

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

1. Service Area/Directorate

Name of Head of Service for activity being assessed:

Directorate:

Name of lead person for this activity:

Individual(s) completing this assessment: Hannah McSherry / Wendy Dyer

Date assessment completed: 12.03.25

2. What is being assessed

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

Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025- 2028

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

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a range of new duties on Local Authorities including:

- a) Appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board, which will be consulted in the implementation of the new Act.
- b) Assess the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support in their area for all victims or their children, including those who come from outside the area.
- c) Develop and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover the local authority locality, having regard to the needs assessment.
- d) Give effect to the strategy (through commissioning or de-commissioning decisions) including the provision of safe accommodation.
- e) Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy, reviewing it every three years.

Herefordshire Council carried out a domestic abuse needs assessment in 2024 and have used the information captured through this process, along with information gathered through the Safelives domestic abuse systems review and feedback from people with lived experience to develop a new Domestic Abuse strategy in line with the guidance issued alongside the 2021 Act.

The strategy reviews activities undertaken through the previous Domestic Abuse Strategy and outlines the activities that will be taken forward to prevent and tackle domestic abuse in Herefordshire during the lifetime of the strategy.

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)

A full needs assessment of domestic abuse has been undertaken using a range of data sources across local support providers and stakeholders as well as sub regional, regional and national data, this was completed in October 2024.

Additionally, we have used legislation, research and policy documents to inform and develop the strategy.

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

Stakeholder consultation was carried out during 2024. A detailed coproduction process has been completed with people with lived experience of domestic abuse which has directly informed the priorities and actions in the strategy. A public consultation was completed in February 2025.

Feedback has been used to inform the strategy.

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 need assessment completed provides a comprehensive analysis of domestic abuse in Herefordshire for the year 2022/23, covering various aspects including demographics, service provision, and recommendations for improvement which include:

- Challenges in data collection and service provision, particularly regarding demographic and socioeconomic factors, which need to be addressed to improve support for victims.
- Support for children and young people affected by domestic abuse includes various programs.
- The number of recorded domestic abuse offences has increased, with a significant proportion of cases not progressing due to lack of victim support for police action.
- There is a need for more housing support for domestic abuse victims, including those with mortgages and those without a local connection, to ensure they have safe accommodation.
- The MARAC process is effective but requires improvements in data collection and addressing the behaviour of perpetrators to enhance victim safety.

The strategy has identified four key priority areas where actions are needed to improve services and support available, these are set out below.

Improve awareness and prevention
 Improving understanding of domestic abuse and support services
 Improve joint working and coordination across services
 Hold perpetrators to account for their behaviour

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 strategy has been developed in line with the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

A Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board is in place, this consists of a group of organisations that are working together to improve outcomes for victims of domestic abuse. This is achieved through a strategic approach to sharing knowledge and intelligence, identifying and, where possible, addressing gaps in support and prevention. The strategy sets out the priorities and actions for the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board for the next 3 years.

The Board recognise the fact that domestic abuse has a huge impact on the lives of victims and are committed to listening and engaging with those with lived experience and supported by expert evidence base, to continuously learn and improve.

The board also acknowledges the gendered nature of domestic abuse but work to ensure our local response to domestic abuse is accessible to all regardless of gender and other protected characteristics.

The equality duty is strengthened through the following actions:

1. Commissioning of a lived experience advisory network to ensure that the voices of people with lived experience of domestic abuse are at the heart of what we do.
2. Secured additional investment for the Sanctuary Scheme (installation of target hardening equipment) in Herefordshire, giving victims the option to stay at home where it is deemed safe to do so.
3. Co-located domestic abuse specialists in Early Help and Edge of Care/Home teams at Herefordshire Council to ensure a robust understanding and response to domestic abuse
4. Offering specialist domestic abuse training for professionals and volunteers across Herefordshire to increase understanding of domestic abuse and the support services that we have in place.
5. Securing funding for the continuation of the IRIS programme to support early intervention and prevention through GP surgeries.
6. Developed our relationship with the Police and Crime Commissioner and domestic abuse commissioners across West Mercia to share best practice and maximise service provision.
7. Work with Adult Social Care colleagues to gain greater insight into the prevalence of elder abuse in Herefordshire.
8. Gain feedback from children and young people and review research to better understand the impact of domestic abuse on their lives.
9. By offering a range of specialist services for people to access e.g. floating support, specialist services for children etc.
10. Fostering good relationships through the DA Local Partnership Board, DA professionals network, West Mercia DA commissioners working group and through the lived experience advisory group.

