

Written statement of a non-key officer decision
Assistant Director All Ages Commissioning

Title	Decision to make a direct award of a contract for domestic abuse services
Decision maker	Assistant Director All Ages Commissioning
Date of decision	25 June 2021
Report exemption class	Open
Purpose	To approve the direct award of a contract for domestic abuse services to West Mercia Women's Aid for a total period of one year, commencing in July 2021. The new services would be complementary to the existing commissioned domestic abuse support service, provided by West Mercia Women's Aid. They would encompass extension of dispersed accommodation and associated support and new services to engage vulnerable victims from under represented communities. They will also deliver enhanced specialist support for children's safeguarding arrangements and the development of new models of working under the new Act
Decision	That: a) a direct award of a contract for the provision of domestic abuse services to West Mercia Women's Aid be approved, in consultation with the cabinet member for health and wellbeing, to a maximum value of £362k, for a period of one year commencing in July 2021.
Reason for the decision	As set out in the report. Documents relating to this decision are available at http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mglssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=50037598
Consultation	Manager of Herefordshire the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and Domestic Abuse Hub Manager of Early Help, Childrens Services Lead Commissioner - West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner Detective Chief Inspector (Chair of Domestic ABuse Delivery Group), West Mercia Police Chief Executive and County Manager, West Mercia Women's Aid Community Cohesion Officer, Herefordshire Council Worcestershire Male Victim Domestic Abuse Support Service - Service users, Support worker and Manager Officers from Herefordshire's Housing Solutions Team and

	<p>Herefordshire Council's Strategic Housing Team Regional Lead for the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Office</p> <p>Stakeholders have been consulted on how domestic abuse victims can be identified sooner and provided with opportunities to access support. This includes a specific focus on victims with specific characteristics who are under-represented in accessing existing domestic abuse support services.</p>
Options considered	<p>1. To offer the opportunity to deliver the contract through an open tender process.</p> <p>This option is not recommended for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The local market is limited in offering the knowledge and skills to deliver the domestic abuse services required. When the existing domestic abuse support service was commissioned in 2019, West Mercia Women's Aid was the only bidder. It is unlikely that an open tender process would result in any viable alternative bids for such a short term opportunity. - There is a need to commission additional services quickly in order to make best use of the resources available. There is an expectation that the grant funding from the MHCLG should be spent, so far as possible, within the financial year 2021/2022. It is anticipated that any underspend could lead to a reduction in funding in future years. - As the current commissioned provider of domestic abuse support services for Herefordshire, West Mercia Women's Aid are uniquely placed to mobilise the new contract quickly and effectively. <p>2. To vary the existing contract with West Mercia Women's Aid.</p> <p>This option is not recommended. The existing contract has been varied twice previously to incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grant funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Government (MHCLG) for the financial year 2020/21 to fund a project providing additional accommodation and associated advocacy and support for families affected by domestic abuse, to a maximum value of £94,125. - A direct award to West Mercia Women's Aid to provide a Domestic Abuse Support and Advocacy Worker to the multi-agency Edge of Care/Home (ECHO) Service, to a

	<p>maximum value of £37,000 per annum for a maximum of 4 years.</p> <p>The total cost of these variations was £242,125. Procurement regulations stipulate that a contract can only be varied to a maximum of 50% of the original contract value. Varying the contract to include the new services would bring the total value of all variations very close to this limit.</p> <p>3. To deliver the domestic abuse service within the council</p> <p>This option is not recommended. Providing services for domestic abuse victims safely requires specific knowledge and expertise, plus access to the national refuge network, intelligence systems and data sharing with key partners, all of which exist through the commissioned provider. At present, the council does not have existing expertise or capacity to deliver the services in-house and the requisite recruitment would be time-consuming and challenging.</p> <p>4. Not to a commission further domestic abuse support services</p> <p>This option is not recommended. All councils are expected to meet the duties specified within the new Act and funding has been released to assist council to meet the associated financial burdens. If the council fails to meet the new duties, there may be a risk of a legal challenge. Additionally, if the council does not spend the grant funding, this would represent a missed opportunity to make proper use of resources. It would also likely be reflected within the government's spending review and may risk a reduction in domestic abuse-related funding to the council in future years.</p>
Declarations of interest	
Call-in expiry date (decisions are not subject to call-in where special urgency provisions apply)	1 July 2021

<p>Officer:</p> <p>Assistant Director All Ages Commissioning (Paul Smith)</p>	<p>Date 25 June 2021</p>
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