



SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 22 APRIL 2026

SAFER COMMUNITIES ANNUAL UPDATE AND DRAFT DOMESTIC ABUSE REDUCTION STRATEGY 2026-2029

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Scrutiny Committee of the work of the Safer Communities Team over the past year and to seek the views of the Committee on the draft Domestic Abuse (DA) Reduction Strategy 2026 – 2029 as part of the consultation.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The work of the Safer Communities Team supports three of the five corporate strategic outcomes: great communities, improved opportunities and safe and well. The Team further supports the Public Health Service Plan, particularly relating to protecting communities and individuals from harm and providing services that meet community needs.
3. Specifically, the Team ensures the Council discharges its corporate duties relating to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and other statutes pertaining to Safer Communities such as producing numerous strategies and policies including the Community Safety Agreement; Domestic Abuse (DA) Reduction Strategy; Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategy and Hate Reduction Strategy, complying with the Prevent guidelines and the Government's Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan.

Safer Communities - Background

4. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and subsequent legislation place a duty on responsible authorities (including local police bodies and local district, and county councils) to work together to reduce crime and disorder.
5. The Community Safety Team works to create safer, stronger and more resilient communities across Leicestershire. The Team helps prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, supports vulnerable people and strengthens partnerships between the council, police, fire service, health services and local voluntary organisations.

Service Priorities

6. The Team manage a number of workstreams across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) as well as corporately within the Council, leading the response to and coordinating the work of numerous partner organisations on issues relating to Crime and ASB Prevention, DA, Hate Crime, community tensions, and Prevent. The Team develops and delivers strategies to reduce crime, disorder and ASB and support the development of Action Plans which are delivered at the locality.
7. Partnerships are an integral part to the Team's success; working closely with statutory, voluntary and community sector services including Leicestershire Police and district councils, Leicester City Council, Rutland Council and Health Services to address local issues and support vulnerable people, protect victims and support early interventions. Also working across the Council to ensure the Council discharges its statutory duties, for example through the corporate Prevent Group and the corporate DA Strategy Group.
8. The work of the Team is data and intelligence led, sharing examples of good practice to partners to recognise emerging threats and issues and support joint problem solving. Furthermore support is given to local responses when incidents threaten community safety for example through the Venue Hire Policy and Martyn's Law in relation to counter terrorism.

Counter Terrorism

9. Prevent is a UK government, multi-agency programme designed to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. As part of the CONTEST counter-terrorism strategy, it focuses on early intervention and safeguarding vulnerable individuals from radicalisation, dealing with all forms of extremism. The County Council works with City Council, Police partners and community organisations to help find solutions and work to support and protect vulnerable people.

Government CONTEST Strategy

10. CONTEST is the UK's Counter Terrorism strategy. Its aim is to reduce the risk of terrorism to the UK, its citizens and interest overseas so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.
11. The Framework for CONTEST is made up of 4 'PS':
 - 1) Prevent - to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.
 - 2) Pursue - to stop terrorist attacks.
 - 3) Protect - to strengthen our protection against terrorist attack.
 - 4) Prepare - to mitigate the implications of a terrorist attack.
12. The Home Office provides guidance on Prevent, Prepare, and Protect to Local Authorities. It recognises that Local Authorities in conjunction with partner agencies have a core role to play in countering terrorism at a local level and help safeguard individuals at risk of radicalisation. The Pursue element of the strategy is focused on police enforcement, and the Protect and Prepare involve the Home Office and law

enforcement agencies working with and providing guidance to local agencies including Local Authorities.

Prevent

13. The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a legal duty on specified authorities to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”; local authorities and their partners therefore have a core role to play in countering terrorism at a local level and helping to safeguard individuals at risk of radicalisation.

The Approach to Dealing with Prevent

14. LLR has a robust multi-agency structure that is embedded to ensure the sub-regional partnership programme for prevent delivery is well governed at all appropriate levels. For example, the County Council has a lead officer who sits on all strategic groups and an operational lead for taking forward relevant actions across the County.
15. The Corporate Prevent Steering Group meets quarterly to oversee all key actions on prevent delivery for the Authority including monitoring the Prevent Action Plan.
16. The Council has a standalone Prevent web page where information and support to reduce the threat of terrorism and extremism is published, including the local Police Prevent Teams referral pathway.
17. A training session on Prevent awareness is available to staff and currently one webinar is delivered monthly; Prevent Awareness Training for County Council’s elected members took place on 5th January 2026, jointly delivered with input from Counter Terrorism Police. Training is also delivered to County schools to share good practice with designated safeguarding leads within maintained schools and a training offer of a commissioned service which Academies can buy into. The Council also has training available for staff who take bookings from the public for local authority owned buildings.
18. The Council’s Venue Hire Policy and Responsible Event Booking Guidance has been in place since 2024 and good practice on this shared with all local authority partners across the county. This is to ensure that no designated group is able to hire a council building for extremist purposes.
19. The Council’s IT Firewall continues to meet the Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (CTIRU) list requirement to know which groups it should block. The Council’s firewall meets the current CTIRU criterion.
20. The Council submitted a bid to the 2025/26 Radicalisation Fund which was successful, and Groundswell (a homeless health charity) was awarded the grant by the Home Office to provide a series of workshops on Safeguarding Neurodivergent young people. There has been a positive take on these online webinar sessions and Groundswell will be presenting an update report to the East Midlands Prevent

network in the Autumn with outcomes of the delivery and evaluation of these workshops.

