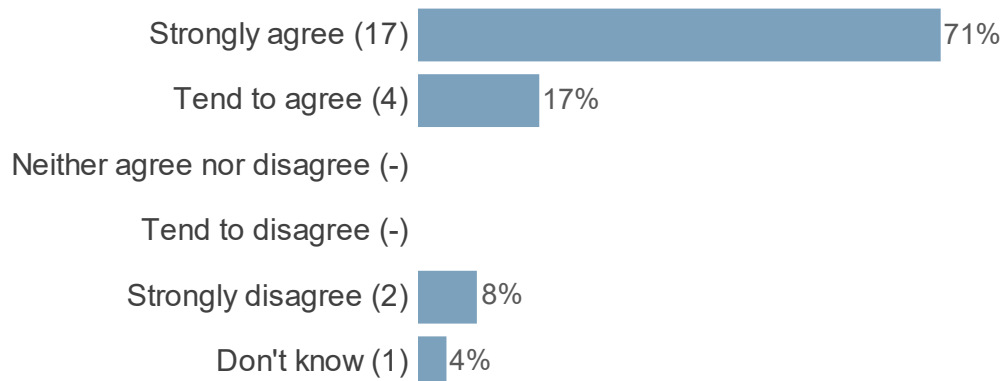
If you indicated that you represent an organisation, business, community group, school/other educational establishment, please provide your details. (Organisation Postcode:)

LE11 5FB

Are you providing your organisation's official response to this consultation?



Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with Priority 1: Every child and young person has a sense of belonging in the educational setting they belong?



Why do you say this? Is there anything else we should consider within this priority?

The fact that they belong means they have 'a sense of belonging' but this is a very vague phrase. You can feel you belong to a an educational setting and still hate every minute of it. Why shouldn't every child enjoy their education setting? Why shouldn't they feel happy going to their educational setting?

It's a vital priority and with the current spread of SEND and mainstream pupils that are not accessing their local primary school setting (and secondary I imagine) this is a significant issue. We are getting a large number of mid-year transfers from out of catchment because they are not happy with the support their child is getting. The local authority needs to work with both schools and parents to see what could be done to minimise this because their social circles are not always in their local area.

Mainstream school leaders also need to remember that they serve the community in which the school is located. Admissions should reflect the local community in terms of supporting students with SEND or other needs. Inclusion as a core value for school leaders, not excluding tricky children if they might make data look bad.

This statement goes without saying

If children feel happy and safe and know that they belong, they will thrive and achieve.

The setting should provide security and encourage strong friendships and positive attitude

Consider that for some this does not mean a mainstream school or the current curriculum and rules in a mainstream school. Foe example the Ethos of our school and their behavioral acronyms, SLANT, immediately puts a barrier in the way of my ADHD child who struggles to Sit still, Listen always, Never interrupt

Children are placed in schools that are not suitable for them because SENA have 'deadlines' to meet! Parents views are definitely not taken into account

One of the main reasons that my eldest child is in a SEN setting on an EHCP is because busy mainstream secondary schools cannot create the needed environment or teaching specialists required to enable autistic teenagers to feel like they truly belong. If the teenager has insight into their differences then they know that they don't belong in a standard school setting. The schools cannot change the basic premise of how they are set up. My youngest is autistic and failing in a unit in mainstream for the same reasons.

My son can't even attend more than 1hour a day as it is too overwhelming. He is expected to cope and engage the same way as his neurotypical peers with no alteration to the environment to help him engage. There needs to be far more understanding by All staff of needs and autism and neurodiversity. The environment and pressure on children needs to change.

A sense of belonging will increase the desire to attend

The decision to send your child to a school is of high importance and for the child to excel in the school environment it should be met with care and compassion.

Why do you say this? Is there anything else we should consider within this priority?

a sense of belonging improves well-being and from that outcomes are improved

Are you saying that your aim is for every child to have a sense of belonging? My child has not been able to attend school, due to their elevated anxiety, caused by the school environment.

Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with Priority 2: Building relationships as foundations?

Strongly agree (19) 83%

Tend to agree (3) 13%

Neither agree nor disagree (-)

Tend to disagree (-)

Strongly disagree (1) 4%

Don't know (-)

Why do you say this? Is there anything else we should consider within this priority?

Maybe if there was time to build relationships with teachers instead of cramming back to back lessons with no time for reflection or conversation and no flexibility of curriculum to engage diverse groups of children we might be able to build relationships. Children are often coming from broken families and they have no foundations. Schools don't give teachers time to converse with their children.

Without trusting relationships you can't do anything else. This is a common sense approach and for anyone who has spent a single second in education should know and utilise this tool as their number one strategy. It's a shame that this is having to be a priority as it shows that it's not being done consistently.

If pupils feel listened to and wanted, through really great relationships then their sense of belonging will increase.

Relationships are imperative to children and young people feeling like they belong in school and the wider community. My concerns are when the adults do not see this as a priority or as important in terms of belonging, or worse, assume it is someone else's problem to sort.

At our school this is our priority. To ensure we build firm foundations with parents and children.

Realionships need to be a priority and it to be consistent. Not teachers seeing a child with SEND as an inconvenience to their lesson. This is particularly prevalent in high school where focus is on those that can access non adjusted learning.

In the right educational setting for the child's needs.

All of this is supposed to happen already in schools- it doesn't matter how well intentioned an ethos of the school is the bottom line is that it doesn't change the fact that mainstream secondary schools cannot change many of the elements that autistic teenagers cannot manage in a mainstream setting. The amount of flexibility and specialist knowledge needed for different types of need and disabilities cannot possibly be incorporated into busy second settings. Children need specialist buildings, environments and teaching- not empty word's as outlined in Priority 2 that schools should be doing anyway under current policy, guidance and legislation. This point seems a bit woolly and meaningless.

Relationships and trust are vital, limiting bullying is also a huge priority

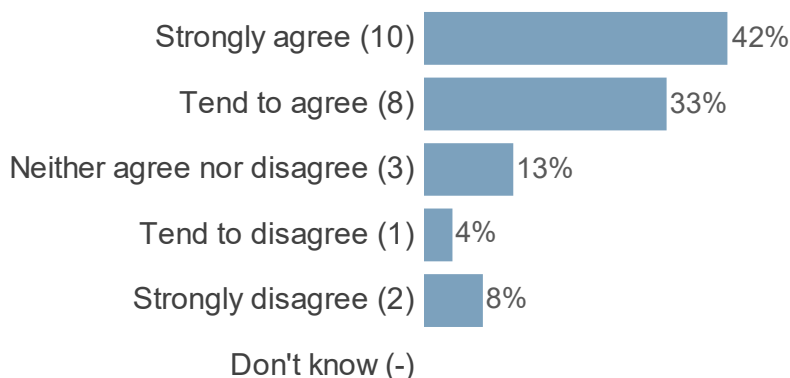
Why do you say this? Is there anything else we should consider within this priority?

Every child should feel safe within their school setting, this includes building relationships with key individuals. Every child should be able to be supported in the way in which it should be received. Different skills for different personnel.

Strong relationships support attendance at work and school.

Building relationships with members of staff would be extremely useful, if they were consistent. My child has felt let down by the amount of changes that occurred within their timetable. Too many substitute teachers for core subjects, so feeling let down and not important enough to care. Too many inconsistencies from one staff member to another. Some would tolerate child's sensitive needs, others would dismiss it.

Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with Priority 3: Schools and professionals ensure children and young people feel autonomy and the authors of their own life stories?



Why do you say this? Is there anything else we should consider within this priority?

Many children would like their life story to include being happy at school but that right is taken away from them when they are trammelled into a restrictive system which is underfunded and inflexible. Children are not the authors of their own story. You keep banging on about attendance as if it's the be all and end all. The education system is so broken that it is damaging children. Making attendance a thing when education is so rubbish is very cruel and disempowers parents. If you are made to go to school when you hate it, you have no autonomy

Schools and professionals do their very best but there are many barriers and factors that can reduce this. Local authority policies (while important) can contribute to this. I also feel like there's a bit of school 'shopping' going on where if parents don't agree with something/like something they'll move onto the next one and so on.

Pupils need to be heard and understood. Work with pupils to navigate their time through school together.

It is THEIR story to tell, no one else will see it through their eyes and it is important we treat them as the true story tellers.

What has happened in children's lives shapes what they do and how they behave. Staff must understand that for children to flourish!

Less dictatorship more communicating

Professionals need to support schools more to enable schools to continue this!

Why do you say this? Is there anything else we should consider within this priority?

Again- all of this should be happening anyway as standard- again the points are quite general and wooly- what does any of this actually mean in practice. Particularly given all of this has been said time and time again and should already be happening under various pieces of legislation and case law that has been around for a long time. This needs to be less vague, more directive and county wide set in stone practice needs to be outlined in much more detail. Otherwise this priority doesn't mean anything and nothing will change.

They're all expected to be the same and do the same. They're not allowed to be unique or show their interests.

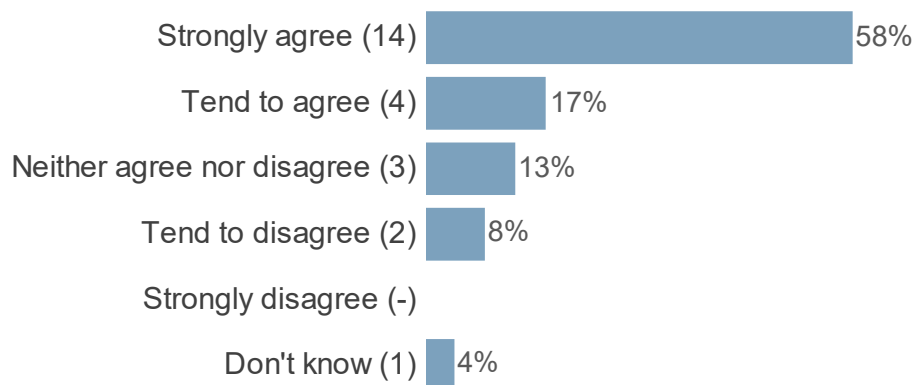
Whilst their input is information, they might not know what's best

Unless schools are prepared to offer a wider range of subjects, particularly in secondary school, then it isn't always easy for a child to have autonomy and be author of their own life stories. The schools specialise in key subject areas and can limit the choice of subjects available, in particular around options in Year 9 onwards. Children should be taught in ways that they wish to learn and more exploration around this needs to take place within.

Autonomy is very important, but with a realism that we are not the only authors of our life stories - giving children the resilience and skills to deal with the stories life throws at them.

This would have a greater impact on my child, knowing that we were not trying to fill in the gaps ourselves, with the teams that are currently working with.

Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with Priority 4: Schools feel equipped to support, especially when a sense of belonging breaks down and can reach out for appropriate external support when needed?



Why do you say this? Is there anything else we should consider within this priority?

Oh if only this was true.

I think this is a vital priority but is no where close to being achieved (hence why it's included). I think there are two parts to this. One is those schools who typically don't engage with the existing services to build on and support their offer and their setting. There are many schools who don't engage with what's available, I can't comment why but it's noticeable and those schools are where children are transferring from. There is also the part where those schools who consistently engage and seek support but cannot get the level of specialist advice they are seeking because they are so inclusive the mainstream channels can't help and because you're seen as 'specialist' you don't get the right support from other services.

Some schools are patient and willing to do the hard things to keep children included as part of the community. Some schools look to offload those children perceived as being more difficult, even if they are very much part of the community. Where children are out of school for a time, all schools should understand their responsibility to develop excellent re-integration packages, not just tokenistic.

Why do you say this? Is there anything else we should consider within this priority?

It is important that school feel equipped to deal with these situations, however I don't think that many do feel capable. Many are still very much in the conformity mindset and do not value relational approaches.

This is good as long as the support is there and available to schools.

Without this being in place the other 3 priorities will not happen. Teachers are already at breaking point.

You are going to fill schools with SEN children that shouldn't be in mainstream and need specialist this is going to make it overwhelming for all teachers!

This is the only priority that actually talks about nuts and bolts service delivery- the ideas are good and will support young people. It outlines accountability and actual tangible actions. All the priorities should be re-written with this approach in mind. More could be done to detail who much funding there is- whose role it is in the council to move this forward, what is the time commitment- how is the new team going to support young people with very different reasons for their anxiety? Is a lot of the resources now test anxiety as behavioural- what about neurodivergent young people who don't fit into AP units as they are aimed at Mental health or emotional needs and don't take into account Autism related needs or need for specialist ASD staff and buildings.

Schools do as little as they can to show "support" whilst making out they're doing all they can. It belittles families and children. They don't try to understand needs they just push this narrative of "fine in school" "happy here" even when the evidence suggests otherwise so that they don't have to put more support in place

School support is required to help them foster that environment

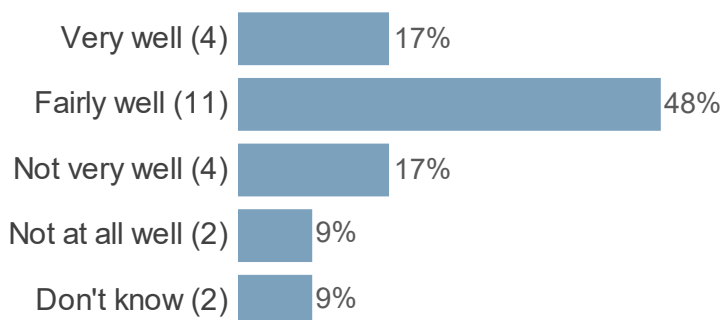
Think schools need the right tools

If it takes a village to raise a child then it takes a multi faceted team to educate a child.....in particular those that require additional support in SEND.

More support needed

I am not sure on how to answer this question. But I do think that is important for schools to be supported, when a young person has additional needs and is seeking help from anywhere (GP/NHS/PRIVATE), so that they can be involved to a degree. Even if they cannot help a specific young person, they should be able to put in future measures to try to prevent the same issues for other young people.

How well, if at all, do you think the draft strategy accurately reflects what works well and the barriers and challenges for children and young people Leicestershire?



Why do you say this? Is there anything missing?

Not very well at all. What's missing is parents voice and especially children's voice. Send some of your staff to a few school council meetings and then write your strategy.

I think it reflects what works well I just don't know how effective it's going to be if engagement and participation isn't tracked and monitored across the county and also how supportive and helpful it will be for those schools who are already doing above and beyond what's expected. I'm looking forward to seeing what happens and hope it is successful

It needs proper agreement and understanding from all parties, plus accountability for those that just pay lip service to the principles.

More detail needed on Children in Care and other vulnerable groups. Some feel a lack of belonging and connection to the school regardless of what the school say is in place; potential for out of sight out of mind issue when tricky children are out on AP full time or who are on roll but do not attend.

Listen to the children and parents ho are navigating mainstream schools and SEND. There are daily battles, daily barriers.

It's not detailed enough- priority 1-3 are all general good principles but the destination is not there. Everything that's been written is all detailed in other policy's, guidance and legislation- how are you actually going to get schools and young people there?? Priority 4 is better- it has nuts and bolts of how these things will be achieved. But it doesn't detail key elements like funding, resources, buildings ,and most importantly- it doesn't acknowledge that different young people cohorts with anxiety need very different approaches. le most APs are not designed for girls with Autism or girls with ADD. There needs more detail. You also need to have a parent group that you regularly consult and have on your governance board and structures- not just token surveys. We live it day in day out- we can point out the pitfalls and the details before you set up expensive systems that will fail large groups of young people.

Mainstream is not the answer. They need small schools with small classes with fully trained staff in ALL areas including TAs. Legal rights must remain and be tightened and followed more! Parents need to be respected and listened to more on their child.

I think bullying in schools and SEND support is a major barrier

How are you actually going to deliver it?

What is your gender?

Male (3) 13%

Female (20) 87%

I use another term (-)

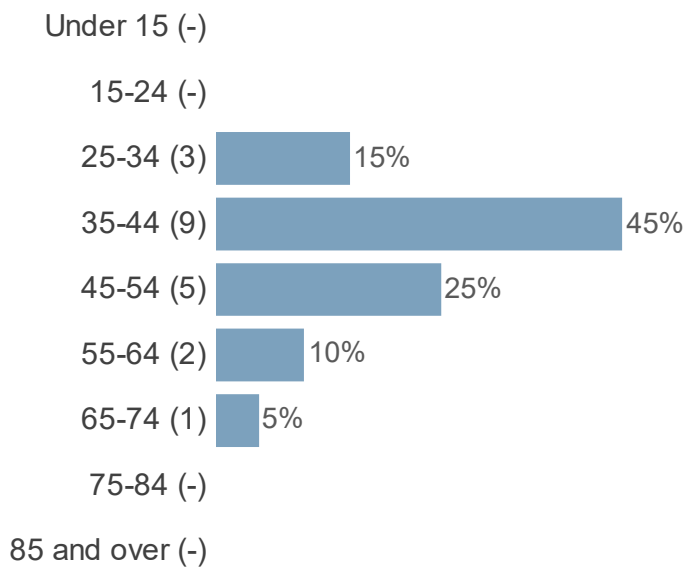
If you're aged under 16, please skip this question.

Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

Yes (21) 100%

No (-)

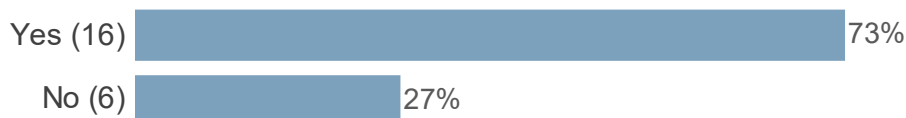
What was your age on your last birthday? (derived)



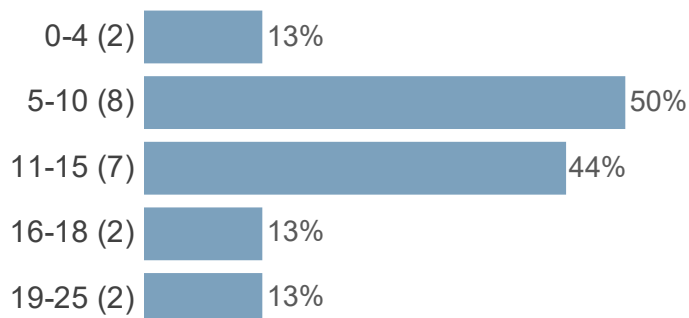
What is your full postcode?

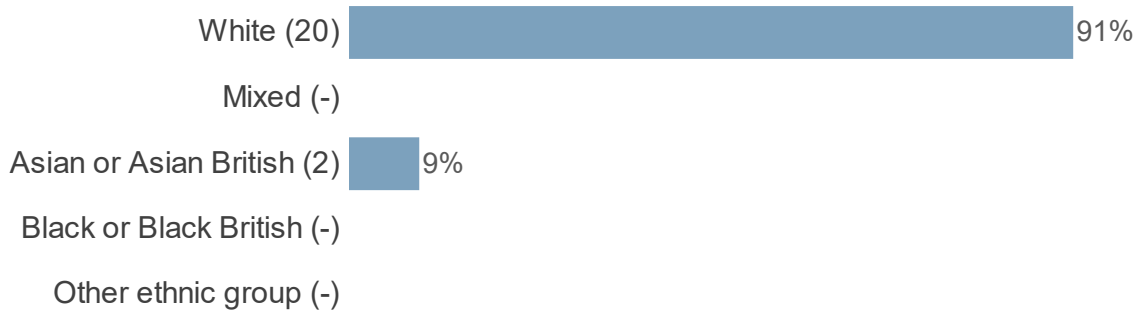
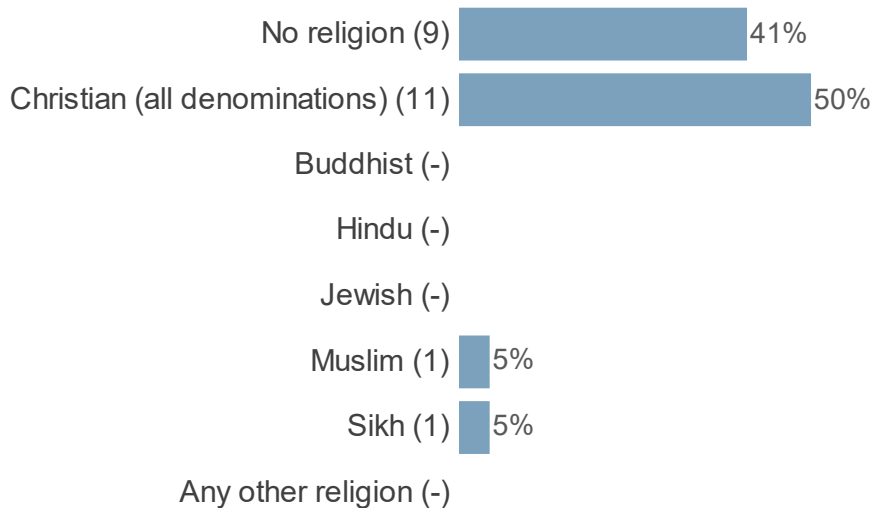
This will allow us to compare responses from different areas. It will not identify your house.

Are you a parent or carer of a young person aged 25 or under?



If yes, what are the ages of the children/ young people in your care? Please tick all applicable



Are you a carer of a person aged 26 or over?**Do you have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity?****What is your ethnic group? Please tick one box only.****What is your religion?**

If you're aged under 16, please skip this question.
What is your sexual orientation?



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CABINET – 21st JULY 2026

DOMESTIC ABUSE REDUCTION STRATEGY 2026–2029

**JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY
SERVICES AND THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, COMMUNITIES,
LAW AND GOVERNANCE**

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Cabinet's approval for the Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026–29, following responses to a consultation period which ran from 2 April – 17 May 2026. The Strategy (attached as Appendix A to this report) has been developed following a comprehensive SafeLives Needs Assessment (attached as Appendix B to this report) and extensive engagement with survivors, professionals, voluntary sector partners and statutory agencies.
2. The report also outlines the statutory context, strategic priorities, and proposed approach to the Domestic Abuse (DA) Reduction Strategy.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that the Cabinet approves the Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026–2029.

(KEY DECISION)

Reason for Recommendations

4. Producing a Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy is a statutory duty under The Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

5. A consultation has been undertaken ensuring that this Strategy reflects the views of survivors, professionals, partners, and the public, and demonstrates transparency and accountability.
6. Consultation has allowed further refinement of the Strategy, ensuring that the lived experiences of victims and survivors, including children recognised as victims under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, are embedded into the final document.

Timetable for Decisions

7. Following the Cabinet's approval on 24 March 2026, public and stakeholder consultation was undertaken from 2 April to 17 May 2026. The draft Strategy was presented for consideration by the Scrutiny Commission in June 2026.
8. Following approval of the Strategy by the Cabinet, it will be shared corporately across the Council and with partnership boards, for adoption from July 2026.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

9. The Strategy aligns with the Council's statutory responsibilities under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and supports delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan 2022–26, particularly the outcomes relating to keeping people safe, improving wellbeing, and supporting strong communities.
10. The previous Strategy was presented to the Cabinet in October 2021; this Strategy replaces that one.
11. The SafeLives Needs Assessment (2024) and previous Cabinet commitments to improving domestic abuse responses directly inform this Strategy, for example ensuring people at the most risk are protected from harm is a core Council outcome; and vulnerable adults and children must be identified early and protected from harm and abuse. Domestic abuse and sexual violence are specifically named priority areas within this commitment.

Resource Implications

12. The Strategy will be delivered through existing domestic abuse funding, including central government allocations for safe accommodation duties.
13. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has allocated grant funding to each local authority for the delivery of the Safe Accommodation duty under the Domestic Abuse Act.

14. Tier one local authorities have received funding; in the financial year 2026 – 2027 the Domestic Abuse duty allocation to Leicestershire County Council is £1,463,965, whilst each district has received approximately £33,000.
15. £385,928 Domestic Abuse funding, previously managed by the Public Health Department, has moved to Children and Family Services in order to align the funding and services offered to victims.
16. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Public Health, Communities, Law and Governance have been consulted on the contents of this report.

Circulation Under Local Issues Alert Procedure

17. This report will be circulated to all members.

Officers to Contact

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PART B

Background

18. Domestic abuse remains one of the most significant safeguarding challenges facing adults, children and families in Leicestershire. SafeLives, a UK wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse, undertook a second Strategic Needs Assessment for the Council in 2024 highlighting high prevalence, hidden harm, and the need for consistent, trauma-informed and joined-up systems. Children within refuges and other safe accommodation are now legally recognised as victims under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and require coordinated, holistic support.
19. The draft Strategy has been developed in partnership with survivors, voluntary and community organisations, statutory partners and specialist services.
20. The Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy responds directly to the findings of the SafeLives Needs Assessment and to the insights survivors gave. It sets out how Leicestershire County Council, working through Children and Families Services and in partnership with local agencies, will strengthen prevention, improve early recognition, protect victims and survivors, and provide coordinated, trauma-informed support.

Statutory Context:

21. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places duties on Tier One authorities, including:
 - Establishing a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board
 - Assessing local need and commissioning support in safe accommodation
 - Recognising children as victims in their own right
 - Ensuring multi-agency coordination across police, health, housing, education and specialist provision
 - embedding a whole-system trauma-informed approach.
22. Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a statutory duty on local authorities to assess the need for and commission support for victims and their children within relevant safe accommodation. This includes refuges, dispersed accommodation, sanctuary schemes and other forms of safe housing, alongside the specialist support required to help families remain safe and begin recovery.
23. The Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board provides strategic leadership, governance and accountability for the delivery of domestic abuse priorities across Leicestershire and Rutland, with a specific statutory role in overseeing duties under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The Board brings together key

partners to ensure a coordinated, survivor-centered and evidence-led response to domestic abuse, and will provide strategic oversight of the Strategy.

24. A Domestic Abuse Survivor Group has been established to advise the Board on service user experience, devise the Action Plan and support delivery of the Strategy.

Needs Assessment

25. In 2024, the Council commissioned SafeLives to undertake a comprehensive Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment (attached as Appendix B to this report). Findings highlight rising demand, increased numbers of under-18s experiencing domestic abuse, high levels of hidden harm, gaps in data quality and consistency, a shortfall in safe accommodation capacity, and opportunities to improve early identification, public awareness and trauma-informed practice.

Consultation

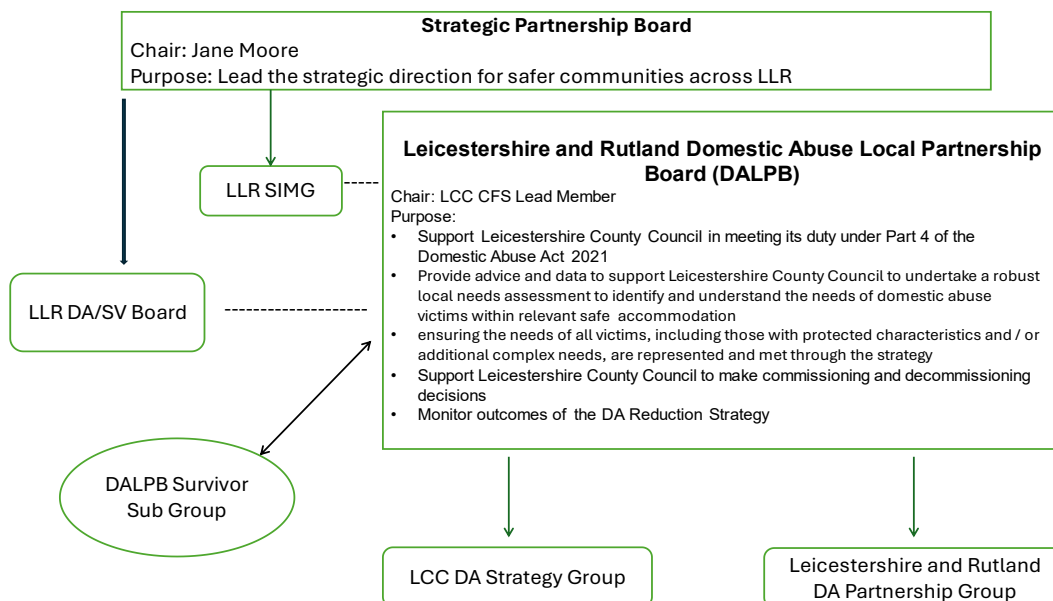
26. The six week consultation period included a public online survey, focus groups with survivors of domestic abuse (including young people, men and older people) as well as engagement with specialist providers and partner forums.
27. A total of 46 responses were received. 25 responses were received from the online consultation, 1 domestic abuse survivor sent a direct email, 8 survivors attended a coffee morning, 10 young people (aged 14 – 22) attended an on-line meeting and 2 individuals responded directly with track changes to the draft strategy.
28. All respondents agreed with the priorities within the Strategy; there were some comments about how the Strategy should be delivered and operational focus, these points will be followed up through the Delivery Plan which will sit under the Strategy to support its delivery.
29. In response to the consultation recognition of Partnership delivery at locality has been included. Nationally the terminology will change from Domestic Homicide Reviews to Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews.

The Draft Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026–2029

30. The Strategy sets out a three-year commitment shaped by survivors, partners and data. Its four priorities are:

- 1) Improving Data Quality and Information Sharing
 - 2) Early Intervention, Prevention and Communication
 - 3) Targeted Support and Safe Accommodation (Part 4 Duties)
 - 4) Strong Partnerships
31. The priorities within the Strategy will be delivered through new and existing partnership arrangements, for example priority 4 will be led by the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Board (LLR DA/SV Board). This Board sits under the Strategic Partnership Board (SPB).
 32. The LLR Senior Information Management Group will support the work on priority 1 and the SPB agreed at its last meeting to take the lead on improving data quality and information sharing across the community safety partnership.
 33. Priorities 2 and 3 will be led by Leicestershire County Council through the DA Strategy Group, including the Domestic Abuse duty allocation of £1,463,965 as well as wider DA work including communications campaigns.
 34. Prior to tendering DA services to assist with delivering the Strategy and to support discharging the Council's statutory duty, the Needs Assessment is considered alongside a gap analysis of need and consultation with survivors, specialists and partner organisations.

