

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 16th June 2022

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Whole Family Response to Domestic Abuse support and service provision.

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To provide an overview of a revised approach to delivering specialist domestic abuse support and services in Halton that align with our local whole picture approach.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

- i) Executive Board agree to take forward the below proposal to ensure a full service offer for victims, children and perpetrators of domestic abuse that is more fit for purpose and will deliver a saving of £39,605 over a two year period.
- ii) Executive Board approve the commencement of a procurement exercise for two separate commissions firstly, the Halton Domestic Abuse Specialist Accommodation Service and secondly, a separate Specialist Children and Young Peoples Domestic Abuse Service.
- iii) Executive Board approve Community Support provision being brought in house.
- iv) Contracts are offered on a two year fixed basis and note that TUPE may apply to all aspects of future service provision.

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Halton Domestic Abuse Partnership Strategy 2022-24 adopts the SafeLives Whole Picture Approach, considered to best practice when developing effective domestic abuse service models that respond to the needs of the individual, the family, the community and wider society.

3.2 The Domestic Abuse Act places a statutory duty on local authorities relating to the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children residing within refuges and other safe accommodation. The Duty also requires that domestic abuse support will include advocacy, prevention advice, and specialist support for victims with relevant protected characteristics and / or complex needs. Children's

domestic abuse support including play therapy and child advocacy; Housing-related support. Counselling and therapy.

- 3.3 Covid-19 has led to an increase in domestic abuse. In Halton more cases have been identified as high risk, Per 10,000 adult female population (16+), Halton had the highest rate of cases discussed at MARAC in Q3 2021/22 (23.23) [20.06 in Q3 20/21] compared to Cheshire (10.44) [10.53 in Q3 20/21]. This follows a national Domestic abuse narrative where cases are escalating in severity more quickly to become complex and serious, with higher levels of physical violence and coercive control.
- 3.4 The Halton Domestic Abuse Service, a whole family provision is currently externally commissioned as a single contract delivered by one provider. This contract comes to a natural conclusion in January 2023.
- 3.5 Domestic abuse affects Halton communities disproportionately, Per 10,000 adult female population (16+), Halton had the highest rate of repeat cases discussed at MARAC (7.06) [9.29 in Q3 20/21] in comparison to Cheshire [2.58 (3.40 in Q3 20/21)]. Halton Borough Council has taken into consideration the impact of Covid as well as the statutory duty and taken a wider look at the corporate response to domestic abuse. Overall, this proposal outlines a blended service model that adheres to the principal of the Whole Picture approach, which is responsive, inclusive and an overall wider service offer which will offer specialist domestic abuse provision to victims, children and challenge the behaviour of those who harm.
- 3.6 **Halton domestic abuse accommodation service –** Accommodation for individuals and families who are at risk of further harm if they do not move out of their home to and to a place of safety. This is a more diverse and inclusive offer of domestic abuse specialist accommodation and notably will consist of:
- Self-contained units, available to both male and female victims who need short term safe accommodation.
 - Community-based accommodation, additional safe spaces.
 - The House for Life model will assist those who require longer term support to enable them to take over a full tenancy.
 - Safe supported accommodation for those previously unable to access support due to financial constraints.
- 3.7 **Domestic abuse service for children, young people and families-** experiencing domestic abuse to ensure a co-ordinated approach for families offering additional support to children and families affected by domestic abuse. An additional element of therapeutic and counselling for children and young people affected by domestic abuse will enhance this service offer.

3.8 **Community Support** – specialist domestic abuse practitioners will work with victims to address the safety of victims and the safety of their children. Employed by the local authority they will be instrumental in improving our corporate response to domestic abuse in Halton.

Sanctuary Measures – This provides victims of domestic abuse with access additional security measures that can be placed on their property.

Engaging with those who harm – To challenge those who harm, reduce the risk of further abuse to victims and children. Local service offer to work with those identified as exhibiting harmful behaviours. An adult perpetrator programme is the final element of the service offer.

Workforce Development – Halton Borough Council is committed to ensuring staff have the skills, knowledge and confidence to respond appropriately to domestic abuse and as part of the corporate response comprehensive training package will be disseminated.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Domestic Abuse Accommodation Act - places a statutory duty on tier one local authorities relating to the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children residing within refuges and other safe accommodation.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The proposal will result in a saving of £11,605 year one and a further £28,007 in year 2 .This report seeks support to bring some service elements that are at present externally commissioned into the remit of the local authority. TUPE procedures will apply to staffing and represent an ongoing risk to the local authority.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

Children and young people in Halton are emotionally, physically and sexually healthy and Children and young people will feel safe at home, in school and in their communities.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Domestic abuse affects 1 in 3 women and 1 in 5 men. With UK employment rate hovering at around 75%, that means that as many as 1.5 million employees will have experienced domestic abuse within the past 12 months. This is estimated to cost the UK economy

close to £2bn annually, with output lost due to reduced productivity; unplanned time off; lost wages; sick pay.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

To remove barriers that disable people and contribute to poor health by working across partnership to address the wider determinants of health such as unemployment, education and skills, housing, crime and environment.

6.4 A Safer Halton

To understand and tackle the problem of domestic abuse in all its forms. Take positive action to protect victims and children from further harm and give access to supportive measures to reduce the number domestic incidents, reduce the risk of further abuse.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None identified.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The commissioned Halton Domestic Abuse Service comes to a natural conclusion in January 2023, there is a significant risk to the health and wellbeing of the local population if access to local specialist domestic abuse provision is disrupted. A decision by the Board is required to ensure the continuity of essential services and enable a formal procurement to take place in an open and transparent way.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The proposed arrangements reflect any requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

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

None.