

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Award of contracts for domestic abuse support services in Herefordshire – 2024/25
Date of decision:	Monday 4 th December 2023
Decision maker:	Corporate Director Community Wellbeing
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>The chief executive's scheme of delegation:</p> <p>CW08; Commissioning, quality assurance and contract management relating to all ages.</p> <p>And delegated authority given to the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing through the Domestic Abuse Commissioning 2024 Cabinet Member decision approved in July 2023.</p>
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	<p>The Council has consulted with existing service providers, key stakeholders and people with lived experience of domestic abuse. The information and feedback gathered through the consultation process has informed the service specifications for each of the services being commissioned.</p> <p>Legal, finance and commercial colleagues have been consulted and their advice has informed this commissioning process.</p>
Decision made:	<p>Following a full open tender process to award the following contracts:</p> <p>Lot 1 - Refuge and extended refuge and DA support service be awarded to: Supplier; West Mercia Womens aid - £469,904 for 12 months, with a total contract value not exceeding £2,349,520.00 over 5 years.</p> <p>Lot 2 - Safe Accommodation and Floating Support service be awarded to: Supplier; Stonewater Ltd - £141,224 for 12 months, with a total contract value not exceeding £706,118.00 over 5 years.</p> <p>Lot 3 - Floating Support for Men and Boys service be awarded to: Supplier; Cranstoun - £46,676 for 12 months, with a total contract value not exceeding £242,634.00 over 5 years.</p> <p>Lot 4 - Lived Experience Advisory Group Co-ordination service be awarded to: Supplier; West Mercia Womens aid - £44,000 for 12 months with a total contract value not exceeding £220,000.00 over 5 years.</p> <p>Contracts will be issued for 12 months, commencing 01.04.2024, with the option to extend for up to 48 months. This approach has been taken as the Council has not yet had confirmation of the continuation of the Domestic Abuse funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) beyond 31.03.2025.</p>
Reasons for decision:	<p>According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), it is estimated that 7.3% (4,830) of females aged 16-74 and 3.6% (2,380) males aged 16-74 were victims of domestic violence and abuse (DVA) in the county during the year ending March 2020.</p> <p>Domestic abuse data from service providers across Herefordshire for 2021/22 indicates that:</p>

	<p>a) Women are most likely to be victims of all types of domestic abuse across all ages in Herefordshire.</p> <p>b) The highest level of domestic abuse was prevalent among White and Mixed ethnic groups.</p> <p>c) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ+) people are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse as are people with disabilities.</p> <p>d) There is an increasing demand for temporary accommodation from victims who flee from abuse.</p> <p>There were three homicides recorded where domestic abuse was a factor in Herefordshire between January 2019 and March 2022.</p> <p>The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced a range of new duties for Local Authorities. DLUHC has supplied a 'new burdens' grant to support council's to deliver the new duties which include establishing a domestic abuse local partnership board, assessing need, developing a domestic abuse strategy and ensuring that victims and their children are able to access safe accommodation with support.</p> <p>The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also places a clear emphasis on the need to take into account the different needs of people with protected characteristics including people with disabilities, minority ethnic or faith communities, those from the Gypsy Roma and Traveller community, LGBTQ+ victims, older victims, as well as victims with complex needs such as mental health or drug and alcohol problems.</p> <p>Commissioning support for victims of domestic abuse and their children fits in with county plans commitments to:</p> <p>a) Strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together.</p> <p>b) Ensure all children are healthy, safe and inspired to achieve.</p> <p>c) Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people.</p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</p>	<p>The financial risks arising from this decision are low. The uncertainty around the continuation of the Domestic Abuse Grant from DLUHC has been mitigated by awarding contracts for one year with the option to extend for up to 48 months.</p> <p>All costs of providing these services will be met by funding from the Public Health Grant and the Domestic Abuse Grant from DLUHC.</p> <p>Legal and Commercial support has been sought throughout the tender process.</p> <p>An equalities impact assessment was prepared as part of the commissioning process.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>1. Not to commission support services for victims of domestic abuse. This is not recommended. 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 which include establishing a domestic abuse local partnership board, assessing need, developing a domestic abuse strategy and ensuring that victims and their children are able to access safe accommodation with support.</p> <p>2. To award all of the funding to a single provider via a direct award. This is not recommended as it is not in line with the council's contract procedure rules. The combined value of the tender opportunities is above the relevant</p>

	<p>UK threshold. Contracts with a value in excess of the relevant UK threshold must be let in accordance with the relevant procurement legislation. Formal tender documents must be used and the entire process of advertising, selecting suppliers to tender, through to final award, is highly prescribed under UK law for all procurements over the relevant threshold.</p> <p>3. To deliver the domestic abuse service within the council. This option is not recommended. Providing services for domestic abuse victim-survivors safely requires specialist 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.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>One of the evaluation panel members declared an interest in one of the organisations that tendered. The declaration of interest was formally recorded and they were excluded from evaluating the tenders submitted by that organisation.</p>