

# DOMESTIC ABUSE IN HEREFORDSHIRE 2024

Final Version

April 2025

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# Introduction

This report presents a summary of the findings of a needs assessment completed by Herefordshire Council using data from a range of sources.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced the requirement for all Local Authority areas to produce a domestic abuse needs assessment and states that the document is refreshed annually. The legislation also requires that Local Authorities have a Domestic Abuse strategy in place. Combined with ongoing engagement with, and feedback from, people with lived experience of domestic abuse in Herefordshire, these documents bring together data to inform decision making, service planning and strategy development.

While prompted by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requirements, this needs assessment is not restricted to safe accommodation support. We sought to build a comprehensive picture of domestic abuse in Herefordshire including need, demand for services, service provision, and feedback from survivors and professionals.

The prevention of domestic abuse and the protection of all victims lies at the heart of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The measures within the Act seek to:

- Promote awareness by introducing a statutory definition of domestic abuse and recognising children as victims in their own right.
- Protect and support victims by establishing in law the office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner, introducing new domestic abuse protection notices and domestic abuse protection orders and placing a new duty of local authorities to provide support to victims in refuges and other forms of safe accommodation.
- Hold perpetrators to account by extending the definition of some existing offences and creating a new offence of non-fatal strangulation.
- Transform the justice response by helping victims to give their best evidence in the criminal court through the use of video evidence, screen etc and ensuring that victims of abuse do not suffer further trauma in family court proceedings by being cross-examined by the perpetrator.
- Improve performance – driving consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse.

Promoting Safety - Herefordshire's strategy for addressing domestic abuse 2021-24 was published in May 2022. The strategy is supported by an action plan that is driven forward by Herefordshire's Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board, a multi-agency board established to ensure that a joined-up approach is taken to tackling domestic abuse. A new strategy will be developed using the data from this needs assessment

This report refers to those who have experienced domestic abuse (DA) as "victims" as this is a widely understood term and is used in many of data sources. It is recognised that this terminology can be controversial, and different people may have preferences for other terms. The decision to use the term "victim" is purely for clarity and not an indication that other terms are not valid. Data from the different sources do not necessarily relate to the same victims, although there will be some overlap.

## Definition of Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides the following definition:

Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and the behaviour is abusive.

‘Abusive behaviour’ is defined as any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse

‘Personally connected’ is defined in the act as parties who:

- are married to each other
- are civil partners of each other
- have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- are relatives

Women’s Aid provide an alternative definition of domestic abuse:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.”

## Estimated prevalence of domestic abuse in Herefordshire

The SafeLives prevalence tool uses data from the Crime Survey England and Wales (CSEW) merged with local population and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) data to capture a true understanding of the prevalence of domestic abuse in a local area. The information provided details the estimated number of victims who have experienced DA, not the number of victims who have accessed services.

*Please note that the SafeLives data comes with the following caveats: The CSEW dataset used is for the year ending in March 2020. This is due to a period of suspended data collection during the Covid 19 pandemic, resulting in the March 2022 dataset which had much lower response rates and highly suppressed figures affecting the quality of estimates. CSEW data is to be updated with the July 2023 dataset when available. Older (75+) victim prevalence rates are based on a proxy rate from the CSEW for abuse in the past year only for those aged 60-74. This is because there is no CSEW prevalence rate data for the year ending in March 2020 for those aged 75+. It should also be noted that CSEW surveys are completed face to face and within the home on a voluntary basis, which may impact on reporting of domestic abuse. The national sample for CSEW is 28,000.*

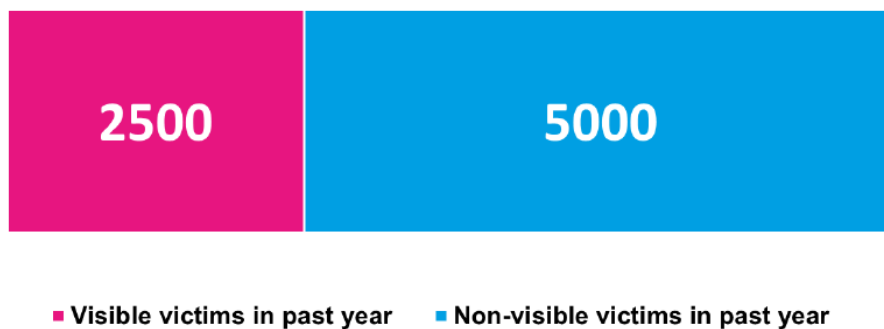
### Prevalence of adult victims – since the age of 16

- SafeLives estimate there are 25,000 adult victims in Herefordshire who have experienced domestic abuse at some point in their lives since the age of 16.
- An estimated 15% of these adult victims will have experienced both partner and family abuse.
- Of the total estimated adult victims 19,000 (68%) are estimated to be female.
- Of the total estimated adult victims 9,000 (32%) are estimated to be male.

#### Prevalence of adult victims – in the past year

- SafeLives estimate there are 8,000 adult victims in Herefordshire who have experienced domestic abuse at some point in the last year.
- They estimate that around 8% of those adult victims will have experienced both partner and family abuse.
- Of the total estimated adult victims in the past year, 5,500 (68%) are estimated to be female.
- Of the total estimated adult victims in the past year, 2,500 (32%) are estimated to be male.

#### Prevalence of adult victims – in the past year – visible victims



- This infographic shows the estimated number of **visible** adult victims in the local area in the past year. SafeLives estimate that a **third (34%) of female victims** and a **quarter (24%) of male victims** in the past year were visible. This calculation uses a combination of MARAC data to show visible high-risk victims and data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for visible non-high risk victims as they reported in the CSEW that they had “told other support professional or organisation.”

Visible victims = the estimated number of adult victims in the local area who have experienced domestic abuse in the past year and who could be considered as wishing to access services. This is as they reported in the CSEW that they had “told other support professional or organisation”. This calculation uses a combination of MARAC data to show visible high-risk victims and CSEW data for visible non-high risk victims.

Non-visible victims = the estimated number of adult victims in the local area who have experienced domestic abuse in the past year and who could be considered as not wishing to access service / not visible to services.

Caveat: MARAC data recording can vary amongst local areas depending on their MARAC processes, for instance some have triaging systems where not all the initial referrals are recorded. These differences will impact on the prevalence estimations for visible high-risk victims.

#### Prevalence – in the past year – partner abuse (IPV)

- SafeLives estimate that there were 5,500 adult victims in the local area who have experienced partner abuse in the past year.

- SafeLives estimate that there were 4,500 children living in a household with partner abuse in the past year.
- SafeLives estimate that there were 4,500 people using abusive behaviours in their intimate partner relationships in the past year in the local area.
- Of those 20% are estimated to be serial perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Caveat.

Uses estimations of 41% of households with partner abuse having children in with an average of 1.85 children per household – this data comes from the ONS, with details in SafeLives 'A safe fund' report.

## **Methodology of the Needs Assessment**

This report applies the latest intelligence on domestic abuse (DA) in Herefordshire gathered from:

- West Mercia Police
- West Mercia Women's Aid (WMWA)
- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
- Housing Solutions
- Adult Social Care
- Children's Social Care
- Cranstoun
- Health Partners
- West Mercia Probation

All of the above services/departments were asked to provide data on the overall numbers of domestic abuse (for example, requests for support or DA flags recorded). They were also asked to provide demographic and socioeconomic data. Many of the services/departments were unable to provide the level of detail requested and this is discussed in more depth later in this report.

The majority of data utilised within this needs assessment is based upon data collected from April 2022 to March 2023. This is to build upon the data collected in the previous needs assessment which covered April 2021 to March 2022. In order to provide services/departments with sufficient time to collate the data required, we were unable to obtain data in time for this financial year (April 2023 – March 2024). We recognise this is a limitation and intend to address this in the next full needs assessment (due to be completed in 2026/27) which will include the most current and up to date information.

In addition to the quantitative data collected above, this needs assessment includes qualitative data which was gathered from practitioners and people with lived experience of domestic abuse in Herefordshire. This data is incorporated throughout the needs assessment with recommendations provided at the end of each section. Qualitative data was provided via the Lived Experience Advisory Group at WMWA, the SafeLives Review of the DA System in Herefordshire produced in 2023 and through opportunities to feedback via email in relation to this needs assessment.

We would like to express our sincere thanks for the data and feedback provided.

# Demographic and Composition Population Features of Victim/ Survivors in Herefordshire

This section aims to answer the following question: **What are the demographics or population features of victim/survivors identified in Herefordshire and accessing services in Herefordshire?**

The following data was requested from all key services/organisations:

Demographic data:

- Age
- Gender identity
- Marital status
- Sexual identity
- Disability
- National identity/Ethnic group

Socio-economic characteristics:

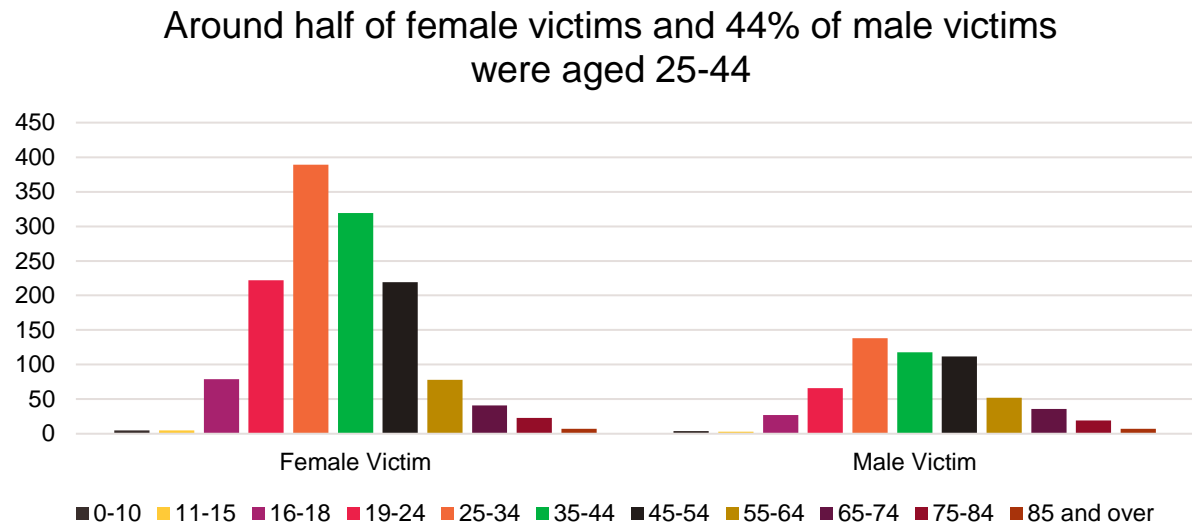
- Household structure
- Occupation
- Household income
- Education

Information on marital status, household structure, occupation, household income and education was not provided.

## Age

- Police

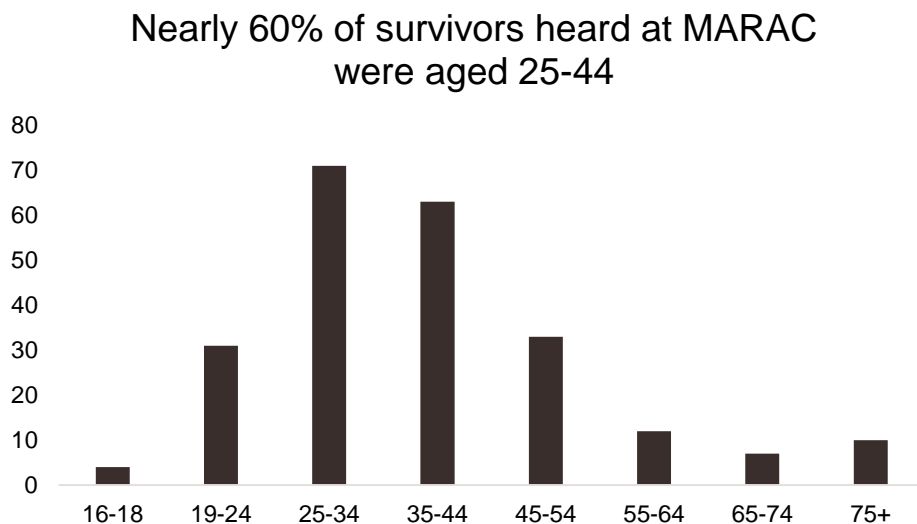
Figure 1 shows that around half of all victims of recorded DA offences were aged 25-44 years, this proportion has been seen each year since 2017/18. The median age of victims was 30. The data shows that despite the majority of DA offences being committed against those aged 25-44, DA offences affect people of all ages in Herefordshire.



*Figure 1. Age profile of victims of DA offences in Herefordshire in 2022/23*

- MARAC

Of the 231 cases discussed at MARAC between April 2022 and March 2023, the majority of victims were aged between 25-34 years (71 cases) and 35-44 years (63 cases), reflecting the data above. There were 4 victims aged 16-18 years and 10 victims over the age of 75 years.

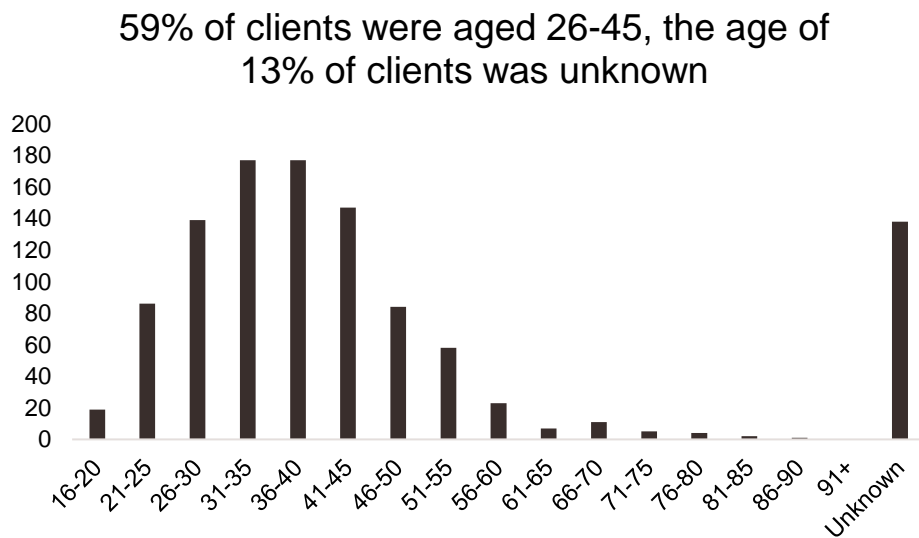


*Figure 2. Age profile of victims discussed at MARAC in Herefordshire in 2022/23*



- WMWA

Most service users were aged 26-45 (640, 59%) with the age categories 31-35 and 36-40 both having the largest number of clients (177, 16%). There were only 30 clients aged 61+ (3%) supported in 2022/23.



*Figure 3. Age profile of clients accessing WMWA services in Herefordshire in 2022/23*

- Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor (IDVA) service

Experts in domestic violence, IDVA's prioritise victim safety in every aspect of their work. They provide vital emotional and practical support to victims and survivors, to reduce the risk posed by the perpetrator<sup>1</sup>.

From April 2018 to March 2023, those aged 25-34 were most likely to be supported by IDVA, accounting for around a third of all cases. However, since April 2021 there has been a noticeable increase in those aged 35-44 being supported. In addition, there has been an increase in the number of older victims being supported by the IDVA service, although numbers still remain much lower than younger age groups; in 2018/19 those aged 65+ accounted for 4% of victims, this had increased to 9% of victims in 2022/23.

<sup>1</sup> [Domestic abuse response in the UK - SafeLives](#)

Between April 2018 and March 2023, victims aged 25-34 were most likely to use the IDVA service, but there has been a large increase in 35-44 year olds in the past two years

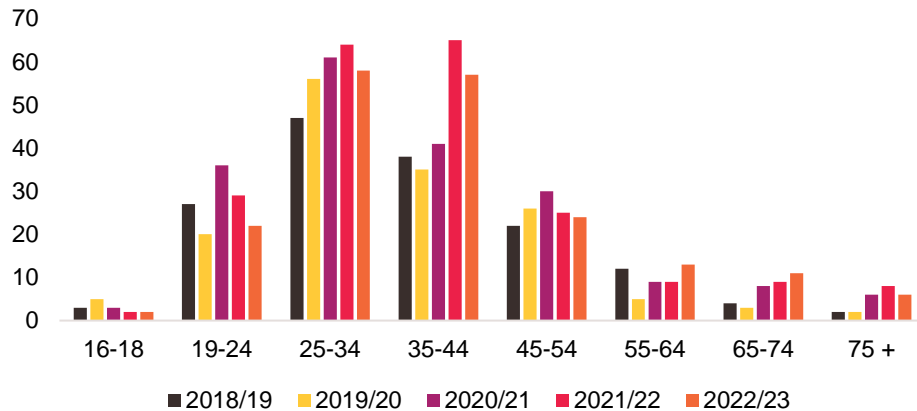


Figure 4. Age profile of clients accessing the IDVA service in Herefordshire, 2018-2023

- Health

GPs across Herefordshire have been seeing patients across all age ranges where DA has been recorded, however, the majority of people were aged between 25 and 44 years.

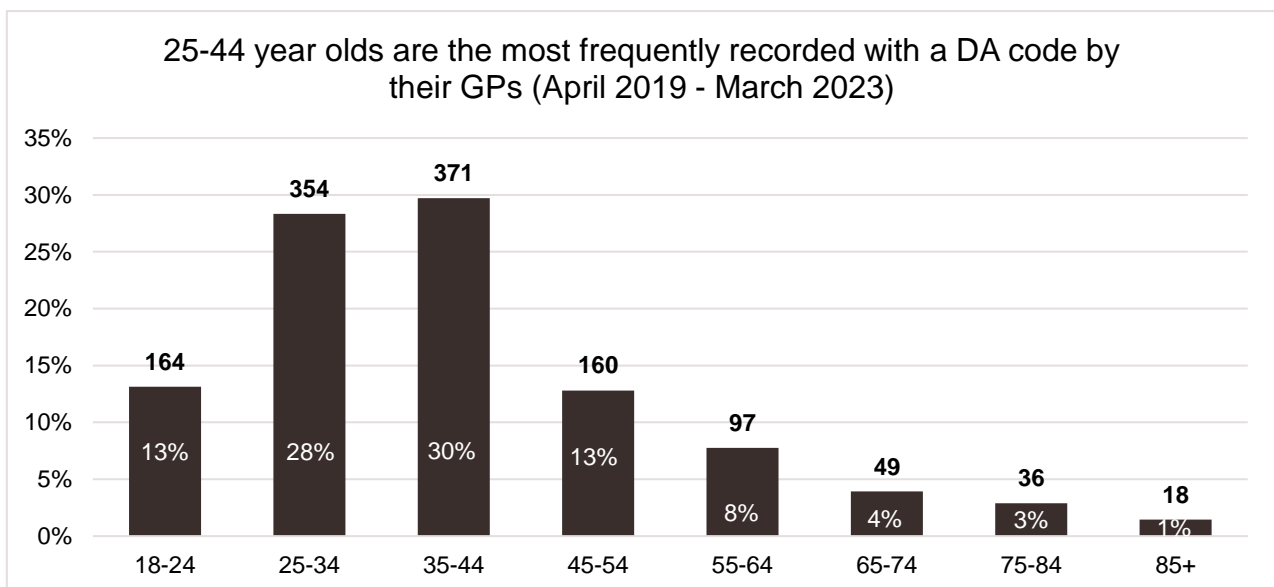


Figure 5. The proportions of DA codes recorded by GPs in Herefordshire by age band, 2019-2023

- Adult Social Care

Most referrals to ASC in 2022/23 where DA is flagged as a factor were for those aged 80-89 for both males and females. However, there are still numerous referrals made for younger adults, with those aged under 40 making up over 25% of referrals. This demographic is markedly different to ASC referrals where DA is not flagged, where those aged under 40 account for only 14% of non-DA referrals.

### Most referrals in 2022/23 to ASC where DA is flagged has been for females aged 80-89

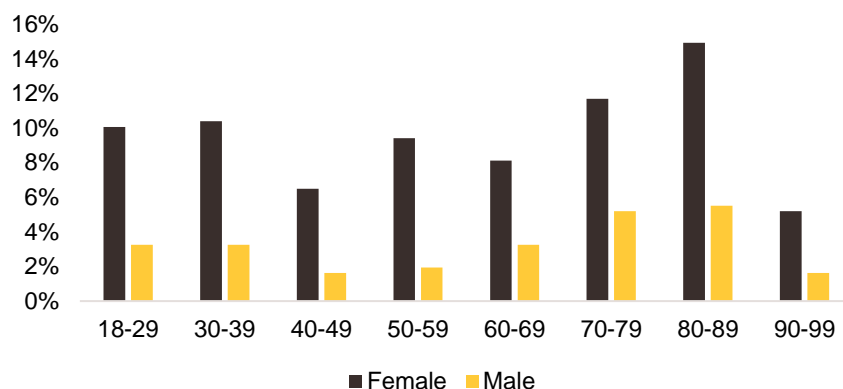


Figure 6. Age profile of ASC referrals where DA is flagged in Herefordshire in 2022/23

- Data on the age range of those accessing Housing Solutions in Herefordshire was requested but not provided.
- The 2023 SafeLives Report estimated prevalence based upon the Crime Survey for England and Wales:
  - SafeLives estimate that there were 1,000 young victims (aged 16-24) of DA in the last year in Herefordshire.  
*The CSEW only provides prevalence rates for 16-19 and 20-24 year olds; therefore, an average of these two was calculated for the 18-24 group.*
  - SafeLives estimate that there were 1,500 older victims aged 60+ in the last year in Herefordshire.  
*Older (75+) victim prevalence rates are based on a proxy rate from the CSEW for abuse in the past year only for those aged 60-74. This is because the CSEW only surveys adults aged 74 and under about their experiences of DA, so there is no prevalence data available for 75+ age group.*

#### Summary:

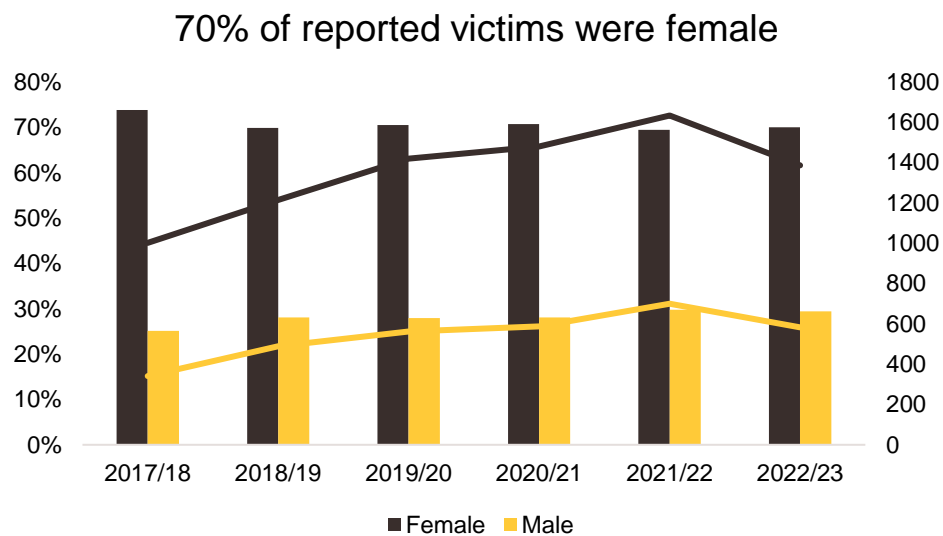
- The most common age group for victim/survivors of DA in Herefordshire was 25-44 years across all agencies but ASC (Police, MARAC, WMWA, IDVA and Health).
- In contrast, most referrals to ASC in 2022/23 where DA is flagged as a factor were for those aged 80-89 for both males and females.

- Based upon the estimated prevalence figures provided by SafeLives (2023), it is evident that figures for younger and older victims are not represented in the data shared by key services/organisations.

## Gender identity

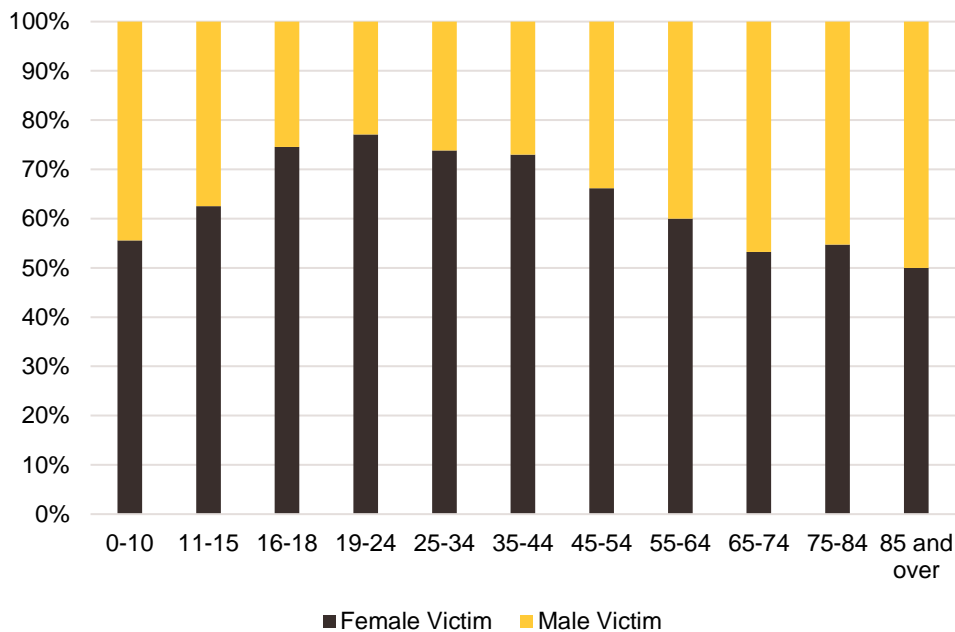
- Police

Figure 7 shows the number of DA victims in Herefordshire recorded by West Mercia Police by gender. Based on the estimated prevalence in Herefordshire, this only accounts for 30% of expected female victims, and 24% of expected male victims. This supports the fact that DA is often a hidden crime which is under reported.



*Figure 7. Gender profile of victims of DA offences in Herefordshire in 2022/23*

Females were more likely to be victims across all age brackets, except in the 85+ category where there were an equal number of male and female victims



*Figure 8. Gender profile of victims of DA offences in Herefordshire in 2022/23*

- **MARAC**

For the year 2022, there were fewer male victims recorded at Herefordshire MARAC (4.8%) compared with national data (6.2%) but the figure for Herefordshire was higher than that of Most Similar Forces (MSFs) (4.4%) and the West Mercia police force area (3.4%). 95.2% of victims discussed at MARAC in Herefordshire during this time period were female.

- **WMWA**

In 2022/23 84% of people who accessed WMWA's support were female, 1% were male and the gender of 15% of clients was unknown (not recorded).

- **IDVA**

Females accounted for 97% of all victims supported by the IDVA service between April 2018 and March 2023, with males accounting for the remaining 3% of victims. In this time period, no non-binary victims and fewer than 5 transgender victims have been supported by the IDVA service.

- Health

The number of DA codes recorded for female patients was higher than for male patients across all age categories. 72% of all codes were recorded for female patients in the last four years.

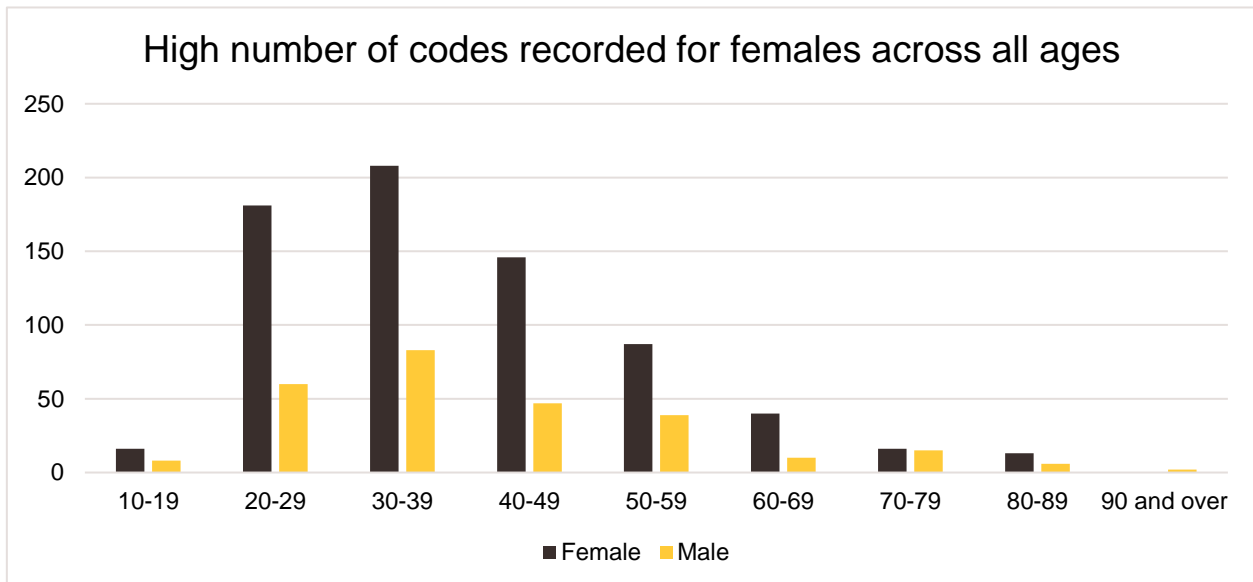
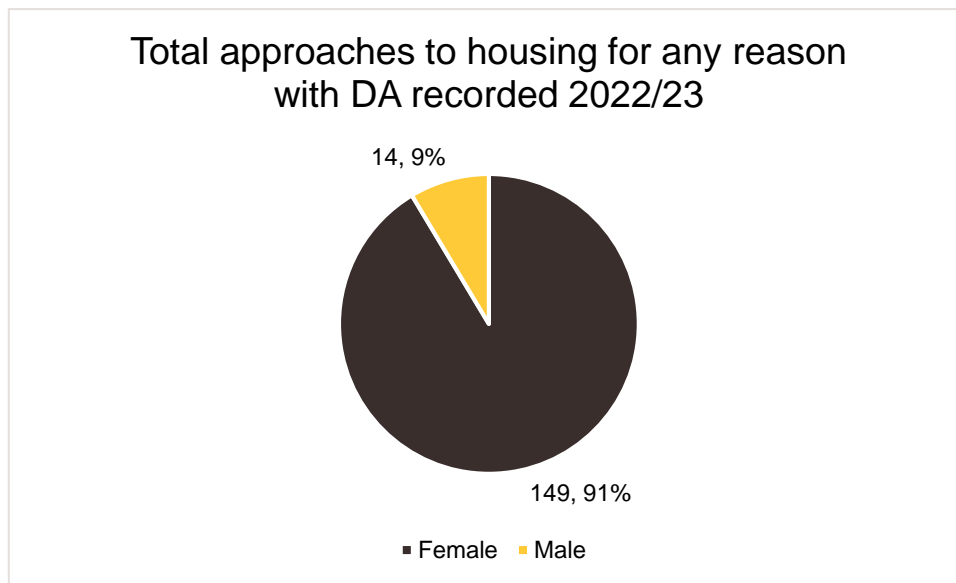


Figure 9. Gender profile of patients with DA codes recorded in Herefordshire, 2019-2023

- Housing Solutions

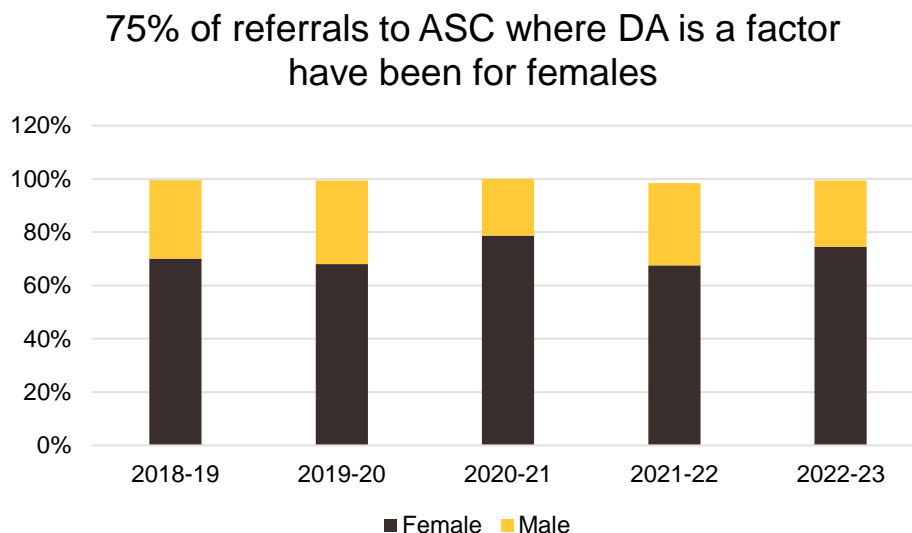
As can be seen in Figure 10, there were 163 approaches to housing where DA was recorded in 2022/23. Of these, 163 instances (91%) were from females and 14 (9%) were from males.



*Figure 10. Gender profile of those approaching housing with DA recorded in 2022/23*

- **Adult Social Care**

Of the 310 people referred to ASC in 2022/23 where DA is flagged, 75% were female which is slightly higher than the previous year but largely in line with the pattern over the previous four years.



*Figure 11. Gender profile of ASC referrals where DA is a factor, 2018-2023*

**Summary:**

- It is evident from the data provided by all agencies that the majority of victim/survivors reporting DA and accessing DA services in Herefordshire are female.

## Sexual identity

- Data on sexual identity was not provided by the Police, Health, Housing or Adult Social Care.

- MARAC

In 2022, just 0.4% of MARAC cases involved a person from an LGBTQ+ group (compared to 1.4% nationally).

- WMWA

In 2022/23, over 60% of referrals to WMWA were for people who identified as heterosexual, the sexuality of 37% of referrals was unknown, and all other sexualities made up the remaining 2% of referrals.

681 (63%) people who accessed WMWA's support were heterosexual, the sexuality for 381 (35%) users was unknown and 16 (1%) people were either lesbian, bisexual or gay. WMWA did not support anyone who identified as pansexual in 2022/23.

- IDVA

Victims who are heterosexual are most represented by IDVA, making up 94% of cases in 2022/23, with lesbian/gay making up 2% of cases, bisexual making up 2% with the final 2% being recorded as other/unknown.

Since 2018/19 the number of other/unknown has fallen from 14% which indicates there has been better recording of victims' sexuality, this has corresponded in an increase in the number of heterosexual victims being recorded, whereas the number of gay, lesbian and bisexual victims has remained constant across the time period.

- 2023 SafeLives Report estimated prevalence based upon the Crime Survey for England and Wales
  - We estimate that there were 1,500 LGBT+ victims of domestic abuse in the past year. *The prevalence statistic for LGBT+ people is based on the CSEW aggregate.*

### Summary:

- It is evident that the vast majority of victims accessing DA services in 2022/23 identified as heterosexual.

## Disability

- Data on disability was not provided by the Police, MARAC, Health, Housing or Adult Social Care.



- WMWA

400 (33%) people who were referred to WMWA were recorded as having a disability in 2022/23. Of those with a disability, 68% was related to mental health, 20% was physical, 8% learning disability, 2% visual disability and 2% was related to hearing.

322 (30%) people who utilised WMWA services were reported as having a disability. Two thirds of those who were identified as having a disability reported their disability was related to mental health, 24% had a physical disability, 8% had a learning disability, 2% a visual disability and 1% had a disability relating to hearing.

- IDVA

The number of disabled victims being supported by the IDVA service has increased over the period April 2018 to March 2023, with over 50% of victims being supported by IDVA service in 2022/23 recorded as having a disability compared to 30% in 2018/19. The data does not break down the types of disabilities so it is unclear what additional needs IDVA clients may be experiencing or how they can be best supported.

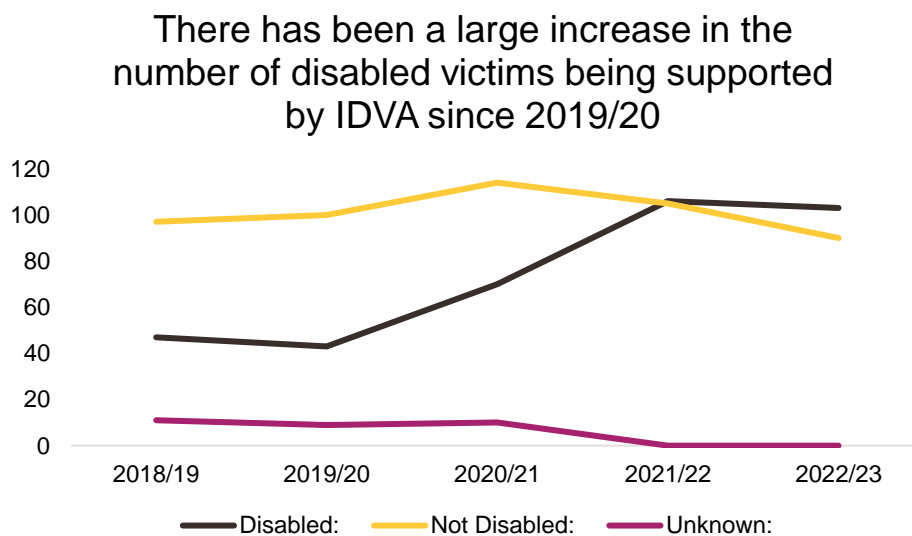


Figure 12. Disability profile of clients receiving IDVA support, 2018-2023

- 2023 SafeLives Report estimated prevalence based upon the Crime Survey for England and Wales
  - SafeLives estimate that there were 1,500 Disabled victims of domestic abuse in Herefordshire in the past year.

Summary:

- Disability data was only provided by WMWA services making comparisons difficult. However, the numbers reported (particularly from the IDVA service) show that a significant number of victim/survivors accessing support within Herefordshire have a disability.

**National identity/Ethnic group**

- Police

Between April 2022 to March 2023, 96% of DA victims for whom an ethnic appearance was recorded by West Mercia Police were determined as being White – North European. This is an unusual way of recording ethnicity as it relies on officers determining a victim's ethnic appearance, and White – North European would encompass those who are White-British, who make up the majority of Herefordshire's population, but could also include other White minority groups. There are also a large number of victims who have no ethnic appearance recorded, so this data is very limited and makes it difficult to draw any conclusions.

For 2022/23 the data also records the individual's self-defined ethnicity; where ethnicity was stated, 92% of victims identified as White British, this is similar to the proportion of White-British people within Herefordshire as a whole which is 91%. The only other ethnic group which accounted for more than 1% of victims, was Any Other White Background, which 5% of victims identified as, which is reflective of the proportion seen in the general population in Herefordshire.

- MARAC

In 2022, 10% (33) of victims discussed at MARAC were from an ethnic minority group (compared to 16% nationally). When compared to the ethnicity makeup of the county (3.1% ethnic group other than White), this is a higher representation.

- WMWA

The majority of referrals were for people with a White British ethnicity (71%), although this is still lower than the proportion of White British people in the county as a whole (91%). The ethnicity of 19% of referrals was unknown, 2% of referrals were for people who were Eastern European (this is not an ethnicity recorded in the Census so cannot be compared to overall population in the county) and 2% for those with a Black African ethnicity (higher than the Black African population as a whole in Herefordshire which is 0.2%). No other ethnicity made up over 1% of referrals.

71% of adults who utilised WMWA support were White British and the ethnicity of 19% of clients was reported as unknown. People who were Eastern European and Black African each made up 2% of clients, no other ethnicity made up more than 1% of adults utilising WMWA's support.

- IDVA

Between April 2018 and March 2023, over 90% of those supported by the IDVA service were recorded as being white. However, the data does not breakdown ethnicity beyond these broad categories, so it is unclear whether these victims were all white British or whether other white ethnicities were being represented.

- Data on the gender profile of those accessing Housing Solutions in Herefordshire was requested but not provided.
- Adult Social Care

In 2022/23, where the ethnicity was recorded, all but 2 of the people referred to ASC where DA was a factor were recorded as white. The data does not breakdown ethnicity further, so it is not possible to determine how many of these people are “White: British” or how many are “White: Other”, which is the largest ethnic minority group in Herefordshire. In addition, 12% of people referred did not have their ethnicity recorded, so it is difficult to fully understand the ethnic demographics of people who are referred to ASC where DA is flagged.

- 2023 SafeLives Report estimated prevalence based upon the Crime Survey for England and Wales
  - We estimate that there were 100 Black, Asian and racially minoritised victims who have experienced domestic abuse in the past year.  
*The CSEW does not accurately reflect the impact of domestic abuse on Black Asian and racially minoritised people, thus, we multiply the number of victims with the Black Asian and racially minoritised proportion of the area including the following: 'Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh', 'Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African', 'Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups', 'White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller', 'White: Roma', and 'Other ethnic group' (data obtained from the ONS census 2021).*

#### Summary:

- The large majority of victim/survivors reporting DA and accessing services in Herefordshire were recorded as white. This reflects the general population in Herefordshire, however, there are some issues related to all white ethnicities being recorded under one umbrella (i.e., white British and white other).

#### **Perpetrator demographics**

- Police

In 2022/23, 74% of suspects were male, 25% were female and 1% were recorded as unknown.

### Men are most likely to be suspects across all age brackets

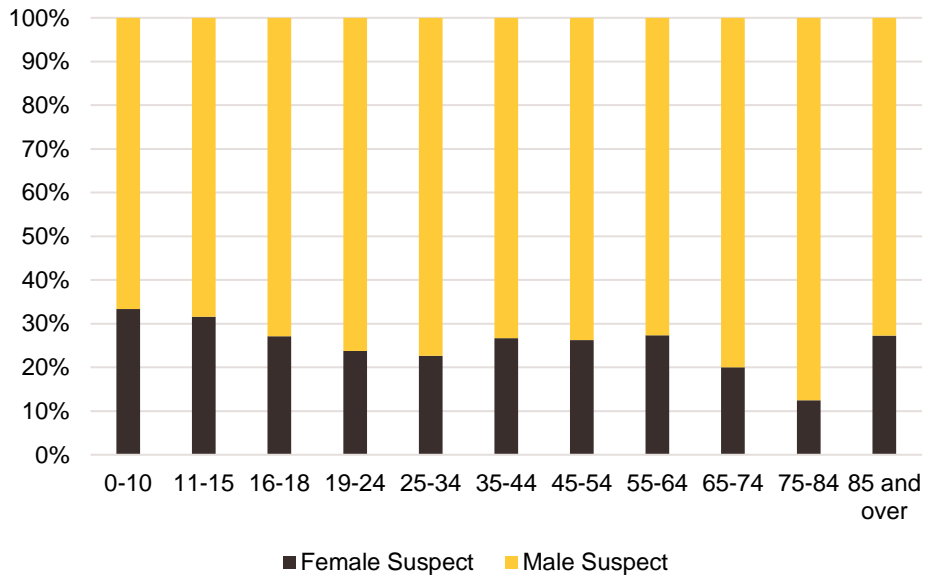


Figure 13. Gender profile of suspects of DA offences in Herefordshire in 2022/23

### Around 55% of all suspects were aged 25-44

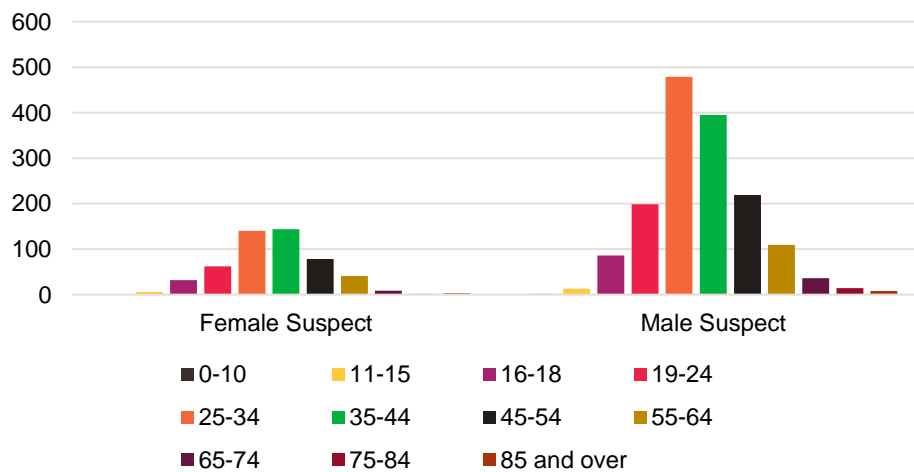


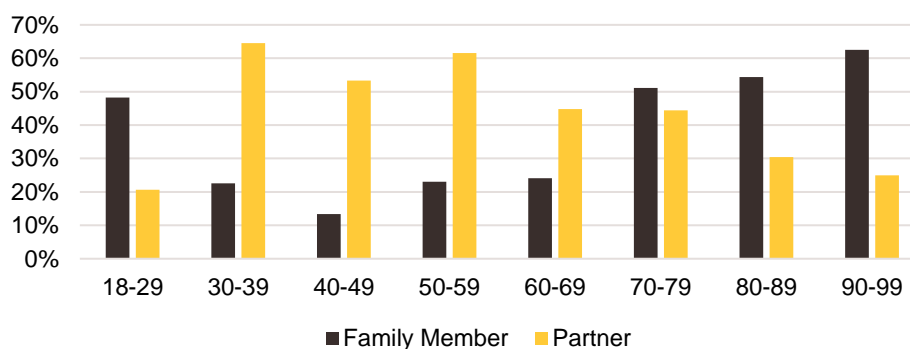
Figure 14. Age profile of suspects of DA offences in Herefordshire in 2022/23

### Relationship type demographics

- Adult Social Care

For 82% of people referred to ASC where DA was flagged (and the source of risk was recorded) the source of risk was identified as either a family member or a partner. In total, 40% of people that were referred identified a partner as the source of risk and 42% cited a family member as the source of risk, however the source of risk varies across the age groups.

The youngest and oldest people who were referred to ASC where DA was flagged were most at risk from a family member, and those aged 30-69 were most at risk from a partner



*Figure 15. Age profile and relationship type for ASC referrals with a DA flag in Herefordshire in 2022/23*

CSEW suggests that partner abuse is around twice as prevalent as familial abuse, which does not match this data. This might suggest that familial abuse is disproportionately prevalent in those who have care and support needs. However, this is the only data set that separates out partner abuse to familial abuse, so it is not known whether this pattern is seen across Herefordshire or is specific to those with care and support needs.

### Limitations

- During this process it became apparent that services'/agencies do not currently gather the breadth of data required for this needs assessment (this has also been found by many local authorities nationally).
- Only the IDVA service were able to provide data on victims' marital status and no agency/service was able to provide data on socio-economic characteristics. The IDVA service stated that data on the victim's employment status is recorded, but in 79% of cases the status is recorded as unknown so it is not possible to accurately consider this data.
- There is a lack of data regarding the type of relationship recorded between victim and perpetrator (i.e. intimate relationships, familial relationships), only ASC provided this data.
- Agencies/services use a range of categories when collating their data making direct comparisons difficult (for example, age categories).

## Recommendations

- Significant improvements are required with regards to data collection across several services. This includes both demographic and socioeconomic factors. The data collection template developed for DA needs assessments should continue to be utilised moving forward, to guide the development of enhanced data collection across Herefordshire. More accurate data recording is required in the future to provide more meaningful insights.
- The collection and consideration of equalities data and information, to routinely identify and respond to need on a consistent basis, is particularly important in enabling us to improve our response to DA victim/survivors with complex needs and/or multiple disadvantage/ intersectionality (particularly LGBTQ, people from ethnic minority backgrounds and Disability).
- The number of people with protected characteristics accessing services is lower than CSEW data suggests it should be. As such, steps need to be taken to identify, understand and address the barriers faced by victim/survivors with protected characteristics within Herefordshire. This could include undertaking work with survivors who have lived experience to understand the issues and barriers they may be experiencing and implement a plan of action to address these. For example, is there a lack of knowledge around the services that are available and/or are there issues relating to the accessibility of these services?
- An increased focus on capturing the demographic composition features of perpetrators of DA in the future. This could then be used to inform and target prevention efforts.
- Additional data needs to be gathered around the issue of domestic abuse in older people to enable a better understanding of this issue and what support is required. A multi-agency approach is required to improve data collection on domestic abuse in older people within Herefordshire. All relevant partner agencies need to collect accurate records to identify where domestic abuse among older people has occurred (i.e., West Mercia Police, WMWA and, importantly, within health and social care settings).
- Further exploration on the variance in data on age is also needed – for example, comparisons between the ASC data and the police/WMWA data which varies for older victim/survivors.

There are concerns that DA perpetrated against older victims is not always recognised as DA, but instead classified as “Elder Abuse”, which then means that victims are not receiving specialist DA support. This is an area that requires further exploration, including an appraisal of the needs to determine which services would be best placed to provide the kind of support that will meet those needs.

Herefordshire has an older population profile compared to England and Wales averages, so we could reasonably expect to see higher levels of DA amongst the elderly, which is not the case.

# Children and Young People

## Children Social Care

Children's Social Care (CSC) have provided data where DA is recorded as a primary issue.

Table 1 shows how many contacts, assessments and plans were recorded with DA as the primary issue in 2022/23. Unfortunately this data does not include the total number of contacts/assessments/plans so it is not possible to establish the proportion of contacts where DA is the primary issue. The data also does not include cases where DA is an issue but not the primary issue, so there may be more cases where DA is present but is not included in this table.

As data was not provided in 2021/22, it is not possible to consider any trends to see if the number of cases with DA has changed over time.

*Table 1. DA recorded as primary issue in CSC in 2022/23*

Total contacts to Front Door with DA recorded as primary issue	449
Total initial assessments with DA recorded as primary issue	193
Total child protection plans with DA as primary issue	34
Total Children in Need plans with DA as primary issue	72
Total Early Help involvement with DA as primary issue	43

Referrals to CSC can come from a number of sources, but as can be seen in Figure 16, the number of referrals are not equal amongst sources, with 69% of referrals in 2022/23 coming from the police, with primary health and schools being the second and third most common referral agencies.

## Over two thirds of referrals to CSC for DA concerns came from the police

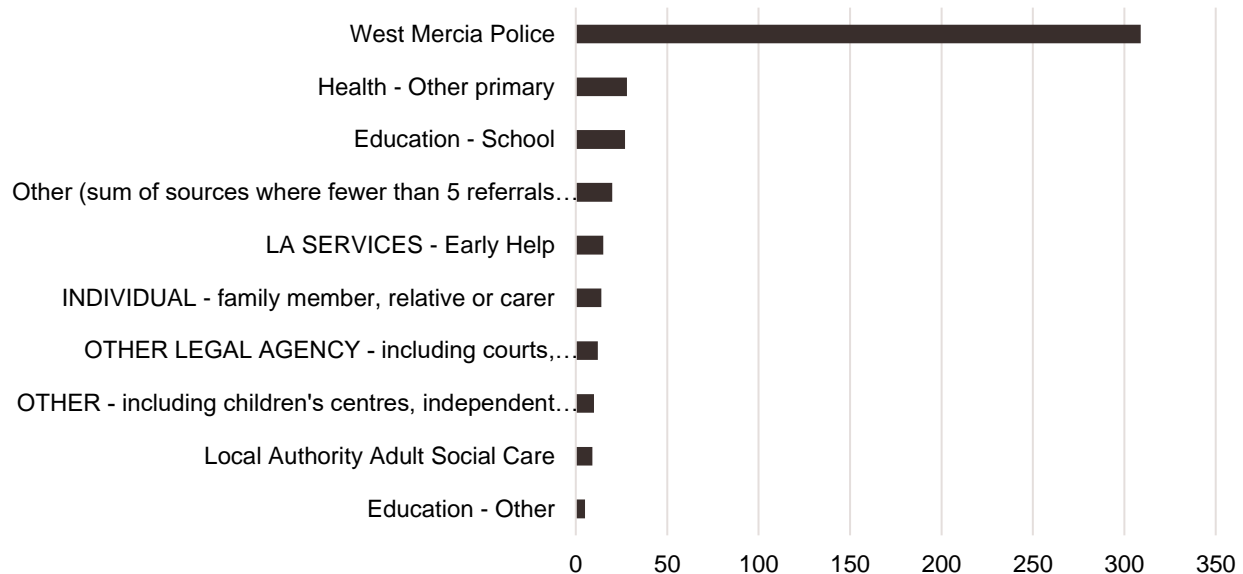


Figure 16. Source of referrals to CSC in 2022/23 for DA concerns

### WMWA Children and Young People Services

WMWA provides support to children and young people who have been affected by domestic abuse. Their work has a strong focus on self-esteem, self-care and on understanding healthy relationships. This includes support for young people who are themselves experiencing abuse in their teen relationships.

WMWA have the following services available across Herefordshire which are run through their WMWA Children and Young People Services (CYP) team:

Helping Hands is for children aged 7-12. The group will help to increase children's understanding of feeling safe and to explore and promote behaviours which will contribute to a safe environment.

The Children and Young People Recovery Toolkit is an evidenced based 8-week programme for any young person that has witnessed or experienced domestic abuse and are able to take part in a group. Children & Young People must not be living with domestic abuse any more to be able to safely attend. The aim of the group is to help children and young people cope and recover from the trauma that domestic abuse can cause. It is integrated in its approach using a combination of trauma – informed resilience focused work, specific trauma focused cognitive behavioural therapy and person-centred therapeutic principles.



CRUSH is a structured group for young people that are affected by ANY form of domestic abuse whether it is witnessed, experienced or perpetrated and is suitable for both young men and young women.

The Young Person's Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (YPIDVAs) provide support to individual young people – aged 13-19 – who are currently experiencing domestic or teenage relationship abuse and who are considered high risk. The YPIDVA will work alongside the young person and other professionals to create an individual safety and support plan, bringing a specialist understanding of the impact experiencing abuse can have on young people. WMWA's YPIDVA's can also provide advice and resources to professionals working with young people who are impacted by domestic abuse, and can support an identified lead professional to complete domestic abuse/healthy relationships work with <sup>[L]</sup><sub>SEP</sub> a young person if this better suits the needs of the individual.

Bespoke support is available to children whose needs would be better met via support from a worker that they already have a relationship with; WMWAs Children & Young People's team can support professionals to complete work directly. This could include safety planning, feelings and self-esteem work and healthy relationships.

#### Referrals:

- 185 referrals to WMWA for children and young people were made in 2022/23, of these 121 referrals were recorded as refused. The most common reasons for refusal were: needs met elsewhere – referred to another service within WMWA (30%), other (16%), needs met elsewhere – referred to partner agency (13%) and unable to contact client (13%).
- Nearly half of referrals for children and young people were internal (44%), large proportions of referrals also came from Early Help (23%) and Children's Services (15%) with smaller numbers coming from other sources such as education and employment (8%), self-referral (3%) and health services (3%).
- Those aged 6-10 made up the majority of referrals (43%), followed by 0-5 (33%), 11-15 (22%), and 16-20 (2%). There is an overlap between adult services and CYP service for the older cohort as some 16-20 year olds were supported by adult services.
- 65% of referrals were for CYP who are White British, the ethnicity of 27% of referrals was unknown and no other ethnicity accounted for more than 2% of referrals.
- There was an equal split of referrals by gender with males and females both making up 39% of referrals, the gender of the remaining 22% of referrals was unknown.
- Of the 185 referrals, 28 (15%) recorded a disability. Of this number 57% had mental health issues, 25% had a learning disability and 18% had a physical disability.

#### Profile of CYP receiving support:

- WMWA supported 96 CYP in 2022/23.

### 49% of CYP supported by WMWA were aged 6-10

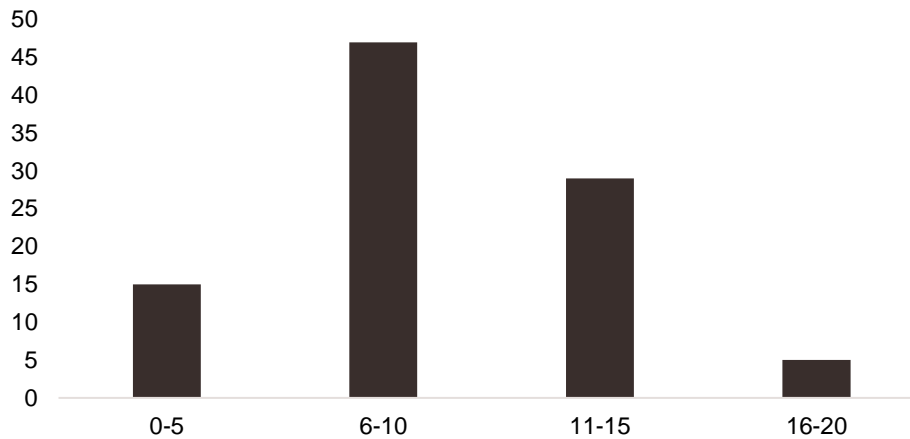


Figure 17. Age profile of CYP supported by WMWA in 2022/23

- Nearly half of the children supported were aged 6-10, 30% were aged 11-15, 16% were 0-5 and 5% were aged 16-20. There were also 16-20 year olds supported by WMWA via their adult services.
- Two thirds of CYP supported by WMWA were White British and the ethnicity of 22% was unknown. No other ethnicity had 5 or more CYP clients.
- 14 (15%) of the CYP supported were recorded as having a disability, with mental health recorded as the most common disability.

#### IDVA

- Nearly two-thirds of victims supported by IDVA between April 2018 and March 2023 had children in the household; 51% of cases refer to a single adult with children, 13% of cases having more than one adult and children in the household and 36% are for adult(s) with no children.

#### Refuge:

- Over three quarters of the people accessing refuge were either pregnant (12%) or had children in the household (65%).

#### Recommendations:

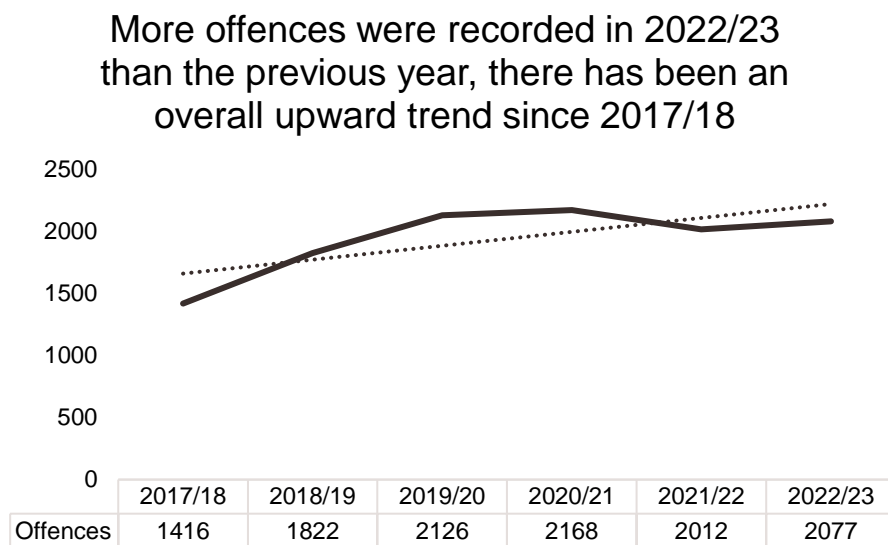
- Only 15% of 185 referrals to WMWA CYP services came from Children's Social Care. Further exploration of what steps can be taken to increase these numbers should be undertaken.
- It would also be beneficial to establish how many of the CSC cases with DA recorded as a primary issue resulted in referrals to WMWA CYP services and how many were supported in house.

# Domestic Abuse – Incidents and Homicides

## West Mercia Police Data

The following data was provided by West Mercia Police in April 2024 and covers offences recorded in Herefordshire that had a DA “flag”. Since April 2015, crimes should be “flagged” as being domestic abuse-related by the police if the offence meets the government definition of domestic violence and abuse.

Figure 18 shows that there has been an increase in the number of recorded DA offences in Herefordshire in 2022/23 compared to the previous year, and although offences are lower than they were in 2019/20 and 2020/21, there has been an upward trend since 2017/18. This may be due to an actual increase in DA offending, but the figures could also be affected by other factors such as better recording and recognition of DA within the police or an increase in the reporting of crime. However, the levels are far below the CSEW and SafeLives estimates for Herefordshire.



*Figure 18. Number of DA offences recorded by West Mercia Police by year in Herefordshire*

Of the 2077 offences recorded in 2022/23, 1907 were recorded with an outcome. Of these, over half resulted in the victim not supporting (or withdrawing support of) police action (57%). The proportion of offences resulting in victims not supporting police action is the lowest it has been since 2017/18, which is a welcome development. However, the number of charge/summons remains low, despite a small increase being seen since 2021/22.

Figure 19 shows the 4 most common outcomes for DA offences. It is not clear from the data why the majority of victims are not supporting police action, but it is clearly not unusual for victims to

do so. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services suggested that police forces need to undertake further work in order to understand the circumstances in which victims do not support police action and what additional steps can be taken to address this. In order to support a prosecution, police and prosecutors should consider pursuing evidence led prosecutions wherever possible. This is the case in Herefordshire where officers are advised to consider evidence led investigations on all DA cases where the victim is not supportive (taking into account the other evidence available). Officers have access to a toolkit on the WMP intranet and the college of policing provide advice and investigation strategies.

The most common outcome for DA offences is recorded as 'evidential difficulties; victim does not support police action', but there has been a recent increase in 'victim supports police action but evidential difficulties prevent further action'

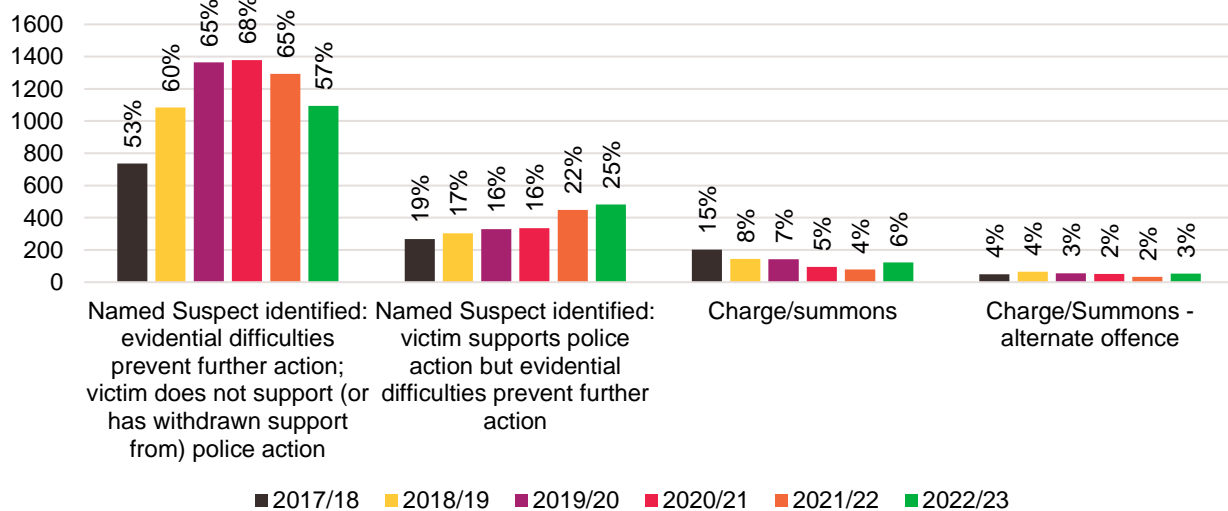


Figure 19. Top most common outcomes of offences recorded by West Mercia Police in Herefordshire

## Domestic abuse offences by area

Prevalence of Domestic Abuse Incidences and Offences Compared to County Average in 2022/23

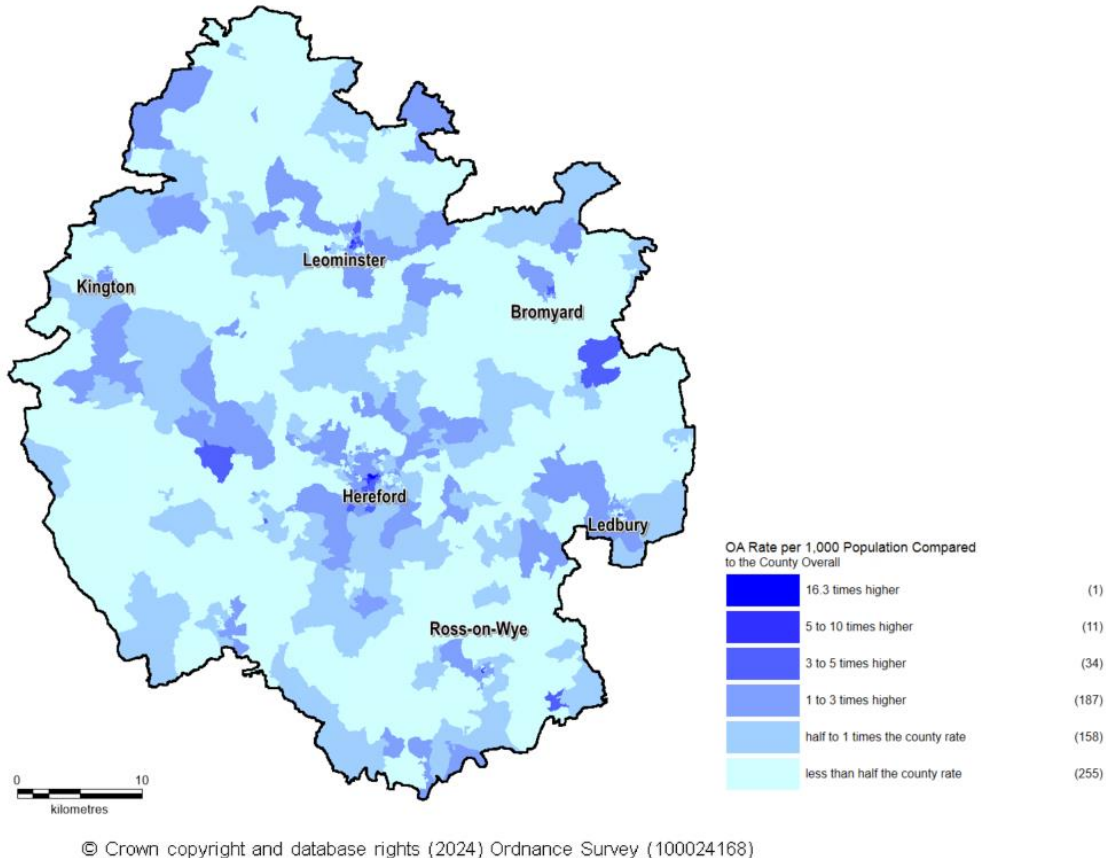


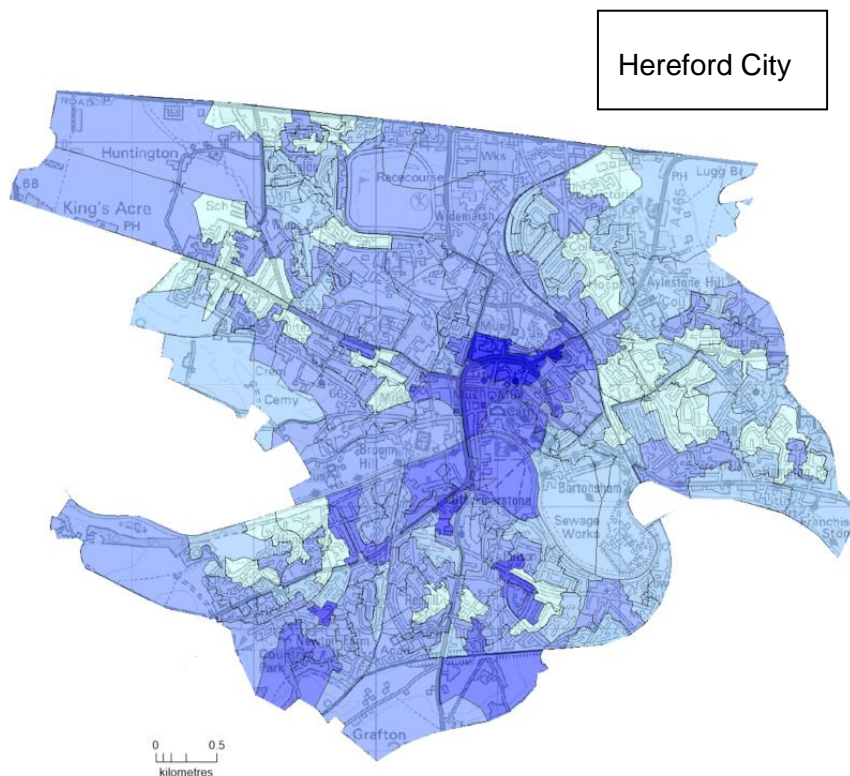
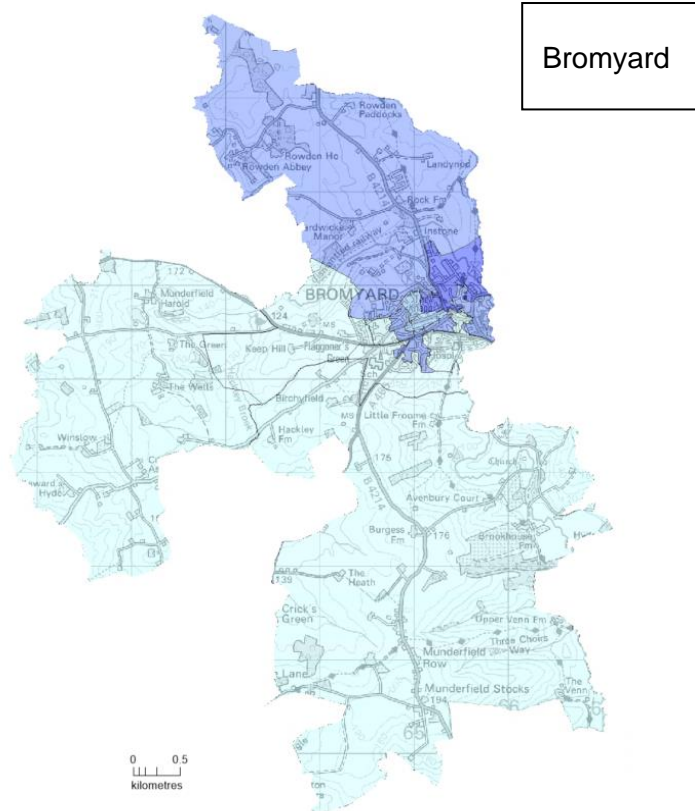
Figure 20. Map showing levels of police reported DA incidents/offences around Herefordshire compared with the county as a whole.

Levels are defined by the proportion of addresses within an Output Area (OAs) where a police reported incident or offence has been committed, between April 2022 and March 2023.

Over half (51%) of OAs with levels that are twice or more than the average for Herefordshire are located in Hereford city; followed by around 16% in Leominster, 8% in Ledbury, 6% in Ross-on-Wye and 5% in Kington. The remaining 13% are dotted randomly around the county. Of particular note, there has been a significant increase in the number of incidences and offences recorded in Leominster compared to last year (9% to 16%).

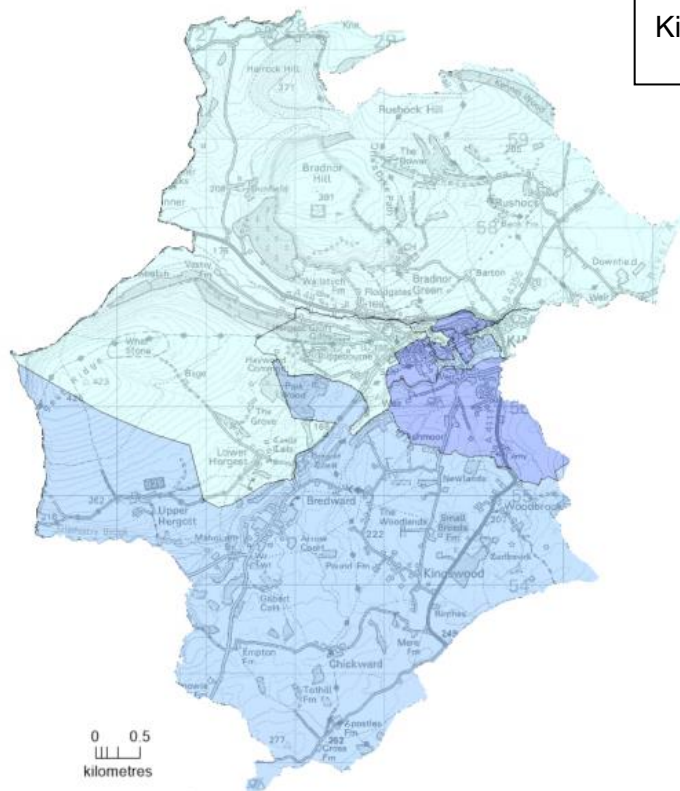
The highest level was recorded in Hereford City Centre, which had rates over 16 times the county average (the only area with rates above 10 times the county average). This area largely consists of commercial properties, including shops, pubs, restaurants and the railway station. Offences and incidences are recorded at the location of where the incidence/offence takes place rather than the home address of the victim or suspect, so this may suggest that a number the incidences/offences are occurring not in the home, but instead when out. Other areas with notably high rates (above 5x county rate) include the John Kyrle area of Ross-on-Wye, areas of South Leominster and areas of South Hereford.

The below figures show a map of hotspots of DA incidences and offences prevalence vs county average.

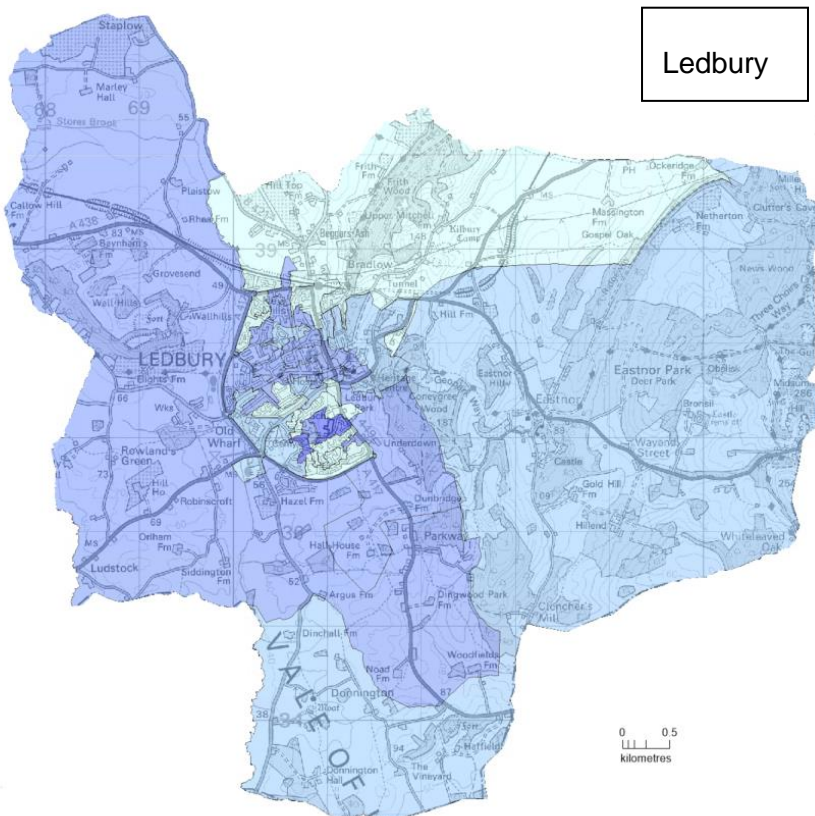


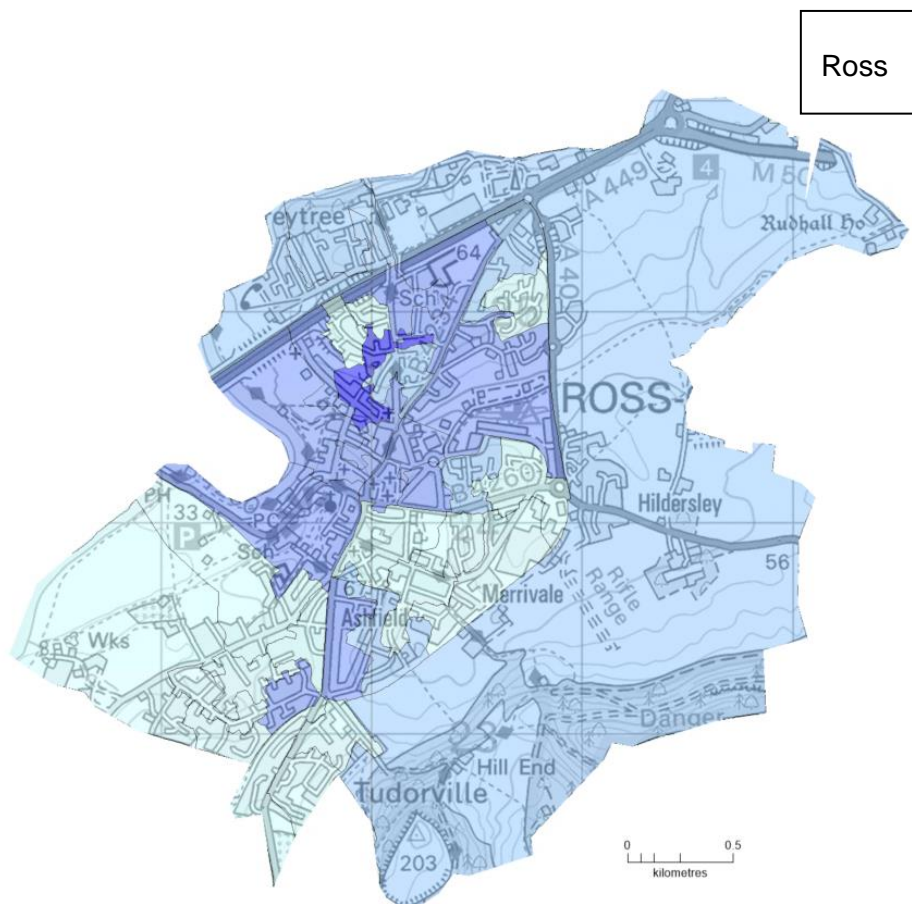
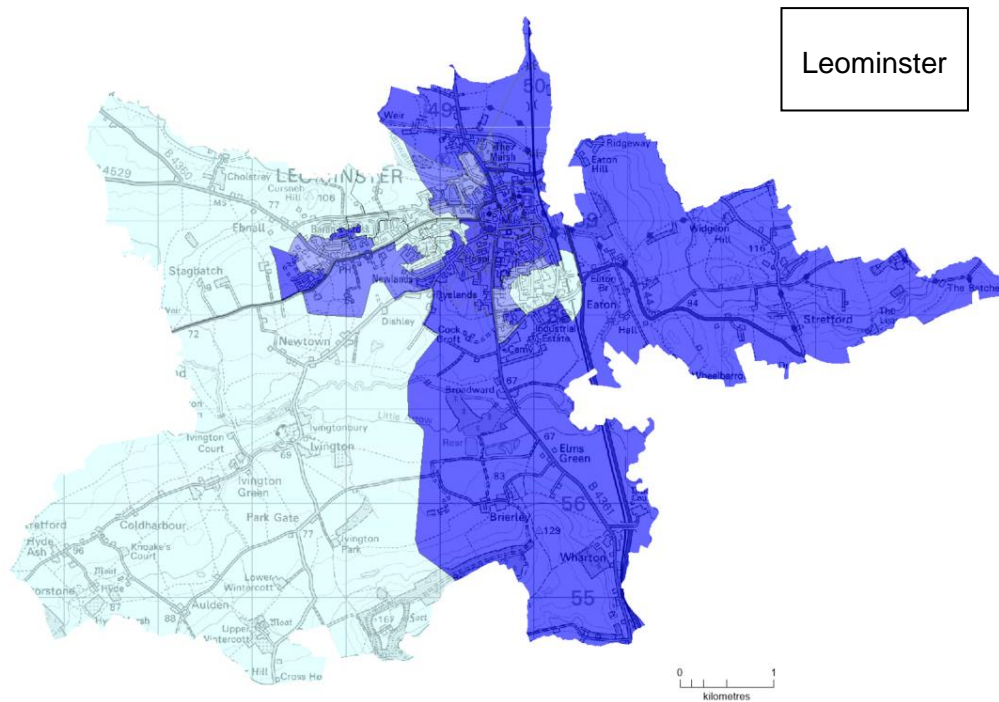


Kington



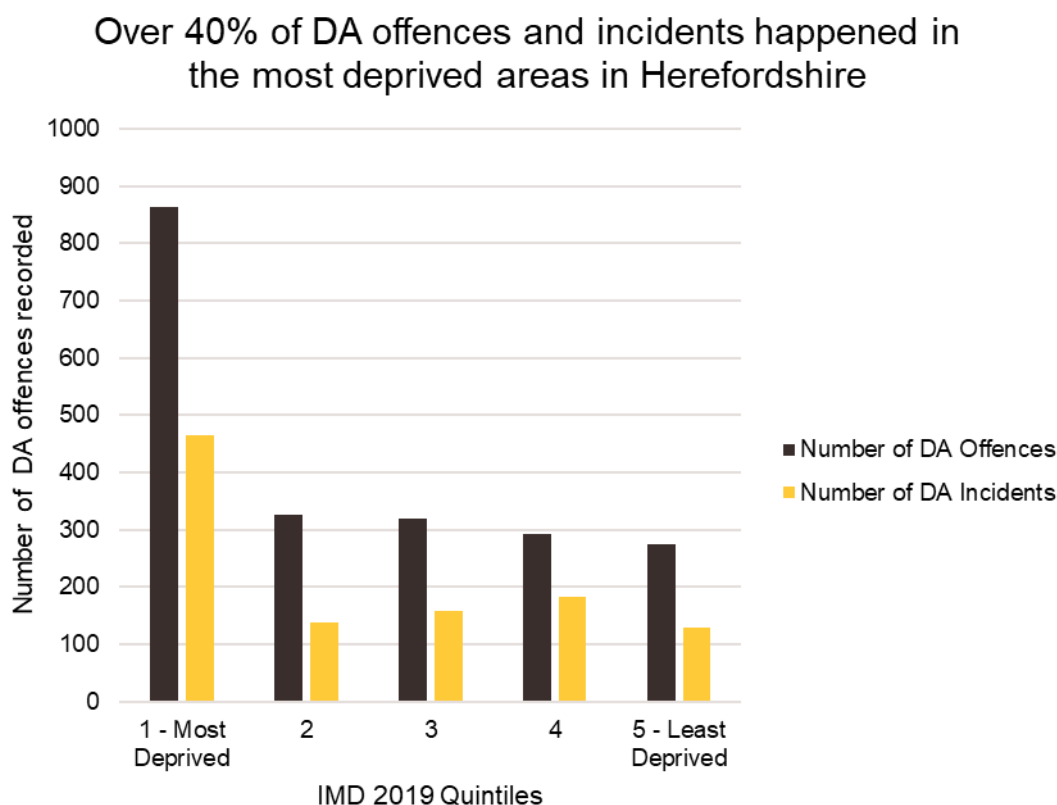
Ledbury







There appears to also be a link between DA offences and deprivation, with over 40% of all DA offences and incidents being recorded in the most deprived parts of Herefordshire, as seen in Figure 21.



*Figure 21. Number of offences with DA flag recorded in 2022/23 in Herefordshire by IMD 2019 quintile*

For context, Herefordshire has the fourth lowest population density in England, with 188,700 residents scattered all over its 842 miles. Over half (100,800; 53%) live in areas defined as 'rural', with the majority of these (81,400 people; 43% of the total) in the most rural 'village and dispersed' areas. A third of the population live in Hereford city (61,900 people), and a fifth in one of the five market towns – Leominster (11,900), Ross (11,100), Ledbury (9,600), Bromyard (4,700) and Kington (3,200). The rural nature of Herefordshire and pockets of isolation are challenging in terms of access to services and understanding the prevalence of domestic abuse.

The National Rural Crime Network issued a report on [domestic abuse in rural](#) areas in 2019. The report highlighted the commonalities and differences between rural and urban experiences based upon a comprehensive examination of the impact of rurality on domestic abuse victims and services. The key findings were as follows:

- Abuse lasts, on average, 25% longer in rural areas.
- The policing response is largely inadequate.
- The more rural the setting, the higher the risk of harm.
- Rurality and isolation are deliberately used as weapons by abusers.
- Close-knit rural communities facilitate abuse.
- Traditional, patriarchal communities control and subjugate women.
- Support services are scarce – less available, less visible and less effective.
- Retreating rural resources make help and escape harder.
- The short-term, often hand to mouth funding model has created competing and fragmented service provision.
- An endemic date bias against rural communities leads to serious gaps in response and support.

## Domestic homicides

A Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) means a review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by— (a) a person to whom he was related or with whom he was or had been in an intimate personal relationship, or (b) a member of the same household as himself/herself, held with a view to identifying the lessons to be learnt from the death.

The purpose of a DHR is to:

- a) establish what lessons are to be learned from the domestic homicide regarding the way in which local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard victims;
- b) identify clearly what those lessons are both within and between agencies, how and within what timescales they will be acted on, and what is expected to change as a result;
- c) apply these lessons to service responses including changes to inform national and local policies and procedures as appropriate;
- d) prevent domestic violence and homicide and improve service responses for all domestic violence and abuse victims and their children by developing a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to ensure that domestic abuse is identified and responded to effectively at the earliest opportunity;
- e) contribute to a better understanding of the nature of domestic violence and abuse; and
- f) highlight good practice.

Police data for Herefordshire in 2022/23 recorded no homicides where DA was a factor.

Herefordshire's Community Safety Partnership received one referral for a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) between April 2022 and March 2023. This review is on-going and further details relating to this case will not be provided within this report to preserve the anonymity of the individuals involved. Lessons learnt from the DHR will be shared with organisations across the county once the review has been completed. They will also be used to inform the action plan for the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board.

## Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme - Clare's Law

Clare's Law, or the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), enables the police to release information about any previous history of violence or abuse a person might have.

Under Clare's Law you can:

- Apply for information about your current or ex-partner because you're worried they may have a history of abuse and are a risk to you (right to ask).
- Request information about the current or ex-partner of someone you know because you're worried they might be at risk (right to know).

*Table 2. DVDS data from West Mercia Police in 2023*

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Right to ask</b>	<b>Right to know</b>
Number of DVDS applications received in 2023	188	134	54
Number of applications which resulted in disclosure in 2023	75	49	26
Number of applications which did not result in disclosure in 2023 (Non-Disclosure)	59	46	13
Number of applications which were withdrawn in 2023	54	39	15
Reasons applications were withdrawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The applicant or person at risk has indicated that they don't require the information because they have left the relationship and have no intention of resuming or having any further contact.</li> <li>- The person at risk has declined the information.</li> </ul>		
Other reasons for non-disclosure	The only other reason for non-disclosure is self-explanatory in that there is no previous history to disclose.		

- The above figures demonstrate that 40% of the total DVDS applications received in 2023 resulted in disclosure (37% of right to ask and 48% of right to know applications).
- 31% of the total DVDS applications did not result in disclosure as there was no previous history to disclose (34% of right to ask and 24% of right to know disclosures).
- 29% of the total DVDS applications were withdrawn (29% of right to ask and 28% of right to know disclosures). This could be for a variety of reasons, for example, the applicant or person at risk has indicated that they don't require the information because they have left the relationship and have no intention of resuming or having any further contact or the person at risk has declined the information.

- It is evident that there is a significant difference in the number of disclosures delivered when the application is based upon a right to know request as opposed to a right to ask request. This may be due to the fact that the majority of right to know requests are submitted by professionals who may already have prior knowledge of a perpetrator's DA offending history.

These figures are generally in line with those provided by the West Mercia police force and national figures for the year ending March 2023:

- 50.2% of 'Right to Know' applications resulted in disclosure in West Mercia (105 of 209) and 42.4% of 'Right to Know' applications resulted in disclosure nationally (7,609 of 17,925), compared to 48.1% in Herefordshire (26 of 54).
- 31.6% of 'Right to Ask' applications resulted in disclosure in West Mercia (215 of 681) and 35.8% of 'Right to Ask' applications resulted in disclosure nationally (9,829 of 27,419) compared to 36.6% in Herefordshire (49 of 134).

### **Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Domestic Violence Protection Orders**

Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) and Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) were rolled out across all 43 police forces in England Wales from 8 March 2014. DVPOs are a civil order that fills a "gap" in providing protection to victims by enabling the police and magistrates' courts to put in place protective measures in the immediate aftermath of a domestic violence incident where there is insufficient evidence to charge a perpetrator and provide protection to a victim via bail conditions. It is important to note that bail with conditions and protective measures can be used simultaneously to build up greater protection for the victim.

A DVPN is an emergency non-molestation and eviction notice which can be issued by the police, when attending to a domestic abuse incident, to a perpetrator. Because the DVPN is a police-issued notice, it is effective from the time of issue, thereby giving the victim immediate support. Within 48 hours of the DVPN being served on the perpetrator, an application by police to a magistrates' court for a DVPO must be heard. A DVPO can prevent the perpetrator from returning to a residence and from having contact with the victim for up to 28 days. This allows the victim a degree of breathing space to consider their options with the help of a support agency. Both the DVPN and DVPO contain a condition prohibiting the perpetrator from molesting the victim.

- Data shared by West Mercia Police show that from April 2022 to March 2023, three DVPNs and three subsequent DVPOs were issued/granted.
- These numbers are particularly low due to a number of issues which have since been addressed by the central team within Herefordshire (for example, magistrates and judges not authorising these orders where there were bail conditions already in place).
- Following these efforts, numbers have increased substantially with data from April 23 to Feb 24 showing that a total of 35 DVPNs were issued and a total of 29 DVPOs.

### **Probation:**

West Mercia Probation Service was unable to provide the data required for the time period requested (April 2022 to March 2023). They did, however, share the data below which represents the DA picture for Herefordshire Probation at the time the data was shared (29/02/2024):

*Table 3. DA data provided by Probation on 29/02/2024*

Cases recorded with at least one DA flag	199
Cases flagged as DA victim	21
Cases flagged as DA perpetrator	172
Cases flagged as DA history	36
Individuals with a requirement or condition to complete the Building Better Relationships (BBR) programme	30
Number of individuals who have completed the BBR programme in the past 12 months	8

### Recommendations:

- As outlined above, most domestic abuse offences in Herefordshire which resulted in no further action were recorded as 'evidential difficulties - victim does not support police action', with a recent increase in 'victim does support police action but evidential difficulties' also preventing further action'. As such, further efforts should be made to explore this in more depth including ways in which to reduce these numbers.
- Regarding DA in a rural context, several important recommendations have been provided by the National Rural Crime Network Report (2019) to include:
  - Services and commissioners must analyse demand by postcode in future, using a common definition of rurality to develop a meaningful dataset, ensuring prevention and intervention work is also targeted at areas where there is apparently little demand – this report strongly indicates there will be demand, just hidden. Crime data provided within this report can be utilised to achieve the above.
  - Education and outreach must be prioritised and must focus on symptoms and patterns of abuse. Greater education and awareness is needed in rural areas regarding the warning signs of domestic abuse and the ability to act or help a victim to act. GPs and religious groups like church communities are the most likely allies in rural areas. Access and reference to Clare's Law, the right to ask, needs to be made more public in rural areas so that victims know they have an option to revert to. Resources need to be freed up to allow an effective awareness campaign to be provided to rural communities which target the recognition of behaviours symptomatic of domestic abuse. We believe that bringing symptoms into the spotlight is more effective than talk about domestic abuse per se.

- Domestic Abuse Service Commissioners need to proactively consider servicing rural communities. Incidence rates for domestic abuse are slightly higher in urban areas as evidenced by the CSEW - 4.6% in urban areas vs 3.9% in rural areas. Commissioners have an obligation to take a data-led approach to plan service provision, but for Commissioners with significant rural areas there must also be an obligation to ensure that data adequately represents the potential for domestic abuse cases in rural areas. With the knowledge that rural victims are half as likely to report incidents, outreach activity should be directed at low incidence or no incidence areas. Efforts should be made to look at where reporting of abuse is not happening, as well as where it is. I.e. are there very low incidences in some areas for no apparent reason and are there demographics and deprivation indices would suggest there should be more incidents?

These recommendations will be integrated into the domestic abuse new action plan which will form part of the new Domestic Abuse Strategy.

## Health and Adult Social Care Data

### Health

#### General Practice

The following data was provided by Taurus, the GP practice federation in Herefordshire for the time period from April 2019 to March 2023.

The figures are counts of when a GP records a code relating to DA on a patient's record, a list of the codes can be found in Appendix A.

There was a marked increase in the number of patients with a recorded DA code in 2021/22 across all age groups, but the figures fell in 2022/23 to the levels recorded in 2020/21. This could be that face to face GP appointments resumed and that they were able detect DA amongst their patients which was not the case in 2019/20 when the majority of the appointments were conducted online or via telephone. The number of patients with mental ill health and also

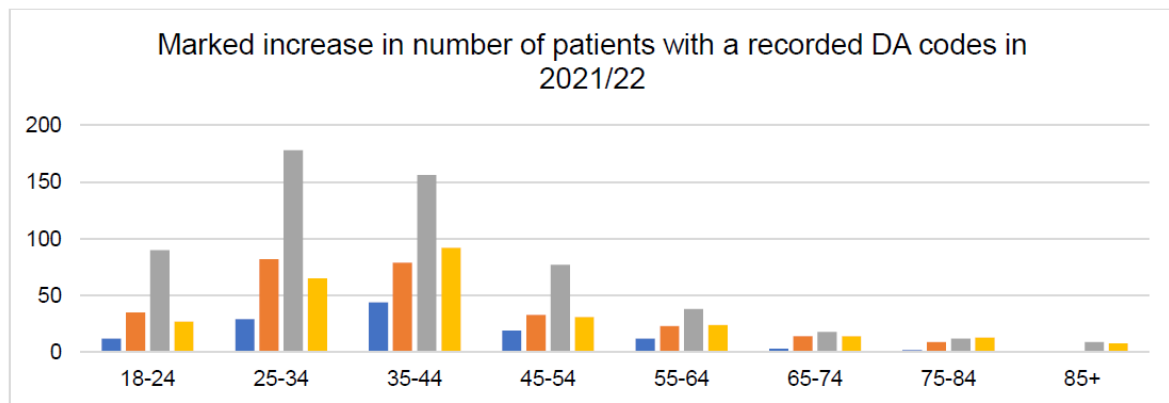


Figure 22. The count of DA codes recorded by GPs in Herefordshire by age group and by year, 2019-2023

recorded with a DA code has doubled between 2021/22 and 2022/23 although in context the numbers are small.

Around 45% of patients who were recorded with DA code live in an area that is in the top 25% most deprived areas in Herefordshire.

GP practices are working together with community, mental health, social care, pharmacy, hospital and voluntary services in their local areas in groups of practices known as primary care networks (PCNs). These enable greater provision of proactive, personalised, coordinated and more integrated health and social care for people close to home. There are five PCNs which cover the whole of Herefordshire and a small area of the bordering county of Worcestershire. Three that cover more rural areas and market towns; East Herefordshire, North West Herefordshire, South West Herefordshire, and two based in Hereford City; Hereford Medical Group (HMG) and Wargrave, Belmont and Cantilupe (WBC).

According to Figure 23 the highest number of DA codes recorded per 1,000 registered patients were recorded by GP practices in the North and West primary care network (PCN) areas over the last four years (from April 2019 to March 2023). In particular, The Ryeland surgery in Leominster (one of the GP practices included in North & West PCN) recorded the most DA codes. It may be helpful to investigate further as to why this is the case. The IRIS programme has been piloted in Herefordshire during 2023//24; IRIS is a specialist DA training, support and referral programme for GP surgeries. It is anticipated that this will positively impact the recording of DA whilst ensuring that GP surgeries have the skills and resources needed to support victims of domestic abuse to access specialist services.

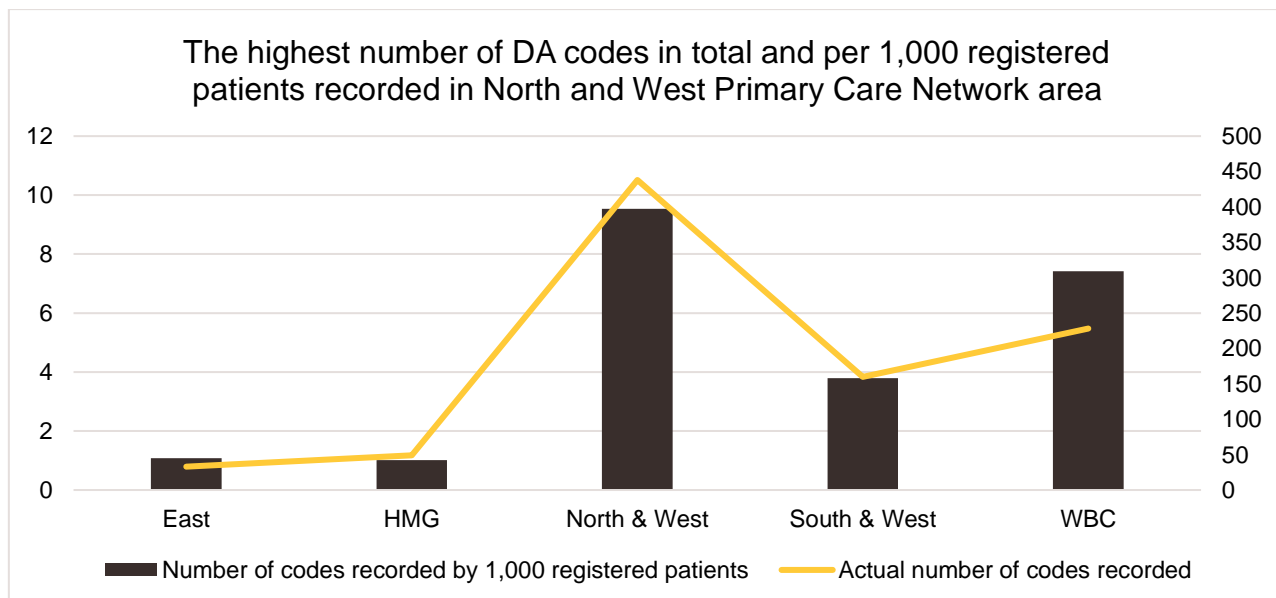
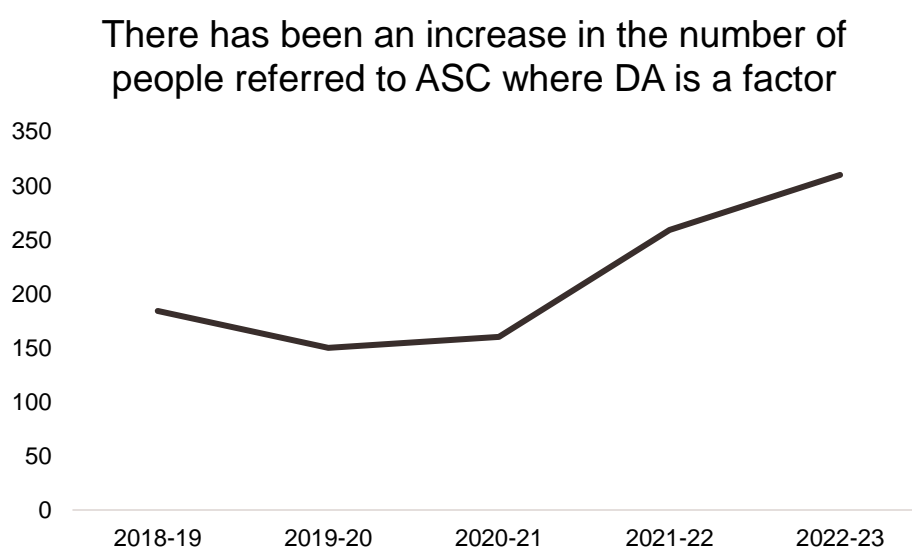


Figure 23. The count of DA codes recorded by GPs in Herefordshire by PCN

## Adult Social Care

There are two ways of recording DA in Herefordshire Council's adult social care safeguarding referral recording system. One way of recording domestic abuse is ticking 'DA' box from a list of 'type of abuse'. And the other way is flagging DA as a factor when recording other types of abuse. In 2022/23, 1,588 people were referred to adult social care, 310 of these individuals referred had DA flagged as a factor, and a further 3 people were referred where domestic abuse was the abuse type but DA was not flagged as a factor. Referrals where DA was the abuse type or where DA was flagged accounted for 20% of the people referred to adult social care in 2022/23.

In 2022/23 there has been an almost two-fold increase in the number of people referred to ASC where DA is recorded as a factor compared to 2020/21, as can be seen in the graph below.



*Figure 24. The number of people referred to ASC where DA is a factor between 2018 and 2023*

In 2022/23, psychological/emotional abuse was cited as a source of abuse for 60% of people who were referred to ASC where DA was flagged. People can be referred for more than one type of abuse which is why the number of people referred for each abuse type adds up to more than the total number of people referred.

*Table 4. The type of abuse cited in people referred to ASC where DA was flagged.*

Abuse Type	Number of people referred for this type of abuse	% of people referred for



		this type of abuse
Psychological/Emotional	187	60%
Physical	134	43%
Domestic Abuse	121	39%
Financial and Material	104	34%
Neglect and Omission	52	17%
Self Neglect	47	15%
Sexual	23	7%
Sexual Exploitation	8	3%
Discriminatory	6	2%
Modern Slavery	4	1%
Organisational	4	1%
Total number of people referred to ASC where DA is a flag	310	

Since there have been people physical

2018/19, been fewer referred for abuse

where DA is flagged, but an increase in the number of people who are referred for financial and material abuse.

Referrals to ASC can come from numerous different sources, with 21 potential sources listed in the data, although the numbers of referrals from each source can vary considerably. Between 2018/19 and 2022/23, most referrals came from Wye Valley Trust (16%), however, there has been a considerable increase in the number of referrals coming from the police since 2021/22, rising from 5% of people referred in 2020/21, to 14% of people referred in 2022/23. The table below shows the 10 most common sources of referral for people referred to ASC where DA is flagged, which account for 99% of all people referred between 2018/19 to 2022/23.

*Table 5. Source of referrals to ASC where DA is flagged between 2018 and 2023*

Source of referral	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Grand Total

WVT - Acute	23	27	29	33	41	146
Other	23	20	21	44	39	139
Family Member	25	9	24	29	36	120
Social Care staff	16	23	12	42	29	118
Police	6	3	8	31	43	85
Health - other	9	10	12	22	34	84
Provider - Dom Care	11	15	11	15	13	59
GP	11	9	5	13	23	59
WVT - Community	15	10	13	8	14	58
Housing	13	8	11	10	15	54

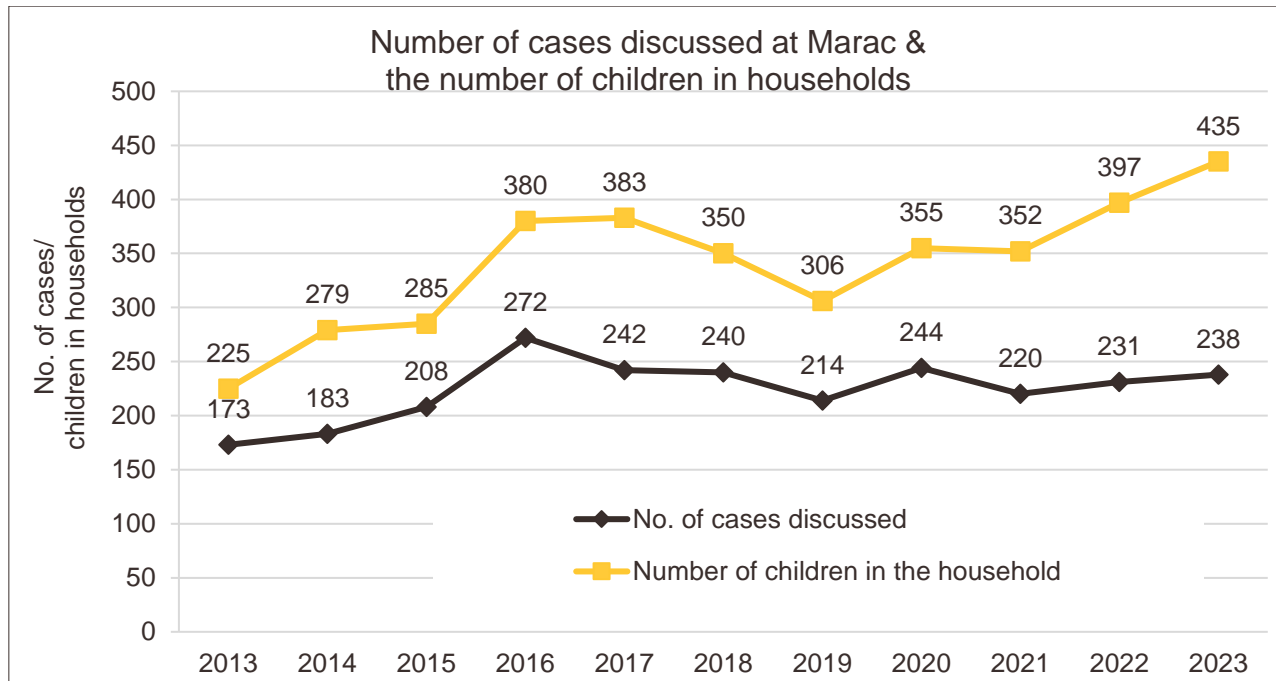
## MARAC

SafeLives describes Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) as “a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), probation and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. After sharing all relevant information they have about a victim, the representatives discuss options for increasing the safety of the victim and turn these into a co-ordinated action plan. The primary focus of the MARAC is to safeguard the adult victim. The MARAC will also make links with other fora to safeguard children and manage the behaviour of the perpetrator. At the heart of a MARAC is the working assumption that no single agency or individual can see the complete picture of the life of a victim, but all may have insights that are crucial to their safety. The victim does not attend the meeting but is represented by an IDVA who speaks on their behalf.”

There were 231 DA cases discussed at MARAC's between April 2022 and March 2023. This equates to 30 cases per 10,000 population, which is relatively low compared with national figures (49) but high compared with the West Mercia area (24) (Domestic Abuse in England and Wales, ONS, 2023).

There has been a notable increase in the number of cases discussed at MARAC – Figure 25. Alongside this overall increase in cases, the number of children in households of MARAC cases has been increasing too. The average number of children in households per case discussed in

Herefordshire during 2022/23 was 1.7; compared with 1.3 nationally, 1.2 for MSFs and 1.4 for the West Mercia policing area.



*Figure 25. The number of cases discussed at MARAC and the number of children in households discussed at MARAC between 2013 and 2023.*

Of the total number of cases discussed at MARACs in 2022/23, 17.75% (41) were repeat cases. Herefordshire's repeat cases figure is significantly lower than the national (33%), MSFs (30%) and West Mercia policing area (25%) figures.

There has been a continuous increase in the number of high-risk domestic abuse cases discussed in MARAC over the last 10 years, with the large majority of referrals (63%) coming from the police followed by the IDVA service. In terms of police referrals specifically, this is slightly less than the national (66%) but equivalent to West Mercia figures (63%).

### 63% of MARAC cases were referred by the police

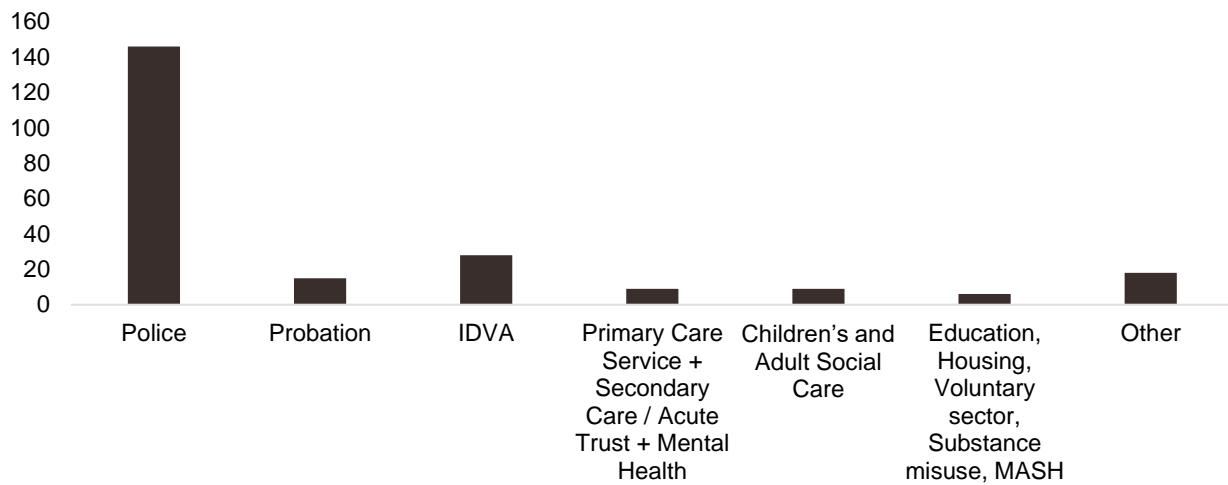


Figure 26. The source of MARAC referrals, 2022-2023

There were fewer victims aged 16-17 years in the cases discussed in Herefordshire MARAC meetings (0.9% of all cases) compared to other areas; 1.3% nationally and 2.2% in the West Mercia police force area.

### Nearly 60% of survivors heard at MARAC were aged 25-44

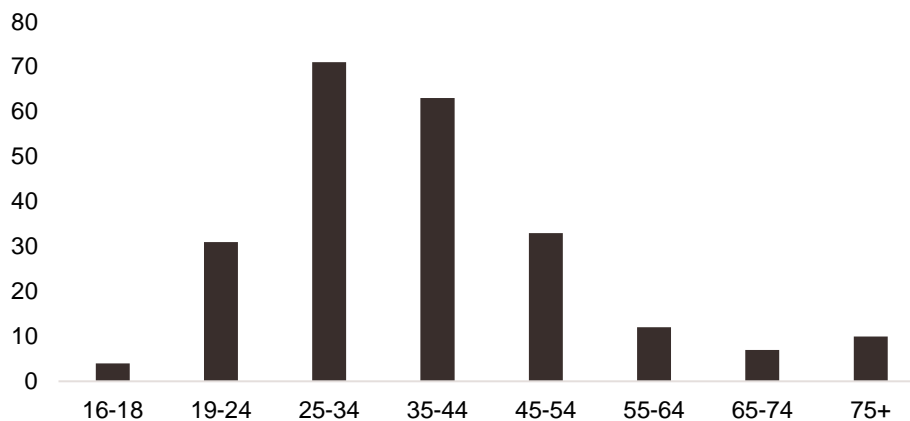


Figure 27. Age profile of victim/survivors discussed at MARAC in the 2022-2023 time period

Whilst data relating to the 2022/23 period specifically is not available for the following demographic factors, data relating to the year 2022 is provided.

Just 0.4% of cases involved a person from an LGBTQ+ group (compared to 1.4% nationally).

There were fewer male victims recorded in Herefordshire (4.8%) compared with national data (6.2%) but the figure for Herefordshire was higher than that of MSFs (4.4%) and the West Mercia police force area (3.4%).

In 2022, 10% (33) of cases discussed at MARAC were from an ethnic minority group (compared to 16% nationally). When compared to ethnicity makeup of the county (3.1% ethnic group other than White), this is a higher representation.

Data was requested regarding the relationship between the victim/survivor and perpetrator of the cases heard at MARAC, however, this was not available.

### **Practitioner engagement: Feedback from the 2023 SafeLives Report (interview and survey feedback from professionals)**

- 76% felt the MARAC Greatly or Somewhat improved the safety of victims
- 79% felt the MARAC Greatly or Somewhat improved the safety of children
- 60% felt the MARAC Greatly or Somewhat addresses the behaviour of those who harm
- Professionals frequently commented on MARAC working well. They referred to MARAC chairing, governance, as well as agencies generally seeing the value in it.
- Lack of attendance was referenced in regards to key people missing or reduced capacity, possibly resulting in inconsistent attendance and sending in of information. One professional pointed out how the lack of key individuals with knowledge meant insufficient challenge was available.
- Repeat cases were also highlighted as a concern.

Feedback provided by professionals in relation to MARAC:

*"The MARAC is well run and works well, it is effectively chaired by someone with great experience and is well attended by professionals."* Professional, Domestic Abuse Service.

*"More awareness for professionals needed from MARAC and to understand why some cases don't go/aren't applicable to go to MARAC."* Professional, Voluntary or community sector

*"I think referral could be scrutinised more and other options discussed for cases not quite meeting the criteria. I have witnessed MARAC's being full a month before they happen. How can this be a response to a high-risk victim if they have to wait to get on to an agenda?"* Professional, Domestic Abuse Service

*"Training to provide the right attendees to Multi Agency meeting to share relevant information".* Professional, Domestic Abuse Service

### **MARAC themes and reflections from the SafeLives review**

- The nine core agencies were present during the observed meeting, with the exception of substance misuse service.
- Some good action planning was observed.
- Risk identification around animals and subsequent actions was impressive.
- Children's social services were present but represented by a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) lead. This process should ideally be reviewed to ensure all relevant

information and action planning can be as effective as possible; thus being represented by a senior manager within CSC. There was a significant lack of actions from this agency.

- Statutory housing representation demonstrated best practice from this core agency at MARAC.
- Action planning was not SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely) in the majority of the cases.
- Issues around identification of the primary victim and person who harms was demonstrated, which potentially was caused by a lack of domestic abuse knowledge and confidence.
- Too much historic information and duplication of information.
- The chair displayed skill and empathy; with examples of intervention which would not have occurred without this person.
- Overall conscious and unconscious victim blaming and judgement, was peppered throughout the cases. This was compounded by a couple of cases overtly displaying compassion for the person who harms and not the victim, for example, language and terminology highlighted empathy for the perpetrator at the expense of displaying detrimental language towards the victim. The victim did not engage and used substances, thus little time was spent on her needs/wants and safety planning, as agencies overall felt her too difficult.
- There appeared to be a large emphasis on the victim providing disclosure and engaging without agencies being proactive to support them achieving this.
- Lack of victims' voice and institutional challenging in the room in many cases.
- Use of laws such as stalking and harassment and coercive control appeared to be missed.
- Lack of preparation by many representatives.
- No representatives gave bespoke timings according to risk with their actions.

#### **Recommendations:**

- To address the above improvements as identified by the SafeLives review.
- There needs to be a clearer focus on addressing the behaviours of those who harm within MARAC.
- Improvements in data collection are needed for future needs assessments. Specifically around certain demographic factors and the relationship type between victims and perpetrators.
- The number of cases discussed at MARAC in Herefordshire where victims are from an ethnic minority group, LGBTQ+, disabled or male are very low. CSEW data suggests that DA is actually more prevalent in people with disabilities and those who are from the LGBTQ+ community. This suggests that there are likely to be unseen disabled and LGBTQ+ victims and efforts should therefore be made to promote services to people with protected characteristics.

## **Non-Accommodation Based Domestic Abuse Service Provision**

## **Victim/Survivor Services**

### **The IDVA Service**

WMWA IDVAs are specialist trained Domestic Abuse safety workers who support people who are at high risk of immediate and significant harm from domestic abuse. IDVAs work with both male and female victims/survivors across Herefordshire.

IDVA's are specialist workers providing a lifeline for victims at a time when they are most vulnerable, supporting them in making their own decisions to preserve their well-being. IDVAs provide both emotional and practical support and information, enabling them to make their own choices about the action that they wish to take in order to promote their long-term safety. IDVA services in Herefordshire are predominately funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia.

IDVAs work closely with a range of organisations to help victims to get the best possible support, and to ensure that the support is well coordinated. IDVAs are independent of all statutory agencies and advocate specifically for the victims of domestic abuse, ensuring that their voice is heard by the other agencies that are working to support them. Client confidentiality is guaranteed unless there is a safeguarding concern, and will only be reviewed if the IDVA feels that they need to share information about concerns for someone's safety.

In 2022/23, 193 people were supported by the IDVA service in Herefordshire.

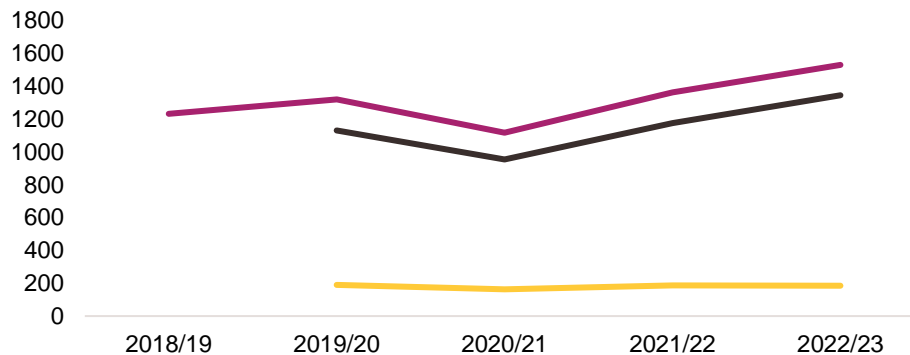
#### Professional feedback – Interviews (SafeLives Report):

IDVAs were spoken of highly. Their presence at MARAC meetings, interactions with victims, and their ability to be easily contacted were all identified as positives for both staff and victims.

### **West Mercia Women's Aid**

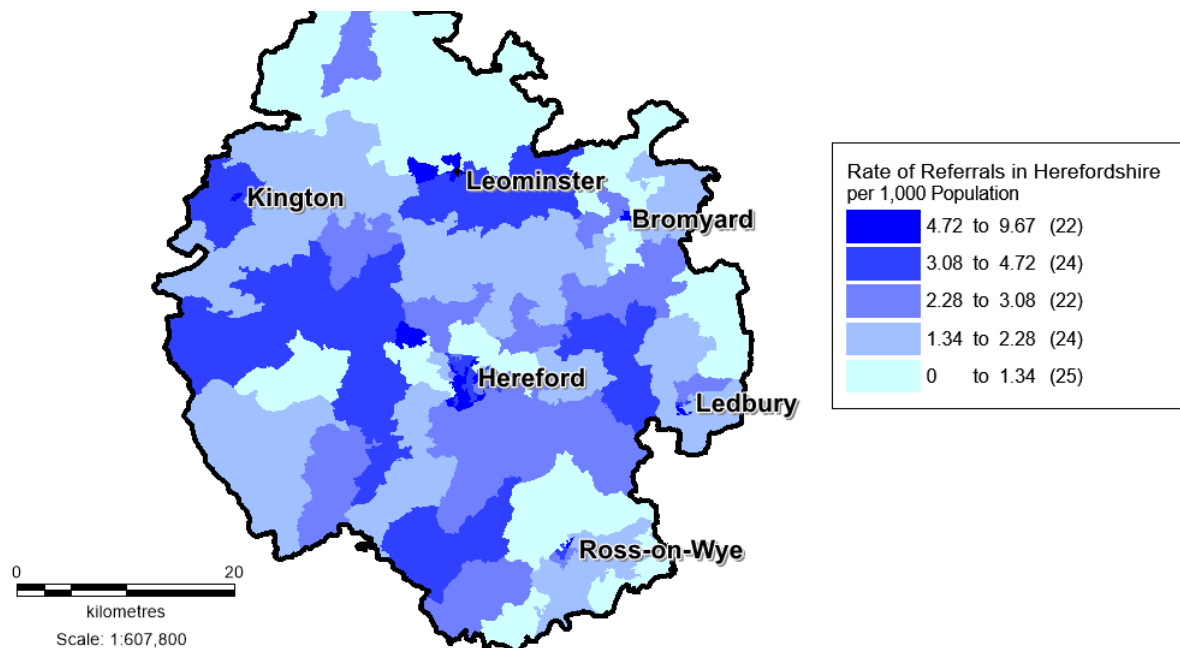
- 1,530 referrals in total for 2022/23 with 88% (1,345) of referrals being for adult services. Most referrals for adult services were either self-referral (62%) or internal referral (25%) with a small number coming from other sources including Children's Services (4%), Health Services (2%) and Police (2%).
- 165 adult referrals were refused, the most common reasons for refusal were: other (30%); unable to contact client (20%), no space/capacity to support (16%) and client does not want support (15%).
- Just over half of the referrals received were for helpline support (679), 448 referrals were for group support (33%), 7% were for refuge (98) and the remaining 9% of referrals were split between the extended housing support project, 1-2-1 support (complex needs and marginalised communities) and Men & Boys.
- WMWA supported 1,078 adult service users in 2022/23 in Herefordshire.

Referrals for children and young people has been stable but there has been an increase in referrals for adults since 2020/21



#### Rate of Referrals to West Mercia Women's Aid in 2022/23 in Herefordshire per 1,000 Population

Figure 28. Number of referrals to WMWA adult and CYP services between 2018 and 2023.



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Figure 29. Rate of referrals to West Mercia Women's Aid in 2022/23 in Herefordshire per 1,000 population

Between April 2022 to March 2023, Hereford South West had the most referrals to WMWA per 1,000 residents at 7 referrals per 1,000 residents, followed by South Leominster and Hereford South (5 & 4 per 1,000 residents respectively). Penyard, Llangarron & Goodrich and Colwall, Cradley & Wellington had the fewest referrals with fewer than 2 referrals per 1,000. The data shows that whilst



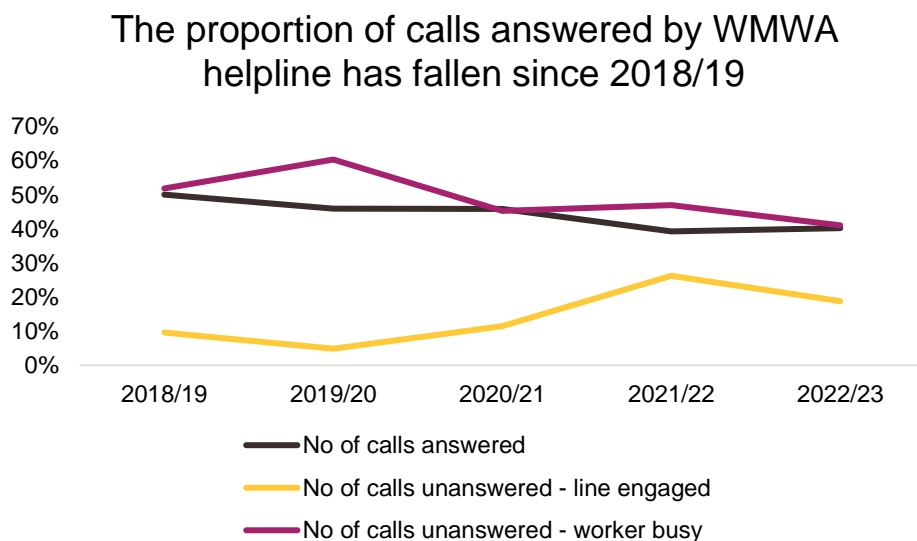
WMWA did receive referrals from across the county, most referrals came from Hereford and Leominster.

- WMWA helpline

WMWA Helpline is both the main ‘front door’ of WMWA services, and a service in itself. All calls are kept confidential unless there are concerns for someone’s safety. Trained workers will support anyone who calls the Helpline – providing information and advice on safety planning, reporting to the Police, housing, and access to both WMWA services and those of other agencies. Sometimes the most effective thing they do is just to listen, and believe, and let callers know that they are not alone and that there is help out there for them – as and when they are ready.

WMWA received 1,785 calls to their Herefordshire helpline in 2022/23, 75% of these calls were repeat contact and 25% were first contact.

WMWA received 3,002 calls to their helpline across Herefordshire and Shropshire in 2022/23 although 553 calls were hung up before the system transferred calls. Of the remaining 2,449 calls, 40% were answered, 41% were unanswered due to the worker being busy and 19% of calls were unanswered due to the line being engaged. Please note that WMWA have changed their helpline resourcing model since this time.



*Figure 30. The proportion of helpline calls answered by WMWA, 2018-2023.*

- The Recovery Pathway Group Programmes

WMWA’s ‘Recovery Pathway’ is a programme of safe and welcoming groups that help survivors to build their own knowledge and confidence, and to help and support each other on their recovery journey. Groups include the Freedom Programme, Power to Change and Recovery Toolkit and a programme to support parents where children have been affected. When groups are unable to meet, then WMWA provide support over the

telephone or through online forums. Support is available to women living in their own homes or in temporary accommodation, and for those at all stages of an abusive relationship – whether they are still in the relationship or have left. All groups are conducted within strict rules of confidentiality, respect and kindness. Bringing together women with a common experience of domestic abuse also helps to develop a network of survivors who can continue to support each other long after the Recovery programme has concluded.

Number of referrals received to group programmes during the 2022/23 period: 448  
Group service users completing programme of support during the 2022/23 period:

- Number of Service Users who completed programme of support = 171
- Number of Service Users who did not complete programme of support = 147

## **Perpetrator Programmes**

### **Risk factors for domestic abuse perpetration**

Research has suggested that particular factors are associated with an increased risk of perpetrating domestic abuse. It is key to note that these 'risk factors' are not causal, rather they are factors which have been associated with domestic abuse perpetration. In other words, their presence does not cause domestic abuse but can make it more likely to occur.

It is also important to recognise that risk factors exist across multiple levels of influence - *individual, relationship, community and societal* – and there is often a complex interaction between these factors, as well as those which would be considered protective.

A summary of the key risk factors for domestic abuse perpetration, as outlined in the academic literature (Clemmow et al., 2023; Morrison et al., 2022; SafeLives, 2019), are provided below:

- Attitudes and behaviours – hostility towards women, misogynistic and patriarchal beliefs, permissive attitudes towards violence, attitudes that condone or normalise domestic abuse.
- Adverse childhood experiences – exposure to violence during childhood (including witnessing domestic abuse within the home) and/or direct experience of abuse during childhood.
- Mental health problems – depression, anxiety, personality disorders, suicidal ideation/attempts.
- Substance misuse – drug and alcohol abuse.
- External factors – recent stress, financial difficulties, unemployment, criminal peers.

Research has suggested that the underlying drivers for domestic abuse perpetration differ for men and women (Clemmow et al., 2023). There is very limited evidence regarding risk factors for perpetrators of domestic abuse against older adults, which is a key area of focus within Herefordshire (Bows et al., 2022).

It is key to gain an understanding of the role that such factors can play in order to inform early intervention efforts aimed at reducing the likelihood of an individual perpetrating domestic abuse (for example, via preventative programmes delivered within schools).

- DRIVE programme
  - The Drive Project is a collaborative approach to tackling domestic abuse, by liaising with police officers, support agencies, caseworks and directly with those presenting abusive, challenging and violent behaviour. Drive provides a case manager who acts as a single point of contact for perpetrators. This project focuses on high risk and serial perpetrators, in order to encourage more engagement with recovery programmes and tackle the greatest risk of harm. Referrals to the Drive programme either come from MARAC via partner agencies or directly from the police.
  - According to the case management system for Hereford Drive, between 01 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, there were:
    - 62 cases allocated
    - 62 cases completed
    - 62 victims/survivors provided with services
    - 141 children and young people involved
  - These figures are higher than the 2021/2022 time period where 52 cases were allocated and only 16 completed.
  - The University of Bristol undertook an independent, three year, evaluation of the Drive Project during its first phase of delivery (2016-19). The evaluation concluded that the Drive Project reduces abuse and the risk perpetrators pose.
- Men and Masculinities programme
  - The Men & Masculinities programme is an evidence based programme that provides a safe space for people who have engaged in abusive, harmful and damaging behaviour within their relationships. The 24-week programme is voluntary and explores what it means to display appropriate behaviour within relationships and highlights how conflict, aggression and anger can deeply impact the lives of others. Importantly, the programme also offers a linked (ex-) partner support service.
  - Between April 2022 and March 2023, 42 men attended the Men and Masculinities programme in Herefordshire, with 20 completing the programme.

### **Practitioner engagement: Local support provision for victims and families – Feedback from the 2023 SafeLives Report**

As part of their review of the domestic abuse system in Herefordshire, SafeLives carried out a survey and interviews with practitioners working across the domestic abuse system and victims.

- Three quarters of respondents (75%) described it as easy or very easy to share information with other agencies and refer to specialist domestic abuse services.
- Two in ten respondents (22%) felt it was difficult or very difficult to find services that could help them.

Professionals were asked the following question: When you identify a victim or family is experiencing domestic abuse, what do you usually find to be the biggest challenges in ensuring they get the support they need?

- Responses identified victim-survivor engagement as the greatest challenge due to lack of trust in services, perpetrator behaviour, and maintaining support.
- Comments on funding, capacity, and waiting lists were also identified as challenges in ensuring support with professionals providing the following quotes:

*“Lack of funding for one-to-one support for victims deemed as low- medium risk. Waiting lists also for services, highlighted for a number of services.”*

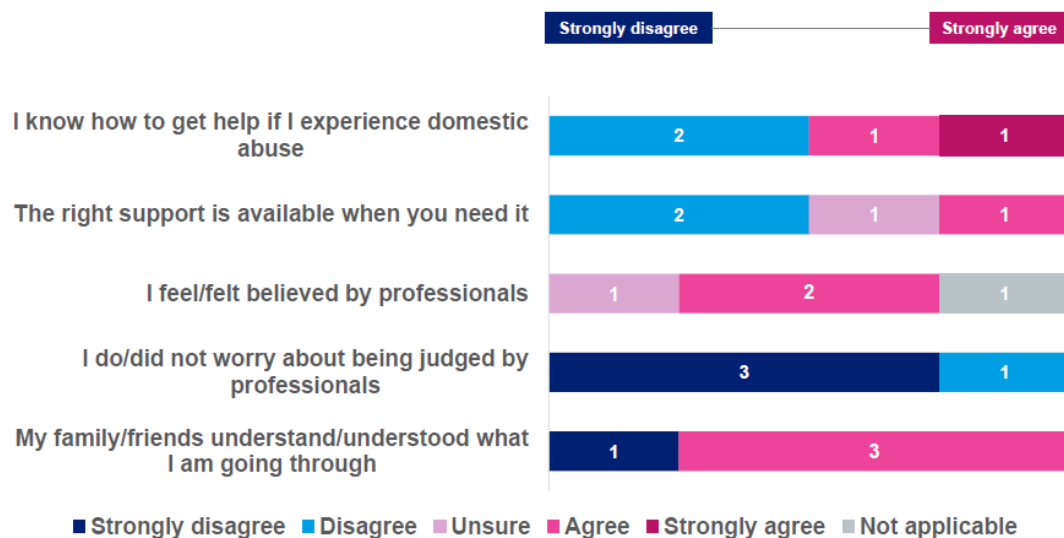
*“Lack of resources across voluntary and statutory agencies, lack of housing, lack of 1-2-1 community support.”*

*“The shortage of services available for the numbers of individuals and families affected. How far people might have to go to access refuge support and the impact this has on theirs and their children’s’ lives.”*

### Survivor engagement: Victim/Survivor Survey and Interviews (SafeLives Report 2023)

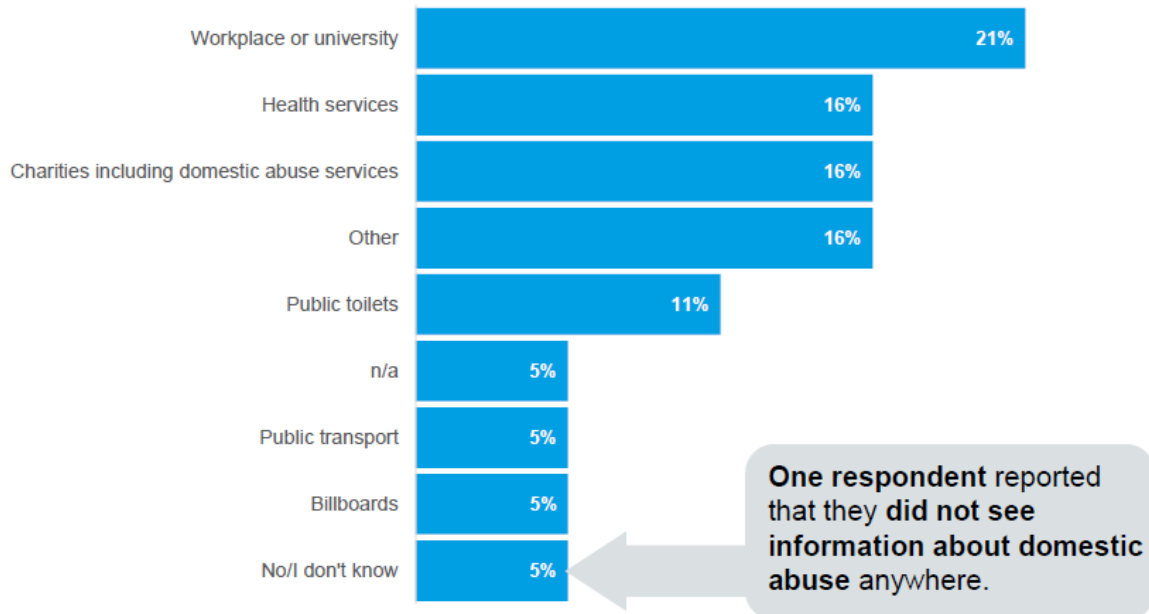
#### Experience of seeking help

Respondents rated how much they agreed with the following statements:



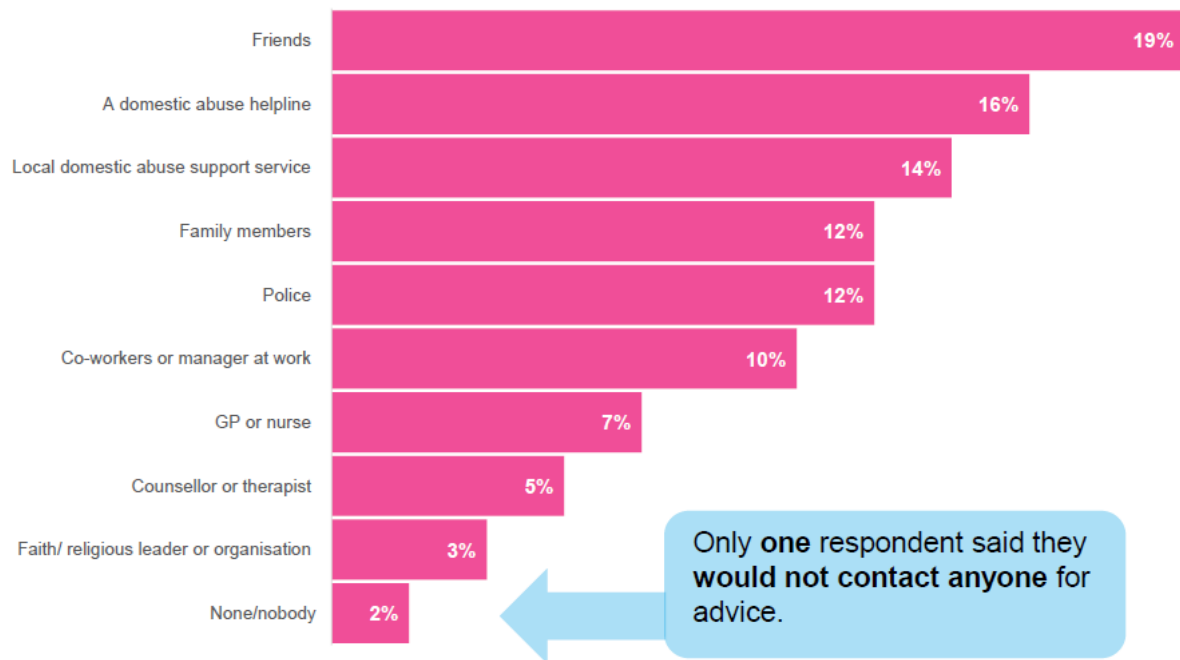
#### Awareness of domestic abuse support

In the local area, respondents most commonly had seen information about domestic abuse in workplace or place of study, followed by health services, charities, and other spaces.



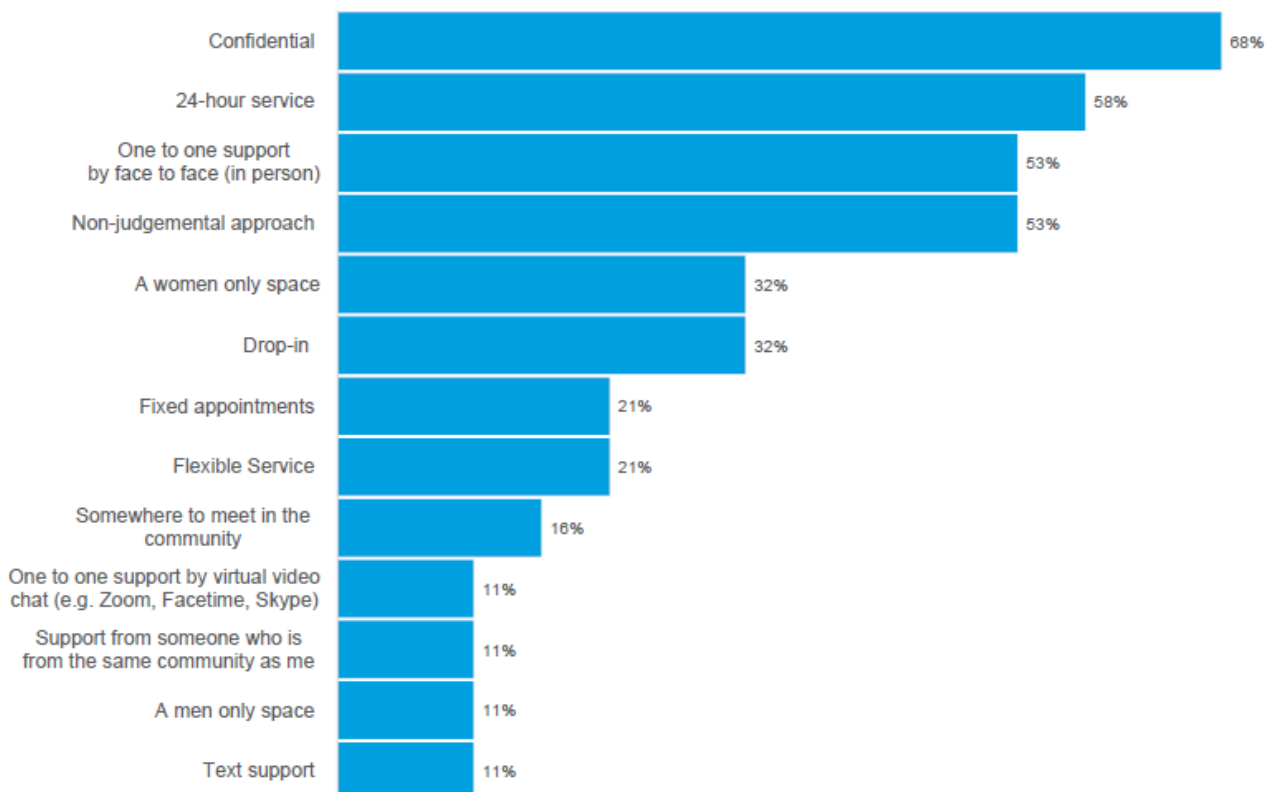
#### Preferred support and services for victims

Respondents would most likely contact friends, a domestic abuse helpline or a local domestic abuse support service for advice if they experienced domestic abuse in the future.



#### Preferred support and services for victims

It was most important to respondents that support was confidential, a 24-hour service, in person, and non-judgemental.



### Recommendations:

- Regarding support for victim/survivors in the community – Work needs to be undertaken to address the perceived lack of support for low-medium risk clients and the waiting lists for these services.
- Consideration needs to be given to the operating model of the helpline; only 40% of calls were answered.
- Feedback from those with lived experience showed that some were unsure of how they could get help if they were experiencing DA. As such, on-going efforts should be made to raise awareness of the support services available and how to access these by engaging with the community using a variety of methods.
- In addition, further efforts need to be made with regards to improving understanding of DA across public-facing agencies to ensure they provide effective responses (for example, by facilitating appropriate referrals into specialist services). This can be addressed via the provision of effective and accessible training.
- Following on from the above, understanding and working to improve referral numbers from external agencies to specialist DA support services. For example, those provided by WMWA as only 4% of referrals were received from social care, 2% from health services and 2% from the police.

# Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation

In this section we will be looking at service mapping, noting the safe accommodation that currently exists in Herefordshire. Much of the data obtained was provided by the local safe accommodation services who provided information on the services they provide.

## Safe accommodation provision

Herefordshire currently meets recommended minimum number of refuge spaces based upon the Council of Europe's recommendation of one unit\* of safe accommodation per 10,000 population.

According to the latest ONS Census data from mid-2021, the population of Herefordshire was 187,600, meaning a minimum of 19 units of safe accommodation is required within the county.

During the 2022/2023 time period, Herefordshire offered 19 units of safe accommodation in total, as outlined below:

- A 10 unit refuge provided by WMWA
- 9 units of dispersed safe accommodation provided by Connexus in partnership with WMWA
- Additional units of dispersed safe accommodation were commissioned during this period but were not in full use (4 units).

*\*One unit refers to accommodation for one person or one person and their children. Units can vary in size and the number of children they can house. In Herefordshire, all 19 units are self-contained accommodation.*

It is important to note that those seeking safe accommodation often access a refuge outside of their local area due to the potential risks associated with remaining in the area they originally resided in. In addition, they are largely dependent on where refuge spaces are available at the time, meaning they may have to access safe accommodation in a different area to where they originally presented. As such, it is difficult to quantify local demand given that refuges are a national provision and current figures indicate that there is a national shortage in the number of units of safe accommodation available based upon the recommendations provided by the Council of Europe, as outlined below.

