



Author/Lead Officer of Report: *(Alison Higgins, Strategic Commissioning Manager, Domestic and Sexual Abuse)*

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Report of: *Carly Speechley, Director of Children and Families*

Report to: *Cllr Jayne Dunn, Executive Member for Education, Children and Families*

Date of Decision: *31st March 2022*

Subject: *Procurement of Specialist Support Service for Children affected by Domestic Abuse*

Is this a Key Decision? If Yes, reason Key Decision:-	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
- Expenditure and/or savings over £500,000	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
- Affects 2 or more Wards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Which Executive Member Portfolio does this relate to? <i>Health and Social Care, & Education, Children and Families</i>		
Which Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee does this relate to? <i>(Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny Committee)</i>		
Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? <i>(People/DACT/LP/BK 080122)</i>		
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-		
<i>“The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).”</i>		

Purpose of Report:

This report is seeking approval to recommission a specialist therapeutic support service for children who have experienced domestic abuse at home which will form part of the Council's response to the new duty to provide support in safe accommodation under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This will be achieved by pooling existing funding streams from the Domestic Abuse budget and Children and Families with funds allocated as part of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 new burdens funding resulting in one contract for £162,190 per year for 3 years plus one year plus one year starting in October 2022.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Executive Member for Children and Families:

1. Approves the procurement strategy for a provider to deliver support services for children and young people affected by domestic violence, as detailed and set out in this report.
2. Delegates authority to the Director of Children and Families, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Commercial Services and the Director of Legal and Governance to agree the terms of the contract and award the contract to the successful tenderer.
3. Where no current authority exists, delegates authority to the Director of Children and Families, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Commercial Services and the Director of Legal and Governance, in consultation with the Elected Member for Children and Families to take such steps to meet the aims and objectives as detailed and set out in this report.

Background Papers:

[Sheffield Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment 2021](#)

[Sheffield Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-2023](#)

[Sheffield Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2018-22](#)

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: Anna Beeby, Gerard Higgins
		Legal: Henry Watmough-Cownie / Gemma Day
		Equalities: Bashir Khan
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>		
2	EMT member who approved submission:	<i>John Macilwraith</i>
3	Executive Member consulted:	<i>Cllr Jayne Dunn Cllr George Lindars Hammond</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Decision Maker by the EMT member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer Name: <i>Alison Higgins</i>	Job Title: <i>Strategic Commissioning Manager, Domestic and Sexual Abuse</i>
	Date: <i>07 March 2022</i>	

1. PROPOSAL

1.1 We are proposing to recommission a specialist therapeutic support service for children affected by domestic abuse. There is a clear need for this service as was evidenced both in:

- the most recent domestic abuse safe accommodation needs assessment which estimates that there could have been between 25,973 and 28,834 children affected by domestic abuse in the last year.¹
- a very high demand for the current commissioned service. The provider of the existing service has waiting lists and has worked over capacity for the duration of their current contract.

1.2 The service will be inclusive, non-discriminatory and use a trauma informed approach to support children and young people to improve their wellbeing, confidence and safety and will provide them with an opportunity to share their feelings in a safe environment. Thereby, enabling children and families to recover from their experience and increase their chances of achieving good outcomes.

1.3 The successful provider will provide a range of programmes, interventions and activities that will be delivered by appropriately qualified professionals and practitioners and will offer flexible, therapeutic work to children aged 3-19 years old including,

- Structured group work offer for all children and young people referred into the service with a groupwork programme for primary school aged children and a separate group for older children/young people.
- Direct work with children and young people to undertake age-appropriate safety planning, along with therapeutic support, where they are living with ongoing domestic abuse. A joint safety planning session/sessions will be offered to children aged 5 to 10 with their parent or other safe adult (if appropriate). Children aged over 10 will be offered an individual safety planning session/sessions along with therapeutic support.
- Recovery work will be offered following assessment where the perpetrator is no longer within the family home. This will cover

¹ [Sheffield-Safe-Accommodation-Needs-Assessment-2021-FINAL.pdf \(sheffielddact.org.uk\)](#)

issues such as understanding emotions, self-regulation, how to seek help in the future, the building of self-esteem and healthy relationships. This can be provided either by group work, or where the needs identified are more complex, on a one-to-one basis.

- The provider will be expected to deliver workforce development sessions/workshops to partner agencies on how to best support children and young people experiencing domestic abuse.
- The provider will also be expected to offer regular consultation session for both social care and multi-agency support teams (MAST).

1.4

The specialist domestic abuse therapeutic service for children will work with a minimum of 210 children per year: 50 children per year referred via Children's Social Care, 25 children from MAST and 135 children per year who are living in 'safe accommodation' will be supported by the provider. The intended outcomes for this proposed service are as follows

- All users will be supported to develop a safety plan.
- The majority of children who engage with the service will report an increase in feelings of safety.
- The majority of children who engage with the service will report an improvement in their relationship with their non-abusing parent.
- There will be a decrease in the number of school exclusions and an improvement in school attendance for children affected by domestic abuse.
- The provider will also deliver workforce development sessions/workshops to partner agencies on how to best support children and young people affected by domestic abuse in recognition of the fact that the provider alone, is not able to meet the needs of all children in Sheffield experiencing domestic abuse.

1.5 The procurement will be via an open competitive tender which will be openly advertised on YORtender and Find a Tender Service.

1.6 A single stage open tender in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 is considered the most suitable tender route, ensuring compliance with both domestic procurement legislation and

- the Council's own Contract Standing Orders under the Constitution.
- 1.7 The open route seems most appropriate given the relatively niche market that exists for provision of this type. This would suggest that in using this procurement route the Council would be successful in appointing a provider to deliver the contract. In addition, the procurement seeks to ensure that the Council will obtain the most advantageous solution – a balance of quality and value for money.
- 1.8 A restricted approach whereby the Council would select providers to move forward to a second stage with a more detailed consideration of bids would seem unnecessary given the relatively modest response anticipated given the niche nature of the market. The competitive dialogue and negotiated tender methods which are usually reserved for more technically complex procurements and would not be appropriate in this case.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?

- 2.1 This proposal contributes to the ambitions laid out in the 'Communities and Neighbourhoods' of the One Year Plan by ensuring that children supported by the service are able to develop and flourish, live without fear and have an expectation of health, wellbeing and happiness.
- 2.2 There are also links to the 'Education, health and care' section of the plan by enabling those children affected by domestic abuse a much better chance to fulfil their potential and achieve better outcomes. By tackling the root cause, the service will reduce the number of exclusions from school caused by children's experience of domestic abuse and trauma.
- 2.3 The proposed service will also support families to repair difficult relationships caused by domestic abuse to enable children to remain living safely at home with their families by intervening at an earlier stage to prevent issues escalating.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

- 3.1 As a result of the new duties for local authorities under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) there were a series of consultation activities undertaken in the city. This included consulting with families affected by domestic abuse living in safe accommodation, a stakeholder event and an online survey. All the consultation activities indicated that survivors of domestic abuse and their children felt that specialist support was essential to help them to understand their experience of domestic abuse and talk about the impact on them and start recovery.
- 3.2 Respondents told us that their children were affected in multiple domains of their lives and that they often had low self-esteem and low

confidence.

3.3 Alongside this, 58% of respondents to our survey told us that they did not think that support for children in Sheffield was good enough, the reasons for this were numerous and included those who had not been able to access a service at all and those who had not had a positive experience with a service regarding their children's support needs.

3.4 We know from the current provider that specialist domestic abuse support has had a positive impact on children affected by domestic abuse, whether they live in safe accommodation or not, with 62.2% of children using the service stating that they knew more about respectful relationships and 73% of children supported stating that the specialist help meant that they know more about how to stay safe in the future.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality of Opportunity Implications

4.1.1 Decisions need to take into account the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This is the duty to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

4.1.2 The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following groups as a protected characteristic: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

4.1.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and highlights that re-commissioning the specialist therapeutic support service for children affected by domestic abuse will aim to ensure that children affected by domestic abuse are supported to fulfil their potential by mitigating any inequality caused to children as a result of their experience both in terms of current and future impact.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

4.2.1 The service will be commissioned for three years (with built in break clauses should funding become unavailable) with the option for extensions for one year plus one year, at a cost of £162,190 per calendar year. £25,000 will come from Children and Families budgets,

£50,000 from the Domestic Abuse budget and £87,190 from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) funding under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act.

- 4.2.2 The DLUHC New Burdens Funding amount for 2022/23 is confirmed as being £1,329,538, however annual break clauses will be included in the contract in order for the contract amount to be reduced as needed.
- 4.2.3 An MOU has not yet been received for 2022/23 for the DLUHC funding, however the Council was content to agree the MoU for 2021/22 and it is anticipated that the MoU will be materially the same for 2022/23. The overall DLUHC funding for 2022/23 and the MoU will be detailed in a report to the Co-operative Executive.
- 4.2.4 The service will be procured by an open tender in accordance with the requirements of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and Contract Standing Orders.
- 4.2.5 Any contracts which are entered into as a result of the procurement will be actively managed by the Service to ensure that all contracted outputs and outcomes are delivered by the provider successful at tender and that any key performance indicators are satisfied. In addition, delivery will be monitored to ensure that the service is delivered in compliance with contractual expectations and stated quality standards.

- 4.3 Legal Implications
- 4.3.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 became law on 29 April 2021. Within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 there is a duty on local authorities to provide accommodation-based support in its area to victims of domestic abuse or their children who reside in safe accommodation.
- 4.3.2 This procurement and any contracts that are awarded will assist the Council in meeting this statutory duty.
- 4.3.3 Due to the estimated value of the new contract, the procurement and contract award processes to be followed will be subject to and must comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
- 4.3.4 The procurement process and any contract awards must also be undertaken in accordance with all relevant provisions of the Council's Constitution including its Contracts Standing Orders.
- 4.3.5 Successful suppliers chosen by the Council following a compliant procurement process will be required to enter into formal written legal contracts with the Council.
- 4.3.6 The Council must comply with all applicable legislation and regulations

including but not limited to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and Subsidy Control.

4.4 Other Implications

4.4.1 None

5. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

5.1 *The following options have been considered*

- Bringing the service in-house to the Early Help (MAST) service. It is thought that this would not be viable due to the lack of specialist workers and the existing pressures on this service. This would also be a more expensive option due to higher staffing costs in the local authority.
- Asking fieldwork social workers to offer the support to the children rather than a specialist service. It was felt that the support was best offered by a specialist worker without the statutory responsibilities and existing caseloads of social workers. This would also be a more expensive option due to higher staffing costs in the local authority.
- Not commissioning a service at all. This is not an acceptable option given that this would mean that the local authority would not be supporting victims of domestic abuse when we have recently published a strategy committing to providing support to children in safe accommodation in line with Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

6. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 In the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children who see, hear or experience domestic abuse are recognised as victims in their own right and therefore, this service will go some way to ensuring that those most harmed by their experience are supported in a way that helps them to recover. Sheffield City Council recognises that children living with domestic abuse are experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences as a result and this may impact on their development and future life chances. The re-commissioning of the service and the provision of support to such children serves to help mitigate such impacts. The service will also contribute to meeting one of the strategic aims of the city's Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2018-22: *we will...Offer therapeutic support to children and young people identified as being traumatised by domestic and / or sexual abuse.*

- 6.2 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced a new duty on local authorities to provide support for survivors of domestic abuse and their children living in safe accommodation, including therapeutic support. Sheffield City Council was allocated New Burdens Funding to carry this out. Over half of the children referred into this proposed service will be living in 'safe' accommodation (e.g. refuges, domestic abuse dispersed accommodation, and properties where Sanctuary Scheme measures have been installed) and therefore this service will help ensure that the Council is able to meet this duty. However, the service will also work with children who are living in other forms of accommodation and that have been identified as needing intensive support by Children's Services.
- 6.3 This proposal is the preferred option as it will ensure that the Council is able to meet its statutory duty to support children affected by domestic abuse living in safe accommodation and also ensures that those children most severely affected by domestic abuse, whether they live in domestic abuse safe accommodation or not, will have access to specialist support at the time they need it most.