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**Annual Report**

**April 2023 to end March 2024**

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# Introduction

This document is a summary of the work of the Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership (HCSP) during 2023/24. This is the first time an annual report has been produced by the HCSP, and it should sit alongside the HCSP Strategic Assessment and the newly agreed HCSP Strategy 2024/27.

The Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership consists of a number of organisations working together to tackle crime and disorder in Herefordshire. The Partnership undertakes a number of statutory responsibilities working on the basis that no single agency can deal with these issues on their own; crime and anti-social behaviour is tackled more effectively when partner agencies working together.

Community Safety Partnerships were set up under Sections 5-7 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The statutory agencies that comprise the Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership are; Herefordshire Council, West Mercia Police, Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (health representative), and the Probation Service. The CSP works alongside the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner and within the Police and Crime Plan.

# Summary

Measuring the success of the work of HCSP during 2023/24 presents a challenge as the impact of preventative interventions, and promotion and awareness activity are measured by looking at long term trends in reporting, recording etc. Only through these will we be able to demonstrate impact over a period of time.

There have been many positive developments over the year to tackle domestic abuse including commissioning training, improvements to services and multi-agency meetings, strategic reviews and commissioning specialist services for the next three years. The recently completed SafeLives review will assist the Partnership to assess whether this work in Herefordshire is making a difference and leading to the desired outcomes.

The adoption of the Herefordshire Sexual Violence Strategy is a significant milestone setting the objectives for Herefordshire to address violence against women and girls (VAWG). The challenge will be to deliver the action plan in a way that is measurable.

The implementation of the Serious Violence Duty by the end of June 2024 has been achieved. Local arrangements reflect domestic abuse and sexual violence as Herefordshire’s two most prevalent serious violence crime types, and the HCSP will be focused on these areas in partnership with the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (DALPB).

The Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) Group meets monthly as an operational group to tackle issues of anti-social behaviour, low level crime, enforcement of hate crime issues, and acquisitive crime. During 2023/24 the HCSP considered 7 community trigger complaints / anti-social behaviour case reviews. County Lines and organised crime continues to be challenged by enforcement authorities.

The combined review of the HCSP priorities (to agree the HCSP 2023/27 Strategy) and the Effectiveness and Governance review, have provided a structure to deliver the statutory requirements for the CSP moving forward. Two additional priorities to prevent the Misuse of Drugs and Neighbourhood Crime have been adopted in response to local needs and concerns.

The cross cutting themes will enable the HCSP Board to monitor delivery of the serious violence strategy, continue to effectively address serious organised crime (SOC), maintain prevention activity, and ensure priority sub groups and work plans include essential community engagement.

Community engagement will enable the CSP to gauge the effectiveness of the CSP activity and understand what the local crime and disorder concerns are.

# Overall Crime and Highlights in the Strategic Assessment

As an overview of crime and disorder in Herefordshire, the Herefordshire CSP Strategic Assessment 2023 told us that:

* Herefordshire recorded offences have largely returned to pre COVID-19 levels.
* Around three quarters (73%) of residents say they feel safe when outside after dark, which is a significant 12 percentage points decrease since reported in 2021. The proportion of people saying they feel unsafe has significantly increased (from 9% to 15%), as has the proportion who provide a neutral response (from 7% to 12%).
* Feelings of safety in Herefordshire are in line with the rest of Britain, with 74% stating they feel very or fairly safe in the October 2022 Local Government Association survey. Following an increase in feelings of safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, figures have returned to those recorded in 2012. (Source: Health and Wellbeing Survey: 8771 Herefordshire Council March 2023 - DJS Research.)
* All Crime within Herefordshire between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2023 totalled 11,060.