*Table 6. The recommended number of safe accommodation units in England and Herefordshire*

	England	Herefordshire
Population (ONS Census data from mid-2021)	56,536,000	187,600
Number of units of safe accommodation	4,332	19



Recommended number of units of safe accommodation (based on the Council of Europe's recommendation of 1 units per 10,000)	5,654	19
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A particular strength of the DA housing provision within Herefordshire relates to the flexibility of the accommodation available. For example, dispersed units are available to male or female victim/survivors and several units allow pets (something that we know is a key barrier that prevents many victim/survivors of DA from accessing safe accommodation). The Pets and Domestic Abuse Survey conducted by the Dogs Trust (2019) found the following:

- 97% of professionals said pets are often used as a means of controlling and coercing someone experiencing domestic abuse.
- 9 out of 10 professionals said that some survivors won't leave their home without knowing their pet will be safe.

#### **Other DA Housing Related Services within Herefordshire:**

The aim of the following services is to ensure that victim/survivors of domestic abuse can stay in their own home by improving the safety and security of their properties. These measures can prevent homelessness and reduce the need for other forms of safe accommodation such as refuge.

- Sanctuary / Target Hardening - Provided by West Mercia Police

The aim of this scheme is to improve the safety and security of victim/survivors through the installation of target hardening measures at their home address. This can include the installation of security measures such as additional lighting and the fitting of new locks.

Target hardening is available to all high risk victim/survivors in Herefordshire where appropriate to their specific situation. The service is offered by the Design Out Crime Officer at West Mercia Police. 171 people in total received this service between April 2022 and March 2023.

- Smart Water initiative - Provided by West Mercia Police.

Smartwater is a DNA based property marking solution which has been deployed by Police forces and community safety partnerships throughout the country for a number of years. It is first and foremost a deterrent to those intent on criminality, particularly acquisitive crime. Overt signage is deployed promoting the use of SmartWater within the property and or/area. The basis for this initiative is to deploy Smartwater at the addresses of high risk victims of domestic abuse and to notify the perpetrator of its deployment as a deterrent.

The overarching principles of the initiative are:

- To improve confidence in domestic abuse victims.

- To improve the partnership approach to protecting domestic abuse victims.
- To bring offenders who continue to pose a risk to justice.

There are two types of Smartwater products being used, a basic Home Security Kit (Level 1) and for some victims also 'Smart Tag', a hand held spray device (Level 2). Both these items have their own DNA properties so are unique to the victim and their address and can be used to identify that a suspect has been in the vicinity of a victim or their home.

The first referral to this service was received on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2022 and there were a total of 34 referrals from this date to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. Of these 34 referrals, 25 victim/survivors received a service from the SmartWater initiative.

West Mercia Police spoke to 15 victims who had received the SmartWater initiative and received the following feedback:

- 14 stated there had been no further incidents since the SmartWater letter was sent. There was 1 repeat incident but this was a chance meeting and the perpetrator did not attend the home address.
  - All stated that they felt safer, reassured and that their confidence in West Mercia Police had increased. They would all recommend SmartWater.
- Home Fire Safety Visits - Provided by Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

A Home Fire Safety Visit is a free home safety visit that is tailored to an individual's needs. The visit includes a home safety check to help reduce the risk of arson in the home and to ensure victims feel safer in their own homes. This includes the checking and fitting of smoke alarms and other equipment (such as the installation of fire reduction letterboxes) where required.

Between the April 2022 and March 2023 the Fire Service received 29 MARAC referrals. Visits were successfully completed for 27 of these referrals. This consisted of 6 safe and well checks, 20 Home Fire Safety Checks and 1 equipment only visit. Two of the referrals did not result in a visit (1 was refused and 1 did not answer the door/phone).

## WMWA

### Refuge:

- There were 96 referrals for refuge in 2022/23 with 41 referrals coming from Herefordshire residents and 55 referrals coming from out of county. Of those which came from out of county, 16 came from Worcestershire, 6 from Birmingham, 5 from Telford & Wrekin, 4 from Dudley and 3 from Shropshire. Worcestershire has consistently been the source of most of the out of county referrals since 2018/19.
- Since 2018/19 there have been more referrals from out of county, however, the number of referrals from within Herefordshire has been rising since 2020/21.

### Referrals from out of area decreased in 2022/23, but referrals from Herefordshire are on an upward trend

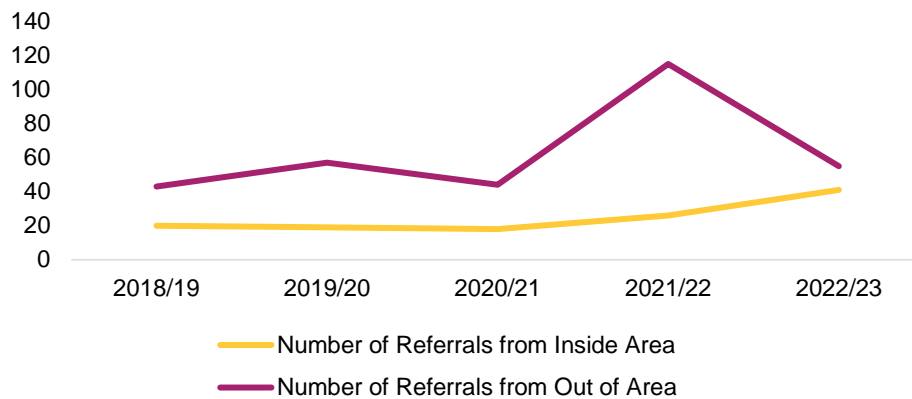


Figure 31. The number of refuge referrals from inside area and out of area from 2018 to 2023

- Of the 96 referrals in 2022/23, nearly 60% were denied with no space or clients not wanting to continue with the referral cited as the most common reasons for denial.

### Number of Unsuccessful Referrals/Access Denied. (Unable to be supported at all)



Figure 32. The number of unsuccessful referrals/access denied to refuge by WMWA, 2018-2023

- 55% of referrals between April 2018 and March 2023 were classed as medium risk, 30% as high risk and 15% as standard risk.
- Between April 2018 and March 2023, almost a quarter of referrals for refuge were self-referral and a similar number came through the local helpline.
- Referrals that came through WMWA's website were classified as either a self-referral or professional referral until 2021/22 when it was added as a distinct route for referral.

Table 7. The source of referrals to WMWA refuge between 2018 and 2023

Source of referral	April 2018-March 2023
Self-Referral	138
Local Helpline	136
Other Professional	108
Website <i>These referrals have only been logged since 2021/22, they were previously classified as self-referral or referral from a professional</i>	72
Housing	54
Police/Criminal Justice	27
Local Authority	23
Medical	8
National Domestic Abuse Helpline	0
Other	0
Total	566

- Nearly half of the people accessing refuge were previously living in social housing, 23% had come from temporary accommodation, 16% lived in other supported housing, 9% were private renters and 5% were private/owner occupiers before moving into refuge.
- The average length of stay between 2018/19 to 2022/23 was 85 days, which is similar to the average length of stay seen in 2022/23 which was 84 days.

#### Demographic composition/population features of service users accessing refuge:

- Over 70% of the people accessing refuge between April 2018 and March 2023 were aged between 25 and 44. There were no referrals for anybody aged 75+, and only 18 for those aged 55-74 of which 56% were refused. There were 7 referrals to refuge for 16-18 year olds during this time period but all referrals were declined as they are referred to Children's Social Care who would then be accommodated in suitable supported accommodation for that age group. i.e. Connexus Young Persons Service.
- Between April 2018 and March 2023 all but 1 of the people accessing refuge identified as female, during this period 2 people who did not identify as female were refused access to refuge.
- 83% of people accessing refuge were heterosexual, 15% had another sexual orientation or preferred not to disclose, and 2% identified as bisexual.

- 77% of people accessing refuge were white, 7% were Asian/Asian British, 5% Black/Black British, 4% Mixed ethnicity, 2% Gypsy/Roma/Traveller and 5% from other/unknown ethnicity.
- Between April 2018 to March 2023, there were 42 referrals for people who have a visa, are an asylum seeker, refugee or have no immigration leave/expired leave. Of these 42 referrals, 33 people with these immigration statuses were able to access refuge accommodation.
- 204 referrals were made for refuge for people who were recorded as having a disability, of which 108 were accepted, meaning that disabled people made up 49% of all people accessing refuge. 61% of the disabled people in refuge were recorded as having mental health issues, 17% had a physical disability, 12% had a learning difficulty, 7% had other long-term conditions, 2% had a visual impairment and 1% had a speech impairment or communication difficulties.

### **Pathway Mapping Examples**

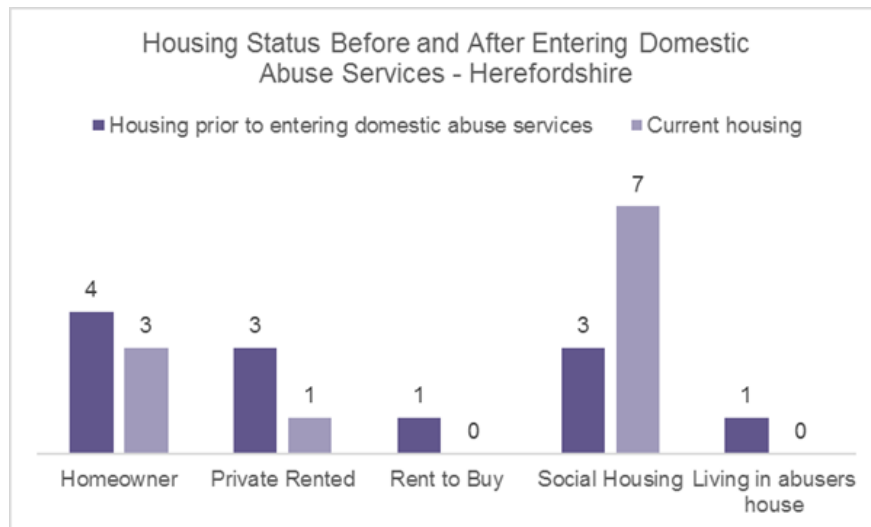
Some examples of pathway mapping for victim/survivors of DA in Herefordshire have been provided by the specialist DA organisation, WMWA. These anonymised examples explore the end-to-end journey taken by DA victim/survivors, and their children, in trying to access DA support within safe accommodation during the 2022/23 time period. This includes detailing what a pathway of support in Herefordshire looks like, from victim/survivors needing support, to accessing and receiving support and then to moving on from support. Five examples are provided within Appendix D of this report and they capture a range of victim/survivors including those with complex needs. These examples are included in order to provide context and identify some potential themes/barriers associated with accessing DA housing provision in Herefordshire.

### **Survivor Engagement - Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) Housing Survey**

The first LEAG survey was produced and disseminated in June 2023. The survey focuses on feedback from those who have experienced the current Housing provision. This was distributed internally, to partner professionals, online and via the WMWA website, social media and survivor network. Further details relating to the methodology can be found in Appendix B.

The survey closed on 31st July 2023 and there were a total of 28 responses. 12 of the 28 responses were from survivors residing in Herefordshire (11 female and 1 male).

Figure shows what each Herefordshire participants' housing status was both before and after accessing support for domestic abuse.



*Figure 33. LEAG survey - Housing status of participants before and after entering domestic abuse services in Herefordshire*

The survey indicated that just over half of victim/survivors stated that they were homeowners prior to entering DA services and the majority of victim/survivors stated that they were living in social housing after entering DA services. However, it appears the largest change before and after entering DA services related to victim/survivors leaving privately rented accommodation and accessing social housing instead.

These figures demonstrate the importance of ensuring that victim/survivors have adequate access to social housing. Domestic Abuse is recognised in the Council's housing allocations scheme. There is no requirement for victims of domestic abuse to have a local connection to Herefordshire in line with statutory guidance.

Figure illustrates how survey participants residing in Herefordshire rated their experience of the housing system on a scale of 1 (Unsatisfactory) to 5 (excellent).

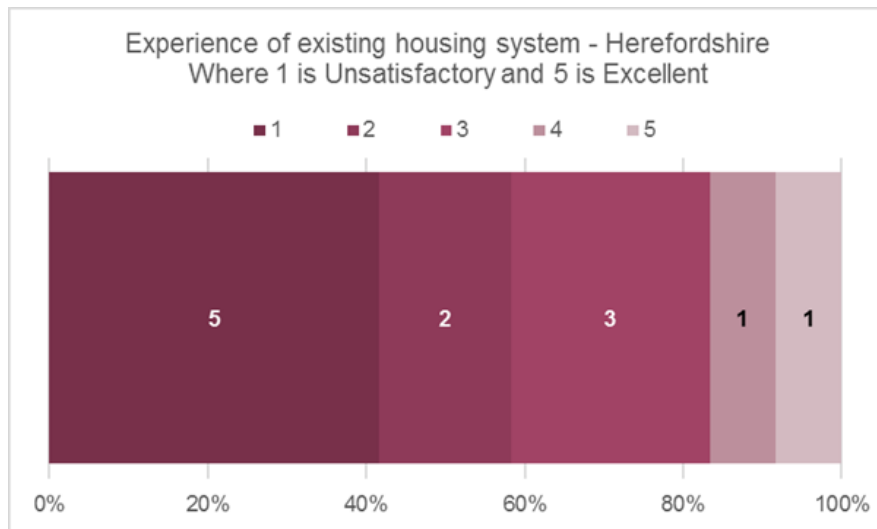


Figure 34. LEAG survey - Participants experience of the existing housing system

As outlined above, the majority of participants rated their experience as 'unsatisfactory.' The free text boxes in the following questions provided opportunity for further elaboration. When asked where gaps lie in current housing provision, participants made the following comments:

*"The abused always seems to have to flee - there just isn't the available housing stock to house families in an emergency."*

*"Coming out of refuge there is no help to move in. The kids had no furniture and we were told to make it fun and camp out on the floor. No help to decorate an empty shell when suffering PTSD, SEN kids, sorting finances, alone with zero support and family court and criminal proceedings."*

*"Support with process of staying in existing housing"*

There were also some suggestions made for new services that had been beneficial in other areas:

*"At a previous property in XXXX the police installed a direct line 'emergency phone' at my home and sent a specialist to assess the safety of the property. This has never been offered or mentioned in Herefordshire but would benefit so many."*

In the initial questions, participants had started to advocate for support with remaining in their existing properties. When asked about this directly 63% of respondents opted for staying in their own home rather than being supported to move to alternative accommodation (Figure ).

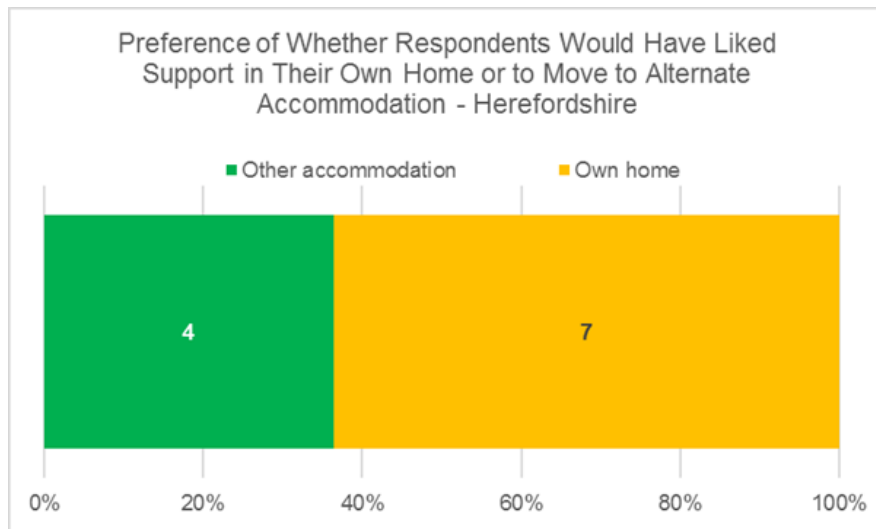


Figure 35. LEAG survey - Participants preference regarding support to stay in their own home or moving to alternative accommodation

When asked to elaborate on ways in which they could be supported to feel safer in their own homes, the following comments were made:

*“Make sure the perpetrator had restrictions in the area I live”*

*“Target hardening and police understanding coercive control better”*

*“Housing understanding more on how abuse works and providing panic alarms or safe rooms for victims if they prefer to stay in the home.”*

*“Support with making the property safer e.g., help with funding for doors, fences etc. to make it more secure.”*

### Practitioner Engagement

Email feedback was sought from practitioners working with victim/survivors and/or perpetrators of DA within Herefordshire. The specific questions asked can be found in Appendix C, however, the following themes were identified:

- Strengths of current DA housing provision

*“My thoughts based on my experiences during my health visiting career are that housing provision has progressed greatly over the last few years. Refuge provision is so much better now that survivors can move into self-contained flats rather than an old, unpleasant building based around communal-living. It's also great that there are other satellite properties in the community that survivors can utilise.”* Professional, NHS Trust.

*“[Housing Solutions Officer] really understood DA and has influenced the service provided to survivors by the Housing Solutions Team. Hopefully the new person in post will continue the good work. I always felt like I could contact [Housing Solutions Officer] directly if I was supporting a survivor and she would do her best to help the survivor. I*



*think another massive strength in Herefordshire is the amazing support provided by the three women's aid workers in XXXX refuge. Survivors gain so much from the support these workers provide to both the adult and child victims."* Professional, NHS Trust.

- Gaps in current housing provision

*"The issue always revolves around the lack of available accommodation in Herefordshire and therefore victims of DA are offered emergency accommodation in Travelodge's or similar establishments in Hereford, Worcester and Gloucester and can often be accommodated there for several weeks (months). Whilst I know their first priority should be their personal safety, it must appear to many of the victims of DA that they are being punished due to the actions of the perpetrator."* Professional, West Mercia Police.

*"I think housing is a problem in general in Herefordshire as there is short supply, so this must be impacting on the options for victim/survivors."* Professional, NHS Trust.

*"There is a real need for more available/allocated housing/flats (permanent accommodation) for victims of DA. I understand this is all down to budgets and therefore it is extremely unlikely that anything will change."* Professional, West Mercia Police.

*"The LA is placing families in hotels which should not be the case and is inappropriate. There is no cooking facilities and the family are in just one room. The stress this can cause will lead to families/women returning to the abusive relationship. Some are often placed in temp out of area which can affect support networks, school attendance, etc."* Professional, Domestic Abuse Service.

*"Sometimes, however, survivors and young children have been placed in really unsuitable properties with really unsuitable neighbours (who actually pose a risk of harm) so that hasn't always been helpful for survivors who have already left their comfortable homes. I wondered, is the need great enough to have another refuge, potentially in Ross or Leominster?"* Professional, NHS Trust.

*"My understanding is that Housing Solutions have over the last 12 months changed in the way they deal with DA victims and instead of having specialist DA housing officers, the DA cases are spread amongst the available staff. From my perspective, having staff dedicated to victims of DA was a better way of supporting victims' housing needs and allowed us the opportunity to liaise with persons who understood the needs of DA victims and were aware of the ongoing cases we were dealing with and what would assist/help the individual victim's needs."* Professional, West Mercia Police.

*"Women fleeing unable to access Homepoint if they have a mortgage. They can look at private renting but we have a lack of privates within our area, or they are unaffordable (this is another issue to add to the list). Just because someone has a mortgage it may take years for the equity to be released, for e.g., if perp seeks legal in regards to him keeping the home until the children reach a certain age. We have had this recently and a woman had to view a bedsit within a property that contained drug addicts – this adds to their vulnerability or leaves the woman to feel they have no choice but to return to the abusive relationship."* Professional, Domestic Abuse Service.

*“Storage of furniture/belongings – the Code of Guidance states that the LA should provide this but they don’t do this. This could deter a woman to leave if it means losing what they have built up over the years/losing their belongings.” Professional, Domestic Abuse Service.*

*“Housing Associations insist on applicants paying RUF (rent up front) which is generally a month. Without the VRF we would have many families unable to access social housing. They are mainly in receipt of benefits so RUF would be wholly unaffordable.” Professional, Domestic Abuse Service.*

*“Homepoint advertise properties that can only be bid on by those that have a Sec 106 Local Connection. Women fleeing from other areas won’t have the LC but would very much like to be part of a community and would use the local amenities, such as schools, shops, parks, GP, etc. This shouldn’t be a blanket policy but part of looking to the applicant’s individual situations. The team are now aware that this is being looked at.” Professional, Domestic Abuse Service.*

- Housing for perpetrators of DA

*“Whilst I think the needs of victims should always come first, if there is available accommodation for perpetrators to access away from the victim’s address, then this would make perfect sense and would help in reducing the level of risk to the victim. Once the perpetrator is away from the victim’s address then we can look at putting in the appropriate security measures to protect the victim.” Professional, West Mercia Police.*

*“Re-housing perpetrators is a tricky one. In some ways it could be helpful if the survivor wants to stay in the home. I think it is something that could be explored as I don’t feel I know enough about it currently.” Professional, NHS Trust.*

## Recommendations

- Although based upon a small number of participants, it is evident from both the quantitative and qualitative data provided above that the majority of victim/survivors who responded to the survey would have preferred to remain in their own homes as opposed to accessing other accommodation. It is also clear that access to target hardening was considered particularly important in terms of supporting victim/survivors to feel safer in their own homes.

This is further supported by a report by the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (Senker & Scott, 2020) which highlighted that many victims want to remain in their own homes, and feel that being the one that has to leave is an additional “punishment”.

Whilst each situation will be unique, efforts should be made to allow victims to stay in their home if this is their wish and it is safe to do so.

Further work could be undertaken here to understand and map the current pathways in place for the Sanctuary Scheme. However, it is relevant to note that during the time period this Needs Assessment relates to (2022-2023), target hardening was offered by the Design Out Crime Officer at West Mercia Police only. More recently, additional funding was secured for 2 years in 2023 to add capacity to the sanctuary scheme in

Herefordshire. The additional capacity is being delivered through the Councils You at Home Service who will be installing the sanctuary equipment. Data in relation to the provision of this service will be included in the refresh of next year's DA Needs Assessment.

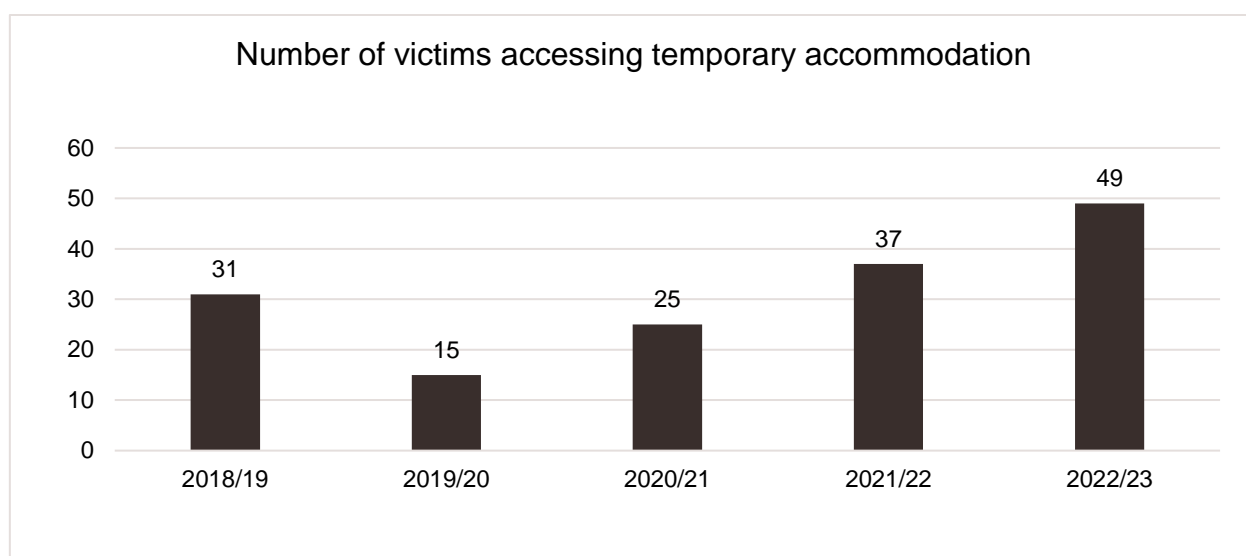
- There needs to be more consideration around the low number of victim/survivors aged 55 and above accessing safe accommodation (particularly those aged 75+ years). It is evident from the data provided above that victim/survivors aged 75 years and above are not accessing safe accommodation within Herefordshire. There were no referrals to WMWA for anybody aged 75+ years between April 2018 and March 2023 and referrals were particularly low for those aged between 55 and 74 years.
- As stated above, 47% of referrals to refuge for disabled people were refused. Further work needs to be undertaken to understand why this number of referrals were refused and what steps can be taken to reduce this.
- Regarding DA in a rural context, several important recommendations have been provided by the National Rural Crime Network Report (2019) to include:
  - Providing better access to refuge and safe houses for rural catchments.
  - One of the key differences between rural and urban refuges is the need for rural victims to stay more local to their former home due to the ties they feel they have with children's schools and the immediate area. By contrast, urban victims can more easily relocate in other parts of a city. The need for some continuity of a former life in the area victims are living in, is key to their ability to move on. Where it is deemed safe to do so a rural relocation should be made available.
  - While acknowledging the difficulty we believe that refuges and particularly the options for safe houses should be planned, financed and maintained regionally more than locally where there may be more likely to cuts as budgets continue to be squeezed. Partnerships with Housing Associations for refuge or safe houses may prove a more viable alternative and allow for distribution across rural as well as urban fringe locations. Local control of housing supply should continue to ensure the primary selection of victims and particularly those with children to rehome.

## Housing and Homelessness Data

Data provided by the Housing Solutions Team within Herefordshire Council indicates that there were 157 instances where DA victims presented for temporary accommodation between April 2018 and March 2023. It is important to note that the number of presentations are not equal to the number of victims as some victims presented for temporary accommodation more than once during this period. Domestic abuse is extremely complex and we know that:

- 85% of victims sought help on average five times from professionals in the year before they got effective help to stop the abuse (SafeLives, 2023).
- On average victims experience 50 incidents of abuse before getting effective help (FearFree, 2023).

According to data in figure 36, the number of presentations for temporary accommodation has been increasing in recent years. It is likely that with increasing national awareness of domestic abuse, more victims realise their situation and flee from abusive homes hence there is an increasing demand for temporary accommodation. However, SafeLives reports that as a consequence of the cost-of-living crisis, victims face no choice other than remaining in unsafe homes or been homeless due to the financial hardship. Other national charities also warn that the current housing crisis is having a devastating impact on victims, putting them at greater risk of violence and abuse.



*Figure 36. Number presentations of DA victims accessing temporary accommodation April 2018 - March 2023.*

*Note: Please note that these figures do include some repeat presentations as outlined above.*

Women make up 86% of DA victims supported by Housing Solutions Team in Herefordshire, many with children or pregnant (52%). However, there is a marked increase in single females accessing temporary accommodation in the year ending March 2023.

*Table 8. The makeup of DA victims presenting for temporary accommodation, between April 2018 and March 2023*

Victim/s	No.	%
Female alone	57	36%
Female with child/ren	73	46%
Pregnant female (with or without children)	9	6%
Male alone	16	10%

Male with child/ren	2	1%
Total	157	100%

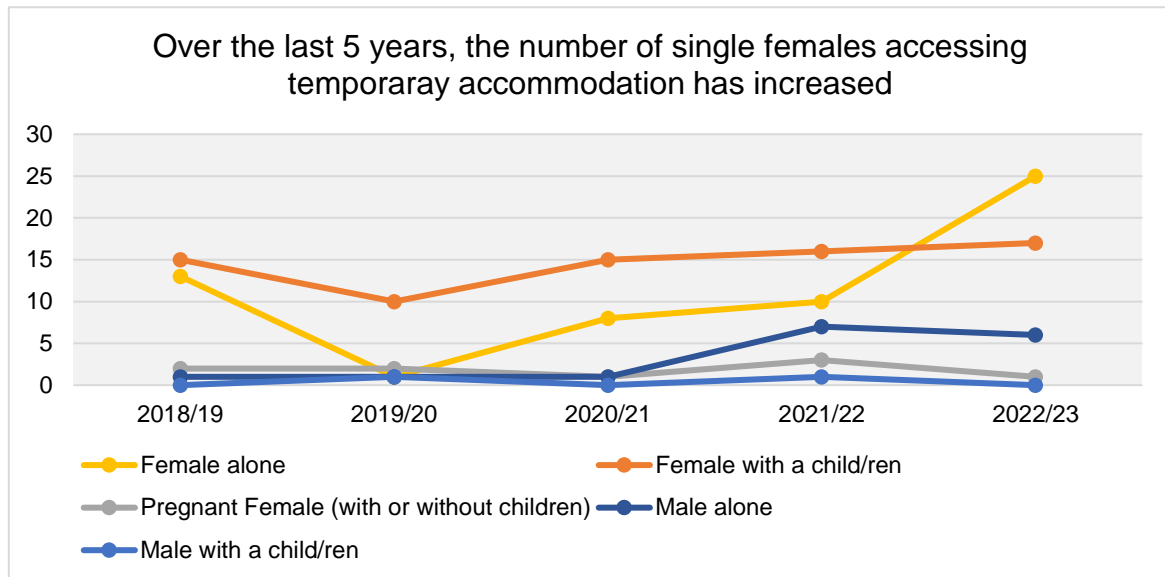


Figure 37. The makeup of DA victims who have accessed temporary accommodation, 2018-2023

There were 41 households registered with Home Point in need of accommodation as a result of domestic abuse in 2021/22 and the figure has increased to 50 households in 2022/23.

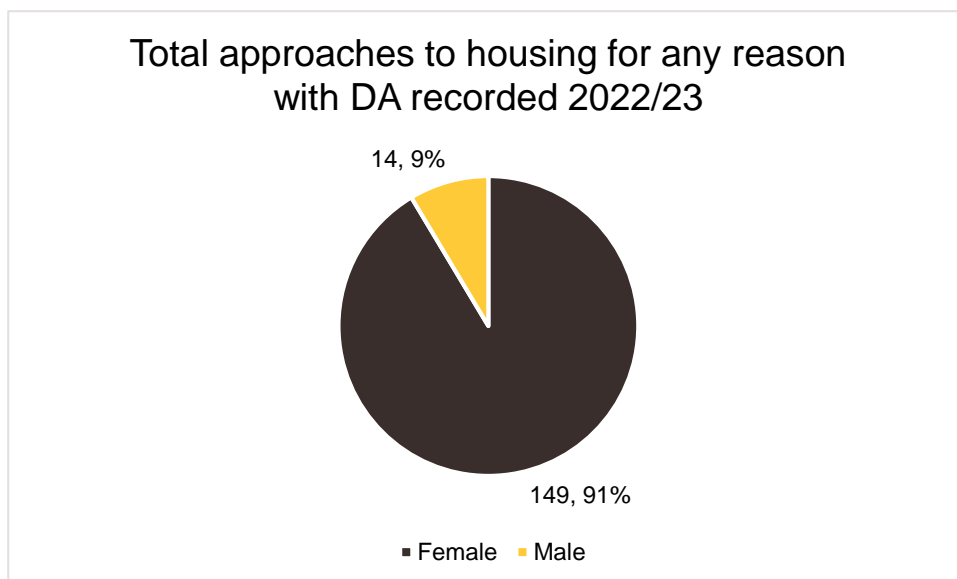
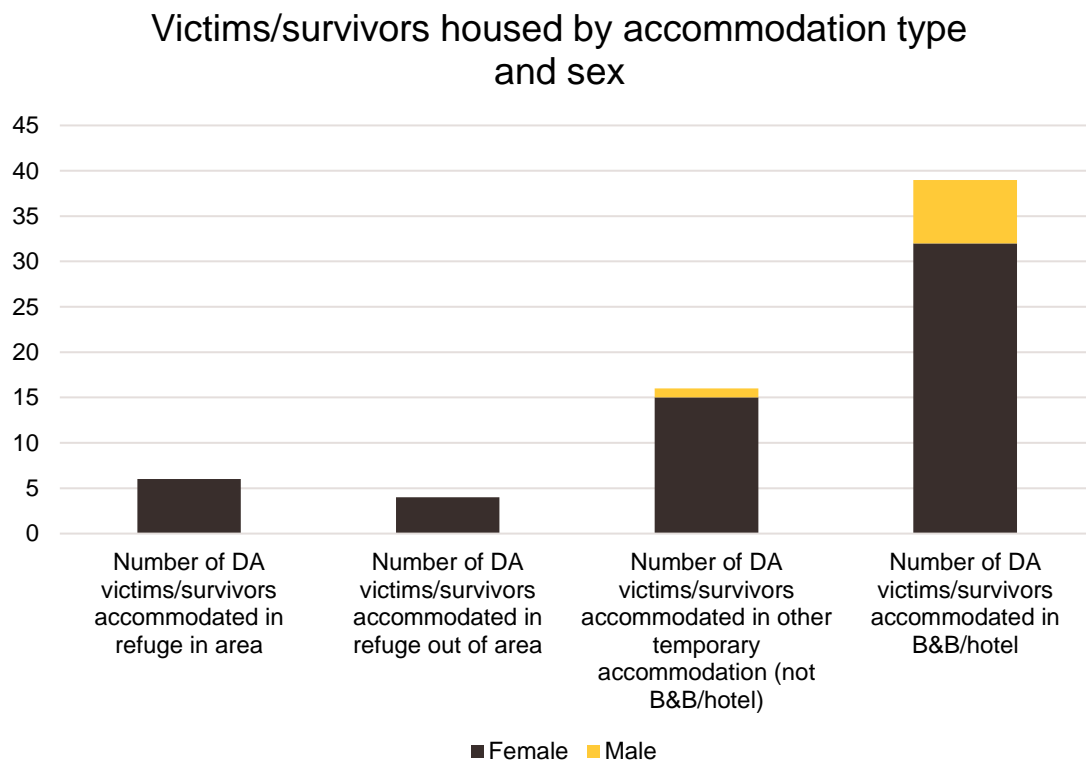


Figure 38. The number of approaches to housing with DA recorded in 2022/23

There were 163 approaches to housing where DA was recorded in 2022/23. Of these 163 instances, 91% were from women and 9% were from men. All 14 approaches by men were accepted, but 2 approaches by women were refused as the applicants were not eligible for access to public funds. All of those who were accepted were considered to be in / reason to believe priority need due to DA.

Figure shows that in 2022/23, 57 women and 7 men were accommodated in temporary accommodation due to being DA victims/survivors, with the majority being placed in a B&B/hotel.



*Figure 39. Number of victims/survivors housed by accommodation type and sex in 2022/23*

The reasons why the prevention and relief duties ended for victims/survivors are outlined in Table 9 and Table 10. Table 11 outlines the reasons why main duty was discharged, with nearly 90% of women accepting a social housing offer.

Table 9. Reasons for ending of prevention duty for applicant who approached with DA in 2022/23

Prevention duty ended for those applicants who approached with DA	Female	Male
Homeless	24	0
Secured alternative accommodation for 12 or more months	11	0
Contact lost	9	0
Secured existing accommodation for 12 or more months	5	0
Secured alternative accommodation for 6 months	3	0
Secured existing accommodation for 6 months	2	0
Withdrew application / applicant deceased (Retired)	1	0

Table 10. Reasons for ending relief duty for those applicants who approached with DA in 2022/23

Relief duty ended for those applicants who approached with DA	Female	Male
56 days elapsed	53	4
Contact lost	25	6
Secured accommodation for 12 months	18	2
Secured accommodation for 6 months	10	0
Withdrew application / applicant deceased (Retired)	4	2
No longer eligible	1	0

Table 11. Main duty discharge reason for applicants who approached with DA in 2022/23

Main duty Discharge Reason	Female	Male
Accepted a Housing Act 1996 Pt6 social housing offer	42	2

Accepted a Private Rented Sector offer	3	1
Applicant withdrew or lost contact	1	0
Ceased to occupy temporary accommodation	1	0

### Recommendations:

- Several recommendations have been identified for housing solutions specifically:
  1. The importance of having key members of staff within housing solutions who have specialist knowledge of DA and can build a strong rapport with relevant services.
  2. More housing support for victim/survivors who have a mortgage.
  3. More housing support for victim/survivors who have fled from another area and therefore do not have a 'local connection'.
- The importance of ensuring that Herefordshire Council adopts a Whole Housing Approach, with consideration given to gaining Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation.
- More consideration is needed around the provision of housing for DA perpetrators (where the victim/survivor wishes to remain in their own home).

## Next Steps and Recommendations

### Demographic and composition population features of victim/survivors in Herefordshire

- Significant improvements are required with regards to data collection across several services. This includes both demographic and socioeconomic factors. The data collection template developed for DA needs assessments should continue to be utilised moving forward, to guide the development of enhanced data collection across Herefordshire. More accurate data recording is required in the future to provide more meaningful insights.
- The collection and consideration of equalities data and information, to routinely identify and respond to need on a consistent basis, is particularly important in enabling us to improve our response to DA victim/survivors with complex needs and/or multiple disadvantage/ intersectionality (particularly LGBTQ, people from ethnic minority backgrounds and Disability).
- The number of people with protected characteristics accessing services is lower than CSEW data suggests it should be. As such, steps need to be taken to identify, understand and address the barriers faced by victim/survivors with protected characteristics within Herefordshire. This could include undertaking work with survivors who have lived experience to understand the issues and barriers they may be experiencing and implement a plan of action to address these. For example, is there a lack of knowledge around the services that are available and/or are there issues relating to the accessibility of these services?



- An increased focus on capturing the demographic composition features of perpetrators of DA in the future. This could then be used to inform and target prevention efforts.
- Additional data needs to be gathered around the issue of domestic abuse in older people to enable a better understanding of this issue and what support is required. A multi-agency approach is required to improve data collection on domestic abuse in older people within Herefordshire. All relevant partner agencies need to collect accurate records to identify where domestic abuse among older people has occurred (i.e., West Mercia Police, WMWA and, importantly, within health and social care settings).
- Further exploration on the variance in data on age is also needed – for example, comparisons between the ASC data and the police/WMWA data which varies for older victims.

There are concerns that DA perpetrated against older victims is not always recognised as DA, but instead classified as “Elder Abuse”, which then means that victims are not receiving specialist DA support. This is an area that requires further exploration, including an appraisal of the needs to determine which services would be best placed to provide the kind of support that will meet those needs.

Herefordshire has an older population profile compared to England and Wales averages, so we could reasonably expect to see higher levels of DA amongst the elderly, which is not the case.

### **Children and Young People**

- Only 15% of 185 referrals to WMWA CYP services came from Children's Social Care. Further exploration of what steps can be taken to increase these numbers should be undertaken.
- It would also be beneficial to establish how many of the CSC cases with DA recorded as a primary issue resulted in referrals to WMWA CYP services and how many were supported in house.

### **West Mercia Police Data**

- As outlined above, most domestic abuse offences in Herefordshire which resulted in no further action were recorded as 'evidential difficulties - victim does not support police action', with a recent increase in 'victim does support police action but evidential difficulties' also preventing further action'. As such, further efforts should be made to explore this in more depth including ways in which to reduce these numbers.
- Regarding DA in a rural context, several important recommendations have been provided by the National Rural Crime Network Report (2019) to include:
  - Services and commissioners must analyse demand by postcode in future, using a common definition of rurality to develop a meaningful dataset, ensuring prevention and intervention work is also targeted at areas where there is apparently little demand – this report strongly indicates there will be demand, just hidden. Crime data provided within this report can be utilised to achieve the above.
  - Education and outreach must be prioritised and must focus on symptoms and patterns of abuse. Greater education and awareness is needed in rural areas regarding the warning signs of domestic abuse and the ability to act or help a victim to act. GPs and religious groups like church communities are the most likely allies in rural areas. Access and reference to Clare's Law, the right to ask, needs to be made more public in rural areas so that victims know they have an option to revert to.

Resources need to be freed up to allow an effective awareness campaign to be provided to rural communities which target the recognition of behaviours symptomatic of domestic abuse. We believe that bringing symptoms into the spotlight is more effective than talk about domestic abuse per se.

- Domestic Abuse Service Commissioners need to proactively consider servicing rural communities. Incidence rates for domestic abuse are slightly higher in urban areas as evidenced by the CSEW - 4.6% in urban areas vs 3.9% in rural areas. Commissioners have an obligation to take a data-led approach to plan service provision, but for Commissioners with significant rural areas there must also be an obligation to ensure that data adequately represents the potential for domestic abuse cases in rural areas. With the knowledge that rural victims are half as likely to report incidents, outreach activity should be directed at low incidence or no incidence areas. Efforts should be made to look at where reporting of abuse is not happening, as well as where it is. I.e. are there very low incidences in some areas for no apparent reason and are there demographics and deprivation indices would suggest there should be more incidents?

## **MARAC**

- To address the MARAC improvements as identified by the SafeLives review.
- There needs to be a clearer focus on addressing the behaviours of those who harm within MARAC.
- Improvements in data collection are needed for future needs assessments. Specifically around certain demographic factors and the relationship type between victim/perpetrator.
- The number of cases discussed at MARAC in Herefordshire where victims are from an ethnic minority group, LGBTQ+, disabled or male are very low. CSEW data suggests that DA is actually more prevalent in people with disabilities and those who are from the LGBTQ+ community. This suggests that there are likely to be unseen disabled and LGBTQ+ victims and efforts should therefore be made to explore these findings further.

## **Non-accommodation based domestic abuse service provision**

- Regarding support for victim/survivors in the community – Work needs to be undertaken to address the perceived lack of support for low-medium risk clients and the waiting lists for these services.
- Feedback from those with lived experience showed that some were unsure of how they could get help if they were experiencing DA. As such, on-going efforts should be made to raise awareness of the support services available and how to access these by engaging with the community using a variety of methods.
- In addition, further efforts need to be made with regards to improving understanding of DA across public-facing agencies to ensure they provide effective responses (for example, by facilitating appropriate referrals into specialist services). This can be addressed via the provision of effective and accessible training.
- Following on from the above, understanding and working to improve referral numbers from external agencies to specialist DA support services. For example, those provided by WMWA, as only 4% of referrals were received from social care, 2% from health services and 2% from the police.

## **Domestic abuse safe accommodation**

- Although based upon a small number of participants, it is evident from both the quantitative and qualitative data provided by those with lived experience that the majority would have preferred to remain in their own homes as opposed to accessing other accommodation. It is also clear that access to target hardening was considered particularly important in terms of supporting victim/survivors to feel safer in their own homes.

This is further supported by a report by the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (Senker & Scott, 2020) which highlighted that many victims want to remain in their own homes, and feel that being the one that has to leave is an additional “punishment”.

Whilst each situation will be unique, efforts should be made to allow victims to stay in their home if this is their wish and it is safe to do so.

- Further work could be undertaken here to understand and map the current, scope, pathways in place for the Sanctuary Scheme. However, it is relevant to note that during the time period this Needs Assessment relates to (2022-2023), target hardening was offered by the Design Out Crime Officer at West Mercia Police only. More recently, additional funding was secured for 2 years in 2023 to add capacity to the sanctuary scheme in Herefordshire. The additional capacity is being delivered through the Councils You at Home Service who will be installing the sanctuary equipment. Data in relation to the provision of this service will be included in the refresh of next year’s DA Needs Assessment.
- There needs to be more consideration around the low number of victim/survivors aged 55 and above accessing safe accommodation (particularly those aged 75+ years). It is evident from the data provided above that victim/survivors aged 75 years and above are not accessing safe accommodation within Herefordshire. There were no referrals to WMWA for anybody aged 75+ years between April 2018 and March 2023 and referrals were particularly low for those aged between 55 and 74 years.
- As stated above, 47% of referrals to refuge for disabled people were refused. Further work needs to be undertaken to understand why this number of referrals were refused and what steps can be taken to reduce this.
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  - Providing better access to refuge and safe houses for rural catchments.
  - One of the key differences between rural and urban refugees is the need for rural victims to stay more local to their former home due to the ties they feel they have with children’s schools and the immediate area. By contrast, urban victims can more easily relocate in other parts of a city. The need for some continuity of a former life in the area victims are living in, is key to their ability to move on. Where it is deemed safe to do so a rural relocation should be made available.
  - While acknowledging the difficulty we believe that refuges and particularly the options for safe houses should be planned, financed and maintained regionally more than locally where there may be more likely to cuts as budgets continue to be squeezed. Partnerships with Housing Associations for refuge or safe houses may prove a more viable alternative and allow for distribution across rural as well as urban fringe locations. Local control of housing supply should continue to ensure the primary selection of victims and particularly those with children to rehome.

### **Housing and homelessness data**

- Several recommendations have been identified for housing solutions specifically:

- The importance of having key members of staff within housing solutions who have specialist knowledge of DA and can build a strong rapport with relevant services.
- More housing support for victim/survivors who have a mortgage.
- More housing support for victim/survivors who have fled from another area and therefore do not have a 'local connection'.
- The importance of ensuring that Herefordshire Council adopts a Whole Housing Approach, with consideration given to gaining Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation.
- More consideration is needed around the provision of housing for DA perpetrators (where the victim/survivor wishes to remain in their own home).

The above recommendations will be integrated into the new domestic abuse action plan which will form part of the new Domestic Abuse Strategy.

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# Appendix

## Appendix A

Table 2 Count of DA codes recorded by Herefordshire GPs

Code Term	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Advice about domestic abuse	1	0	2	0	3
Advice about domestic violence	2	2	1	0	5
DASH (Dom Abuse Stalking Harassment HBV) 2009 Risk Checklist	0	6	0	0	6
DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour Based Violence) 2009 Risk Checklist	0	0	8	22	30
Domestic abuse	0	1	12	2	15
Domestic abuse of adult	0	0	3	0	3
Domestic abuse victim in household	4	0	0	0	4
History of domestic abuse	3	7	12	1	23
History of domestic emotional abuse	1	1	1	0	3
History of domestic sexual abuse	1	0	0		1
History of domestic violence	10	10	11	3	34
Routine enquiry about domestic abuse	1	4	7	7	19
Routine enquiry about domestic abuse declined		0	1	0	1
Routine enquiry about domestic abuse not made	1	0	0	0	1
Victim of domestic abuse	23	22	35	17	97

## Appendix B

### Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) Housing Survey

The survey focuses on feedback from those who have experienced the current Housing provision. This was distributed internally, to partner professionals, online and via the WMWA website, social media and survivor network.

The survey included the following questions:

1. Prior to entering domestic abuse services what was your housing status? Options: home owner, rent to buy, private rented, social housing, other – please specify (free text box)
2. What is your current housing status? Options: home owner, rent to buy, private rented, social housing, other – please specify (free text box)
3. What are your experiences of the existing housing system? Please rate your experience of existing housing system (1- unsatisfactory to 5 – excellent).
4. Where do you feel the gaps lie in the housing system? (free text box)
5. What support have you benefited from in accessing housing? (free text box)
6. Are there services you have seen elsewhere that you would benefit from locally? (free text box)

7. Would it be your preference to be supported to stay in your own home or to move to alternative accommodation? Options: own home, other accommodation.
8. Are there ways in which you could be made to feel safer in your own home? (free text box)

## **Appendix C**

Practitioner engagement – The below questions were distributed amongst relevant agencies/organisations working with victim/survivors and/or perpetrators of DA in Herefordshire

1. Are the existing housing support provisions for victim/survivors of DA in Herefordshire currently meeting need?  
  
If no, please expand. (I.e. what are the gaps in DA housing service provision in Herefordshire? Do we need additional options and what would this look like taking into account factors such as the age/sex of the victim/survivor and the size, number and location of the units?)
2. What are the key challenges victim/survivors face when accessing DA housing services in Herefordshire?
3. What are the strengths of the existing housing support provisions for victim/survivors of DA in Herefordshire? (I.e. what works well)
4. What are your thoughts on the provision of housing for perpetrators of DA (where the victim/survivor wishes to remain in their own home) – is this something that you would like to see explored / developed?
5. Any other comments:



## Appendix D

### Pathway Mapping Examples

