

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

12 September 2023

Subject: Domestic Abuse External Grant Allocation 2023-25

Cabinet Member: Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Leisure, Libraries, Facilities Management and Operational Assets

Key Decision: Key

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to:

Seek the required authority from Cabinet to endorse the proposals outlined in the paper for use against the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) funding.

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has determined under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 that a grant of £257 million should be paid to local authorities in 2023-25.

Wiltshire Council have been allocated £848,998 for 2023-24 (year 3 funding), and £865,016 for 2024-25 (year 4 funding).

This payment has been awarded to enable the Council to fulfil the statutory functions of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 relating to the provision of specialist support to victims and their families fleeing domestic abuse and living in safe accommodation.

Proposals

Cabinet is asked to approve and agree:

- 1) the £848,998 allocated from the DLUHC fund for 2023-24 (yr 3), and £865,016 for 2024-25 (yr 4) and endorse the proposals for allocating the grant.
- 2) to roll any surplus funding to an earmarked reserve.
- 3) that any further decisions relating to the distribution of this grant are delegated to the Corporate Director of Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Director of Public Health.

Reason for Proposals

Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 details the statutory responsibilities of the Local Authority functions relating to the 'provision of support for all victims of domestic abuse and their children, regardless of their relevant protected characteristics, within relevant accommodation' (as defined by the Regulations).

To support the implementation of new duties in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Wiltshire distributed its allocated year 1 funding (£830,051) and year 2 funding (£832,348) to further strengthen the local support offer to victims and their families fleeing domestic abuse and living in safe accommodation. The decision making was underpinned from evidence from the local health needs assessment, an independent review of services including a map and gap, as well as service-user engagement and multi-agency learning.

In December 2022 the government committed a further £127 million to be allocated to local authorities for year three, and £129 million for year four of its continued commitment to invest in domestic abuse services. Wiltshire have been allocated £848,998 for 2023-24 (year 3 funding), and £865,016 for 2024-25 (year 4 funding).

To maximise the opportunities of this additional funding, enhancing the local support offer available to victims and their families in Wiltshire experiencing domestic abuse, Wiltshire requires Cabinet approval to endorse the proposals for the allocation of this funding across the local system.

The proposals seek to build on the learning from projects invested as a result of the funding received in year's one and two and allows for continuation where results have been indicative of positive engagement and improved outcomes for those using the interventions and in receipt of support. Using the funding on the proposals included in the paper will enable valuable work to continue and ensure there are no gaps in service delivery, which could place vulnerable service users at risk.

Terence Herbert
Chief Executive

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

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Subject: Domestic Abuse External Grant Allocation 2023-25

Cabinet Member: Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Leisure, Libraries, Facilities Management and Operational Assets

Key Decision: Key

Purpose of Report

1. To seek the required authority from Cabinet to endorse the proposals outlined in the paper for use against the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) funding, to fulfil the functions of the statutory duty on Tier 1 Local Authorities relating to the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children residing in safe accommodation.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The provision of domestic abuse support for victims of domestic abuse and their families who reside in relevant accommodation contributes to the following Wiltshire Council business plan guiding themes: Prevention and Early Intervention (preventing serious risk of harm through the provision of appropriate support for those residing in safe accommodation), Improving Social Mobility and Tackling Inequalities (providing specialist safe accommodation support for the most vulnerable victims and children in Wiltshire), Understanding Communities (providing support that meets the needs of Wiltshire residents), Working Together (Developing a multi-agency response to providing support).

Background

3. In December 2019 the Government was elected with a manifesto commitment to “support all victims of domestic abuse and pass the Domestic Abuse Bill” originally introduced in the last Parliament. The Act aims to ensure that victims have the confidence to come forward and report their experiences, safe in the knowledge that the state will do everything it can, both to support them and their children and pursue the abuser.
4. Under part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 it places a duty on tier 1 local authorities in England, to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation.
5. The Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has determined under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 that a grant of £257 million should be paid to the local authorities in 2023-25.
6. As such, Wiltshire Council were allocated £848,998 for 2023-24, and £865,016 for 2024-25.

