



CABINET – 26 OCTOBER 2021

LEICESTERSHIRE DOMESTIC ABUSE REDUCTION STRATEGY
2022-24

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICE

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Cabinet's approval for the approach being taken to discharging the duties placed on the County Council under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (DA Act), including the draft Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2021-24.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that;
 - (a) The approach to developing the Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2021-24 be approved.
 - (b) The approach as outlined in the report for formal consultation on the draft Strategy be agreed.
 - (c) The approach to the commissioning of DA Services be approved.

Reasons for Recommendation

3. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021, places a number of statutory duties on the County Council and this report is the Council's response to discharging those duties.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

4. The draft DA Reduction Strategy will be presented to Scrutiny Commission on 17 November 2021.
5. A further report will be presented to Cabinet on 14 December 2021 presenting the 'near' final Strategy and seeking delegated authority for the Director to finalise it following the closure of the consultation and to publish it by required date of 5 January 2022.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

6. Leicestershire County Council has in place a DA Reduction Strategy (2018 – 2021) which set out the partnership approach to tackling DA.
7. The priorities that form the Strategy align with the following outcomes from the Leicestershire County Council's Strategic Plan 2018-22 which was approved by the County Council on 6 December 2017:

Wellbeing and opportunity: The people of Leicestershire have the opportunities and support they need to take control of their health and wellbeing.

Keeping people safe: People in Leicestershire are safe and protected from harm.

Great Communities: Leicestershire communities are thriving and integrated places where people help and support each other and take pride in their area.

Resource Implications

8. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report
9. The services to be commissioned are therapeutic and advocacy support services as per the grant conditions and not for accommodation itself (which would create a longer-term funding risk). It is intended to fund these fully within the DLUHC £1.1m grant so no further funding is requested from LCC at this time other than internal resources to administer the grant and duties (which will be absorbed within existing staff resources).
10. As this funding is time limited there is some financial risk of the Authority needing to provide additional future funding. However, the Government has advised the intention of future funding in the policy with reference to:

“In the spirit of the New Burdens Doctrine, the duty will be funded in future years. The amount of funding from April 2022 will be a matter for the next Spending Review”.

Legal Implications

- 14 This report summarises the statutory requirements of the DA Act with particular reference to section 57 which places a duty on the County Council to prepare, give effect to and monitor a strategy based on an assessment of the need for accommodation-based support for victims of domestic abuse in the Council's area.
- 15 The DA Act also places a duty to create a Domestic Abuse Partnership Board to advise the Council about its functions under s57 plus the provision of other

local authority support in its area. A further report will be presented to the Cabinet at a future date once the possible options to deliver this have been considered.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

16 A copy of this report will be circulated to all members.

Officer(s) to Contact

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PART B

Background

17. The DA Act received royal assent in April 2021. The Act places a duty on tier one local authorities (the County Council) to provide accommodation based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation and provides clarity over governance and accountability, requiring tier two councils (district councils), to co-operate with the lead local authority.
18. A multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board must be appointed for Leicestershire. Options are currently being considered as to whether an existing Board can be utilised through extending the membership to comply with the new duty, or whether a new Board will need to be established.

Needs Assessment

19. A Strategic Needs Assessment must be undertaken to assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support across Leicestershire for all victims. This work has commenced. Data is currently being collated from numerous agencies and engagement with victims and survivors of DA has been ongoing to collate information about their experiences. The national DA charity SafeLives is assisting with this Needs Assessment.
20. The Needs Assessment will inform the development of a Strategy for the provision of support to cover Leicestershire and inform commissioning / de-commissioning decisions. The first draft of the Need Assessment will be received by 17 October 2021.
21. The Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has stipulated that where authorities are aware of gaps in service provision for victims of DA, commissioning can begin and direct awards can be made before the Needs Assessment is published. A workshop was held with partners including district councils, Police and DA Service providers in August 2021 where the gaps in service provision were identified and the commissioning process to plug these gaps has commenced. The Comprehensive Spending Review will inform whether further funding will be allocated.

Funding

22. Funding has been allocated by the DLUHC to support all of this work; The County Council has received £1,127,205 whilst each district council has received approximately £33,000.
23. A Leicestershire DA Act and Funding Group has been convened, by the County Council, to support the response across Leicestershire. Membership includes all district council's, County Council Departments (Children and Family Services, Adult Social Care and Public Health), Police and DA service providers.

The Draft Strategy

24. It is a requirement of the DA Act 2021 to produce a DA Reduction Strategy and to consult on this in order to retain the £1.1m. The draft Strategy must be published by 26 October 2021; a pre-draft will be published on the corporate website. The final Strategy must be published by 5 January 2022 and the funding must be spent or at least allocated by 31 March 2022.
25. Timescales are tight. The draft Leicestershire DA Reduction Strategy 2021-24 will have five priorities:
 - i. Early Intervention and Prevention
 - ii. Targeted Support
 - iii. Reachable Services
 - iv. DA Act (Part 4) - Safe Accommodation
 - v. Strong Partnerships
26. Further detail is included in the Appendix to this report. These will be developed further over the coming weeks based on feedback received to date, the consultation outcomes and in light of the Needs Assessment.
27. An implementation plan will be developed and led by the Community Safety Team to deliver the Strategy. Progress against the implementation plan will be monitored by the Director of Children and Family Services and the Children and Family Services DA Strategic Group, Chaired by the Assistant Director for Targeted Early Help and Social Care. Progress information will also be shared with partners and key stakeholders to ensure alignment across the system.

Consultation

28. An 8-week public consultation is planned take place from 26 October to 21 December 2021 seeking feedback on the draft Strategy. Feedback from the consultation will be incorporated into the final Strategy.
29. The planned consultation, which is required by legislation, will involve the Scrutiny Commission, the DA Board, the district councils and other key stakeholders, as well as victims and survivors.
30. The consultation will involve group and individual workshops with victims and survivors of DA, including children and young people; questionnaires, surveys and forums. The consultation will be promoted through the the Council's website, social media, traditional media outlets such as radio stations.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

31. As part of the development of the final Strategy a full Equality Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) will be undertaken to identify equality and human rights issues that needed to be incorporated into the final Strategy. The EHRIA will be finalised following results of the consultation. The findings from the EHRIA

will be embedded in the Strategy's subsequent implementation plan and regularly reviewed as part of the performance monitoring arrangements.

Crime and Disorder Implications

32. Domestic Abuse has far reaching impacts on individual health, families, and communities.

Partnership Working and Associated Issues

33. One of the priorities in the draft Strategy focusses on Strong Partnerships outlining a partnership approach to tackling Domestic Abuse. The priorities identified within this strategy have been developed based on an understanding of needs in relation to Domestic Abuse.

Background Papers

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents/enacted>

Appendix

Outline of the Draft Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy