

Report to Cabinet

24 February 2021

Subject:	Extension of grant for the provision of community-based support to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Living Healthy Lives – Councillor Farut Shaeen
Director:	Interim Director of Adult Social Care Katharine Willmette
Key Decision:	Yes An executive decision which is likely to incur significant expenditure or have a significant effect on the community
Contact Officer:	Justin Haywood Operations Manager: Commissioning Justin_Haywood@sandwell.gov.uk Maryrose Lappin Domestic Abuse Team Manager maryrose_lappin@sandwell.gov.uk

Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to the extension of the grant for the provision of community-based support to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence to Black Country Women’s Aid for a period of three years from 1 April 2021 for a value of £287,268 per annum.
- 1.2. That the Director of Prevention and Protection be authorised to extend the grant referred to in 1 above, subject to satisfactory monitoring and performance criteria at the end of the current extension.






2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 This report seeks approval to extend the grant for the provision of community-based support to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence to Black Country Women's Aid for a period of three years from 1 April 2021 at a value of £287,268.
- 2.2 The report also seeks approval for the Director of Prevention and Protection to have delegated authority to extend the grant, subject to satisfactory monitoring and performance criteria at the end of the current extension.
- 2.3 Cabinet granted approval on 31 January 2018 to undergo a competitive grant-making process for the provision of community-based support to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- 2.4 Given the specialisms of this support, the outcome of that competitive process was that only one application was received, this was from Black Country Women's Aid (BCWA) who had been providing this support in Sandwell for many years.
- 2.5 BCWA were therefore awarded the grant for a period of three years.
- 2.6 The current grant period expires on 31 March 2021.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan? (select relevant category and inc narrative how deliver)

	Best start in life for children and young people
	People live well and age well - The provision outlined in the report will support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence and seek to reduce the risk of serious harm or homicide.
	Strong resilient communities – The provision will support vulnerable victims and their families and help them to cope and recover from domestic abuse and sexual violence.

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 A Domestic Abuse Problem Profile was undertaken in 2020 which identifies that domestic abuse is a significant issue for Sandwell with reports of domestic abuse to police consistently increasing over the last 3 years.
- 4.2 Reports of rape and sexual violence to police have also consistently increased in Sandwell by 30% between 2017 and 2019.
- 4.3 Whilst the increase in reported incidents is of concern, it does indicate that more victims are being identified at an earlier point and coming forward for support and therefore proves evidence of the needs for the Councils continued investment in the support provided via this grant.
- 4.4 BCWA were awarded the grant for a period of three years expiring on 31 March 2021 and during this time have supported 4426 victims of domestic abuse and 478 victims of rape and sexual violence in Sandwell with 79% of victims reporting last year that their situation had improved following support from BCWA.
- 4.5 The grant is comprised of three elements of monies from the Voluntary Sector Support Grant (VSSG); Public Health and Adult Social Care.



- 4.6 The VSSG element requires that this funding must be used for grant funding a third sector organisation who meet Sandwell's third sector criteria.
- 4.7 In line with the VCS Compact the Council is encouraged where possible to provide grant lengths of 3 years to provide financial stability for organisations. Therefore, the extension to the existing grant will be £287,268 per annum for a period of three years from 1 April 2021.
- 4.8 Consultation to date has involved the current provider and a range of stakeholders who regularly refer clients and liaise with the provision regularly.
- 4.9 All partners involved in the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP) have supported the delivery of the 2017-2020 Domestic Abuse Strategy for Sandwell. Partners agreed to a model of Prevention, Provision, Protection and Partnership Working that incorporates the following elements:
- Refuge service
 - Support to standard, medium and high-risk victims
 - Targeted work to prevent the perpetration of domestic abuse
 - A co-ordinated service working together in partnership
- 4.10 DASP recognises that short-term and insecure funding arrangements could have a detrimental impact on provision for victims and their children. The proposals outlined in this report to extend the grant for 3 years will assist in securing arrangements to support victims and children over the longer term and will reduce this key risk identified by DASP.
- 4.11 The Domestic Abuse Bill 2020 currently going through parliament will place a statutory responsibility on local authorities for the provision of support to victims and children in safe accommodation from April 2021. The draft statutory guidance which underpins this Bill also requires the provision of specialist support to victims and children to enhance their safety. The provision outlined in this report will assist Sandwell MBC in responding to the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Bill.