7. This payment has been awarded to enable Council's to fulfil the functions of the new statutory duty on Tier 1 Local Authorities for year 3 and year 4 relating **to the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children residing in safe accommodation.**
8. DLUHC have outlined criteria for how this funding should be allocated. The full criteria can be located in [Domestic abuse support within safe accommodation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
9. In summary it can be used for the:
 - **Provision of support in 'relevant accommodation'** which includes refuges, specialist safe accommodation e.g. BAME, LBGTQ+, disabled victims, single gendered and/or complex needs, dispersed accommodation, sanctuary schemes, move-on / second stage accommodation.
 - **Provision of support can include** management of services within the 'relevant accommodation', day-to-day running, advocacy support, DA prevention advice, prevent re-victimisation, specialist support for victims designed to recognise victims with relevant protected characteristics and/or complex needs, children's support. Housing-related support, advice services including counselling and therapy.

Main Considerations for the Council

10. Using the criteria defined [Domestic abuse support within safe accommodation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) .
11. Proposals for this grant have been developed based on local need, in line with the Wiltshire DA strategy and following key recommendations from the 2021 Wiltshire domestic abuse health needs assessment, and the Oxford Brookes 2021 safe accommodation health needs assessment.
12. The proposals for the grant are listed in the table below:

Proposed area of spend	Provider	Cost 23/24	Cost 24/25
2 x Resettlement Workers	Fearless	£61,726.50	£61,726.50
1 x Male and complex needs IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor)		£35,187.00	£35,187.00
4 x Children's Workers		£129,151.00	£129,151.00
1 x Engagement Worker		£34,568.50	£34,568.50
1 x Military IDVA		£34,419.50	£34,419.50
1 x DA Safety Advisor (focus on clients with additional needs)		£32,623.00	£32,623.00
0.5 Management Support		£24,050.00	£24,050.00
Hope-2-Recovery Training (for 4 staff members)		£1,320.00	£1,320.00
0.6 Group Work Facilitator		£21,016.50	£21,016.50
1 x Complex Needs Worker for safe accommodation provision		£38,771.00	£38,771.00
Move on fund for safe		£3,000.00	£3,000.00

accommodation provision			
1 x DA Housing Specialist	Wiltshire Council Housing	£38,000.00	£38,000.00
1 x Trilogy of Risk Senior Assistant Psychologist	Turning Point	£33,740.50	£33,740.50
Ruth House (1 x 4 bed property)	Julian House	£39,723.50	£39,723.50
Round Flats (8 x 1 units)		£71,645.00	£87,666.00
Male provision (1 x 2 bed property)			
Target Hardening	Bobby Van	£7,000.00	£7,497.00
1 x Early Help Advisor	Wiltshire Council Children's Social Care	£138,046.00	£138,046.00
1 x DA Family Key Worker			
1 x Family Drug & Alcohol Court worker			
Community connectors	Wiltshire CIL	£25,500.00	£25,500.00
Gypsy Roma Traveller Training	<i>Provider to be confirmed by Request for Quotes process</i>	£1,500.00	£1,000.00
Gypsy Roma Traveller DA Workers (including outreach and training delivery)		£78,010.00	£78,010.00
Total		£848,998	£865,016

13. Where providers have not yet been identified for the provision, the intention is that a specialist provider is identified using a Request for Quotation process. If it is not possible to identify a suitable provider for this provision, it is requested that the money allocated to these posts is able to be used to bolster existing provision currently provided by existing providers, as per the table above.
14. As previously mentioned, the proposals focus on enhancing existing contracts in place, to enable rapid implementation, maximising the benefits to those communities where the additional support is being required.
15. The proposals seek to build on the learning from the projects invested in as part of the year one and two funding and allows for continuation where early results have been indicative of positive engagement and improved outcomes for those using the interventions and in receipt of support. In addition, the proposals also continue to bridge any gaps in service provision that are being highlighted. Using the funding on the proposals included in the paper will enable work to continue and to ensure there are no gaps in service delivery, which could place vulnerable service users at risk.
16. Whilst government have committed to provide funding for 2023-25, they are not able to confirm if this funding will continue beyond March 2025. Therefore, at this time we continue to treat this funding grant as a 'discreet fund' being used to support short-term interventions satisfying the duties as outlined within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

