

**CABINET – 24TH MARCH 2026****DOMESTIC ABUSE REDUCTION STRATEGY 2026–2029: PERMISSION TO
CONSULT****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Cabinet's approval to undertake a public and stakeholder consultation on the Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026–29. The draft Strategy (attached as Appendix A to this report) has been developed following a comprehensive SafeLives Needs Assessment 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 consultation and engagement.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
 - a) Approves the draft Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026–2029 (attached as Appendix A) for a twelve week consultation exercise;
 - b) Agrees that a further report be submitted to Cabinet in July 2026 presenting the findings of the consultation and a final Strategy for approval.

Reason for Recommendations

4. Conducting a consultation will ensure that the final Strategy reflects the views of survivors, professionals, partners, and the public, and demonstrates transparency and accountability.
5. Consultation will allow 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 proposals.
6. Consultation is required to ensure the Council is meeting its statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, including responsibilities relating to support for victims and survivors in safe accommodation.

7. Failure to consult may result in statutory non-compliance, insufficient alignment with survivor voice, reputational risk, and weak partnership assurance as well as operational and safeguarding risk.

Timetable for Decisions

8. Public and stakeholder consultation will be undertaken following Cabinet approval from April to June 2026. The draft Strategy will be presented for consideration at Scrutiny Commission in June 2026; the final draft will be brought back to Cabinet in July 2026 for approval and final sign off.
9. The Strategy will be shared with partnership boards for adoption in July 2026.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

10. 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.
11. The previous Strategy was presented to Cabinet in October 2021; this Strategy replaces that one.
12. 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, 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

13. Consultation costs will be met within existing budgets.
14. The Strategy will be delivered through existing domestic abuse funding, including central government allocations for safe accommodation duties. A full financial breakdown will be included in the Cabinet report to be presented in July 2026.
15. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Public Health, Law and Governance have been consulted on the contents of this report.

Circulation Under Local Issues Alert Procedure

16. This report will be circulated to all members.

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PART B

Background

17. 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 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 are legally recognised as victims under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and require coordinated, holistic support.
18. The draft Strategy has been developed in partnership with survivors, voluntary and community organisations, statutory partners and specialist services.

Statutory Context

19. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places duties on Tier One authorities, including:
 - 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.

Needs Assessment

20. 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.

The Draft Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026–2029

21. The Strategy sets out a three-year programme 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

Proposed Consultation Approach

22. A 12-week consultation including a public online survey, focus groups with survivors of domestic abuse (including young people, men and older people) and engagement with

schools, Family Hubs and specialist providers, partner forums, and accessible materials for marginalized communities.

Conclusion

23. Subject to the Cabinet's approval, consultation will begin in Spring 2026. The findings will inform any amendments and a final Strategy will be presented to the Cabinet for approval in July 2026.
24. Approval to consult will ensure the final Strategy is evidence-based, survivor-informed and aligned with statutory duties, enabling the Council and partners to improve safety, reduce harm and deliver coordinated domestic abuse responses across Leicestershire.

Equalities Implications

25. 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.
26. 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

27. The Strategy supports compliance with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Consultation ensures that the Strategy is lawful, robust and informed.
28. Domestic abuse has major health impacts and early intervention will support wellbeing.
29. The Strategy will strengthen prevention and the response to domestic abuse, contributing to crime reduction.

Background Papers

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (Statutory Guidance)

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

Appendices

- A - Draft Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026–2029 Appendix A
- B - Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment (SafeLives, 2024) Appendix B

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