Governance Structure



Legal Implications

35. The Strategy supports compliance with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Consultation has ensured the Strategy is lawful, robust and informed.
36. The DA Act 2021 places a statutory duty on Tier One local authorities to provide support to victims of domestic abuse including children within refuges and other safe accommodation.

Equalities Implications

37. An Equality Impact Assessment will accompany the final Strategy. Consultation will engage groups with additional barriers, including ethnically diverse communities, LGBTQ+ victims, disabled individuals, older people, men and young people.
38. Domestic abuse directly affects Article 2 (Right to Life), Article 3 (Freedom from inhumane treatment), Article 8 (Right to family life). Strengthening responses supports the Council's Human Rights duties.

Other Implications

39. Domestic abuse has major health impacts; early intervention will support wellbeing.
40. The Strategy will strengthen prevention and the response to domestic abuse, contributing to crime reduction.

Conclusion

41. Subject to the Cabinet's approval, the Strategy will be adopted by the Council and an Action Plan drafted.

Background Papers

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (Statutory Guidance)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62c6df068fa8f54e855dfe31/Domestic_Abuse_Act_2021_Statutory_Guidance.pdf

Report to the Cabinet – 24 March 2026 – Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026-29:
Permission to Consult -

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s195404/DA%20Reduction%20Strategy%20FINAL.pdf>

Appendices

A - Draft Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026–2029

B – Strategic Needs Assessment

Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026-29

Foreward

Cllr Charles Pugsley (Lead Member Children and Family Services and Chair of the Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board)

Domestic Abuse remains one of the most serious and pervasive challenges facing our communities. It causes profound harm to individuals, families and neighbourhoods, with lasting impacts on physical and mental health, wellbeing, housing stability, and life chances. As a local authority, we have both a moral responsibility and a statutory duty to do everything within our power to prevent abuse, protect victims and survivors, and hold perpetrators to account.

This Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy sets out our clear commitment to tackling domestic abuse in all its forms. It recognises that abuse can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, background, culture, disability or sexual orientation, and that it often remains hidden due to fear, stigma or a lack of confidence in services. We are determined to create an environment in which victims and survivors are believed, supported and empowered to seek help at the earliest opportunity.

The strategy has been developed in partnership with survivors, frontline professionals, voluntary and community sector organisations and other key partners. It reflects both local need and national good practice, and places a strong emphasis on early intervention, trauma-informed support, and prevention. Importantly, it also recognises the devastating impact of domestic abuse on children and young people and the need to safeguard and support them as victims in their own right.

Informed by lived experience, this strategy commits to:

- Putting survivors' voices at the heart of decision-making, service design and evaluation
- Believing and validating disclosures of abuse, without blame or judgement
- Providing consistent, trauma-informed support, recognising the long-term impact of abuse
- Reducing barriers to help, including for those facing additional inequalities or risks
- Ensuring safety, choice and control remain central to all interventions

Survivors' experiences remind us that effective domestic abuse responses are not defined solely by policies or processes, but by how safe, supported and empowered people feel when they seek help. This strategy is grounded in that understanding and will continue to be shaped by the voices of those with lived experience.

Reducing domestic abuse cannot be achieved by one organisation alone. This strategy reinforces our commitment to strong partnership working, shared accountability and continuous learning. It sets out how we will strengthen our response across prevention, protection and provision of support, ensuring that our actions are coordinated, effective and focused on achieving meaningful outcomes.

As the Elected Lead Member, I am proud to champion this strategy and the values it represents. I am committed to ensuring that domestic abuse remains a priority across the council and our partnerships, and that we continue to listen to survivors' voices as we improve our services. Together, we can work towards a future where everyone is safe in their home and able to live free from fear and abuse.

Sharon Cooke (Interim Director Children and Family Services)
Mike Sandys (Director Public Health, Communities, Law and Governance)

This Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy outlines how Leicestershire County Council will work with partners to reduce Domestic Abuse (DA), support adult and child victims and survivors in Leicestershire and discharge the Council's statutory requirements within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

The Leicestershire Needs Assessment undertaken by SafeLives in 2024 demonstrates a year-on-year increase in under 18's becoming victims of DA; this was further confirmed by the group of young survivors who shared their experiences with us, highlighting the need to support children and young people to recognise the signs of abuse and seek support.

Leicestershire County Council's Children and Family Service is committed to being a trauma informed responsive department where we believe "we are stronger together". Our culture is one of partnership where we look for solutions and recognise the potential impact of trauma on the children and families we work with in Leicestershire.

The DA Act 2021 states: *"Children and young people are deemed to be victims under the 2021 Act as a result of seeing, hearing or otherwise experiencing domestic abuse between two people where the child is related to at least one of them whether that be the victim or perpetrator".*

We are committed to protecting all victims and survivors and supporting vulnerable children and families; we will strive to create a safe, compassionate, healing environment demonstrated through relationships based on trust, respect, hope and empathy and this has been demonstrated through the Council ring fencing government funding to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and through a dedicated team within the directorate to support families.

Survivors' experiences remind us that domestic abuse is not only a crime but a safeguarding issue with lifelong consequences for children and families. This strategy sets out how Leicestershire County Council will meet its responsibilities, work in partnership, and ensure that every child and family affected by domestic abuse is supported with compassion, consistency and care.

Glossary

Commissioned

Specialised providers formally chosen by public bodies to deliver specific services to vulnerable citizens following a rigorous commissioning process

Domestic Abuse

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between anyone aged 16+ who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional.

DHR (Domestic Homicide Review)

A review into the circumstances around a death of an individual following domestic abuse. Public bodies (police, councils, social services, etc) come together to understand and learn from the circumstances and help raise awareness in local communities of how to help victims in order to prevent further loss of life. Home Office Guidance is expected to change DHRs to **DArDR (Domestic Abuse related Death Review)** and will include deaths by suicide where there was domestic abuse.

Early Intervention

An integrated public body approach, to support people to recover faster and live healthier and more independent lives.

MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)

A meeting bringing agencies together to undertake a comprehensive assessment of a victim's needs including any children, and link them, and the perpetrator to appropriate services.

Marginalised communities

Those excluded from mainstream social, economic, educational, and/or cultural life including ethnic minorities, low-income individuals, people with physical and mental disabilities, LGBTQ+, and older people.

Multi-agency

Professionals from different agencies working together to reduce duplication and improve services, whilst saving money.

Perpetrators

People who use abusive behaviours and actions to cause harm.

Prevention

Not all problems can be prevented, but for those that can, by providing people with the early support it reduces the need for crisis intervention.

Trauma Informed

A practice of recognising the widespread impact of trauma increasing professional's awareness of how trauma can impact individuals and delivering support in a personal way.

Victims/survivors

Someone who has been subjected to domestic abuse, including adults, children and young people.

Whole System

Local stakeholders come together, share an understanding of the reality of the challenges and consider how the local system operates bringing change through shared activities in an integrated way with long term benefit.

Introduction

Domestic Abuse (DA) continues to present a significant and complex challenge for many, including adults from marginalised communities, men, children, young people and families across Leicestershire; however it must also be recognised that DA is largely a gender-based crime and this Strategy is linked to the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy.

In 2024, Leicestershire County Council commissioned SafeLives, the UK-wide domestic abuse charity, to undertake a comprehensive needs assessment to support the Council in meeting its statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and to strengthen local responses for adults and children affected by abuse.

The SafeLives Needs Assessment highlights that domestic abuse in Leicestershire is widespread and often hidden, with many victims experiencing long-term patterns of harm before receiving support. It reinforces that abuse is not limited to physical violence and frequently includes controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional abuse and economic abuse forms of harm that are not always recognised by victims themselves, their families, or wider communities. This lack of recognition contributes to delayed disclosure and missed opportunities for Early Help.

Crucially, the assessment reflects the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 in recognising children as victims in their own right when they see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse. SafeLives' findings underline the profound impact domestic abuse has on children's safety, emotional wellbeing, development and educational outcomes, and the importance of safeguarding responses that fully understand and address this harm.

The needs assessment also identifies the importance of joined-up, trauma-informed systems. Survivors and professionals described how fragmented responses, unclear pathways and the need to repeat experiences across services can re-traumatise families and undermine safety. Where agencies worked together effectively - particularly across Children and Families services, early help, housing, health, police and specialist domestic abuse provision - families were more likely to receive timely and appropriate support.

SafeLives further emphasised the critical role of early intervention and communication. Many survivors reported that friends, family members and even professionals did not recognise abuse or were unsure how to respond. The assessment highlights the need for clearer, consistent communication across communities and services about what domestic abuse looks like, how it affects children, and how and where to seek help safely.

This Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy responds directly to the findings of the SafeLives Needs Assessment and to the insights survivors gave. It sets out how Leicestershire County Council, working through Children and Families Services and in partnership with local agencies, will strengthen prevention, improve early recognition, protect victim and survivors, and provide coordinated, trauma-informed support.

It describes how safe accommodation and support for domestic abuse (DA) victims and survivors will be provided over the next three years and outlines four objectives that will be the focus of delivery:

- 1. Improve the quality of data and information sharing**
- 2. Early Intervention and Prevention, including detailed communication campaigns**
- 3. Targeted Support**
- 4. Strong Partnership**

Background

Domestic Abuse causes significant harm to individuals, children, families, and communities.

The scale and impact is vast. The SafeLives prevalence tool shows that 98,000 adults in Leicestershire have experienced DA at some point since the age of 16, with approximately 15% experiencing both partner and family abuse. Furthermore 30,500 adult victims have experienced Domestic Abuse in the last year with approximately 8% experiencing both partner and family abuse. 73,500 (68%) are estimated to be female and 35,000 (32%) are estimated to be male. It is further estimated that 6,000 were young victims (16-24years old) and 6,000 were older victims (60+ years old); the overall number of victims has increased year on year.

A Survivor's Perspective

The following statement reflects the voices and experiences of survivors who have contributed to the development of this strategy. It is shared anonymously, with gratitude for their courage and insight:

“Domestic abuse doesn’t always start with violence. For many of us, it begins with control, fear, isolation and the slow loss of confidence. It can happen behind closed doors, while outwardly life appears normal. Speaking out is one of the hardest steps to take — often because you don’t know who to trust, whether you’ll be believed, or what will happen next.”

“When I finally asked for help, what mattered most was being listened to without judgement. I needed professionals who understood that leaving isn’t a single moment, but a process, and that fear doesn’t end just because the abuse has stopped. Practical support — with housing, finances, and my children — made the difference between surviving and being able to rebuild my life.”

“This strategy matters because it recognises that survivors are not all the same. We need services that are accessible, trauma-informed, culturally sensitive and joined-up, so we don’t have to repeat our story again and again. We need responses that focus on safety, dignity and choice.”

“Most importantly, I want others experiencing abuse to know this: you are not alone, the abuse is not your fault, and help should be there when you are ready — not just when you are at crisis point.”

Informed by lived experience, this strategy commits to:

- Putting adult and child survivors’ voices at the heart of decision-making, service design and evaluation
- Believing and validating disclosures of abuse, without blame or judgement
- Providing consistent, trauma-informed support, recognising the long-term impact of abuse
- Reducing barriers to help, including for those facing additional inequalities or risks
- Ensuring safety, choice and control remain central to all interventions

Survivors’ experiences remind us that effective domestic abuse responses are not defined solely by policies or processes, but by how safe, supported and empowered people feel when they seek help. This strategy is grounded in that understanding and will continue to be shaped by the voices of those with lived experience.

Many survivors told us that neither they, nor the people around them, recognised what was happening as domestic abuse. Friends, family members and even professionals often saw

behaviour as ‘relationship problems’ or ‘stress at home’, rather than abuse. This meant that warning signs were missed and support was delayed.

Survivors spoke about how controlling behaviour, emotional harm and financial abuse were normalised or minimised — not only by the perpetrator, but sometimes by those closest to them. Some said that when they tried to talk about what was happening, they were advised to ‘work it out’, ‘stay for the children’, or were not believed, as was the case for a male survivor. This left survivors feeling isolated and unsure where to turn.

Parents shared that fear of judgement, particularly around their parenting, made it even harder to seek help. What helped was when professionals clearly named abuse, explained the impact on children, and reassured survivors that asking for help was a protective step.

Children and young people also described not having the words to explain what they were experiencing. Survivors welcomed the recognition in the Domestic Abuse Act that children are recognised as victims but said that this needs to be matched by clear communication in schools, services and communities about what abuse looks like and how to get help.

Survivors consistently said that better communication - clear, consistent and accessible - could have helped them and those around them recognise abuse earlier. Knowing what domestic abuse is, where to get support, and that help is available without judgement was seen as critical to keeping victims safe.

Survivors’ voices are central to this strategy; their experiences remind us that legislation alone is not enough — it must be translated into compassionate, coordinated and effective local action.

DA Act 2021

The DA Act places a statutory duty on Tier One local authorities to provide support to victims of domestic abuse including children within refuges and other safe accommodation.

The Act strengthens protection and support for victims and survivors by:

- Defining domestic abuse in law, including physical, sexual, emotional, economic and controlling or coercive behaviour
- Recognising children as victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse
- Placing duties on local authorities to assess need and provide support for victims and their children in safe accommodation
- Requiring partnership working between councils, police, health services and other relevant agencies
- Embedding a survivor-centred approach, focused on safety, choice, dignity and long-term recovery

The Priorities

1. Improve the quality of data and information sharing

High-quality data and effective information sharing are essential to understanding the scale and nature of domestic abuse in Leicestershire, identifying risk earlier, protecting children, and delivering coordinated, trauma-informed responses. Current learning highlights variation in how domestic abuse is recorded, shared and used across services, which can limit our ability to respond effectively and to evidence impact.

The Needs Assessment has highlighted that within the datasets across the partnership, data capture for certain categories is lacking. This includes:

- **Ethnicity:** Different ethnic groups have different experiences of services and experience different barriers. It is important to ensure that ethnicity is captured appropriately to fully understand the demographic and needs of people in Leicestershire.
- **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity:** Those in LGBT+ relationships often face additional barriers to reporting and accessing services. It is important to ensure that this information is asked and captured in order to fully understand the demographics and needs of people in Leicestershire.
- **Socio Economic status:** Research in the UK has consistently found vulnerability to DA to be associated with low income, economic strain, and benefit receipt.

It is important to ensure that this information is asked and captured in order to fully understand the demographics and intersecting needs of victims and survivors within Leicestershire.

There have been significant improvements in the level and accuracy of the data collected compared to the previous needs assessment particularly around age, gender and ethnicity. There were challenges in the collection and the consistency of data provided including some partners being unable to provide any data at all.

A concern is that by not capturing the demographic data of the whole family, we cannot understand the needs of the whole family and provide appropriate support.

We will strengthen how domestic abuse data is collected, shared and used across Children and Family Services and partner agencies, ensuring that information supports timely decision-making, safeguards children, reduces repeat harm and drives continuous improvement. Furthermore, by collating and analysing rich data sets commissioning can focus on where it is most needed.

We Will:

- Improve the consistency and quality of domestic abuse recording, including non-physical abuse and the lived experience of children and adults, across Early Help, safeguarding and commissioned services
- Strengthen information-sharing arrangements between Children and Families, Community Safety, Police, Health, Housing, Education and specialist domestic abuse services, in line with statutory guidance
- Reduce duplication and gaps by ensuring families do not have to repeat their experiences unnecessarily
- Develop shared data standards, definitions and pathways, enabling clearer tracking of journeys and outcomes
- Use data intelligently to identify risk earlier, target prevention activity and inform commissioning and service design
- Work with commissioned services to ensure there is a shared understanding of the requirements embedding data requirements into contracts

Intended Outcomes

- Targeted and appropriate support services commissioned for all communities both in terms of need and geography
- A clear understanding of victim's characteristics, areas of multiple disadvantage and complex needs
- A clearer, shared understanding of domestic abuse prevention and support need and patterns across Leicestershire
- Earlier identification of risk
- More coordinated, timely and proportionate responses across agencies
- Improved ability to evidence impact, outcomes and value for money

- Greater accountability and learning across the partnership

Performance Measures and Success Indicators

- Percentage of cases where the impact on children is explicitly captured
- Reduction in missing or incomplete domestic abuse fields across systems
- Percentage of relevant cases with evidence of timely multi-agency information sharing
- Reduction in the number of times survivors are asked to repeat their experiences across services
- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and multi-agency meeting records demonstrating improved data completeness and action tracking
- Regular publication of a multi-agency domestic abuse dashboard to inform strategic oversight
- Evidence that data is used to identify trends, target early help and improve service access for under-represented groups
- Annual reporting demonstrating how learning from data, audits and reviews has informed service improvement

Strategic Commitment

By improving the quality of data and information sharing, we will ensure that domestic abuse responses in Leicestershire are better informed, better connected and more effective. This priority underpins all others in the strategy and is critical to delivering safer outcomes for victims and survivors including children and families.

2. Early Intervention and Prevention including Communication

Early intervention and prevention are essential to reducing the harm caused by domestic abuse and improving outcomes for victims and survivors. Evidence from the local needs assessment and survivor engagement shows that opportunities to identify abuse earlier are often missed, particularly within universal services where families have regular contact but concerns may not yet meet statutory thresholds.

Embedding a 'Making Every Contact Count' (MECC) approach will ensure that every professional contact becomes an opportunity to recognise early signs of domestic abuse, build trust and support safe disclosure.

We will strengthen early intervention and prevention through regular training and by embedding a clear, consistent domestic abuse response across Family Hubs, Early Help and education settings, ensuring that abuse is recognised early, responded to proportionately, and addressed before risk escalates.

We recognise the pivotal prevention and early help role of universal services, including District Councils through housing, community safety, environmental health and early help which contribute to preventing escalation and reinforcing whole system ownership.

We Will:

- Roll out healthy conversation skills training across Family Hubs, Early Help, Education and partner agencies, equipping staff to recognise cues, ask open questions, respond safely to disclosures and offer initial advice or signposting
- Embed domestic abuse awareness and training, safe enquiry and response within Family Hub services, including health visiting, midwifery, perinatal mental health, early years and parenting support
- Ensure Family Hubs act as trusted access points for advice, information and early help for parents and carers experiencing domestic abuse

- Provide clear pathways from Family Hubs into Early Help, specialist domestic abuse support and safeguarding services where required
- Embed domestic abuse consistently within Early Help assessment, planning and review processes, ensuring non-physical abuse and coercive control are recognised
- Ensure Early Help pathways clearly distinguish between healthy relationships, parental conflict and domestic abuse, enabling the right response at the right level
- Strengthen step-up and step-down arrangements so families experience continuity of support as needs change
- Strengthen the role of schools and colleges as key partners in early identification and prevention, recognising the impact of domestic abuse on attendance, behaviour and emotional wellbeing
- Support Designated Safeguarding Leads and school staff to recognise signs of domestic abuse affecting children and families, including where abuse occurs at home
- Ensure schools and colleges have clear routes into safeguarding services and support from specialist providers, and understand how to respond safely to disclosures
- Promote preventative education, including healthy relationships, safety and resilience, using age-appropriate approaches

Intended Outcomes

- Domestic abuse is identified earlier across universal and early help services
- Families receive timely, proportionate support before harm escalates
- Children affected by domestic abuse are recognised and supported sooner
- Improved confidence among professionals to act at the earliest opportunity including through effective use of MECC and healthy conversation skills
- Reduced escalation to crisis, statutory intervention and repeat harm

Performance Measures and Success Indicators

- Increase in identification of victims and perpetrators at an early stage
- Percentage of people signposted or referred to support soon after early signs are detected
- Proportion of practitioners trained in domestic abuse-informed practice
- Increase in timely engagement with services following first contact
- Reduction in repeat victimisation or repeat police callouts
- Improvements in survivor coping skills, confidence, and self-efficacy
- Reduction in stress, anxiety, and trauma symptoms experienced by survivors
- Increased access to housing, financial support, legal advice, and social networks
- Better community understanding of domestic abuse including the complexity of it and where to find support
- Increase in help-seeking behaviours

Strategic Commitment

By embedding domestic abuse awareness into early intervention and prevention within Family Hubs, Early Help and schools, we will ensure that victims in Leicestershire receive the right support at the earliest opportunity. This approach shifts the system from crisis response to earlier, safer and more effective intervention, reducing harm and improving long-term outcomes.

Communication

Through engagement activity undertaken across Leicestershire, survivors highlighted the need for:

- Greater public understanding of domestic abuse, including non-physical and controlling behaviours
- Clearer information for friends, family and whole communities, so they can recognise abuse and respond safely
- Consistent messages across services, reducing confusion about thresholds, roles and support available
- Early conversations with parents and children, using accessible, age-appropriate language
- Visible, trusted routes to help, so survivors know where to turn when they are ready

Survivors' engagement has made clear that earlier recognition and better communication can change outcomes for victims; we shall work tirelessly to raise awareness amongst the public and professionals through various routes including:

- Face to face engagement eg community meetings and forums
- Digital and on line channels eg Local authority website updates and news pages
- Printed communications eg newsletter and posters in GP surgeries
- Media engagement eg press releases and radio interviews
- Community partnerships eg working through faith/community leaders and schools

3. DA Act (Part 4) – Safe Accommodation

Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a statutory duty on local authorities to assess the need for, and commission, support for victims and their children within relevant safe accommodation. This includes refuges, dispersed accommodation, sanctuary schemes and other forms of safe housing, alongside the specialist support required to help families remain safe and begin recovery.

There are currently 21 safe accommodation spaces in Leicestershire. The Council of Europe recommendation is 1 family place per 10,000 population. The population of Leicestershire is 706,155 therefore the recommended number is 70 spaces. The current provision available in Leicestershire is significantly below the recommended level, furthermore, referrals for Safe Accommodation have increased significantly as have homelessness presentations.

Homelessness presentations by victims of DA to District housing teams is continuing to increase. through commitment to strategic joint working with district housing authorities we commit to support earlier intervention and maximise safe, sustainable move on options.

We will continue to strengthen our duties under Part 4 of the Act by ensuring that victims of domestic abuse and their children can access safe, appropriate accommodation and high-quality, trauma-informed support, regardless of their circumstances. This priority recognises that safe accommodation is not only about housing, but about safety, stability, dignity and long-term outcomes for families.

We Will:

- Fulfil our statutory responsibilities by maintaining a robust local needs assessment, regularly reviewed and informed by data, lived experience and partnership intelligence
- Commission and coordinate a range of safe accommodation options, including refuge, dispersed and sanctuary provision, to meet diverse needs
- Ensure victims and their children receive specialist, trauma-informed support while in safe accommodation, recognising children as victims in their own right
- Strengthen pathways into and out of safe accommodation, including planned move-on, housing sustainment and community-based support

- Work through the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board to provide strong governance, oversight and accountability for Part 4 delivery
- Reduce barriers to access, including for victims with additional needs or facing disadvantage, ensuring services are accessible and inclusive
- Ensure effective joint working with Children and Families services, safeguarding partners, housing providers and specialist domestic abuse services

Intended Outcomes

- Victims are able to access safe accommodation when needed
- Children in safe accommodation are recognised and supported as victims of domestic abuse through commissioned specific specialist workers in temporary safe accommodation
- Families experience coordinated, trauma-informed support that promotes safety and recovery
- Improved move-on outcomes, reducing repeat homelessness and repeat abuse
- Clear accountability and assurance in meeting statutory duties

Performance Measures and Success Indicators

- Availability and utilisation of safe accommodation aligned to identified need
- Reduced waiting times for access to appropriate safe accommodation
- Range of provision meeting the needs of families, including those with additional or complex needs, men and marginalised communities
- Percentage of adults and children in safe accommodation receiving specialist support
- Improved safety, wellbeing and stability reported by survivors and children
- Successful planned move-on from safe accommodation into stable housing
- Effective operation of the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board
- Regular reporting against Part 4 duties, needs assessment findings and commissioning outcomes
- Evidence that survivor feedback and learning inform service improvement

Strategic Commitment

Through this priority, we will ensure that Leicestershire County Council continues to meet its statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Part 4 while striving to go beyond minimum requirements. By working in partnership and keeping victims and survivors at the centre of our approach, we will deliver safe accommodation and support that not only protects from immediate harm, but helps them build safer, more stable futures.

Leicestershire and Rutland Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board

The Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board provides strategic leadership, governance and accountability for the delivery of domestic abuse priorities across Leicestershire and Rutland, with a specific statutory role in overseeing duties under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 relating to support in safe accommodation. The Board brings together key partners to ensure a coordinated, survivor-centred and evidence-led response to domestic abuse, with a strong focus on safeguarding children and supporting families affected by abuse.

The Local Partnership Board:

- Provides strategic oversight of the Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy and associated delivery plans
- Supports the Council to meet its statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, particularly Part 4
- Oversees the development, review and implementation of the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment

- Agrees priorities for commissioning and service development, informed by data, lived experience and local need
- Champions a whole-system, partnership approach, ensuring alignment across Children and Families, Community Safety, Health, Housing, Police, Education and the voluntary sector
- Promotes trauma-informed, survivor-centred practice, recognising children as victims in their own right
- Ensures learning from survivor engagement, audits, Domestic Homicide Reviews and performance data informs continuous improvement

Membership of the Local Partnership Board reflects statutory guidance and local need and includes representation from across Leicestershire and Rutland, furthermore the Board ensures that survivor and lived experience voices are meaningfully embedded within its work through a Survivor Advisory Group.

The Local Partnership Board is accountable for:

- Ensuring clear lines of responsibility for the delivery of Part 4 duties and wider strategy priorities
- Agreeing and monitoring performance measures and outcomes, including access to safe accommodation and support for children
- Holding partners to account for their contributions to agreed actions and outcomes
- Escalating risks, gaps or system pressures to senior leadership and relevant governance bodies
- Ensuring decisions are evidence-based, transparent and focused on improving safety and outcomes

The Board operates with clear terms of reference, decision-making processes and reporting arrangements.

To ensure effective delivery, the Local Partnership Board:

- Receives regular performance reports against the Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy and Part 4 delivery plan
- Monitors trends in demand, access, outcomes and equality of service provision
- Uses a multi-agency domestic abuse performance dashboard to support oversight and decision-making
- Commissions or request audits, reviews and deep-dives where concerns are identified
- Ensures actions are taken in response to learning from data, survivor feedback and statutory reviews

4.Strong Partnerships

Domestic Abuse cannot be prevented or reduced by any single organisation working alone. Strong, effective partnerships are essential to identifying risk early, safeguarding children, supporting survivors, holding perpetrators to account and delivering coordinated, trauma-informed responses. Local evidence and survivor feedback consistently show that where agencies work well together, families experience safer, more timely and more effective support.

Leicestershire has strong partnership arrangements in place to share information and develop joint plans to protect victims and survivors and hold perpetrators to account – the MARAC continues to take a joint approach to risk assessment and safety planning for victims living in Leicestershire. A review of the MARAC has been undertaken by SafeLives and recommendations are being implemented across the partnership.

We will continue to strengthen and sustain partnerships across statutory, voluntary, community and faith sectors to ensure a shared understanding of domestic abuse, clear roles and responsibilities, and joined-up action at every stage of a victims journey.

We Will:

- Strengthen multi-agency collaboration across Children and Families, Community Safety, Health, Police, Housing, Education, Probation and specialist domestic abuse services
- Ensure partners share a common vision and shared priorities, grounded in safeguarding children and supporting survivors
- Clarify roles, responsibilities and pathways, so survivors experience coordinated support rather than fragmented responses
- Value and support the role of the voluntary and community sector, recognising their expertise, trusted relationships and reach into communities
- Embed domestic abuse as a shared priority across strategic boards, partnerships and governance arrangements
- Promote a culture of mutual challenge, learning and accountability, using data, audits and lived experience to drive improvement

Intended Outcomes

- Consistent, joined-up responses to domestic abuse across agencies
- Clear and timely pathways for children, survivors and families
- Reduced duplication and fewer gaps between services
- Improved safety, experience and outcomes for families affected by domestic abuse
- Stronger system resilience and shared ownership of risk

Performance Measures and Success Indicators

- Regular attendance and engagement from key partners at strategic and operational forums
- Clear, agreed pathways and protocols in place and consistently used
- Partner feedback indicating improved clarity of roles and joint working
- Evidence of coordinated multi-agency plans for families affected by domestic abuse
- Reduction in delays caused by hand-offs or unclear responsibilities
- Improved timeliness of referrals and access to support
- Learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews, audits and case reviews shared and acted upon across partners
- Joint training and development activity delivered and evaluated
- Evidence that partnership learning informs service design and commissioning
- Domestic Homicide Review recommendations are actioned across the system

Strategic Commitment

By investing in strong partnerships, we will ensure that domestic abuse responses are coordinated, consistent and effective, and that no single service carries risk alone. This priority underpins the whole strategy and reflects our commitment to working together to safeguard children, support survivors and reduce domestic abuse across our communities.

Domestic Homicide Reviews

A Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) is a statutory, multi-agency review that must be carried out when the death of a person aged 16 or over has resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a current or former intimate partner, or a family member. The purpose of a DHR is not to apportion blame, but to identify learning that can improve future responses to domestic abuse and reduce the risk of further deaths. DHRs consider the contact that victims, perpetrators and their families had with statutory agencies, voluntary organisations and other services, and examine how agencies worked both individually and together.

Domestic Homicide Reviews are, by their nature, a partnership responsibility. Effective DHRs depend on the active engagement, openness and accountability of all relevant agencies, including local authorities, police, health, housing, probation, education and specialist domestic abuse services.

Nationally the terminology will change from Domestic Homicide Reviews to Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews. This will reinforce learning from a broader range of domestic abuse related deaths, including suicide, to inform prevention and early intervention.

Within Leicestershire, DHRs are overseen through established governance arrangements within the Safeguarding Partnerships Board Office, with learning shared across strategic and operational partnerships, including the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board, Children and Families Partnership, Safeguarding Children Partnership, Safeguarding Adults Board and Community Safety Partnerships. A dedicated officer oversees this work.

