

# Title of report: **Sexual Violence Strategy**

**Meeting: Health and wellbeing board**

**Meeting date: Thursday 27 April 2023**

**Report by: Public Health Consultant**

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

## **Wards affected**

All wards

## **Purpose**

The Health and Wellbeing Board note the Herefordshire Sexual Violence Strategy and to support the further development and delivery of the action plan across the system.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- a) **The Board notes the Herefordshire Sexual Violence Strategy**
- b) **The Board support and facilitate further development and delivery of the action plan.**

## **Alternative options**

1. There are no alternative options since the Board has a statutory duty to consider the health and wellbeing needs of its local population and these are considered here with regard to sexual violence, together with a framework for action which has been agreed with all relevant stakeholders.

## **Key considerations**

2. Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has two strategic priorities: violence against women and girls and domestic abuse. In this context, a strategy on sexual violence was sought and a sub-group established. This group involved a range of partners including from the NHS, drug and alcohol services, West Mercia Police, Council, Probation, Herefordshire Women's Equality Group, West Mercia Women's Aid, and West Mercia Rape

and Sexual Abuse Support centre. A final report was produced following some months of discussion and presented to the CSP in March 2023, where it was welcomed.

3. The strategy covers 2023 – 2028 (see appendix) and presents some key data such as that 98% of perpetrators are male; that there is significant under-reporting of sexual violence; and that reports have risen since pre-Covid. It recognises that there is evidence as to what works to prevent sexual violence, and what works to reduce its impact once it has occurred. However, it notes that awareness of available services is variable, and that access to services can be problematic due to capacity issues.
4. The strategy's vision is for a County where everyone lives free of the fear, threat, or experience of sexual violence. There are three areas of focus: prioritising prevention; supporting victims and survivors and pursuing perpetrators.
5. A delivery focussed action plan has been drafted which is under active further development. All partners across the system will be included in the implementation. The level of partner engagement has been high and it is anticipated that this will continue.

### **Community impact**

6. Implementation of this strategy will have a significant impact on the local community, at a time when public awareness of sexual violence is particularly high. Fear of sexual violence and the experience of being attacked have significant negative impacts on health and well-being and the focus here on prevention and improved survivor support can bring real benefit.

### **Environmental Impact**

7. There are no direct implications for the environment in this strategy. However, creating safe public space may remove a barrier to active travel and thereby increase the number of short distance trips being done by sustainable modes of travel.

### **Equality duty**

8. This strategy has beneficial impact for women and girls who are disproportionately the victims of sexual violence and therefore makes a contribution to tackling indirect discrimination, as below.

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

## Resource implications

9. This strategy has no immediate resource implications although reviewing future commissioning priorities will be required.

## Legal implications

10. Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has two strategic priorities: violence against women and girls and domestic abuse. The strategy on sexual violence sub-group involved: the NHS, drug and alcohol services, West Mercia Police, Council, Probation, Herefordshire Women's Equality Group, West Mercia Women's Aid, and West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support centre.

## Risk management

11. There is reputational risk should the Health and Wellbeing Board not endorse and commit to the Sexual Violence Strategy.

## Consultees

12. The strategy was agreed by a partnership forum over a period of some months. The key partners are listed in paragraph 2 above.

## Appendices

Appendix 1 - Sexual Violence Strategy  
Appendix 2 - Powerpoint presentation

## Background papers

None identified

## Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

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