

Promoting Safety: Herefordshire's Strategy for Addressing Domestic Abuse 2021-2024

May 2022

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Glossary of terms

| | |
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| DA | Domestic Abuse |
| WMWA | West Mercia Women's Aid |
| LPB | Local Partnership Board |
| HBV | Honour Based Violence |
| FGM | Female Genital Mutilation |
| CSEW | Crime Survey of England and Wales |
| IDVA | Independent Domestic Violence Advisors |
| LGBTQ+ | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer |
| BAME | Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic |
| MARAC | Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference |
| GP | General Practitioner |
| FGM | Female Genital Mutilation |
| DLUHC | Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (previously Ministry of Housing and Local Government) |
| VAWG | Violence Against Women and Girls |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Social Media | Website and computers programmes including apps that allow people to communication and share information on the internet using a computer or mobile phone. |
| Remote/Tech Abuse | The use of technology (including remote technology) to perpetrate domestic abuse. |

1. Executive Summary

Domestic abuse has a huge impact on society and is one of the most pervasive of all social problems. It causes pain and suffering for those affected and their family, and has a significant cost to public services and the local community. It is often a hidden crime, with people experiencing domestic abuse reluctant to report their situation and friends, neighbours or family hesitant to get involved.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales indicates that an estimated 2.3 million adults aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse in 2019/20. More than one in ten of all offences recorded by the police are domestic abuse related.

People who have experienced, or are experiencing domestic abuse may be affected in a number of ways, including significant and lasting impact on physical and mental health, homelessness, loss of income or work and isolation from families and friends. Children can experience both short and long-term cognitive, behavioural and emotional effects as a result of witnessing domestic abuse.

1.1 Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has established a definition of domestic abuse and given Local Authorities new statutory duties:

- Appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board that it will consult as it performs certain specified functions.
- Assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support in their area for all victim-survivors or their children, including those who come from outside the area.
- Develop and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their locality, having regard to the needs assessment.
- Give effect to the strategy (through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions) including the provision of safe accommodation.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy, reviewing it every three years.

Building on existing work, this strategy outlines what Herefordshire Council and our partners are doing to deliver these new duties.

1.2 Needs Assessment

A domestic abuse needs assessment was carried out in June 2021 to refresh the needs assessment completed in 2018. This tells us that in Herefordshire between April 2020 and March 2021, the police recorded 1,354 domestic abuse incidents and 2,168 domestic abuse offences, this is roughly 4 incidents and 6 offences per day. It is widely understood that domestic abuse is

under reported, data from the Crime Survey of England and Wales indicates that there were likely to be an estimated 4,900 women and 2,400 men in Herefordshire who were victim-survivors of domestic abuse in 2019/20. As well as Police data, the needs assessment considered a wide range of other data sources in order to build a full picture of domestic abuse across Herefordshire.

1.3 Priorities

The priorities of the strategy period are:

- Prevention
- Provision
- Partnership
- Perpetrators

A thorough consultation and engagement process has been undertaken in order to gain feedback on these priorities including a public consultation via an online survey, stakeholder focus groups and focus groups with service users and people with lived experience of domestic abuse.

These priorities will inform commissioned services and the work of the Local Partnership Board.

1.4 Measuring Progress

A work programme will be developed in order to enable the monitoring and evaluation of progress against the outcomes detailed in the strategy. This will be further backed up by performance indicators in commissioned contracts and via an annual performance monitoring update for DLUHC.

The strategy will be reviewed in full during 2024.

2. Introduction

Domestic abuse has a huge impact on society and is one of the most pervasive of all social problems. It causes pain and suffering for those affected and their family, and has a significant cost to public services and the local community. It is often a hidden crime, with people experiencing domestic abuse reluctant to report their situation and friends, neighbours or family hesitant to get involved.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales indicates that an estimated 2.3 million adults aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse in 2019/20. More than one in ten of all offences recorded by the police are domestic abuse related.

People who have experienced, or are experiencing domestic abuse may be affected in a number of ways, including significant and lasting impact on physical and mental health, homelessness, loss of income or work and isolation from families and friends. Children can experience both short and long-term cognitive, behavioural and emotional effects as a result of witnessing domestic abuse.

The breadth of the impact on individuals and families results in needs arising across a wide-range of public services, from police and health care through to education, housing support and criminal justice. We recognise that a collaborative approach to developing and delivering services is fundamental to preventing and responding to domestic abuse in the most effective way.

Since the publication of our current strategy in 2019, the Government have given royal assent to the Domestic Abuse Act in April 2021. In Herefordshire, we have considered the new act requirements, the evidence from our needs assessment, existing strategy priorities and have outlined our future direction in this draft strategy.

3. Our Shared Vision

Domestic abuse is unacceptable to residents and our wider communities. All victim-survivors of domestic abuse, regardless of their situation, are able to have equal access to help when they need it, including access to safe accommodation and the wider specialist support services required.

The strategy, through its implementation will enable people and communities to;

- Recognise and reject all forms of domestic abuse
- Understand where to access help
- Seek, be offered and receive effective help and support as early as possible
- Understand and have the skills to establish healthy relationships

The overall aim is to reduce the harm caused by, and the number of incidents of, domestic abuse in Herefordshire.

4. Progress against priorities 2019 - 2021

Since the publication of our current strategy in 2019, a number of the actions have been progressed, although the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns has impacted on the delivery of some activities. Below is a summary of the key achievements.

4.1 Prevention

- Using data effectively - Enhanced data capture during COVID-19 pandemic. Creation of a domestic abuse hub for level 2 and 3 cases which is now embedded in practice.
- Collaboration to support culture change across the population - All Domestic Abuse Strategic Group partners are undertaking awareness raising and promotion. Safelives review of Domestic Abuse in Herefordshire has commenced and will provide a review of our existing approach and recommendations for improvements. The review will be completed in 2022.
- Universal services supporting early disclosure - West Mercia Women's Aid (WMWA) have created a community ambassador scheme. Community ambassador's work alongside communities to support them in identifying the key issues that affect people locally and offer the opportunity for local voices to influence and shape the response of local services.
- Supporting young people to recognise and understand harm of domestic abuse – The council and the Police and Crime Commissioner commission West Mercia Women's Aid to provide information, advice, tools and support to education professionals. Training for children and family workers within the council's Early Help team has been delivered. [Operation Encompass](#) ensures information about domestic abuse involving children is shared in a timely way with schools.

4.2 Provision

In addition to 9 units of refuge accommodation, funding has been secured for 7 units of dispersed accommodation with outreach support. During the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 and 2021, additional ways were established for victim-survivors to access support including covert means through various media.

Work as a partnership to respond to funding bids - Successful funding bids or additional funding from the council and partners was secured to deliver:

- Additional staff capacity to support 7 units of dispersed refuge accommodation

- [The Drive perpetrator programme](#) delivered through Cranstoun
- Increased 'chat' hours through the WMWA website
- Additional capacity around messaging and accessing support through the WMWA website and working with Rural Media to promote specific campaigns.
- Healthy relationships work through WMWA
- Safelives review of Domestic Abuse in Herefordshire
- Multiagency domestic violence training
- [Men and masculinity project](#) delivered through Cranstoun (and WMWA for the victim-survivor support element)

4.3 Partnership

Ensure strong leadership across organisations – The Local Partnership Board (formally the Domestic Abuse Strategic group) provides strong leadership, with wide ranging representation and commitment to the delivery of this strategy.

4.4 Perpetrators

Evidence based programmes are being delivered within the county to challenge and change perpetrator behaviour, these include:

- Drive Herefordshire and Worcestershire (for high risk perpetrators) mobilised in February 2021. Drive is an evidence-based and evaluated programme which has delivered encouraging results in other areas. More information about the Drive programme can be found [here](#).
- The Men and Masculinities programme provides a safe space for people who have engaged in abusive, harmful and damaging behaviour within their relationships. The programme explores what it means to display appropriate behaviour within relationships and highlights how conflict, aggression and anger can deeply impact the lives of others. More about this programme can be found [here](#).

WMWA have secured funding to deliver training to Magistrates through their family court IDVA's in order to support the aim of using the criminal justice system to full effect.

5. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

5.1 Overview

Building on previous government initiatives, including the violence against Women and Girls Strategy launched in January 2019, the government introduced the Domestic Abuse Bill to the House of Commons in March 2020. It was designed to promote awareness of domestic abuse; protect and support victim-survivors and their families; transform the justice process to prioritise victim-survivor safety and provide an effective response to perpetrators; and to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas, agencies and sectors.

On the 29th April 2021, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was enacted and new duties on came into force, with all local authorities required to:

1. Appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board that it will consult as it performs certain specified functions.
2. Assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support in their area for all victim-survivors or their children, including those who come from outside the area.
3. Develop and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their locality, having regard to the needs assessment.
4. Give effect to the strategy (through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions) including the provision of safe accommodation.
5. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy, reviewing it every three years.

5.2 What is Domestic Abuse?

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 creates a statutory cross government definition of domestic abuse, outlined below;

- *‘Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if*
 - a. *A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected* to each other, and*
 - b. *The behaviour is abusive.*
- *Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:*
 - a. *Physical or sexual abuse.*
 - b. *Violent or threatening behaviour*
 - c. *Controlling or coercive behaviour.*
 - d. *Economic abuse*
 - e. *Psychological, emotional, or other abuse.*

And it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

- *“Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to*
 - a. *Acquire, use, or maintain money or other property, or*
 - b. *Obtain goods or services.*
- *For the purposes of this Part A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).*

*The statutory guidance defines that two people are “personally connected” to each other if any of the following applies:

- a. they are, or have been, married to each other;
- b. they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
- c. they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

- d. they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- e. they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
- f. they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental
- g. relationship in relation to the same child
- h. they are relatives

This definition includes so called 'honour' based violence (HBV), female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and makes it clear that domestic abuse is not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

Herefordshire's response to HBV, FGM and forced marriage is co-ordinated under the domestic abuse agenda by the [Community Safety Partnership](#).

In the new definition, both the person who is carrying out the behaviour and the person to whom the behaviour is directed towards must be aged 16 or over and be personally connected. Abusive behaviour directed at a person under 16 would be dealt with as child abuse rather than domestic abuse.

The definition above lists the broad categories that capture a range of different abusive behaviours, including physical, emotional and economic.

The Act also recognises that domestic abuse can impact on a child who sees, hears or experiences the effects of the abuse and it treats these children as victim-survivors of domestic abuse in their own right where they are related to either the abuser or the abused.

[Statutory guidance](#) on the Act was finalised in October 2021, giving more detail about how the Act should be interpreted and used.

The Local Partnership Board welcome having a clear definition of domestic abuse, however the board feels that it is important to underline the power and control element of domestic abuse and will deliver local services on this basis.

5.3 Safe Accommodation and homelessness

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021, places a new statutory duty on the council to deliver support to victim-survivors of domestic abuse and their children residing in refuges and other safe accommodation. It also requires that the council assesses the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support in their area for all victim-survivors or their children, including those who require highly specialist support and those who come from outside the area.

The legislation indicates that the following are classed as safe accommodation:

- refuge accommodation;
- specialist safe accommodation;
- dispersed accommodation;
- sanctuary schemes; and
- move-on or second stage accommodation.

It is noteworthy that the Act specifically excludes the use of accommodation with shared facilities e.g. B&B accommodation, as this is not considered relevant safe accommodation.

The option for victim-survivors to stay in their own homes where it is safe and possible to do so should be explored. There is an existing sanctuary scheme in Herefordshire that supports this approach. A sanctuary scheme is a multi-agency victim/survivor centred initiative, which aims to enable households at risk of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes and reduce repeat victimisation through the provision of enhanced security measures (Sanctuary) and support¹.

The Act amends existing homelessness legislation (the Housing Act 1996) by extending priority need to all eligible victim-survivors who are homeless as a result of being a victim-survivor of domestic abuse. This change removes the requirement for victim-survivors of domestic abuse to demonstrate vulnerability in order to attain priority need and clarifies the remit of people affected by this change with the new statutory definition of domestic abuse. This requirement was already a feature of Herefordshire Council's allocations scheme, which has been updated to include the new definition of Domestic Abuse.

6. Domestic Abuse in Herefordshire (Needs Assessment)

A domestic abuse needs assessment was carried out in June 2021 to refresh the needs assessment completed in 2018. The information below comes from this needs assessment, the full report can be found in appendix 2.

In Herefordshire between April 2020 and March 2021, the police recorded 1,354 domestic abuse incidents and 2,168 domestic abuse offences, this is roughly 4 incidents and 6 offences per day. It is widely understood that domestic abuse is under reported, data from the Crime Survey of England and Wales indicates that there were likely to be an estimated 4,900 women and 2,400 men in Herefordshire who were victim-survivors of domestic abuse in 2019/20.

Police data provides just one insight into understanding domestic abuse in Herefordshire, so data has been analysed from other sources, including West Mercia Women's Aid, Primary Care and Social Services. Below is a brief overview of some of the key findings regarding domestic abuse in Herefordshire.

- An estimated 4,900 women and 2,400 men in Herefordshire experienced Domestic Abuse in 2019/20
- Being disabled or LGBTQ+ puts you at higher risk of Domestic Abuse
- West Mercia Police have recorded an increase in Domestic Abuse offences in Herefordshire each year since 2017 - there were 2168 offences recorded between 2020/21
- In approximately 60% of Domestic Abuse offences in Herefordshire the victim-survivor does not supporting police action
- 3 of the 4 domestic homicides in Herefordshire between 2017-2021 were matricide (a person who kills their mother)
- Between a quarter to a third of referrals to refuge were unsuccessful/denied, primarily due to lack of space. Over 50% of referrals came from out of area and the remaining 17-24% were successful referrals were for victim-survivors inside the area

¹ [15 -wha-sanctuary-scheme.pdf \(dahalliance.org.uk\)](#)

- 1% of MARAC cases were LGBT, 13% of MARAC cases were BAME, <1% of MARAC cases were people with a disability, 2% of MARAC cases were men
- 97% of victim-survivors supported by IDVA were women
90% of victim-survivors supported by IDVA were heterosexual/straight
- 143 victim-survivors were supported by Housing Solutions in 2020
- There has been a decrease in Adult Social Care referrals where Domestic Abuse is a factor since 2018. There were 118 referrals in 2020/21, accounting for 7% of referrals to Adult Social Care
- Most referrals to Children's Social Care, where Domestic Abuse is a factor per 1,000 population were from South West Hereford
- GPs were most likely to flag Domestic Abuse on a patient's record if they were aged 25-44

The information below gives further an insight into domestic abuse in Herefordshire:

6.1 Source - Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) and estimated prevalence (2019/20)

- An estimated 4,900 women and 2,400 men in Herefordshire experienced Domestic Abuse in 2019/20
- 4% of adults have experienced domestic abuse from a partner, and 1.9% of adults experience domestic abuse from family members
- Domestic abuse is most prevalent in 16-19 year olds and prevalence largely decreases through the age groups
- Domestic abuse is most prevalent in Mixed – White and Black Caribbean ethnic group
- Somebody with a disability is more likely to be a victim-survivor of domestic abuse than somebody who is not disabled
- Bisexuals are more likely to be the victim-survivors of domestic abuse than any other sexual orientation

6.2 Source - West Mercia Police (2017/18 to 2020/21)

- The number of domestic abuse offences recorded has increased year on year since 2017/18, with 1416 offences in 2017/18 to 2168 offences in 2020/21
- Around 60% of Domestic Abuse offences in Herefordshire result in the victim-survivor not supporting police action
- 71% of recorded victim-survivors were women
- 98% of recorded victim-survivors were “White North European” or “Unknown”
- 50% of suspects and victim-survivors were aged 25-45
- The youngest victim-survivor was 0 years old, the oldest was 96
- The youngest suspect was 6 years old and the oldest suspects were 96
- 66% of recorded victim-survivors were only seen by police on one occasion between 2017 and 2021, but one victim-survivor was seen 28 times during the same time period
- Most domestic abuse incidences and offences were recorded in Hereford City, particularly in Centre, Courtyard and South Wye areas. Other areas with high levels were Kingstone, John Kyrle area of Ross-on-Wye and the Gateway area of Leominster

- Four domestic homicides were recorded between 2017 and 2021. Three of these homicides were matricide (a person who kills their mother).

6.3 Source - West Mercia Women's Aid (Refuge) (2018/19 to 2020/21)

- Per 1,000 population, most referrals were from the Colwall, Cradley and Wellington Heath area, but referrals were received from across the county and not concentrated in the city or market towns
- Between a quarter to a third of referrals were unsuccessful/denied, over 50% came from out of area
- Lack of room has been the most common reason for victim-survivors to be denied access to refuge year on year
- 71% of referrals were for victim-survivors aged 25-34
- 16% of referrals were for BAME victim-survivors
- Nearly 100% of referrals were for women, 1 referral was for a victim-survivor who identified as transgender

6.4 Source - Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) (2018-2020)

- 71% of cases are referred by the police
- 1% of MARAC cases were LGBT
- 13% of MARAC cases were BAME
- <1% of MARAC cases were disabled
- 2% of MARAC cases were men
- 240 cases in 2018, 214 in 2019 and 233 in 2020
- 18% of cases are repeat cases

6.5 Source - Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA) (2018/19 to 2020/21)

- There has been a nearly 30% increase of victim-survivors being supported by IDVAs in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20
- 72% of victim-survivors supported by IDVAs were aged 19-44
- 97% of victim-survivors supported by IDVA were female
- 90% of victim-survivors supported by IDVA were heterosexual/straight

6.6 Source - Housing and Homelessness (2020)

- 143 domestic abuse victim-survivors were supported by Housing Solutions team in 2020
- 99% of victim-survivors supported by Housing Solutions were women, only two men were supported
- 66% of victim-survivors supported by Housing Solutions were in touch with other agencies

- Over 60% of victim-survivors supported had children or were pregnant
- 66% of victim-survivors were aged 25-44

6.7 Source - Adult Social Care (2018/19 to 2020/21)

- The number of referrals where Domestic Abuse is a recorded factor and the source of risk is a family member or partner has decreased each year between 2018/19 to 2020/21
- Referrals where domestic abuse is a factor and the source of risk is a family member of partner, makes up about 7% of all referrals received by Adult Social Care
- Most referrals were for individuals aged 80-89
- Most referrals cite the source of risk as a partner, but this is not the case for those aged 80+ where it is family members who are recorded as the source of risk
- 90% of referrals were for victim-survivors who were white
- 75% of referrals were for women

6.8 Source - Children's Social Care (2018/19 to 2020/21)

- 12% of referrals were for BAME children
- Per 1,000 population, the majority of referrals were from the South West Hereford MSOA
- Nearly 50% of all referrals came from the police

6.9 General Practice (2017/18 to 2020/21)

- 25-44 year olds are most frequently recorded with a domestic abuse code by their GPs
- 89% of recorded domestic abuse codes were for female patients

The overall picture shows that victim-survivors who are using these services are primarily aged 25-44, predominately female, and where data is available, largely straight/heterosexual and nondisabled. It is worth noting that data on sexuality and disability are not routinely recorded by most of these sources, so knowledge is limited regarding the sexuality and disability of survivors. In addition, recording of ethnicity is inconsistent, such as only recording victim-survivors as "White" or "White Northern European" and not differentiating between different White ethnic groups, which is especially important in Herefordshire as the largest minority ethnic group in Herefordshire is "White: Other". Where there is data on ethnicity, it appears that more than 10% of victim-survivors are recorded as BAME, which is higher than the county BAME population average which the 2011 census recorded as 6.4% .

This suggest that there are groups of people who are not accessing services. Data indicates that this is also the case for people under the age of 25, (despite the CSEW suggesting domestic abuse is most prevalent in 16-19 year olds).over 45s (despite Herefordshire having an aged population compared to national averages); genders other than women; people with a disability and people from the LGBTQ+ community.

The needs assessment also highlighted that access to refuge is frequently declined due to lack of space and that victim-survivors rarely support police action when an offence has occurred. The domestic homicides data also emphasises the danger of familial domestic abuse. This is also illustrated as a specific issue for over 80's in the Adult Social Care data.

There have been concerns nationally that COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns since March 2020, will have led to an increase in domestic abuse, however, based on the available data the only noticeable increase in demand in Herefordshire seems to be for IDVAS, which may suggest that whilst there has not been an increase in domestic abuse generally, we have seen more victim-survivors who are assessed as being at high risk.

7. Strategic priorities for 2021 - 2024

The priorities for the strategy are:

- Priority 1 – Prevention
- Priority 2 – Provision
- Priority 3 – Partnerships
- Priority 4 – Perpetrators

These priorities remain unchanged from the 2019 strategy with minor changes to the objectives in order to reflect the new act requirements. The vision, priorities and objectives were developed through ongoing work with, and gaining the views of professionals, stakeholders and groups from across Herefordshire, including people with lived experience of domestic abuse.

The outcomes for each priority listed below will be monitored by the Local Partnership Board via their annual work plan.

7.1 Priority 1 – Prevention

The aim is that individuals and communities understand domestic abuse and the harm it causes and have the skills to build a culture that supports healthy relationships. Preventing domestic abuse is key to delivery of our vision.

Talk Community is the council's strategic approach to prevention, enabling people to get the assistance they need and managing demand for more specialist services. It conveys an aspiration and culture which prioritises prevention, innovates and intervenes at the earliest possible point to make independence and wellbeing inevitable. There are five strategic aims of Talk Community, shown below:

- Putting wellbeing, social value and strengths based approaches in all practice, policy and decision making.
- Ensuring that prevention and early intervention are prioritised.
- Targeting resources based on need and place, maximising impact and value for money.
- Challenging and developing our culture and practice, and
- Working in partnership with a focus on system integration at all levels.

Talk Community offers an approach that is fundamental to the council's future delivery and prevention agenda. It compliments prevention activities taking place for different groups within communities, including children and young people where early help activity is already taking place. The following objectives are set within this strategic approach.

Objectives: Partner agencies will:

- Collect and use data effectively to create a shared understanding of domestic abuse in Herefordshire.
- Work collaboratively across organisations and through Talk Community to support culture change in the population, developing a community that recognises and rejects all forms of domestic abuse.
- Create an environment throughout universal services and Talk Community that supports early disclosure of domestic abuse by those affected and provides a high quality and consistent initial response.
- Increase awareness amongst those who work with people with additional vulnerabilities and certain protected characteristics (see Appendix 1) to ensure domestic abuse is identified through an effective initial response.
- Support young people, children and families to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and understand the harm it causes as well as the positive impact of disclosing abuse.
- Ensure information, advice and support in relation to the above is accessible and appropriate for victim-survivors with certain protected characteristics and other vulnerabilities that there is adequate support in place.

Outcomes for Priority 1:

- Increased recognition by the population of all forms of domestic abuse and the harm it causes to children with particular reference to those with certain protected characteristics and other vulnerabilities.
- Increased understanding by professionals of the signs, symptoms and appropriate response to domestic abuse
- Decrease in the impact of domestic abuse on children, through reduction in the number of children affected, improved early identification and reduction in repeat incidents affecting children.

7.2 Priority 2 - Provision

The aim is that when domestic abuse is disclosed, identified or reported, those affected can access timely and effective information, safe accommodation, advice and support. This support should meet the needs of the affected individuals in a way which ensures equality for victim-survivors across our communities including any children, now recognised as victim-survivors in their own right.

Objectives: Partner agencies will:

- Ensure that those experiencing domestic abuse can easily and safely contact, or be referred, and access specialist domestic abuse services and safe accommodation,

including those with certain protected characteristics or vulnerability such as multiple complex needs, and children who are identified as victim-survivors in their own right.

- Ensure that children exposed to domestic abuse are supported in the best possible way.
- Ensure that housing advice, emergency and other appropriate housing solutions are available to those experiencing domestic abuse, and where appropriate support those affected by domestic abuse and their children to remain in their homes safely.

Outcomes for Priority 2:

- Those affected by domestic abuse and their families are supported to re-build their lives, and to maintain an enhanced view of positive relationships both within their families and their future.
- Those affected by domestic abuse and their families are safe from harm.
- Children who are victim-survivors of domestic abuse are safe from harm and supported as victim-survivors in their own right

7.3 Priority 3 - Partnerships

Domestic abuse has impact across multiple agencies who play a key role. These include primary and secondary health care, police, early years, children's social services, adult social care, schools, courts and probation. There is no single place that a person might disclose domestic abuse and no single agency that can provide a full response. Acknowledging that domestic abuse can be the cause of or underlying issue in relation to multiple health and social problems including substance use and mental health. It is also recognised that abuse towards people and abuse towards animals are often interlinked. Close partnership working is essential, with a shared vision, strong leadership and clear pathways. The aim is to work together across organisations and geographical areas in an efficient and effective way to prevent, and protect those experiencing, domestic abuse.

Objectives: Partner agencies will:

- Ensure there is strong leadership across all organisations on domestic abuse.
- Work collaboratively across organisations to create clear pathways for supporting those experiencing domestic abuse.
- Ensure data is collected and collated to provide a clear understanding of those effected by domestic abuse across Herefordshire. The data will support the on-going needs assessment and the development of future service provision to accurately reflect Herefordshire residents, including identifying those affected with certain protected characteristics.
- Ensure that front line staff (for example, staff who work in primary care, emergency department, children's centres, schools, children's social care, adult social care, fire service);
 - i) have a good understanding of domestic abuse;
 - ii) are professionally curious in their investigation of underlying causes of a person's current circumstances

- iii) have awareness and understanding of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and how the measures impact on their roles and responsibilities
- iv) see it as their role and responsibility to reduce the harm of domestic abuse; and
- v) understand the tools/resources available to them to do so.

Outcomes for Priority 3:

- Improved shared understanding of the whole system response to domestic abuse.
- Reduction in cross organisation barriers to an effective response to domestic abuse.
- Established pathways for joint working and planning of health and social interventions.

7.4 Priority 4 – Perpetrators

There are many tools available to the police and court system to prevent and deter perpetrators from domestic abuse. The aim is that the tools available are used effectively and consistently and that those experiencing domestic abuse see the police and criminal and civil legal systems as working to protect them and their children.

Objectives: Partner agencies will:

- Support those experiencing domestic abuse to use the various tools available to prevent further offending (e.g. Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, Clare’s Law), Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Domestic Violence Protection Orders).
- Use the criminal justice system to its full effect to deter offending and bring perpetrators to justice.
- Make available effective, evidence-based programmes to help change perpetrator behaviour, where perpetrators have the capacity to change.

Outcomes for Priority 4:

- Reduction in re-offending by perpetrators
- Victim-survivors of domestic abuse are aware of the range of prevention tools available and supported to access them.

8. Delivering the Domestic Abuse Act requirements and strategy implementation

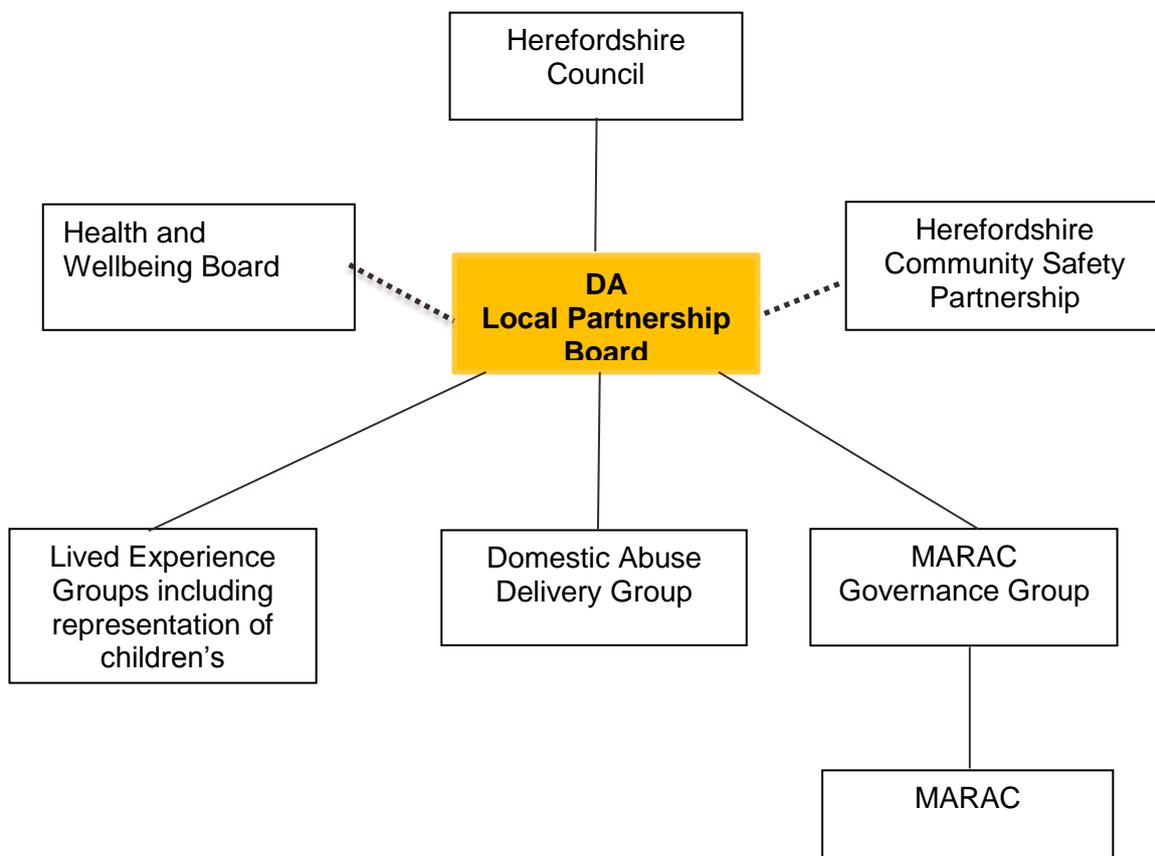
8.1 Leadership and delivery

The existing Domestic Abuse Strategic and Delivery Group, acting as the Board under the Community Safety Partnership structure has been amended to provide a higher level executive group which now forms the Local Partnership Board. The Board will deliver a collaborative approach to domestic abuse, oversee and monitor progress of the needs assessment, the strategy and its implementation and report back to Government. It is responsible for providing advice to the council about the functions required under section 57 of the Act. In line with the draft statutory guidance, the Local Partnership Board includes the following members:

- Council representative
- Victim-survivors representative
- Children’s representative
- Voluntary sector representative linked to supporting victims-survivors
- Health representative
- Policing representative
- Housing representative
- Representative for those people with ‘protected characteristics’ identified within the statutory guidance

The Board can add to this membership where it is deemed relevant for the furtherance of the aims set out in the Act. The Board will agree a work plan to implement the strategy, working alongside the operational delivery group. The work plan will take account of existing commissioned services and focus on actions, opportunities and resources available within each partner organisation and wider funding opportunities as well as monitoring the outcomes of this strategy. Commissioned services are monitored through quarterly meetings lead by the Community Commissioning Team at Herefordshire Council.

The Governance Structure for the Local Partnership Board is as follows:



8.2 Consultation and engagement

A stakeholder consultation was undertaken via an online survey in December 2021. A stakeholder focus group was convened in March 2022 to follow this up. The following feedback was received from a range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations; please also see corresponding responses:

- Need to embed quality standards. This has already started through the commissioning and improved partnership working e.g. co-location with MASH. This will be further developed by the Local Partnership Board via their work plan.
- How can we help people to understand what domestic abuse is e.g. much more than physical violence? This will be achieved through training and education. WMWA and WMRSASC deliver training to a wide range of partners and in local schools to help professionals and young people to develop an understanding of positive relationships and behaviours that are abusive.
- Ensure that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is addressed in the strategy. The impact of the pandemic has been highlighted in the strategy.
- How can the VCS add value to existing commissioned services? By increasing awareness of domestic abuse within their organisations and customer, by attending training events, by identifying gaps in service provision and by sign posting to services.
- How can we identify gaps in service provision? The domestic abuse needs assessment will be updated annually. Feedback from service users, people with lived experience and wider VCS / statutory service providers will be used to shape future service provision.
- The definition of domestic abuse is welcomed, but it does not strongly underline the power and control element of domestic abuse. This has been acknowledged in the strategy.

West Mercia Women's Aid were commissioned to undertake detailed engagement work with service users and people with lived experience of Domestic Abuse in March and April 2022. This included survey work and focus group sessions and included feedback on how best to continue engagement activity throughout the lifetime of the strategy.

The main themes arising from this engagement process were:

- There should be more education around domestic abuse available to young people.
- Need to improve access to services, remove barriers to coming forward to sharing experience of domestic abuse,
- A need for greater understanding of the signs, symptoms of, and response to, domestic abuse amongst professionals.
- Partnership working is fundamental to supporting people with lived experience of domestic abuse.
- More tools are needed for the Police and Court systems to deter perpetrators of domestic abuse.

These key themes are picked up in the strategy under the priorities of prevention, provision, partnership and perpetrators.

The information gathered through this process has been used to update the strategy and will be used to inform the future commissioning activity in line with the guidance provided alongside the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

8.3 Commissioned Services

8.3.1 Council funded services

The council commissions a domestic abuse support service which delivers the following outcomes based services to support victim-survivors, and is in place until 2024. This represents an investment of £1 million over a period of five years. The service includes;

- Online and telephone helpline
- Safe accommodation through housing support or refuge accommodation with associated support work in relation to information, advice and signposting
- Outreach support
- Group Work
- Information and advice
- Raising awareness
- Support for children
- Intelligence sharing
- Strategic influence

The support work offered is individualised, outcome focussed and uses a strengths based approach with victim-survivors in line with the councils Talk Community approach.

Previous Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHCLG - now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities DLUHC) funding enabled short term investment in staffing capacity with the existing countywide service provider to support seven separate properties of refuge dispersed accommodation as well as resource supporting children and young people. The learning from this pilot work has influenced commissioning activity, specifically, the additional funding from MHCLG in 2021/22 which has been used to sustain and enhance the safe accommodation and associated support offer to nine dispersed accommodation units.

8.3.2 Other local services

There are a number of other services supporting victim-survivors of domestic abuse in operation in Herefordshire funded from a range of sources such as the Police and Crime Commissioner and central government. These include;

- Independent Domestic Violence Advisors
- West Mercia Women's Aid Children and Young person's worker
- Building Better relationships – behaviour change programme
- Inspiring Families – support for families as victim-survivors and behaviour change for perpetrators
- Sexual Assault Referral Centre
- West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre
- The Drive Programme – behaviour change programme for perpetrators

- Helping hands and Crush programmes – awareness and understanding in primary and secondary aged children
- Herefordshire Substance Use Recovery Service
- Sexual Health services – Solutions for Health
- Public Health nursing (Health Visitors and School nurses)
- Herefordshire Home Point – Herefordshire choice based letting scheme for social housing.
- Talk Community initiatives including the free holiday activities programme.

Service planning and commissioning activity is regularly considered collectively by key stakeholders and this will continue through the new Local Partnership Board and the existing partnership structure.

8.3.3 Additional service provision during 2021/22

With the funding available from central government for 2021/22, the council commissioned a range of new, but complimentary, services which focused on increasing resources within the county to deliver the following:

- Connecting West Mercia Women’s Aid with universal services, organisations, talk community hubs, community groups and individuals with expertise in working with and for people with certain protected characteristics.
- Training and awareness raising to upskill professionals across these services/organisations to recognise and respond to domestic abuse, raise awareness, create culture change and communicate services available.
- Increased communication and media activity.
- Continuation and expansion of a short term government funded project, developed during the Covid19 response, which will deliver the staffing support to:
 - 9 houses in Herefordshire used as dispersed safe accommodation for victim-survivors fleeing domestic abuse (in addition to the main refuge), the majority of which permit pets.
 - Associated advice, advocacy and support for adults and children
- An experienced domestic abuse professional co-located virtually within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Domestic Abuse Hub for the purposes of developing and sharing intelligence and triage of cases. The role will also focus on enhancing the data captured around certain protected characteristics, which will in turn support the needs assessment.
- Specialist worker to focus on those people with multiple complex needs and facilitating access to counselling support.
- Enhanced data capture particularly around protected characteristics.

The general themes of support provided by the enhanced workforce through the new services include;

- a. Advocacy support
- b. Domestic abuse prevention advice

- c. Specialist support for victim-survivors with relevant protected characteristics and/or complex needs
- d. Children's support
- e. Housing related support
- f. Counselling and therapy

The needs assessment confirms our approach by demonstrating that victim-survivors of some protected characteristics are currently seldom accessing services and that there is constant and often unmet demand for safe accommodation.

8.3.4 Future commissioning

DLUHC have confirmed another annual grant for the 2022/23 financial year, to support local authorities to deliver the new duties set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This funding will be used to continue some of the successful work started during 2021/22 as well as commissioning new activities based on the needs assessment, feedback from our engagement process with service users and people with lived experience and examples of best practice. The following areas of focus are being considered:

- Community champions – linked to Talk Community Hubs.
- Co-locating services to ensure shared specialist knowledge.
- Workforce development – including social care specifically in relation to domestic abuse in relation to people with disabilities and older people.
- Legal and financial advice – drawing on Talk community programmes around financial advice and developing opportunities to access legal advice and information within hubs.
- Perpetrator programmes

The annual nature of the funding settlement, can make it difficult to retain staff and sustain services. It is not yet known if more funding will be granted for 2023/24.

9. Challenges in addressing Domestic Abuse

All people affected by domestic abuse are vulnerable in some way. However, there are certain groups of people who are harder to reach due to certain protected characteristics, vulnerabilities or cultural challenges:

9.1 Men

There are fewer known cases of men reporting domestic abuse than women. Just 2% of high risk cases discussed by MARAC were male, lower than the expected proportion of between 4-10%. There are very few men accessing the local domestic abuse support service provided by West Mercia Women's Aid.

9.2 Older People

Older people are less likely to make disclosures of domestic abuse, further exacerbated by health conditions such as dementia or physical disability. People in these circumstances are more likely

to be isolated and reliant upon their partner or family for their care, while the demands upon their carer can cause additional pressures and a shift in the dynamic of their relationship.

9.3 People with a disability

Similarly, people with physical or mental health illness or learning disabilities can be additionally vulnerable to domestic abuse due to isolation or a reliance upon their family or partner as their carer.

9.4 LGBTQ+ Community

People from the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender or Queer (LGBTQ+) community are less likely to report domestic abuse. Local data provided by West Mercia Women's Aid shows low numbers of people in Lesbian, Gay or Bi-sexual relationships accessing the service and similarly lower than expected numbers of LGBTQ+ cases are considered in MARAC (less than 1% of all high risk cases) than would be expected (more than 5%). The West Mercia and Warwickshire Police Draft Domestic Abuse Threat Assessment 2017 reports for couples in a same sex relationship, females accounted for 7% of reported offences and males for 8%. This would indicate that proportionately, those in same sex relationships are not accessing domestic abuse support services.

9.5 Ethnic Minorities

People from ethnic minority groups may be reluctant to report abuse due to fear of isolation or repercussions, or due to a lack of understanding about domestic abuse, UK law and the support available. Key communities to consider in Herefordshire include the Eastern European and Traveller populations. People affected by domestic abuse in both of these communities might face additional challenges which make it harder to identify abuse for both the person affected and agencies, and more difficult to flee the abusive relationship. Reasons for this may include; lack of trust in police and other professionals, being ostracised from their own community for example; if women leave a marriage, traditional established roles for men and women and lack of culturally-appropriate refuge accommodation

9.6 Rural Communities

People living in rural communities may face additional challenges to accessing services, or have concerns about their information being shared with others in their community should they make a disclosure. In 2019, The National Rural Crime Network, published the results of an 18 month intensive research project on domestic abuse in rural areas, '[Captive and Controlled](#)'. The report shows a picture of domestic abuse in rural Britain with hidden victims who feel isolated, unsupported and unprotected.

The report finds:

- Abuse lasts, on average, 25 per cent longer in the most rural areas.
- Traditional, patriarchal communities control and subjugate women.
- The policing response is largely inadequate.
- Support services are scarce – less available, less visible and less effective.

- The more rural the setting, the higher the risk of harm.
- Retreating rural resources make help and escape harder.
- Rurality and isolation are deliberately used as weapons by abusers.
- The short-term, often hand-to-mouth funding model has created competing and fragmented service provision.
- Close-knit rural communities facilitate abuse.
- An endemic data bias against rural communities leads to serious gaps in response and support (victims in rural areas are less likely to report and this in turn leads to a that the problem is not as serious as it actually is, which in turn leads to less resources being devoted to it).

Herefordshire is a rural county, which brings additional barriers for those experiencing domestic abuse, including recognising abuse, asking for help, accessing support and fleeing the abusive relationship.² Domestic abuse in rural communities is no less prevalent but can be less visible. Women living in rural areas have been found to particularly value the importance of health practitioners, especially GPs, in providing confidential and safe services for women compared to women living in urban areas. Women have been found to express concern about the confidential nature of services they received in their community, not echoed by women living in urban areas.³

Our enhanced service commissioned in 2021 and delivered through WMWA has prioritised and provided support to those victim-survivors with protected characteristics or vulnerabilities such as complex needs, both as victim-survivors and through wider community engagement work. People from all backgrounds must be enabled and encouraged to access services, and the system must be prepared to respond to their individual needs. WMWA are working with Rural Media to deliver targeted campaigns. Links to Talk Community are being explored through this work in order to better understand how this network could be used to sign post and enhance the work of commissioned domestic abuse services.

10. Preventing Domestic Abuse

Primary prevention of domestic abuse is key. This means preventing abuse before it happens. There are several broad categories of interventions that work at a primary prevention level. These include⁴:

- Early childhood and family-based approaches: not only, as described above, does witnessing abuse have a direct impact on child development, but it is in early childhood that children learn a range of skills and attitudes. Skills such as problem-solving, emotional management, and social skills, alongside attitudes to gender roles, relationships and acceptability of aggression and violence, form the basis of future relationships. Children learn much of this from the behaviour of people around them. Positive parenting

² SafeLives Herefordshire MARAC review, 2018

³ McCarry M and Williamson E. Violence against women in rural and urban areas. https://www.thewi.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/49874/vawruralandurbanareas.pdf

⁴ World Health Organization. Primary prevention of intimate-partner violence and sexual violence: Background paper for WHO expert meeting May 2–3, 2007 https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/publications/violence/IPV-SV.pdf

and safe and supportive home environments are therefore crucial to pro-social behaviour and healthy relationships.

- Public Health approach: provides a useful framework for prevention of domestic abuse through primary prevention programmes and policy interventions. This approach is aimed at entire populations and as such can address underlying causes of domestic abuse to prevent them from occurring or re-occurring. This approach is dependent on engagement and action from multiple organisations and agencies simultaneously for its success, acknowledging that there are multiple causes of health and social problems. Multiple agencies working in partnership is a key component of addressing both the underlying causes of domestic abuse and preventing the recurrence of incidents. Primary prevention should be targeted at both community and individual levels, addressing gender norms and healthy relationships and empowering individuals and communities in education, workplace and healthcare settings.
- School-based approaches: school based programmes to prevent abuse should be part of broader community based prevention strategies. Evidence suggests that most effective programmes are those that aim to change attitudes and norms, rather than provide information, and should address both boys and girls.
- Interventions to reduce alcohol and substance misuse: alcohol and drug use are typically a situational factor that contribute to the severity of abuse, or a coping mechanism for ongoing abuse, rather than being the primary cause. Alcohol harm reduction strategies, although not addressing the underlying cause, can still lead to improvements in preventing abuse.
- Public information and awareness campaigns: such campaigns are a common approach to preventing domestic abuse, to try to break the silence and influence attitudes and social norms. Communications strategies based on a social marketing framework are more likely to be effective in changing individuals' knowledge, attitudes, and social norms.
- Community-based approaches: such approaches include interventions targeted at subgroups of the population (such as group education for people at risk) and comprehensive community-wide mobilisation [interventions like Herefordshire Councils Talk Community programme](#). Comprehensive programmes are designed to effect social change by creating an enabling environment for changing individual attitudes and behaviour. This approach requires multiple components, often including participatory education or training, public awareness campaigns, and social marketing techniques. These approaches can be particularly challenging as they rely on long-term, participatory engagement with high-quality facilitation and are most effective where there is community ownership.
- Structural and policy approaches: working towards strengthening gender equality can have fundamental impact on domestic abuse whilst improving criminal justice system responses is a key part of a comprehensive approach.

This overview, based on international research, outlines the range of activities required across the system to effectively prevent domestic abuse and the importance of the wider work of organisations, such as the council. This strategy and the identified priorities include primary prevention strategies, alongside early identification and harm-reduction after domestic abuse incidents have taken place.

11. Representing victim-survivors

As part of previous engagement work, views were sought from those who have experienced, or continue to experience domestic abuse in order to provide valuable insight into their journey. We also sought the views of parents with young children and professionals working closely with those who have experienced domestic abuse.

The key themes that have emerged from our conversations include:

- Recognition of abuse: People understand that domestic abuse is not just violence, however people affected by domestic abuse found it difficult to identify whether the behaviours they were experiencing or witnessing constituted abuse or were just typical relationship issues.
“When should alarm bells ring and who do you talk to, to check it out?”
- Fear of losing children: There was a deep fear of children’s social services or intervention into family matters. This was driven by the concern that children would be taken away or custody issues. Perpetrators often use children as leverage to exert power and control and persuade someone to stay in the abusive relationship.
- Crisis point: The majority of those affected waited until things reached crisis point and the police or social services became involved before they sought help.
- Cycle of domestic abuse: Many (but not all) of those affected by domestic abuse reported coming from abusive families, and had experienced multiple abusive relationships.
- Feeling that no-one is on their side: Those affected reported that as a parent, once you have been identified as a victim-survivor, you are continually seen as the ‘bad guy’ by the authorities who are checking up on your parenting skills; by the police who don’t believe you unless there’s hard evidence (and perpetrators are usually very good persuaders); by their families who think you should keep the family together; and by the criminal justice system which fails victim-survivors, with perpetrators who receive a conviction getting more lenient sentences for physically assaulting a member of their family than they would receive if they had attacked a stranger.
- Housing concerns: Property rights and tenancies are used as another manipulation tool.
- Impact on children: The impact of domestic abuse on children, whilst the parent affected by domestic abuse was with them, was not recognised – with the parent feeling they could protect the child(ren) from harm. People affected by domestic abuse reported concern about the impact on their children who remained living with their abuser.

- Organisations could work better together: reports of organisations continuing to work in a fragmented way, leading to confusion and conflicting information.

The Local Partnership Board is committed to enabling the victim-survivors voices to be heard and represented. Therefore as well as representation at the Board, we are also proposing to develop a separate group to enable people with lived experience to engage with the ongoing review of this strategy and the development of service provision.

12. Key policies and partners

12.1 Stakeholders

There are a wide range of partners instrumental to the delivery of this strategy across Herefordshire as follows;

- Herefordshire Council
- West Mercia Police
- Wye Valley Trust
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust
- NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Taurus Healthcare GP Federation
- West Mercia Women's Aid
- West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre
- National Probation Service
- West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company
- West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
- West Mercia Youth Justice Service
- Herefordshire Substance Use Recovery Service

12.2 Out of county support

Victim-survivors from out of county areas will receive the equivalent support to those from within the county. If the victim-survivor has been working with their current Local Authority, the support package will transfer over with them so they will be able to access the equivalent services in Herefordshire. This means that support will continue and the victim-survivor will still be in receipt of support from services they were receiving previously such as MARAC. Equally, the council can refer victim-survivors to other Local Authorities.

The safe accommodation available within the county is part of the national network for refuge accommodation. The mix between those accessing the accommodation support from within the county to those outside the county fluctuates continuously and is impacted by duration of stay.

Discussions are taking place with colleagues from Worcestershire regarding joint working and wider representation and engagement which are expected to develop further over the strategy period.

12.3 Wider policy and legislation

There are a large number of local and national policies that impact on the delivery of the strategy. Whilst the list below is not exhaustive it provides some of the key policies and legislation relevant to domestic abuse.

- Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG) 2016-2020
- The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime 2021
- Housing Act 1985
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Care Act 2014
- Children's Act 2004
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Policing and Crime Act 2017
- Local Government Act 2000
- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Herefordshire County Plan
- West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner Safer West Mercia Plan
- Herefordshire Adults Safeguarding Policy
- Herefordshire Children and Young Peoples Policy
- Herefordshire Looked after children commissioning and sufficiency strategy

13. Measuring progress

There are two main ways in which we will measure progress against this strategy:

13.1 Priority Outcomes and Contract Performance Measures

The strategy includes details of the outcomes that we are seeking to achieve under each of the four priorities listed, these are highlighted in section 7 and below.

Outcomes for Priority 1:

- Increased recognition by the population of all forms of domestic abuse and the harm it causes to children with particular reference to those with certain protected characteristics and other vulnerabilities.
- Increased understanding by professionals of the signs, symptoms and appropriate response to domestic abuse
- Decrease in the impact of domestic abuse on children, through reduction in the number of children affected, improved early identification and reduction in repeat incidents affecting children.

Outcomes for Priority 2:

- Those affected by domestic abuse and their families are supported to re-build their lives, and to maintain an enhanced view of positive relationships both within their families and their future.
- Those affected by domestic abuse and their families are safe from harm.
- Children who are victim-survivors of domestic abuse are safe from harm and supported as victim-survivors in their own right

Outcomes for Priority 3:

- Improved shared understanding of the whole system response to domestic abuse.
- Reduction in cross organisation barriers to an effective response to domestic abuse.
- Established pathways for joint working and planning of health and social interventions.

Outcomes for Priority 4:

- Reduction in re-offending by perpetrators
- Victim-survivors of domestic abuse are aware of the range of prevention tools available and supported to access them.

These outcomes will be incorporated into the Local Partnership Boards work plan. Some of the outcomes are broad and will be backed up by performance indicators in commissioned contracts.

Contract monitoring is a key function of the community commissioning team and each contract is issued with a clear set of performance measures. Contract monitoring is undertaken quarterly. Data collected through this process will feed into the work plan held by the Local Partnership Board.

13.2 Government Performance Monitoring

The government have issued all local authorities with a performance monitoring form to monitor the implementation of the Statutory Duties as stated in the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) concerning the provision of support within safe accommodation by Local Authorities to victims of domestic abuse and their children. This covers the following areas in detail:

- Availability of Commissioned Safe Supported Accommodation
- Specialist Services available in Commissioned Safe Supported Accommodation
- Support Types Commissioned in Safe Supported Accommodation
- Specialist Characteristics Supported in Safe Supported Accommodation
- Number of instances a household was unable to be supported in the local authority area, by reason
- Number of instances of victims/survivors who moved on following stay in Safe Accommodation
- Quality of Support
- Strategy

- Finance

The form will be completed annually by the community commissioning team and submitted to the Local Partnership Board as well as DLUHC.

Appendix 1 - Domestic Abuse Act summary

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 29th April 2021. The Act delivers a number of significant changes to improve the protection of victims within the community and the criminal justice system. It has been designed to promote awareness of domestic abuse and drive consistency and better performance in response to domestic abuse across all local areas, agencies and sectors.

The statutory guidance is currently in draft form and this draft strategy will be updated according once the final guidance is published.

Summary of the Act:

Supporting survivors:

- Create a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, coercive, or controlling, and economic abuse. As part of this definition, children will be explicitly recognised as survivors if they see, hear, or otherwise experience the effects of abuse;
- Create a new offence of no-fatal strangulation;
- Extend the controlling or coercive behaviour offence to cover post separation abuse;
- Extend the ‘revenge porn’ offence to cover threat to disclose intimate images with the intention to cause distress;
- Clarify the law to further deter claims of “rough sex gone wrong” in cases involving death or serious injury;
- Create a statutory presumption that survivors of domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal, civil and family courts (for example, to enable them to give evidence via a video link)
- Establish in law the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, to stand up for survivors, raise public awareness, monitor the response of authorities, the justice system and other statutory agencies and hold them to account in tackling domestic abuse
- Place a duty on local authorities in England to provide support to survivors of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation;
- Provide that all eligible homeless survivors of domestic abuse automatically have ‘priority need’ for homelessness assistance;
- Place the guidance supporting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (“Clare’s law”) on a statutory footing;

- Ensure that when local authorities rehouse survivors of domestic abuse, they do not lose a secure lifetime or assured tenancy;
- Stop vexatious family proceedings that can further traumatise survivors by clarifying the circumstances in which a court may make a barring order under section 91(14) of the Children Act 1989;
- Prohibit GPs and other health professionals from charging a survivor of domestic abuse for a letter to support an application for legal aid

Strengthened measures to tackle perpetrators

- Prohibit perpetrators of abuse from cross-examining their survivors in person in family and civil courts in England and Wales;
- Bring the case of R vs Brown into legislation, invalidating any courtroom defence of consent where a survivor suffers serious harm or is killed;
- Enable domestic abuse offenders to be subject to polygraph testing as a condition of their licence following their release from custody;
- Extend the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the criminal courts in England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland to further violent and sexual offences;
- Provide for a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order, which will prevent perpetrators from contacting their survivors, as well as force them to take positive steps to change their behaviour, e.g., seeking mental health support;
- Extend the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the criminal courts in England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland to further violent and sexual offences;
- Introduce a statutory duty on the Secretary of State to publish a domestic abuse perpetrator strategy (to be published as part of a holistic domestic abuse strategy)

Protected characteristics and other vulnerabilities requiring additional support:

- Black Asian and Minority Ethnic [Including Gypsy Roma and Traveller, with consideration to the Women and Equalities Committee report]
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and / or Transgender
- Disabled – including but not limited to, deaf or hard of hearing, visually impaired, Autistic, wheelchair users and those with learning difficulties
- Male
- Young (aged 16-18 – including care leavers) and older victims (over 65)
- People with an offending history
- Those presenting with complex needs including those with mental health and/or substance misuse needs
- Those facing multiple forms of abuse within the family such as honour based violence and forced marriage
- Religious and/or spiritual, particularly if facing barriers as a result
- Having insecure immigration status

- From isolated and/or marginalised communities, including where there is limited English proficiency.
- Survivors who have no choice but to move away from their local areas, communities, and friends to escape their perpetrator to stay safe and receive the support they need.
- Children of survivors (including adolescent male children) within safe accommodation.
- Survivors with children, including large families and those with older adolescence boys (12+)
- Pregnant survivors

Appendix 2 - Domestic Abuse Needs assessment



DA Needs
Assessment v1.0 FINA