11. 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)	☒	☐	☐	According to the needs assessment carried out in 2024, half of all victims of recorded domestic abuse offences were aged 25-44 years, with the median age of victims being 30. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 highlights the significant impact domestic abuse can have on children and young people, including their health, wellbeing, and development. The act also discusses the unique challenges faced by older victims of domestic abuse, such as dependency on the abuser for care and the potential for abuse to be overlooked or misinterpreted as age-related issues. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 asks local authorities to have particular regard to victims and their children with relevant protected characteristics as per the Equality Act 2010 and states that they must be able to access the support that they need. Under this duty, local authorities must ensure the appropriate and adequate support within safe accommodation that meets the needs of all victims including those with relevant protected characteristics, additional and / or multiple complex needs and whose support needs may not be able to be met within non-specialist domestic abuse safe accommodation. The duties under the act are reflected in the council's Domestic Abuse Strategy and commissioned services which should result in a potential positive impact on age ensuring that victims/survivors have access to the right support at the right time regardless of age.
Disability (consider attitudinal, physical, financial and social barriers, neuro-diversity, learning disability, physical and sensory impairment)	☒	☐	☐	The needs assessment shows a significant number of domestic abuse victims are disabled. Also, that 68% of disabled people referred to West Mercia Women's Aid (WMWA) had mental health issues. Additionally, over 50% of victims supported by the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service in 2022/23 were recorded as disabled. Data suggests that disabled people may be more vulnerable to domestic abuse due to factors such as communication barriers, social isolation, and dependency on the abuser for care. Abuse can take various forms, including physical, emotional, financial, and sexual. For disabled victims, it can also include withholding care,

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				medication, or mobility aids, and restricting access to necessary support services. Disabled victims may face additional barriers to reporting abuse, such as fear of losing their caregiver, lack of accessible reporting mechanisms, and concerns about not being believed or taken seriously. The council's strategy emphasises the need for support services to be accessible and tailored to the specific needs of victims. This includes: • providing information in accessible formats, ensuring physical accessibility of services, and training staff to understand and respond to the unique challenges faced by individuals. • collaboration between multiple agencies, including health and social care services, the police, and specialist domestic abuse services ensuring a comprehensive and coordinated local response to need.
Gender Reassignment (include gender identity, and consider privacy of data and harassment)	☐	☒	☐	The needs data highlights the number of non-binary and transgender victims supported by the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service is very low. Specifically, between April 2018 and March 2023, no non-binary victims and fewer than five transgender victims have been supported by the IDVA service. Data on gender identity was not provided by the Police, Health, Housing, or Adult Social Care services as part of the needs assessment. The challenges in data collection need to be addressed to better understand the impact on this group however the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance includes important considerations for individuals who have undergone or are undergoing gender reassignment: • Individuals who have undergone or are undergoing gender reassignment may face unique forms of abuse related to their gender identity. This can include emotional abuse, such as threats to "out" them, or physical and sexual abuse that targets their gender identity. There can be significant barriers to accessing support for these individuals, including fear of discrimination, lack of understanding from service providers, and concerns about being misgendered or not taken seriously.

Equality Group	Potential positive impact	Potential neutral impact	Potential negative impact	Rationale
				The council's strategy and commissioned services emphasise the need for domestic abuse services to be inclusive and sensitive to the needs of transgender individuals. This includes providing training for staff on gender identity issues and ensuring that services are welcoming and accessible to all.
Marriage & Civil Partnerships	☒	☐	☐	The domestic abuse act defines "personally connected" individuals as those who are married to each other, 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 have had a parental relationship in relation to the same child, or are relatives. Domestic abuse within marriage can often involve coercive control, where one partner exerts power and control over the other through various means, including emotional, psychological, and financial abuse. Married individuals may experience economic abuse, where the abuser controls access to financial resources, limiting the victim's independence and ability to leave the abusive relationship. The council's strategy and commissioned support services emphasise the importance of accessible support services for married victims of domestic abuse, this includes safe housing options which would have a positive impact on this group.
Pregnancy & Maternity (consider working arrangements, part-time working, infant caring responsibilities)	☒	☐	☐	The needs assessment shows over three-quarters of the people accessing refuge were either pregnant (12%) or had children in the household (65%). Women make up 86% of domestic abuse victims supported by the Housing Solutions Team in Herefordshire, many with children or pregnant (52%). Whilst the domestic abuse strategy for Herefordshire does not specifically address pregnancy, although it is acknowledged that pregnancy can be a trigger for domestic abuse, and existing abuse may get worse during pregnancy or after giving birth. Midwives ask pregnant women about domestic abuse as part of their checks. However, the strategy does talk about investment in the IRIS programme, which is a GP based programme of education and support which focuses on early intervention and prevention of domestic abuse. The strategy highlights the impact of domestic abuse on various vulnerable groups and

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				the importance of providing support to all victims, regardless of their circumstances.
Race (including Travelling Communities and people of other nationalities)	☐	☒	☐	The Herefordshire DA needs assessment data shows the majority of victims are from white ethnic backgrounds. However, the needs assessment also shows there are challenges in data collection which need to be addressed to better understand the impact on people from different nationalities. The Domestic Abuse Act acknowledges the additional cultural and linguistic barriers that victims from ethnic minority backgrounds may face, and the need for culturally sensitive support and intervention. The council's strategy and commissioned support services emphasise the importance of accessible support services ensuring a commitment to inclusivity and non-discrimination in providing support and services to victims of domestic abuse.
Religion & Belief	☒	☒	☐	Data from the needs assessment on religion and belief was not provided by the Police, Health, Housing, or Adult Social Care services. This highlights the need for better data collection. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 asks local authorities to have particular regard to victims and their children with relevant protected characteristics as per the Equality Act 2010 and states that they must be able to access the support that they need. This duty is reflected in the council's updated Domestic Abuse Strategy and should result in a potential positive impact.
Sex (consider issues of safety and sexual violence, part-time work)	☒	☐	☐	SafeLives, a leading domestic abuse charity, estimate that around 8,000 people a year in Herefordshire experience domestic abuse: 5,500 (68%) females and 2,500 (32%) males. The local needs assessment data confirms that the majority of domestic abuse victims are female. The duties under the act are reflected in the council's Domestic Abuse Strategy and commissioned services which should result in a potential positive impact by ensuring that victims/survivors have access to inclusive and sensitive support services regardless of sexual identity.

Equality Group	Potential positive impact	Potential neutral impact	Potential negative impact	Rationale
Sexual Orientation	☐	☒	☐	The domestic abuse act recognizes the distinct experiences of LGBTQ+ victims, including the potential for abuse to be linked to their sexual orientation or gender identity. The act also covers the experiences of male victims of domestic abuse, highlighting the stigma and underreporting that can occur. The Domestic Abuse Strategy for Herefordshire emphasises the importance of ensuring that the local response to domestic abuse is accessible to all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation.
Others: carers, care leavers, homeless, social/ economic deprivation (consider shift-patterns, caring responsibilities)	☒	☐	☐	The local needs assessment shows a notable link between domestic abuse and deprivation, with over 40% of all domestic abuse offences and incidents recorded in the most deprived parts of Herefordshire. There are challenges in accessing support services, particularly for those in rural areas. Rural victims are half as likely to report their abuse, and face significant barriers in accessing support services. The strategy outlines several priorities and actions aimed at improving awareness, understanding, and joint working across services. These include investing in specialist domestic abuse roles, promoting healthy relationships education in schools, and developing social media campaigns to support wider understanding of domestic abuse. Additionally, the strategy emphasises the importance of training professionals to understand coercive control and its impact, as well as the need for a non-victim-blaming approach.
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)	☒	☐	☐	The domestic abuse act addresses the impact of domestic abuse on children recognising that witnessing abuse can have long-term effects on their health and development. The Domestic Abuse Strategy also highlights the significant impact of domestic abuse on the health and well-being of victims. It emphasises the need for a comprehensive approach to address the physical, psychological, and emotional health consequences of domestic abuse. The strategy outlines several priorities and actions aimed at improving the health outcomes of domestic abuse victims. These include investing in specialist domestic abuse roles, promoting healthy relationships education in schools, and developing social media campaigns to support wider understanding of domestic abuse.

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				Further investment has been secured for the continuation of the IRIS project in Herefordshire to support GP practices with early intervention and prevention of domestic abuse.

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.

12. 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)

The strategy is underpinned by an action plan that will be championed by each partner within the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board. The actions will be further developed and directly linked to agencies to ensure effective mechanisms are in place for delivery.

13. Monitoring and review

How will you monitor these actions?

Needs assessments are an important precursor to developing local strategies. A full needs assessment should be conducted at a minimum every 3 years, with a refresh being undertaken on an annual basis to ensure any change in demand or support requirements are adequately captured. This will be used to inform the strategy and resulting actions.

Accountability and Governance

The strategy and associated action plan is designed to be flexible and adapt to changing needs and national guidance. The Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board is responsible for its implementation, overseeing effectiveness, delivery plan, and funding commitments. Feedback from people with lived experience will continue to inform progress and commissioning of services.

Measuring Progress

Progress will be measured through a multi-agency domestic abuse dashboard, feedback from the Lived Experience Advisory Network, workforce data, grant and contract monitoring data, and learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews.

The strategy will be implemented by the Local Partnership Board, a multi-agency partnership. The council will be required to report to the Government annually.

When will you review this EIA?

The EIA will be reviewed at least every 3 years at the same time as the strategy is updated

14. 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

Hannah McSherry and Wendy Dyer

Date signed 13.03.25