

## Wiltshire Council

### Cabinet

26 April 2022

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**Subject:** Procurement of Wiltshire Domestic Abuse Support Services

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

**Key Decision:** Key

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#### Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to:

Seek authority from Cabinet to commence a procurement process to secure future domestic abuse support services in Wiltshire.

The current contract commissioned jointly by the Local Authority and Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner will expire on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

Domestic abuse continues to impact the lives of so many living in Wiltshire. Its impact on individuals and their families' health and wellbeing are great. It is estimated approximately 19,350 adults in Wiltshire will have experienced domestic abuse in 2019-2020. Whilst the actual number of reported incidents to Wiltshire police was 4,121, this reflects the hidden nature associated with domestic abuse and why it continues to have one of the highest rates of 'under-reporting' of all crime-types. Furthermore, the evidence continues to grow supporting the significant harms to children and young people who are exposed to and living with domestic abuse in the home. In Wiltshire, domestic abuse was identified as a presenting factor in 36% children in need assessments.

The introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has placed a duty on local authorities in England, to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within refuges and other forms of safe accommodation.

Wiltshire continues to recognise the cross-cutting nature and significant harms caused by domestic abuse on its populations living with it. Continuing to commit future investment into specialist domestic abuse services, focused to intervene earlier, reduce escalation, and break the cycle of abuse associated

with domestic abuse; providing access to the right support for victims, children and young people, as well as seeking to address behaviour change for those perpetrating.

The new statutory duties on local authorities as prescribed in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, can be aligned to the new contract to ensure compliance.

**Proposal(s)**

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Agree that a procurement process is undertaken to enable the provision of future domestic abuse support services in Wiltshire
2. Delegate authority for awarding the contract to the new service provider/s to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, Leisure, Libraries, Facilities Management and Operational Assets, Corporate Leadership Team and the Director of Public Health

**Reason for Proposal(s)**

The current contract expires in March 2023 and to prevent a gap in service delivery to a vulnerable client group, this paper seeks the endorsement from Cabinet to commence the next steps in the commissioning processes and develop an appropriate service model which continues to meet the needs and demands underpinned by the local evidence-base.

**Terence Herbert**  
**Chief Executive**

# Wiltshire Council

## Cabinet

26 April 2022

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**Subject:** Domestic Abuse Support Services in Wiltshire (Part I)

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

**Key Decision:** Key

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### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to:

1. To seek agreement from Cabinet to undertake a procurement process to secure future domestic abuse support services in Wiltshire.

### Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The provision of domestic abuse support for victims of domestic abuse and their families, as well as address behaviours of those perpetrating the abuse seeks to contribute to the following Wiltshire Council business plan outcomes: Strong Communities (personal wellbeing through a healthier population), protecting the vulnerable (early intervention through prevention activities) and protecting the vulnerable (joined up health and care through greater partnership working).

### Background

3. Wiltshire Council and its partner agencies recognise the significant impacts domestic abuse has on our local populations, victims, families, young people, and those perpetrating. Whilst the physical harms heal, the effects on emotional and physiological health and wellbeing can be endured for many years.
4. A service area review in 2016 highlighted how local support arrangements for domestic abuse in Wiltshire had become fragmented over the years, borne out of historic, legacy arrangements pre-dating unitary transition, with a range of contracts being held. Work was completed that sought to align the domestic abuse support offer in Wiltshire into a single contract. Wiltshire completed a competitive procurement process in 2017 for the provision of a single contract for domestic abuse support services.

5. In April 2018, the current contract commenced, aligning the former service arrangements into a single contract, as well as embedding support for sexual violence.
6. The service model consisted of four intertwined strands:
  - i. Victim focussed support addressing both domestic abuse and sexual violence
  - ii. Support for children and young people living with the impacts of domestic abuse
  - iii. Work to address perpetrator behaviour, as part of a whole family approach
  - iv. Provision of safe, flexible accommodation accessible to all in need who are fleeing domestic abuse
7. Over the duration of the contract, demand has continued to remain high; with further increases recorded in 2020-21 thought to be influenced due to the pandemic and the lock down restrictions. The table below details the referrals received into the service across the service strands.

