

Draft

Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026-29

Forward

Cllr Charles Pugsley (Lead Member Children and Family Services and Chair of the Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board)

Domestic Abuse remains one of the most serious and pervasive challenges facing our communities. It causes profound harm to individuals, families and neighbourhoods, with lasting impacts on physical and mental health, wellbeing, housing stability, and life chances. As a local authority, we have both a moral responsibility and a statutory duty to do everything within our power to prevent abuse, protect victims and survivors, and hold perpetrators to account.

This Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy sets out our clear commitment to tackling domestic abuse in all its forms. It recognises that abuse can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, background, culture, disability or sexual orientation, and that it often remains hidden due to fear, stigma or a lack of confidence in services. We are determined to create an environment in which victims and survivors are believed, supported and empowered to seek help at the earliest opportunity.

The strategy has been developed in partnership with survivors, frontline professionals, voluntary and community sector organisations and other key partners. It reflects both local need and national good practice, and places a strong emphasis on early intervention, trauma-informed support, and prevention. Importantly, it also recognises the devastating impact of domestic abuse on children and young people and the need to safeguard and support them as victims in their own right.

Informed by lived experience, this strategy commits to:

- Putting survivors' voices at the heart of decision-making, service design and evaluation
- Believing and validating disclosures of abuse, without blame or judgement
- Providing consistent, trauma-informed support, recognising the long-term impact of abuse
- Reducing barriers to help, including for those facing additional inequalities or risks
- Ensuring safety, choice and control remain central to all interventions

Survivors' experiences remind us that effective domestic abuse responses are not defined solely by policies or processes, but by how safe, supported and empowered people feel when they seek help. This strategy is grounded in that understanding and will continue to be shaped by the voices of those with lived experience.

Reducing domestic abuse cannot be achieved by one organisation alone. This strategy reinforces our commitment to strong partnership working, shared accountability and continuous learning. It sets out how we will strengthen our response across prevention, protection and provision of support, ensuring that our actions are coordinated, effective and focused on achieving meaningful outcomes.

As the Elected Lead Member, I am proud to champion this strategy and the values it represents. I am committed to ensuring that domestic abuse remains a priority across the council and our partnerships, and that we continue to listen to survivors' voices as we improve our services. Together, we can work towards a future where everyone is safe in their home and able to live free from fear and abuse.

Sharon Cooke (Interim Director Children and Family Services)

This Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy outlines how Leicestershire County Council will work with partners to reduce Domestic Abuse (DA), support adult and child victims and survivors in Leicestershire and discharge the Council's statutory requirements within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

The Leicestershire Needs Assessment undertaken by SafeLives in 2024 demonstrates a year-on-year increase in under 18's becoming victims of DA; this was further confirmed by the group of young survivors who shared their experiences with us, highlighting the need to support children and young people to recognise the signs of abuse and seek support.

Leicestershire County Council's Children and Family Service is committed to being a trauma informed responsive department where we believe "we are stronger together". Our culture is one of partnership where we look for solutions and recognise the potential impact of trauma on the children and families we work with in Leicestershire.

The DA Act 2021 states: "*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*".

We are committed to protecting all victims and survivors and supporting vulnerable children and families; we will strive to create a safe, compassionate, healing environment demonstrated through relationships based on trust, respect, hope and empathy and this has been demonstrated through the Council ring fencing government funding to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and through a dedicated team within the directorate to support families.

Survivors' experiences remind us that domestic abuse is not only a crime but a safeguarding issue with lifelong consequences for children and families. This strategy sets out how Leicestershire County Council will meet its responsibilities, work in partnership, and ensure that every child and family affected by domestic abuse is supported with compassion, consistency and care.

Glossary

Commissioned

specialised providers formally chosen by public bodies to deliver specific services to vulnerable citizens following a rigorous commissioning process

Domestic Abuse

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between anyone aged 16+ who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional.

DHR (Domestic Homicide Review)

A review into the circumstances around a death of an individual following domestic abuse. Public bodies (police, councils, social services, etc) come together to understand and learn from the circumstances and help raise awareness in local communities of how to help victims in order to prevent further loss of life. Home Office Guidance is expected to change DHRs to **DArDR (Domestic Abuse related Death Review)** and will include deaths by suicide where there was domestic abuse.

Early Intervention

An integrated public body approach, to support people to recover faster and live healthier and more independent lives.

MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)

A meeting bringing agencies together to undertake a comprehensive assessment of a victim's needs including any children, and link them, and the perpetrator to appropriate services.

Marginalised communities

Those excluded from mainstream social, economic, educational, and/or cultural life including ethnic minorities, low-income individuals, people with physical and mental disabilities, LGBTQ+, and older people.

Multi-agency

Professionals from different agencies working together to reduce duplication and improve services, whilst saving money.

Perpetrators

People who use abusive behaviours and actions to cause harm.

Prevention

Not all problems can be prevented, but for those that can, by providing people with the early support it reduces the need for crisis intervention.

Trauma Informed

A practice of recognising the widespread impact of trauma increasing professional's awareness of how trauma can impact individuals and delivering support in a personal way.

Victims/survivors

Someone who has been subjected to domestic abuse, including adults, children and young people.

Whole System

Local stakeholders come together, share an understanding of the reality of the challenges and consider how the local system operates bringing change through shared activities in an integrated way with long term benefit.

Introduction

Domestic Abuse continues to present a significant and complex challenge for many, including adults from marginalised communities, men, children, young people and families across Leicestershire. In 2024, Leicestershire County Council commissioned SafeLives, the UK-wide domestic abuse charity, to undertake a comprehensive needs assessment to support the Council in meeting its statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and to strengthen local responses for adults and children affected by abuse.

The SafeLives Needs Assessment highlights that domestic abuse in Leicestershire is widespread and often hidden, with many victims experiencing long-term patterns of harm before receiving support. It reinforces that abuse is not limited to physical violence and frequently includes controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional abuse and economic abuse forms of harm that are not always recognised by victims themselves, their families, or wider communities. This lack of recognition contributes to delayed disclosure and missed opportunities for Early Help.

Crucially, the assessment reflects the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 in recognising children as victims in their own right when they see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse. SafeLives' findings underline the profound impact domestic abuse has on children's safety, emotional wellbeing, development and educational outcomes, and the importance of safeguarding responses that fully understand and address this harm.

The needs assessment also identifies the importance of joined-up, trauma-informed systems. Survivors and professionals described how fragmented responses, unclear pathways and the need to repeat experiences across services can re-traumatise families and undermine safety. Where agencies worked together effectively - particularly across Children and Families services, early help, housing, health, police and specialist domestic abuse provision - families were more likely to receive timely and appropriate support.

SafeLives further emphasised the critical role of early intervention and communication. Many survivors reported that friends, family members and even professionals did not recognise abuse or were unsure how to respond. The assessment highlights the need for clearer, consistent communication across communities and services about what domestic abuse looks like, how it affects children, and how and where to seek help safely.

This Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy responds directly to the findings of the SafeLives Needs Assessment and to the insights survivors gave. It sets out how Leicestershire County Council, working through Children and Families Services and in partnership with local agencies, will strengthen prevention, improve early recognition, protect victim and survivors, and provide coordinated, trauma-informed support.

It describes how safe accommodation and support for domestic abuse (DA) victims and survivors will be provided over the next three years and outlines four objectives that will be the focus of delivery:

- 1. Improve the quality of data and information sharing**
- 2. Early Intervention and Prevention, including detailed communication campaigns**
- 3. Targeted Support**
- 4. Strong Partnerships**

Background

Domestic Abuse causes significant harm to individuals, children, families, and communities.

The scale and impact is vast. The SafeLives prevalence tool shows that 98,000 adults in Leicestershire have experienced DA at some point since the age of 16, with approximately 15% experiencing both partner and family abuse. Furthermore 30,500 adult victims have experienced Domestic Abuse in the last year with approximately 8% experiencing both partner and family abuse. 73,500 (68%) are estimated to be female and 35,000 (32%) are estimated to be male. It is further estimated that 6,000 were young victims (16-24 years old) and 6,000 were older victims (60+ years old); the overall number of victims has increased year on year.

A Survivor's Perspective

The following statement reflects the voices and experiences of survivors who have contributed to the development of this strategy. It is shared anonymously, with gratitude for their courage and insight:

“Domestic abuse doesn’t always start with violence. For many of us, it begins with control, fear, isolation and the slow loss of confidence. It can happen behind closed doors, while outwardly life appears normal. Speaking out is one of the hardest steps to take — often because you don’t know who to trust, whether you’ll be believed, or what will happen next.”

“When I finally asked for help, what mattered most was being listened to without judgement. I needed professionals who understood that leaving isn’t a single moment, but a process, and that fear doesn’t end just because the abuse has stopped. Practical support — with housing, finances, and my children — made the difference between surviving and being able to rebuild my life.”

“This strategy matters because it recognises that survivors are not all the same. We need services that are accessible, trauma-informed, culturally sensitive and joined-up, so we don’t have to repeat our story again and again. We need responses that focus on safety, dignity and choice.”

“Most importantly, I want others experiencing abuse to know this: you are not alone, the abuse is not your fault, and help should be there when you are ready — not just when you are at crisis point.”

Informed by lived experience, this strategy commits to:

- Putting adult and child survivors’ voices at the heart of decision-making, service design and evaluation
- Believing and validating disclosures of abuse, without blame or judgement
- Providing consistent, trauma-informed support, recognising the long-term impact of abuse
- Reducing barriers to help, including for those facing additional inequalities or risks
- Ensuring safety, choice and control remain central to all interventions

Survivors’ experiences remind us that effective domestic abuse responses are not defined solely by policies or processes, but by how safe, supported and empowered people feel when they seek help. This strategy is grounded in that understanding and will continue to be shaped by the voices of those with lived experience.

Many survivors told us that neither they, nor the people around them, recognised what was happening as domestic abuse. Friends, family members and even professionals often saw

behaviour as ‘relationship problems’ or ‘stress at home’, rather than abuse. This meant that warning signs were missed and support was delayed.

Survivors spoke about how controlling behaviour, emotional harm and financial abuse were normalised or minimised — not only by the perpetrator, but sometimes by those closest to them. Some said that when they tried to talk about what was happening, they were advised to ‘work it out’, ‘stay for the children’, or were not believed, as was the case for a male survivor. This left survivors feeling isolated and unsure where to turn.

Parents shared that fear of judgement, particularly around their parenting, made it even harder to seek help. What helped was when professionals clearly named abuse, explained the impact on children, and reassured survivors that asking for help was a protective step.

Children and young people also described not having the words to explain what they were experiencing. Survivors welcomed the recognition in the Domestic Abuse Act that children are recognised as victims but said that this needs to be matched by clear communication in schools, services and communities about what abuse looks like and how to get help.

Survivors consistently said that better communication - clear, consistent and accessible - could have helped them and those around them recognise abuse earlier. Knowing what domestic abuse is, where to get support, and that help is available without judgement was seen as critical to keeping victims safe.

Survivors’ voices are central to this strategy; their experiences remind us that legislation alone is not enough — it must be translated into compassionate, coordinated and effective local action.

DA Act 2021

The DA Act places a statutory duty on Tier One local authorities to provide support to victims of domestic abuse including children within refuges and other safe accommodation.

The Act strengthens protection and support for victims and survivors by:

- Defining domestic abuse in law, including physical, sexual, emotional, economic and controlling or coercive behaviour
- Recognising children as victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse
- Placing duties on local authorities to assess need and provide support for victims and their children in safe accommodation
- Requiring partnership working between councils, police, health services and other relevant agencies
- Embedding a survivor-centred approach, focused on safety, choice, dignity and long-term recovery

The Priorities

1. Improve the quality of data and information sharing

High-quality data and effective information sharing are essential to understanding the scale and nature of domestic abuse in Leicestershire, identifying risk earlier, protecting children, and delivering coordinated, trauma-informed responses. Current learning highlights variation in how domestic abuse is recorded, shared and used across services, which can limit our ability to respond effectively and to evidence impact.

The Needs Assessment has highlighted that within the datasets across the partnership, data capture for certain categories is lacking. This includes:

- **Ethnicity:** Different ethnic groups have different experiences of services and experience different barriers. It is important to ensure that ethnicity is captured appropriately to fully understand the demographic and needs of Leicestershire.
- **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity:** Those in LGBT+ relationships face additional barriers to reporting and accessing services. It is important to ensure that this information is asked and captured in order to fully understand the demographics and needs of Leicestershire.
- **Socio Economic status:** Research in the UK has consistently found vulnerability to DA to be associated with low income, economic strain, and benefit receipt.

There have been significant improvements in the level and accuracy of the data collected compared to the previous needs assessment particularly around age, gender and ethnicity. It is important to ensure that this information is asked and captured in order to fully understand the demographics and intersecting needs of victims and survivors within Leicestershire. There were challenges in the collection and the consistency of data provided including some partners being unable to provide any data at all.

A concern is that by not capturing the demographic data of the whole family, we cannot understand the needs of the whole family and provide appropriate support.

We will strengthen how domestic abuse data is collected, shared and used across Children and Families services and partner agencies, ensuring that information supports timely decision-making, safeguards children, reduces repeat harm and drives continuous improvement.

We will:

- Improve the consistency and quality of domestic abuse recording, including non-physical abuse and the lived experience of children and adults, across Early Help, safeguarding and commissioned services
- Strengthen information-sharing arrangements between Children and Families, Community Safety, Police, Health, Housing, Education and specialist domestic abuse services, in line with statutory guidance
- Reduce duplication and gaps by ensuring families do not have to repeat their experiences unnecessarily
- Develop shared data standards, definitions and pathways, enabling clearer tracking of journeys and outcomes
- Use data intelligently to identify risk earlier, target prevention activity and inform commissioning and service design
- Work with commissioned services to ensure there is a shared understanding of the requirements embedding data requirements into contracts

Intended Outcomes

- Targeted and appropriate support services for all communities both in terms of need and geography
- A clear understanding of victim's characteristics, areas of multiple disadvantage and complex needs
- A clearer, shared understanding of domestic abuse prevention and support need and patterns across Leicestershire
- Earlier identification of risk
- More coordinated, timely and proportionate responses across agencies
- Improved ability to evidence impact, outcomes and value for money
- Greater accountability and learning across the partnership

Performance Measures and Success Indicators

- Percentage of cases where the impact on children is explicitly captured
- Reduction in missing or incomplete domestic abuse fields across systems
- Percentage of relevant cases with evidence of timely multi-agency information sharing
- Reduction in the number of times survivors report having to repeat their experiences across services
- MARAC and multi-agency meeting records demonstrating improved data completeness and action tracking
- Regular publication of a multi-agency domestic abuse dashboard to inform strategic oversight
- Evidence that data is used to identify trends, target early help and improve service access for under-represented groups
- Annual reporting demonstrating how learning from data, audits and reviews has informed service improvement

Strategic Commitment

By improving the quality of data and information sharing, we will ensure that domestic abuse responses in Leicestershire are better informed, better connected and more effective. This priority underpins all others in the strategy and is critical to delivering safer outcomes for victims and survivors including children and families.

2. Early Intervention and Prevention including Communication

Early intervention and prevention are essential to reducing the harm caused by domestic abuse and improving outcomes for victims and survivors. Evidence from the local needs assessment and survivor engagement shows that opportunities to identify abuse earlier are often missed, particularly within universal services where families have regular contact but concerns may not yet meet statutory thresholds.

We will strengthen early intervention and prevention by embedding a clear, consistent domestic abuse response across Family Hubs, Early Help and education settings, ensuring that abuse is recognised early, responded to proportionately, and addressed before risk escalates.

We will:

- Embed domestic abuse awareness, safe enquiry and response within Family Hub services, including health visiting, midwifery, perinatal mental health, early years and parenting support
- Ensure Family Hubs act as trusted access points for advice, information and early help for parents and carers experiencing domestic abuse
- Provide clear pathways from Family Hubs into Early Help, specialist domestic abuse support and safeguarding services where required
- Embed domestic abuse consistently within Early Help assessment, planning and review processes, ensuring non-physical abuse and coercive control are recognised
- Ensure Early Help pathways clearly distinguish between healthy relationships, parental conflict and domestic abuse, enabling the right response at the right level
- Strengthen step-up and step-down arrangements so families experience continuity of support as needs change
- Strengthen the role of schools and colleges as key partners in early identification and prevention, recognising the impact of domestic abuse on attendance, behaviour and emotional wellbeing
- Support Designated Safeguarding Leads and school staff to recognise signs of domestic abuse affecting children and families, including where abuse occurs at home

- Ensure schools and colleges have clear routes into safeguarding services and support from specialist providers, and understand how to respond safely to disclosures
- Promote preventative education, including healthy relationships, safety and resilience, using age-appropriate approaches

Intended Outcomes

- Domestic abuse is identified earlier across universal and early help services
- Families receive timely, proportionate support before harm escalates
- Children affected by domestic abuse are recognised and supported sooner
- Improved confidence among professionals to act at the earliest opportunity
- Reduced escalation to crisis, statutory intervention and repeat harm

Performance Measures and Success Indicators

- Increase in identification of victims and perpetrators at an early stage
- Percentage of people signposted or referred to support soon after early signs are detected
- Proportion of practitioners trained in domestic abuse-informed practice
- Increase in timely engagement with services following first contact
- Reduction in repeat victimisation or repeat police callouts
- Improvements in survivor coping skills, confidence, and self-efficacy
- Reduction in stress, anxiety, and trauma symptoms
- Increased access to housing, financial support, legal advice, and social networks
- Changes in community attitudes toward domestic abuse
- Increase in help-seeking behaviours

Strategic Commitment

By embedding domestic abuse awareness into early intervention and prevention within Family Hubs, Early Help and schools, we will ensure that victims in Leicestershire receive the right support at the earliest opportunity. This approach shifts the system from crisis response to earlier, safer and more effective intervention, reducing harm and improving long-term outcomes.

Communication

Through engagement in Leicestershire, survivors highlighted the need for:

- Greater public understanding of domestic abuse, including non-physical and controlling behaviours
- Clearer information for friends, family and whole communities, so they can recognise abuse and respond safely
- Consistent messages across services, reducing confusion about thresholds, roles and support available
- Early conversations with parents and children, using accessible, age-appropriate language
- Visible, trusted routes to help, so survivors know where to turn when they are ready

Survivors' engagement has made clear that earlier recognition and better communication can change outcomes for victims; we shall work tirelessly to raise awareness amongst the public and professionals through various routes including:

- Face to face engagement eg community meetings and forums
- Digital and on lone channels eg Local authority website updates and news pages

- Printed communications eg newsletter and posters in GP surgeries
- Media engagement eg press releases and radio interviews
- Community partnerships eg working through faith/community leaders and schools

3. DA Act (Part 4) – Safe Accommodation

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a statutory duty on local authorities to assess the need for, and commission, support for victims and their children within relevant safe accommodation. This includes refuges, dispersed accommodation, sanctuary schemes and other forms of safe housing, alongside the specialist support required to help families remain safe and begin recovery.

There are currently 21 safe accommodation spaces in Leicestershire. The Council of Europe recommendation is 1 family place per 10,000 population. The population of Leicestershire is 706,155 therefore the recommended number is 70 spaces. The current provision available in Leicestershire is significantly below the recommended level furthermore, referrals for Safe Accommodation have increased significantly as have homelessness presentations

We will continue to strengthen our duties under Part 4 of the Act by ensuring that victims of domestic abuse and their children can access safe, appropriate accommodation and high-quality, trauma-informed support, regardless of their circumstances. This priority recognises that safe accommodation is not only about housing, but about safety, stability, dignity and long-term outcomes for families.

We will:

- Fulfil our statutory responsibilities by maintaining a robust local needs assessment, regularly reviewed and informed by data, lived experience and partnership intelligence
- Commission and coordinate a range of safe accommodation options, including refuge, dispersed and sanctuary provision, to meet diverse needs
- Ensure victims and their children receive specialist, trauma-informed support while in safe accommodation, recognising children as victims in their own right
- Strengthen pathways into and out of safe accommodation, including planned move-on, housing sustainment and community-based support
- Work through the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board to provide strong governance, oversight and accountability for Part 4 delivery
- Reduce barriers to access, including for victims with additional needs or facing disadvantage, ensuring services are accessible and inclusive
- Ensure effective joint working with Children and Families services, safeguarding partners, housing providers and specialist domestic abuse services

Intended Outcomes

- Victims are able to access safe accommodation when needed
- Children in safe accommodation are recognised and supported as victims of domestic abuse
- Families experience coordinated, trauma-informed support that promotes safety and recovery
- Improved move-on outcomes, reducing repeat homelessness and repeat abuse
- Clear accountability and assurance in meeting statutory duties

Performance Measures and Success Indicators

- Availability and utilisation of safe accommodation aligned to identified need
- Reduced waiting times for access to appropriate safe accommodation
- Range of provision meeting the needs of families, including those with additional or complex needs, men and marginalised communities

- Percentage of adults and children in safe accommodation receiving specialist support
- Improved safety, wellbeing and stability reported by survivors and children
- Successful planned move-on from safe accommodation into stable housing
- Effective operation of the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board
- Regular reporting against Part 4 duties, needs assessment findings and commissioning outcomes
- Evidence that survivor feedback and learning inform service improvement

Strategic Commitment

Through this priority, we will ensure that Leicestershire County Council continues to meet its statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Part 4 while striving to go beyond minimum requirements. By working in partnership and keeping victims and survivors at the centre of our approach, we will deliver safe accommodation and support that not only protects from immediate harm, but helps them build safer, more stable futures.

Leicestershire and Rutland Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board

The Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board provides strategic leadership, governance and accountability for the delivery of domestic abuse priorities across Leicestershire and Rutland, with a specific statutory role in overseeing duties under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 relating to support in safe accommodation. The Board brings together key partners to ensure a coordinated, survivor-centred and evidence-led response to domestic abuse, with a strong focus on safeguarding children and supporting families affected by abuse.

The Local Partnership Board:

- Provides strategic oversight of the Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy and associated delivery plans
- Supports the Council to meet its statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, particularly Part 4
- Oversees the development, review and implementation of the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment
- Agrees priorities for commissioning and service development, informed by data, lived experience and local need
- Champions a whole-system, partnership approach, ensuring alignment across Children and Families, Community Safety, Health, Housing, Police, Education and the voluntary sector
- Promotes trauma-informed, survivor-centred practice, recognising children as victims in their own right
- Ensures learning from survivor engagement, audits, Domestic Homicide Reviews and performance data informs continuous improvement

Membership of the Local Partnership Board reflects statutory guidance and local need and includes representation from across Leicestershire and Rutland, furthermore the Board ensures that survivor and lived experience voices are meaningfully embedded within its work through a Survivor Advisory Group.

The Local Partnership Board is accountable for:

- Ensuring clear lines of responsibility for the delivery of Part 4 duties and wider strategy priorities
- Agreeing and monitoring performance measures and outcomes, including access to safe accommodation and support for children
- Holding partners to account for their contributions to agreed actions and outcomes

- Escalating risks, gaps or system pressures to senior leadership and relevant governance bodies
- Ensuring decisions are evidence-based, transparent and focused on improving safety and outcomes

The Board operates with clear terms of reference, decision-making processes and reporting arrangements.

To ensure effective delivery, the Local Partnership Board:

- Receives regular performance reports against the Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy and Part 4 delivery plan
- Monitors trends in demand, access, outcomes and equality of service provision
- Uses a multi-agency domestic abuse performance dashboard to support oversight and decision-making
- Commissions or request audits, reviews and deep-dives where concerns are identified
- Ensures actions are taken in response to learning from data, survivor feedback and statutory reviews

4.Strong Partnerships

Domestic Abuse cannot be prevented or reduced by any single organisation working alone. Strong, effective partnerships are essential to identifying risk early, safeguarding children, supporting survivors, holding perpetrators to account and delivering coordinated, trauma-informed responses. Local evidence and survivor feedback consistently show that where agencies work well together, families experience safer, more timely and more effective support.