Partnerships play a critical role in ensuring that:

- Reviews are conducted thoroughly, independently and within statutory timescales
- Agencies contribute openly and reflectively to the review process
- Learning is translated into practical, system-wide improvements, rather than remaining a paper exercise
- The victim and their family remain central to the process

Learning and System Improvement

Domestic Homicide Reviews provide vital insight into:

- Missed opportunities for early identification and intervention
- How information was shared, or not shared, between agencies
- The impact of domestic abuse on children and families
- Barriers faced by victims in accessing support
- How risk was assessed, managed and escalated
- Gaps in services and support available within the local community / across the service area

A key responsibility of local partnerships is to ensure that learning from DHRs is embedded across the system, not confined to the agencies directly involved in a specific case. This includes identifying recurring themes, systemic issues and workforce development needs.

Partnership Responsibilities for DHR Learning

Through this strategy, partners commit to:

- Treating DHRs as a collective learning process, with shared responsibility for improvement
- Ensuring that recommendations are owned, tracked and delivered through appropriate governance structures
- Sharing learning across Children and Families services, safeguarding arrangements, MARAC, Early Help, Family Hubs, schools and frontline practitioners
- Using DHR findings to inform policy, practice, commissioning, training and communication activity
- Considering the specific learning relating to children's lived experience, non-physical abuse, coercive control, and information sharing
- Reviewing progress regularly and challenging where change is not being achieved

The Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board provides strategic oversight of DHR learning in relation to domestic abuse and ensures alignment with the Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy. The Board will:

- Receive regular updates on DHR progress, themes and actions
- Monitor delivery of agreed actions and escalate concerns where required
- Ensure learning is reflected in strategy priorities, delivery plans and performance frameworks
- Work alongside safeguarding and community safety partnerships to ensure coherent and coordinated responses

Domestic Homicide Reviews remind us of the serious consequences of domestic abuse and the importance of getting responses right. As partners, we commit to approaching DHRs with professional curiosity, humility and a shared determination to improve.

By learning together, challenging constructively and acting decisively, partnerships in Leicestershire will use DHRs to strengthen early intervention, improve information sharing, safeguard children and ultimately reduce the risk of future harm and loss of life.

How This Strategy Will Be Delivered

The Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy will be delivered through a whole-system, partnership-led approach, recognising that reducing domestic abuse and improving outcomes for victims and survivors requires coordinated action across statutory, voluntary and community partners.

Delivery will be underpinned by strong governance, clear accountability, effective partnership working, robust data and continuous learning.

Overall leadership and accountability for delivery of this strategy will sit with the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board. The Board will provide strategic direction, oversight and challenge, ensuring that the priorities of this strategy are delivered and that statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, including Part 4, are met.

Each strategic priority within this strategy will be supported by:

- A defined set of delivery actions
- Named lead agencies and partners
- Clear outcomes and performance measures
- Timescales for delivery

A detailed delivery plan will be maintained and reviewed regularly to ensure progress is tracked, actions remain relevant, and resources are targeted effectively.

Delivering the Strategy

The Strategy will be delivered through a confident, skilled and supported workforce.

This will include:

- Multi-agency training and development aligned to strategy priorities
- Strengthening understanding of domestic abuse, including non-physical abuse and coercive control
- Embedding trauma-informed, strengths-based practice across services
- Supporting professionals to identify abuse early and respond appropriately

Learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews, audits, MARAC and survivor feedback will be used to continuously improve practice.

Delivery will be informed by high-quality data and shared intelligence. A multi-agency approach to data and information sharing will support:

- Early identification of risk
- Monitoring demand, access and outcomes

- Identifying inequalities and unmet need
- Evidence-based decision-making and commissioning

Performance will be monitored through agreed indicators and reported regularly to the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and relevant governance structures.

Survivors, children and families will remain central to delivery of the strategy.

This will be achieved by:

- Ongoing engagement with survivors and young people
- Using lived experience to inform service design, commissioning and communication
- Gathering feedback on service experience and outcomes
- Ensuring survivor voice informs review and improvement activity

This strategy is a living document. Progress will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains responsive to emerging need, learning and changes in the local or national context.

We will:

- Publish regular progress updates and annual reports
- Review and refresh delivery actions as required
- Track and deliver actions arising from reviews and learning
- Hold partners to account for agreed commitments

Our Commitment

Through strong leadership, shared accountability and effective partnership working, this strategy will be delivered in a way that is coordinated, evidence-led and focused on improving safety and outcomes. By working together, we will reduce harm, strengthen early intervention, support recovery and ensure that children and families affected by domestic abuse receive the help they need, when they need it.

For further information about this Strategy please contact:

communitysafety@leics.gov.uk

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Leicestershire County Council

Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment

November 2024

About SafeLives

We are SafeLives, the UK-wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse, for everyone and for good.

We work with organisations across the UK to transform the response to domestic abuse. We want what you would want for your best friend. We listen to survivors, putting their voices at the heart of our thinking. We look at the whole picture for each individual and family to get the right help at the right time to make families everywhere safe and well. And we challenge perpetrators to change, asking 'why doesn't he stop?' rather than 'why doesn't she leave?' This applies whatever the gender of the victim or perpetrator and whatever the nature of their relationship.

Last year alone, nearly 11,000 professionals working on the frontline received our training. Over 65,000 adults at risk of serious harm or murder and more than 85,000 children received support through dedicated multi-agency support designed by us and delivered with partners. In the last three years, over 1,000 perpetrators have been challenged and supported to change by interventions we created with partners, and that's just the start. Together we can end domestic abuse. Forever. For everyone.

Glossary

DA – Domestic Abuse

Dash – Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-Based Violence

DHR – Domestic Homicide Review

HBV – Honour Based Violence

Idva- Independent Domestic Violence Advisor

IPV – Intimate Partner Violence

LA – Local Authorities

LPB – Local Partnership Board

Marac – Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference

MSF – Most Similar Force (Police)

NRPF – No Recourse to Public Funds

VAWG – Violence Against Women and Girls

Content

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About this project

Context

SafeLives have been commissioned to provide support and coordination to Leicestershire County Council in carrying out the Safe Accommodation needs assessment in line with their statutory duty under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

This report outlines our findings, following review and analysis of data provided by agencies and organisations across Leicestershire, and from hearing the voice and experiences of victims and survivors.

We are very grateful to everyone who participated in this needs assessment. Their willingness to share information and expertise helped us immensely with drawing together the detail in this report.

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Project aims and objectives

The project aims were to support the Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Local Partnership in gaining an understanding of the current landscape for safe accommodation to enable effective planning and commissioning.

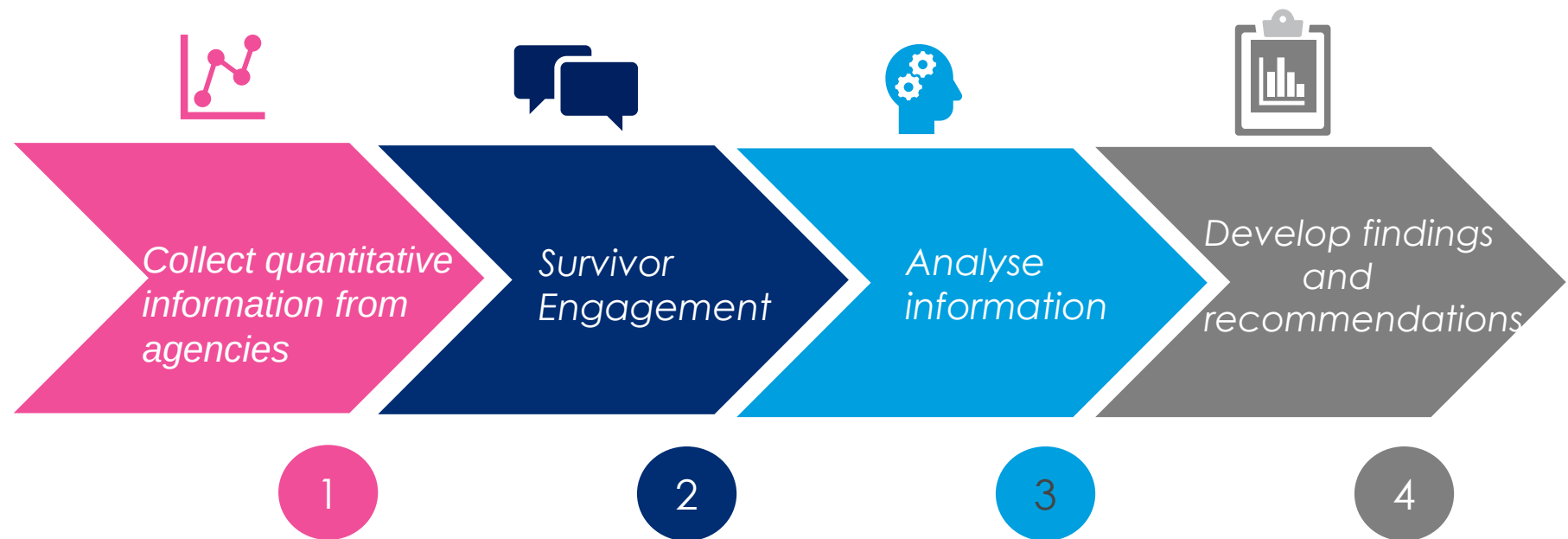
Key objectives were:

- Carry out a needs assessment of safe accommodation across Leicestershire County
- A review of safe accommodation provision
- Identify gaps and needs in safe accommodation provision
- Review and assess implementation of recommendations from the previous needs assessment

Data was collated using the MHCLG needs assessment tool. Comparative data from SafeLives national data sets was used and analysed using a number of SafeLives tools including the prevalence tool.

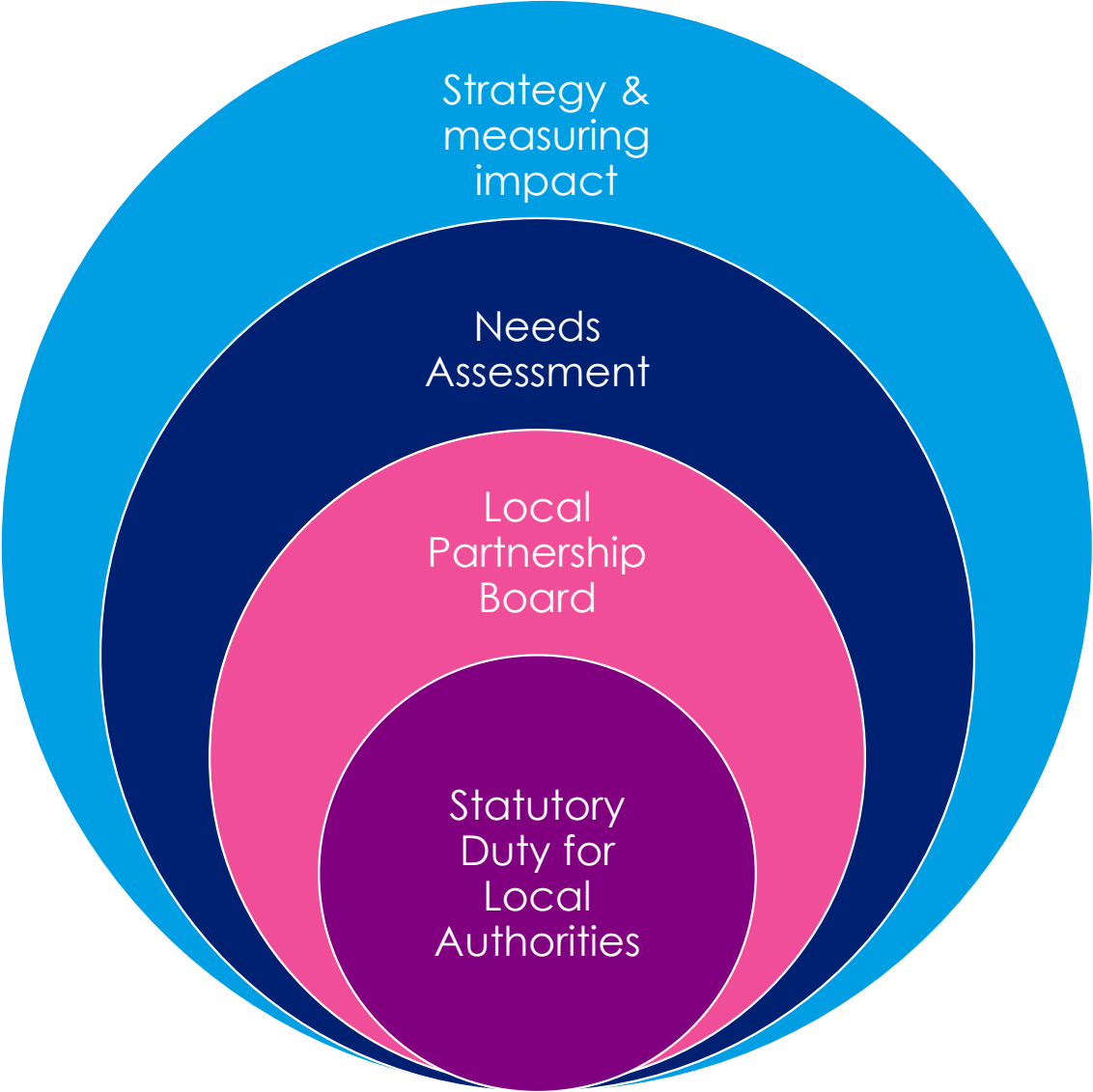
This work will enable Leicestershire County Council to gain a clearer understanding of local need in relation to safe accommodation and will help to inform their domestic abuse strategy and any subsequent commissioning.

Our Approach



A full list of agencies providing data is in Appendix A

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Duty



The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Duty



Statutory Duty for Local Authorities

Statutory duty on Tier One local authorities to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within refuges and other safe accommodation.

A four-part statutory framework for the delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation and provides clarity over governance and accountability.

Local Authorities will be required to appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board which will carry out a governance and consultative role as it performs certain specified function.



Provide advice to Area about its functions under Section 55 of the DA Act

Core membership as set out in the DA Act and statutory guidance with Authentic Voice for both adult and child victims essential.

Responsibilities are

- Assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support for all victims in their area, including those who require cross-border support
- Develop and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their locality, having regard to the needs assessment
- Give effect to the strategy (through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions)
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy



Assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support for all victims in Leicestershire County, including those who require cross-border support

When - every three years

How - Using the template provided gather data from local sources

Who - Tier 1 LA to carry out through DA Local Partnership Boards, others who must co-operate are Tier 2 LA, DA services, refuge services

What - Mapping current provision for safe accommodation and support

- Mapping current need, who and how much need for safe accommodation and support



Develop and publish: a strategy for provision of support, using the needs assessment

Develop a domestic abuse strategy encompassing the provision of support, informed by the needs assessment

- Implement the strategy through commissioning
- Tier 1 LAs in England must send an annual report to the Secretary of State on how it is realising the strategy
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.



Local Partnership Board

Domestic Abuse Partnership Board Membership

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 sets out a core membership of the Domestic Abuse Partnership board.

Since the previous needs assessment there have been changes made to the board and its membership. The Leicestershire Local Partnership Board has joined with Rutland Council to form the Leicestershire and Rutland Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board.

Having reviewed membership of the boards, there are opportunities to strengthen. It is noted that work to include the Survivor Advisory Board within the Partnership Boards is ongoing.

It is positive to see the inclusion of a specific post to represent the interests of adult victims of domestic abuse. There are opportunities to strengthen the role of the representative of the interests of child victims of domestic abuse which currently sits with one of the local domestic abuse services.

The Echo Project will support with the strengthening of both the adult and child victim representative role, amplifying the authentic voice of victims and survivors within the partnership board.

Another positive is the inclusion of a number of domestic abuse and specialist by and for services. This shows a clear commitment to understanding the differing and intersecting needs of victims and survivors, and the vital role specialist by and for services have in this.



Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment

Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment

The Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment is a comprehensive tool that enables you to capture data covering a range of themes relating to safe accommodation.

This needs assessment will inform your strategy, not only for safe accommodation but for the domestic abuse system as a whole. It is important to view this in the context of a whole picture approach, not only doing what is necessary but thinking of the art of the possible.

Survivor voice is an essential component of this needs assessment and throughout the requirements of the Statutory Duty. By listening to the authentic, unmediated voice of victims and survivors, we truly understand the barriers, challenges and good practice they experience.

What can we learn, what are our gaps and how can we build on our success.

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Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment

Within this section we present the assessment for all victims accessing services. This is not inclusive of those accessing safe accommodation as this will be addressed further in the document.

Alongside the Tier 1 data provided by Leicestershire Children and Adult Services, the assessment utilises data submitted from Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC), Oadby & Wigston Borough Council (OWBC), North-West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC), Melton Borough Council (MBC), Harborough District Council (HDC). Blaby District Council (BDC) did provide limited data. Due to queries with the data which we were not able to resolve by the time of writing, we have been unable to use their homelessness data within the needs assessment. Their Domestic Abuse service data has been included. Charnwood Borough Council (CBC) were unable to provide a data return for this assessment.

It is likely that there are further victims about whom we have not been provided information of, and it is important to note that the figures included here only reflect those victims included in the data provided and the ones we are aware of. The data may also include duplicate counting as victims may have approached or been in contact with multiple services/agencies.

Where there are anomalies in the data, these are detailed within the relevant section of the report.

A full list of agencies who supplied data can be found in **Appendix A**

Throughout this work we have used our Prevalence Tool. These figures are estimates calculated with the site's prevalence data and have been rounded down to reflect that they are approximations. The joint prevalence figures for Area were calculated using combined data from two areas. There may be small differences between the joint prevalence figures and the combined totals of prevalence areas from the two areas due to the rounding process.

Further information regarding the Prevalence Tool can be found in the next section of this report.

Prevalence of Domestic Abuse

The Prevalence Tool

What is the prevalence tool?

The SafeLives prevalence tool estimates the prevalence of domestic abuse within local areas. This includes an estimation for the number of victims, perpetrators of abuse, and children in households with partner abuse. It also breaks down the victim estimations into visible victims only, Adult Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) victims only, and marginalised groups of people such as racially minoritised people, LGBT+ people, and disabled people.

How does it work?

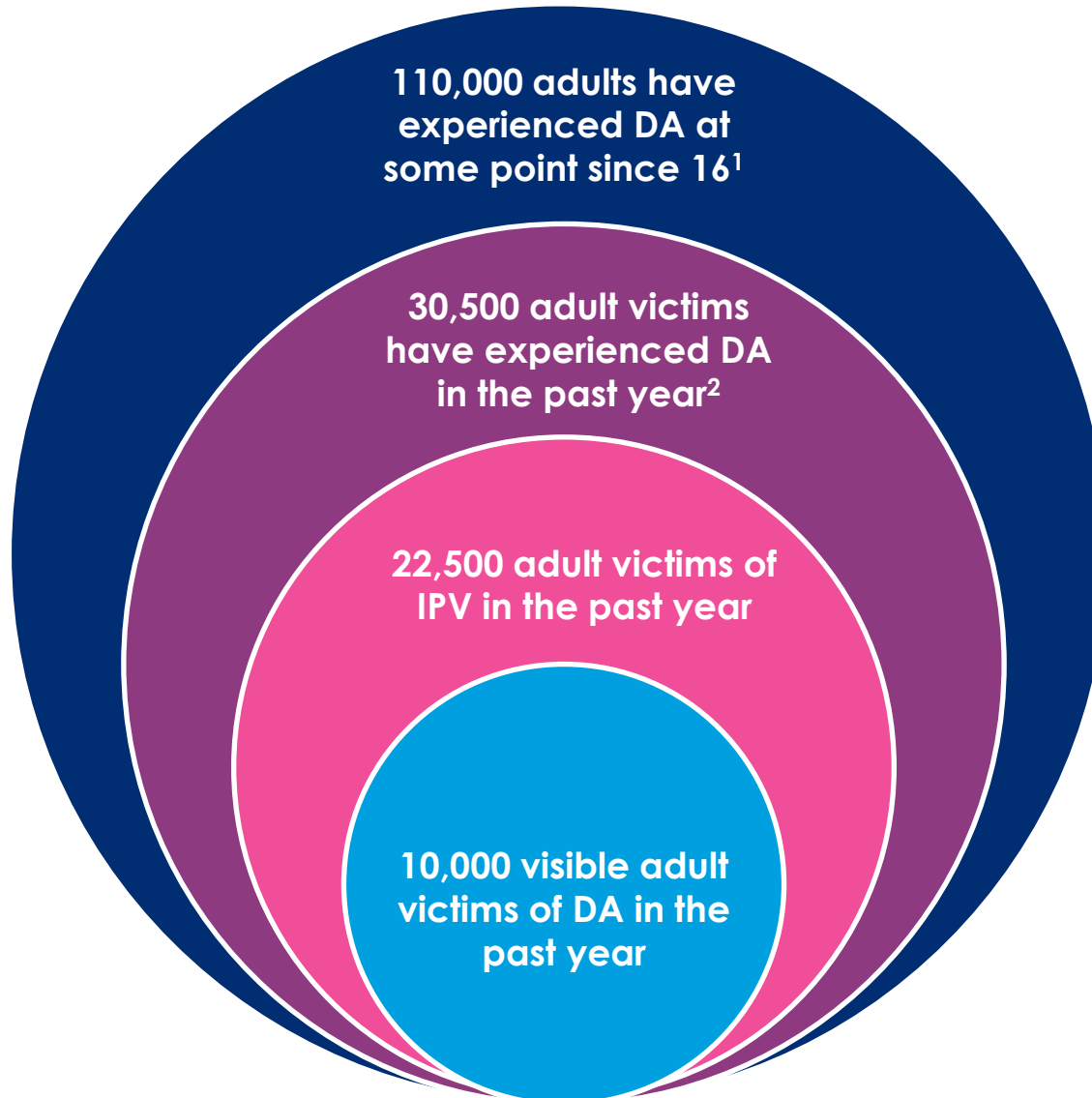
The tool calculates the figures by using several external and internal data sources for estimations of domestic abuse amongst different groups of people. This includes both 'set figures' which are consistent across all local areas, as well as 'local specific data'. The 'set figures' include data from the ONS (Office for National Statistics) including the 'Crime Survey for England and Wales' (2020) and the 'Family Resources Survey', Stonewall data, and SafeLives estimations such as the number of children experiencing abuse in their household. 'Local specific data' includes population data for each area on gender, age and ethnicity taken from the latest Census (2021) survey, as well as data on those at the highest risk of serious harm or homicide taken from the latest Marac dataset.

Please note:

The numbers provided are estimations and have been rounded down. All calculations are based on population data from the 2021 Census. The tool uses the 2020 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), we decided not to use the more recent CSEW version due to various data collection issues which means they have not been defined as national statistics.

Number of victims: Overview

Leicestershire



The SafeLives prevalence tool uses data from the Crime Survey England and Wales (CSEW) merged with local population data. It is in the ONS domestic abuse bulletin and more specifically the prevalence and trends paper. We also use Marac data to capture a true understanding of the prevalence of domestic abuse in a local area.

This details the estimated number of victims who have experienced domestic abuse (DA), not the number of victims who have accessed services. 204

¹Around 15% will have experienced both partner abuse and family abuse

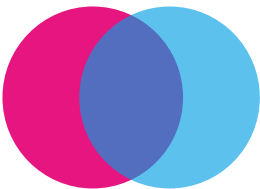
²Around 8% will have experienced both partner abuse and family abuse

Caveat: The CSEW dataset used is for the year ending in March 2020. This is due to a period of suspended data collection during Covid resulting in the March 2022 dataset which has much lower response rates and highly suppressed figures affecting the quality of estimates. CSEW data is to be updated with the July 2023 dataset when available.

Prevalence of adult victims – since the age of 16



We estimate there are **98,000** adult victims in Leicestershire who have experienced domestic abuse at **some point in their lives since the age of 16**



An estimated **15%** of these adult victims will have experienced **both partner and family abuse**

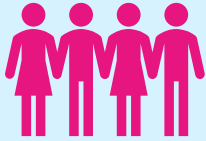


Of the total estimated adult victims **73,500 (68%)** are estimated to be **female**

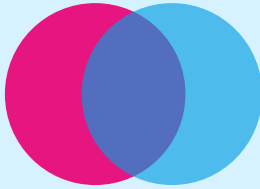


Of the total estimated adult victims **35,000 (32%)** are estimated to be **male**

Prevalence of adult victims – in the past year



We estimate there are **30,000** adult victims in Leicestershire who have experienced domestic abuse at **some point in the last year**



We estimate that around **8%** of those adult victims will have experienced **both partner and family abuse**



Of the total estimated adult victims in the past year, **20,500 (68%)** are estimated to be **female**



Of the total estimated adult victims in the past year, **9,500 (32%)** are estimated to be **male**

Caveat: Older (75+) victim prevalence rates are based on a proxy rate from the CSEW for abuse in the past year only for those aged 60-74. This is because there is no CSEW prevalence rate data for the year ending in March 2020 for those aged 75+.

The sum of females and males may not add up to the total due to rounding.

Prevalence of adult victims – in the past year – visible victims



■ Visible victims in past year ■ Non-visible victims in past year

Visible victims = the estimated number of adult victims in the local area who have experienced domestic abuse in the past year and who could be considered as wishing to access services. This is as they reported in the CSEW that they had “told other support professional or organisation”. This calculation uses a combination of Marac data to show visible high-risk victims and CSEW data for visible non-high risk victims.

Non-visible victims = the estimated number of adult victims in the local area who have experienced domestic abuse in the past year and who could be considered as not wishing to access service / not visible to services.

Caveat: Marac data recording can vary amongst local areas depending on their Marac processes, for instance some have triaging systems where not all the initial referrals are recorded. These differences will impact on the prevalence estimations for visible high-risk victims.

This shows the estimated number of **visible** adult victims in the local area in the past year. We estimate that a **third (34%) of female victims** and a **quarter (24%) of male victims** in the past year were visible. This calculation uses a combination of Marac data to show visible high-risk victims and data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for visible non-high risk victims as they reported in the CSEW that they had “told other support professional or organisation”.

Prevalence of adult victims – in the past year – marginalised groups



We estimate that there were **6,000 Young victims** aged 16-24¹

- Useful resource: see our [Spotlights on Young People and DA](#)



We estimate that there were **6,000 Older victims** aged 60+²

- Useful resource: see our [Spotlights on Older People and DA](#)



We estimate that there were **1,500 Black, Asian and racially minoritised victims** who have experienced domestic abuse in the past year³.

- Useful resource: see our [Spotlights on 'Honour'-based Violence and Forced marriage and DA](#)



We estimate that there were **7,500 Disabled victims** of domestic abuse in the past year

- Useful resource: see our [Spotlights on Disabled people and DA](#)



We estimate that there were **5,500 LGB+ victims** of domestic abuse in the past year⁴

- Useful resource: see our [Spotlights on LGB+ people and DA](#)

1. The CSEW only provides prevalence rates for 16-19 and 20-24 year olds, therefore an average of these two was calculated for the 18-24 group.

2. Older (75+) victim prevalence rates are based on a proxy rate from the CSEW for abuse in the past year only for those aged 60-74. This is because there is no CSEW prevalence rate data for the year ending in March 2020 for those aged 75+.

3. The CSEW does not accurately reflect the impact of domestic abuse on Black Asian and racially minoritised people, thus, we multiply the number of victims with the Black Asian and racially minoritised proportion of the area including the following: 'Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh', 'Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African', 'Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups', 'White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller', 'White: Roma', and 'Other ethnic group' (data obtained from the ONS census 2021)

4 The prevalence statistic for LGB+ people is based on the CSEW aggregate for Gay and Lesbian people. It does not include trans people as the sample size is too small

Prevalence – in the past year – partner abuse (IPV)



We estimate that there were **22,500** adult victims in the local area who have experienced partner abuse in the past year¹.



We estimate that there were **17,000 children living in a household with partner abuse** in the past year²

- Useful resource: see our [Spotlights on Parenting and DA](#) and our [Spotlights on Young People and DA](#)



We estimate that there were **18,000 people using abusive behaviours** in their intimate partner relationships in the past year in the local area



Of those **20%** are estimated to be **serial perpetrators of domestic abuse**³

1. Older (75+) victim prevalence rates are based on a proxy rate from the CSEW dataset for the year ending March 2020 for those aged 60-74 only. This is because there is no CSEW prevalence rate data for the year ending in March 2020 for those aged 75+.

2. Uses estimations of 41% of households with partner abuse having children in with an average of 1.85 children per household – this data comes from the ONS, with details in SafeLives '[A safe fund](#)' report.

3. Robinson, A.L., Clancy, A. and Hanks, S., 2014. Prevalence and characteristics of serial domestic abuse perpetrators: Multi-agency evidence from Wales.

Overview of Data

Overview 2021 – 2022

15,019



Total number of
adult & child victims

Of these 15,019 records



Age 18 - 64



Under 18



Over 65



Unknown Age

Female	76.9%
Male	19.9%
Non Binary	0.05%
Trans*	0.02%
Other	0.03%
Unknown	0.2%



1. Those age 16/17 may be child victims whose parent/s are in DA Relationships and/or victims of IPV.
2. Adult Victims only

Overview 2022 – 2023

14,815



Total number of
adult & child victims

Of these 14,815 records



Age 18 - 64



Under 18



Over 65



Unknown Age

Female	78.1%
Male	20.3%
Non Binary	0.03%
Trans*	0.04%
Other	0.04%
Unknown	1.5%



1. Those age 16/17 may be child victims whose parent/s are in DA Relationships and/or victims of IPV.
2. Adult Victims only

Overview 2023 – 2024

16,738



Total number of
adult & child victims

Of these 16,738 records



Age 18 - 64



Under 18



Over 65



Unknown Age

Female	77.3%
Male	20.6%
Non Binary	0.06%
Trans*	0.04%
Other	0.04%
Unknown	1.6%



1. Those age 16/17 may be child victims whose parent/s are in DA Relationships and/or victims of IPV.
2. Adult Victims only

Number of Victims

The SafeLives Prevalence Tool, developed in line with our research, estimates that **110,000 adults** in Leicestershire have experienced Domestic Abuse at some point in their lives since the age of 16, with around **15%** experiencing both partner and family abuse.

It also estimates that **30,500 adult victims** have experienced Domestic Abuse in the last year, with around **8%** experiencing both partner and family abuse and **17,000 children** living in a household with partner abuse in the last year.

The total number of adult and child victims identified in the data sets provided by services/agencies in Leicestershire in each of the 3 years the needs assessment covers are:



The overall number of victims has **decreased by 1.4%** from years **2021 – 22 to 2022 – 23**. However, there was a **13% increase** from years **2022 – 23 to 2023 – 24**.

There has been a significant increase in the number of victims identified by agencies since the previous needs assessment. An overall increase of **68%** from the end of the previous assessment to the end of this assessment period. There will be many reasons for this increase including improved identification of domestic abuse, improved or new ways of recording on systems, an increased number of services working with victims such as the housing link workers and more agencies contributing to this assessment.

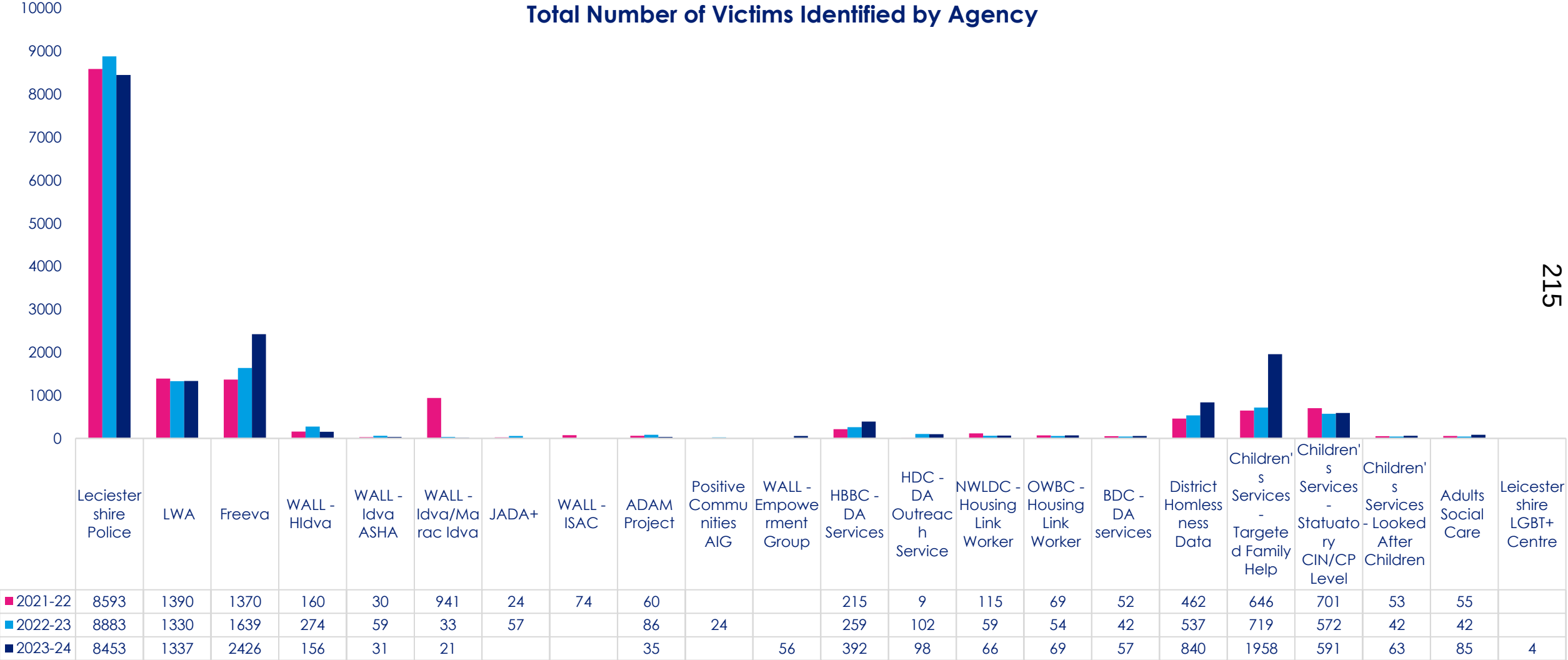
However, it should be noted that there may be an element of duplicate recording i.e. the helpline and the DALs service may both record a victim's details.

*These figures are estimates calculated with the site's prevalence data and so have been rounded down to reflect that they are approximations

Data Trends

Identification by Agency

Total Number of Victims Identified by Agency



215

2021-22 2022-23 2023-24



Identification by Agency

This table on the previous page details the number of victims identified broken down by agency.

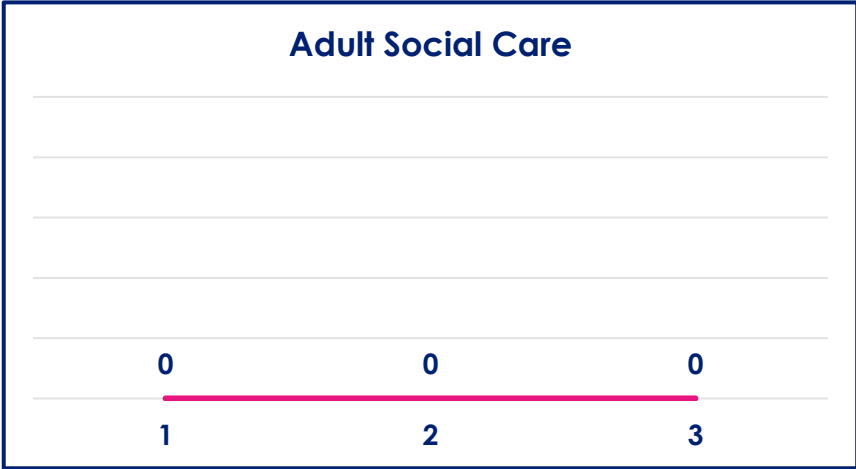
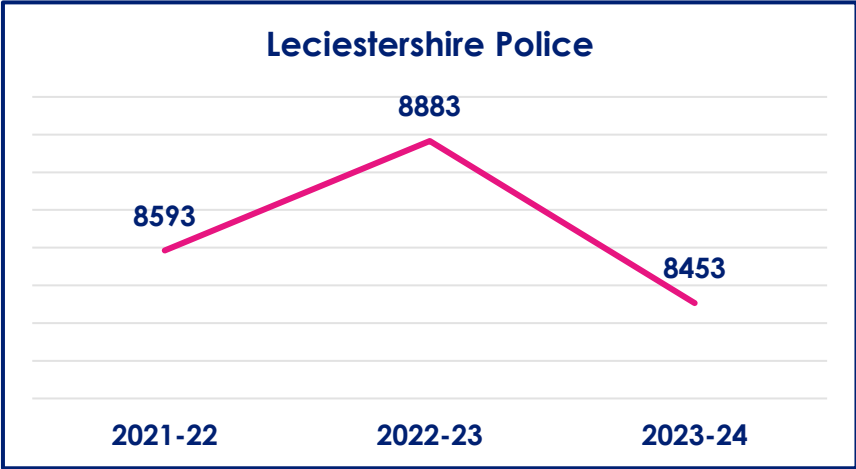
Leicestershire Police, LWA and Freeva have the highest levels of identification of victims in the first two years. Leicestershire Police, Freeva and Targeted Family Help have the highest identification for the final year.

We have been advised that a new system was implemented within Targeted Family Help in the year 2023 – 24 and therefore a new recording a collection system which may account for some of the increase.

The following section will look at the data trends for individual agencies in more detail.

Trends

Victims identified by Service



The number of victims identified by Leicestershire Police increased by **3.4%** from 2021 - 22 to 2022 – 23. It then decreased by **4.8%** in 2023 – 24, which is **1.6%** fewer victims being identified than in 2021 – 22.

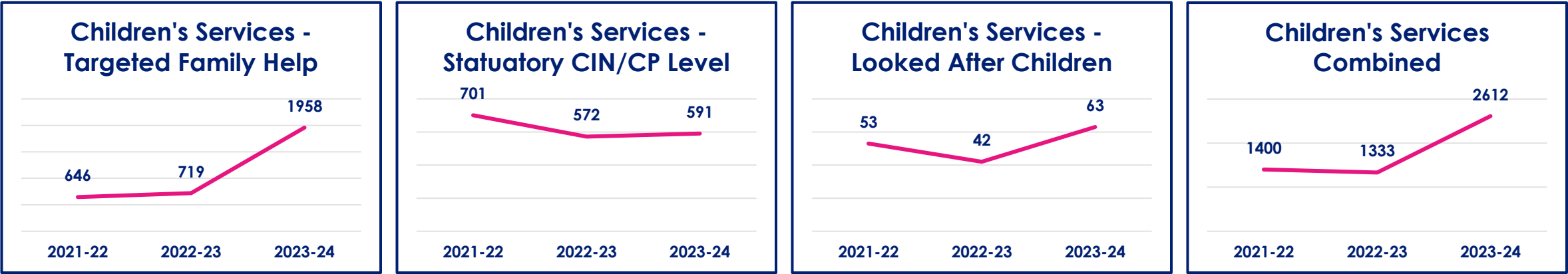
However, when we consider the previous Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment, the number of victims identified by Leicestershire Police was **6979** in 2020 – 21, meaning there has been an increase of **23.1%** from the end of the previous assessment to the first year of this assessment, and an increase **21.1%** victims being identified to the final year of this assessment.

Adult Social Care also saw a decrease in the number of victims identified by **23.6%** from 2021 – 22 to 2022 – 23. it then increased significantly by **102.4%** in 2023 – 24.

When we consider the previous Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment, the number of victims identified by Adult Social Care was **41** in 2020 – 21, meaning there has been an increase of **35.1%** from the end of the previous assessment to the first year of this assessment, before returning to a similar level in 2022 – 23, with an increase **107.3%** victims being identified to the final year of this assessment.

Trends

Victims identified by Children's Services



In the previous Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment, Children's Services provided SafeLives with their first response data (Contacts and Referrals), where the primary reason for contact is Domestic Abuse and Children's Social Care Assessments where domestic abuse is a factor. This data only provided information regarding the children identified.

Within this assessment we have been provided with data sets for victims identified by

- Targeted Family Help Service, which provides information on both the adult and child
- Statutory Child in Need and Child Protection Assessments, which provides information for only the children
- Looked after Children, which provides information for only the children

For the Targeted Family Help Service, we can see that the number of victims identified increased by **11.3%** from 2021 - 22 to 2022 – 23. It increased again by **172.3%** in 2023 – 24 with the number of children identified increasing from **363** on 2021 – 22 to **393** in 2022 – 23 and **1299** in 2023 – 24.

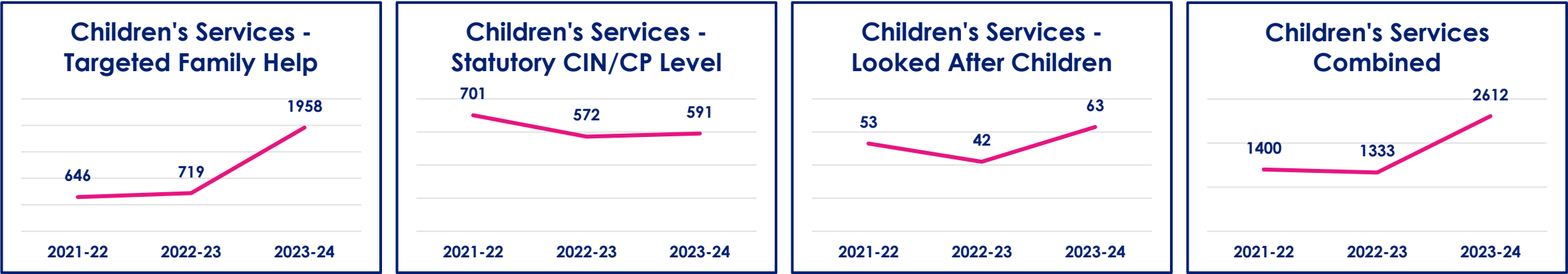
For those children receiving statutory Child in Need and Child Protection Assessments, this figure decreased from 2021 – 22 to 2022 – 23 by **18.4%** before increasing slightly by **3.32%**. This provides an overall decrease of **15.7%**.

For Looked after Children, there is a decrease of **20.8%** from 2021 – 22 to 2022 – 23. It then increased by **50%** in 2023 – 24.



Trends

Victims identified by Children's Services



We can see that overall there has been a significant increase of **86.6%** in the number of victims identified across the time period of this assessment, most of which can be attributed to the increase in those identified by Targeted Family Help. However, this is lower than the number identified in the previous Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment with **6754 children** identified within the first response data and **1011** Children's Social Care Assessments where domestic abuse is a factor completed in 2020 - 21. It should be noted that during that year there was a change in practice by the Children's Social Care assessment team to 'including other children in the family' as part of their case management records.

Due to the different ways of providing the data, it is difficult to fully determine how or why there is a significant difference and we would recommend exploring this further and aligning the data sets provided.

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Trends

Victims identified by Domestic Abuse Service

Service Offer

Victim's services has undergone a period of change across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland with a new service contract starting on the 1st April 2022.

There is now a Helpline and Engagement service managed by Freeva which is the Front Door for all referrals and attend Marac, a Domestic Abuse Locality service consisting of a Complex Need service, and an Outreach service managed by LWA and the Safe Accommodation provision managed by WALL. Due to the set up and referral pathway, there may be an element of double counting.

While the traditional Idva provision ended with WALL at that time, there continues to be a small team of specialist Idvas available such as a Marac Idva, Hospital Idva and Idva (ASHA) for those from Black, Asian and Racially Minoritised communities within WALL however it should be noted that these contracts ended with WALL in September 2023. The Marac Idva and Health Idva roles transferred to Freeva and the ASHA Idva role funding ceased in 2023.

The JADA+ project provided by WALL ran during the first two years of this needs assessment however, this funding also ended in 2022 – 23.

The Adam Project is a male only support service provided by WALL.

Data Collection

LWA have provided data regarding both adult and child victims. Freeva have provided limited data regarding children (n. 6 in 2021 – 22, n. 9 in 2022 – 23 and n. 21 in 2023 – 24) and it is unclear if they relate to children who have been referred as a victim in their own relationship or as a children experiencing domestic abuse within the household. In addition, the data has not been separated by service – ie Helpline, Marac Idva, Health Idva etc where applicable.

Other than for the JADA+ project, WALL have not been able to provide data regarding children. The exception of two 16 – 17-year-olds in 2022 – 23 and six in 2023 – 24, one age 12 – 15-year-old and 5 16 – 17-year-olds. They were supported by the Health and Marac Idvas.

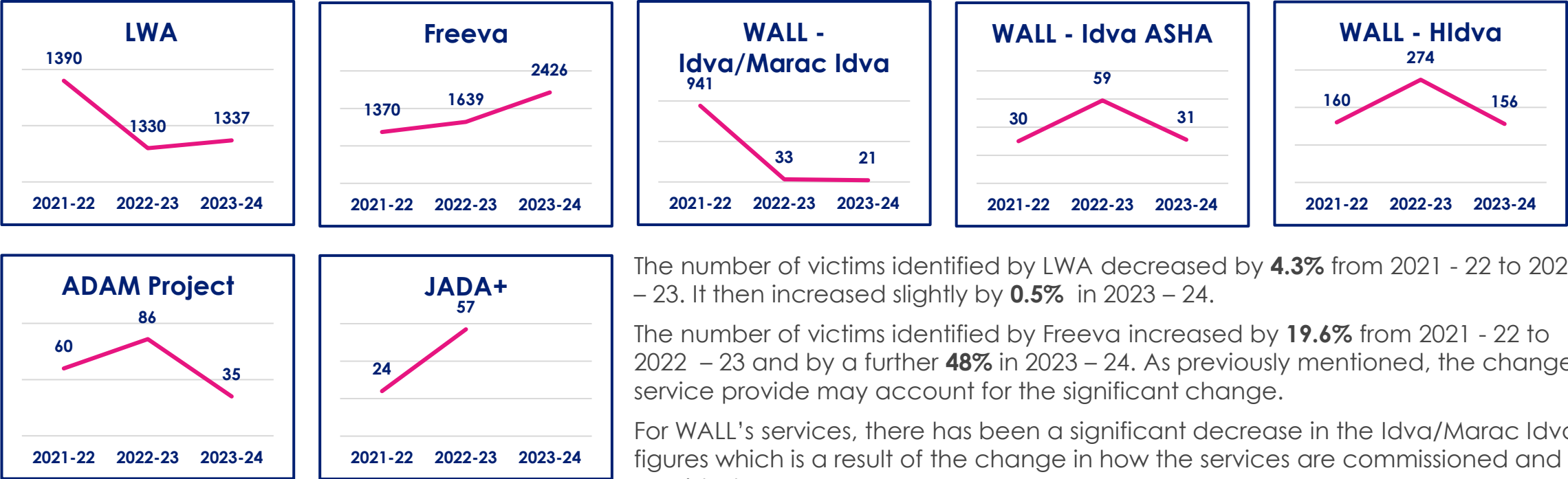
It should also be noted that all data provided by WALL **is LLR wide**, barring the District Housing Link Workers. This data is not currently broken down by locality so we cannot say, with certainty how many of the victims identified live in Leicestershire.

This is an area WALL are working to rectify and aim to be able to provide a breakdown in future years.

Due to the new service offer and ways the data is presented, again it is difficult to compare to the previous assessment.

Trends

Victims identified by Domestic Abuse Service



The number of victims identified by LWA decreased by **4.3%** from 2021 - 22 to 2022 - 23. It then increased slightly by **0.5%** in 2023 - 24.

The number of victims identified by Freeva increased by **19.6%** from 2021 - 22 to 2022 - 23 and by a further **48%** in 2023 - 24. As previously mentioned, the change in service provide may account for the significant change.

For WALL's services, there has been a significant decrease in the Idva/Marac Idva figures which is a result of the change in how the services are commissioned and provided.

For the Idva ASHA service, there was an increase of **96.7%** from 2021 - 22 to 2022 - 23. Whilst it shows a decrease in 2023 - 24, this contract ended part way through the year therefore is not a true reflection.

This is also the case for the Health Idva however we can see an increase of **71.3%** from 2021 - 22 to 2022 - 23. We know that Health plays an essential role in addressing domestic abuse and it is positive to see a Health Idva in post supporting victims in a number of sites across the LLR.

The JADA+ Project ran across the first two years of this needs assessment. Data shows that there was an increase of **137.5%** of children identified by this service before funding ended.

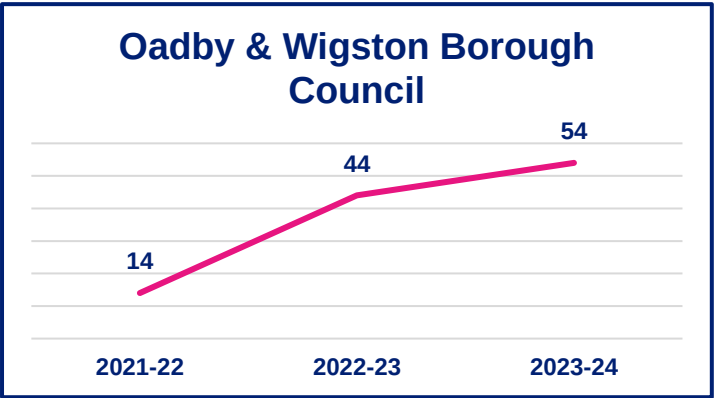
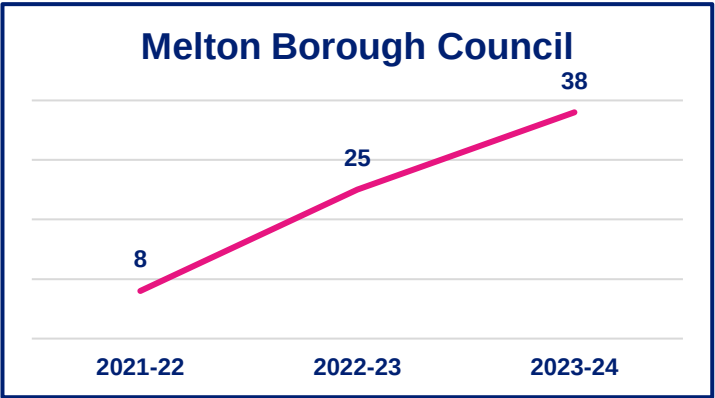
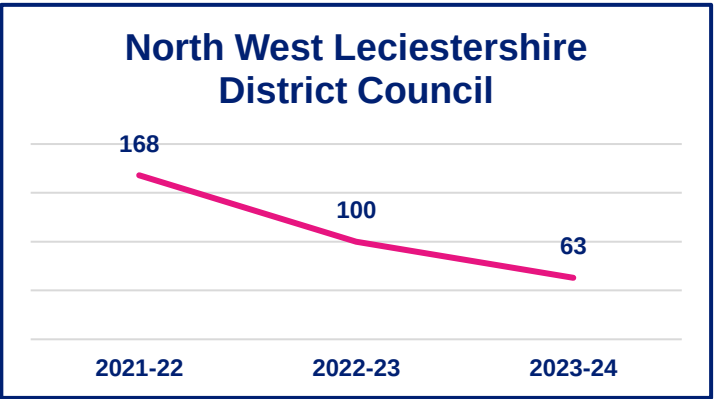
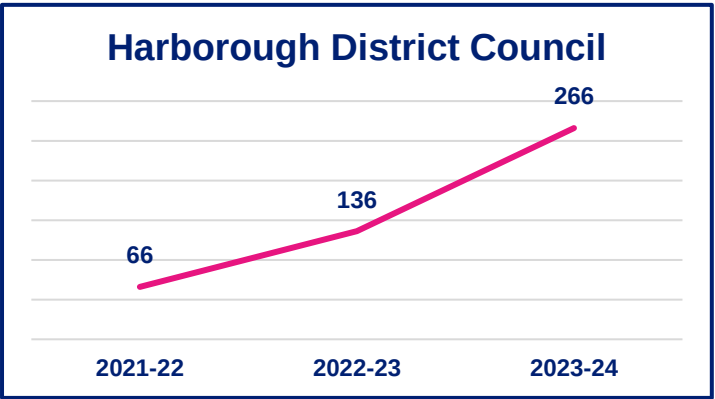
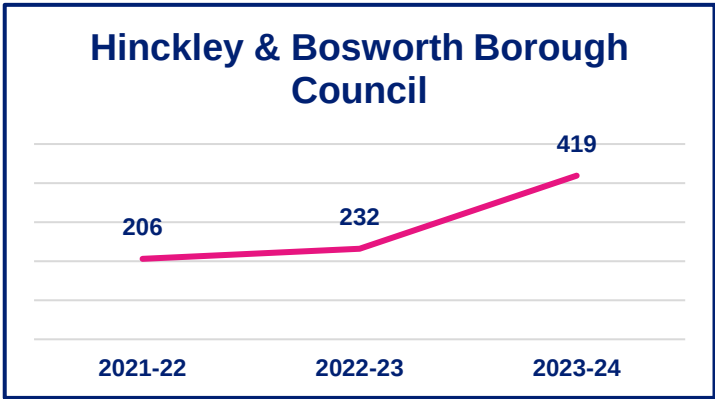
The ADAM Project saw an increase of **43.3%** of victims identified from 2021 - 22 to 2022 - 23. It then decreased by **59.3%** in 2023 - 24.

Trends

Victims identified by District Homelessness Teams

Data was provided by five of the seven districts homelessness departments. Unfortunately, Charnwood Borough Council have been unable to provide a data set for this needs assessment. Blaby District Council provided data of their domestic abuse service and not their homelessness team which is reviewed further in the report. They have however stated during partnership board meetings that they have seen a considerable increase in the number of homelessness presentations due to domestic abuse. Oadby and Wigston Borough Council and Melton Borough Council did not provide data regarding children or other members of the household included on the housing application.

Data shows that areas have seen an increase in the number of victims identified across these needs assessment with the exception being North West Leicestershire District Council.



Trends

Victims identified by District Homelessness Teams

The number of victims identified by HBBC increased by **12.6%** from 2021 – 22 to 2022 – 23 before increasing further by **80.6%** in 2023 – 23. It should be noted that the number of victims identified in the final year of the previous needs assessment was **301** therefore there has been a decrease of **31.6%** between the previous needs assessment and this one.

HDC saw an increase of **106.1%** from 2021 – 22 to 2022 – 23 with a further increase of **95.6%** the following year. The number of victims identified in the final year of the previous needs assessment was **48** resulting in an overall increased of **454.2%** in the number of victims identified from the final year of the previous assessment to the final year of this assessment.

As mentioned, NWLDC is an outlier in this area. Whilst there was an initial increase from the previous needs assessment of **330.8%**, this has steadily decreased by **40.5%** from 2021 – 22 to 2022 – 23 and then a further **37%** in 2023 – 24. However it should be noted that the number of victims identified in 2023 – 24 is still **61.5%** higher than the figure in the final year of the previous assessment.

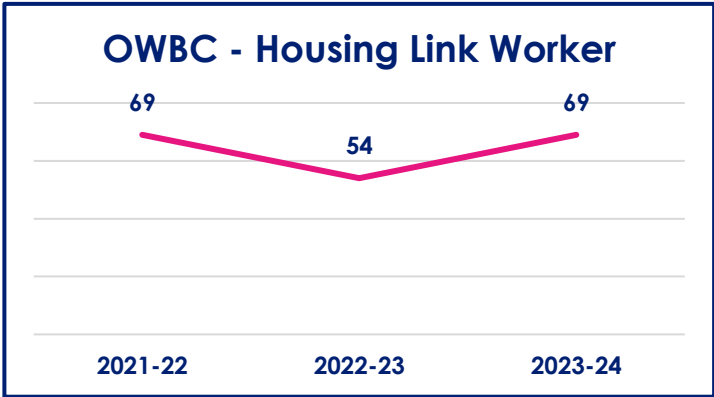
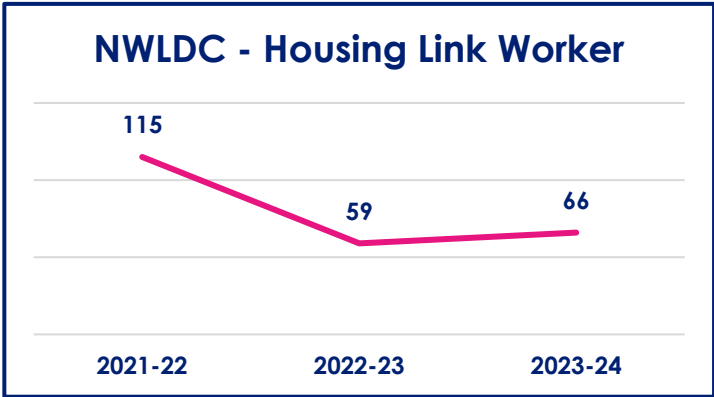
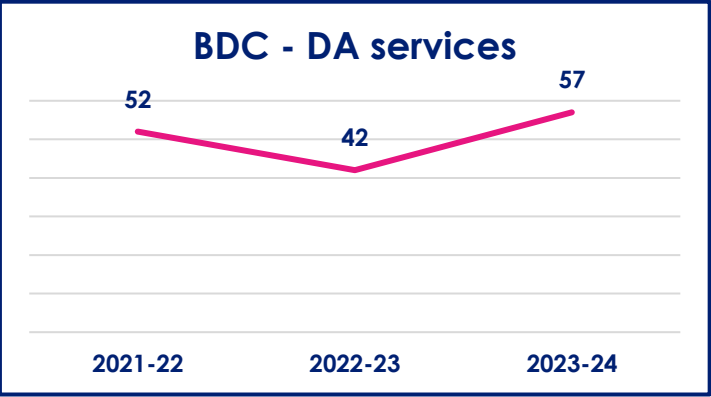
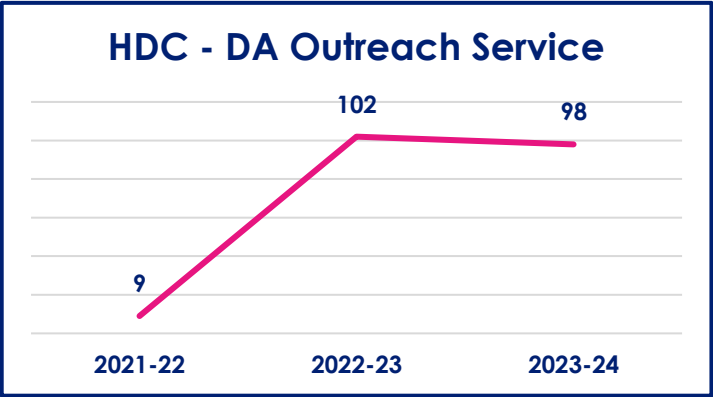
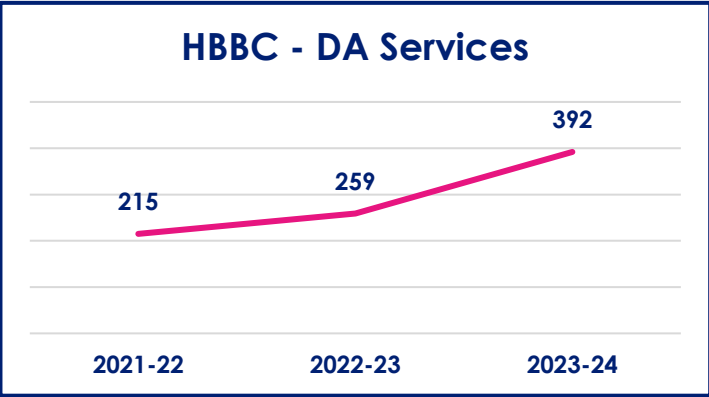
In OWBC, there was an initial decrease from the previous needs assessment of **62.2%**, the number of victims identified has increased year on year by **214.3%** and **22.7%** respectively.

Due to the low figures reported by MBC in the last needs assessment, we are unable to provide a comparison. However we can see that there has been an increase of **212.5%** from 2021 – 22 to 2022 – 23 and a further **52%** in 2023 – 24

Trends

Victims identified by District Domestic Abuse Service

Hinckley and Bosworth, Harborough and Blaby District Councils provide an in house domestic abuse service. Oadby and Wigston Borough Council and North West Leicestershire District Council have commissioned WALL to provide a Housing Link Worker who are based within their homelessness teams. These roles are funded via the funding received by Leicestershire CC from The Department for Levelling Up Communities and Housing, now renamed Ministry Housing, Communities and Local Government who allocated funding to each local authority for the delivery of the Safe Accommodation duty. Only Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council provided data regarding children.



Trends

Victims identified by District Domestic Abuse Service

The number of victims identified by HBBC increased by **20.5%** from 2021 – 22 to 2022 – 23 before increasing further by **51.4%** in 2023 – 23. In contrast to the HBBC Homelessness team, the Domestic Abuse Service saw an increase of **15% in** the number of victims identified in the final year of the previous needs assessment and the first year of this assessment

HDC saw an increase of **1033.3%** from 2021 – 22 to 2022 – 23 with a slight decrease **3.9%** in 2023 – 24. We do not have data for this service from the previous assessment.

BDC saw a decrease of **19.2%** from 2021 – 22 to 2022 – 23 before increasing in 2023 – 24 by **35.7%** however this is only **9.6%** increase from the first year of this assessment. We do not have data for this service from the previous assessment.

Again, NWLDC is an outlier in this area following a similar trend to the homelessness data. This post was created following the previous needs assessment and identified **115** victims in 2021 – 22. This decreased by **48.7%** in 2022 – 23 however did increase by **11.9%** to a number similar to the number of victims identified by the homelessness teams.

OWBC follows a similar pattern to BDC with a decrease of **21.7%**, from 2021- 22 to 2022 – 23, before increasing by the same percentage in 2023 – 24.

There are differences in the number of victims identified by the Housing Link Workers and the Homelessness teams. It would be of benefit to explore this further to understand why that may be and what steps can be taken to ensure that all victims identified by the Homelessness teams are offered the support of the Housing Link Worker and vice versa. This should be monitored on a regular basis for example at the Chief Housing Officer Group.

Marac & Police Data

Marac Cases

At Marac, the most high risk cases are discussed. SafeLives was commissioned to complete a Marac Review across Leicestershire Police and the LLR which was shared in the summer of 2022. This provided a number of recommendations including recommendations regarding referral pathways and the number of cases. We would advise that this be revisited to measure the progress of those recommendations and this data be considered in that process.

Leicestershire Police Force covers three local authority areas each with its own Marac - Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. For the purposes of this report, we will only be focusing on the Leicestershire Marac data covering April to March for years 2021 – 22, 2022 – 23 and 2023 – 24.

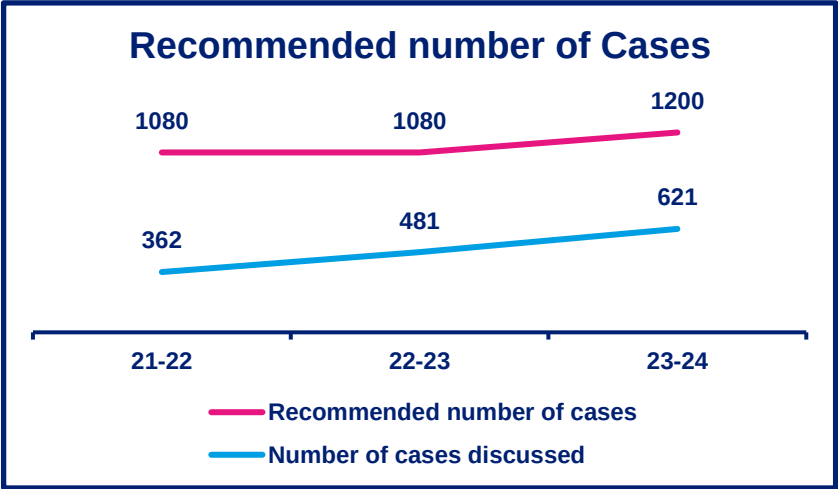
The recommended number of cases for Leicestershire is **1080** per year in **years 2021-22 and 22/23**, and **1200** in **year 23/24** based on the SafeLives recommendation of **40** cases per 10,000 adult female population.

As the adult (16+) female population recorded in the census increased between 2011 and 2021 in Leicestershire, this has resulted in an increase in the recommended number of cases for this Marac.

The table below shows the number of cases heard, inclusive of repeat cases, per year and the number of children within those households.

This will be explored further in this chapter

Year	Number of Cases	Number of Children	Recommended number of cases
2021/22	362	441	1080
2022/23	481	583	1080
2023/24	621	795	1200



Marac Data – Number of Cases

2021 - 22

	SafeLives Recommends	UK wide	MSF Group	Leicestershire Police	Leicestershire Marac
Cases per 10,000 adult female population	40	47	39	19	13
Year on Year change in number of cases		6%	4%	-13%	-7%
Repeat rate	28-40%	33%	29%	36%	36%
Police referrals	60-75%	67%	60%	68%	65%
Non police referrals	25-40%	33%	40%	32%	35%

2022 - 23

Cases per 10,000 adult female population	40	47	39	22	18
Year on Year change in number of cases		-2%	0%	20%	33%
Repeat rate	28-40%	33%	31%	33%	37%
Police referrals	60-75%	66%	60%	67%	68%
Non police referrals	25-40%	34%	40%	33%	32%

2023 - 24

Cases per 10,000 adult female population	40	46	40	27	21
Year on Year change in number of cases		-1%	9%	34%	29%
Repeat rate	28-40%	32%	30%	36%	38%
Police referrals	60-75%	64%	58%	68%	68%
Non police referrals	25-40%	36%	42%	32%	32%

Marac Data

The tables on the previous page show how the Marac in Leicestershire performs in comparison to its most similar force group and national counterparts across the time period of this assessment.

The recommended number of cases for Leicestershire is **1080** per year in **years 2021-22 and 22/23**, and **1200** in **year 23/24** based on the SafeLives recommendation of **40** cases per 10,000 adult female population.

The number of cases discussed within Leicestershire remains significantly below the recommended figure, with **13 cases** per 10,000 adult females heard in 2021 – 22, increasing slightly to **18 cases** in 2022 – 23 and increasing again to **21 cases** in 2023 – 24.

The repeat rate referrals, police referrals, and non police referrals are all in line with the recommended number of cases SafeLives recommends.

Marac Data – Equality

2021 - 22

	SafeLives Recommends	UK wide	MSF Group	Leicestershire Police	Leicestershire
Black, Asian and racially minoritised population		17.9%	14.5%	23.4%	8.6%
Black, Asian and racially minoritised cases		15.3%	10.4%	20%	8.6%
LGBT+ Cases	2.5-8.5%	1.4%	1.7%	1.9%	1.1%
Victims with disabilities	23% or above	8.5%	11.1%	14.3%	15.2%
Male Victims	5-10%	6.2%	5.5%	4.5%	4.1%

2022 - 23

Black, Asian and racially minoritised population		17.7%	14.5%	23.4%	8.6%
Black, Asian and racially minoritised cases		16%	11.3%	19.3%	9.4%
LGBT+ Cases	2.5-8.5%	1.5%	1.4%	1.8%	1.5%
Victims with disabilities	23% or above	9.1%	13.7%	32.5%	36%
Male Victims	5-10%	6.3%	5.9%	6.5%	5.6%

2023 - 24

Black, Asian and racially minoritised population		22.5%	20.9%	32.7%	13.4%
Black, Asian and racially minoritised cases		14.8%	13.2%	16%	9.7%
LGBT+ Cases	2.5-8.5%	1.7%	1.6%	1.9%	1%
Victims with disabilities	23% or above	9.4%	14%	21.8%	24.2%
Male Victims	5-10%	6.4%	6.2%	5.1%	5.6%

Marac Data – Equality

The tables on the previous page show how the Marac in Leicestershire performs in relation to marginalised groups.

We would expect referrals to Marac to be representative of the local Black, Asian and racially minoritised population. As previously stated, the updated census information has resulted in changes to, not only the recommended case figures, but also the population figures.

For the years 2021 – 22 and 2022 – 23, our research shows the Black, Asian and racially minoritised population for Leicestershire to be **8.6%**. The percentage of Marac cases heard where the victim was Black, Asian or from a racially minoritised community was **8.6% and 9.4%** respectively and in line with population data.

The population figure increased to **13.7%** in 2023 – 24 while the percentage of cases remain similar to previous years at **9.7%**. Therefore, while the figure has been increasing, it is now below the recommended figure.

The SafeLives recommendation is that **2.5% - 5.8%** of cases heard at Marac are LGBT+ victims. The highest percentage was **1.5%** in 2022 – 2023, less than half the lowest end of the recommended levels.

The recommended level of Marac cases where the victim has a disability is **23% or above**. In the previous needs assessment period, the figures were far below that figure. Therefore, it is positive to see an increase in the identification of cases where the victim has a disability and that this is being recorded appropriately with **15.2%** of cases being heard in 2021 – 22 and **36%** and **24.2%** in subsequent years. We will discuss this further in the disability section of this report.

For male victims, the lowest number of cases was in 2021 - 22 with **4.1%**, before increasing to **5.6%** in 2022 – 23 and remaining the same the following year which is within the recommended range.

Police Data

2021/22



	Leicestershire Police	East Midlands	MSF1	MSF2	England and Wales
DA Crimes & Incidents	21,641	102,251	20,781	21,402	1,500,369
Crimes & Incidents Per 1000 population	20	21	18	18	25
DA Crimes	15,481	68,702	15,397	12,829	910,980
Crimes per 1000	14	14	13	11	15
% of all crimes recorded	15%	17%	15%	17%	17%

2022/23



DA Crimes & Incidents	24,145	109,177	21,438	20,850	1,453,867
Crimes & Incidents Per 1000 population	22	22	19	17	24
DA Crimes	16,927	72,157	16,255	12,565	889,918
Crimes per 1000	15	15	14	10	15
% of all crimes recorded	16%	17%	15%	16%	16%

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Police Data

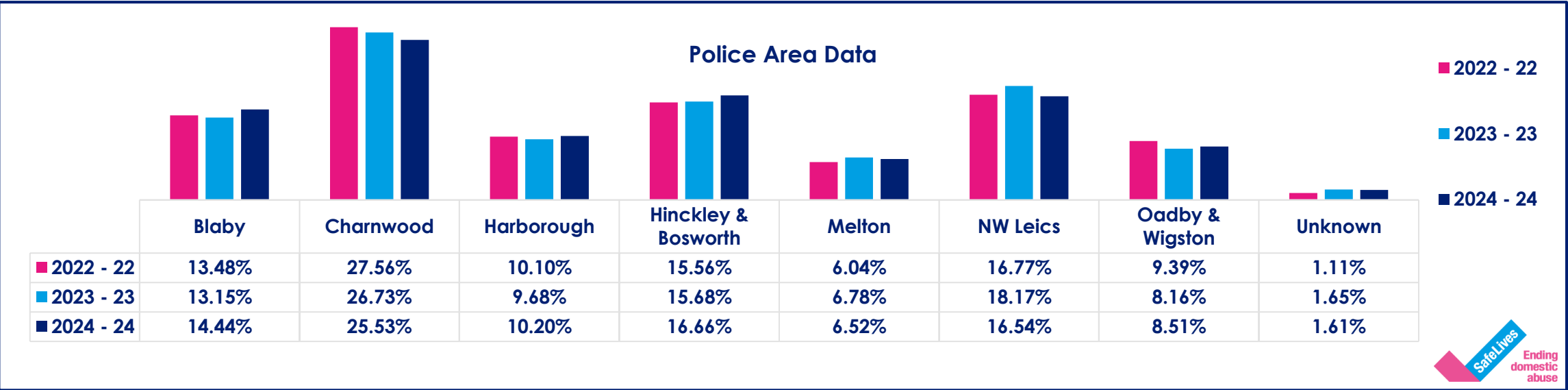
The tables above show a comparison of the number of incidents and crimes reported across Leicestershire Police force wide, two Most Similar Forces and across the East Midlands and England and Wales.

The comparison data is not currently available for the 2023 – 2024 period, however we know that across Leicestershire Police there were **8453 domestic abuse victims identified**

Leicestershire Police domestic abuse crimes and incidents is **20** per 1000 population in 2021/22 and **22** per 1000 population in 2022/23. This is higher than the two MSF areas (2021/22, **18 and 18**, 2022/23 **19 and 17**) and in line with the regional rate. However, this is lower than the national rate of domestic abuse crimes and incidences at **25** per 1000 population in 2021/22, reducing to **24** per 1000 population in 2022/23.

There has been an increase of **11.5%** in the number of domestic abuse related incidents and crimes recorded by Leicestershire Police from 2021/22 – 2022/23, and an increase of **9.3%** in domestic abuse crimes from years 2021/22 to 2022/23.

In terms of location, Charnwood has the highest number of victims identified by the police across all three years which is the same as the previous needs assessment. However, this has decreased year on year with Hinckley and Bosworth seeing the opposite and increasing year on year. The lowest number of reported victims are in Melton followed by Oadby and Wigston.



Domestic Homicides:

21/22

- North-West Leicestershire
- Hinckley & Bosworth

22/23

- Charnwood

23/24

- Melton

In the three-year period that the needs assessment covers there were four domestic homicides across Leicestershire County Council.

The DHRs that occurred in North-West Leicestershire, Charnwood, and Melton are still currently ongoing and therefore these will not be discussed in the report.

However, the homicide that occurred in Hinckley & Bosworth was undertaken by a joint Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and falls under Blaby and Hinckley & Bosworth CSP. This is discussed on the following slide.

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Domestic Homicide Reviews

Blaby and Hinckley & Bosworth 2021: The DHR concluded that there were no professional missteps or omissions identified that may have contributed to the death of the victim, and noted there was insufficient evidence to indicate that domestic abuse was a factor in the homicide.

Recommendations from the report included the following;

- To ensure the Carer's Strategy refresh that was presented at Leicestershire County Council Cabinet in 2022 is making timely and sufficient progress to ensure carers get the assessment and support they need.
- To ensure all agencies have up to date training on domestic abuse in accordance with the new Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and this remains effective for workforces.

SafeLives agrees with the recommendations and would ensure that relevant domestic abuse training includes information on supporting carers and making sure they are included within risk assessments, in line with our Whole Picture Strategy.

However, SafeLives would also recommend more could have been done to understand whether domestic abuse was a factor throughout this homicide. We know from previous DHRs on older people¹ that the potential for violence in relationships increases when an intimate partner/family member is acting as a carer for the other. In this instance, the victim had previously been harmed during a self-harm incident from 'Bob', and no further questioning from staff around domestic abuse, or other support occurred. Support could have been implemented to help the victim deal with the health struggles Bob was having, and create a safety plan around this.

We also know from the Safe Later Lives report² that older people have extra barriers to disclosing domestic abuse such as a generational understanding of domestic abuse, longstanding abuse occurring, and systems not being accessible for older people. Therefore, agencies need to consider this when enquiring about domestic abuse and seeing warning signs. Further training on ensuring services are accessible to older people, and recognising signs in older people would be beneficial.

We can see there is a rise in numbers of older people in the population within Leicestershire County Council and therefore a deeper understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse in older relationships is essential.

1. <https://safelives.org.uk/news-views/what-domestic-homicide-reviews-tell-us-about-the-abuse-of-older-people/>
2. <https://safelives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Safe-Later-Lives-Older-people-and-domestic-abuse-Spotlight.pdf>

Demographic Data

Population

During the previous needs assessment, Census Data was used from the 2011 Census. Following the 2021 Census we have used this data set within this needs assessment.

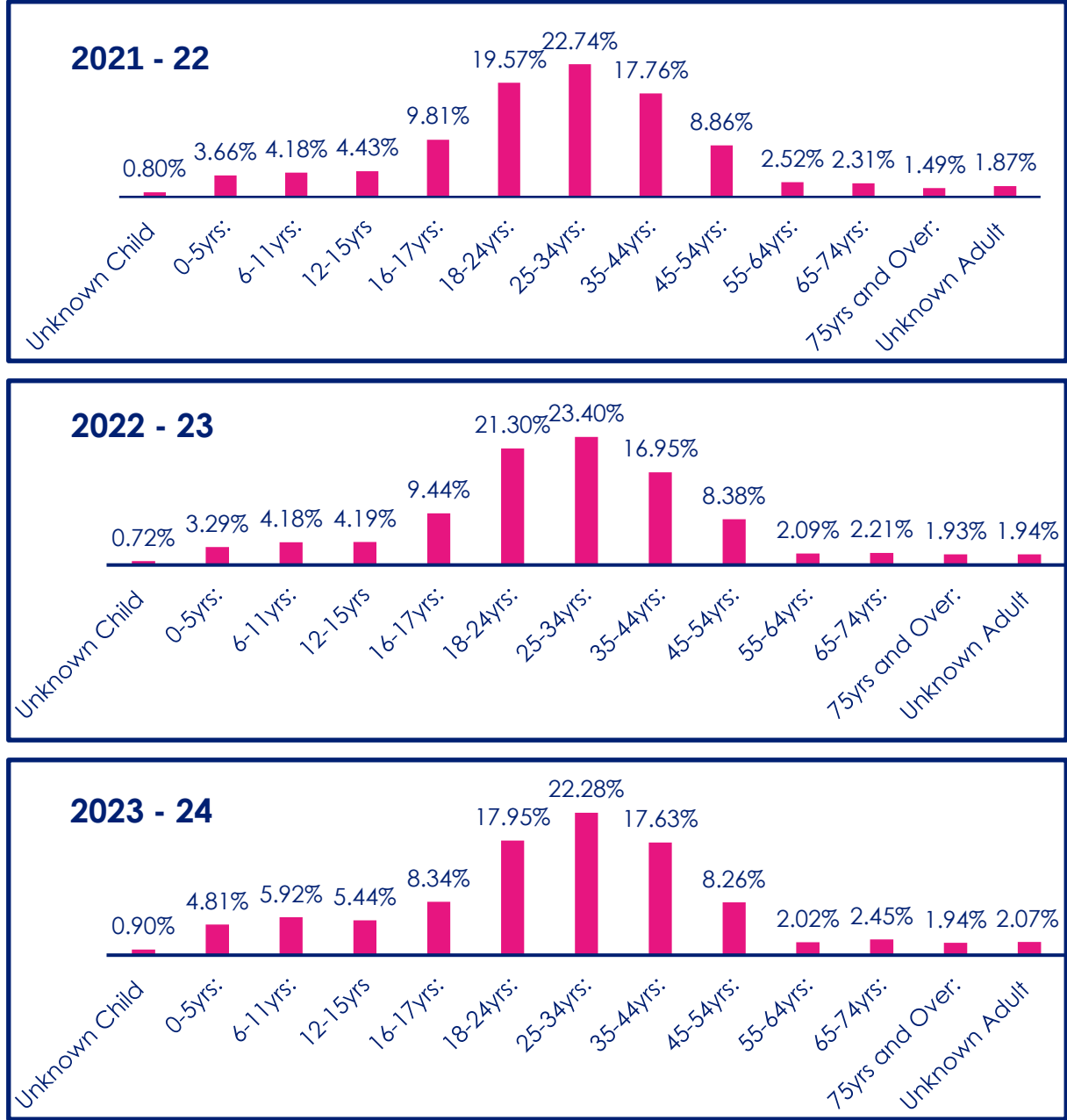
There have been significant changes within the composition of the population in all districts across Leicestershire. All have seen an increase in the overall population ranging from **2.7%** in Oadby and Wigston to **14.3%** in Harborough, which is the largest increase in the East Midlands.

In terms of age, the most significant change has been in the **over 65 age group**. Harborough has seen the second highest increase in the over 65 population in England with **38.5%**. The other districts, baring Oadby and Wigston at **13%**, have all seen an increase of between **25% and 31.4%** compared to a **20.1%** increase in England overall.

For the **under 15 age range**, Charnwood is the district with the highest increase of 10.2% with Melton having the lowest at **3.6%** compared to **5%** in England overall. For the **15 – 64 age range**, all have seen an increasing baring Oadby and Wigston who have seen a decrease of **1.7%** compare to **3.6%** in England overall. These increases range from **1.7% in** Melton to **10.1%** in Harborough.

These changes will have an impact on the range of needs and therefore services required by victims and survivors across Leicestershire.

Age



There has been an improvement with the collection of age data with the level of unknown falling from **5.6%** at the end of the previous assessment to **2.07%** at the end of this assessment.

The age profile of identified victims in Leicestershire remained broadly consistent across all three years, with **almost a quarter** of all identified victims falling within the 25–34-year-old age bracket. This is consistent with the previous needs assessment.

There have however been changes in the age of victims identified from the previous assessment.

There has been a decrease in the 35 – 44 and 45 – 56-year-old age ranges from **20.3% to 17.63%** and **14.1% to 8.26%** respectively, from the start of the last assessment to the final year of this assessment.

As per the previous slide the 2021 census shows that there has been a significant increase in the older population in Leicestershire ranging from **13%** in Oadby and Wigston to **38.5%** in Harborough¹

SafeLives' Prevalence Tool estimates there **are 6,000** victims aged over 60 who will have experienced domestic abuse in the last year in Leicestershire. However, we can see that **735** victims aged over 65 were identified in 2023 – 24, accounting for **5.89%** of adult victims and **4.39%** of all victims.

Our Spotlight on Older People and Domestic abuse shows that those over 60 experience domestic abuse for much longer, on average **12.9 years** compared to the national average of **4.5 years**, with **25%** experiencing abuse for between **20 and 50 years**.²

1.

[Oadby and Wigston population change, Census 2021 – ONS](#)

2.

[Spotlight #1: Older people and domestic abuse | Safelives](#)

Age – Children and Young People

Using the prevalence tool, it is estimated that **6000** young victims aged 16 - 24 will have experienced domestic abuse in the last year within their own intimate partner relationships.

There has been a significant increase in the number of victims identified aged 16 – 24 from the previous needs assessment.

Previously between **2% and 2.8%** of all victims identified were aged 16 – 17 compared to a range of **8.34% to 9.81%**

There is a higher proportion of 18 – 24-year-olds identified during this period with a range of **17.95% to 21.30%** of all victims in that age range. This is compared to a range of **11.6% to 13.2%** previously.

The 16 – 24-year-old age group accounts for over a quarter of all victims in all three years of this assessment.

It should be noted that the data provided for the needs assessment for those age 16/17 may be child victims whose parent/s are in DA Relationships and/or victims of IPV in their own relationships.

At Marac, **10** cases were heard where the victim was 16/17 in 2023 - 24 in Leicestershire. A reduction from the previous two years of **17** in 2021 - 22 and **15** in 2022 – 23 .

The prevalence tool estimates that there are 17,000 children (under 18) living in a household with partner abuse in the past year in Leicestershire.

The total number of child victims identified in the Leicestershire in each of the 3 years the needs assessment covers are:



It should be noted that a number of agencies do not capture data regarding children.

Barring children aged 16 and 17, children aged 6 – 11 years old have the highest prevalence of identification.

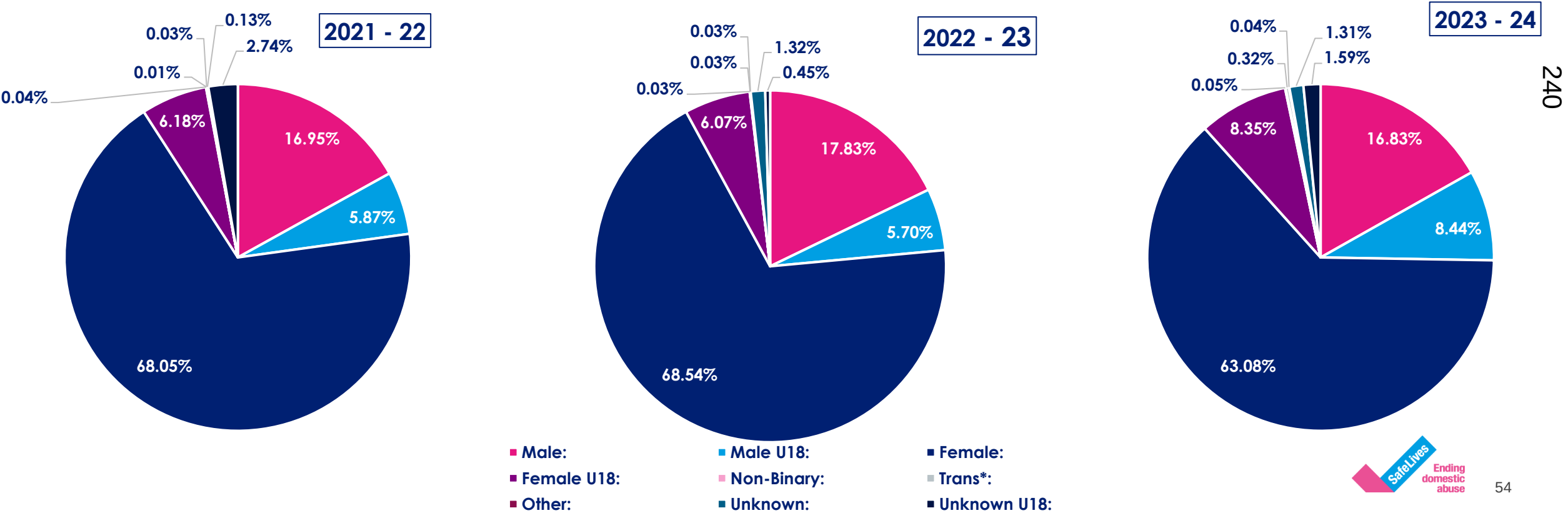
Children account for around a quarter of all identified victims ranging from 22.88% in 2021 – 22 to 25.41% in 2023 – 24 compared to 19.2% at the end of the previous assessment. This highlights the importance of the commissioning and sustainability of specialist children's provision, for those living in households where abuse is taking place and for those experiencing abuse within their own relationships.

Gender Identity

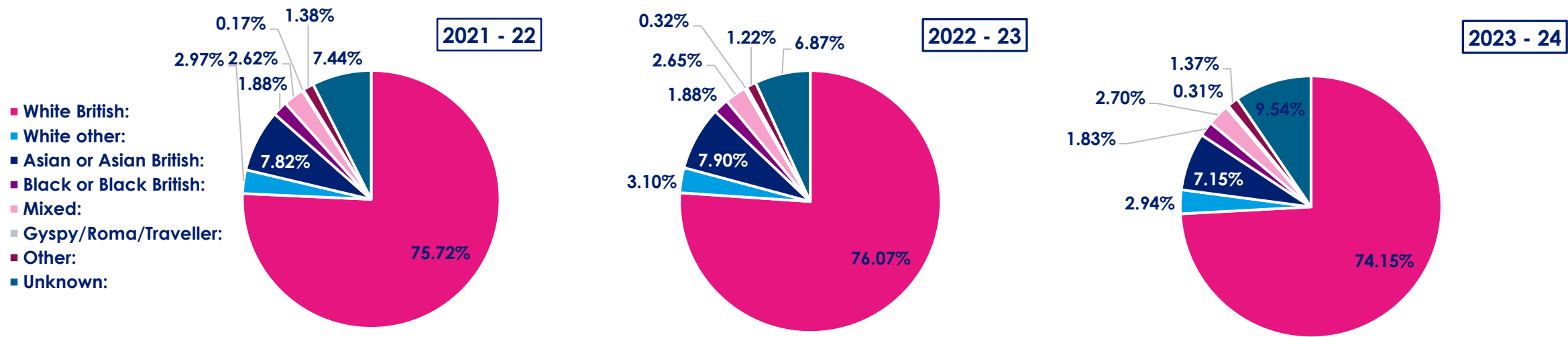
The gender of victims in Leicestershire also remained fairly consistent across the three years with the highest number of identified victims recorded as being adult female. Similarly to the age data, there has been an improvement with the data capture. The number of all victims with their gender identity recorded as unknown in the final year of the previous assessment was **7.35%** and has reduced to **2.87%** in 2021 – 22, **1.77%** in 2022 – 23 and **2.9%** in 2023 – 24.

Fewer than 1% of victims were recorded as identifying as non-binary, transgender or other, combined across all three years.

Marac data shows that **4.1%** of all victims discussed in were male in 2021 - 22, increasing to **5.6%** in 2022 – 23 and 2023 - 24. All falling within the SafeLives recommended 5-10% range. It is noted that Freeva now also employ a specialist male worker role.



Ethnicity



This is another area where there has been significant improvement with the data collection. In the previous needs assessment, the level of unknown was as high as **80.2%** with the lowest figure being **39%**.

Within this assessment, the number of victims whose ethnicity is unknown is **7.44%** in 2021 – 22, **6.87%** in 2022 – 23 and **9.54%** in 2023 – 24.

Across all three years, White British is the most prevalent group with approximately a quarter of all victims identifying as White British.

ONS data suggests that **16.36%** of individuals in Leicestershire are Black, Asian or from a racially minoritised community. The data provided by agencies is in line with this with **16.84%** of victims identified as Black, Asian or from a racially minoritised community in 2021 – 22, **17.07%** in 2022 – 23 and **16.30%** in 2023 – 24.

In 2023 - 24, **9.6%** of Marac in Leicestershire were identified as relating to those who were Black, Asian or from a racially minoritised community. In previous years, referrals had been in line and slightly over the recorded Black, Asian and racially minoritised community population data however with the updated census data, we can see that Marac cases are below the population figure.

It is positive that those from minoritised communities are being identified. Leicestershire GATE works with those from the Gypsy Roma Traveller community and is funded by the county. It is noted that dedicated specialist By & For safe accommodation provision has been commissioned also. However, further specialist support for those residing in the county from other minoritised communities needs a focus.

Ethnicity

Our research shows that for Intimate Partner Violence only, we would estimate a total of **1500 Black, Asian and Racially Minoritised** adult victims per year. This does not include child domestic abuse victims or victims who experience abuse from non-intimate partners such as parents, siblings, HBV etc.

In the 2023 - 24 year the data submitted recorded **2729 Black, Asian and Racially Minoritised** adult and child victims accessing services.

