



**CABINET – 14 DECEMBER 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 provide the Cabinet with a summary of responses to the consultation to date concerning the County Council's Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy (2022 – 2024) and to seek the Cabinet's approval for the Director of Children and Family Services to finalise the Strategy ahead of its publication in early January 2022.
2. The report also sets out a proposed approach in relation to the establishment of a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board, a multi-agency Board required by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, responsible for tackling domestic abuse and supporting victims and their children.

**Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that:
  - (a) The consultation responses to date on the draft Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2022 – 2024, be noted;
  - (b) The latest version of the draft Strategy, attached as the appendix to the report, be approved, noting that further amendments may be necessary in order to address additional consultation responses received ahead of its closing on 21 December 2021;
  - (c) Following the end of the consultation, the Director of Children and Family Services, following consultation with the Lead Member, be authorised to take the necessary steps to finalise and publish the Strategy ahead of the statutory deadline of the 5 January 2022;
  - (d) The proposed approach to establishing the required Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board as set out in the report, be approved.

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

4. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a number of statutory duties on the County Council including the requirement to publish a Domestic Abuse Strategy by 5 January 2022 and to establish a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board.

### **Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

5. As part of the consultation, the draft Strategy was considered by the Scrutiny Commission on 17 November 2021 and its comments are summarised in Part B of this report.
6. Subject to approval, the Director of Children and Family Services, following consultation with the Lead Member, will finalise the Strategy following the closure of the consultation and publish it by the 5 January 2022 deadline.
7. The Police and Justice Act 2006 requires County Councils in two-tier areas to set up county-level Crime and Disorder Strategy Groups to provide strategic leadership and direction on community safety matters, including domestic abuse, across the region. In Leicestershire, this is the Leicestershire Safer Communities Strategy Board (LSCSB) which is chaired by the County Council's Lead Member for Children and Families and Community Safety. Other Board members include the chairs from each of the CSPs, senior representatives from the other responsible authorities, the Police and Crime Commissioner and their Chief Executive.
8. The LSCSB considered a report concerning the proposed approach to establishing a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board at its meeting on the 10 December 2021.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

9. Leicestershire County Council has in place a Domestic Abuse (DA) Reduction Strategy (2018 – 2021) which sets out the partnership approach to tackling DA.
10. The priorities that form the new Strategy align closely with the vision and aims set out in the County Council's revised draft Strategic Plan (2022-26) which is currently being consulted upon. The draft Strategic Plan is based on five strategic outcomes which reflect the Council's vision for Leicestershire. Each outcome is accompanied by specific aims and actions to deliver the outcome over the next four years.
11. The outcome with the strongest links to the DA Strategy is the 'Keeping People Safe and Well' outcome, which covers people being safe and well in their daily lives, as well as the Council's safeguarding duties to protect vulnerable people. This outcome includes, a sub-outcome 'People at the most risk are protected from harm', an aim for vulnerable people to be identified and protected from harm and abuse. This is supported by an action for the County Council to focus on combatting sexual violence and domestic abuse by developing a DA

Strategy, protecting all survivors and their families in safe and appropriate accommodation and improving our understanding of perpetrators and how to respond to them.

12. The Cabinet approved the draft DA Strategy for consultation at its meeting on 26 October 2021

### **Resource Implications**

13. Funding by way of a three-year grant has been allocated by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). The County Council received £1,127,205 in year one (2021/22), whilst each district council received approximately £33,000. The funding allocated to the County Council will form part of the Children and Family Services directorate budget overseen by the Director of Children and Family Services and the DA Local Partnership Board will monitor outcomes against the use of these funds.
14. It is not clear whether the financial allocation awarded in 2021/22 will be reflected in subsequent years, with both years two and three tied to a Central Government spending review. A financial plan will be developed alongside the new Strategy and this will outline how the County Council funding will be allocated to the specific requirements of the new duties.
15. The services to be commissioned include therapeutic, specialist 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 grant and therefore no further funding is requested at this time. Resources required to administer the grant and duties will be delivered using existing staff resources.
16. 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”.
17. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on the content of this report.

### **Legal Implications**

18. The DA Act 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.

19. 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.
20. The Director of Law and Governance has been consulted on the content of this report.

#### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

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

#### **Officer(s) to Contact**

Jane Moore, Director of Children and Family Services  
Email: [jane.moore@leics.gov.uk](mailto:jane.moore@leics.gov.uk)

Gurjit Samra-Rai, Community Safety Manager  
Email: [gurjit.samra-rai@leics.gov.uk](mailto:gurjit.samra-rai@leics.gov.uk)

## **PART B**

### **Background**

22. 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.
23. In line with the DA Act, the County Council is also required to produce a DA Reduction Strategy which sets out a partnership approach to tackling DA. The first iteration of the draft Strategy was considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on the 26 October. The final Strategy must be published by 5 January 2022 and the funding allocation for year one must be spent/allocated by 31 March 2022.
24. To help deliver the Strategy, a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board must also be established, consisting of key partners with an interest in tackling domestic abuse and supporting victims and their children.

### **The Draft Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy**

25. The DA Reduction Strategy outlines how the County Council will support victims of DA and how it will fulfil its safe accommodation duty as set out in the DA Act 2021. The Strategy has been informed by the Needs Assessment and will be implemented through commissioning the £1,127,205 DLUHC allocation.
26. The draft Leicestershire DA Reduction Strategy 2022 - 2024, attached as the Appendix, has five priorities:
  - i. Early Intervention and Prevention
  - ii. Targeted Support
  - iii. Reachable Services
  - iv. DA Act (Part 4) - Safe Accommodation
  - v. Strong Partnerships
27. A Delivery Plan will be developed to deliver the Strategy. Progress against the Delivery Plan will be monitored by the Director of Children and Family Services, the Family Services DA Strategic Group, Chaired by the Assistant Director for Targeted Early Help and Social Care and the DA Local Partnership Board. Progress information will also be shared with partners and key stakeholders to ensure alignment across the system.

## Consultation

28. On 26 October 2021 the Leicestershire County Council Cabinet approved the Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2021-24 for consultation.
29. An 8-week public consultation is commenced on October 26<sup>th</sup> and will close on the 21 December. The consultation is seeking the views of the public and stakeholders which will be used to develop the final Strategy. The draft strategy and short questionnaire on the five priorities can be viewed on the County Council's website here [www.leicestershire.gov.uk/have-your-say/current-engagement/domestic-abuse-strategy](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/have-your-say/current-engagement/domestic-abuse-strategy)
30. The consultation, which is required by legislation, has to date involved:
  - The County Council's Scrutiny Commission
  - The proposed membership of the new DA Local Board members
  - the district councils and other key stakeholders
  - Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs)
  - Victims and survivors
  - "By and for" organisations
  - Communities across Leicestershire
31. To date all of the respondents to the consultation agree with the five priorities and the approaches suggested to reduce Domestic Abuse and support victims across Leicestershire. Further detail concerning the consultation and the responses received to date is included below.

## Scrutiny Commission

32. The Scrutiny Commission considered a report at its meeting on 17 November which detailed the new duties placed on the County Council by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and sought its views on the draft Strategy.
33. The Scrutiny Commission welcomed the allocation of new funding and supported the proposed approach as set out in the draft Strategy. The Commission were pleased to hear that the funding would help add capacity to those support services already being provided to victims of domestic abuse mainly by the voluntary sector, as well as help develop new services for underrepresented groups such as males, and LGBT+ and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller victims. However, the Commission highlighted that there were risks around capacity, as the true impact of the pandemic and therefore the level of demand on services would not likely be known for some time. It also identified that sustainability would be a key issue and, whilst managed to a degree through the commissioning process, would inevitably result in the reliance on further Government funding coming forward which was currently uncertain.
34. The Commission noted that an action plan would be developed once the Strategy had been agreed, with the support of partners, and agreed that this was the right approach as it would build on what were already well established partnership arrangements. Further issues raised by the Commission included:

- The recognised lack of accommodation for victims of domestic abuse as highlighted in the Needs Assessment;
- Links with private housing providers to secure adequate accommodation for victims;
- Therapeutic support for young carers where domestic abuse was being perpetrated in the home;
- The need for improved communication and training around what was and what was not appropriate behaviour and the re-education of preparators to break the cycle of abuse.

35. Limited accommodation was an issue being seen nationally, but the Commission was reassured that steps were being taken to address this locally through the appointment of domestic abuse housing officers. Such persons would act as a conduit between private sector housing providers and the County and district councils and its partners to secure suitable accommodation where needed. Such appointments would be made by district councils utilising the new funding now being allocated to them.

#### DA Local Board Members

36. Whilst the Board itself has not yet been established, the proposed membership have been consulted. The draft Strategy has also been raised at each Community Safety Partnership meeting in the districts. Furthermore, a workshop was delivered which included service providers representing the voice of victims and survivors. All agreed with the five priorities and aims set out in the draft Strategy.

