

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Decision to extend, by means of a variation, contracts for domestic abuse support services in Herefordshire.
Date of decision:	17 th February 2025
Decision maker:	Corporate Director Community Wellbeing
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>The chief executive's scheme of delegation: CW08; Commissioning, quality assurance and contract management relating to all ages.</p> <p>Along with delegated authority given to the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing through the Domestic Abuse Commissioning 2024 Cabinet Member decision approved in July 2023.</p> <p>https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=9548;</p>
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	Existing providers, Public Health, commercial service, and finance colleagues have been consulted and their advice has informed this decision.
Decision made:	<p>To extend the following contracts by way of a contract variation:</p> <p>Refuge and extended refuge and DA support service for 12 months- Supplier; West Mercia Womens aid. The extension has been costed at £581,856 for the 12-month period this includes an uplift against predicted costs for this period to cover the impact of National Insurance contributions rising and the costs of inflationary pressures on services.</p> <p>Safe Accommodation and Floating Support service for 12 months. Supplier Stonewater Ltd - £141,224 for the 12-month extension which is commensurate to the current contract cost.</p> <p>Floating Support for Men and Boys service. Supplier- Cranstoun - The extension has been costed at £49,527 for the 12-month period this includes an uplift against predicted costs for this period to cover the impact of National Insurance contributions rising and the costs of inflationary pressures on services.</p> <p>Lived Experience Advisory Group Co-ordination Service- Supplier; West Mercia Womens aid - £44,000 for the 12-month extension which is commensurate to the current contract cost.</p> <p>Contract extensions will be issued for 12 months, commencing 01.04.2025. This approach has been taken as the Council has only received confirmation of New Burdens Domestic Abuse grant funding up to 31.03.2026.</p>
Reasons for decision:	The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 established several new responsibilities for Local Authorities. The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) provided a 'new burdens' grant to assist councils in fulfilling these new responsibilities. This grant has been included in the

	<p>Local Government Finance Settlement and is distinguishable as a separate line item.</p> <p>Funding for local government responsibilities, under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, to support victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation is an essential element of the Government's commitment to halving instances of violence against women and girls within the next decade. Improved support for victims is also part of the Government's Safer Street Mission.</p> <p>The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a clear emphasis on the need to consider the different needs of people with protected characteristics including people with disabilities, minority ethnic or faith communities, those from the Gypsy Roma and Traveler 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together. b) Ensure all children are healthy, safe and inspired to achieve. c) Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people.
Equality Considerations	<p>An equalities impact assessment was prepared as part of the initial commissioning process.</p> <p>Due to the risks associated with domestic abuse support for male victim/survivors was separated out from support for female victim/survivors. This means that a separate service has been commissioned to support male victim/survivors of domestic abuse.</p> <p>Specialist services have been developed in Herefordshire to specifically support children and young people.</p> <p>Local data indicates that the highest level of DA was prevalent among White and Mixed ethnic groups, this could be that DA is a hidden crime among ethnic minority communities. The crime Survey for England and Wales data shows that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) people are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse. More is being done to promote services to people with protected characteristics through the new services in line with the aims of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	<p>The financial risks arising from this decision are low. The original contracts all commenced on 01.04.2024 for an initial term of 12 months to 31.03.2025 with the option to extend for up to 48 months. The contracts are being extended initially for a further 1 year because of the uncertainty around the continuation of the Domestic Abuse Grant from MHCLG post March 2026.</p> <p>Finance colleagues have been consulted with to ensure the cost of providing these services can be met by funding from the Public Health</p>

	<p>Grant and the Domestic Abuse Grant from MHCLG. In addition, Children's Services fund the two ECHO roles that form part of the refuge and extended refuge and DA support service. The Lived Experience Advisory Group Co-ordination Service operates across Herefordshire and Worcestershire and as such this is jointly funded by both local authorities.</p> <p>Legal and commercial services advice has support has been sought to ensure the extension process is in line with the council's contract procedure rules.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>Not to deliver support services for victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>This is not recommended for the following reasons:</p> <p>The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 established new responsibilities for councils, with the Government providing funding to help councils support victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation. This is also an essential element of the Government's commitment to halving instances of violence against women and girls within the next decade.</p> <p>Supporting victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation is a statutory duty under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.</p> <p>The benefits of these services on victim/survivors are wide ranging and includes but is not exhaustive to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risk of harm from domestic abuse on people and their children is reduced through the delivery of tailored support. • Quality of life and opportunities for people and their families who have experienced domestic abuse is improved. • The prevalence of domestic abuse is reduced through education and increased awareness of domestic abuse. • The voice of survivors in Herefordshire and Worcestershire are amplified and used to inform commissioning and delivery of services, improving outcomes for victim survivors. <p>To recommission the four domestic abuse contracts.</p> <p>This option is not recommended. MHCLG confirmed continued funding for domestic abuse safe accommodation in late December, leaving insufficient time for a meaningful compliant procurement process for contracts to commence on 1st April 2025 ensuring no gap in current provision.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>None</p>

Signed..... Date: