



SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 6th NOVEMBER 2024

LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL COMMUNITY SAFETY ANNUAL UPDATE 2024

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to set out the work being undertaken by the Council's Community Safety Team to deliver the Council's Community Safety Strategy 2022 – 2026, and in undertaking the duties placed on the Authority in relation to crime and disorder in partnership with other statutory responsible agencies. This 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. The latest iteration of the Community Safety Strategy was approved by full Council in December 2022 and forms part of the Council's Policy Framework as set out in its Constitution.
3. The County Council also has in place a Domestic Abuse (DA) Reduction Strategy (2022 – 2025). This was approved by the Cabinet in December 2022 following consultation with the Scrutiny Commission in September 2022. This incorporates the duties in Part 4 of the DA Act 2021 and sets out the partnership approach to tackling DA up to 2025.
4. The Community Safety Strategy and the Domestic Abuse (DA) Reduction Strategy sets out the Council's responsibilities in relation to crime and disorder issues and priorities agreed by Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), the Police and Crime Commissioner, and other statutory agencies with whom the Council works. These support delivery of the County Council's current Strategic Plan outcomes of engendering great communities, keeping people safe and well and improving opportunities.

Background

5. The Community Safety function within the Council was established in response to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, to ensure that the Council discharges its duty to consider the impact of all its functions and decisions on crime and disorder in the local area.

6. Subsequent legislation has added further duties over the years and forthcoming legislation will add more still as outlined below.
7. The County Council's approach to crime and disorder in line with its statutory duties, is set out in its Community Safety Strategy 2022-2026. This is aligned with the current approach and priorities introduced and overseen by partners through the Leicestershire and Rutland Safer Communities Strategy Board.
8. Dealing effectively with crime and disorder matters requires a collaborative partnership approach and the Strategy details the County Councils responsibilities and approach in dealing with these matters within the context of a two-tier local authority arrangement.
9. The Strategy outlines the role of the Council's Community Safety Team, the local partnership framework for dealing with community safety matters, and the approach adopted to identify, manage, and monitor community safety matters, including scanning for new and emerging issues across Leicestershire. It also sets out the current shared crime and disorder priorities, as agreed by the LRSCSB, which are to:
 - Identify and protect the most vulnerable.
 - Reduce crime and the fear of crime.
 - Reduce the incidence and impact of anti-social behaviour (ASB).
 - Reduce the harm from alcohol and substance misuse.
 - Reduce risk of harm to young people from cybercrime and bullying.
 - Increase reporting of domestic abuse and protect the most vulnerable.
 - Increase confidence in reporting of hate incidents.

Community Safety Team

10. The Council's Community Safety Team does not have a front-line delivery function. The Team ensures that the County Council discharges all its statutory functions relating to community safety and supports delivery of the current shared crime and disorder priorities set out in the Community Safety Strategy. It does this in a number of ways, including:
 - by leading, co-ordinating and supporting the work of the complex multi agency partnership across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR);
 - by sharing good practice to reduce duplication and promote economies of scale, as well work across the Council to support staff and members;
 - by leading and co-ordinating operational planning across the County on several areas linked to crime and disorder. This includes co-ordinating standards, commissioning, joint working arrangements, priority setting, data sharing, training, and joint working arrangements linked to anti-social behaviour, 'Prevent' activity (related to counter terrorism), hate crime, and domestic abuse;
 - by having oversight and coordinating the work of the Leicestershire and Rutland Safer Communities Strategy Board (LRSCSB) and the Leicestershire and Rutland Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (LRDALPB) by providing the necessary background information and support for its meetings and through liaison with district councils and LLR partner agencies. It undertakes planning, gives support, and if required adopts work-streams

arising from actions agreed by the Board. Further information regarding these Boards and the work of the Team in this area is provided below;

- through attending local CSP meetings and supporting local delivery of its strategic priorities, establishing working groups to drive this work across LLR and leading the work to produce policies, procedures and operating models for delivery;
- by providing support to CSPs on the introduction of local plans to address crime and disorder, ensuring local strategic priorities take cognisance of and are linked to countywide, LRSCSB, Strategic Partnership Board (SPB) and PCC priorities;
- working with other responsible agencies across LLR to provide a coordinated response to emerging threats – for example, serious violence, ‘County Lines’ serious organised crime, exploitation of children, modern slavery, knife, and cyber-crime.

