

Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022–2025

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Foreword

In the 12 months to March 2020, an estimated 2.3 million adults aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse in the UK (1.6 million women and 757,000 men).

In Worcestershire in 2020-21, there were a total of 12,887 domestic abuse incidents (reported crimes and non-crimes) reported to the police. In addition to those who have reported domestic abuse, there is thought to be a large unmet domestic abuse need in Worcestershire.

Domestic abuse can have wide-reaching impacts on the physical and mental health of survivors, their financial state and housing. It also affects the health, wellbeing and educational attainment of children who witness it. Physical and emotional harms resulting from domestic abuse are estimated to have cost £47 billion in England and Wales in 2017, with an overall cost to society of £66 billion.

There are a wide range of services, both statutory and voluntary, who work to support families and individuals affected by domestic abuse. The Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Partnership Board will play a key part in strengthening and coordinating the local response to domestic abuse.

It is the aim of the Partnership to ensure that those at risk of, or experiencing domestic abuse in Worcestershire, have the support and services that they require and that perpetrators are appropriately addressed.

It is the aim of this Strategy to enable the Partnership to work together to prevent abuse from occurring, to strengthen the services in Worcestershire and to ensure that services are being steered using the latest research and most robust data. This Strategy also ensures that Worcestershire meets the duties placed on it in relation to part iv of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Introduction

The Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Partnership Board is a partnership between Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police, the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner, NHS organisations, the National Probation Service, Worcestershire Children First, specialist providers, District Councils and is supported by people with lived experience.

This strategy sets out the joint vision, priorities, and commitments of Worcestershire County Council and the Partnership Board. The overall aim of the Partnership Board is:

To prevent, and reduce the prevalence of, domestic abuse and ensure that all those impacted by domestic abuse have the right support, when they require it.

SAFE ACCOMMODATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLAN

This Strategy is informed by best practice, national learning and a Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment. It will inform an Action Plan.

The Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment, brings all the data and information, as required by the duty under part iv of the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act, in relation to safe accommodation together in one place and helps the Partnership Board understand what is working well in Worcestershire and where there are areas for development.

Bringing information together from across the Partnership Board is vital as it enables plans and service decisions to be evidence informed.

The Action Plan will bring together the actions which need to be completed to implement this strategy; it will be overseen by the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board who have the responsibility of ensuring progress on the commitments given.



Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The prevention of abuse and the protection of all victims lies at the heart of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the wider programme of work.

The measures in the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act seek to:

PROMOTE AWARENESS - to put abuse at the top of everyone's agenda, by introducing a statutory definition of domestic abuse and recognise children as victims in their own right.

TRANSFORM THE JUSTICE RESPONSE - including by helping victims to give their best evidence in the criminal courts through the use of video evidence, screens and other special measures, and ensuring that victims of abuse do not suffer further trauma in family court proceedings by being cross-examined by their abuser.

IMPROVE PERFORMANCE - to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse.

PROTECT AND SUPPORT VICTIMS - including by establishing in law the office of domestic abuse commissioner, introducing a new domestic abuse protection notice and domestic abuse protection order and placing a new duty on upper tier local authorities to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation.

TACKLE PERPETRATORS - extending the controlling or coercive behaviour offence to cover post-separation abuse, extending the offence of disclosing private sexual photographs and films with intent to cause distress to cover threats to disclose such material, creating a new offence of non-fatal strangulation or suffocation of another person, clarifying by restating in statute the general position that a person may not consent to the infliction of serious harm and, by extension, is unable to consent to their own death.



What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse causes significant harm to individuals, children, families and communities.

This Strategy adopts the Government definition of domestic abuse which is outlined in the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act. The new definition emphasises that domestic abuse is not only physical violence, but can also be emotional, coercive or controlling behaviour, and economic abuse. See Appendix for full definition

BEHAVIOUR IS CLASSED AS “DOMESTIC ABUSE” IF:

- Both individuals are over 16 years of age.
- Both individuals are personally connected to each other, and the behaviour is abusive.

ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR CAN BE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

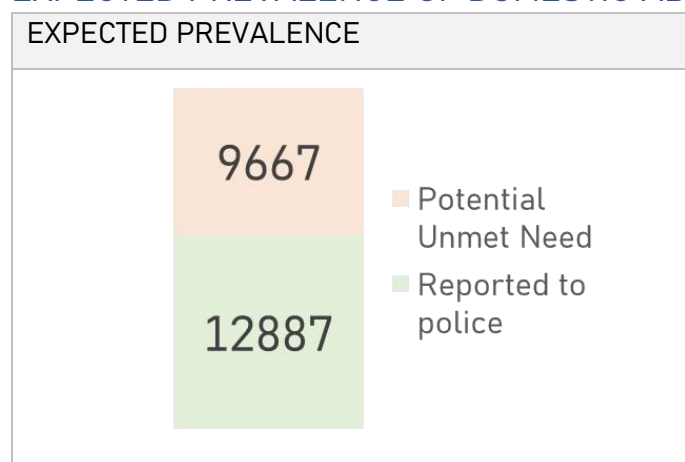
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse



Picture in Worcestershire

In the scoping work completed as part of creating this strategy, several datasets were investigated to build a picture of the domestic abuse need in Worcestershire. Below is a summary of those data sets.

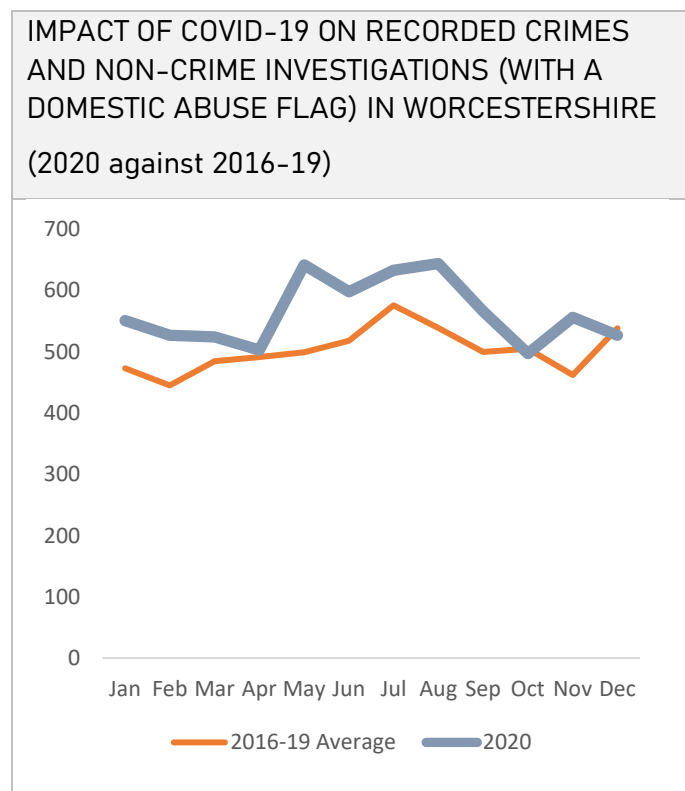
EXPECTED PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC ABUSE INCIDENTS



The expected prevalence uses the findings from the Crime Survey of England and Wales and applies them to the population by age across Worcestershire.

For the financial year 2020-21, the prevalence rates indicate that approximately 43% of victims do not report their crimes to the police.

RECORDED CRIMES AND NON-CRIME INVESTIGATIONS



The graph compares crimes and non-crimes with a domestic abuse flag between 2020 and 2016-19.

COVID-19 had an impact on the numbers of domestic abuse incidents reported to the police. Nationally, many victims of domestic abuse couldn't distance themselves from their abuser, safely contact the police for help or get support from family and friends.

In Worcestershire, there was overall a greater number of crimes and non-crime incidents during 2020 compared to the average in Worcestershire over the three years between 2016-19.

