

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 14 March 2019

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Joint Commissioning of Domestic Abuse Services Across People's Directorate

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To request approval to commence a procurement process for the joint commissioning of an integrated Domestic Abuse service across the People Directorate to include the existing separate adult and children's services.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board approve the commencement of a procurement exercise for an integrated Domestic Abuse service.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Changing Lives were commissioned in 2014 to deliver Halton Domestic Abuse Refuge Accommodation and Community Support Services. Services are provided to victims of domestic abuse aged 18 and over, and also supports 16/17 year olds who are referred into the service through MARAC. Following the remodelling of the refuge in 2014 into self-contained units, the service also supports male victims fleeing or at risk of domestic abuse.

3.2 Changing Lives were awarded a two year contract with the option to extend for a further three years. The third extension has been awarded and a waiver approved to further extend the contract from July to October 2019 to align with the Children's contract and allow for a joint procurement process to be undertaken.

3.3 In February 2016 HBC in collaboration with Cheshire Police piloted Operation Enhance for six months initially. The key aim was to provide victims of domestic abuse between intimate partners with an enhanced level of service ensuring that victims of domestic abuse and their families were provided with the most appropriate and timely service, focusing on the outcome the victim wants and that perpetrators are dealt with expeditiously. Working in partnership a dedicated Police Officer and an Independent Domestic Violence

Advocate (IDVA) from Changing Lives provided early intervention and a support services to all victims of low, medium and high risk Domestic Violence in the Runcorn area only, for the duration of the pilot. In August 2016, Operation Enhance was recognised as best practise in terms of increasing engagement for victims as well as increasing confidence to encourage victims to ask for help earlier.

3.4 Following the successful local pilot, Operation Enhance was replicated across the Pan-Cheshire area and the Council secured funding to deliver the enhanced service across the borough. Funding is currently available to the end of March 2019, and this provision will be mainstreamed and a 7 day service delivered as part of the new commission.

3.5 In 2017 further funding was secured by the Cheshire authorities for a two-year project to support and accommodate victims of domestic abuse who have complex needs and do not engage with services. Changing Lives recruited to the position of Complex Case worker from within their existing staff, backfilling the vacancy within the Refuge staff team and this service has been provided since September 2017. The key aims of the project are to:

- Develop a sub-regional coordination and specialist support model for victims of Domestic Abuse (DA) in Cheshire, improving the quantity, quality and maximise the use of available accommodation options matched with essential family support through our integrated front door system.
- Reduce the need to export victims out of area by expanding the availability of specialist support provision so that vulnerable victims with complex needs can be helped with the appropriate level of support to enable them to be safe.
- Extend the dispersed accommodation offer by creating additional bed spaces across Cheshire by utilising existing accommodation assets and through partnership work with Registered Providers.

Further funding has recently been secured to continue the Refuge Accommodation project to 2021.

3.6 As part of the project, other Cheshire authorities have been looking at alternative accommodation models although thus far no additional specific domestic abuse accommodation spaces have been identified.

3.7 In April 2016, Halton Borough Council commissioned Catch 22 to deliver a domestic abuse service for children, young people and families experiencing domestic abuse to ensure a co-ordinated approach for families. Children and families need to be within social

work and there must be either domestic abuse present or it has been present within the last 12 months and/ or there is an identified need that the family require both parenting and child safety planning support within the household.

- 3.8 The service is to support parents that are victims of domestic abuse enabling parents to understand the impact of domestic abuse on how they parent and how domestic abuse can negatively affect children and young people's behaviour. Interventions are delivered through Parenting Groups and/or one to one support.

4.0 PROPOSED SERVICE MODEL

- 4.1 The proposed model is an integrated service model which will include all elements currently provided. The commissioners would like to proceed with a co-production approach with the development of the service specification and then to work with the successful provider to ensure the main elements are included but to incorporate an option for creativity and further development of domestic abuse services including people with no recourse to public funds and affordability issues for working individuals and families.

- 4.2 In order to proceed with an integrated model, waivers have been agreed to align and extend both contracts to October 2019.

- 4.3 The service will continue to provide short term supported accommodation to those who need to flee or at risk of domestic abuse including both men and women, with or without children.

- 4.4 To maximise throughput within the service, it is proposed to reduce the length of stay from the current 6 months maximum duration to 20 weeks. Data from 2017/18 and 2018/19 shows that only 30% of people accessing refuge accommodation stay for longer than 4 months, but the length of stay can be extended for individuals and families who have more complex or additional needs. This will be agreed in advance by the commissioner, and the service will also provide an additional 6 weeks resettlement support when they move out into settled accommodation.

In addition, the support provider will establish clear move on protocols with housing providers and other agencies to maximise throughput within the service while ensuring move on is done in a planned and supported way.

- 4.5 The service will continue to provide Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) specialism support to high risk victims including:

- Crisis intervention

- Needs and risk assessment
- case work
- independent advice
- multi-agency working
- outcome monitoring
- attendance at MARAC
- support for clients through the Specialist Domestic Violence Court, or other criminal justice interventions
- work in partnership with the Independent Sexual Violence Advisor

4.6 Following the success of Operation Enhance, this provision will now be mainstreamed and the support provider will deliver a 7 day IDVA service.

4.7 The support service would provide outreach sessions supporting children, young people and adults living in the community and those within the supported accommodation. The support sessions will be delivered within community setting across the borough as group work and also 1-1 sessions focussing on positive relationships and use a variety of person centred tools and methods to support dealing with domestic abuse. The support is time limited to an average of 12 weeks but this can be extended if the child, young person or adult needs additional support.

4.8 Although there is no current budget for an adult perpetrator provision, consideration has been given to its inclusion in the new service offer. Halton's lack of perpetrator programme was noted during the latest Single Inspection Framework with Ofsted and under the current Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill before Parliament, there is an expectation that local authorities have a local community based provision for those perpetrators who are not subject to criminal justice based programmes.

Should this provision be included in the service, the support provider would actively encourage and support individuals over the age of 18 who have recognised that their behaviour is harmful to not only their victim but children within the family. The perpetrator should want to change their abusive behaviour, and will be available to both those still with the victim and those no longer in the relationship in order for them to have greater awareness and understanding of the harm caused by domestic abuse in future relationships.

This provision would be co-produced with the support provider and it is proposed to fund on a payment by results basis to minimise financial risk should the provision not be fully utilised.

5.0 ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

5.1 An options appraisal has been undertaken on the property to be used for refuge accommodation, and consideration given to the following:

5.1.1 Existing Refuge Accommodation

One option is to continue using the existing refuge accommodation at Ann Street West. The property was remodelled into self-contained units 4 years ago, but there are still some issues around the property condition and maintenance with no cyclical maintenance programme provided to the support provider.

The communal areas within the scheme are dated and in need of decoration as they were not included in the refurbishment. The new commission focusses strongly on links with community assets and although it is felt the communal areas are not particularly well utilised at the moment, the support provider may choose to work within the Refuge rather than developing links with the local community

5.1.2 Use of alternative HBC accommodation and development of community based units

Consideration was also given to properties owned by the Council that are not currently being utilised, and one site was identified as suitable for development as supported accommodation for victims of domestic abuse.

The proposal for the site is to remodel the existing property to include a communal base for interviews, meetings and storage, and provide 8 units for use as short term supported accommodation for both single adults and families, to include 4 larger units to accommodate larger families. Halton residents would be prioritised but referrals will continue to be accepted from out of area as per the current offer.

There will be a capital cost associated with this option as the accommodation will require refurbishment to bring them up to a suitable standard. The cost of a similar previous refurbishment was £272,897.

However, as the building is owned by the Council there will be ongoing revenue income available which could part fund the support service. This could be either by the Council receiving rental income and/or Housing Benefit payments or by a reduction in the level of funding for the refuge element of the service if the Council enters into a management agreement with the support provider for the provision of the housing management function.

Similar supported accommodation services attract rent/HB levels of £242.98 per week, which includes core rent, service charges, void loss etc. Assuming a core rent of £100 per unit per week, this could generate income of approximately £42,000 per year.

5.2 Consideration has also been given to developing a wider offer of community based accommodation across the borough. It is felt this will allow more people to safely access short term supported accommodation, properties will be able to accommodate larger families and will offer affordable accommodation which has been a particular issue for victims of domestic abuse who work and people with no recourse to public funds.

5.3 The preferred option is to utilise the available HBC property and bring back into use the Council’s accommodation resources. The building is in a good location with regard to other community services and local amenities, including community centre, children’s centre, schools and health services, and gives opportunity for efficiencies through rental income and/or reduction in contract value for the refuge element of the service.

5.4 It is proposed to monitor service utilisation and undertake a review after 12 months to identify if there is demand for additional community based accommodation and work with local social housing providers to develop this provision.

6.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 None identified.

7.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The table below shows the current contract values:

Service	Funding
Refuge Accommodation	£120,000
Community Support	£123,000 (includes £15,000 for Sanctuary Scheme)
Family Service	£158,557
Total	£401,557
Additional short term funding	
DA Refuge Accommodation	£40,000

project (Complex Case Worker pan Cheshire funding)	
Operation Enhance (funding only currently available to March 2019)	£32,000

It is anticipated any future service will be procured within current existing budget of £401,557, however additional funding may be required to fund the inclusion of a perpetrator provision as detailed at 4.8 and 7.3.

The Family Service is currently part funded from the Troubled Families budget and this funding will only be available for a further two years.

A commitment has been made that funding will be made available from within Children's budgets for the full contract term, but it is proposed to award a contract for two years with the option to extend for a further three years (on a one plus one plus one basis) to allow for the family element of the service to be reduced if necessary.

Operation Enhance is currently only funded to March 2019 but it is proposed this service is mainstreamed for the new commission.

Additional funding for the DA Refuge Accommodation project has recently been secured to extend the project to 2021, although full details about the additional funding is not yet known.

7.2 Capital funding will be required for the refurbishment of the HBC property. Indicative costs are currently in the region of £273,000 (based on a similar previous refurbishment).

7.3 Utilising the Council's accommodation resource may realise indicative annual revenue income of £42,000. There are 2 options available for this revenue funding:

- Efficiencies / Capital Repayment
The indicative revenue income represents an efficiency saving of approximately 10% against the total current budget of which a proportion will enable repayment of the capital required for the refurbishment.
- Perpetrator provision
As this service is not currently available in Halton, there is no budget available. A proportion of the efficiencies will be available for this provision, however it is unlikely to fully fund a perpetrator provision and an increase in the budget may be required.

It is proposed to fund this element on a payment by results basis to minimise financial risk should the service not be fully utilised.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

8.1 Children & Young People in Halton

This service will support and provide safe accommodation for children, young people and families. Wherever possible children and young people are enabled to remain in their home and continue to access and maintain existing schools, health services and support services.

8.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

Individuals accessing the service will be supported to maximise opportunities to access training and employment.

8.3 A Healthy Halton

The service will support people to minimise the risks of harm, and access relevant services to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

8.4 A Safer Halton

This service will safeguard children, young and vulnerable people and families by providing safe accommodation or support to remain safe at home.

8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None identified.

9.0 RISK ANALYSIS

9.1 Financial risk will be minimised by aiming to deliver the service within existing budgets, but should an increase be needed for the perpetrator provision this element of the service will be provided on a payment by results basis.

9.2 The contract will comply with the Council's Standing Orders in relation to procurement and will be monitored in line with the Council's Quality Assurance framework to ensure contractual requirements are met with regard to quality, performance and outcomes.

10.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

10.1 The support provider will be required to demonstrate they embrace and comply with the Equality Act.

11.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.