The HALT (Homicide Abuse Learning Together) group carried out research into Domestic Homicide Reviews and Black and Minoritised Victims and Perpetrators.¹

One of the key themes of this research is the Invisibility of Race and Culture. It showed that many agencies did not collect data regarding a person's ethnicity, highlighting that poor data collection has wider impact regarding accessibility of services to Black, Asian and Racially Minoritised victims.

One DHR included in the research noted -

"several agencies had no details of ethnicity, nationality or religion as these were not recorded at the point of referral. It is a core principle of good practice to ensure agencies know the background of those using their services; otherwise they have no information to consider in what they might need to adapt to improve access"

Where ethnicity is recorded, it is not always fully understood, acknowledged or recognised as a significant factor within the experience of Domestic Abuse.

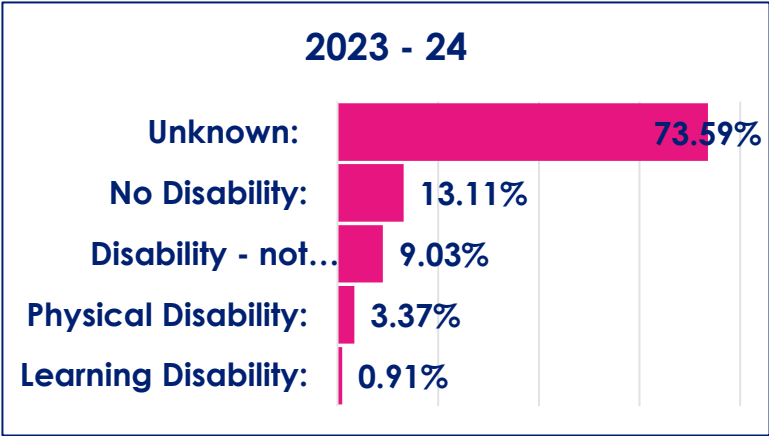
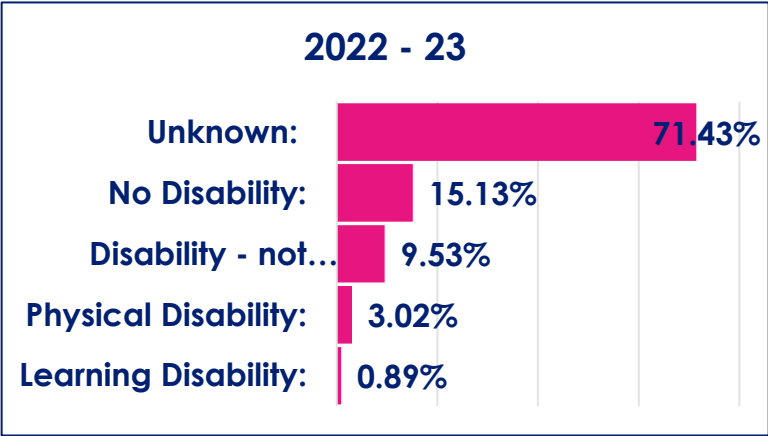
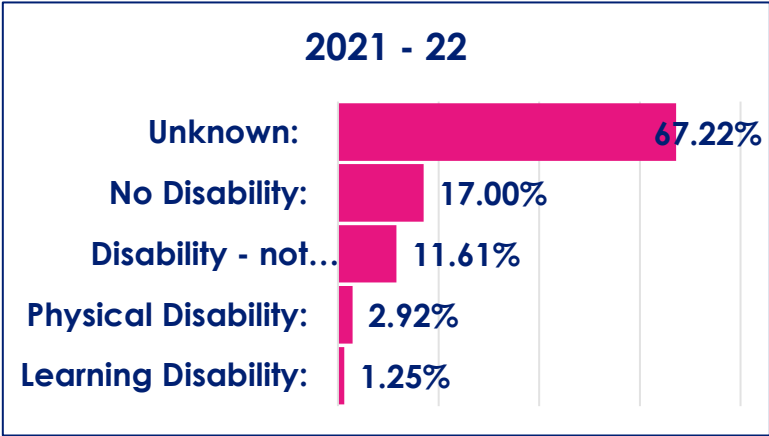
Other themes include

- Perception of Services; with the DHRs reporting that victims had received negative experiences of seeking help and that there was a lack of awareness of UK laws, culture, available support and misleading information by perpetrators influencing a victim's perception of services.
- Stereotypes and culturalisation of Domestic Abuse including the uncritical acceptance and normalisation and culturalisation of Domestic Abuse in minoritised communities.
- Interpreters and communication, with friends, children and even the perpetrator being used as an interpreter for the victim, and professional interpreters being inconsistently used meaning the victims voice and views were not heard. There is also an example of a victim having to provide an account of a serious sexual assault to a male GP, male Police Officer and male medical examiner with no interpreter support.
- DHR recommendations with around half of the DHRs including recommendations regarding ethnicity/culture such as – enhanced risk assessment predominantly focusing on HBV/Forced Marriage, raising awareness of domestic abuse, staff training and using independent interpreters

This research shows that it is imperative that a person's ethnicity and identity is fully captured, acknowledged and understood.

[1. An analysis of minoritisation in domestic homicide reviews in England and Wales - Khatidja Chantler, et al., 2022 \(sagepub.com\)](#)

Disability



Whilst there is a high level of unknown regarding disability, it should be noted that only Leicestershire Police, the Targeted Family Help service and two of the Districts did not provide and/or capture disability data. While there have been improvements with data collection regarding disability, there are areas to strengthen. This should be an area of priority for those agencies.

It should also be noted that the number of disabilities identified may be higher in some agencies than the number of victims identified as some victims identify as having more than one disability. Within the “disability not defined” category, some agencies have captured mental health condition or cognitive impairment, some have included sensory disabilities within physical disabilities and others within disability not defined. It would be of benefit to have a collective decision on the categories of disabilities so there is consistency across the board.

Using the SafeLives prevalence tool, we estimate that there were **7,500 Disabled victims** of domestic abuse in the past year, The numbers identified are significantly below this.

In 2021 – 22 **2404** victims were recorded as having a disability with **2057** in 2022 – 23 and **2299** in 2023 – 24. This is in contrast to the Marac data where we have seen an increase in the identification of cases being heard where the victim has been identified as having a disability.

If a victim's disability is not recorded and acknowledged, not all risks can be identified and therefore subsequent action plans and support cannot be specific to that person's needs and family circumstances.

Disability

People with Disabilities in Partner Relationships



SAFE have created a power and control wheel for those with disabilities in partner relationship which highlights the additional barriers and challenges a disabled person may face.¹

SafeLives Spotlight on Disabled People and Domestic Abuse² has found that disabled victims of domestic abuse also suffer more severe and frequent abuse over longer periods of time than non-disabled victims. SafeLives' data reveals that disabled victims typically endure abuse for an average of 3.3 years before accessing support, compared to 2.3 years for non-disabled victims. Even after receiving support, disabled victims were 8% more likely than non-disabled victims to continue to experience abuse. For one in five (20%) this ongoing abuse was physical and for 7% it was sexual.

This is in line with Public Health England's (2015)³ report that **disabled people**:

- experience disproportionately higher rates of domestic abuse.
- experience domestic abuse for longer periods of time, and more severe and frequent abuse than non-disabled people.
- encounter differing dynamics of domestic abuse, which may include more severe coercion, control or abuse from carers.

We also know that women with learning disabilities and/or autism are three times more likely to experience domestic abuse than their non-disabled peers.⁴

SafeLives have also undertaken research, in partnership with the Vision Foundation regarding the impact of domestic abuse on those who are visually impaired. **One in 12 visually impaired people** in the UK is believed to be a victim or survivor of domestic abuse, meaning that **188,000** of the 2.19 million blind and partially sighted people living in this country have experience of domestic abuse. The report highlighted the additional barriers and abuse faced by those who are visually impaired⁵

Sexual Identity of Victims Year on Year comparison:

The data regarding sexual identity is limited with a minimum of **73.7%** victims' sexual identity unknown. This has decreased from a minimum of **89.3%** of victims in the previous assessment.

According to research more than **one in four** gay men and lesbian women and more than **one in three** bisexual people report at least one form of domestic abuse since the age of 16¹

It should be noted that sexual identity is not captured by Leicestershire Police which accounts for a significant number of the unknown figure. For other agencies, the information recorded is sporadic.

The way in which the data is captured, groups Lesbian Women and Gay Men together, with the figures showing in:

- 2021 - 22 **42** Lesbian / Gay, **94** Bisexual and **12** Other Sexual Identity victims recorded;
- 2022 - 23 **60** Lesbian / Gay, **95** Bisexual and **9** Other Sexual Identity victims recorded;
- 2023 - 24 **56** Lesbian / Gay, **110** Bisexual and **5** Other Sexual Identity victims recorded.



Our research shows that for Intimate Partner Violence only, we would estimate a total of **5,500 LGB+** adult victims per year, significantly higher than the recorded numbers.

At Marac in 2021 - 22 **1.1%** of cases related to an individual who identified as LGBT+ in Leicestershire, this increased to **1.5% in 2022 – 23** before decreasing to **1%** in 2023 – 24.

All of these figures fall below the recommended SafeLives recommended figures of between **2.5% and 5.8%**.

National data suggests that LGBT+ victims of abuse are more likely than heterosexual individuals to experience abuse from multiple partners, are almost twice as likely to have attempted suicide, are more than twice as likely to have self-harmed and are more than twice as likely to have experienced historic abuse from a family member¹. Therefore it is vital that the sexual identity of domestic abuse victims are recorded and understood in order to provide appropriate support.

The Leicestershire LGBT Centre has been commissioned by Leicestershire County Council to provide domestic abuse counselling support. They also provide social groups, drop in sessions, and outreach services in each of the districts.

¹. [Recognise and Respond](#): Strengthening advocacy for LGBT+ survivors of domestic abuse

Socio-economic Characteristics

Data regarding socio-economic characteristics is limited, other than employment status and household structure, which are recorded by some agencies. This has improved from the last needs assessment with the level of unknown reducing from 92.7% in the final year of the previous assessment for household structure/family make up to 79% in the final year of this assessment.

Although limited data is currently captured by local agencies about socio economic characteristics, these can have a significant impact on victims' ability to access appropriate services when they need them, for example:



Marital status: divorce and matrimonial rights to a home



Family make up: needs of a single person and those with children



Income: a persons income and expenditure can impact their eligibility for social housing



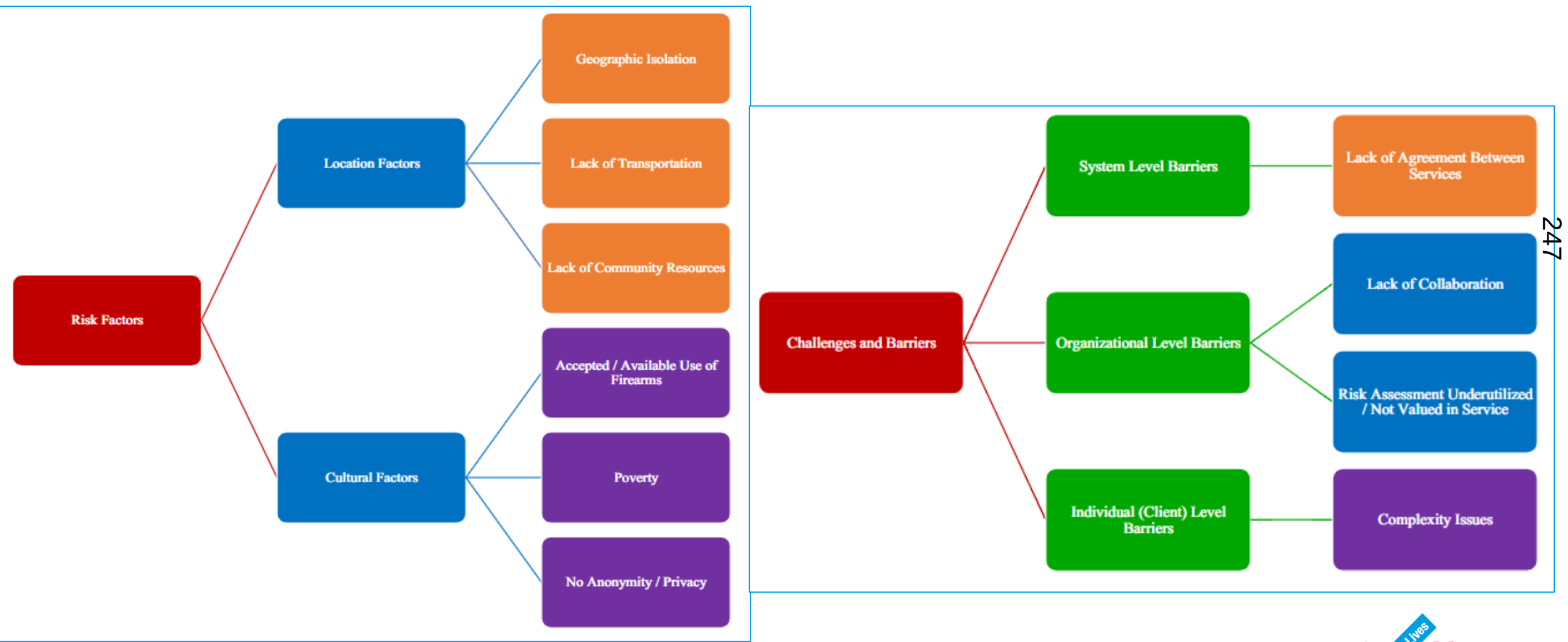
Benefits: a victim seeking safe accommodation may experience delays in claiming benefit, resulting in arrears. In addition, the impact due to the change of circumstance affecting benefits

All these characteristics represent the whole person and a whole family, it is, therefore, important to capture this information to ensure victims get the right support at the right time.

Rural Areas

There are many areas of Leciestershire which are classed as rural areas.

Challenges in Risk Assessment with Rural Domestic Violence Victims: Implications for Practice, shared in the Journal for Family Violence, Youngson et al highlights the unique risk factors and barriers of victims experiencing DA in rural locations.



Rural v Urban

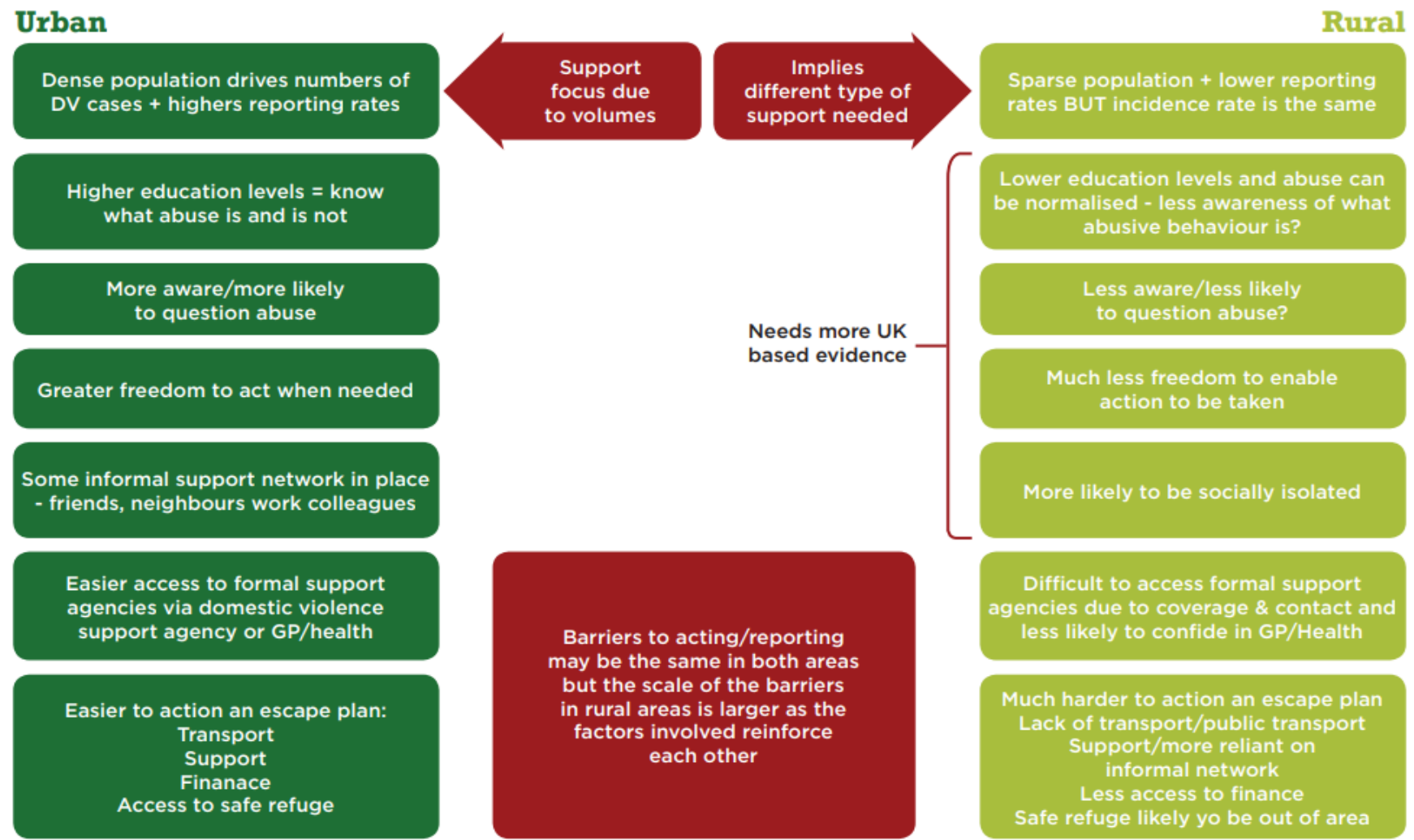


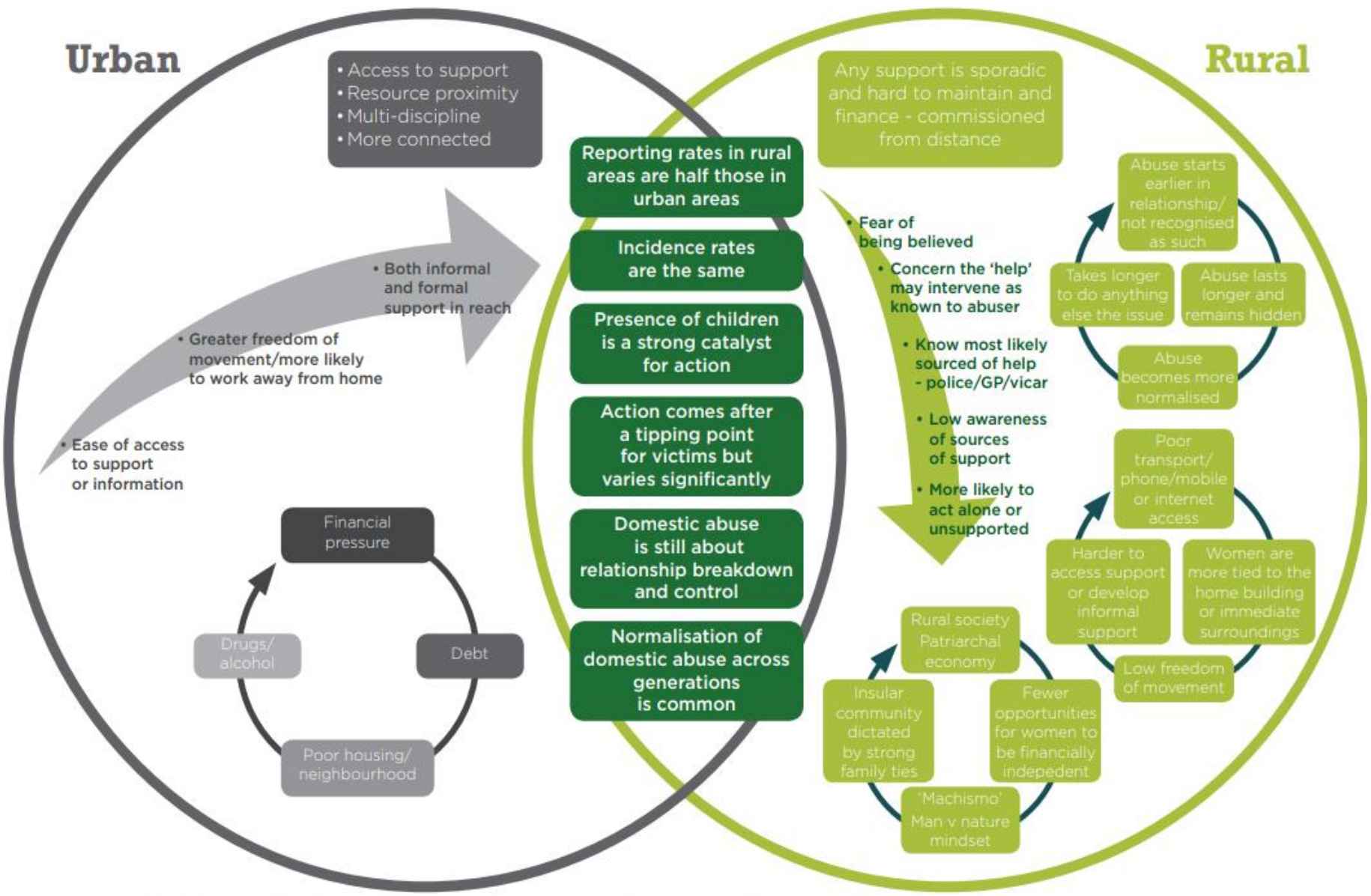
Figure 3: Differences noted between Urban and Rural areas for Domestic Abuse

A consortium of OPCC areas commissioned the National Rural Crime Network to conduct research into Domestic Abuse in Rural Areas – Captive and Controlled¹. A key part of this research was to understand whether there is a difference in the nature and patterns of domestic abuse between those in rural areas compared to urban areas. The table opposite highlights those potential differences, which have been simplified to assist with research.

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1. [Captive & Controlled - Domestic Abuse in Rural Areas - National Rural Crime Network](#)

Rural v Urban



The **dark green** section highlights the drivers of domestic abuse. Whilst there are similarities, it is shown within this research that the scale of barriers faced by rural victims is significantly greater than those in urban areas. This can be due to geographic, cultural and societal differences in addition to isolation having an impact on the ability to report abuse.

We can see within the **grey** circle the factors impacting domestic abuse rates and barriers to action for those in urban areas.

The **green** circle shows the factors impacting domestic abuse rates and barriers to action for those in rural areas. Whilst not all will be present in each case, this highlights the additional barriers to disclosure and support. Not only the practical barriers such as lack of transport and support services, but the cultural and social barriers including a lack of awareness of domestic abuse and a fear of not being believed.

Rural v Urban

Captive and Controlled Domestic Abuse in Rural Areas Key Findings - National Rural Crime Network

The **Captive and Controlled** report detailed **10 Key Findings**:

1. Abuse lasts, on average, 25% longer in the most rural areas
2. The policing response is largely inadequate
3. The more rural the setting, the higher the risk of harm
4. Rurality and isolation are deliberately used as weapons by abusers
5. Close-knit rural communities facilitate abuse
6. Traditional, patriarchal communities control and subjugate women
7. Support services are scarce – less available, less visible and less effective
8. Retreating rural resources make help and escape harder
9. The short-term, often hand-to-mouth funding model has created competing and fragmented service provision
10. An endemic data bias against rural communities leads to serious gaps in response and support

It is important to consider these findings when commissioning services within rural areas and communities to ensure appropriate access to services.



Safe Accommodation Provision

What is Safe Accommodation?

Refuge Accommodation - A refuge offers single gender or single sex accommodation and domestic abuse support which is tied to that accommodation. The address will not be publicly available. Victims, including their children, will have access to a planned programme of therapeutic and practical support from staff. Accommodation may be in shared or self-contained housing, but in both cases the service will enable peer support from other refuge residents.

Specialist safe accommodation - dedicated specialist support to victims with relevant protected characteristics and/or complex needs such as specialist refuges for Black, Asian and racially minoritised, LGBT+, and disabled victims and their children.

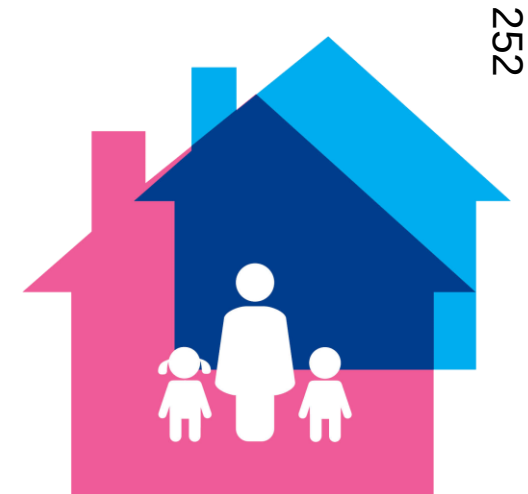
Dispersed accommodation – Safe self-contained accommodation with the same level of specialist domestic abuse support as provided within a refuge but which may be more suitable for victims who are unable to stay in a refuge.

Sanctuary Schemes – may also be called Target Hardening scheme. A survivor centred initiative which aims to enable a victim to remain in their own home by installing additional security to the property and perimeter alongside specialist domestic abuse support.

Move on and/or second stage accommodation – Accommodation temporarily housing victims, who no longer require the intensive support provided in a refuge, but still require a lower level of domestic abuse specific support before they move to fully independent and permanent accommodation. May include support accommodation schemes.

Other forms of domestic abuse emergency accommodation – A safe place with support given victims an opportunity to spend a temporary period of time to consider and make decisions in an environment which is self-contained and safe.

Safe accommodation is not generic temporary accommodation which is not solely dedicated to providing a safe place to stay for victims of domestic abuse. It is important to note that those experiencing Domestic Abuse may well be in standard temporary accommodation but may not have been identified as such or may have been placed in this accommodation due to Homelessness Duty.



Safe Accommodation Provision

Service	Provider	Commissioner	No of Units	Referral Pathway
Refuge	Women's Aid Leicestershire(WALL)	Leicestershire County Council	7 units in Hinckley and Bosworth	Via the local helpline, self-referrals, national helpline, professionals, other domestic abuse support services, Women's Aid online referral route.
Dispersed Accommodation	Women's Aid Leicestershire(WALL)	Leicestershire County Council	9 units in Charnwood 2 units in Hinckley and Bosworth	Via the local helpline, self-referrals, national helpline, professionals, other domestic abuse support services, Women's Aid online referral route.
Specialist dispersed property for male victims	Women's Aid Leicestershire(WALL)	Leicestershire County Council	1 units in Hinckley and Bosworth	Via the local helpline, self-referrals, national helpline, professionals, other domestic abuse support services, Women's Aid online referral route.
Specialist refuge accommodation for Black Asian and Racially Minoritised Women	Panahghar (Commenced in July 2024)	Leicestershire County Council	6 units in Charnwood	Via Panahghar's helpline service

As of July 2024, there are currently **25** safe accommodation spaces in Leicestershire which are situated in two districts, Hinckley and Bosworth and Charnwood. It should be noted that there are a further **8** dispersed safe accommodation spaces within Rutland which are jointly funding by the partnership board.

This is an increase of **4** spaces from the previous assessment however if we include the spaces within Rutland, there is an increase of **12** spaces.

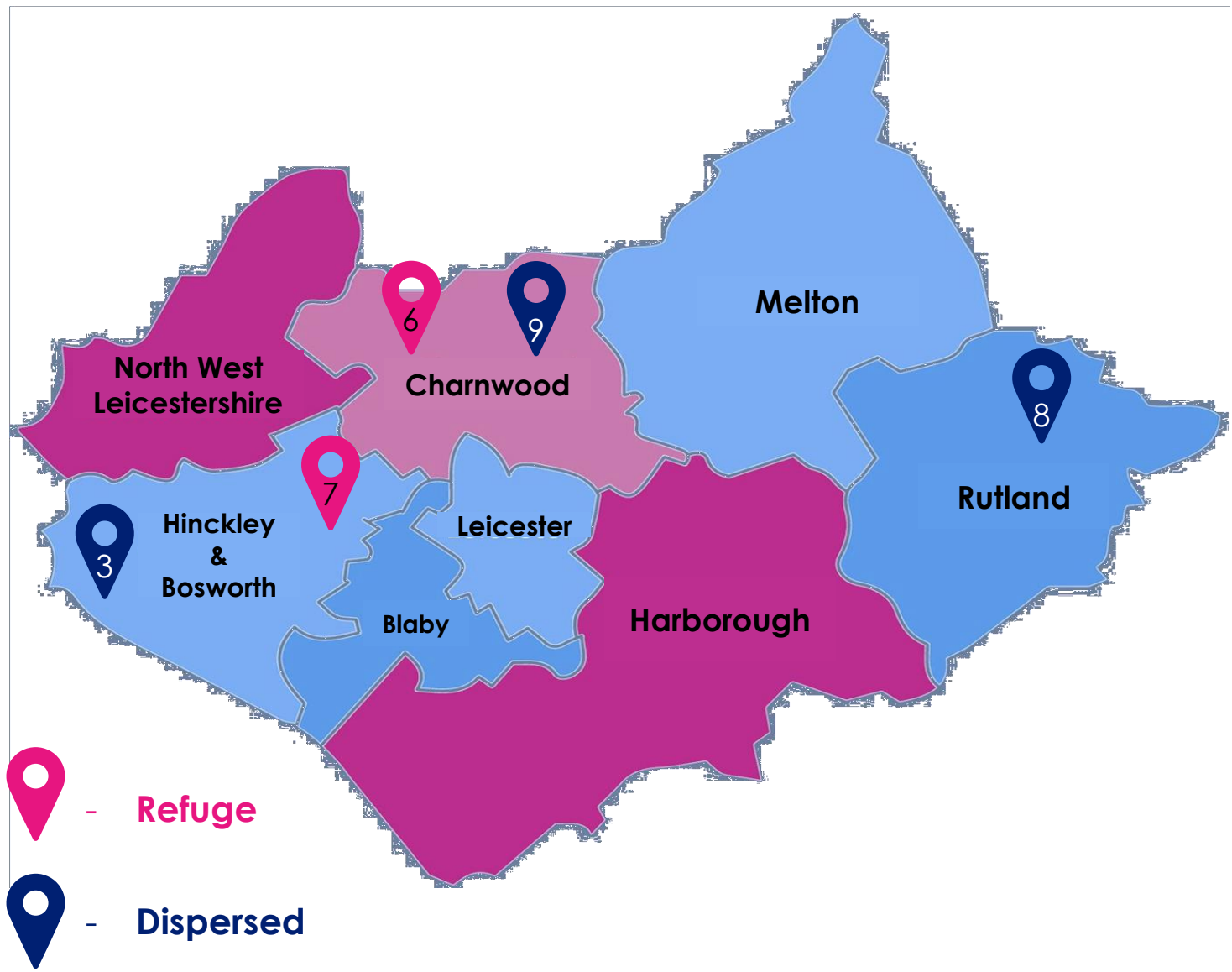
It is noted that not all districts have safe accommodation however victims can access these services regardless of their location as well of those in Rutland.

