



## CABINET

12<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2021

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### Integrated Domestic Abuse Services for Northumberland – Permission to Tender

Report of: Executive Director of Adult Social Care & Children's Services, Cath McEvoy-Carr

Report of Cabinet Member: Councillor Wendy Pattison, Portfolio Holder for Adults' Wellbeing

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#### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek permission to go to the market to commission a range of services to provide an Integrated Domestic Abuse Service for Northumberland which will allow the Council to meet its statutory duties. The length of contracts will be 2 years, with an option to extend for a further 2 years.

#### Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended:

- To note the information presented in this report regarding the procurement of a contract for an integrated domestic abuse service.
- To note that the total value of the four-year contract is approximately £2,595,101. Further detail of spend is outlined below.
- To authorise the Executive Director of Adult Social Care & Children's Services to undertake a procurement exercise and award of the contracts.

#### Key Issues

The new Domestic Abuse Act was passed into law in April 2021. With this new Act a range of new duties were placed on Local Authorities, including the need to provide

support to survivors of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation services in their areas, this covers:

- Refuge accommodation
- Specialist safe accommodation
- Dispersed accommodation
- Sanctuary schemes
- Move on or second stage accommodation

Each Tier 1 Local Authority is also required to establish a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board that meets quarterly and has responsibility to prepare and publish a strategy for the new provisions of newly legislated support for domestic abuse, as well as continually monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of strategy. The Northumberland Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board had its first meeting on the 29 June 2021, chaired by Graham Reiter, Service Director Children's Services.

Outlined below are the commissioning intentions which will enable the Local Authority to meet its duties of the new Domestic Abuse Act.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Ministry of Housing, and Communities Local Government (MHCLG) advised local authorities of their 2021-22 allocation to meet new statutory duties in February 2021. Whilst this funding is welcome and allows the Council to address levels of unmet need by building upon its core financial commitment of £207,000 per annum, the timescale involved provided a short lead in time in which to develop commissioning intentions.

To support this process, a scoping exercise was undertaken with a Task Group (formed of both internal and external stakeholders) to gain an understanding of existing service provision in Northumberland, the aim of which was to avoid duplication. A needs assessment has also been undertaken.

Although the MHCLG recognise the risks that short term contracts pose they are unable to confirm year two and three allocations until after the annual spending reviews. In order to approach the market with a viable offer, supporting value for money considerations and reducing operational risks, it is proposed that contracts are awarded for 2 years with the option to extend for a further 2. They will be structured to ensure that a risk of a funding reduction in year 2 is mitigated by being able to reduce the contract values, accepting that there would be an associated reduction in service delivery. Contracts will commence in February 2022 ensuring that the funding allocation can be used within the appropriate financial year which will allow for a procurement exercise to be undertaken and seamless transition from existing arrangements, where they exist.

The findings from the needs assessment from our current providers and using internal resources are as follows:

### **Domestic Abuse Support Service Northumberland commissioned to provide a fully integrated service with a single point of contact available 24 hours a day**

- Slight increase in new clients accessing the IDVA Service
- Refuge has been at full capacity throughout 2019/20
- The number of children supported by refuge has increased.
- Over the same period the number of new clients supported by outreach has increased

### **Acorns-organisation commissioned to provide therapeutic support to children impacted by domestic abuse**

- In the year ending March 2021, 235 referrals received since the start of the project in November 2018
- 95 children and young people remain on the waiting list (71%). Demand for Acorns significantly outstrips provision due to the limited funding available.

### **Housing**

- In 2020/21 160 (20%) individuals approached the homeless team due to domestic abuse. This reflects a continued increase which has been seen since 2018.

### **Adult Social Care**

- The number of domestic abuse related enquiries has increased year on year and has more than doubled from 2019/20 to 2020/21 (34 to 88).
- Referrals due to domestic abuse where those referred had identified mental and physical health issues has increased significantly.

### **Rural Northumberland**

- Domestic abuse is less visible in rural areas as services are usually more dispersed.
- They are often close-knit communities causing problems of confidentiality
- Because of rurality access to services and the distance and availability of emergency services and refuges spaces can be a challenge.
- All of these issues may lead to survivors needing to relocate to more urban areas.

From the findings of the scoping exercise and needs analysis the following is proposed.

1. **An integrated Domestic Abuse Support service - £460,000** per annum to provide an assessment hub, refuge, dispersed properties, IDVA, Sanctuary Scheme, Outreach, Groupwork and finally establish a Service User Form. This provision will be for both male and female victims of domestic abuse over the age of 16.
2. **Children's Counselling and Therapeutic and Outreach Support - £100,000** per annum to support children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse. The key elements of this provision will be to provide an initial response, counsel those in need via play therapy and finally establish a children and young people's service user forum. This will be an outreach support service for children and young people.
3. **Perpetrator Service - £100,000** per annum to work with both male and female (aged 18 and over) and operate as a single point of entry for referrals and subsequent delivery for residents who agree to engage and take responsibility and wish to change their abusive behaviour. The service will focus on increasing the safety of partners, children and family members to reduce the incidents of domestic abuse within these relationships
4. **Adult Counselling Service - £30,000** per annum to work with both male and female (aged 18 and over) to support those who have experienced domestic abuse, which will allow victims to explore how they feel and discuss experiences in a safe non-judgemental environment.
5. **Domestic Abuse in Rural Northumberland - £49,999** per annum to work with males and females who reside in the North and West of the county to offer both face to face and virtual sessions, one to one sessions and support groups. Additionally, to work with other agencies to raise awareness in the communities of domestic abuse and sign-post service users to where additional support is available.

## IMPLICATIONS

<b>Policy:</b>	This procedure follows LA Statutory regulations (2012) that ensure transparent commissioning procedure is followed on behalf of Local Authority commissioning of services. Furthermore, will ensure that NCC meets its new statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
<b>Finance and value for money:</b>	The MHCLG have provided additional funding to NCC to enable new duties to be met. Commissioning intentions have been developed to reflect both the statutory requirements and local needs analysis. Through adopting an integrated model, the aspiration is that service users will receive an integrated service and can move from being a victim to a survivor due to the integration of services. Contracts will be awarded in February 2022 allowing funding to be allocated within the appropriate financial year. Value for money will be achieved via an open market procurement exercise. The cost of this tender exercise will be met from existing budget.
<b>Legal:</b>	The Local Authority now has a legal duty to provide these services as part of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
<b>Procurement:</b>	The value of the proposal requires that an open market procurement exercise be undertaken in order to be compliant.
<b>Human Resources:</b>	TUPE considerations for current provider staff will be the responsibility of the successful provider and built into the contract arrangement
<b>Property:</b>	This will be the responsibility of the successful provider and will be built into the contract arrangement
<b>Equalities:</b> (Impact Assessment attached)  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment considered the equality agenda and ensures that minority groups are catered for within the service specification.
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	The Local Authority is required to ensure commissioning of services is competitively tendered. If this tender is agreed by Cabinet, the risk of challenge will be mitigated.

<b>Crime &amp; Disorder:</b>	The range of services covered by the commissioning intentions includes support for perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse.
<b>Customer Considerations:</b>	The customer needs are at the centre of the procurement process and subsequent service delivery. It is a requirement that the customer is consulted about service redesign, and this will be assessed throughout the life of the contract. The service providers will be expected to hold regular service user forums to gain feedback from service users. This feedback will form part of discussions at the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board with service providers being an integral member of the Partnership Board.
<b>Carbon Reduction:</b>	N/A
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Health and wellbeing are at the centre for this procurement process. The aim of these services is to ensure victims can find safe accommodation, access service provision to support with accessing additional services where appropriate.
<b>Wards:</b>	All Wards

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-overarching-factsheet>

## Report Sign Off

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Neil Masson
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson Wendy Pattison

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