HOMELESS APPROACHES BY DISTRICT

District	Number of DA Approaches	Owed a homelessness duty	Prevention
Bromsgrove	30	17	8
Malvern Hills	34	34	0
Redditch	35	35	4
Worcester	116	58	11
Wychavon	113	95	0
Wyre Forest	58	48	10

The table on the left shows the number of homeless approaches (the number of people who have asked the council for assistance due to being homeless or worried about becoming homeless) in the financial year 2020-21, where the reason was domestic abuse, by district.



DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICE USER PROFILE¹

The needs assessment highlighted the demographic make-up of those accessing domestic abuse services. It should be noted that there can be barriers to services faced by marginalised groups

- Predominantly White British – 79%, second largest ethnic group were White other – 9.8%
- 86% of victims were females, 12% males and 2% identified as transgender
- 81% were heterosexual, 6% lesbian or gay and 12% preferred not to say
- Perpetrators are mainly white males
- The number of male victims reporting domestic abuse is increasing
- Most of the victims have at least one child
- 65% of service users are atheist, 17% Christian and 4% Muslim

In Worcestershire, accessing safe accommodation is particularly challenging for the following groups:

- Refugees and newly arrived migrants (in terms of language, culture, immigration, faith)
- Those with disabilities
- LGBTQ+ groups
- Males
- Parents with teenage boys
- Owner occupiers
- Larger families with older children, especially with complex needs
- Those dependent upon alcohol or other drugs
- Disabled females

CHILDREN AND DOMESTIC ABUSE

In relationships where there is domestic violence and abuse, children witness about three-quarters of the abusive incidents. Children who witness domestic abuse may display aggressive or angry behaviour, become withdrawn, have difficulty at school, experience anxiety, depression or eating disorders, have problems sleeping or wet the bed, exhibit self-harming behaviour, take drugs or excessively drink alcohol. They are at risk of being abused themselves and may repeat the pattern and become abusive when they are older.

The information below is taken from the Needs Assessment and highlights the need for a range of interventions to support children living in families subject to domestic abuse.

District Council	Parents with One or More Children	Individuals with No Children
Bromsgrove	98	8
Malvern Hills	23	2
Redditch	48	54
Worcester	46	53
Wychavon	51	59
Wyre Forest	33	27
Total	299	203

¹ Taken from the Worcestershire Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment 2021
Worcestershire DA Strategy

The table below addresses the key themes from the Domestic Abuse Act, the evidence from the Needs Assessment and the way in which the priorities in the Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy will address these themes. Details of the “4 P Priorities” are laid out from page 14 onwards.

KEY THEME FROM DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT	EVIDENCE FROM NEEDS ASSESSMENT	STRATEGY PRIORITIES
Address the need for 'safe accommodation' in Worcestershire	There is a need to increase suitable safe accommodation provision in Worcestershire as many referrals are not being met due to a shortfall.	PROVISION
	The assessment shows a requirement for 35 units per annum across Worcestershire.	
	Services are not easily accessible to rural communities.	PARTNERSHIP
	Referral times need to be as brief as possible due to the distressing nature of the violence.	
Meeting the need for accommodation-based support	Domestic Abuse victims require a holistic, person-centred package of support as well as housing services. For example, victims need assistance with legal and financial matters as well as wellbeing support.	PREVENTION
	Support should be beyond the time of being in safe accommodation.	PROVISION PARTNERSHIP PURSUE
Meeting needs of all those with protected characteristics	Suitable accommodation is required for specific groups including males, LGBTQ, people from ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and difficulties, and larger families.	PREVENTION
		PROVISION
	There needs to be improved recognition of the needs of, and response to, male and LGBTQ victims.	PARTNERSHIP
		PURSUE
Address barriers faced by those with protected characteristics	It is crucial to ensure support services are accessible to people from diverse backgrounds, communities and experiences.	PREVENTION
		PROVISION
		PARTNERSHIP
		PURSUE
Address support needs of children	There are gaps in services for children of families affected by domestic abuse.	PREVENTION
		PROVISION
		PARTNERSHIP
Meeting the needs of those from outside of Worcestershire	Referrals for refuges and safe accommodation in Worcestershire are received from both within Worcestershire and from further afield. The nature of DA is such that a survivor may choose to move some distance from their abuser creating both a flow into and out of the county	PROVISION
		PARTNERSHIP