21. The former annual Counter Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP) produced by the East Midlands Counter Terrorism Policing is now shared quarterly. The CTLP is an important document used by all partners in informing their risk assessments.

Channel Panel

22. Channel is a programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being susceptible to being drawn into terrorism. The programme uses a multi-agency approach to protect vulnerable people, sits outside of the criminal space, and engagement with Channel is voluntary. The Channel Panel meets quarterly and the County Council officer representative is one of the Deputy Chairs for the LLR Channel Panel.
23. Following the tragic events in Southport in December 2025 (the knife attack which led to the deaths of three young girls) the Home Secretary announced the launch of a pilot to test new approaches to monitoring and supporting those cases that are referred to Prevent, which do not meet the threshold for Channel support, but where there are residual vulnerabilities warranting onward referral for support. The LLR local authorities were approached by the Home Office to take part in the pilot due to the strong partnership and good practice around Prevent. The Home Office is currently in the process of compiling the results from the pilot.

Home Office Annual Benchmarking

24. The 2025/26 Prevent Duty Annual Assurance Process took place with the Home Office on 12th February 2026. The Home Office will be sending a letter to the Council's Chief Executive in May informing it of the outcomes of the assurance exercise against the local authority Prevent duty benchmarking process.
25. The 2024/25 Prevent Duty Annual Assurance Process took place on 12th March 2025, the Council exceeded all but one of the 8 benchmarks which it met (Communication and Engagement); the reason for this is that Prevent is such a contentious issue amongst communities that very little proactive communication is undertaken. The Home Office are aware of this national issue.

Hate Crime

26. The County Council is represented on the LLR Hate Strategy Group which meets quarterly and plays an active role in delivering actions within the partnership Hate Delivery Plan; Partners have worked together and the Police launched the [Speak Out Space - Act together against hate crime](#), an online hub created to educate the communities of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland about what hate crimes are and the support available for anyone impacted.
27. Corporately, the Team designed and introduced the process of reporting hate incidents through the AssessNet system (used to report health and safety incidents,

near misses, and breaches of procedure). Its aim is to support a safer workplace by ensuring all safety-related events are logged accurately and acted upon promptly.

28. Furthermore, the hate Incident Report Form for communities to use has been embedded within the new ECINS case management system.

Anti-Social Behaviour

29. ASB is conduct that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress to others, encompassing both criminal acts (like vandalism) and non-criminal nuisances (like persistent noise), affecting community well-being by disregarding societal norms. Reporting is mostly handled by district councils and police for issues like [drug use](#), [graffiti](#), [aggressive begging](#), or [nuisance neighbours](#).
30. The ASB Partnership (made up of the County Council, Rutland Council, Leicester City Council, the 7 district councils and the Police) recognise that residents are entitled to live free from ASB and hate incidents. For the majority of residents, ASB is not a problem but where it does occur it can have a devastating effect on the quality of life for communities if not dealt with.
28. The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, defines ASB as:
- (a) *conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm, or distress to any person;*
 - (b) *conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or*
 - (c) *conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person.*

Types of anti-social behaviour are wide-ranging and can take many forms.

The Partnership Approach to Dealing with ASB

29. The Partnership adopts an Incremental Approach when dealing with ASB; the purpose being to manage ASB in a consistent and proportionate manner.
30. The decision on the range of tools, powers and action used will be based on the circumstances of each case and will be proportionate to the behaviour exhibited and risk of harm, taking into account any vulnerabilities. Officers use their discretion to decide, on a risk-centred basis, at what stage they enter the incremental approach and to what extent each incremental step should be followed in turn. The rationale for such decisions will be recorded ECINS, the partnership case management system.
31. All hate-related cases will be treated as 'high risk' at the point a report is received. Cases which, on subsequent practitioner assessment, remain or become high risk will be referred to the Partnership's Joint Action Group (JAG) for multi-agency problem solving. Hate-related graffiti will be removed within 24 hours of receiving the report.