The most recent HCSP Strategic Assessment (2024) has told us that:

* Offences with domestic abuse markers have been decreasing throughout 2022 and 2023, levelling off into early 2024.
* The financial impact of the cost of living crisis is likely to have increased risks for victims and they are likely to put off leaving a dangerous partner due to the financial impact this will have on them. The number of referrals to Women’s Aid has increased over the last three year period despite a decrease in the levels of reported domestic abuse related crime. Referrals from women over 60 is rising significantly quarter on quarter and the number of perpetrators who are suffering from dementia are increasing.
* The use of technology related domestic abuse is increasing and includes apps such as Snapchat. Abusers are also making use of trackers such as ‘ring’ door bells to exert soft control upon victims even when an abuser is not present.
* Although crime data is decreasing, there have been more people accessing services and receiving substance misuse treatment. Most drug offences within Herefordshire relate to possession of cannabis. It is suggested that the younger community use cannabis as opposed to Class A drugs.
* Class A drug use especially opioids are on the decline, and are mostly used by older people. Future drug treatment interventions should address initial ‘recreational’ drug use before it turns to a more serious addiction. Interventions are only currently available when more serious addiction starts.
* Police recording tells us that most rape offences were committed on a female aged 16 and over, and most recorded sexual offences were sexual assault on a female.
* Child on child sexual assault and exploitation is a concern. Most sexual offences are reported to the police within 28 days of the offence taking place.
* Sexual violence is also taking place online in the digital space. Snapchat is a concern due to the nature of the app, where photos and conversations which could be used in evidence, disappear after a certain amount of time.

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)

1. When analysing data within Herefordshire, violence without injury recorded the largest volume of VAWG offences over a two year period, accounting for almost half of VAWG offences. Sexual assault and rape accounted for 13% of VAWG offences.
2. Nationally, data indicates the following VAWG threat areas have seen increases over recent years: domestic abuse, sexual offences, stalking and harassment, and modern slavery and human trafficking. Domestic abuse is a key contributor to VAWG crime numbers.

Child Criminal and Sexual Exploitation

1. As would be expected, over the last three years the largest volume of child sexual exploitation offences were sexual offences. Other miscellaneous crimes against society including offences in relation to obscene publications which were linked to indecent images have also been recorded within this category.

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

1. Over the past three year period, just under 50 modern slavery and human trafficking offences were recorded within Herefordshire. Most National Referral Mechanism referrals within Herefordshire were in relation to children (73%).

Adult Exploitation

1. Adult exploitation is varied and there was no key themes identified. Themes that were mentioned involved the use of the internet for fraud and sexual exploitation, the use of violence, suspects pretending to be friends with those with disabilities, and carers exploiting older people for money.

Hate Crime

1. Most hate crime within Herefordshire is racially motivated, with some exploitation of vulnerable people with learning disabilities, as well as physical disabilities. Numbers are generally low and remain consistent over the past three years.

Acquisitive Crime

1. In total, acquisitive crime offences increased from 2021/2022 to 2022/23 and continues to increase into 2024. This category includes theft from the person and all other theft offences. Shoplifting is an increasing category.

Antisocial Behaviour

1. The number of reports of antisocial behaviour is high.
2. Antisocial behaviour encompasses a range of issues that can cause nuisance, annoyance, harm and distress to a person. These include, but are not limited to:
* Noise - including loud music, banging, DIY, loud parties, and frequent visitors at unsocial hours.
* Shouting, swearing and fighting.
* Intimidation through threats or actual violence.
* Harassment.
* Verbal abuse.
* Abusive behaviour aimed at causing distress or fear to certain people; for example, elderly or disabled people.
* Driving in an inconsiderate or careless way; for example, drivers congregating in an area for racing/car cruising.
* Dumping rubbish.
* Animal nuisance, including dog fouling, dogs barking.
* Vandalism, property damage and graffiti.
* Antisocial drinking.
* Arson.
1. If left unreported or unresolved, antisocial behaviour can escalate and lead to more serious crimes.

# Strategic Priorities and Delivery 2023/24

The HCSP Strategy 2021/2024 identified two strategic priorities, these being domestic abuse and violence against women and girls (VAWG). During 2023 HCSP also began the implementation of the Serious Violence Duty, which had to be in place by the end of January 2024.

In addition to the strategic priorities HCSP delivered other ‘core business’ activity as part of the partnership remit.

## Domestic Abuse Achievements 2023/24

For over a decade tackling domestic abuse has been a strategic priority of the HCSP due to the impact this crime type has on the Herefordshire community. The rate of domestic abuse is no higher in Herefordshire than anywhere else but it has significant resource and financial implications for the county, and most importantly Herefordshire wishes to reduce the prevalence of this abhorrent crime that causes so much suffering and harm to adults, children and families.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2022 instigated, as a statutory requirement, the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (DALPB). From this point onwards this strategic group has led on tackling domestic abuse on behalf of the HCSP to avoid duplication of work and resources. Sitting under the DALPB in the HCSP structure is the Domestic Abuse Operational Group (a task and finish group that delivers elements of the Domestic Abuse Strategy) and the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment (MARAC) Governance Group.

Multi-Agency Training and White Ribbon Campaigns

The HCSP with partners have delivered multi-agency training on domestic abuse and a White Ribbon Conference in November 2023.

The White Ribbon Conference was an online event held on Friday 24 November 2023. The conference objective was to raise awareness and increase delegate knowledge and confidence around domestic abuse, which is a key part of our approach to tackling not only violence against women and girls, but to all victims of abuse in our communities.

This year’s event had a broad range of speakers and subjects, with the keynote speaker being Maggie Blyth, the National Police Chiefs Council Lead for Violence against Women and Girls.

There was a particular emphasis on reaching out to businesses across the county and their role in identifying, supporting, and signposting those suffering abuse. The Employers Initiative on domestic abuse shared national best practice in relation to workplace domestic abuse policies, thus further embracing the ethos that “Domestic abuse is everyone’s business”.

PEGS, a social enterprise set up to support parents, carers and guardians who are experiencing Child to Parent Abuse (CPA) also presented. SafeLives presented their research to understand how domestic abuse impacts on blind/visually impaired victims. The conference also celebrated the launch of “Cut it Out”, an initiative focused on supporting practitioners in the beauty and hair industry to recognise domestic abuse. The Right Path also reported to the conference on the success of their intervention in West Midlands schools and sports clubs.

In total 220 delegates attended the day, and the intention is to repeat the event in 2024.

There has been an extensive programme of multi-agency domestic abuse courses run in Herefordshire during 2023/24 that were available to practitioners and volunteers. Courses covered ‘Curiosity Saves Lives’, Domestic Abuse and Young People's Relationships, the Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children and Young People, Honour Based Abuse including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, Domestic Abuse and Trauma, Domestic Abuse and Learning Difficulties in Adults, Domestic Abuse and Older People, and Domestic Abuse and the Rural Context. A total of 432 delegates attended the 27 courses.

MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) continues to meet twice a month to discuss high risk cases of domestic abuse and develop plans to keep victims safe. Between February 2023 and January 2024 235 MARAC cases were heard involving 426 children.

MARAC awareness training for professionals was delivered in November 2023.

MARAC case audits were completed in May 2023 and the recommendations from those reviews have been fully implemented, including the responsibility of managing MARAC case notes to rest firmly with single agencies to ensure the case notes are placed on individual case files; to amend the administration process to consider repeat MARAC case reviews; and the recommendation to fully resource MARAC so MARAC minutes are available and distributed to all relevant agencies.

The Domestic Abuse Operations Group also delivered awareness sessions on domestic abuse and older victims. A tackling domestic abuse ‘drop in’ network programme was established for the first Wednesday lunch time of each month. Unfortunately the attendance to these ‘drop in’ sessions were not as expected so the Partnership is now considering other options for engagement.

Perpetrator interventions continue to be provided in Herefordshire. Cranstoun delivers the perpetrator programmes for Herefordshire, and these are commissioned by the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner.

DRIVE is a mandatory perpetrator programme that certain offenders will be required to follow and adhere to. The Men and Masculinities programme is voluntary, provided for those that recognise their unhealthy behaviours and have motivation to change.

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR’s) continue to be carried out by the HCSP. Since 2011, twelve DHR’s have been commissioned, one a year on average. During 2023/24 two DHR’s were completed and two further DHR’s were commissioned. The learning from these reviews will inform future policy, however a common thread with all the DHR’s is that a history of domestic abuse between the two parties was not commonly known, or identified. Other themes to these DHR’s is that poor mental health is a factor for either the victim, perpetrator or both, and the victims are predominantly aged over 55 years.

Domestic abuse remains the most common serious violence crime type in Herefordshire and accounts for 52% of serious violence crimes within the county.

In 2023 SafeLives were commissioned by the HCSP to carry out a full system review of how Herefordshire tackles domestic abuse. The review included case audits, observation of MARAC and Strategic meeting groups, interviews with practitioners, and surveys and interviews of survivors. The report from SafeLives was received at the end of March 2024, findings from the review and recommendations will inform the new Herefordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy and the work plans of the Domestic Abuse groups during 2024/2025.

New Services Commissioned from 1st April 2024

The DALPB have successfully commissioned new domestic abuse services to run from 2024 onwards. These include refuge, dispersed refuge and flexible support for victims of domestic abuse in Herefordshire, which incorporates specific support for children and young people who are now recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right. Additional floating support for men and boys who are victims of domestic abuse has also been commissioned.

West Mercia Women’s Aid (WMWA) continues to offer refuge accommodation in Herefordshire. There are 10 units of self-contained accommodation in the refuge, including one disability suite and one emergency unit. The refuge can only be accessed by women and children.

WMWA work in partnership with Connexus to offer 9 units of dispersed refuge accommodation. These units are more flexible and can accommodate male or female victims, their children and pets. All units are directly supported by WMWA staff, who will also continue to offer helpline, group support and Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) services for victims of domestic abuse, including children, across Herefordshire.

Stonewater currently offer 4 family size units of fully furnished safe accommodation within Herefordshire. This will increase to 6 units. These units are available to male or female victims and their children. Stonewater also offer a floating support service to the families accommodated in these units, and from April 2024 onwards will be expanding this service to victims in other forms of accommodation across Herefordshire.

Cranstoun offer a support service specifically for men and boys that are victims of domestic abuse. The service will offer floating support for men and boys across Herefordshire as well as offering education and awareness sessions.

The Impact of Domestic Abuse Interventions during 2023/24

The domestic abuse awareness training and specialist courses were reasonably well attended and delegates reported on evaluation feedback forms that their learning and knowledge on subject areas had improved giving them confidence to challenge and ask difficult questions.

Examples of feedback achieved are provided below.

*“BEFORE the training how confident were you to "ask the question"? –*

*response = 5.34 average rating.*

*FOLLOWING the training how confident are you now to "ask the question"? –*

*Response = 8.55 average rating.”*

*“How did you rate your knowledge of support agencies and national schemes (Clare's Law, MARAC etc..) to support victims and families of abuse BEFORE the training?*

*Response = 5.68 average rating.*

*“How do you rate your knowledge of support agencies and national schemes to support victims and families of abuse AFTER the training?*

*Response = 8.68 average rating.”*

*“How do you rate your understanding of the challenges of leaving an abusive relationship BEFORE the training?*

*6.01 average rating*

*How do you rate your understanding of the challenges of leaving an abusive relationship AFTER the training?*

*9.09 average rating”*

The true measure of the impact of domestic abuse training is to see victims of domestic abuse kept safe, which is a challenging measure to quantify, especially as we also strive to increase reporting of incidents.

## Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Achievements 2023/24

Sexual Violence Strategy

During 2023/24 the Herefordshire Sexual Violence Strategy 2023-2028 was completed and adopted. Driven by the Sexual Violence Strategic Group, the Strategy has a vision for the Herefordshire where everyone lives free of the fear, threat, or experience of sexual violence. The strategy focuses on three priority areas: prioritising prevention, supporting victims and survivors and pursuing perpetrators.

Herefordshire is the first CSP in West Mercia to have a sexual violence strategy, and as such we are viewed as a pathfinder in our approach. An action plan has been developed and plans are in place to complete a sexual violence dashboard/ dataset.

The three priority areas are broken down into:



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The action plan is multi-agency with each agency having dedicated objectives to increase awareness, work with families and schools, support specialist service providers, to address problematic behaviour, and bring perpetrators to account.

It is recognised that the delivery of this strategy by the Sexual Violence Strategic Group will need to be in conjunction with the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and the Safeguarding Children Partnership’s Child Exploitation and Missing priority work group.

Safer Streets

During 2023 the HCSP working with West Mercia Police, specialist providers, the voluntary and community sector, and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner delivered Safer Streets 4 in Hereford City. The interventions delivered during the year were based on evidence of need around the community’s concerns about safety and in particular night time safety. Additional CCTV cameras and lighting were installed, vegetation was trimmed back to improve sightlines, Vennture pastors patrolled certain areas, such as by the River Wye, and education on healthy relationships and upstander interventions were delivered in schools and to night time economy organisations.

In all, through Safer Streets 3 and Safer Streets 4, Herefordshire has secured over £1m in grants and match funding to make Hereford a safer place.

Safer Streets 5 (applied for by the West Mercia OPCC) has brought resources into Leominster and Ross-on-Wye, so extending out to the two market towns the approach delivered within Hereford City. Safer Streets 5 will be delivered and completed during 2024.

The Impact of VAWG Interventions during 2023/24

The challenge for the HCSP Sexual Violence sub group in 2024/25 is to deliver the Sexual Violence Strategy action plan. As with domestic abuse, we recognise the challenges associated with measuring the impact of interventions and to measure the success of the strategy.

Violence against women and girls will remain a priority for the HCSP into 2024/27.

## Serious Violence Duty

In 2022, section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) was changed to ensure preventing and reducing serious violence is a priority for Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs).

The Duty requires specified authorities for a local government area to work together and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence, including identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence (so far as it is possible to do so), and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing, and reducing serious violence in the area. The Duty also requires the specified authorities to consult educational, prison and youth custody authorities for the area as part of the preparation of their strategy.

In accordance with the Serious Violence Duty, in November 2023 Herefordshire published its Serious Violence Needs Assessment. The West Mercia Serious Violence Strategy was agreed in January 2024, so within the required timescales. All West Mercia CSP’s agreed to adopt a regional Serious Violence Strategy recognising common need and that serious violence often transcends CSP boundary areas.

We know that serious violence levels in Herefordshire have decreased by 13% in the year to 31 August 2023 compared to the previous year. 52% of serious violence over a three year period was linked to domestic abuse, whilst 31% of serious violence was of a sexual nature. 30% of serious violence was youth related, the majority sexual, which has increased over the three year period.

In view of the local serious violence profile, in March 2024 Herefordshire CSP agreed that its two serious violence priorities would be domestic abuse and sexual violence, with the ongoing monitoring of knife and sharp bladed implement crime rates also to feature.

Serious Violence is seen as a cross cutting theme across all CSP activity and will be reported quarterly by each CSP priority group. The DALPB will act as the Serious Violence Partnership reporting into the HCSP. This reflects the prevalence of domestic abuse within Herefordshire’s serious violence statistics.

The impact of Serious Violence interventions during 2023/24

The completion of the Serious Violence Needs Assessment and implementation of the West Mercia Serious Violence Strategy and local arrangements by the end of January 2024 should be noted.

As specific action plans are delivered during the coming reporting period the CSP will be able to demonstrate its work to fulfil the Serious Violence Duty and progress against local priorities.

## Other HCSP Interventions

In addition to the strategic priorities the HCSP is responsible for delivering a number of other services and interventions. The partnership has an overview of serious and organised crime (SOC) and a number of operations during 2023/24 have targeted serious and organised crime in Herefordshire, including action against ‘rogue traders’ involved in the sale of counterfeit goods.

County lines remain a key challenge, but Herefordshire has a strong record in tackling county lines by preventing the transportation and distribution of illicit drugs into and across Herefordshire. The CSP is represented on the South West Mercia Combatting Drugs Partnership and the CSP works with Public Health colleagues to host a Herefordshire Tackling Drugs subgroup.

The Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) meeting meets monthly as an operational group to tackle issues of anti-social behaviour, low harm crime, enforcement of hate crime issues and acquisitive crime.

During 2023/24 the HCSP also considered seven community trigger complaints / anti-social behaviour case reviews.

Effectiveness of other HCSP Interventions

There has been significant progress made by the Herefordshire CSP during this reporting period. It is recognised however that the CSP Board needs clearer sight and understanding of this activity (in addition to the CSP priorities). To address this, one of the recommendations from the CSP review (covered below) is to require sub groups and tasking groups to regularly update the CSP Board on successes and request support where necessary.

# Review of CSP Effectiveness and Governance

In the autumn of 2023 the HCSP commissioned an overview of the Herefordshire’s Community Safety Partnership and the broader activity and partnerships that aim to prevent and protect local communities from crime and to help people feel safer.

The aim of the review was threefold:

1. To understand the current national legislation around community safety and local compliance
2. Map current partnership arrangements and activities to deliver statutory duties and strategic priorities
3. Identify areas for improvement and make recommendations

This review forms part of a wider programme of work looking at the effectiveness of Herefordshire place based partnerships and governance arrangements which will be undertaken in spring 2024 with the Local Government Association.

The HCSP is a complex Partnership with several statutory requirements, governance procedures, and multiple meetings, and it works alongside a network of other partnerships. The review was presented to the HCSP Board on 22 March 2024 with proposals outlining the structure of the partnership, the interrelationship with other partnerships, and a clear reporting hierarchy. The review has provided clarity as to what is required of the Board and how it can manage the multiple work streams. The review proposals were adopted by the CSP Board on the 22 March 2024.

# Developing a New Strategy 2024/27

The HCSP is required to agree then deliver against a three year strategy informed by the HCSP Strategic Assessment and a number of other needs assessments. At the March 2024 HCSP Board meeting, the new Strategy was agreed with the following four strategic priorities for 2024 to 2027 and four underlying and cross cutting themes:

Strategic Priorities:

1. **Domestic Abuse**
2. **Violence Against Women and Girls - Sexual Violence**
3. **Misuse of Drugs**
4. **Neighbourhood Crime**

Cross Cutting Themes:

1. **Serious Violence**
2. **Serious Organised Crime**
3. **Prevention**
4. **Community Engagement**

The Impact of the HCSP Effectiveness and Governance Review and adopting the 2024/27 HCSP Strategy

The combined adoption of the HCSP 2024/27 Strategy and the Effectiveness and Governance review, has provided a structure against which Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership can deliver its statutory requirements. Two additional priorities, Misuse of Drugs and Neighbourhood Crime are in response to local needs and concerns.

The cross cutting themes will enable the HCSP Board to monitor delivery of the serious violence strategy, continue to effectively address serious and organised crime, maintain prevention activity, and ensure priority sub groups and work plans include essential community engagement activity. Community engagement will enable the CSP to gauge the effectiveness of the HCSP and understand what the local crime and disorder concerns are. Our progress against these areas will be measured within the 2024/25 annual review.