



Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

1. Service Area/Directorate

Name of Head of Service for activity being assessed: Manny Jhawar-Gill

Directorate: Community Well Being

Name of lead person for this activity: Wendy Dyer

Individual(s) completing this assessment: Wendy Dyer

Date assessment completed: 24/04/2026

2. What is being assessed

Activity being assessed (eg. policy, procedure, budget, service redesign, strategy etc.)

Recommissioning of Domestic Abuse Support Services in Herefordshire

What is the aim, purpose, or intended outcome of this activity?

The aim of the recommissioning of Domestic Abuse Support Services in Herefordshire is to ensure the availability of safe, accessible, and high-quality domestic abuse support that meets identified local need and discharges the Council's duties under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

The intended outcomes are to improve safety, wellbeing, and recovery for victims and survivors of domestic abuse and their children; ensure equitable access to specialist support across protected characteristics; and secure a sustainable, outcome-focused service model aligned to Herefordshire's Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025–2028.

As part of the revised service design, the Council will no longer directly commission or contribute towards the cost of a local standalone domestic abuse helpline. Instead, all commissioned services will be required to ensure they are accessible by telephone as part of core delivery, with wider universal telephone support available through established national domestic abuse helplines.

Instead, all commissioned domestic abuse services will be required to ensure they are contactable by telephone as part of their core delivery model. This will include the ability for victims and survivors to make direct contact with services to seek support or referral into accommodation-based or community-based provision.

Wider domestic abuse support that is not directly linked to a commissioned local service remains available through established national domestic abuse helplines, which provide free, confidential support 24 hours a day. These national services offer specialist advice, safety planning and onward signposting and are accessible regardless of local service configuration.

This approach is intended to improve sustainability and focus local commissioning resources on direct support and intervention.

The recommissioning will primarily affect victims and survivors of domestic abuse and their children who require accommodation-based and community-based support.

It will also affect carers and families, commissioned service providers, partner agencies including Social Care, Public Health, Housing and the Police, and communities across Herefordshire through improved safety, prevention and early intervention.

Who will be affected by the development and implementation of this activity?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☒ Service users | ☐ Visitors to the county |
| ☒ Communities | ☒ Carers |
| ☒ Children | ☐ Patients |
| ☐ All staff | ☐ All part-time staff |
| ☐ Staff at a particular location | ☐ Other: |

Is this:

- ☒ Review of an existing activity/policy
- ☐ New activity/policy
- ☐ Planning to withdraw or reduce a service, activity or presence?

3. Background information and findings

What information and evidence have you reviewed to help inform this assessment? (name your sources, eg. demographic information, usage data, Census data, feedback, complaints, audits, research)

The following information and evidence have been reviewed to inform this assessment:

Herefordshire Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment (2024)

SafeLives Domestic Abuse Systems Review

Herefordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025–2028

The current providers of DA services locally collect and report a range of diversity information on service users through quarterly contract monitoring returns. This includes monitoring of age, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, geographic location and no recourse to public funds (NRPF) across adult domestic abuse services. For children and young people's services, monitoring currently includes age, ethnicity, gender, disability and geographic location. This information is reported alongside service activity and outcomes data, enabling the Council to consider patterns of access, reach and service use across different groups.

Engagement with partners including Public Health, Social Care, Housing and West Mercia Police

National policy, legislation and statutory guidance including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and Equality Act 2010

Relevant research and best practice guidance on domestic abuse support services.

Summary of engagement or consultation undertaken (eg. who you've engaged with, and how, or why do you believe this is not required)

Consultation has taken place with key stakeholders including current providers to gain their view on the development opportunities for the services.

Co-production activities with survivors of domestic abuse is planned and will be held face to face with the support of Domestic Abuse Coordinator employed by the Council. The findings from the co-production activities will inform the development of the service design and delivery.

Key stakeholders within the Children's Social Care Directorate, Public Health and Housing have been consulted with to review the potential impact and ensure all options and the impact have been given due consideration.

Summary of relevant findings (it is possible that you will have gaps in your evidence. You must decide whether you need to fill in the gaps now, and if it is feasible to do so. It might be that collecting robust information forms part of your action plan below)

The evidence reviewed demonstrates:

- Domestic abuse affects people across all ages and protected characteristics, with a significant proportion of victims being women aged 25–44, but also including children, older people, men, disabled people, and people from marginalised groups.
- Disabled victims and those with mental health needs face increased vulnerability and barriers to accessing support.
- Children are frequently affected by domestic abuse, either directly or indirectly, and require specialist therapeutic and recovery-focused support.
- There is a clear need for accessible, flexible accommodation-based and community-based domestic abuse services, including for those with multiple and complex needs.
- Victims from minoritised or marginalised communities may face additional barriers linked to trust, discrimination, or previous negative experiences of services.