The Council of Europe¹ recommendation is 1 family place per 10,000 population. The population of Leicestershire according to the 2021 census is 712,300 therefore the recommended number is **71** spaces.

¹ [1. Final Activity Report \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/council-of-europe)



Safe Accommodation Provision - Map



This map illustrates where the current safe accommodation provision is located across Area.

As mentioned on the previous slide, safe accommodation is only available in two districts, three if you include the Rutland dispersed properties.

Many would have to travel a minimum of 30 minutes by car to access safe accommodation, with some being over an hours away by car. When using public transport this could take much longer.

Consideration should be given to the location of safe accommodation, how appropriate this might be for victims, thinking about their support network, culture, employment and children's school.

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Safe Accommodation Provision

Within the previous needs assessment, there was a sanctuary scheme offer available. This was funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. This funding has now ended and there is no sanctuary scheme available in Leicestershire.

The Sanctuary Scheme is a victim/survivor centred initiative which aims to enable households at risk of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes, when it is safe to do so and if they chose to, by installing additional security to the property and perimeter (Sanctuary) and support. It also forms part of the whole housing approach to domestic abuse.

Consideration should be given to reinstating the sanctuary scheme as an option of safe accommodation for victims and their families. This will provide choice for victims, allowing them to remain at home and within their support networks when it is safe to do so. It will enable more victims to be safely supported and may reduce the need for refuge or dispersed accommodation for the victim.



Safe Accommodation Referrals

Referrals to Safe Accommodation – Refuge & Dispersed Accommodation

WALL manages the majority of the refuge and dispersed accommodation across Leicestershire with Panahghar managing the specialist accommodation for Black, Asian and racially minoritised communities.

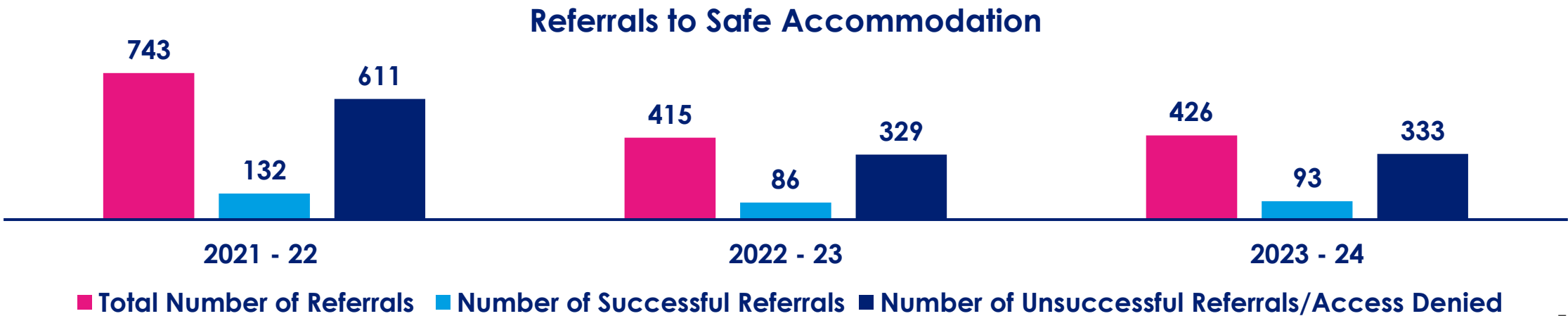
Panaghar's service contract commenced in July 2024 however due to delays with housing benefit they have been unable to take referrals until October 2024. Due to the contract commencement date, Panaghar's service is not included in the data set for this needs assessment. It is positive to see that this service has been commissioned and implemented in Leicestershire.

It must be noted that the data provided by WALL for their safe accommodation provision is **LLR wide** so covers all referrals into safe accommodation across the LLR area. This data cannot be broken down into those accessing the Leicestershire accommodation only. Referrals to the service can be made by professionals and self referrals via the helpline, website and by contacting the team directly.

Limited data is available regarding referrals to safe accommodation. WALL have identified this as an area for improvement.

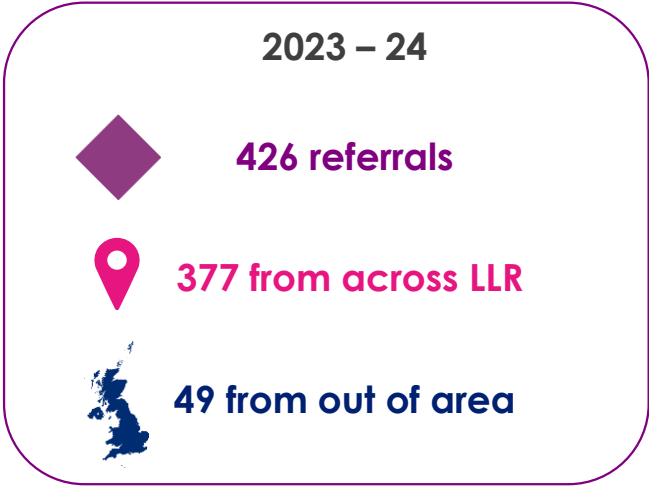
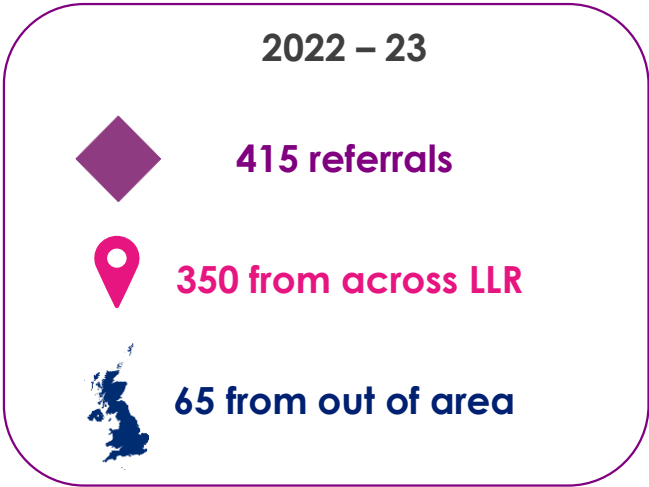
The data shows that there has been a **44.1%** decrease in referrals in to safe accommodation from 2021 – 22 before increasing slightly in 2023 – 24 by **2.65%**. WALL have advised that for 2023 – 24 175 referrals were for clients who have been referred into organisation for support before. Of these 175 referrals , 94 clients had been previously referred to refuge and assessed.

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Referrals to Safe Accommodation – Refuge & Dispersed Accommodation

We know that many victims will have to move out of area to a new local authority to access safe accommodation. WALL accepted a number of referrals over the period of this needs assessments from victims out of area. Data regarding area is not available for 2021 – 22.



WALL have advised that for the 2022 – 23 and 2023 – 24, a large proportion of referrals were for those within Leicester City. In 2023 – 24, 253 referrals were for those within Leicester.

For those who were referred from out of area, the top areas are detailed in the table below.

2021 – 22	Nottingham – 9	Chesterfield – 3		
2022 – 23	Derbyshire – 15	Birmingham – 10	Nottingham – 9	Northampton - 5
2023 - 24	Nottingham – 19	Derbyshire – 19	Birmingham – 13	Northampton - 8

Denied Access to Service

Not all victims who are referred to Safe Accommodation services will be able to access them for a number of reasons. In 2021 – 22 **82.2%** of referrals were denied access, **79.2%** in 2022 – 23 and **78.1%** in 2023 – 24.

Data is limited regarding denied access to service.

In **2022 – 23** the most common reason for being denied access is 'no space or capacity'.

For **2023 – 24** the most common reasons are

- Client does not require support/declined refuge
- No capacity/space available
- Area identified as being unsafe.

We can see that 'no space/capacity to support' is cited in both years. It has been highlighted that the number of safe accommodation spaces available in Leicestershire is below the recommended figure of 71.

Regarding the 'client does not require support/declined refuge', there may be some relevance in the location of safe accommodation as discussed earlier in this report. This was highlighted in the previous assessment as there was a high proportion of denied access due to 'client does not want support'. Consideration should be given to providing safe accommodation within all districts.

Consideration should be given to alternative forms of safe accommodation which may be more suited to those who cannot access a refuge, such as a Housing First scheme, where wraparound support for complex and additional needs can be provided or properties with adaptations for those who have a disability or care and support needs include children.

Consideration should also be given to perpetrator management as set out in the Domestic Abuse Draft Statutory Guidance Framework, which could enable victims and children to remain in their homes and communities, reducing disruption and trauma already experienced

Denied Access to Service

In addition to the previous slide, there are many other barriers to accessing safe accommodation including socio economic factors.

Where a victim needs to access safe accommodation and they are claiming Universal Credit, they are able to make a claim for Housing Benefit to cover the cost of safe accommodation.

However, if their income is over a certain amount, they would not be eligible for Housing Benefit and therefore would have to cover the cost of provision themselves.

For those on certain benefits, assistance can be sought to cover the cost of both safe accommodation and their main home. Again, if your income is over a certain amount, you would not be eligible for this and would have to cover the cost of both.

As a result, many cannot afford safe accommodation costs and either remain in their home or seek alternatives such as staying with family. Sadly, this is a national issue and not specific to Leicestershire.

There are additional challenges for those with NRPF or insecure immigration status.

We know that many who are denied access to safe accommodation will access temporary accommodation. We do not have data regarding this from the districts. This is an area for further exploration to gain a greater understanding of those accessing temporary accommodation due to domestic abuse.

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Safe Accommodation Data

Safe Accommodation 2021 - 22

The diagrams below illustrates the demographic data provided for victims who have accessed refuge & dispersed provision in 2021 – 22



175 Victims Supported
172 - Female Victims
3 - Male Victims



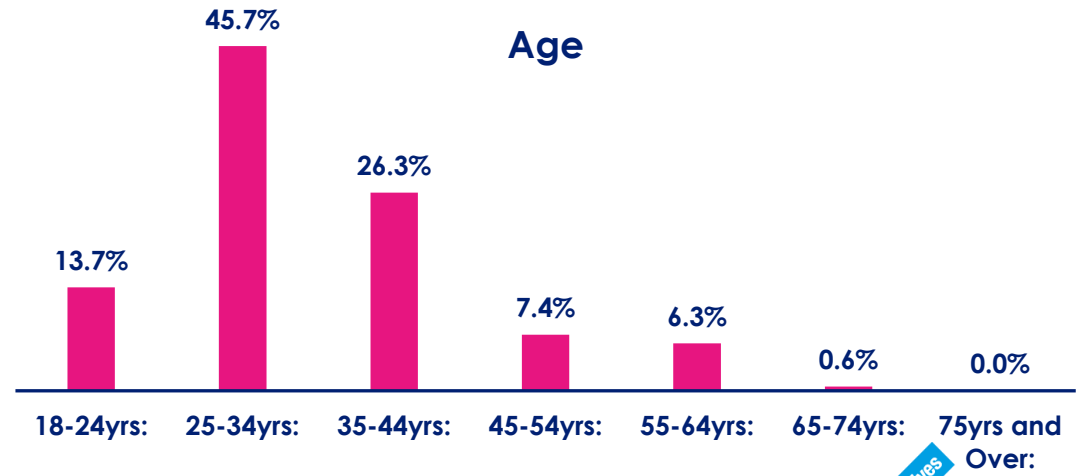
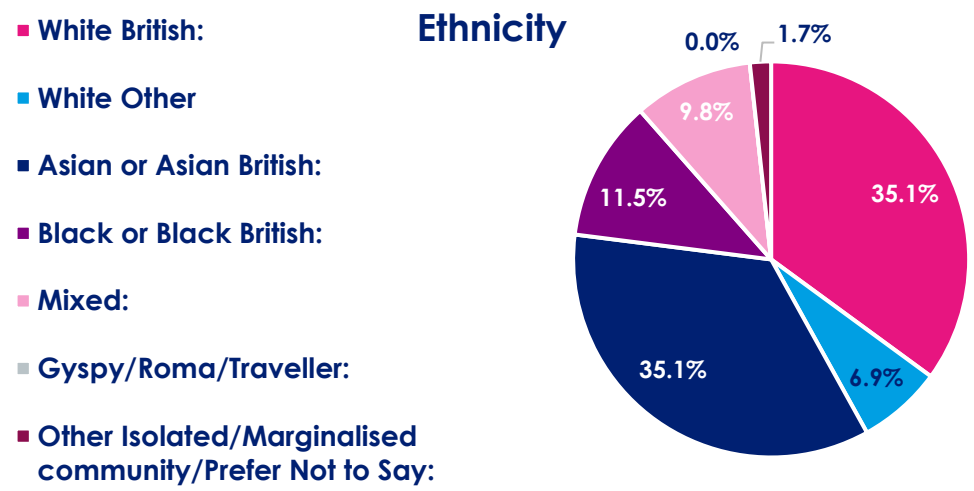
Sexual Identity

162 - Heterosexual
3 - Gay/lesbian
6 - Bisexual
4 - prefer not to say



Family Composition

48 - single victims without children
127 - victims with children



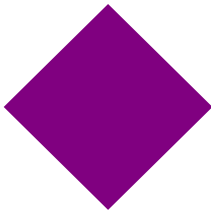
Safe Accommodation 2021 – 22

Below is the demographic data provided for victims who have accessed refuge & dispersed provision in 2021 – 22



Disability

- 15 - Physical disability
- 5 - Learning disability
- 2 - Visual impairment
- 1 - Speech impairment or communication difficulties
- 53 - Mental Health issue
- 15 - Other long term health conditions



Honor Based Violence

- 9 - experienced HBV
- 1 - experienced Forced Marriage



Immigration Status

- 22 - Family Visa
- 1 - Work/Student/Visit Visa
- 4 - Indefinite leave to remain



Additional Needs

- 174 - Homeless
- 1 - Alcohol misuse
- 17 - Drug misuse
- 38 - Legal Support
- 107 - Financial support
- 22 - Translator required



Housing prior to Safe Accommodation

- 2 - Private/Owner Occupier
- 8 - Private Renter
- 34 - Social Housing
- 77 - Temporary
- 54 - Other



Employment

- 32 - Employed/Self Employed
- 90 - Unemployed
- 52 - Unknown

Safe Accommodation 2022 - 23

The diagrams below illustrates the demographic data provided for victims who have accessed refuge & dispersed provision in 2022 – 23



86 Victims Supported

- 85 - Female Victims
- 1 - Male Victims



Sexual Identity

- 78 - Heterosexual
- 1 - Gay/lesbian
- 6 - Bisexual
- 1 - prefer not to say

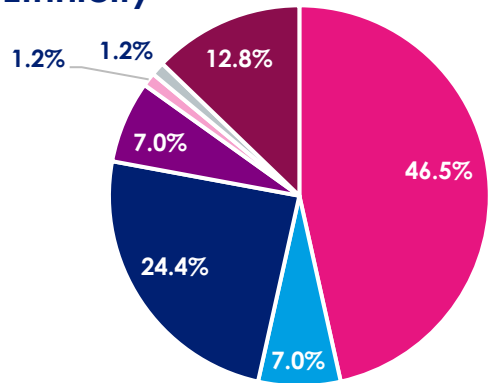


Family Composition

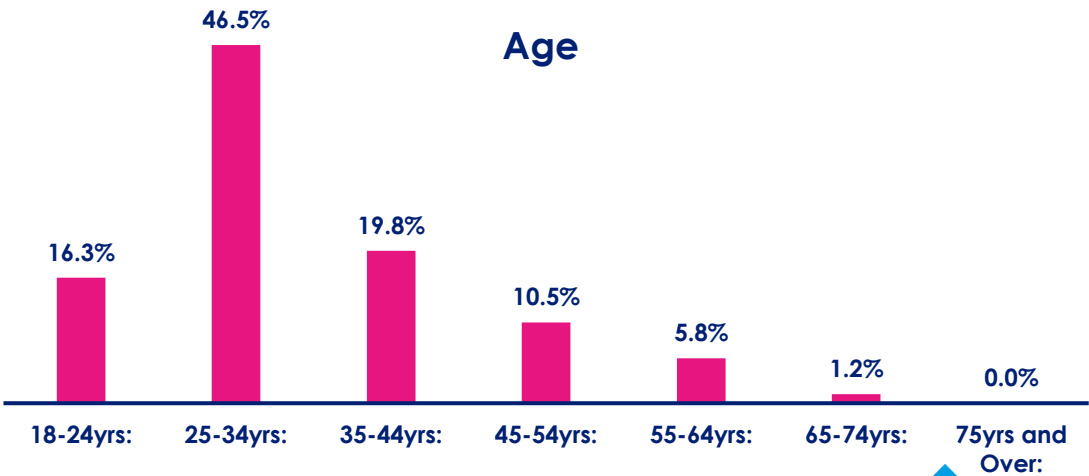
- 25 - single victims without children
- 61 - victims with children

- White British:
- White Other
- Asian or Asian British:
- Black or Black British:
- Mixed:
- Gypsy/Roma/Traveller:
- Other Isolated/Marginalised community/Prefer Not to Say:

Ethnicity



Age



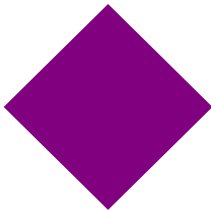
Safe Accommodation 2022 – 23

Below is the demographic data provided for victims who have accessed refuge & dispersed provision in 2021 – 22



Disability

- 20- Physical disability
- 3 - Learning disability
- 1 - Deaf/hearing impairment
- 18 - Mental Health issue
- 41 - Other long term health conditions



Honor Based Violence

- 5 - experienced HBV
- 1 - experienced Forced Marriage



Immigration Status

- 1 - Work/Student/Visit Visa
- 4 - Limited leave to remain
- 15 Other/unknown/prefer not to say



Additional Needs

- 86 - Homeless
- 2 - Alcohol misuse
- 4 - Drug misuse
- 1 - Offending history



Housing prior to Safe Accommodation

- 2 - Private/Owner Occupier
- 5 - Private Renter
- 23 - Social Housing
- 31 - Temporary
- 25 - Other supported housing



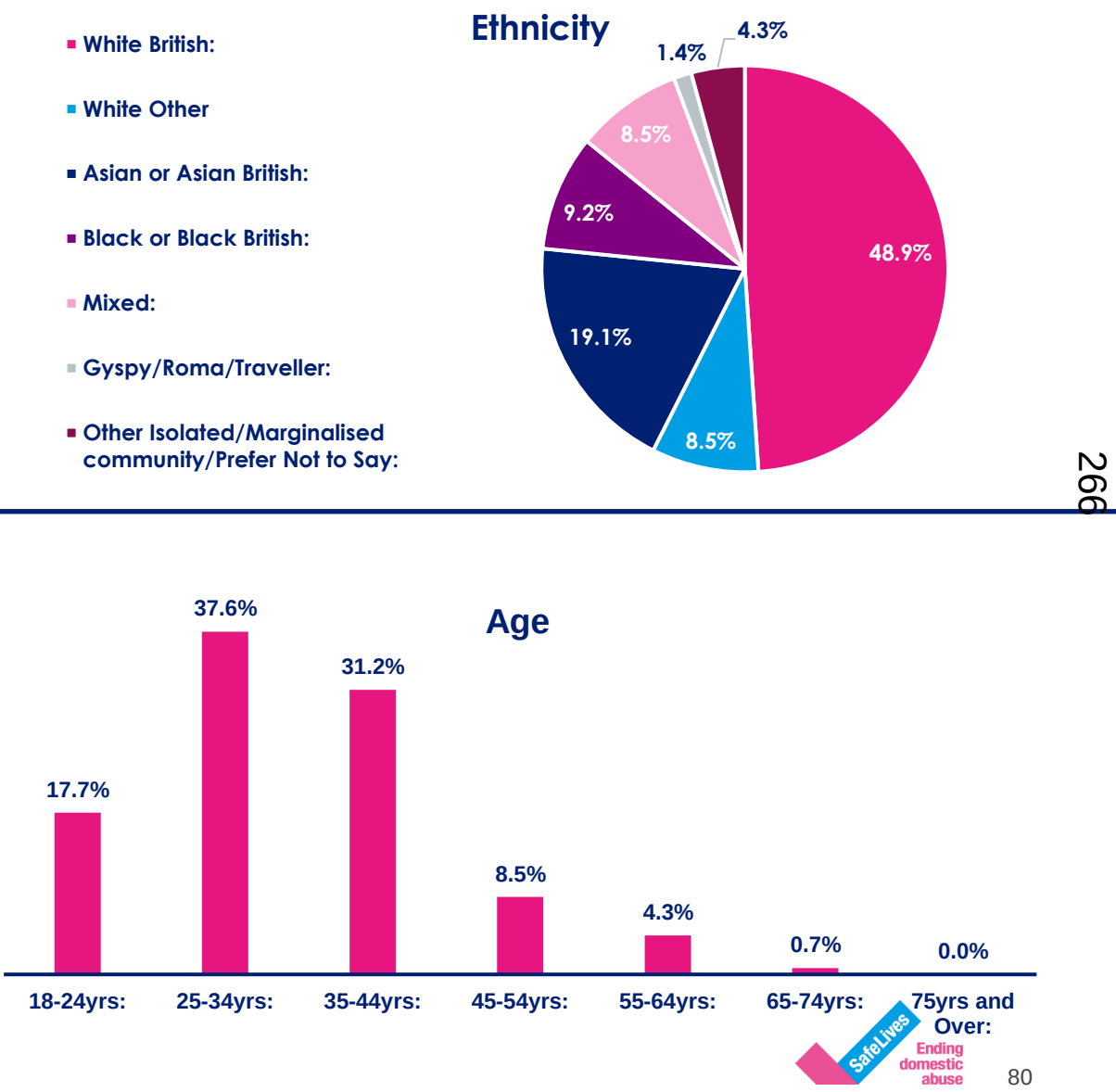
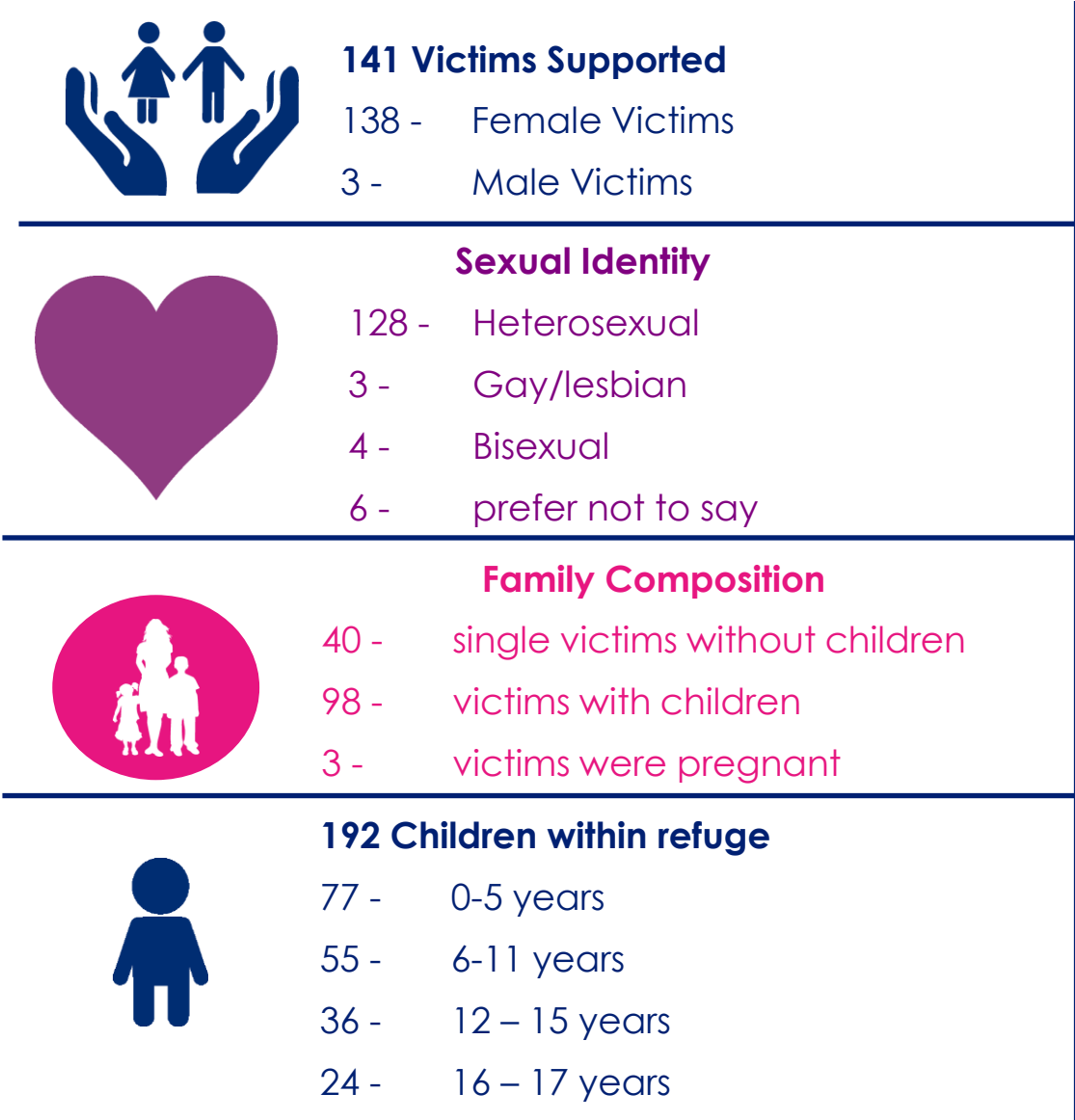
Employment

- 8 - Employed/Self Employed
- 78 - Unemployed



Safe Accommodation 2023 - 24

The diagrams below illustrates the demographic data provided for victims who have accessed refuge & dispersed provision in 2023 – 24



Safe Accommodation 2022 – 23

Below is the demographic data provided for victims who have accessed refuge & dispersed provision in 2021 – 22

Disability



- 28 - Physical disability
- 6 - Learning disability
- 2 - Deaf/hearing impairment
- 8 - Sensory impairment
- 60 - Mental Health issue
- 1 - Neuro divergent
- 9 - Other long term health conditions

Additional Needs



- 141 - Homeless
- 3 - Alcohol misuse
- 2 - Drug misuse
- 82 - Legal support
- 106 - Financial Support
- 17 - Translator required

Honor Based Violence



- 4 - experienced HBV
- 3 - experienced Forced Marriage

Immigration Status



- 1 - Work/Student/Visit Visa
- 3 - Asylum seeker
- 10 - Indefinite leave to remain
- 3 - Limited leave to remain
- 15 - Other/unknown/prefer not to say

Housing prior to Safe Accommodation



- 2 - Private/Owner Occupier
- 1 - Private Renter
- 35 - Social Housing
- 86 - Temporary
- 1 - Other supported housing
- 16 - Other

Employment



- 23 - Employed/Self Employed
- 75 - Unemployed
- 43 - Unknown

Safe Accommodation

As previously stated, the data provided by WALL is LLR wide and not Leicestershire specific. Our analysis of the data cannot be fully attributed to Leicestershire due to this. WALL have advised that a significant number of referrals are from those residing in Leicester.

This is an area for improvement for future data collection and needs assessments.

The data provided shows that the most prevalent age range across all three years is the **25 – 34 years**. There is an increase in the **35 – 44 years** in 2023 – 24. This is in keeping with the overall identified victim figures.

We do not have any data regarding the ages of children except for 2023 – 24. That data shows that while there is a spread across the age ranges, the highest proportion of children are age **0 – 5 years** at **40.1%**.

Children are victims of domestic abuse in their own right. It is important that support is available in age appropriate formats. Support in accessing schools, nurseries and other provision such as play groups is also of benefit.

With regard to ethnicity, the data changes across the three years. As a caveat we know there are a significant number of referrals from Leicester which has a higher Black, Asian and racially minoritised community population (66.8%).

In 2021 – 22, **35.1%** of victims identified as White British and Asian or Asian British. In 2022 – 23 the number of victims identifying as White British increased to this decreased to **46.5%** with Asian or Asian British decreasing to **24.4%** before decreasing again to **19.1** in 2023 – 24.

There are a number of victims who accessed refuge accommodation who had a disability with physical disabilities and mental health needs being the most identified. Accessibility to safe accommodation for those with disability is key. This is a key area for all to consider especially when we consider the ageing population of the area.

The data shows that a high proportion of victims within the service required financial and legal support. The data records all victims accessing safe accommodation as homeless. We would assume that to mean, support with homelessness is required rather than a person being 'street homeless'. Clarification around this would be of benefit.

Safe Accommodation

WALL have stated that

'It has been identified that the support needs for clients has increased. With us as a service having to ensure that our team are trained to enable us to provide an effective service to anyone seeking refuge. With this in mind, this also reflects the lack of funds available to services such as ours to enable us to provide additional team members (Staff) to provide the level of support required by those accessing refuge. This being a national concern and not one expressed within just this area. Taking into account the volume of referrals received alone by ourselves, this highlights the demand and need for refuge within this area. And the increase in those needing to seek refuge and a safe environment away from harm. Looking at those that WALL have not been able to accommodate due to no spaces being available this outlines the demand for refuge.'

