

# Report to Cabinet

**20 July 2022**

<b>Subject:</b>	Authority to procure Accommodation based support services for victims of domestic abuse
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health – Cllr Suzanne Hartwell
<b>Directors:</b>	Director of Borough Economy Alice Davey Director of Adult Social Care Rashpal Bishop
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes Value of new contract exceeds £250k
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Operations Manager Complex Commissioning Justin Haywood <a href="mailto:Justin_Haywood@sandwell.gov.uk">Justin_Haywood@sandwell.gov.uk</a>  Commissioner, Craig Stevens <a href="mailto:Craig_Stevens@sandwell.gov.uk">Craig_Stevens@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

## 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to the Director of Adult Social Care to enter into a procurement exercise to procure new accommodation-based support services for victims of domestic violence and abuse, for a contract and services commencing 1 February 2023 and for a maximum period of 5 years with a budget of £470k per annum and £2.35m across the contract term.
- 1.2 That approval be given to the Director of Borough Economy to award the contract given that the budget funding for this contract will sit with Borough Economy.
- 1.3 That approval be given to make an exemption to rule 8.7 of the Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules 2018/19 to allow a contract



to be awarded to a successful tenderer in the event that the required minimum number of tenders are not received.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The current contract for Accommodation based support for victims of domestic abuse expires 31 January 2023 which provides 34 units of safe accommodation and support to victims of domestic abuse and their families
- 2.2 An independent assessment of provision in Sandwell was recently undertaken as part of the Council's responsibilities under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This found that provision in Sandwell was not only sufficient to meet local demand but also provided a good customer journey and very positive outcomes for people experiencing Domestic Violence and Abuse. This report also pointed to the service supporting effective and timely move on to safe and appropriate alternative accommodation.
- 2.3 The report did suggest a few areas where support could be further enhanced which we are building into the new contract and we are looking to bring together a smaller contract for additional refuge provision into the new main contract from February 2023.
- 2.4 Given the very specialist nature of the service historically there have been very few providers in the market and the Council has no evidence to suggest that this will be any different for this procurement exercise. Therefore, in the likely event that fewer than the required number of tenders are received an exemption to rule 8.7 of Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules 2018-2019 is sought to allow a contract to be awarded to the successful tenderer.



### 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people -</p> <p>The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children as victims of domestic abuse. The service outlined in this report will provide specialist support in safe accommodation to victims and their children who have experienced domestic abuse</p>
	<p>People live well and age well -</p> <p>The service outlined in this report include provision of specialist support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation.</p>
	<p>Strong resilient communities</p> <p>The service provision outlined in this report will include support to vulnerable victims and their families in safe accommodation and help them to cope and recover from domestic abuse.</p>

### 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The requirement for Local Authorities to provide Safe Spaces to victims of domestic abuse became a Statutory Duty in April 2021 with the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- 4.2 An Independent Local Needs Assessment into Safe Spaces was a requirement of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 together with the award of New Burdens Funding to ensure Local Authorities could continue to commission services which meet the needs identified.
- 4.3 The local needs assessment for Sandwell was carried out externally by Linxs Consultancy on behalf of the Council which consisted of data analysis, review of clients accommodated, consultation with stakeholders who refer into service, 1-1 interviews with victims and consultation with the public.



#### 4.4 The findings showed:

- The existing safe accommodation system in Sandwell is highly effective.
- The range of accommodation types and levels of support provided by Black Country Women's Aid (BCWA) mean that survivors are routinely accepted regardless of level of risk or complexity of presenting needs.
- Sufficient units were currently being commissioned to meet demand.
- The first available void policy had been successful, with Sandwell residents now more likely to receive safe accommodation within the Borough.

#### 4.5 The report identified a number of recommendations for additional activity to be built into the accommodation specification further enhance the any newly commissioned provision these include:

- 4 additional units and complex worker
- Family Support Worker and Empowerment and Engagement Coordinator
- Resettlement worker

#### 4.6 The contract for the new provision from February 2023 will be funded through New Burdens Money. A report regarding the planned spend for the New Burdens Money was presented and approved at Cabinet on 23 March 2022 including the services/costs referenced in this report. See attachment 1 - Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-2024 and allocation of New Burdens funding for 2022-2024.

### 5. Financial Implications

#### 5.1 The new contract is expected to have a budget in the region of £470k per annum which will be funded by New Burdens funding:

Services and Interventions	Budget Per Annum
Provision of refuge accommodation	£305k
4 additional places in refuge accommodation, including Refuge Complex Needs Worker	£60k
Family Support Worker and Empowerment & Engagement Co-Ordinator posts to support	£70k



victims in specialist domestic abuse safe accommodation	
Floating support/resettlement support for victims' transition from refuge to community	£35k
Total	470k

- 5.2 The contract will be for a maximum period of 5 years with a total budget in the region of £2.35m over the contract term.
- 5.3 As the specification is still being developed there may be elements of support that need to be added or removed from the specification therefore the final budget may fluctuate accordingly.

## 6 Alternative Options

- 6.1 Do nothing

The current contract expires 31 January 2023 with no option to extend and as the service is required to allow the Council to meet its statutory duty under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 there is no option other than to procure the service.

## 7 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	Services identified in this report and that will be included within the new specification will be funded through New Burdens money which came with the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which has already been presented and agreed at Cabinet 23 March 2022
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	<p>The Budget allocated is in the region of £470k per annum, for a five-year contract would make the value £2.35m therefore a full above threshold procurement will be required under the Light Touch Regime, implementing a competitive tender process.</p> <p>As a result, the contract will be procured and awarded in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules.</p>



	In view of the value of the contract, Rule 8.7 of the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules states that a minimum of three tender submissions would be required. In the event that the required minimum number of tenders are not received, an exemption to Rule 8.7 of the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules would need to be secured to waive the requirement to obtain a minimum of three tender submissions and to proceed with the award of the contract to a successful tenderer.
<b>Risk:</b>	There is a risk of receiving a very small number of bids, however, the current provider has indicated they will be submitting a bid.
<b>Equality:</b>	An equality impact assessment has been carried out regarding the authority to procure this service and an in-depth assessment was carried out as part of the needs assessment
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The service provision outlined in this report will include support to vulnerable victims and their families in safe accommodation and help them to cope and recover from domestic abuse.
<b>Social Value</b>	Social Value forms part of the tender process with a % of the quality score being attributed to this

## 8. Appendices

Appendix A - Cabinet Report – 23 March 2022 – Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-2024  
Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment

## 8. Background Papers

Domestic Abuse Act 2021  
Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment for Sandwell(Confidential)  
Sandwell Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24