ADDRESS THE NEED FOR 'RELEVANT ACCOMMODATION' IN WORCESTERSHIRE

PREVENTION	PROVISION OF SERVICES	PARTNERSHIP	PURSUING PERPETRATORS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE
-	The DAPB work to ensure that the appropriate number of additional units are provided as per the needs assessment.	The DAPB should ensure that the full range of 'relevant accommodation' is developed in Worcestershire, including for those survivors who wish to remain in their own home.	-

MEETING THE NEEDS OF ACCOMMODATION BASED SUPPORT

PREVENTION	PROVISION OF SERVICES	PARTNERSHIP	PURSUING PERPETRATORS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE
Any future service developments and implementations should be based on clear and robust data. There should be a plan for making data collection uniform across all of Worcestershire, including the districts.	The goal of support services should be to provide a person-centred package of support that meets all the needs of survivors of domestic abuse. All communities in Worcestershire, including those in rural areas, should have good access to specialist domestic abuse services.	There should be clear pathways between 'safe accommodation' services and community services to ensure 'wrap around' support for survivors.	The behaviour of the perpetrator must be addressed. Victims must be supported at the earliest stage.

MEETING NEEDS OF ALL THOSE WITH PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS / ADDRESS BARRIERS FACED BY THOSE WITH PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

PREVENTION	PROVISION OF SERVICES	PARTNERSHIP	PURSUING PERPETRATORS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE
<p>Worcestershire must aim to provide high quality and equitable services. Service planning must be supported by robust data collection.</p> <p>Data should be used to inform needs-led evidenced based commissioning.</p>	<p>It should be ensured that the new definition of domestic abuse is understood by all – survivors and front-line practitioners who may be best placed to identify signs of domestic abuse at the earliest possible stage.</p> <p>Awareness and understanding of domestic abuse should run through all services.</p> <p>There should be access to appropriate and safe accommodation.</p>	<p>There should be appropriate information-sharing between agencies to ensure that survivors receive the most appropriate interventions. This includes protecting them from ongoing harm.</p>	<p>The behaviour of the perpetrator must be addressed.</p> <p>Victims must be supported at the earliest stage.</p>

ADDRESS SUPPORT NEEDS OF CHILDREN

PREVENTION	PROVISION OF SERVICES	PARTNERSHIP	PURSUING PERPETRATORS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE
<p>Witnessing domestic abuse can have long-term effects on children and young people.</p> <p>Within families, there may be other complex needs present (e.g., mental health, substance misuse, housing, financial issues). There should be a joined-up approach to addressing these issues.</p>	<p>Support services for children and young people should offer age-appropriate services.</p>	<p>There should be a joined-up approach to identifying families where there is a domestic abuse need.</p> <p>Information about children in families where domestic abuse has been identified should also be included in any information sharing.</p> <p>The safeguarding needs of children and young people should be considered when domestic abuse is identified in families.</p>	-

MEETING NEEDS OF THOSE FROM OUTSIDE OF WORCESTERSHIRE

PREVENTION	PROVISION OF SERVICES	PARTNERSHIP	PURSUING PERPETRATORS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE
-	For those from outside of Worcestershire, there may be difficulties or blockages when transferring from a refuge to long-term accommodation. Appropriate information should reduce these blockages.	Key stakeholders will have to work together to ensure the housing need of those from outside of Worcestershire are met.	-



Strategic Response

The overall aim is to prevent and reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse and ensure that all those impacted by domestic abuse have the right support, quickly. Four key priorities have been identified:

- PREVENTION
- PROVISION OF SERVICES
- PARTNERSHIP
- PURSUING PERPETRATORS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Included under each priority are commitments that demonstrate how we, as a Partnership Board plan to improve the response to domestic abuse within Worcestershire.