32. The Partnership will aim to resolve most ASB cases through non-legal means and may use a range of early intervention tools and techniques to prevent ASB from escalating and to resolve cases quickly. The police and the relevant council will decide who should take the lead in any case; for example, where there is a criminal element the police will be best placed to lead. The council will support its partners in their investigation and action in these instances.
33. The LLR ASB Strategy Group (chaired by the Council's Community Safety Manager) sets the strategic direction for the ASB Partnership, the ASB Delivery Group (chaired by the Council's Community Safety Officer) is the operational group leading the work across LLR on ASB. Whilst there is local variance, the County Council leads the work to ensure all victims receive a good standard of service wherever they live across LLR.
34. The Council leads the Partnership response to ASB with good processes and strong referral pathways, including victim support services, ensuring visible outcomes and better support for victims and for the most vulnerable in communities. The Team leads the continued delivery of bi-annual cross-partnership ASB Training for all front line ASB professionals to continue to raise awareness and encourage consistent usage of the LLR Incremental Approach. The Team has also developed Easy Read ASB documentation to support the understanding/awareness for those who may struggle to read/ understand standard documents or have language barriers. Further developments are planned following the success of this work.

Joint Action Groups

34. JAGS are multi-agency intelligence led local partnerships focussed on anti-social behaviour and related crime and disorder, dealing with the threat, risk and harm to local communities and local people, identifying and safeguarding vulnerable individuals through collaborative problem solving.
35. The purpose of JAGs are to:
 - a) Manage cases of ASB, including hate incidents and local crime issues through a multi-agency approach..
 - b) Deal with perpetrators of ASB through the incremental approach .
 - c) Support victims of ASB and related crime, particularly vulnerable victims.
 - d) Identify and refer offenders to Integrated Offender Management.
 - e) Focus on ASB hotspots across LLR.
36. The JAGs are an integral part of the management of ASB in the LLR area. A key element of their work is the management of high risk ASB cases, dealing with perpetrators through the incremental approach, and supporting victims, particularly those most vulnerable. The JAGS also focus on ASB hotspots within districts and so through a multi-agency, holistic approach will case-manage both people and places.
37. The County Council is leading a piece of work to undertake a review of all JAGs across LLR to ensure they are operating in a standardised way; a new set of

minimum operating standards will be drawn up by September 2026, and implemented in October after final consultation with partners.

ASB Case Review (formerly known as the Community Trigger)

38. Introduced through the ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014, the ASB case review is a process that gives victims and communities the right to request a review of actions taken, where they believe an ongoing problem has not been adequately addressed.
39. The ASB case review is only to be used if the complainant believes that there has been a failure by the agencies concerned to respond adequately to their reports of anti-social behaviour. The threshold to be met is one hate incident reported in a six-month period or three reported incidents of ASB within a six-month period.
40. Whilst the national recommendation is three reported incidents of ASB within a six-month period, locally partners have also agreed to the further threshold of one hate incident reported in a six-month period due to the significant detrimental impact these incidents have on victims.
41. The County Council leads the work to establish the processes and minimum standards to govern the reviews.

ASB Case Management System - ECINS

42. In 2025 the ASB Partnership agreed to the procurement of a new case management system, with the County Council leading on its procurement.
43. The system is now running well and its further development, using Home Office funding, is being discussed; this will enable the partnership to use “hot spot mapping” to identify significant clusters/ concentrations of ASB as well as further improvement in data collation and analysis.
44. The Partnership shares information in line with legislation between partners to adopt a multi-agency approach to tackling ASB, to identify vulnerability and reduce risk, threat and harm to individuals and communities, whilst ensuring that requirements of data protection legislation are strictly complied with.

Domestic Abuse

45. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has allocated grant funding to each local authority for the delivery of the Safe Accommodation duty under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This duty requires local authorities in England to assess the need for, and provide, support within safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and their children. It focuses on providing specialised, supported refuge spaces, not just housing
46. Tier-one local authorities (such as the County and City Councils) have received the following funding, whilst each district council (tier-two authorities) has received approximately £33,000 for each year:

- i. DA duty 2021-2022 allocation: £1,127,205
- ii. DA duty 2022-2023 allocation: £1,130,326
- iii. DA duty 2023-2024 allocation: £1,152,936
- iv. DA duty 2024-2025 allocation: £1,174,689
- v. DA duty 2025 – 2026/ 2026-2027 allocation: £ 1,463,965 – this, and all future funding has now moved from a grant fund allocation to local government financial settlement.

Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment (SANA)

- 47. The purpose of the SANA was to review safe accommodation across Leicestershire, identify gaps in provision and service to vulnerable victims of DA to enable the County Council to gain a clearer understanding of local need and help to inform its Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy (2026) and future commissioning.
- 48. The SANA looked at the DA support offer across the system in the County, including the offer through partner agencies. The SANA demonstrates that the services the County Council has commissioned to date to support victims of DA (including children) are having a positive impact and increasing confidence in reporting.

