

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	Commissioning of Services using the Domestic Abuse 'New Burdens' Grant 2023/24.
Date of decision:	16 th June 2023
Decision maker:	Corporate Director Community Wellbeing
Authority for delegated decision:	The Chief Executive's scheme of delegation SA09; Commissioning, quality assurance and contract management relating to all ages.
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	Consultation with providers, stakeholders and people with lived experience of domestic abuse is an ongoing process through the lived experience advisory group, domestic abuse local partnership board and the domestic abuse operational group.
Decision made:	To approve the commissioning proposals for the domestic abuse new burdens funding for 2023/24.
Reasons for decision:	<p>The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced a range of new duties for councils. The Government has supplied new burdens funding to support council's to deliver the new duties. The DLUHC have allocated the council a non-ring fenced Section 31 grant of £370,752 for 2023/24.</p> <p>Herefordshire currently has 19 units of safe accommodation; 10 units within a dedicated refuge and 9 dispersed units. In 2021 West Mercia Women's Aid (WMWA) the organisation that provides this accommodation received 141 referrals and a total of 79 households were accommodated throughout the year.</p> <p>44 households were placed on temporary accommodation due to domestic abuse during 2022/23; 16 more households than in 2021/22 when the council accommodated 28 households for the same reason.</p> <p>The average annual cost of accommodating survivors of domestic abuse in temporary accommodation including B&B has been estimated as £127,928.</p> <p>A proportion of the DLUHC grant funding allocation for 2022/23 was used to increase the amount of safe accommodation with support available across Herefordshire. This opportunity was competitively tendered and awarded to Stonewater Ltd. The use of B&B to house survivors of domestic abuse and their families is no longer supported under the legislation.</p> <p>As well as extending the amount of safe accommodation available to survivors of domestic abuse, the 2022/23 DLUHC grant was used to extend the support offered by WMWA to people with protected characteristics and to develop a lived experience advisory group (LEAG) to bring together the voices of people with lived experience of domestic abuse. The work of the LEAG will feed into the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and inform commissioning processes across both Herefordshire and Worcestershire.</p> <p>Contracts for the LEAG and Safe Accommodation with Support provided by Stonewater Ltd will be extended until 31.03.24.</p> <p>A domestic abuse coordinator was employed by the Council in 2021 to support the roll out of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021(post was vacant throughout 2022). is the role will continue to be utilised for a minimum of 24 months in order to offer additional capacity for both the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board and the recommissioning of domestic abuse services.</p> <p>An underspend of £17K from the 2022/23 New Burdens Grant will be</p>

	allocated to WMWA for the continuation of support for men and boys for 2023/24.
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	<p>The financial risk arising from this decision is minimal. Revenue funding of £370,752 has been granted from the DLUHC to support the Council to deliver the duties of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This funding will be used to deliver safe accommodation and support to survivors of Domestic Abuse as set out in Part 4 of the Act.</p> <p>The new burdens work undertaken by WMWA has been delivered via a variation to their main domestic abuse support contract. This contract has been varied a number of times over its lifetime and as such a waiver will be required to extend the work being currently carried out. The main contract will come to an end on the 31.03.24.</p> <p>All domestic abuse services will be recommissioned during 2023; contracts will start on 01.04.2024. The aim of this approach is to take an integrated approach to the funding available for domestic abuse services, moving away from an annual cycle of reactive commissioning and developing flexible contracts that offer longer term support for survivors, value for money and where possible stability for providers.</p>
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	<p>Not to extend the services set out above. This is not recommended. Herefordshire does not benefit from a wide pool of providers for these services and the council is not in a position to deliver this specialist work directly. The approach outlined demonstrates a clear plan for the commissioning of domestic abuse services in Herefordshire going forward, enabling the council to move away from reactive commissioning brought about by annual funding settlements.</p>
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None