Leicestershire has strong partnership arrangements in place to share information and develop joint plans to protect victims and survivors and hold perpetrators to account – the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings continue to take a joint approach to risk assessment and safety planning for victims living in Leicestershire. A review of the MARAC has been undertaken by SafeLives and recommendations are being implemented across the partnership.

We will continue to strengthen and sustain partnerships across statutory, voluntary, community and faith sectors to ensure a shared understanding of domestic abuse, clear roles and responsibilities, and joined-up action at every stage of a victims journey.

We will:

- Strengthen multi-agency collaboration across Children and Families, Community Safety, Health, Police, Housing, Education, Probation and specialist domestic abuse services
- Ensure partners share a common vision and shared priorities, grounded in safeguarding children and supporting survivors
- Clarify roles, responsibilities and pathways, so survivors experience coordinated support rather than fragmented responses
- Value and support the role of the voluntary and community sector, recognising their expertise, trusted relationships and reach into communities
- Embed domestic abuse as a shared priority across strategic boards, partnerships and governance arrangements
- Promote a culture of mutual challenge, learning and accountability, using data, audits and lived experience to drive improvement

Intended Outcomes

- Consistent, joined-up responses to domestic abuse across agencies

- Clear and timely pathways for children, survivors and families
- Reduced duplication and fewer gaps between services
- Improved safety, experience and outcomes for families affected by domestic abuse
- Stronger system resilience and shared ownership of risk

Performance Measures and Success Indicators

- Regular attendance and engagement from key partners at strategic and operational forums
- Clear, agreed pathways and protocols in place and consistently used
- Partner feedback indicating improved clarity of roles and joint working
- Evidence of coordinated multi-agency plans for families affected by domestic abuse
- Reduction in delays caused by hand-offs or unclear responsibilities
- Improved timeliness of referrals and access to support
- Learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews, audits and case reviews shared and acted upon across partners
- Joint training and development activity delivered and evaluated
- Evidence that partnership learning informs service design and commissioning
- Domestic Homicide Review recommendations are actioned across the system

Strategic Commitment

By investing in strong partnerships, we will ensure that domestic abuse responses are coordinated, consistent and effective, and that no single service carries risk alone. This priority underpins the whole strategy and reflects our commitment to working together to safeguard children, support survivors and reduce domestic abuse across our communities.

Domestic Homicide Reviews

A Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) is a statutory, multi-agency review that must be carried out when the death of a person aged 16 or over has resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a current or former intimate partner, or a family member. The purpose of a DHR is not to apportion blame, but to identify learning that can improve future responses to domestic abuse and reduce the risk of further deaths. DHRs consider the contact that victims, perpetrators and their families had with statutory agencies, voluntary organisations and other services, and examine how agencies worked both individually and together.

Domestic Homicide Reviews are, by their nature, a partnership responsibility. Effective DHRs depend on the active engagement, openness and accountability of all relevant agencies, including local authorities, police, health, housing, probation, education and specialist domestic abuse services.

Within Leicestershire, DHRs are overseen through established governance arrangements within the Safeguarding Partnerships Board Office, with learning shared across strategic and operational partnerships, including the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board, Children and Families Partnership, Safeguarding Children Partnership, Safeguarding Adults Board and Community Safety Partnerships.

Partnerships play a critical role in ensuring that:

- Reviews are conducted thoroughly, independently and within statutory timescales
- Agencies contribute openly and reflectively to the review process
- Learning is translated into practical, system-wide improvements, rather than remaining a paper exercise
- The victim and their family remain central to the process

Learning and System Improvement

Domestic Homicide Reviews provide vital insight into:

- Missed opportunities for early identification and intervention
- How information was shared, or not shared, between agencies
- The impact of domestic abuse on children and families
- Barriers faced by victims in accessing support
- How risk was assessed, managed and escalated
- Gaps in services and support available within the local community / across the service area

A key responsibility of local partnerships is to ensure that learning from DHRs is embedded across the system, not confined to the agencies directly involved in a specific case. This includes identifying recurring themes, systemic issues and workforce development needs.