Funding Allocation

- 49. The SANA identifies areas in greatest need of support. Resources are concentrated on high vulnerability, high need and high risk situations. The Council also commissioned specialist voluntary sector services, subject matter experts in their field, to provide highly tailored, wrap-around holistic recovery and support that address the victims' and survivors' full range of needs.
- 50. Services commissioned to date from the funding discussed in paragraph 45 includes support for families experiencing DA, therapy for children and adults, community-based support offering advice and signposting as well as advocacy and support within DA refuges. The Council established an Extended Domestic Abuse team in year 2 (2022-2023) to provide specialist support and assistance to victims of domestic abuse.
- 51. The procurement process for the Safe Accommodation has also been undertaken as is required under the DA Act in order to provide safe accommodation to victims of DA. The safe accommodation units now provide housing and deliver support; they have added 19 additional units to the housing support across Leicestershire. The SANA highlighted the continued lack of Safe Accommodation; there is a severe lack of property for refuge or dispersed accommodation and all of the Safe Accommodation is currently located in the Charnwood and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council areas where there is available housing stock. Further work will be undertaken in an attempt to locate properties in other districts.
- 52. There is a significant shortage of therapeutic support for children and young people who are victims of DA. The DA Act 2021 recognises that children and young people who live in a household where DA is present are victims (rather than witnesses); much research has been conducted on the negative impact of DA on children and the effect this has on them throughout their childhood and into adulthood. The

Council will seek to increase therapeutic support for vulnerable children and young people.

53. The SANA highlights the rise in the number of older victims, which is reflected in increasing Domestic Homicide Reviews and through research undertaken by Durham University. Work is currently underway to establish how best to support older victims and survivors of DA.
54. Far reaching communication campaigns will be undertaken to target specific groups (for example victims living in rural areas), to raise awareness of DA and the services available. Furthermore officers from the County Council and partner organisations will also be advised of services available to their service users.

Consultation on the draft Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026 – 2029

55. On 24th March 2026 the Cabinet approved the draft Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026–2029 for public, partner and stakeholder consultation, engaging with residents, partners, survivors, young people, commissioned services and community organisations. This consultation is taking place from 2 April to 17 May through on line meetings, face to face meetings, an on line link, paper copies and communications through the Council’s social media channels.
56. The draft Strategy sets out a three-year programme shaped by survivors, partners and data and is a statutory requirement under the DA Act 2021. It also supports delivery of the Council’s Strategic Plan 2022–26, particularly the outcomes relating to keeping people safe, improving wellbeing, and supporting strong communities.
57. The Strategy will be delivered through existing domestic abuse funding, including central government allocations for safe accommodation duties.

Statutory Context

58. 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.

The Draft Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026–2029

59. The Strategy (attached as Appendix A to this report) sets out a three-year programme shaped by survivors, partners and data. Its four priorities are:
 - (i) Improving Data Quality and Information Sharing
 - (ii) Early Intervention, Prevention and Communication
 - (iii) Targeted Support and Safe Accommodation (statutory duties)
 - (iv) Strong Partnerships.

Needs Assessment:

60. In 2024, the Council commissioned SafeLives (a UK-wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse) 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.

Resource Implications

61. Consultation costs will be met within existing budgets.
62. 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.
63. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Public Health, Law and Governance have been consulted on the contents of this report.

Timetable for Decisions

64. A 6-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 marginalised communities.
65. It is intended that a report on the outcome of the consultation (including comments of the Scrutiny Commission) and presenting the final Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy will be submitted to the Cabinet at its meeting on 21 July 2026.

Recommendation for the Scrutiny Commission

66. And concluded no It is recommended that the Commission:
- a) To note the Safer Communities annual update;
 - b) Comment on the draft Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026 – 2029 appended to this report.

Background Papers

Report to the Cabinet on 24 March 2026 and minutes of that meeting
<https://cexmodgov01/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=135&MIId=8305>

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (Statutory Guidance)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62c6df068fa8f54e855dfe31/Domestic_Abuse_Act_2021_Statutory_Guidance.pdf

Equality Implications

67. The SANA has looked at the specific needs of marginalised communities. As result of this, specialised services have been commissioned through “by and for organisations” offering targeted support. For example the Council is the first authority to commission support for the Gypsy and Traveller Community and Leicestershire has the only Independent Domestic Violence Advocate in the country.
68. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed on the draft Strategy and concluded that there are no adverse implications for any marginalised community as protected characteristics have been specifically considered and targeted services for these communities are being commissioned.

Human Rights Implications

69. Due regard has been paid in respect for human rights through the Equality Impact Assessment; no implications have arisen as protected characteristics have been specifically considered and targeted services for these communities are being commissioned.

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Appendices

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

