

CABINET

DATE

18th January 2023

REPORT OF

Councillor Ron Shepherd, Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

Janice Spencer, Director of Children's Services

SUBJECT

Commissioning and Procurement of Domestic Abuse Services and Safe Accommodation in North-East Lincolnshire

STATUS

Open

FORWARD PLAN REF NO.

CB 12/22/04

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The delivery of an effective and preventative placed based commissioned Domestic Abuse Services offer contributes to the Council's key priorities of;

- Reach their full potential through skills and learning
- Enjoy good health and wellbeing and live in a safe environment
- Can have their say about things that are important to them and participate fully in their communities.

This will be achieved by commissioning services based upon the identified needs of those living in NEL to prevent domestic abuse escalating to high risk or crisis points with early interventions and support.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24 was co-produced during 2020 with local stakeholders in North East Lincolnshire (NEL). In 2021 new statutory duties around the provision of support within safe accommodation for victims was also introduced via the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

A recent local needs assessment has enabled understanding of how the Council will meet those new duties. This will require a comprehensive place-based commissioning exercise utilising a range of Council, Partnership and Government funding to enable services to be procured to meet the requirements of new duty and ensure effective support is put in place to support victims and their families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Authorises the Director of Children Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities, to undertake a commissioning and procurement exercise for the delivery of Domestic Abuse Services in North East Lincolnshire.

2. Delegates to the Director of Children Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities, the ability to make an award with a view to commencement of provision from 1st August 2023.
3. Authorises the Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer to execute all documentation arising.

REASONS FOR DECISION

Whilst partnership working has remained strong, historically commissioning of domestic abuse provision has been undertaken within individual organisations and services and has not been joined up. With the addition of direct Government monies granted as part of the Safe Accommodation duties, in addition to bringing together wider Council and Partnership funding, there is a new opportunity to commission services in a holistic way against the needs and aspirations set out in the local strategy.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1. The Community Safety Partnership, The Safeguarding Children Partnership, and the Safeguarding Adults Board, supported by the Domestic Abuse Strategic Board have identified local need in relation to Domestic Abuse.
- 1.2. Tackling Domestic Abuse remains a priority for North East Lincolnshire.
- 1.3. The Domestic Abuse Strategy was developed to reflect the scope of the local challenges and the required interventions to confront the negative impact of domestic abuse.
- 1.4. To date there has not been a place-based approach to commissioning services in relation to domestic abuse.
- 1.5. Due to the nature of public finance, historically funding to deliver established domestic abuse services in NEL has often been time limited and subject to review, preventing longer term commitment to much needed provision.
- 1.6. Funding arrangements have been managed separately across organisations and agencies.
- 1.7. The joint commissioning approach aligns with the evolution of new partnership arrangements such as the Health and Care Partnership in NEL which supports the joint commissioning exercise.
- 1.8. Discussions have taken place between the Council and Health and Care Partnership to utilise commissioning and procurement capacity in Health and Care to co-ordinate the process and help to manage it through to the point at which contracts are signed.
- 1.9. As required by the Domestic Abuse Act, the Council has undertaken a Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment which articulates the local position in relation to domestic abuse prevalence and where it needs to focus new service provision.
- 1.10. This needs assessment has helped to inform the service specifications

associated with this commissioning exercise alongside the Domestic Abuse Strategy.

- 1.11. Domestic abuse and its impact on people in North East Lincolnshire is well documented and has long been identified as a key driver of demand in services locally including Children's Social Care.
- 1.12. There is consensus amongst local stakeholders that this service provision is essential to help address this need and reduce demand on services.
- 1.13. The Domestic Abuse Strategy, Safer Accommodation Strategy and the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment inform the commissioning approach which is owned by all key local stakeholders.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.1. Failure to meet the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act and Safe Accommodation Duty could leave the Council open to legal challenge. The joint commissioning process will enable the Council to meet those requirements and provide access to preventative and early help support, reducing and mitigating the risk of crisis interventions.
- 2.2. This creates an ideal opportunity for key stakeholders across NEL to come together to commission place-based services and support within safe accommodation based upon local identified needs. In doing so it is anticipated that the number of high-risk cases, and crisis situations for victims, including children and young people will be reduced. In preventing crisis from being reached, services would be able to support those in need to access the right services, for the right needs, at the right time.
- 2.3. By working together, the procurement of provision can provide assurance that services commissioned will be duty compliant, meet the identified needs of victims and support the delivery of the local strategy and priorities.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1. Do nothing – this option would result in the Local Authority being non-compliant in meeting the Domestic Abuse Act and Safe Accommodation Duty. Additionally, some services would cease to be delivered, including access to the current accommodation-based support offer due to contract arrangements coming to the end of their legal tenure.
- 3.2. Separate commissioning across services – this option would duplicate commissioning and procurement workloads across the Council and stakeholders. Additionally, this approach would not provide the assurance that all services commissioned are based upon the identified needs in NEL, are duty compliant and support the delivery of local strategies and priorities.
- 3.3. Extend current arrangements - this option would result in the Council being non-compliant in meeting the Domestic Abuse Act and Safe Accommodation Duty. Additionally, some services may cease or reduce their capacity to be delivered

in NEL, due to financial arrangements not being reviewed to reflect the local needs of delivery and market cost to deliver services.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1. There are potential positive and negative reputational implications for the Council resulting from this decision. The Commissioning Team will work in partnership with the Council's Communications Team to both mitigate any risk and maximise the opportunities for positive news stories, in addition to covering the following issues:-
- 4.2. Potential changes and additions to the current service provision and support, including what support will be provided during periods of transition.
- 4.3. The decision could create media interest in the procurement as domestic abuse remains high profile and of interest to the public and media locally and nationally.
- 4.4. Opportunities for communities to understand more about what domestic abuse is, what support is accessible and how domestic abuse can be prevented and reported.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1. The options outlined within the report will support the Council's key financial objective to shift our financial resource to support delivery of the Council's vision.
- 5.2. The proposed budget envelope per annum for the delivery of the newly commissioned NEL Domestic Abuse offer is £740,891.
- 5.3. A three-year delivery option equates to £2,222,673. Should extension options be utilised a five-year delivery model would equate to £3,704,455.

Funding Source	Annual Cost
Community Safety Partnership	£40,000
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Duty grant	£324,951
NELC Housing Related Support	£226,340
Public Health & Health Care Partnership Grant	£149,600
Grand Total	£ 740,891

- 5.4. An additional £178,000 per year will also be allocated to continue with existing role commitments and add additional capacity to support the delivery of the NEL Domestic Abuse Offer.

5.5. The delivery of new contracts will continually promote a change in local culture and lifestyle behaviour, and as the right conditions are being created and the environment changes, we anticipate seeing the numbers in high need and those in crisis reduce, with those accessing early help and low/moderate support offers increasing;

- All contracts will be funded by a combined budget managed by the Council, this will be established as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Budgets from Government grants and established budgets will be pooled to create one budget that can offer longer term assurance and commitments.
- No additional funding other than what is already earmarked and allocated is required from North East Lincolnshire Council.
- There is no call on Council reserves.
- There will be no effect on revenue and capital expenditure.
- Value for money will be demonstrated by reducing repeated homelessness incidents due to domestic abuse, preventing cases escalating to crisis point, investing in preventative support packages, providing a range of safer accommodation-based support options and assessing the needs of victims at the point of entry to determine the holistic needs of the person and what are the right services they are in need of.

6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

It is evident that high levels of children known to Children Services experience and witness domestic abuse within the family home. This commissioning process will both mitigate the likelihood of children witnessing and experiencing repeat domestic abuse through safe accommodation options and provide support to children who have been affected by domestic abuse.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The procurement exercise does not have any implications upon climate change or the environment.
- 7.2. As part of the service delivery, providers will support and encourage clients to access and use public transport to build their independence skills were safe to do so. Where health and wellbeing is highlighted as a key area requiring support, plans are also developed to encourage clients to walk and cycle to appointments they have within the borough.

8. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY

Communities Scrutiny Panel received a Domestic Abuse Update report in January 2022 and have been provided with a briefing note in relation to the intended commissioning approach.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications of the procurement are outlined in Section 5 above.

The Council has a finite resource available and needs to ensure that performance delivers the Councils objectives in this area. A re-procurement exercise whilst running a risk that tender prices will have increased demonstrates value for money at the contract selection stage.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The joint commissioning approach outlined in the body of the report will enable the Council to meet the statutory requirements.
- 10.2. The recommendations are consistent with an exercise of this nature.

11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct HR implications associated with the joint commissioning approach.

12. WARD IMPLICATIONS

The commissioned Domestic Abuse Services will be accessible across the borough impacting upon all wards.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Communities Scrutiny Panel January 31st 2022 - Overview of the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24 and Local Approach [8.-Domestic-Abuse-Scrutiny-Report.pdf \(nelincs.gov.uk\)](https://nelincs.gov.uk/8.-Domestic-Abuse-Scrutiny-Report.pdf)

14. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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