Supported Housing: National Statement of Expectations

The National Statement of Expectations (NSE) was developed in collaboration between the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) with input from local councils and the supported housing sector. Together, they are committed to seeing delivery of good quality supported housing which meets residents' needs and represents good value for money.

The NSE provides a mechanism for establishing the vision for accommodation standards, quality, and value for money. The NSE is not a statutory requirement, and to date there has been no definitive set of guidelines on what should reasonably be expected from the accommodation element of supported housing. However, it is hoped that organisations involved in the provision of supported housing will use, adopt, and find the principles and examples of best practice helpful.

In supported housing, accommodation is provided alongside support, supervision, or care to help people live as independently as possible in the community, including for people fleeing domestic abuse with their children.

In order to deliver the ambitions of the NSE local authorities should work alongside providers and local delivery partners to:

- Assess local demand and plan effectively
- Ensure safe and good quality supported housing
- Ensure supported housing provides good value for money

Women's Aid Annual Audit 2021

The annual audit presents information on the provision and usage of domestic abuse services (both accommodation and community support services) in England, mainly focusing on the financial year 2019/20. This year the report also includes a section on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Key findings from the audit included:

- It is estimated (based on the On Track data collection) that 10,592 women and 12,710 children were supported by a refuge in 2019 - 20.
- 3,935 refuge spaces in England, falling short of the number of spaces recommended by the Council of Europe by 1,694, which represents a 30% shortfall^[1].
- It is estimated that a total of 24,748 referrals were received by refuges. This means that 57% of all referrals received for refuge were rejected. The main reason for rejection was a lack of space or capacity with 18% of all referrals received rejected for this reason, this also equates to 32% of all rejected referrals being rejected due to lack of space or capacity.
- Only 26% of refuges commissioned by local authorities indicated that the funding covered all aspects of the support staff costs.
- 63% of women in refuge services had children and 6% were pregnant
- 88% of service users had experienced emotional abuse, 67% had experienced jealous or controlling behaviour.
- 49% of service users in a refuge had support needs around mental health
- 48% of service users in a refuge reported feeling depressed or having suicidal thoughts because of the abuse.
- 26% of women at refuge services have a disability; most common were mental health disabilities, 7% had a physical disability.
- Of service users who were not British nationals, just over half (54.5%) were able to access public funds.
- Only 4% of vacancies posted on Routes to Support^[2] could consider women who had no recourse to public funds.
- Under half of refuge vacancies can accommodate a woman with two children and less than one in five for a woman with three children.

These statistics highlight that nationally there are barriers for some women to enter refuge.

This includes women who are NRPF and who are a parent and who are likely to have mental health needs requiring sufficient therapeutic support. We also know that people with a disability are more likely to experience domestic abuse. The small percentage of women in refuge with a physical disability, is likely not reflective of demand from this group and impacted by the availability of accessible accommodation.

Whole Housing Approach

SafeLives supports the DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) Whole Housing Approach which aims to improve the housing options and outcomes for all experiencing domestic abuse. It suggests a range of housing options or specialist initiatives to give victims and survivors the choice to relocate or remain in their existing property and for agencies to work together collaboratively.

This diagram shows the model and it's 12 parts. The lighter circles represent the temporary accommodation settings and tenure types with the darker circles representing the housing options and specialist initiatives to support victims to either relocate or remain in their home.

Further information available here
<https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/what-we-do/whole-housing-approach-housing-toolkit/>





Survivor Voice

Survivor Voice

“We’ve walked through fire to get our voices back; we’re not going to give them up now.” Ursula, Pioneer

SafeLives are committed to placing people with lived experience at the heart of all we do, valuing internal and external survivors’ experience as an asset.

Working together, we can aggregate and amplify survivors’ voices and interweave authenticity and independence throughout all our work. By listening and responding to views that are different to our own, professionals and survivors can critically assess and address challenges together. To do this authentically we support survivors to tell their truth and speak with an unmediated voice.

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Case Studies

The needs assessment also requires a review of case studies to understand a victim's journey, support required, received, and the outcome.

22 case studies have been provided and analysis of these is below:



1 case was an OOA referral



2 victims were pregnant

12 victims had children – 9 victims had more than one child

1 victim was transgender

2 victims had step-children



14 victims were unable to access refuge accommodation due to their circumstances

1 victim was asked to leave refuge accommodation

1 victim's case was closed as housing would not consider a different location



1 victim was already residing in refuge through WALL

2 victims were accepted into refuge

8 victims were housed in temporary accommodation

Case Studies

Of the 14 victims that were unable to access refuge, three stated they did not wish to change their children's schools, one stated they could not move away for work reasons, five stated they did not want to move out of area, or the location of the refuge was too far away, one declined due to the perpetrator being bailed away from the property, and one declined stating the refuge was not suitable for kids. One case also declined due to not being able to bring pets.



- 3 were not eligible due to pregnancy, the victim being on bail, and the victim previously assaulting staff.
- 1 victim was asked to leave refuge due to a breach in contract and no further information is provided on follow up housing.
- 1 victim declined refuge due to being in a different location and was told that housing would not consider another area. There is no further information on why this occurred.
- 1 victim was housed in supported accommodation that was not DA specific.
- 1 victim went on to live with family due to the location of refuge.



Those who were trying to access safe accommodation but could not be placed somewhere straight away were placed in hotels, hostels and Bed & Breakfasts. Of the four who were placed in those, two then went on to access safe accommodation, whilst the other two remained on priority banding waiting housing. Time periods of being in temporary accommodation lasted up to 7 months. Eight cases accessed temporary accommodation and of these, three were still in temporary accommodation, three were rehoused into their own properties, one returned to live at the perpetrator's address, and one went on to refuge. Those that remain in temporary accommodation are on priority banding for their own accommodation. Six cases were rehoused straightaway through social housing or through CSC. Two cases were currently residing in refuge looking for onwards accommodation.

Case Studies



Of the cases where children were present and looking to flee with the victim, nine out of the 12 cases were referred for Early Help/CSC support or already had this support in place. Two cases there was no record of referring or accessing support for the children. In one case the child was residing with the perpetrator however a safeguarding referral was completed to the relevant area on behalf of the victim.



When considering support needs for victims who were seeking safe accommodation, 37% of cases had mental health needs. Of these a referral was made to counselling/therapy services in six cases and three were receiving emotional support from DA agencies already. Two cases had substance misuse needs, and one was referred for specialist support. Two cases needed support with injunctions and both cases were referred to NCDV for this. Six cases needed support with finances in which support was given around benefits.

58% of cases were referred for specialist DA support, 29% were already engaging with DA services, and 8% received no support regarding domestic abuse.

These cases demonstrate the varying needs of victims seeking safe accommodation, and that no single model of accommodation-based support will be able to meet these needs. Leicestershire County Council should review their options for safe accommodation and seek to design an offer that can cater for the complexity and variety of needs victims of domestic abuse present with.

Survivor Voice

SafeLives spoke to 2 survivors of domestic abuse to understand their experience of Safe Accommodation

Although SafeLives managed to gather the voices of two survivors, there were difficulties in collecting more voices from around the county.

Survivor voice is key to understanding victims needs and how we can improve services to best support them. Survivors are at the heart and start of everything we do at SafeLives, and we are looking to continue this in Leicestershire with Echo Project.

Echo Project seeks to embed survivor voice into the design and delivery of policies and services that intend to meet their needs. The Authentic Voice Coordinators within Leicestershire will continue to gather voices and therefore support in understanding the needs of survivors for all aspects of domestic abuse including housing.

Both survivors however spoke about further training needed within the area to fully understand the complexities and dynamics of an abusive relationship. It was thought there was a lack of understanding regarding the impacts of domestic abuse on personal lives, and the housing system needs to have a more human approach alongside understanding to ensure survivor needs are met.

We can see from the case studies that accessing safe accommodation can be difficult, but having a better understanding of the dynamics of abusive relationships and being more human can have positive impacts on survivors being heard, and feel they are in control of their own lives when deciding to leave.



2 interviews with
2 women



Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion and Recommendations

We have, throughout this report, using SafeLives recognised best practice guidelines, in conjunction with tools such as our prevalence tool, made recommendations regarding the expected levels of services reach and provision. We recommend that these are considered as part of Leicestershire's Domestic Abuse commissioning strategy.

Local Partnership Board

Since the previous needs assessment The Leicestershire and Rutland DA Local Partnership Board has been established which meets quarterly. There have been a number of changes to the board ensuring compliance with the statutory guidance including the inclusion of many by and for services. It is chaired by the Lead Member for Safer Communities within Leicestershire County Council.

An area for development is the child victim representative role.

The Echo Project will support the strengthening, embedding and amplifying of authentic adult and child voice within the Local Partnership Board.

This can only be done with the support of the board and its partners to work collaboratively with the Echo team and local survivors.

- All agencies and partners to engage with the Echo Project to ensure authentic voice is at the centre of Leicestershire's Domestic Abuse Strategic

Conclusion and Recommendations

Data collection

Leicestershire Partnership Board used the previous needs assessment to highlight the need for collecting appropriate data, particularly in ethnicity, sexual identity, gender identity and socio economic status.

There have been significant improvements in the level and accuracy of the data collected compared to the previous needs assessment particularly around age, gender and ethnicity.

Disability and sexual identity recording is still limited. Regarding disability, this is not captured by Leicestershire Police, the Targeted Family Help service and two of the Districts. Research shows that disabled victims of domestic abuse also suffer more severe and frequent abuse over longer periods of time than non-disabled victims.

Whilst there has been a decrease in the level of unknown for sexual identity, almost three quarter of victims' sexual identity is unknown.

Research shows that those in LGBT+ relationships face additional barriers to reporting and accessing services.

It is important to ensure that this information is asked and captured in order to fully understand the demographics and intersecting needs of victims and survivors within Leicestershire.

There were challenges in the collection and the consistency of data provided including districts being unable to provide any data.

Many of the District Homelessness Teams collect age related data on all members of the household but will only capture further demographic data on the lead applicant. This could account for some of the unknown figure. Within Children's Social Care statutory assessments, only the child's data is captured; whereas WALL and a number of the District Domestic Abuse Services only capture the adult victim data.

Many agencies do not collect information regarding socio economic characteristics.

A concern is that by not capturing the demographic data of the whole family, we cannot understand the needs of the whole family and provide appropriate support.

As stated WALL are not able to separate their data into locality at present and are working towards a solution for this.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Data collection

- There is a continued need for a consistent approach to collecting data across Leicestershire This will provide a clear understanding of victim's characteristics, areas of multiple disadvantage and complex needs, which will in turn, inform a comprehensive strategy for domestic abuse and ensure that services delivered can meet identified needs
- The recording of disability data is a priority for Leicestershire Police, Targeted Family Help, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council and North West Leicestershire District Council
- Data collection regarding all members of the family to be considered in order to provide a whole family approach

Conclusion and Recommendations Review

Provision of support and capacity of commissioned services

Victim's services have undergone a period of change across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland with a new service contract starting on the 1st April 2022.

There is now a Helpline and Engagement service managed by Freeva. This is the Front Door for all referrals, and they also provide the Marac Idva. There is also a Domestic Abuse Locality service consisting of a Complex Need service; an Outreach service managed by LWA; and the Safe Accommodation provision managed by WALL.

A number of new services have been commissioned which commenced in 2024. As such their data is not captured within the timeframe of this needs assessment.

The services are

- Specialist dispersed property for male victims
- Specialist refuge accommodation for Black Asian and Racially Minoritised Women

WALL have also expanded their dispersed refuge accommodation to include refuge for those with larger families, clients with pets, and male victims.

There are currently 25 safe accommodation spaces across Leicestershire against a recommended figure of 71 and the lack of space is the one of the highest reasons for denied access. This was also a theme within the case audits.

Safe Accommodation is only available in two districts, limiting options for victims needing accommodation. Location has been cited as a reason for victims not wanting to enter refuge.

Since the previous needs assessment, Leicestershire have found it difficult to secure dispersed accommodation in other districts due to the lack of housing available.

The lack of a sanctuary scheme is a cause for concern as this limits the options available to victims. It does not enable them to stay in their own home where it is safe to do so. In turn, this can have an impact on the number of referrals to refuge and the increasing need as there is not alternative.

Conclusion and Recommendations Review

Provision of Support and capacity of commissioned services continued

- Increase the number of safe accommodation with the aim to reach the recommended figure of 71
- Consideration should be given to the location of safe accommodation and the range of safe accommodation commissioned to ensure accessibility to all victims. This may include adapted properties, provision for older people in line with the aging population, larger properties and Housing First Schemes with wrap around support for complex and additional needs
- The reintroduction of the Sanctuary Scheme to enable victims and survivors to remain in their own homes with support where safe to do so

Conclusion and Recommendations

Housing and Homelessness

Whilst we do not have data regarding temporary accommodation, we know many victims are access alternative temporary accommodation rather than safe accommodation. Within Leicestershire, alternative temporary accommodation options include a hotel or Bed and Breakfast.

These options are not safe accommodation and can be traumatic for victims and their families, especially those with children, disabilities and/or additional needs. This highlights the importance of the need for a range of safe accommodation options.

In the previous needs assessment, we highlighted the importance of considering those who are street homeless and hidden homeless. This is an area which is a focus of the District Chief Housing Officer Group.

Work had commenced during the previous needs assessment regarding a dedicated domestic abuse specialist within the Housing Options and Homelessness service in all districts. Each district received funding to employ a 'Housing Link Worker' to create links between Domestic Abuse services and housing. Most districts have recruited with an employee in post. The consistency of support offered is unclear and it would be of benefit for the districts and the link workers to come together to ensure best practice across the county.

- Review of housing and allocations policies to ensure consistency across areas
- Ensure Homelessness and Housing Options teams are fully aware of the Safe Accommodation and support options for victims

Conclusion and Recommendations

Children

There are a high proportion of child victims aged 6 - 11 in Leicestershire with children accounting for around a quarter of all identified victims ranging from 22.88% in 2021 – 22 to 25.41% in 2023 – 24 which suggests that children are experiencing trauma at a very early, crucial stage of their development and continues through their childhood. Prevention and early identification need to remain a priority as well as continuing therapeutic support for child victims

There has been a significant increase in victims identified aged 16 – 17 ranging from **8.34% to 9.81%** of all identified victims across the three years. It should be noted that the data provided for the needs assessment for those age 16/17 may be child victims whose parent/s are in domestic abuse relationships and/or victims of IPV in their own relationships.

This highlights the importance of the commissioning and sustainability of specialist children's provision, for those living in households where abuse is taking place and for those experiencing abuse within their own relationships. It is currently unclear what provision and support offer is available to children in Leicestershire.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises that children in abusive households are victims. As stated previously, not all agencies are collecting data regarding children. It is imperative that all data around children is captured. This is to ensure that the needs of the child are assessed, understood and met by providing appropriate support and services for the whole family and linked in with other relevant strategies.

It is noted from the refuge demographic data that there are a significant number of children within the service but limited information regarding their needs and outcomes.

- Specialist children's provision to be commissioned for those within safe accommodation and the wider community
- Specialist children and young peoples' provision for those experiencing domestic abuse within their own relationship. This is an area for consideration for those within safe accommodation, as well as in the community
- Children's provision to be tailored to a child's needs, identity, and culture

Conclusion and Recommendations

Performance Monitoring

It was previously recommended that the Local Partnership Board complete dip sampling and case audits on those accessing safe accommodation on a quarterly basis. Whilst it is noted that individual providers are completing these, it would be of benefit for the Local Partnership Board to review these on a regular basis to quality assure.

No Recourse to Public Funds

WALL have highlighted that immigration status can be a barrier for victims accessing safe accommodation. In the previous needs assessment we recommended that staff be aware of the Destitution Domestic Violence (DDV) Concession scheme for those who have been granted leave to enter as a spouse or partner of a British person.

We do not have an update regarding this and would recommend that this be an area which is explored to ensure the intersecting needs of victims are being met.



Appendix A

Data Submissions

Data was supplied by the following agencies –

- Leicestershire Police
- LWA
- Freeva
- WALL
- Adam Project
- Hinckley & Bosworth DA service
- Harborough DA service
- Blaby DA service
- North West Leicestershire Housing Link Worker
- Oadby & Wigston Housing Link Worker
- Children's Services
- Adult Social Care
- Leicestershire LGBT+ Centre
- Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
- Oadby & Wigston Borough Council
- North West Leicestershire District Council
- Melton Borough Council
- Harborough District Council
- Blaby District Council

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**CABINET – 21 JULY 2026****RESPONSE TO THE BLABY DISTRICT COUNCIL REGULATION 19
LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND
TRANSPORT****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the progress of Blaby District Council's Local Plan, to present the County Council's proposed response to the District Council's Regulation 19 consultation and to set out the proposals to address the outstanding issues.
2. A supplementary report setting out the detail on these matters is currently being prepared and will be circulated to Members and published on the County Council's website as soon as it is available.

Recommendations

3. The Cabinet is asked to note this report and will be asked to consider the recommendations set out in the supplementary report.

Reasons for Recommendation

4. The supplementary report will include consideration of additional evidence as part of the Local Plan and set out in full the County Council's proposed response to Blaby District Council's Local Plan consultation.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

5. Blaby District Council has outlined a timetable for the submission of its Local Plan. It is anticipated that following the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission consultation and subject to approval of Blaby District Council, the Local Plan would be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by the end of 2026.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

6. In 2018, the County Council, Leicester City Council, the seven district councils in Leicestershire, and the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP), approved the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan

(SGP) which provides the long-term vision for planned growth for the area up to 2050. The SGP identifies five key growth areas and most pertinent to Blaby District are 'Leicester: Our Central City', the A46 Priority Growth Corridor and the A5 Improvement Corridor.

7. In October 2019, the Cabinet approved the response to Blaby District Council's New Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation at Regulation 18 stage, which is the first formal stage of consultation for the Local Plan.
8. The Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Priorities was approved by the Cabinet on 20 November 2020. This document has a plan period to 2050 and it was developed by the County Council and City Council alongside the SGP to ensure that the long-term development needs and associated transportation requirements are co-ordinated.
9. In March 2021, the Cabinet approved the response to a further Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation undertaken by Blaby District Council, the New Local Plan Options Consultation.
10. In 2021, the County Council and its partners (Leicester City Council, the seven district councils and the LLEP), commissioned the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA). The HENA, published in June 2022, provides evidence that across Leicester and Leicestershire, the projected housing need from 2020 to 2036 is 91,400 dwellings and employment land need from 2021 to 2036 is 344 hectares.
11. In December 2021, the County Council became a signatory to a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) relating to South Leicestershire Local Plan Making (November 2021), aligning the gathering of evidence and activity in the development of new Local Plans for three districts in the south of the County.
12. In September 2022, the Cabinet approved the County Council becoming a signatory to a SoCG relating to Housing and Employment Land Needs (June 2022), setting out how the City Council's identified unmet needs would be accommodated in the County. Blaby District Council approved the SoCG at its Council meeting in July 2022.
13. In November 2022, the Cabinet received a paper setting out the financial implications for the County Council of delivering sustainable and inclusive growth and the approach and principles that it is proposed the Council would adopt to address and manage these risks.
14. In October 2024, the Cabinet received a paper on the Strategic Planning Issues associated with the emerging Charnwood Local Plan. This included principles for future engagement of the Local Highways Authority in other Local Plan processes in light of the County Council's experience of the Local Plan for Charnwood Borough.
15. In December 2024, the Cabinet report on the Provisional Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2028/29 referred to the importance of Local Plans

being prepared with sufficient evidence to secure contributions and delivery for critical infrastructure and that it is necessary for the district councils to work with the County Council to ensure that their Local Plans include policies that balance the need to support delivery of growth with the financial risk to the County Council.

16. In December 2025, the Cabinet received a report on Strategic Spatial and Transport Planning. This outlined proposals for the preparation of a Spatial Development Strategy and secured approval for the County Council to share initial evidence work, to undertake initial scheme feasibility and development work, outlined how this would be used by the Local Transport Authority to input into strategic planning, including to assist the evolution of Local Plans to the submission stage and in bringing forward strategic sites allocated in those Local Plans.
17. In February 2026, the Cabinet approved the County Council becoming a signatory to a SoCG produced by the Leicester and Leicestershire local authorities relating to housing distribution following the National Planning Policy Framework and new Standard Method published in December 2024. Blaby District Council became signatories to this SoCG in January 2026.

Resource Implications

18. The County Council has committed significant resources to engaging in, and supporting, a collaborative approach to strategic planning in order to facilitate the delivery of growth within the County and to mitigate the negative impacts of development, to the extent that it is reasonably possible to do.
19. As set out in the report to the Cabinet in December 2025 on Strategic Spatial and Transport Planning, securing the delivery of infrastructure, transport or otherwise (such as education, waste and health), to support the needs of Leicester and Leicestershire's growing population is becoming ever more challenging, particularly where strategic transport and education infrastructure is required to seek to mitigate the cumulative impacts of development sites across a relatively wide area of the County. The County Council seeks to achieve a more coordinated approach to locations for growth and prioritisation of its delivery relative to the prioritisation of investment in the infrastructure and services necessary to support it.
20. As part of seeking to provide necessary infrastructure to support new and existing communities appropriately, the County Council recognises that having up to date, effective Local Plans in place underpinned by appropriate policies and delivery strategies is the most effective way to fund and deliver infrastructure, maximising the contribution from the development industry and minimising potential negative impacts of unplanned growth.
21. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer have been consulted on this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

This report will be circulated to all Members.

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CABINET – 21 JULY 2026

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the progress of Harborough District Council's Local Plan and to set out the County Council's position on a proposed Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) on transport matters, ahead of the Examination in Public (EiP) and the initial hearing session, which is scheduled for 12 August 2026.
2. A supplementary report setting out the detail on these matters is currently being prepared and will be circulated to Members and published on the County Council's website as soon as it is available.

Recommendations

3. The Cabinet is asked to note this report and will be asked to consider recommendations set out in the supplementary report.

Reasons for Recommendation

4. The supplementary report will set out an update on Harborough District Council's Local Plan and the County Council's position on a proposed SoCG on transport matters, ahead of the EiP. The SoCG has specifically been requested by the panel of Inspectors examining Harborough District Council's Local Plan.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

5. In 2018, the County Council, Leicester City Council, the seven district councils in Leicestershire, and the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP), approved the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) which provides the long-term vision for planned growth for the area up to 2050. Both Market Harborough and Lutterworth are identified as being areas for managed growth.
6. In October 2019, the Cabinet approved the response to Harborough District Council's New Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation at Regulation 18 stage, which is the first formal stage of consultation for the Local Plan.

7. The Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Priorities was approved by the Cabinet on 20 November 2020. This document has a plan period to 2050 and it was developed by the County Council and City Council alongside the SGP to ensure that the long-term development needs and associated transportation requirements are co-ordinated.
8. In 2021, the County Council and its partners (Leicester City Council, the seven district councils and the LLEP), commissioned the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA). The HENA, published in June 2022, provides evidence that across Leicester and Leicestershire, the projected housing need from 2020 to 2036 is 91,400 dwellings and employment land need from 2021 to 2036 is 344 hectares.
9. In December 2021, the County Council became a signatory to a SoCG relating to South Leicestershire Local Plan Making (November 2021), aligning the gathering of evidence and activity in the development of new Local Plans for three districts in the south of the County.
10. In September 2022, the Cabinet approved the County Council becoming a signatory to a SoCG relating to Housing and Employment Land Needs (June 2022), setting out how the City Council's identified unmet needs would be accommodated in the County. Harborough District Council approved the SoCG at its Council meeting in July 2022.
11. In November 2022, the Cabinet received a paper setting out the financial implications for the County Council of delivering sustainable and inclusive growth and the approach and principles that it is proposed the Council would adopt to address and manage these risks.
12. In October 2024, the Cabinet received a paper on the Strategic Planning Issues associated with the emerging Charnwood Local Plan. This included principles for future engagement of the Local Highways Authority in other Local Plan processes in light of the County Council's experience of the Local Plan for Charnwood Borough.
13. In December 2024, the Cabinet report on the Provisional Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2028/29 referred to the importance of Local Plans being prepared with sufficient evidence to secure contributions and delivery for critical infrastructure and that it is necessary for the district councils to work with the County Council to ensure that their Local Plans include policies that balance the need to support delivery of growth with the financial risk to the County Council.
14. In March 2025, the Cabinet received a report on the proposed response, as the views of the County Council, to the Submission Draft (Regulation 19) Harborough Local Plan 2020-2041. The report set out that there were substantive issues associated with the Plan's evidence base and as the Local Transport Authority, the County Council considers that the Plan was failing to meet the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) tests of soundness insofar both its Effectiveness and Consistency with national policy. The report

also set out that a number of policies required updating to reflect required land and monetary contributions to deliver necessary education provision.

15. In September 2025, the Cabinet received a report on Harborough District Council's Local Plan, seeking approval for the County Council to become a signatory to a SoCG with the District Council regarding the two Authorities' 'Duty to Cooperate' on strategic and cross-boundary matters associated with the production of the Local Plan. It focused on the engagement related requirements of the Duty to Cooperate and is produced without prejudice to other matters of detail that the parties may wish to raise during the Local Plan examination.
16. In December 2025, the Cabinet received a report on Strategic Spatial and Transport Planning. This outlined proposals for the preparation of a Spatial Development Strategy and secured approval for the County Council to share initial evidence work, to undertake initial scheme feasibility and development work, outlined how this would be used by the Local Transport Authority to input into strategic planning, including to assist the evolution of Local Plans to the submission stage and in bringing forward strategic sites allocated in those Local Plans.
17. In February 2026, the Cabinet approved the County Council becoming a signatory to a SoCG produced by the Leicester and Leicestershire local authorities relating to housing distribution following the NPPF and new Standard Method published in December 2024. Harborough District Council is yet to become a signatory to this SoCG.

Resource Implications

18. The County Council has committed significant resources to engaging in, and supporting, a collaborative approach to strategic planning in order to facilitate the delivery of growth within the County and to mitigate the negative impacts of development, to the extent that it is reasonably possible to do.
19. As set out in the report to the Cabinet in December 2025 on Strategic Spatial and Transport Planning, securing the delivery of infrastructure, transport or otherwise (such as education, waste and health), to support the needs of Leicester and Leicestershire's growing population is becoming ever more challenging, particularly where strategic transport and education infrastructure is required to seek to mitigate the cumulative impacts of development sites across a relatively wide area of the County. The County Council seeks to achieve a more coordinated approach to locations for growth and prioritisation of its delivery relative to the prioritisation of investment in the infrastructure and services necessary to support it.
20. As part of seeking to provide necessary infrastructure to support new and existing communities appropriately, the County Council recognises that having up to date Local Plans in place underpinned by appropriate policies and delivery strategies is the most effective way to fund and deliver infrastructure,

maximising the contribution from the development industry and minimising potential negative impacts of unplanned growth.

21. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer have been consulted on this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

This report will be circulated to all Members.

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**CABINET – 21 JULY 2026****ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE TO APPROVE THE
PROCUREMENT OF TWO CONTRACTS IN RELATION TO THE CRISIS
AND RESILIENCE FUND****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, COMMUNITIES,
LAW AND GOVERNANCE****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of action taken by the Chief Executive to approve two procurement requests concerning the commissioning of services required to deliver the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) between 2026 and 2029.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet notes the action taken by the Chief Executive following consultation with the Leader to approve the procurement of contracts relating to the Crisis and Resilience Fund.

Reasons for Recommendation

3. The County Council's Contract Procedure Rules (Part 4G of the Constitution) require that where a procurement under the Rules involves a Key Decision then prior to the commencement of the procurement it must be taken to the Executive (the Cabinet) for approval. The Council's Constitution (Part 3, Responsibility for Functions) provides that the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader of the Council, may take action in-between Cabinet meetings which they consider is urgent subject to the detail of such action being reported for information to the next appropriate meeting of the body concerned.
4. In this instance, there was no Cabinet meeting in June to enable timely approval. In order to avoid delay to critical procurement activity associated with delivery of the Crisis and Resilience Fund, the Chief Executive approved the procurement requests.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

5. The decisions were approved by the Chief Executive on 3 June 2026.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

6. The action was taken in line with the Council's Constitution as explained in paragraph 3 above.
7. The procurement activity forms part of the delivery of the Crisis and Resilience Fund, as previously approved by the Cabinet on 28 April 2026.

Resource Implications

8. There are no resources implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The two procurements relate to the commissioning of services required to deliver the Crisis and Resilience Fund between 2026 and 2029, funded through ring-fenced grant funding provided by the Department for Work and Pensions.
9. Both procurements are essential to enable the Council to deliver its obligations under the grant conditions and to ensure effective delivery of both crisis support and preventative activity.
10. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

11. None.

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PART B

Background

12. From 1 April 2026, the Department for Work and Pensions is providing grant funding to the County Council through the Crisis and Resilience Fund to support households experiencing a financial crisis and to invest in preventative activity that reduces future demand for crisis services.
13. Delivery of the Fund requires procurement of external providers to deliver key elements of the programme. Two Procurement Approval Requests were therefore developed to support:
 - i) The provision of a fund dispersal solution to administer payments to eligible residents in a secure and efficient manner; and
 - ii) The commissioning of Financial Resilience and Community Coordination services to support longer-term financial stability and strengthen local support systems.
14. As Key Decisions the procurements would ordinarily require Cabinet approval.
15. However, due to the timing of the procurement activity and the absence of a Cabinet meeting in June, there was a risk of delay to the procurement process, mobilisation and delivery of services. Delay would have affected the Council's ability to meet grant requirements and deliver support to residents in a timely manner.

Equality Implications

16. There are no equalities implications arising from this report. The commissioned services themselves are designed to support vulnerable and low-income residents and will contribute to reducing inequalities.

Human Rights Implications

17. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Background Papers

Report to the Cabinet on 28 April 2026 "Crisis and Resilience Fund 2026- 2029" and minutes of that meeting -

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=8306>

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