Partnership Responsibilities for DHR Learning

Through this strategy, partners commit to:

- Treating DHRs as a collective learning process, with shared responsibility for improvement
- Ensuring that recommendations are owned, tracked and delivered through appropriate governance structures
- Sharing learning across Children and Families services, safeguarding arrangements, MARAC, Early Help, Family Hubs, schools and frontline practitioners
- Using DHR findings to inform policy, practice, commissioning, training and communication activity
- Considering the specific learning relating to children's lived experience, non-physical abuse, coercive control, and information sharing
- Reviewing progress regularly and challenging where change is not being achieved

The Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board provides strategic oversight of DHR learning in relation to domestic abuse and ensures alignment with the Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy. The Board will:

- Receive regular updates on DHR progress, themes and actions
- Monitor delivery of agreed actions and escalate concerns where required
- Ensure learning is reflected in strategy priorities, delivery plans and performance frameworks
- Work alongside safeguarding and community safety partnerships to ensure coherent and coordinated responses

Domestic Homicide Reviews remind us of the serious consequences of domestic abuse and the importance of getting responses right. As partners, we commit to approaching DHRs with professional curiosity, humility and a shared determination to improve.

By learning together, challenging constructively and acting decisively, partnerships in Leicestershire will use DHRs to strengthen early intervention, improve information sharing, safeguard children and ultimately reduce the risk of future harm and loss of life.

How This Strategy Will Be Delivered

The Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy will be delivered through a whole-system, partnership-led approach, recognising that reducing domestic abuse and improving outcomes for victims and survivors requires coordinated action across statutory, voluntary and community partners.

Delivery will be underpinned by strong governance, clear accountability, effective partnership working, robust data and continuous learning.

Overall leadership and accountability for delivery of this strategy will sit with the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board. The Board will provide strategic direction, oversight and challenge, ensuring that the priorities of this strategy are delivered and that statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, including Part 4, are met.

Each strategic priority within this strategy will be supported by:

- A defined set of delivery actions
- Named lead agencies and partners
- Clear outcomes and performance measures
- Timescales for delivery

A detailed delivery plan will be maintained and reviewed regularly to ensure progress is tracked, actions remain relevant, and resources are targeted effectively.

Conclusion

The strategy will be delivered through a confident, skilled and supported workforce.

This will include:

- Multi-agency training and development aligned to strategy priorities
- Strengthening understanding of domestic abuse, including non-physical abuse and coercive control
- Embedding trauma-informed, strengths-based practice across services
- Supporting professionals to identify abuse early and respond appropriately

Learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews, audits, MARAC and survivor feedback will be used to continuously improve practice.

Delivery will be informed by high-quality data and shared intelligence. A multi-agency approach to data and information sharing will support:

- Early identification of risk
- Monitoring demand, access and outcomes
- Identifying inequalities and unmet need
- Evidence-based decision-making and commissioning

Performance will be monitored through agreed indicators and reported regularly to the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and relevant governance structures.

Survivors, children and families will remain central to delivery of the strategy.

This will be achieved by:

- Ongoing engagement with survivors and young people
- Using lived experience to inform service design, commissioning and communication
- Gathering feedback on service experience and outcomes
- Ensuring survivor voice informs review and improvement activity

This strategy is a living document. Progress will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains responsive to emerging need, learning and changes in the local or national context.

We will:

- Publish regular progress updates and annual reports
- Review and refresh delivery actions as required
- Track and deliver actions arising from reviews and learning
- Hold partners to account for agreed commitments

Our Commitment

Through strong leadership, shared accountability and effective partnership working, this strategy will be delivered in a way that is coordinated, evidence-led and focused on improving

safety and outcomes. By working together, we will reduce harm, strengthen early intervention, support recovery and ensure that children and families affected by domestic abuse receive the help they need, when they need it.

For further information about this Strategy please contact:
communitysafety@leics.gov.uk

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