

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	1 February 2024
Subject:	Procurement of Fully Integrated Community Domestic Abuse Service		
Report of:	Executive Director - People	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Communities and Housing		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	Main report - No Appendix 2 – Yes, the Appendix is NOT FOR PUBLICATION by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The Public Interest Test has been applied and favours the information being treated as exempt		

Summary:

Sefton is seeking to procure a fully Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (IDAS) from 2024 for a minimum of 3 years. The service will provide holistic support to the victims and families of domestic abuse, irrespective of protected characteristic or risk level. The service will provide therapeutic counselling to those that require it in order to build resilience and aid recovery from the long-term effects of domestic abuse. The service will address a number of the priorities outlined in the action plan accompanying the Domestic & Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023-2028

Recommendation(s):

- (1) That the Assistant Director of People (Communities) be authorised to conduct a procurement exercise for a fully Integrated Domestic Abuse Service with a view to entering a contract for a minimum period of 3 years, plus 2 optional years (1+1)
- (2) That the Assistant Director of People (Communities) , in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities & Housing, be granted delegated authority to award the Contract(s) resulting from the procurement and to award any extension thereof following a review of the original award.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The IDAS will provide holistic support to the victims and families of domestic abuse, irrespective of protected characteristic or risk level. The integrated service model will underpin the Domestic & Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023-2028 and will address key priorities outlined within the action plan.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

The current system is disjointed and based on risk.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

Revenue costs will be met from within existing Council and Sefton Place (Cheshire & Merseyside ICB) budgets by way of a pooled budget arrangement.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no Capital costs.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): The costs for procuring the new service will be fully met from existing revenue budgets.								
Legal Implications: To comply with the provisions of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021								
Equality Implications: The equality implications have been identified and mitigated against. The Equality Impact Assessment is included at Appendix 1.								
Impact on Children and Young People: Yes The service will provide a positive impact for children and young people. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 determines that children should be viewed as victims in their own right. This service will support children in recovering from domestic abuse.								
Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will <table border="1"><tr><td>Have a positive impact</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Have a neutral impact</td><td>No</td></tr><tr><td>Have a negative impact</td><td>No</td></tr><tr><td>The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors</td><td>Yes</td></tr></table> The procurement of this service will mean residents will be able to access support at a single point of access via telephone removing the need to travel. This in turn will reduce Sefton's carbon footprint.	Have a positive impact	Yes	Have a neutral impact	No	Have a negative impact	No	The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes
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Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: The service will provide specialist support to all victims of domestic abuse, their children and families.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities:
Commission, broker and provide core services:
Place – leadership and influencer:

Drivers of change and reform:
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:
Greater income for social investment:
Cleaner Greener

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.7420/23) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5620/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Emails, surveys, meetings, focus groups with key stakeholders.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Cabinet decision.

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Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2 – Financial & Commercially Sensitive Information

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides a statutory responsibility on Local Authorities to provide support services to victims, children and their families living in safe accommodation. Part 4 of the Act includes the duty for Local Authorities to provide support to survivors of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation. This duty came into effect on 1 October 2021. To support LAs in delivering this duty the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) has allocated Sefton new burdens funding which Council granted delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Communities & Housing to allocate appropriately.
- 1.2 The adoption and children act 2005 refined the definition of significant harm to include 'witnessing or experiencing the harm or ill treatment of others', in short to protect children who live in a house where DA is a feature of their lives. Section 3 of the DA act 22 specifically provides that a child who hears or experiences the effects of DA be regarded as a victim, to whom a service must be provided.
- 1.3 In sefton DA is overwhelmingly our most prevalent source of concern. For context, in this financial year to date we have received 2600 contacts where DA is listed as the prime concern. The next biggest concern is listed as 'Parenting support' , 860 contacts. DA outstrips the next biggest reason we are involved with children by over three times. In reality, this is a minimisation, once we begin to work with families DA often reveals itself as a significant concern that was not the original reason for referral. We know that children who experience parenting within the context of domestically abusive relationship can go on to model these behaviours in their own relationships later in life