Key Achievements

11. Some key achievements and outcomes delivered since the last report to the Commission by the County Council’s Community Safety Team include:

(a) Prevent

Local authorities and the Prevent Partnership have a critical role to play in countering terrorism at a local level and ensuring that people who are susceptible to radicalisation are supported. As part of the Prevent duty refresh, the Home Office has updated its assurance process to help ensure that local authorities are delivering their statutory Prevent duty in line with the Prevent duty guidance.

The Prevent duty toolkit for local authorities outlines the eight benchmarks Prevent delivery is measured against and includes suggested examples of good and best practice. The assurance process is designed for local authorities to assure themselves via a self-assessment that they are effectively delivering their statutory duty.

The Prevent Lead, the Community Safety Manager, completed a self-assessment before a Home Office Prevent Adviser came in to undertake the assessment in April 2024 to identify both areas of good practice and areas for improvement, where required.

The feedback stated that “delivery in Leicestershire is excellent” with:

- (i) Exceptional governance structures being in place;
- (ii) Excellent risk assessment processes across the county;
- (iii) Very strong partnership plans being in place.

(b) Anti-Social Behaviour

A review of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) policies and processes and the development of a business case to consider a change in the ASB case management system across the LLR partnership. The business case has now been approved by all partners and the authority is leading the work to procure the new system. This complex work is ensuring the Council and the LLR partnership is in a place of strength now the new ASB Action Plan has launched,

giving vulnerable victims confidence and further support whilst perpetrators are managed appropriately.

(c) Domestic Abuse

Project Echo is a pilot project running until December 2026 working in 3 areas in the UK – Bolton, Sheffield and Leicestershire. This project aims to deliver a sustainable model for embedding child and adult survivors' voices in the design and delivery of policies and services intended to meet their needs. This project has come into Leicestershire due to the relationships the Community Safety Team has fostered nationally and the recognition of the positive work the Authority is undertaking to support victims of DA.

(d) Training

The Team continues to deliver multi agency training across Leicestershire on various themes including DA, ASB, counter terrorism and hate crimes and incidents, including a programme for elected members.

(e) Co-ordinated support

The Team continues to support local delivery of priorities enabling local solutions for local issues across the partnership. For example, one district's housing team was receiving disproportionate enquiries about rehousing victims of DA, compared to others. The Community Safety Team worked across the County to identify the issue and has allocated funding to support districts to enable victims to remain in their homes (where it is safe to do so) thereby reducing the cost of rehousing vulnerable victims and their families.

Leicestershire and Rutland Safer Communities Strategy Board (LRSCSB)

12. In two-tier local authority areas, the duty to produce detailed locality-based plans to reduce crime and disorder sits with Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) at district council level. However, there is also a duty placed on responsible partners to co-ordinate priorities at a county level which in Leicestershire is undertaken through the Leicestershire and Rutland Safer Communities Strategy Board (LRSCSB).
13. The Board which includes a representative from Rutland Council, the chairs from each of the CSPs, and other senior representatives from the responsible authorities (i.e. Leicestershire Police, Public Health, the Fire Authority, Leicestershire Fire and Rescue, the National Probation Service, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)), is chaired by the County Council's Cabinet Lead Member for Community Safety, and supported by the Community Safety Team.
14. The role of the LRSCSB is to oversee and co-ordinate the implementation and delivery of Leicestershire Community Safety Partnership priorities including supporting the Police and Crime Plan. It does this by providing strategic leadership, developing joint approaches and encouraging collaborative working across agencies and partnerships, and by facilitating greater alignment between CSPs and other

bodies with community safety responsibilities.

15. The partnership priorities include reducing offending and re-offending, substance-related crime and disorder, protecting those considered to be most vulnerable in the community, reducing anti-social behaviour and increasing public confidence in local crime and disorder services.
16. For example, the OPCC has supplied a budget to produce a Hate Crime Hub which will be a united and positive voice from partners to reach communities. It will provide advice, guidance and a greater understanding on what hate crimes and hate incidents are, who to report them to and share valuable and helpful resources. This resource is intended to support under reporting, increase awareness about the definition of hate crimes and hate incidents, ensure support is not weighted in favour of one protected characteristic over others and provide information about the laws surrounding this type of crime, improve knowledge about who to contact and to ultimately be a one stop shop for everything hate crime related across LLR.

Domestic Abuse

17. The Domestic Abuse Act (DA 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.
18. It should be noted that this 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.
19. These new duties are now also undertaken by the Community Safety Team which:
 - i. Supports the multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board
 - ii. Is undertaking a further Needs Assessment to understand what impact the MHCLG funding has had to date and assess the further 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. Is monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the Strategy and reporting back annually to central government.

Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board

20. The Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board consists 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 the County, Rutland and district councils, adult and child victims of domestic abuse, charities and voluntary organisations that work with victims, health and police.

21. The 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.
22. As with the LRSCSB, the Community Safety Team lead and oversee the work of the Leicestershire and Rutland DA Local Partnership Board (LRDALPB).

Needs Assessment

23. The Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment is a comprehensive tool that enables the capture of data covering a range of themes relating to safe accommodation. The legislation requires the County Council to assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support across Leicestershire for all victims. Led by the Community Safety Team, this work has now been completed and data has been collated from numerous agencies. Engagement with victims and survivors of DA is, however, still ongoing to collate more information about their experiences.
24. The national DA charity SafeLives assisted the Community Safety Team with this Needs Assessment which has been used to inform the development of the DA Reduction Strategy for the provision of support in Leicestershire:
<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2022/1/6/domestic-abuse-reduction-strategy-2022-2025.pdf>
25. The Needs Assessment has also informed the commissioning decisions for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) funding to date as outlined in the table further below.
26. A regular review of the Needs Assessment is undertaken by officers within the Community Safety Team to ensure commissioning decisions are founded on evidence-based data and intelligence. This information is presented to and monitored by the DALPB along with monitoring and evaluation information from all commissioned services.
27. A further Needs Assessment is currently being drafted with publication timescales of December 2024. This new Needs Assessment will inform the authority what positive impact commissioning undertaken to date has had for victims of domestic abuse. It will also enable the prioritisation of service provision across the County which will include commissioning decisions, should further funding be forthcoming from government.

The DA Reduction Strategy

28. The County Council's Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2022-2025, includes the following five priorities identified through engagement with stakeholders and partners, analysing known gaps in provision and the statutory duty:

- i. Early Intervention and Prevention
 - ii. Targeted Support
 - iii. Reachable Services
 - iv. DA Act (Part 4) - Safe Accommodation
 - v. Strong Partnerships
29. An implementation plan was completed by the County Council with key partners in January 2022. This live document sets out how the priorities identified in the Strategy will be delivered through the lifetime of the three year Strategy, 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 as shown in the table below, will also be shared with partners and key stakeholders to ensure alignment across the system.
30. An annual report is submitted to MHCLG to inform on progress of the Strategy (via a portal). The County return for the last financial year demonstrates a large upturn in victims of DA seeking support from commissioned services, the 2022 – 2023 return was 97 victims the return for 2023 – 2024 was 1,257. Whilst concerning, this is seen as positive in terms of demonstrating public confidence in the service the Council has commissioned.

Funding

31. The County Council has received £1,127,205 funding from DLUHC in year one (2021 – 2022), £1,130,326 in year two (2022 – 2023), £1,152,936 in year three (2023 – 2024) and £1,174,689 in year four (2024 – 2025) in addition, each district council has received approximately £33,000 from DHLUHC 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.
32. 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, overseeing commissioning decisions before they are presented to the DA Locality Partnership Board for consideration.
33. Tier one authorities are waiting to be informed whether any grant funding will be received for year five; early indications are that if future funding is awarded it will come into the Authority as part of the local government funding settlement rather than as a grant award.

Spend Plan

34. The spend plan was drafted and agreed at the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group (Chaired by the Assistant Director, Targeted Early Help and Children's Social Care) before being signed off at the DALPB (Chaired by the Lead Member for Safer Communities).

35. Years 1, 2 and 3 Funding Spend Plan is set out in the table below.

<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
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)
DA Team	Leicestershire County Council	£504,074	2 years
Refuge and Dispersed Accommodation	WALL Male, Generic and Accessible Units Panaghar BAME Units	£250,000	2 years (+1 year extension)
Legal support to enable victims to remain in safe accommodation	Chief Housing Officer Group	£100k	2 years

Serious Violence Duty

36. A Serious Violence Duty was imposed on specified authorities (unitary, upper tier and district councils), including the County Council in 2023.

