

## Appendix C – Outline of the Joint Domestic Abuse Strategy for Herefordshire

### 1. Learning from the Former Herefordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy

The 2014-2017 Domestic Abuse Strategy for Herefordshire contained **four outcomes** and **four objectives**:

Outcomes	Objectives
<b>Prevention:</b> to raise awareness of domestic violence and abuse and to provide advice and guidance on healthy, respectful relationships	Victims of domestic violence and abuse are protected and live in safety
<b>Provision of Service:</b> to ensure that people affected by domestic violence and abuse have access to appropriate advice and services	Fewer children and young people experience domestic violence and abuse
<b>Partnership Working:</b> to ensure that partner agencies work together, taking a whole system and family centred approach to dealing with domestic violence and abuse	Perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse control their behaviour
<b>Criminal Justice:</b> to ensure effective use of the criminal justice system in bringing perpetrators to account, as well as to ensure that victims are given the support they need on their journey through the criminal justice system.	Increased awareness of domestic violence and abuse, which leads to a culture where it is not accepted.

In the broadest sense, the outcomes detailed in the 2014-17 strategy remain current and aligned to national priorities. This is not indicative of any failures but recognition that the four outcomes are ongoing 'golden threads' to tackling domestic abuse.

When the learning is considered in more detail, analysis of the local action plan in relation to domestic abuse provides a fuller picture. The action plan was informed by both the former Domestic Abuse Strategy and a local domestic abuse needs assessment completed in 2013 (updated in 2017) and resulted in the following new or increased services:

- A new refuge building (9 self-contained units)
- Helping Hands and CRUSH programmes delivered to children
- Improved domestic abuse data recording across agencies
- A triage worker in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub to support the flow of information

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- Ongoing support for families through Early Help and the Troubled Families Programme
- Amendments to the Housing Allocations Policy to ensure domestic abuse victims have higher priority
- A specific worker within the Housing Solutions Team with specialist knowledge around domestic abuse
- A perpetrator programme, trialled in Herefordshire
- A draft multi-agency domestic abuse risk and referral pathway was created
- The creation of a Domestic Abuse Delivery Group to drive forward partnership working
- Implementation of 'Operation Encompass' where the police inform the MASH about domestic abuse cases and the MASH alerts the school.
- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) training has been rolled out to professionals.

The following actions remain outstanding:

- A specific local domestic abuse service for males.  
The level of need for male victims remains poorly understood nationally. In Herefordshire the current local domestic abuse helpline provides initial advice to male victims and signposting to relevant local or national organisations. All organisations working jointly on developing the revised strategy will be expected to raise the profile of male victims in order to encourage disclosures and build a more accurate picture of demand. The re-commissioned service will be required to demonstrate how they ensuring there is an adequate service for male victims in Herefordshire.
- Awareness raising and education for professionals and in the full diversity of Herefordshire communities.  
Herefordshire Council are part of two joint funding bids with a focus on education and awareness raising around the identifying and responding to domestic abuse across Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and in schools. Additionally the commissioned domestic abuse support service will be expected to promote and make their services available to people of all ages and communities across Herefordshire. The revised strategy will consider which tools are required to enable professionals to identify and respond to disclosures of domestic abuse.

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- Clarity around various assessments used and how they translate between services.

There is recognition that different assessment tools are used across which is sometimes unhelpful in terms of understanding thresholds. The revised strategy will examine this in more detail.

- Better information sharing arrangements between key agencies (substance misuse services, sexual health services, general health services, social care, schools etc.), including data protection considerations.

Improvements are already underway with compulsory joint working across commissioned health services being written into service specifications.

However, there is a recognition that information sharing becomes challenging where safeguarding does not apply and the revised strategy will explore how information can be shared legally and proportionately.

The revised strategy will consider the actions which remain outstanding set-against the current national and local context. Since the former strategy was written in 2014, there has been a significant change to the way partners such as the police and health services deliver their services both strategically and operationally. Revising the strategy will provide the opportunity to review the way partners deliver services, ensuring there is a shared sense of purpose.

## 2. Outline of the Proposed Strategy

- a. The local strategy has **four priorities** which are aligned to the national priorities:

### Prevention

- Education and empowerment to prevent domestic abuse and encourage disclosures
- Early intervention
- Stimulating culture change
- Practical interventions and solutions which encourage identification of domestic abuse such as safe places in communities
- Whole family approach – effective, evidenced-based interventions with the victim, perpetrator and any children

### Partnership working

- Training and toolkits for professionals to prevent and identify abuse
- Coordinated response
- Clear pathways
- Information sharing arrangements
- Clear roles and responsibilities

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### Provision of services

- Providing effective, timely services
- Empowering victims through partnership working
- Wrapping services around the victim
- Good quality advice and information suited to individual and cultural needs

### Pursuing perpetrators

- Using evidence based interventions to support perpetrators to change
- A partnership approach to deter and bring perpetrators to justice
- Effectively using all tools available to disrupt perpetrators, including civil orders
- A criminal justice system which supports the victim while bringing perpetrators to justice

### b. Scope

The strategy will include cultural challenges associated with domestic abuse, including:

- forced marriage
- sexual exploitation
- honour based violence
- female genital mutilation

It will also consider the local context, including delivering services to those with protected characteristics in Herefordshire. There are nine protected characteristics under the council's equality duty:

- **Age** – Herefordshire has an older age structure than England and Wales, with rates of dementia increasing and featuring in recent local domestic homicide reviews.
- **Disability** – Those with a disability are particularly vulnerable to domestic abuse and isolation where there is a reliance on the perpetrator to access to support.
- **Gender reassignment, sex and sexual orientation, marriage or civil partner status** – domestic abuse can happen in any relationship. Organisations must take steps to understand the challenges and make services accessible to those from LGBT communities.
- **Pregnancy and maternity** – Pregnancy can elevate risk to victims and can be a method of control.
- **Race and religion or belief** – Domestic abuse can happen in any ethnicity or culture. Services should understand the BAME communities in Herefordshire and adapt their services to prevent, identify and respond to domestic abuse.

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The strategy will also consider the challenges associated with delivering services in rural Herefordshire.