



SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 7 SEPTEMBER 2022

LEICESTERSHIRE DOMESTIC ABUSE REDUCTION STRATEGY 2022– 2025 - UPDATE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Scrutiny Commission of the approach taken to new duties placed on the County Council by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and to provide an update on the work being undertaken under the Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2022-25. The report is presented to the Commission in its capacity as the County Council's designated crime and disorder committee.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. Leicestershire County Council has in place a Domestic Abuse (DA) Reduction Strategy (2022 – 2025). This incorporates the new duties in Part 4 of the DA Act 2021 and sets out the partnership approach to tackling DA up to 2025.
3. The County Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026 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.
4. 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 our 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 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.

Background

5. The Domestic Abuse Act (the Act) received royal assent in April 2021. The Act places a duty on tier one local authorities (in Leicestershire, 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.

6. To fulfil its new duties, the County Council has:
- i. Appointed a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board
 - ii. Undertaken a Needs Assessment to understand the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support in the area for all victims (and their children) who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those who come from outside of their area.
 - iii. Prepared and published a strategy for the provision of such support to cover the Leicestershire area having regard to the needs assessment - the DA Reduction Strategy.
 - iv. Given effect to the Strategy (through commissioning / decommissioning decisions).
 - v. Begun to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Strategy and report back annually to central government.
7. It should be noted that this new duty is separate to local authority housing duties under the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002 and does not place a requirement on the County Council to provide domestic abuse victims with accommodation. Support under the Act might consist of advocacy support, domestic abuse prevention advice, or specialist support for victims with protected characteristics or with additional and /or complex needs.

Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board

8. As required by the DA Act a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board has been established consisting of key partners with an interest in tackling domestic abuse and supporting victims and their children. The Board, which meets quarterly, includes one or more representatives from or on behalf of:
- i. The County Council (Chair – the Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Family Services)
 - ii. District councils in the area including Housing Services
 - iii. Adult victims of domestic abuse
 - iv. Children victims of domestic abuse
 - v. Charities and other voluntary organisations that work with victims of domestic abuse in the area
 - vi. Persons who provide, or have functions relating to, health care services in the area
 - vii. Persons with functions relating to policing or criminal justice in the area
9. The Local Partnership Board carries out a monitoring and consultative role as it performs certain specified functions, including:
- i. Assessing the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support for all victims
 - ii. Supporting the development and publication of the required Strategy
 - iii. Giving effect to the new Strategy (through monitoring commissioning / de-commissioning needs)
 - iv. Ensuring representation of marginalised groups and those who are underrepresented in local services.

Needs Assessment

10. The legislation requires the County Council to assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support across Leicestershire for all victims. This work has now been completed. Data has been 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 assisted with this Needs Assessment.
11. The Safe Accommodation Needs assessment is a comprehensive tool that enables the capture of data covering a range of themes relating to safe accommodation. This Needs Assessment has been used to inform the development of a strategy for the provision of support in Leicestershire.
12. The Needs Assessment has also informed the commissioning decisions for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) funding to date.
13. A regular review of the Needs Assessment will be undertaken by officers to ensure commissioning decisions are founded on evidence-based data and intelligence.

The Strategy

14. The County Council's Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2022-2025 was approved by the Cabinet in December 2021 and published on 6 January 2022. The Strategy includes plans and approaches working across both County and District Councils and including other services in the area, such as specialist domestic abuse providers, housing, and health bodies.
15. The Strategy includes five priorities:
 - i. Early Intervention and Prevention
 - ii. Targeted Support
 - iii. Reachable Services
 - iv. DA Act (Part 4) - Safe Accommodation
 - v. Strong Partnerships
16. The priorities have been identified through engagement with stakeholders and partners, analysing known gaps in provision and the statutory duty. These priorities have been strengthened by the Safelives Needs assessment and the consultation.
17. An implementation plan has been completed by County Council with key partners in January 2022. This live document will set out how the priorities identified in the Strategy will be delivered over the next three years, responding to changing needs as these needs are reviewed annually. Progress against the implementation plan will be monitored within the authority by the Director of Children and Family Services and the Children and Family Services Domestic Abuse Strategy Planning Meeting, 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.

18. An annual report must be submitted to DLUHC to inform on progress of the Strategy (via a portal); the first report is due at the end of June 2022.

Funding

19. The County Council has received £1,127,205 funding from DLUHC in year one, and, in addition, each district council has received approximately £33,000 from DLUHC to support this work. The County Council funding is within the Children and Family Services directorate budget overseen by the Director of Children and Family Services and the DA Locality Partnership Board which will continue to monitor outcomes against the use of these funds.
20. A DA Act Officer and a Commissioning Officer have been recruited to drive this work forward and a DA Act Working Group has been convened by the County Council to support the response across Leicestershire. The Working Group membership includes all district councils, County Council Departments (Children and Family Services, Adult Social Care and Public Health), Police and DA service providers. It will ensure the response to this work is embedded at locality, within the districts.
21. The corporate DA Strategy Group, chaired by the Assistant Director, Targeted Early Help and Children's Social Care, governs the corporate approach to this work, signing off commissioning decisions before they are presented to the DA Locality Partnership Board.
22. Tier one authorities have now been informed as to the amount of grant funding to be received for year two; the County Council has been allocated £1,130,326. Tier two authorities have been allocated funding as follows: Blaby £33,318; Charnwood £32,322; Harborough £33,576; Hinckley and Bosworth £32,757; Melton £32,364; North West Leicestershire £32,598; Oadby and Wigston £32,328.
23. Plans for the year two funding are underway, with the County Council looking to recruit a domestic abuse team within the Children and Family Service and commission further safe accommodation.

Spend Plan

24. Year 1 Funding Spend Plan:

<u>Support service</u>	<u>Service provider</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Time period</u>
Domestic Abuse Act Coordinator	Leicestershire County Council	£95,062	2 years fixed term
Commissioning officer	Leicestershire County Council	£88,234	2 years fixed term
Substance misuse specialist	Turning Point	£80,000	2 years (+1 year extension)
Gypsy Roma and Traveller specialist	Leicestershire Gate	£60,000	2 years (+1 year extension)
Specialist DA Support LGBT+ Victims	Leicester LGBT service	£56,000	2 years (+1 year extension)
Outreach support for male victims	Women's Aid Leicestershire	£97,054	2 years (+1 year extension)
Helpline support for male victims	FreeVa	£76,544	2 years (+1 year extension)

BAME advisor	FreeVa	£76,544	2 years (+1 year extension)
Counselling service for adults	FreeVa	£42,982	1 year
Counselling service for children	FreeVa	£42,982	1 year
Children support service	JADA+ via Women's Aid	£123,550	1 year
Outreach worker x2	Living without Abuse	£148,000	2 years (+1 year extension)
County Family service: x2 family workers	Living without Abuse	£148,000	2 years (+1 year extension)
1 part time young person's IDVA	Living without Abuse	£54,000	2 years (+1 year extension)
Contribution to MARAC manager and Administrator costs	MARAC	£18,000	2 years (+1 year extension)
Total:		£1,206,952	

Resource Implications

25. 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 the County Council at this time other than internal resources to administer the grant and duties (which will be absorbed within existing staff resources).
26. 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 with reference to: "In the spirit of the New Burdens Doctrine, the duty will be funded in future years".
27. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

Conclusions

28. The Scrutiny Commission is asked to comment on the approach being taken to discharging the duties placed on the County Council under the DA Act, and on the Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2022-25.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

29. None.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

30. In developing the final Strategy, a full Equality Human Rights Impact Assessment was undertaken to identify equality and human rights issues that needed to be incorporated within the Strategy.

Other Relevant Impact Assessments - Crime and Disorder Implications

31. Domestic Abuse has far reaching impacts on individual health, families, and communities. Partnership Working and Associated Issues One of the priorities in the draft Strategy focusses of 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>

Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2022-2025:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2022/1/6/domestic-abuse-reduction-strategy-2022-2025.pdf>

Officers to Contact

Jane Moore

Director – Children and Family Services

Telephone: 0116 305 2649

Email: jane.moore@leics.gov.uk

Sharon Cooke

Assistant Director Targeted Early Help and Children's Social Care

Telephone: 0116 305 5479

Email: sharon.cooke@leics.gov.uk

Gurjit Samra-Rai

Head of Community Safety and Resettlement

Telephone: 0116 305 6056

Email: Gurjit.samra-rai@leics.gov.uk