The evidence also highlights the importance of recognising intersectionality. Individuals may experience multiple and overlapping protected characteristics (for example, disabled women, migrant victims, or individuals experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage), which can result in compounded barriers to accessing support. These cumulative disadvantages can increase vulnerability to domestic abuse and reduce the likelihood of disclosure, engagement with services, and successful recovery. The recommissioning approach therefore emphasises flexible, trauma-informed and person-centred provision to respond to complex and intersecting needs.

These findings have informed the proposed recommissioning approach, including the emphasis on accessibility, trauma-informed delivery, and provider flexibility in service design.

4. The Public Sector Equality Duty

Will this activity have a positive, neutral or negative impact on our duty to:

Equality Duty	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation?	☐	☒	☐
Advance equality of opportunity between different groups?	☐	☒	☐
Foster good relations between different groups?	☐	☒	☐

Explain your rationale here, and include any ways in which you could strengthen the capacity of this activity to promote equality (remember to add anything relevant into your action planning below)

The recommissioning of Domestic Abuse Support Services is expected to have a neutral to positive impact on the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty.

The recommissioning approach includes integrating currently commissioned gender-specific provision into a gender-inclusive service model. This is intended to reduce fragmentation, improve equity of access, and ensure that all victims and survivors, regardless of sex or gender, are able to access appropriate and specialist domestic abuse support.

The services will be commissioned using an outcome-focused approach, enabling providers to design delivery models that respond flexibly to diverse needs across protected characteristics.

The procurement approach will encourage inclusive service design, partnership working, and accessibility.

The recommissioned services will support the priorities set out in Herefordshire's Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025–2028 and wider Health and Wellbeing Strategy, with a focus on reducing health inequalities, improving safety, and supporting recovery for victims and their children.

The revised access model ensures that victims and survivors continue to have multiple safe routes to telephone-based support through a combination of local service access and national helplines, reducing reliance on a single entry point.

5. The impact of this activity

Consider the potential impact of this activity on each of the equality groups outlined below and explain your rationale. Please note it is possible for the potential impact to be both positive and negative within the same equality group. Remember to consider the impact on staff and service users (current and potential) and partner organisations. It may be useful to include data within these sections if you know the diversity make-up of the people likely to be affected.

Equality Group	Potential <u>positive</u> impact	Potential <u>neutral</u> impact	Potential <u>negative</u> impact	Rationale
Age (include safeguarding, consent and child welfare)	☒	☐	☐	Domestic abuse affects adults and children across all age groups. The recommissioned services will ensure that support is available to victims regardless of age, including children and young people affected by domestic abuse, adults of working age, and older victims who may experience dependency-related abuse. The recommissioning aligns with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requirement to ensure victims and their children can access appropriate support within safe accommodation and community settings, resulting in a positive impact across age groups
Disability (consider attitudinal, physical, financial and social barriers, neuro-diversity, learning disability, physical and sensory impairment)	☒	☐	☐	The evidence reviewed indicates that disabled people, including people with physical disabilities, sensory impairments, learning disabilities, neurodiversity and mental health needs, are over-represented among victims and survivors of domestic abuse and may face additional barriers to accessing support. The recommissioning of domestic abuse services is expected to have a positive impact for disabled victims by ensuring services are accessible, inclusive and responsive to individual needs. The service specification will require providers to deliver trauma-informed, needs-led support and to make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010. Providers will be required to ensure information is available in accessible formats, address attitudinal, physical, communication and social barriers, and work in partnership with health, adult social care and other specialist services

Equality Group	Potential positive impact	Potential neutral impact	Potential negative impact	Rationale
				where appropriate. This approach supports the Council's duties under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and is intended to improve access, safety and outcomes for disabled victims and their children
Gender Reassignment (include gender identity, and consider privacy of data and harassment)	☐	☒	☐	Gender reassignment will not be a barrier to accessing domestic abuse support services. The recommissioned services will be expected to provide safe, inclusive and respectful support to trans and non-binary victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Although local data on gender identity is limited, national evidence and statutory guidance under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognise that trans and non-binary individuals may experience specific forms of abuse, including threats of disclosure, targeted harassment, and barriers to seeking help due to fear of discrimination or stigma. This is particularly so in light of the 2025 ruling by the Supreme Court that "sex" in the Equality Act 2010 refers exclusively to biological sex at birth. The service specification will therefore require providers to demonstrate how they will promote inclusive access, protect privacy and dignity, and ensure staff are appropriately trained to support people with this protected characteristic. This approach is expected to have a neutral to positive impact by reducing barriers to disclosure and access to specialist domestic abuse support.
Marriage & Civil Partnerships	☐	☒	☐	Marriage or civil partnership status will not be a barrier to accessing domestic abuse support services. Domestic abuse can occur within married and civil partnership relationships as well as other intimate and family relationships, as defined within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The recommissioned services will be accessible to all victims and survivors who fall within the statutory definition of being "personally connected", regardless of marital or civil partnership status. This approach is expected to have a neutral to positive impact, ensuring equitable access to support for victims experiencing abuse within current or former marriages or civil partnerships.
Pregnancy & Maternity (consider working arrangements, part-time working, infant caring responsibilities)	☒	☐	☐	Pregnancy or maternity status will not be a barrier to accessing domestic abuse support services. Evidence shows that pregnancy can be a period of heightened risk for domestic abuse, and that victims with dependent children

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				may face additional barriers in seeking safety and support. The recommissioned services will be required to provide safe, flexible and trauma-informed support to pregnant victims and those with infants or dependent children, including access to appropriate accommodation-based and community-based support. Providers will be expected to work in partnership with health, maternity, children's and family services to ensure coordinated support that promotes safety, wellbeing and recovery for both the victim and their children. This approach is expected to have a positive impact for this group.
Race (including Travelling Communities and people of other nationalities)	☐	☒	☐	Race or nationality will not be a barrier to accessing domestic abuse support services. Victims and survivors of domestic abuse come from a range of ethnic and national backgrounds and may face additional barriers to seeking help, including language barriers, cultural stigma, fear of engagement with statutory services, and concerns about immigration enforcement, which may deter some individuals from seeking support or disclosing abuse. The recommissioned services will be required to provide inclusive and culturally sensitive support, including access to interpreting and translation services where required. Providers will be expected to demonstrate how they will proactively promote access for people from minoritised ethnic communities and travelling communities, and how they will address barriers to engagement. While local data indicates lower recorded access by some ethnic minority groups, this is recognised as a potential under-reporting issue rather than lower prevalence. The recommissioning approach is therefore expected to have a neutral to positive impact by improving accessibility, awareness, and equity of access across all racial and ethnic groups.
Religion & Belief	☐	☒	☐	Religion or belief will not be a barrier to accessing domestic abuse support services. Victims and survivors may experience additional challenges related to religion or belief, including cultural or community pressure,

Equality Group	Potential positive impact	Potential neutral impact	Potential negative impact	Rationale
				fear of stigma, or barriers to disclosure where abuse is normalised or hidden. The recommissioned services will be required to provide inclusive, non-judgemental and culturally sensitive support. Providers will be expected to respect individual religious beliefs, support freedom of belief, and, where appropriate, work in partnership with faith-based or community organisations to improve access and engagement. Although local data on religion and belief is limited, the recommissioning approach aims to reduce barriers to access and promote equitable support for all victims. This is expected to have a neutral to positive impact.
Sex (consider issues of safety and sexual violence, part-time work)	☒	☐	☐	Sex will not be a barrier to accessing domestic abuse support services. Domestic abuse affects people of all sexes, although it is recognised as a gendered crime that disproportionately affects women. The recommissioning approach moves towards a more integrated, gender-inclusive service model. This will incorporate existing provision for men and boys within a wider domestic abuse service offer, maintaining access to specialist support while improving accessibility, consistency and sustainability across the system. The service specification will require providers to demonstrate how they will meet the distinct needs of women, men and non-binary victims, including those who may face additional stigma or barriers to disclosure. Where elements of the service are delivered as single-sex provision, such as refuge accommodation, this will be based on safety, safeguarding and recovery needs and delivered in line with Equality Act 2010 exemptions. Alternative appropriate pathways will be available where single-sex provision is not suitable
Sexual Orientation	☐	☒	☐	Sexual orientation will not be a barrier to accessing domestic abuse support services. Domestic abuse affects people of all sexual orientations, including lesbian, gay and bisexual victims, who may face additional barriers to disclosure and access to support due to fear of stigma, discrimination or lack of understanding. The move towards a gender-inclusive service model is intended to support victims of all sexual orientations by reducing fragmentation and ensuring consistent access to appropriate

Equality Group	Potential positive impact	Potential neutral impact	Potential negative impact	Rationale
				specialist support. recommissioned services will be required to provide inclusive, non-discriminatory and trauma-informed support. Providers will be expected to demonstrate how they will promote equality of access, ensure staff are appropriately trained, and create safe environments where victims feel able to disclose abuse regardless of sexual orientation. This approach is expected to have a neutral to positive impact, supporting equitable access to domestic abuse services and reducing barriers for LGBTQ+ victims and survivors.
Others: carers, care leavers, homeless, social/ economic deprivation (consider shift-patterns, caring responsibilities)	☒	☐	☐	The needs assessment highlights strong links between domestic abuse, homelessness, care experience, and socioeconomic deprivation. The recommissioned services will provide early intervention, crisis support, and accommodation pathways that reduce the risk of homelessness and repeat victimisation. This is expected to have a positive impact on people experiencing multiple disadvantages, including care leavers, carers, and those living in deprived or rural areas.
Health Inequalities (any preventable, unfair & unjust differences in health status between groups, populations or individuals that arise from unequal distribution of social, environmental & economic conditions)	☒	☐	☐	Domestic abuse is strongly associated with health inequalities, including poor mental health, physical injury, substance misuse, long-term health conditions and adverse childhood experiences. Victims and survivors experiencing domestic abuse are more likely to face preventable and entrenched health inequalities as a result of trauma, poverty, social exclusion and barriers to accessing health services. The recommissioned domestic abuse services will be required to adopt a trauma-informed and whole-system approach, working closely with health, mental health, substance misuse and wider support services to improve access to care and promote recovery. Providers will be expected to support early identification of health needs, signpost and refer into appropriate services, and contribute to wider prevention and early-intervention activity in line with local Public Health priorities, including Making Every Contact Count. This approach is expected to have a positive impact by reducing health inequalities, improving mental and physical wellbeing, and supporting longer-term recovery outcomes for victims, survivors and their children

Equality Group	Potential <u>positive</u> impact	Potential <u>neutral</u> impact	Potential <u>negative</u> impact	Rationale

It is also important to recognise that domestic abuse can present in different forms across communities, including so-called “honour-based abuse”, forced marriage and other culturally specific forms of harm. These forms of abuse may involve multiple perpetrators, extended family networks and heightened risks to victim safety. They cut across a number of protected characteristics, including sex, race, religion and belief. The recommissioned services will be required to demonstrate how they will identify and respond to these risks, ensuring that staff are appropriately trained and that safeguarding responses are robust, culturally competent and victim centred.

Where a negative impact on any of the equality groups is realised after the implementation of the activity, the activity lead will seek to minimise the impact and carry out a full review of this EIA.

6. Action planning

What actions will you take as a result of this impact assessment? (you will need to include actions to mitigate any potential negative impacts)

Potential negative impact	What action will be taken	Who will lead	Timeframe
Barriers to access for people with protected characteristics	equality, accessibility and inclusion requirements will be embedded in the service specifications	Commissioning Lead	Prior to procurement
Risk that some groups are under-represented or face barriers to engagement	Providers will be required to demonstrate how they will proactively promote inclusive access and address barriers for protected groups	Commissioning Lead	Prior to procurement
Limited local data for some protected characteristics	Providers will be required to collect, maintain and report equality and diversity data. As a minimum, this will include age, sex, gender identity where disclosed, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, geographic location and NRPF status, together with recording where data is unknown or not disclosed. Providers will also be expected to use this information proactively to identify under-representation, potential barriers to access, and any differential outcomes for particular groups, and to set out what action they will take in response through service delivery and continuous improvement.	Commissioning Lead	Prior to procurement

Potential negative impact	What action will be taken	Who will lead	Timeframe
Risk that the needs of men and boys are not fully met following service integration	The service specification and evaluation criteria will require providers to demonstrate how the distinct needs of men and boys will be identified and met within a gender-inclusive model	Commissioning Lead	Prior to procurement
Risk that some victims may experience confusion or difficulty accessing telephone support following removal of a standalone local helpline	Service specifications will require all providers to be contactable by telephone and to clearly promote national domestic abuse helplines. Providers will support service users to access national helplines where appropriate, including for out-of-hours or anonymous support. Access issues will be reviewed through contract monitoring.	Commissioning Lead	Prior to procurement and ongoing

7. Monitoring and review

How will you monitor these actions?

As part of on-going contract monitoring process. Any changes in the delivery of the service that result in potentially negative impact on any equality group will be immediately raised with the provider by the commissioning lead.

When will you review this EIA?

The EIA will be reviewed as part of the contract mobilisation and implementation phase and revisited throughout the contract period. The EIA will be formally reviewed in the event the services delivered are varied in any way.

8. Equality Statement

- All public bodies have a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to give due regard to how they can improve society and promote equality in every aspect of their day-to-day business. This means that they must consider, and keep reviewing, how they are promoting equality in decision-making, policies, services, procurement, staff recruitment and management.
- Herefordshire Council will challenge discrimination, promote equality, respect human rights, and design and implement services, policies and measures that meet the diverse needs of our population, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others.

Signature of person completing EIA

W Dyer

Date signed

01.07.2026