17. A briefing with the Vice Chair of the Health Select Committee took place on Thursday 27 July 2023, for an opportunity to share and discuss the proposals outlined in the paper.
18. There is a future item scheduled on Health Selects Committee's forward workplan for later in 2023, in order to share the progress and outcomes for local populations being achieved against the use of this external grant funding.

Safeguarding Implications

19. Safeguarding and protecting those at risk remains at the heart of the domestic abuse agenda and as such there are strong processes in place to ensure that services identify those at risk of harm and/or exploitation and those concerns are reported appropriately. Across Wiltshire Council there are strong established relationships cross cutting children's and adult's safeguarding, housing and public health to ensure that any risks, concerns or incidents are escalated in line with Council protocols and procedures.

Public Health Implications

20. Domestic abuse is a key public health priority, which creates a substantial burden of harm that significantly impacts on health and wellbeing. Still referred to as a 'hidden crime', it has one of the highest under-reporting rates; using the crime survey for England and Wales, we can project that just over 19,000 Wiltshire residents will be living with the effects of domestic abuse.
21. The health impacts of domestic abuse are widely reported; from physical injury to the significant long-term association with poor mental health and wellbeing including depression, anxiety, increased risk of suicide, as well as increased use and reliance of alcohol and drugs.
22. There has been much documented on the impact of domestic abuse on children; with domestic abuse recognised as a factor in over half of all serious case reviews. There are significant long-term impacts of children witnessing domestic abuse, with over a third going on to experience another form of abuse. There is also a higher probability of parental neglect, poor emotional wellbeing and resilience, school non-attendance, behavioural issues (including anti-social behaviour/offending) and difficulty in recognising and establishing appropriate relationships with others.
23. The Wiltshire domestic abuse agenda is cross-cutting and is integrated across Child and Adult Safeguarding, Drugs and Alcohol, Private Space Violence, Child Sexual Exploitation and the Modern-day Slavery agendas.

Procurement Implications

24. Procurement have been consulted as part of this papers development and the planning required around the use of the funding and the procurement processes that will be required to support the use of the funding.
25. Award of the funding detailed within this Cabinet Paper will be done in line with our requirements under the Council's Constitution and the Public Contract Regulations 2015.
26. A variety of solutions compliant with our requirements set out in paragraph 24 could be used to award this funding including (but not limited to) modifications of contract and competitive processes.
27. The Commercial and Procurement Team has been and will continue to provide advice and support on the award of this funding as set out in this Cabinet Paper.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

28. An equalities impact has not been undertaken on this proposal. However, it should be noted that some service users accessing support may fall into certain protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (age, sex, sexual orientation, race). Through this funding the council will ensure that the support provided by those providers will meet any duties under the Act.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

29. Environmental and climate change considerations do not affect the decisions required within this proposal.

Workforce Implications

30. There are no workforce implications identified.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

31. If the funding proposals are not endorsed, Wiltshire Council run the risk of:
- Not being able to spend the funding in-year and risk the funding being returned.
 - Missing opportunities to enhance the local support offer for domestic abuse through the increasing the capacity and additional support offers not being put in place to work with those victims and families that have fled domestic abuse and living in safe accommodation.
 - Reputational risk to Wiltshire Council for not investing national funding.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

32. Recruitment for short-term posts may be challenging from a potentially finite pool of specialist support services. Working with providers who are already working across this field, therefore there are some opportunities to add additional hours to existing postholders to enable delivery of the new areas of support identified; this may help to ensure work continues even if recruitment is challenging.
33. The nature of the annualised investment and its challenges have also been escalated and shared across national LGA forums supporting the implementation of the domestic abuse funding.
34. Whilst government have committed to provide funding up until March 2025, they are not able to confirm if this funding will continue beyond this point. Therefore, a further risk is the impact on those service users if the funding does stop. A mitigation to this is that we continue to treat this funding grant as a 'discreet fund' being used to support 'short-term' interventions satisfying the duties as outlined within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. These services whilst are needed, they work alongside the existing provision included in the core contract offer, to compliment and add capacity. If the funding was to stop, there will be services available to re-direct service users into, although this will have an impact on possible capacity. Additionally, the short-term interventions will be planning in transition or stepping down support in consultation with wider partners across the system to help manage this risk safely.

Financial Implications

35. There are no major financial implications, as the proposals are supported using an external government grant, using the DLUHC criteria to determine its allocation. It is anticipated the funding will be spent across 2023-24 and 2024-25; anything that is not spent in year will be rolled over into an earmarked reserve and be used to support the continuation of work being delivered against this agenda.

Legal Implications

36. The Secretary of State for The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has determined under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 that a grant of £127 million should be paid to the local authorities in 2023-2024 and £129 million in 2024-2025. As such, Wiltshire Council has been allocated £848,998 for 2023-24, and £865,016 for 2024-25.
37. The proposals outlined in this report ensures that the Council will be able to meet the statutory responsibilities imposed by Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, relating to the provision of support for all victims of domestic abuse and their children.
38. The Constitution requires that delegation of authority applies to the approval of awarding grants to an external body, as this exceeds £250,000 this sits with Cabinet. Wiltshire Council will be passing on the external grant funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to those listed in point/ section 11.
39. Wiltshire Council should enter into a Grant Funding Agreement (or similar legal documentation) with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in order to formally accept its funding to support victims and their families experiencing domestic abuse in Wiltshire, and so that the terms of use of the funding are clearly set out. Legal Services will need to be consulted to review the final documentation before execution.
40. Cabinet should delegate authority to enter into the Grant Funding Agreement and any other legal documentation to an appropriate individual.
41. It will be necessary to vary the contracts listed at point 12 in order to allocate the funding to appropriate domestic abuse support services. Any variation of these existing contracts should be completed in compliance with the Constitution, the Public Contract Regulations (2015) and the Procurement Manual, and Exemption Requests should be sought.
42. Cabinet should also delegate authority to enter into any necessary variation document and any other legal documentation required related to passing on the grant funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to an appropriate individual.
43. The relevant Subsidy Control Assessments should be undertaken by the Client Team in line with the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022, which came into force on 4 January 2023. For the avoidance of any doubt, this assessment template determines whether a proposed funding award to an enterprise is or is not a subsidy and whether any transparency requirements apply under the UK's new Subsidy Control regime. Any financial assistance that Wiltshire Council receives or distributes must be compliant with the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

Options Considered

44. Due to the short-term nature of the external grant funding, the decision has been taken to look to utilise the funding in accordance with the terms of the grant as defined by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, to support and strengthen existing service offers informed by the local evidence-base of needs and gaps in service offers.

Conclusions

45. Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 details the statutory responsibilities of the Local Authority functions relating to the provision of support for all victims of domestic abuse and their children, regardless of their relevant protected characteristics, within relevant accommodation (as defined by the Regulations).
46. The Government has been clear that having the right support to protect and assist all victims of domestic abuse will make individuals and families safe, sooner.
47. Government recognises the critical importance of safe accommodation and support for victims and their children as they rebuild their lives after the trauma of domestic abuse.
48. Following extensive engagement and public consultation, Sections 57-61 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced requirements on local authorities and more accountability in the local delivery of domestic abuse support in safe accommodation.
49. The Secretary of State for Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has determined under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 that a grant of £257million should be paid to the local authorities in 2023-2025.
50. Wiltshire Council were allocated £848,998 for 2023-24 and £865,016 for 2024-25.
51. This payment has been awarded to enable Council's to fulfil the functions of the statutory duty on Tier 1 Local Authorities relating to the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse and their children residing in safe accommodation for year 2.

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Appendices

None

Background Papers

None