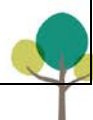
5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 If the grant was not extended and the provision for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence were not commissioned, this would leave the council in a position of non-compliance with legislation and leave vulnerable victims without the specialist and bespoke support they need.
- 5.2 There are no other options available to ensure the continuity of provision of bespoke specialist support to victims from 1 April 2021 onwards.
- 5.3 There is no reason to expect a different response from the market if a competitive grant process was undertaken again.
- 5.4 There is also no reason for us to look for an alternative provider. Sandwell MBC has grant aided Black Country Women's Aid for over 13 years to provide specialist community-based support to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence and their families with no concerns over performance or value for money.



6 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>The total grant for the provision of community-based support to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence is £287,268 per annum and is comprised of the following three elements:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="504 488 1259 837"> <tr> <td>Adult Social Care grant allocation</td> <td>£123,708</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Voluntary sector support grant budget allocation (VSSGB)</td> <td>£121,560</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Public Health grant allocation</td> <td>£42,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Grant</td> <td>£287,268</td> </tr> </table> <p>A grant of £287,268 per annum for a period of 3 years will be awarded to Black Country Women’s Aid to deliver community-based support to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence in Sandwell.</p> <p>The amounts set out in the table above will come from existing programme budgets.</p>	Adult Social Care grant allocation	£123,708	Voluntary sector support grant budget allocation (VSSGB)	£121,560	Public Health grant allocation	£42,000	Total Grant	£287,268
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<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<p>The recommendations of the report are in line with the Council’s Third Sector Funding Strategy. The intended services will be delivered in the context of the following legal and policy considerations.</p> <p>The Government has developed a new statutory definition of domestic abuse in the Domestic Abuse Bill currently being considered by parliament, which is expected to be implemented from April 2021 onwards.</p> <p>The Bill also outlines statutory expectations on local authorities for the provision of support to victims and children in safe accommodation. Statutory guidance underpinning the proposed legislation highlights the need for specialist support for victims and children to be provided.</p>								



The Government's Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) National Statement of Expectations was issued in 2016 and has been re-emphasised in the 2020 Domestic Abuse Bill. This sets out what local areas need to put in place to ensure their response to VAWG issues is as collaborative, robust and effective as it can be so that all victims and survivors can get the help they need. The Government expects to see local strategies and services that:

- Put the victim at the centre of service delivery
- Have a clear focus on perpetrators to keep victims safe
- Take a strategic, system-wide approach to commissioning, acknowledging the gendered nature of VAWG
- Raise local awareness of the issues and involve, engage and empower communities to seek, design and deliver solutions to prevent VAWG

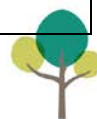
Sandwell's Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Strategy 2017-2020 has 4 strategic priorities:

- Prevention of domestic violence & abuse
- Provision of domestic abuse services
- Protect people against domestic violence & abuse
- Partnership working

The statutory power to provide grant funding is contained in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 (general power of competence). Grant funding is not subject to the requirements for competition under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Consultation with the Corporate Procurement Team has been undertaken and confirmation received that they are happy with the approach to the procurement of the provision outlined in this report.

Consultation with the Voluntary Sector Support Team has not been undertaken as there would be no change to the existing provision or provider.



Risk:	<p>The recommendation from this report will mitigate the risk of community-based support to vulnerable victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence not being available from 1 April 2021 onwards.</p> <p>The risk register addresses the potential risk of poor performance by the provider. It also addresses the potential for inadequate resources allocated to deal with the increasing no of cases.</p>
Equality:	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of Cabinet report process which has identified no adverse impacts or issues of concern for protected groups.</p>
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>The objectives of the provision supported through the grant arrangement will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the safety of victims and children • To improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of victims • To improve children’s safety • To regain/retain victims’ stability, resilience and autonomy
Social Value	<p>The nature of the commissioning arrangements will generate social value thus the Council will meet its obligations in accordance with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.</p> <p>Black Country Women’s Aid are a well-established third sector organisation whose roots are in Sandwell. They employ local people and also lever additional resources from charitable and other sources to provide support to vulnerable victims and children in Sandwell and add value to the SMBC investment.</p>

7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