The priorities and their commitments are for all people irrespective of gender, sex, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion, recognising intersectionality of these characteristics.

This will be reflected within the Partnership Board Action Plan.

Throughout the priorities below are commitments that deliver upon the duties placed on Worcestershire County Council in relation to Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The preferred solution is to support victims and their children to remain safely in their own homes. However, where this is not possible, the Act sets out the specific duties placed on upper tier local authorities in relation to the provision of support for victims and their children residing within relevant safe accommodation.

Key Priority 1 – Prevention

THIS PRIORITY AIMS TO INCREASE THE FOCUS ON EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION.

In Worcestershire, early intervention by the voluntary sector and statutory agencies working together can help to protect adult and child victims from further harm, as well as preventing escalation and recurrence of a range of abuses which can form part of domestic abuse, such as stalking, harassment, and sexual violence.

We will aim for local organisations and agencies to have in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs of individual children and families experiencing domestic abuse.

Through the Partnership Board we will aim to work with organisations and agencies to develop joined-up early help services based on a clear understanding of local needs, as detailed in the Worcestershire Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment 2021.

This requires all practitioners, including those in universal services and those providing services to adults with children, to understand their role in identifying emerging problems and to share information with other practitioners to support early identification and assessment.

To achieve the aims of this priority, all front-line practitioners must adopt professional curiosity when engaging with individuals. Often, victims will make contact with a range of services before disclosing their abuse. These contacts represent opportunities for early intervention, so it is crucial that all staff are trained to recognise domestic abuse and ask the right questions.

Increasing practitioner's knowledge and confidence in identifying the signs and symptoms of domestic abuse is critical to early identification of domestic abuse. This includes recognising the barriers to services for those with protected characteristics including male survivors.

COMMITMENT 1

We will **work jointly** to identify and support individuals and families at risk of **domestic abuse**, including where there has been historic abuse or where other risk factors are present. We will deliver **preventative and early intervention services** linked to understanding vulnerabilities and risk.

COMMITMENT 2

We will ensure that a robust offer on **domestic abuse awareness and healthy relationships** is available to **all schools and educational settings**. We will work with schools to challenge gender inequality, sexual stereotyping, and domestic abuse normalisation where it exists.

COMMITMENT 3

We will use our **safeguarding functions** to support the **early identification** of abuse of adults and children including those with **additional needs**. This includes recognising instances of the abuse of older people and children and working in accordance with safeguarding policies and protocols.

COMMITMENT 4

As a Partnership Board, we will **challenge societal attitudes** that allow domestic abuse to occur through targeted communications and services.

COMMITMENT 5

We will **increase awareness** of how to **better prevent and respond** to **domestic abuse** across all agencies, services, and our local communities.

COMMITMENT 6

To aid **identification of domestic abuse** at the earliest possible opportunity **all relevant staff and volunteers** will have a **strong understanding of appropriate responses and pathways** including referrals and interventions.

COMMITMENT 6

We will ensure that **under-represented groups, and those with protected characteristics, are engaged**, and will identify those more vulnerable to certain types of abuse.



Key Priority 2 – Provision of Services

THIS PRIORITY FOCUSES ON THE PROVISION OF RESPONSIVE AND EFFECTIVE SERVICES FOR ADULT AND CHILD VICTIMS AND GROUPS AT RISK OF, OR SUBJECT TO DOMESTIC ABUSE.

There are a variety of factors which may increase the risk of domestic abuse and as such a range of solutions which may be provided to those affected by it. Services include victim support, perpetrator programmes, child-specific services, couple and whole family interventions and criminal justice interventions.

A multi-agency response will be key to providing responsive, flexible services, which respond as early as possible. The ability to recognize the signs and symptoms of domestic abuse and the confidence to do something about it should be in place across all statutory and voluntary services. The wider community should also be better informed about domestic abuse and be assured that there are appropriate services available for those who need them.

Commissioning and service planning will be underpinned by principles which ensure that services meet the required quality standards and meet the diverse needs of those who require them. When services are working with survivors, they will address the holistic needs of the survivor, including mental health and emotional wellbeing needs.

The Partnership Board will work together to provide the full range of 'relevant accommodation' (as described in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021) and ensure that there is appropriate provision to meet the needs as detailed in the needs assessment.

COMMITMENT 1

All services will be commissioned and delivered according to a **robust evidence base** and on **best practice**. Our **joint commissioning approach** will continue to be developed as best practice guidelines evolve.

COMMITMENT 2

We will seek to use **trauma-informed approaches** to support children and adult victims who have experienced abuse to improve outcomes. We will use learning and research on **Adverse Childhood Experiences** to further understand the impact of domestic abuse on young people, and how to **minimise harm** experienced to **build resilience**.

COMMITMENT 3

The Partnership Board will meet the **needs, and respect the diversity**, of those with protected characteristics, and ensure clear signposting and referral mechanisms, particularly for **addressing minority or complex needs** and supporting those with **multiple vulnerabilities**.

COMMITMENT 4

The **commissioning and provision of services** will be informed by the views of those with **lived experience** or who are at significant risk of domestic abuse.

COMMITMENT 5

We will ensure all relevant **front-line staff** are trained in **identifying** and **working with** those experiencing all forms of **domestic abuse**, to help them **recognise risks** and include these in **safety plans** where appropriate for both survivors and perpetrators.

COMMITMENT 6

We will develop and maintain a **complete service directory** to show a clear **picture of available services**. This will ensure that the development of provision meets changing needs within the community and that we are able to quickly **identify any gaps in support** linking with the **Needs Assessment**.

COMMITMENT 7

All partners will **work jointly** to lessen the impact of domestic abuse on **children and young people** through early intervention by supporting activities and services to **develop their resilience and improve their emotional wellbeing**. Partners will support appropriate training and resources including the involvement of the non-abusive parent where appropriate.

COMMITMENT 8

The DAPB will work together to provide the full range of 'relevant accommodation' (as described in the DA Act 2021) and ensure that appropriate support is provided to meet the identified needs is available to all victims of domestic abuse, including males and those with protected characteristics.



Key Priority 3 – Partnership

THIS PRIORITY ENSURES A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO IMPROVE WORCESTERSHIRE'S RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC ABUSE.

A partnership approach encourages the broadest possible response to domestic abuse, addressing prevention, early intervention, dealing with crisis, risk fluctuation, and long-term recovery and safety.

Best practice in relation to partnership working states that no single agency or individual can see the complete picture of the life of a family or individual within that family, but all may have insights and can provide interventions that are crucial to their safety and wellbeing.

A true partnership approach moves the responsibility for safety away from individual survivors to the community and services existing to support them.

COMMITMENT 1

All agencies commit to **working together** to provide the **broadest possible response** to domestic abuse. This will cover **co-leadership, pooling of resources**, actively engaging to **achieve our shared objectives**, and a **more strategic and effective response** to domestic abuse. This will address prevention, early intervention, dealing with crisis, risk fluctuation, and long-term recovery and safety.

COMMITMENT 2

Partners will **work collectively** to bring together **comparable, accurate and consistent data** on areas such as commissioning, provision and gap analysis in an improved, ongoing **Needs Assessment process**. Information-sharing will work to inform our response to **under-reporting** and ensure we draw out the right narratives from the evidence. Where possible we will commission research where gaps in knowledge exist.

COMMITMENT 3

All agencies will ensure they participate in multi-agency panels such as the **Domestic Homicide Review process**, the **Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)** and the **Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme (DAPP)**. **Learning** from these, Serious Case Reviews and Safeguarding Practice Reviews are **proactively shared** with contributing members and the wider workforce.

COMMITMENT 4

We will **work together** to **access external funding opportunities**, working collectively to **identify the areas** that would benefit the most from additional funding.

COMMITMENT 5

We will support any person **within the workforce** who is **experiencing domestic abuse**, and ensure our processes work to assist and **support any staff member** who discloses domestic abuse to us. We will **work with businesses** to ensure that they have access to information on how to support staff members who may disclose abuse.

COMMITMENT 6

Domestic abuse services, housing, and other key services will work together to ensure that domestic abuse survivors and their children have access to **appropriate housing and support**.

Key Priority 4 – Pursuing Perpetrators and Criminal Justice

THIS PRIORITY FOCUSES ON INCREASING PERPETRATOR CONVICTIONS THROUGH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICE AND PARTNERS USING THEIR POWERS TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC ABUSE AND REDUCE THE LIKELIHOOD OF FURTHER INCIDENTS.

Reducing the impact of domestic abuse can be achieved through a number of routes including prosecuting perpetrators through the criminal justice system, via civil outcomes, through working with perpetrators to change behaviour, or through rehabilitation (within prison or the community). Reducing the impact of domestic abuse requires continuous improvement of the protections and justice available and lobbying for an effective use of sentencing.

All partners should be aware that the violent and harmful behaviour of perpetrators needs to be addressed. Individuals may be continuing to be impacted by abusive behaviour as their case moves through justice processes.

Supporting interventions that lead to sustainable behaviour change in perpetrators themselves should drive a reduction in the prevalence of domestic abuse and reduce the rates of re-offending.

COMMITMENT 1

Focused protection, support and information will be available for **all survivors** throughout the **Criminal Justice System** process. An element of this will include the IDVA provision commissioned by the West Mercia PCC. All agencies should ensure that the **survivors' voice is heard** throughout these processes and used to improve and enhance service provision.

COMMITMENT 2

All agencies will work together to ensure that there is a **robust approach to perpetrators**. This will include understanding the behaviour of the perpetrator, supporting interventions that lead to sustainable behaviour change in perpetrators themselves and having a clear plan to bring them to justice or diverting them from offending. We will respond **robustly to harmful and violent behaviour**; and provide greater focus on changing the behaviour of the perpetrator through a combination of disruption, support and the management of offenders.

COMMITMENT 3

We will **support individuals and families** through their **criminal justice journey** from arrest of the perpetrator through to prosecution and beyond to ensure the **timely, meaningful delivery of justice**, working to **reduce further harm through re-traumatisation** and provide **sustainable outcomes**.

COMMITMENT 4

Ensure **staff and volunteers** understand the **legal tools and support available**, and how they can be put **in place in a timely manner**.

COMMITMENT 5

Partners will work together to improve the **process and journey** through the **family court system** for survivors of domestic abuse.

COMMITMENT 6

Provision of **appropriate accommodation and support** to victims will enable them to support Criminal Justice outcomes

COMMITMENT 7

An **Offender Housing Pathway** will encourage offenders to use housing solutions independent of their ex-partners



Achieving our Objectives

This strategy is intended to be an overarching document setting out a common understanding and commitment from key partners to address domestic abuse across Worcestershire. Accountability for this strategy sits with the DAPB. This strategy will be supported by a joint action plan agreed to and championed by each partner within the DAPB.

Actions developed will be directly linked to our identified priorities and commitments. Below this each partner will choose whether to develop bespoke or adopt existing individual action plans to capture the actions that they, as an organisation will have responsibility for.

The DAPB will oversee the action plans arising from this strategy. Feedback from those who use interventions and services will form a vital part of service development, our commissioning which includes joint commissioned activity with the key partners and our monitoring procedures (through the Joint Commissioning Group). We will work to ensure that the voice of survivors, of families affected by domestic abuse and of perpetrators who have interacted with our services informs and continually improves our provision.

The DAPB will provide annual monitoring reports to the Worcestershire Safer Communities Board, setting out progress against our priorities and identified outcomes. The strategy and joint action plan will be regularly reviewed by the DAPB.

Delivery of this Strategy will require sustained commitment from all partners if we are to continue to make a measurable difference to the lives of survivors of domestic abuse and their families. We are focused on delivering real change, strengthening the coordination of services, learning from the latest research and continuing to develop and respond to the needs of our community.

Appendix

DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC ABUSE (DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT 2021)

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 specifies that behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) as “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