#### The District Councils and other key stakeholders

37. The Needs Assessment, draft Strategy and the consultation documents have been circulated to district chief executives and other key stakeholders such as the police and health. The Community Safety Manager has attended specific meetings, such as the district chief executives meeting, to inform partners of this work and consult with them. There have been no responses to date.

#### Victims and Survivors

38. Groupwork sessions and one to one sessions have been held with victims and survivors of domestic abuse to capture how they feel services might be improved. To date all have agreed with the five priorities and aims set out in the draft Strategy.

#### By and For Organisations

39. A "By and For" organisation is a specialist service run by members of a specific community for that community. For example, specialist service providers who work with male victims; Black, Asian, Multi Ethnic (BAME) victims and LGBT+ victims. Such services have been directly contacted and consulted. To date all have agreed with the five priorities and aims set out in the draft Strategy.

### Communities across Leicestershire

40. The consultation has been promoted widely through traditional media channels, through social media (Facebook and Twitter) and through Yammer. Paper copies have also been made available. To date one person has engaged with the County Council asking to support this work in a voluntary capacity, as a survivor of Domestic Abuse; they agree with the priorities and aims set out in the draft Strategy.

### Strategic Needs Assessment

41. A Strategic Needs Assessment has been undertaken to assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support across Leicestershire for all victims. The national DA charity SafeLives assisted with this Needs Assessment.
42. Key points from the Needs Assessment have been included in the Strategy to evidence need:
- 98,350 adults in LCC have experienced Domestic Abuse at some point in their lives since the age of 16 with approximately 15% experiencing both partner and family abuse.
  - 28,360 adult victims have experienced Domestic Abuse in the last year with approximately 8% experiencing both partner and family abuse.
  - The overall number of victims has increased year on year, with a 4.9% increase in 19/20 and 7.6% increase in 20/21 on the previous year.
  - Victims being assessed by the County Council's Children's Social Care (CSC) service increased by 218% (this can be attributed to a change in practice by the CSC assessment team to 'including other children in the family' as part of case management records). This is welcomed and puts the County Council in good stead to ensure the gathering of information in response to the DA Act 2021 S.3(181) - "*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*"
  - Victims accessing DA support outreach services Increased by 5.3%
43. The Needs Assessment has informed the development of the Strategy with regard to the provision of support to cover Leicestershire and will inform commissioning / de-commissioning decisions.

### Establishing a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board

44. The Act requires a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board to be appointed consisting of key partners with an interest in tackling domestic abuse and supporting victims and their children. This is to include one or more representatives from or on behalf of:
- The County Council.



- District councils in the area including Housing Services.
  - The authentic voice of adult victims of domestic abuse.
  - The authentic voice of children victims of domestic abuse.
  - Charities and other voluntary organisations that work with victims of domestic abuse in the area.
  - Persons who provide, or have functions relating to, health care services in its area.
  - Persons with functions relating to policing or criminal justice in its area.
45. The Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board will carry out a governance and consultative role as it performs certain specified functions, which will include the following:
- To assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support for all victims.
  - To support the development and publication of the required Strategy.
  - To give effect to the new strategy (through monitoring commissioning / de-commissioning needs).
  - To ensuring representation of marginalised groups and those who are underrepresented in local services.
46. The proposal is for the DA Local Partnership Board to have a similar membership to the Leicestershire Safer Communities Strategy Board (LSCSB), with the addition of representatives of housing services, the authentic voice of adult and child victims and survivors and voluntary sector services who work with victims of domestic abuse.
47. A report setting out the proposed arrangements will be considered by the LSCSB at its meeting on 10th December 2021.
48. In addition, a DA Act and Funding Officer Group has been established, which will be responsible for progressing the priorities agreed by the Board. Membership of this Group includes all district council's, County Council Departments (Children and Family Services, Adult Social Care and Public Health), Police and voluntary sector DA service providers.

### Funding

49. Funding by way of a three-year grant has been allocated by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Of this the County Council has received £1,127,205 for 2021/22 with a further £33,000 being allocated to each district. This funding allocated to the County Council, will form part of the Children and Family Services directorate budget overseen by the Director of Children and Family Services and the DA Local Partnership Board will monitor outcomes against the use of these funds.

50. Tier one authorities have yet to be informed as to the amount of grant funding to be received for years two and three. No date has been announced with regards to when the information will be known.

### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

51. 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**

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

### **Partnership Working and Associated Issues**

53. 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**

Report to the Leicestershire Safer Communities Strategy Board – 10 December 2021 – Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board.

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1032&MId=6426&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet, 26 October 2021 – Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=6447&Ver=4>

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

### **Appendix**

Draft Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy