

## Record of operational decision

<b>Decision title:</b>	Decision to vary the existing Specialist Domestic Abuse Support Services including Refuge and Dispersed Accommodation contract with West Mercia Women’s Aid to enable additional investment for the co-location of domestic abuse specialist support within the Edge of Care Home (ECHO) Team at Herefordshire Council.
<b>Date of decision:</b>	Monday 7 <sup>th</sup> October 2024
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Corporate Director Community Wellbeing
<b>Authority for delegated decision:</b>	<p>CW08 – Commissioning, quality assurance and contract management relating to all ages.</p> <p>A <a href="#">decision to commission domestic abuse services</a> was taken in July 2023 by the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing. This decision included the following delegation:</p> <p><i>“That delegated authority is given to the Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing to approve contract award, any changes to the commissioning process and subsequent operational management of contracts for their duration, including the option to extend.”</i></p>
<b>Ward:</b>	Countywide
<b>Consultation:</b>	Consultation has been carried out with the ECHO team at Herefordshire Council and with West Mercia Women’s Aid to ascertain the need for and deliverability of this service. Advice has been taken from Herefordshire Council commercial services, finance and legal teams.
<b>Decision made:</b>	To vary the existing contract with West Mercia Women’s Aid to enable additional investment in the co-location of domestic abuse specialist support within the ECHO team at Herefordshire Council.
<b>Reasons for decision:</b>	<p>During 2021/22 West Mercia Women’s (WMWA) received 1,175 referrals. 2,294 calls made to the WMWA helpdesk and 1,028 online referrals or emails received. During the same period WMWA had 922 service users; 811 adults and 111 children and young people.</p> <p>In Herefordshire, 1,500 children and young people received a social care assessment in 2020- 21, domestic abuse was observed in 59% of these assessments. Domestic abuse is one of the family safeguarding risks considered in the Trio of Vulnerabilities together with mental ill-health and substance misuse. It is estimated that around 2,400 children and young people in Herefordshire are at risk of domestic abuse.</p> <p>The Domestic Abuse 2021 recognised children as victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear or otherwise experience the effects of abuse and are related to either the victim or the perpetrator.</p> <p>Skilled workers in the ECHO team provide effective support to prevent family breakdown and provide help for carers.</p>

	The total cost of this service for 2024/25 is £76,544.08. The cost for 2025/26 will be £95,387.34.
<b>Equality Considerations</b>	<p>The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.</p> <p>In supporting this decision the council is actively demonstrating its commitment to the equality duty.</p> <p>An equalities impact assessment was prepared as part of the original commissioning process and governance process.</p>
<b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</b>	<p>The West Mercia Women's Aid contract is funded by the Public Health Grant (Public Health Investment Fund element) and Domestic Abuse funding allocated to Herefordshire Council through the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. The contract has been issued for 12 months with the option to extend for up to 48 months, subject to funding.</p> <p>The ECHO roles are funded by Children's Services and are permanent roles. The existing contract will be modified to allow for termination of the main services should external funding for these services no longer be available. The modification will allow for the ECHO workers service to continue on termination of the main services as permanent funding for these roles has been secured. The modification has no financial value.</p>
<b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b>	Additional investment in domestic abuse specialist services has been made through Herefordshire Council's Children Services Directorate. The decision to vary the existing contract was made to ensure a joined up approach to the funding and delivery of services.
<b>Details of any declarations of interest made:</b>	None.