37. The Duty requires specified authorities, for one or more local government areas, to work together and plan to prevent and reduce Serious Violence (SV), including identifying the kinds of SV in the area, the causes of that violence and to prepare and implement a shared strategy for preventing and reducing SV.
38. The local definition of SV includes serious violence in public places, domestic abuse related serious violence and sexual violence.
39. The Community Safety Team is leading on this work through the Strategic Partnership Board Executive, chaired by the Director of Children and Family Services and the CSPs. This Board has instructed that a stocktake be undertaken across the partnership to assess progress amongst duty holders, which will be reported back to the Strategic Partnership Board Executive.

Police and Crime Commissioners

40. 2012 saw the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners who have responsibility for oversight of the local police force and introducing 'force-wide' (LLR) Police and Crime Plans focused on reducing crime and disorder in their region. Oversight of the PCC lies with the Police and Crime Panel, a joint committee which includes a 'County' representative along with a representative of each district council who can raise Leicestershire-related issues. The current County Council representative on the Panel is the Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Family Services and Community Safety, who also chairs the LSCSB.
41. Recognising that there may be some crossover in the role of PCCs and County Councils in two-tier arrangements, the Crime and Disorder (Formulation and Implementation of Strategy) Regulations 2012 introduced a requirement for county-level strategy groups such as the LSCSB to introduce a Community Safety Agreement (CSA) and a partnership plan.
42. In Leicestershire the community safety team introduced a web-based plan through the LRSCSB. The CSA identifies common themes and priorities and provides links to the PCC and CSP plans and to related national crime and disorder strategies. The planning cycle linked to the local community safety agreement has been developed by the LRSCSB
43. The Government launched a new National ASB Action Plan in 2024 with dedicated funding to support Police and Crime Commissioners, working with councils and others, to target enforcement in the areas where anti-social behaviour is most prevalent in their communities. The Community Safety Team is leading the response across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) on this Action Plan through chairing of the LLR Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategy Group and ASB Delivery Group.

Anti-Social Behaviour

44. The anti-social behaviour (ASB) recording and management system, Sentinel, was introduced across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) in 2011 after learning was taken from national and local serious case reviews.

45. In March 2023, a request was made by two members of the ASB Partnership (the 9 local authorities (LA) across LLR and Leicestershire Police) to review the suitability of the system. Sentinel has been in place across the partnership for the last 12 years and during this time, no formal review had taken place. A review was undertaken by the Community Safety Team.
46. The main drivers for the request were difficulties with accurately extracting data from Sentinel, difficulties and costs of interfacing with police and some LA systems, as well as user frustrations with outdated interfaces, time-consuming recording processes, slow navigation across the system and slow or lack of responses from the system owners Vantage.
47. Following the review partners agreed to the procurement of a new ASB Case Management System, requesting that LCC lead the project. A new system will be procured in November 2024.

Resource Implications

48. The DA 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 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).
49. 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".
50. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

Conclusions

51. In two tier Local Authority arrangements the statutory duties placed on district CSPs and responsible agencies to work together and identify priorities are relatively complex and require the production of a Community Safety Agreement to identify shared priorities. To inform the Scrutiny Commission the report details the work of the Council's Community Safety Team in meeting the duties placed on the Authority by relevant legislation and provides background information concerning the role of the Police Crime Commissioner and Leicestershire Safer communities Strategy Group (LSCSB) and the critical role of the Team in ensuring a joined up approach across the County and Rutland.
52. The Scrutiny Commission is asked to note the work of the Community Safety Team in discharging the duties placed on the County Council and the delivery of its community safety priorities.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

53. None.

Equality Implications

54. There are no identified direct equality implications for the County Council as a partner agency within broader crime and disorder arrangements.
55. In developing all Strategies, a full Equality Human Rights Impact Assessment was undertaken to identify equality and human rights issues that needed to be incorporated within the Strategy.

Human Rights Implications

56. There are no Human Rights implications arising from this report.

Background Papers

Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan 2022-26

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2021/10/29/Draft-Strategic-Plan-2022-26.pdf>

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>

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