



CABINET – 21st JULY 2026

DOMESTIC ABUSE REDUCTION STRATEGY 2026–2029

**JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY
SERVICES AND THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, COMMUNITIES,
LAW AND GOVERNANCE**

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Cabinet's approval for the Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026–29, following responses to a consultation period which ran from 2 April – 17 May 2026. The Strategy (attached as Appendix A to this report) has been developed following a comprehensive SafeLives Needs Assessment (attached as Appendix B to this report) 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 the Domestic Abuse (DA) Reduction Strategy.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that the Cabinet approves the Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026–2029.

(KEY DECISION)

Reason for Recommendations

4. Producing a Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy is a statutory duty under The Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

5. A consultation has been undertaken ensuring that this Strategy reflects the views of survivors, professionals, partners, and the public, and demonstrates transparency and accountability.
6. Consultation has allowed 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 document.

Timetable for Decisions

7. Following the Cabinet's approval on 24 March 2026, public and stakeholder consultation was undertaken from 2 April to 17 May 2026. The draft Strategy was presented for consideration by the Scrutiny Commission in June 2026.
8. Following approval of the Strategy by the Cabinet, it will be shared corporately across the Council and with partnership boards, for adoption from July 2026.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

9. 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.
10. The previous Strategy was presented to the Cabinet in October 2021; this Strategy replaces that one.
11. The 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; and 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

12. The Strategy will be delivered through existing domestic abuse funding, including central government allocations for safe accommodation duties.
13. 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.

14. Tier one local authorities have received funding; in the financial year 2026 – 2027 the Domestic Abuse duty allocation to Leicestershire County Council is £1,463,965, whilst each district has received approximately £33,000.
15. £385,928 Domestic Abuse funding, previously managed by the Public Health Department, has moved to Children and Family Services in order to align the funding and services offered to victims.
16. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Public Health, Communities, Law and Governance have been consulted on the contents of this report.

Circulation Under Local Issues Alert Procedure

17. This report will be circulated to all members.

Officers to Contact

Sharon Cooke, Interim Director, Children and Family Services
Sharon.cooke@leics.gov.uk

Mike Sandys, Director of Public Health, Communities, Law and Governance
Mike.sandys@leics.gov.uk

Gurjit Samra-Rai, Community Safety Manager
Gurjit.smara-rai@leics.gov.uk

PART B

Background

18. 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 second 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 within refuges and other safe accommodation are now legally recognised as victims under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and require coordinated, holistic support.
19. The draft Strategy has been developed in partnership with survivors, voluntary and community organisations, statutory partners and specialist services.
20. The 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 victims and survivors, and provide coordinated, trauma-informed support.

Statutory Context:

21. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places duties on Tier One authorities, including:
 - Establishing a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board
 - 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.
22. Part 4 of 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.
23. 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. The Board brings together key

partners to ensure a coordinated, survivor-centered and evidence-led response to domestic abuse, and will provide strategic oversight of the Strategy.

24. A Domestic Abuse Survivor Group has been established to advise the Board on service user experience, devise the Action Plan and support delivery of the Strategy.

Needs Assessment

25. 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.

Consultation

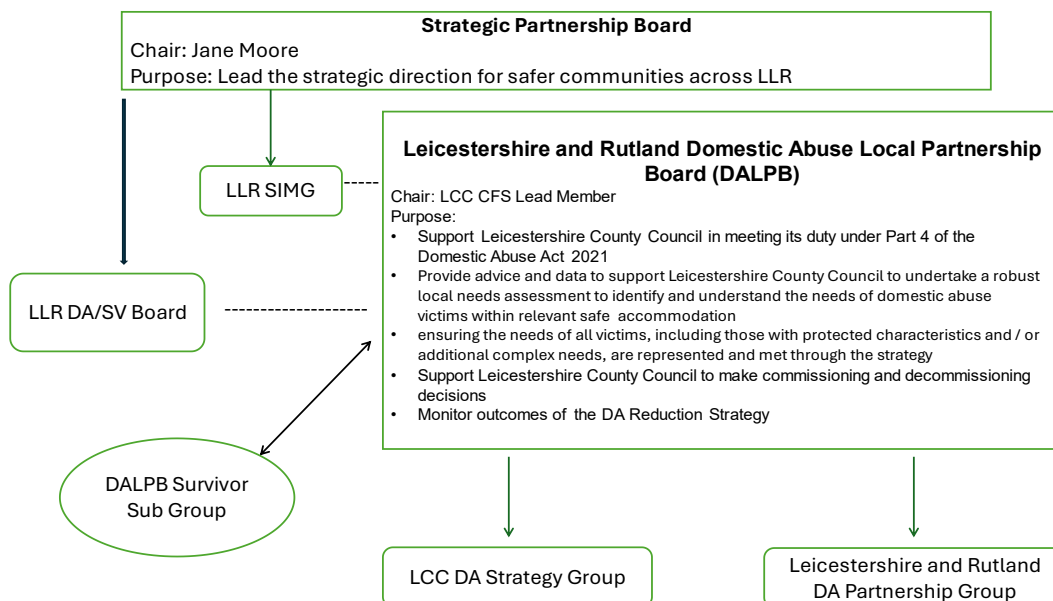
26. The six week consultation period included a public online survey, focus groups with survivors of domestic abuse (including young people, men and older people) as well as engagement with specialist providers and partner forums.
27. A total of 46 responses were received. 25 responses were received from the online consultation, 1 domestic abuse survivor sent a direct email, 8 survivors attended a coffee morning, 10 young people (aged 14 – 22) attended an on-line meeting and 2 individuals responded directly with track changes to the draft strategy.
28. All respondents agreed with the priorities within the Strategy; there were some comments about how the Strategy should be delivered and operational focus, these points will be followed up through the Delivery Plan which will sit under the Strategy to support its delivery.
29. In response to the consultation recognition of Partnership delivery at locality has been included. Nationally the terminology will change from Domestic Homicide Reviews to Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews.

The Draft Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026–2029

30. The Strategy sets out a three-year commitment 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
31. The priorities within the Strategy will be delivered through new and existing partnership arrangements, for example priority 4 will be led by the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Board (LLR DA/SV Board). This Board sits under the Strategic Partnership Board (SPB).
 32. The LLR Senior Information Management Group will support the work on priority 1 and the SPB agreed at its last meeting to take the lead on improving data quality and information sharing across the community safety partnership.
 33. Priorities 2 and 3 will be led by Leicestershire County Council through the DA Strategy Group, including the Domestic Abuse duty allocation of £1,463,965 as well as wider DA work including communications campaigns.
 34. Prior to tendering DA services to assist with delivering the Strategy and to support discharging the Council's statutory duty, the Needs Assessment is considered alongside a gap analysis of need and consultation with survivors, specialists and partner organisations.

Governance Structure



Legal Implications

35. The Strategy supports compliance with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Consultation has ensured the Strategy is lawful, robust and informed.
36. The DA Act 2021 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.

Equalities Implications

37. 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.
38. 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

39. Domestic abuse has major health impacts; early intervention will support wellbeing.
40. The Strategy will strengthen prevention and the response to domestic abuse, contributing to crime reduction.

Conclusion

41. Subject to the Cabinet's approval, the Strategy will be adopted by the Council and an Action Plan drafted.

Background Papers

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (Statutory Guidance)

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

Report to the Cabinet – 24 March 2026 – Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026-29: Permission to Consult -

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s195404/DA%20Reduction%20Strategy%20FINAL.pdf>

Appendices

A - Draft Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026–2029

B – Strategic Needs Assessment