2 Current Domestic Abuse Service Provision in Sefton

- 2.1 Current Domestic Abuse (DA) provision in Sefton has evolved historically and has the potential to be disjointed and based on risk. The Council has 4 core funded Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and has accessed some time limited funding to increase this cohort by 4 to a total of 8. The role of Sefton's IDVA's is to support high risk (gold) victims of DA and male victims.
- 2.2 Sefton Women's & Childrens Aid (SWACA) receive funding from the Council and Sefton Place (Cheshire & Merseyside ICB) to deliver their core adults and children's and families support services. These are delivered to medium risk (silver) DA victims.
- 2.3 There is currently no commission for standard risk (bronze) victims of DA. We know through our Domestic Homicide Reviews that many Domestic Homicide victims, are not previously known to services or have previously been determined to be low risk.
- 2.4 It is to be noted that Cheshire and Merseyside ICB have funded the domestic abuse provision and is recommended that future funding be included in this contract. The contract award is within the scheme of delegation of the NHS Place Director for Sefton.

3. Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment

3.1 The needs assessment that was commissioned to meet our statutory obligations under the DA Act, tells us we have unmet need around:

- Reporting of DA in more affluent areas of the borough was less than in areas of deprivation.
- Women with complex needs
- Older Victims / Survivors
- Male Victims

3.2 At the time the needs assessment was undertaken there appeared to be low numbers offering DA as a reason for homelessness. We know that over the last 2 years this picture has changed with more households approaching the Council citing DA as the reason for homelessness. These households also need extra support through their homelessness and finding new safe accommodation.

4. Proposal & Scope

4.1 We are proposing to procure a fully integrated Community Domestic Abuse service that operates on a network approach. The following outlines proposed objectives of the new service.

1. Community Workers working at a Locality level allowing victims to access support within their community.
2. An accessible boroughwide Domestic Abuse Helpline for victims, survivors, concerned friends and family and professionals – no matter what the protected characteristic, no matter what the risk level.
3. A range of recovery programmes for individuals, families, or groups together with a range of drop in sessions
4. Training & Volunteer Coordination – a training offer for the partnership, the voluntary sector, Sefton businesses, and the general public – together with coordinating the efforts of those that wish to volunteer in the sector
5. A programme of therapeutic counselling aimed at individuals or families to aid the long-term recovery from DA
6. Links into the Locality – a clear link from the 2 pillars of the place – Education & Acute GP Primary Care Network to offer a clear and seamless pathway into service ensuring victims and survivors identified through schools or GP practices can access support quickly.

4.2 More detail around these 6 key strands of the contract are listed below:

- A holistic support to the victims and families of domestic abuse who are deemed at standard risk (bronze) following a Merseyside Police report of domestic abuse.
- A holistic support to the victims and families of domestic abuse who are deemed at medium risk (silver) following a Merseyside Police report of domestic abuse.
- A holistic support to the victims and families of domestic abuse who are identified from other sources within the borough that are not deemed to be at the level of MARAC (Multi-agency Risk Assessment).
- Strong links with education settings & Family Well Being centres in the borough and support the delivery of Operation Encompass (the notification given to

schools following a domestic abuse incident involving a child). To deliver appropriate healthy relationship sessions to groups when required.

- A domestic abuse helpline that can be contactable for a minimum of 5 days per week between the hours of 8am to 6pm which could be utilised by victims, the families & friends of victims and professionals seeking support and advice around domestic abuse.
- A minimum of once a week drop-in session in each of the localities, based on identified needs to allow residents to seek support around domestic abuse. These need to be flexible and accommodate all residents.
- Domestic abuse recovery-based programmes (e.g., Recovery Toolkit) that aid the long-term recovery of victims and build resilience across the borough developing flexibility to allow open access to all that need this.
- Strong links with Primary Care Networks, Mental Health providers, and Community Link workers, where they exist, and to offer support for victims and families who are within mental health services and in need.
- Offer therapeutic counselling support for victims and families effected by domestic abuse, aiding long term recovery and prevention.
- Strong links with the existing provision delivering domestic abuse support in the borough including the IDVA team, Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise provision, and partner agencies.
- Effective communications to raise the profile of Domestic Abuse, and available services, advice and guidance, using a range of communication channels, including digital.
- Training programme for the Council, partner organisations, private sector business community and general public.
- Co-locating the IDVAs into the new service will be explored to ensure there is seamless transition from silver to gold and vice versa.

Community Workers	Boroughwide DA Helpline	Programme, Group & Drop In	Training & Volunteer Coordination	Counselling	Linked into Locality
<p>Working in the North, Central & South Localities.</p> <p>Workers will work with victims assessed at Silver or Bronze risk offering interventions to help prevent further incident</p>	<p>To be available between 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday.</p> <p>Offers support to victims, families and friends and also staff around Domestic Abuse.</p> <p>Provides a central point</p>	<p>Community Workers in each locality will also:</p> <p>Offer various victim programmes (e.g., Freedom, Recovery Toolkit)</p> <p>Create and facilitate victim support groups and networks in</p>	<p>Responsible for training Sefton Council in domestic abuse matters.</p> <p>Offers domestic abuse training to other organisations including partnership agencies.</p> <p>Coordinates</p>	<p>Offers Counselling support to victims and families affected by domestic abuse, aiding long term recovery and prevention.</p> <p>Offers both individual and whole family counselling</p>	<p>Links directly with Primary Care Networks around selective enquiry.</p> <p>Links in with education settings around healthy relationship and Operation Encompass</p>

	of contact that can be shared as part of any local domestic abuse campaign promotion.	each locality including a boroughwide experts by experience group. Offers weekly drop-in sessions in each locality. Links to Family Well Being Centres	volunteers to work alongside the contract objectives		Links in with Mental Health link workers.
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5. Funding, Commissioning, Governance and next steps

- 5.1 The cost of the service will be covered by existing commissioning amounts topped up by New Burdens funding. Full details of the financial details can be found in Appendix 2. Responsibility for the commissioning and monitoring of this contract lies within Communities department and therefore sits within the Executive Director for People’s portfolio. The Senior Responsible Officer for this contract is the Locality Service Manager for Domestic Abuse, Community Safety & Engagement with support from the wider Council’s commissioning structure.
- 5.2 Sefton Women & Childrens Aid (SWACA) have been appointed on a 1 year contract to test the new concepts involved in this new approach to a DA service in Sefton. The Council will use the shared learning from this 1 year contract to shape the specification before a full open procurement process that will seek to appoint a contractor for a 3 +1 +1 contract.
- 5.3 Whilst the performance outcomes of this contract will feed into the performance dashboard that the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board will use to measure the success of the Domestic & Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023-28, the board will have no commissioning influence or contract monitoring responsibilities. A joint commissioning group has been established to provide oversight of the procurement with representatives from Children’s Social Care and Cheshire and Merseyside ICB at Place.
- 5.4 The service specification and associated costs are based upon a tried and tested comparable model which is effectively supporting victims of domestic abuse in a nearby Local Authority. The shared learning from the 1 year contract will be used to shape the specification before a full open procurement process that will seek to appoint a contractor for a 3+1+1 contract.
- 5.5 The timescales for the commissioning of this contract are:

Activity	Date	Responsible Person
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Commission 12 month "Proof of Concept Contract"	June 2023	Locality Service Manager for Domestic Abuse, Community Safety & Engagement
Cabinet Report to Exec Commissioning Group	Aug 2023	Locality Service Manager for Domestic Abuse, Community Safety & Engagement
Report to ELT	Oct 2023	Locality Service Manager for Domestic Abuse, Community Safety & Engagement
Forward Plan	November 2023	Locality Service Manager for Domestic Abuse, Community Safety & Engagement
Cabinet	February 2024	Locality Service Manager for Domestic Abuse, Community Safety & Engagement
Open Procurement Process	May 2024	Procurement Team
Contract Awarded	June 2024	Executive Director People
Contract Start	September 2024	Service Provider