

Portfolio Holder Decision

Domestic Abuse Counselling and Therapy Commissioning

Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Finance & Property
Date of decision	18 February 2022
	Signed

1. Decision taken

Recommendation:

That the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Property approves proceeding with an appropriate procurement process to tender a new specialist Domestic Abuse Counselling and Therapy Service for an initial two-year period, with the option to extend it for up to an additional two years and authorises the Strategic Director for People to enter into all relevant contracts on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources.

2.0 Reasons for decisions

- 2.1 Warwickshire County Council (WCC) has a new duty under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to assess the need for accommodation-based support and prepare strategies to provide such support for victims and their children who reside within relevant accommodation as set out in the legislation. This duty has been reflected within the Warwickshire Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021 – 2024. The definition of “support” includes the provision of counselling and therapy for adult and child victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

- 2.2 The requirement for a specialist Domestic Abuse Counselling and Therapy Service has emerged from the Domestic Abuse Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2021. The Needs Assessment recommended that specialised, trauma informed therapy for victim-survivors of domestic abuse be provided for all ages.

- 2.3 To meet this identified need, the Portfolio Holder is requested to approve that WCC can tender for a new Domestic Abuse Counselling and Therapy Service and enter relevant contracts. This will be funded using Domestic Abuse Act funding from the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities and existing WCC Domestic Abuse Service budget (WCC general fund allocations). The proposal is compliant

¹ <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/joint-strategic-needs-assessments-1/thematic-needs-assessments-previous-annual-updates/1>

with the Domestic Abuse Act Statutory Guidance.

- 2.4 The tender will be for a specialist domestic abuse counselling and therapy service for children, young people, and adults who reside in relevant, safe accommodation as set out in the legislation and guidance and those who do not reside, in what the legislation and guidance determines, is safe / relevant accommodation, but are currently being supported by the Warwickshire Domestic Violence and Abuse Service.
- 2.5 The aim is to commission a service for a two-year period, with the option to extend it for up to an additional two years (budget pending).
- 2.6 The financial envelope for this would be £400,000 per annum, with the totality of the contract value over 4 years, calculated at £1.6m.
- 2.7 It is anticipated that up to 200 victim- survivors will benefit from this service, per year.

3.0 Background information

3.1 The Domestic Abuse Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (DAJSNA) 2021 informed the commissioning of the current Warwickshire Domestic Violence and Accommodation Service (WDVAS). The current WDVAS includes the provision of:

- 24 units of refuge accommodation and re-settlement support across the county.
- Domestic Abuse Support Services, which incorporates:
 - A Single Point of Contact / Helpline – to provide victim-survivors, concerned family and friends and professional’s advice and information. This includes risk assessments and immediate safety planning for victim-survivors.
 - 1:1 support for victim-survivors either via Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) or outreach workers
 - Outreach / floating support – drop-in sessions and recovery group programmes
 - Health advocate educators – 1:1 support to victim-survivors who make disclosures to health care staff and training and awareness raising for health care staff
 - Sanctuary Scheme (home security and target hardening)
 - Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference Coordination – a meeting where agencies agree actions to reduce harm and increase safety of high-risk victims and implement actions to hold perpetrators accountable for their behaviour.
 - Training and awareness raising for professionals on domestic abuse.

3.2 The DAJSNA highlighted the following gaps in relation to the mental health and wellbeing of adults, children, and young people:

- 42% of those supported by the WDVAS had a mental health issue, of these, 17% had attempted to take their own lives.
- 30 women everyday attempt to end their lives because of experiencing domestic abuse; three women succeed.
- Of women who experienced severe mental illness, 15-22% were victims of

domestic abuse.

- Domestic abuse is consistently undetected by mental health providers, with only 10-30% of cases identified.
- One in seven (14.2%) children and young people under the age of 18 are exposed to domestic abuse which places them at an increased risk of trauma, direct abuse, serious injury or death.
- Although mental health professionals are aware of links with domestic abuse, services are ill equipped to respond appropriately to disclosures from victim-survivors.
- Young People are at risk of domestic abuse from a partner - 6.6% of men and 12.6% of women aged 16 to 19 experienced domestic abuse in the past year.
- A survey of 13- to 17-year-olds found that 25% of girls and 18% of boys had experienced physical violence from an intimate partner.

3.3 The recommendations which emerged from the DAJSNA suggested that further development was required to provide specialised, trauma information therapy for victim-survivors of domestic abuse of all ages.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 In 2021/22 the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) issued a section 31 grant to WCC which provided additional funding to deliver the Safe Accommodation Duty. The amount WCC received from DLUHC for 2021/22 was £1,040,132. It is expected that this funding will be recurring for the next three years.
- 4.2 The current 2021/2022 WCC General Fund budget for domestic abuse is £1.2m. It is allocated primarily toward the Warwickshire Domestic Violence and Abuse Service contract, and the recurring annual contract value is £837,502. Of the funding allocated to the WDVAS from WCC, £240,000 is considered within scope of the duty to provide support within relevant and safe accommodation.
- 4.3 The WCC Finance Team have reviewed the guidance and opportunities for maximising both the DLUHC funding and the WCC general fund allocations towards the WDVAS and are supportive of this approach.
- 4.4 The intention is to commission a new Counselling and Therapy Service for a two-year period, with the option to extend it for up to an additional two years.
- 4.5 The financial envelope for this would be £400,000 per annum, with £200,000 allocated via the DLUHC funding and £200,000 offset against payments made to the Warwickshire Domestic Violence and Abuse Service from WCC.
- 4.6 The totality of the contract value over 4 years, would be £1.6m.

5. Environmental implications

² The contract will operate from 2021 – 2026, with an option to extend for up to two years.

5.1 None

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Assistant Director	Assistant Director People - Strategy and Commissioning
Strategic Director	Strategic Director for People
Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care & Health

Urgent matter?	No
Confidential or exempt?	No
Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?	No

List of background papers

- Warwickshire Safe Accommodation Strategy - <https://safeinwarwickshire.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/warwickshires-safe-accommodation-strategy-2021-2024-.pdf>
- Recommendations for the Domestic Abuse Joint Strategic Needs Assessment – <https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-1350011118-3053>
- Warwickshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2021 - Domestic Violence and Abuse – <https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-1350011118-3054>

Members and officers consulted and informed

Portfolio Holder – Councillor Peter Butlin

Corporate Board – Nigel Minns

Legal – Katherine Lamyman, Sioned Harper and Ian Marriott

Finance – Rosemary Rockcliffe and Andrew Felton

Equality – n/a

Democratic Services – Isabelle Moorhouse

Councillors – Warwick, Birdi, Boad, Philipps and W, Roberts

Local Member(s): n/a