		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22 (6mths)
<b>Strands 1 and 2 Victim Support for DA, DA Families &amp; ISVA</b>	<b>Total referrals DA (All risk)</b>	1520	1545	2002	1144
	<b>Of which Families supported (DAFSW)</b>	495	478	607	232
	<b>Total referrals ISVA (All risk)</b>	766	602	664	419
<b>Strand 3 Perpetrator</b>	<b>Behaviour Change</b>	74	109	112	55
<b>Strand 4 Place of saftey support</b>	<b>Safe Accommodation</b>	74	85	71	48

8. Domestic abuse and its impacts continue to be a high-profile agenda within national government policy setting. The recent enactment of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 reinforces this, as well as the continued developments and commitment towards tackling Violence against Women and Girls.

9. The introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has placed a duty on local authorities in England, to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within refuges and other forms of safe accommodation.
10. In addition to the policy context, work to understand the local need and demand has identified:
  - Reports of domestic abuse have been increased year on year in Wiltshire, with peaks seen across the pandemic period (2020-2021)
  - Salisbury, Chippenham, Trowbridge and Melksham have the most reported domestic abuse incidences; Calne, Devizes and Royal Wootton Bassett have been identified as emerging hotspots.
  - Referrals into Wiltshire's Multi-Agency Case Conference (MARAC) continue to increase year-on-year, 791 high-risk cases referred.
  - Commissioned support services reported an increase across all risk thresholds in 2020-21, with the largest increase occurring in those assessed as medium risk (47% increase on the previous year).
  - Engagement rates in structure support remain high with 80% achieved in 2020-21.
  - 73% of domestic abuse victims are female in Wiltshire, with the majority having an age profile of 20-39yrs; with only 7% of male victims accessing support from services.
  - An emerging trend reports victims aged 60+ accessing support services as the fastest growing age group.
  - Local data still reflects a level of under-reporting from male, LGBTQ, disabled, young people and older people.
  - 877 children were recorded in the household at the time of a high-risk DA incident resulting in a referral to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Case Conference (MARAC) in 2020-21; of which 136 children were identified in the household where further repeat incidents of DA occurred.
  - Domestic abuse was an identified factor in 36% (1,396) of child in need assessments in 2020.
  - There have been 4 domestic-related homicides in Wiltshire since 2017; one included a child victim, as well as two child witnesses.
  - 74% of offenders perpetrating domestic abuse were male; the age profile for perpetrators was 26-35yrs.
  - The relationship profile of a perpetrator to their victim showed in Wiltshire 50% of victims were abused by an ex-partner; 45% by a current partner and 5% involved son to mother relationship.
  - 112 referrals were made to Wiltshire's Behaviour Changes programme in 2020, of which 68 went on to access the support.

- A recent study identified that perpetrators of domestic abuse represent one of the largest cohorts that have resulted in suicide.
- Substance misuse and poor mental health are viewed as the most significant and common co-existing risk factors present alongside domestic abuse.

11. Whilst the impact and long-term effects of domestic abuse presents a significant case to support the need for investment in service provision. Using a national costing model, the financial cost of domestic abuse to Wiltshire services is in the region of £18million per annum (although this is likely to be higher). Evidence-based practice demonstrates a preventative approach to tackling domestic abuse will not only increase the opportunities to save lives through earlier interventions but offer savings on public money. National studies have calculated a significant return on the investment in these specialist services of at least £6 for every £1 invested.

### **Main Considerations for the Council**

12. Wiltshire Council and the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner have committed to commissioning a comprehensive range of specialist support services supporting domestic abuse victims, children and perpetrators. The current arrangements will expire on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, and if the decision to commence a procurement process is not supported there are implications of destabilising the support offer to a very vulnerable and at-risk group.
13. Vulnerable groups are at the heart of the domestic abuse support services. There are several vulnerable groups and inequalities which are further exasperated if impacted by domestic abuse. The figures captured in para.11 highlights the prevalence of domestic abuse being experienced in Wiltshire. Sadly, the most significant cost of domestic abuse is death; without sufficient support services to intervene earlier and mitigate risks would be a missed opportunity and highly likely to be flagged in a statutory review process e.g., domestic homicide reviews.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

14. This paper was produced following a collaborative discussion between the Corporate Leadership Team and the Director for Public Health. The Cabinet member for Public Health and Public Protection, Leisure, Libraries, Facilities Management and Operational Assets - Cllr Blair-Pilling has also been consulted with in advance.

15. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Health Select Committee were informed that this report would be presented to Cabinet. The Committee will be informed of the Cabinet decision and the agreed provider(s).

### **Safeguarding Implications**

16. 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**

17. 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 fewer than 9,000 women in Wiltshire will be living with the effects of domestic abuse.
18. 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.
19. 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.
20. The Wiltshire domestic abuse agenda is cross-cutting and is integrated across Child and Adult Safeguarding, Drugs and Alcohol, Private Space Violence, Violence against Women and Girls, Child and Adult Exploitation, Homelessness and the Modern-day Slavery agendas.

## **Procurement Implications**

21. A compliant procurement process will be followed in line with Public Contract Regulations 2015.
22. The procurement process will be designed and run, in conjunction with the Strategic Procurement Hub.

## **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

23. The Public Sector Equality duties to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, foster good relations and promote equality of opportunity applies in all exercises all functions of the Council. As this report relates to funding a full equalities impact assessment has not been undertaken on this proposal. However, it has been noted that some service users accessing support will fall into certain protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (age, sex, sexual orientation, race) and the proposal does include ensuring these groups have appropriate knowledge of, and access to, the services proposed. 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**

24. Future procurement of domestic abuse services will be required to demonstrate their considerations to supporting the local authority's commitment against reducing the impact on climate change and carbon footprint, to ensure any future contract is considerate of travel requirements whilst still being able to serve its county-wide service-users.
25. Environmental and climate change considerations do not affect the decisions required within this proposal.

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

26. The evidence-base supports that demand and local need for domestic abuse support will continue and the complexity of the agenda means it is not going to go away. It continues to pose real challenges to the health and wellbeing on our local populations who are being impacted by it. If the decision was not supported to commence the procurement of future services, it would result in a break in service offer, leaving at risk a very vulnerable and at-risk cohort of service users.
27. The new statutory duty on Local Authorities for this area of business, requires an annual report to DLUHC (formerly MHCLG) on the work that is being delivered to support victims and their families who have fled domestic abuse and in supported accommodation, as discharged in the DA Act 2021.



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

28. There is a service delivery risk, should the procurement recommendation not be approved; Wiltshire would not have any domestic abuse support services post 31 March 2023 to support some of our most vulnerable residents in Wiltshire. The procurement of specialist domestic abuse services in Wiltshire will continue to build on Wiltshire's commitment to ensure those in need and require support can access the appropriate support at the right time.
29. The contract with the current provider will expire on the 31 March 2023 and has been extended to the maximum allowed within the current arrangements. This allows time for a procurement process to be completed, as well as minimise the risk of destabilising vital services during the uncertain times brought on during the pandemic and the increased risks and vulnerabilities on our local populations requiring support from services. Not taking this decision now, increases the risk of a gap in provision.

## Financial Implications

30. Funding for the current domestic abuse support services has come from a pooled budget, with contributions from Wiltshire Council's Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Housing and Public Health, as well as the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner.
31. Wiltshire's future domestic abuse support services from April 2023 are proposed to be funded through a pooled budget arrangement. All parties remain committed in principle to continue this funding for the full duration of the contract period. Any alteration in funding necessitated by changes in financial circumstances would need to be agreed to by all parties.
32. The proposed contributions to the Domestic Abuse Pooled Budget from each partner from 2023 are given in the table below, alongside the current contributions:

Agency	Department	Amount 2021/2022	Amount 2022/23
<b>Local Authority</b>	Public Health	252,711	252,711
	Children's Services	180,000	180,000
	Adult Social Care	20,000	20,000
	Housing	246,150	222,300
<b>Police and Crime Commissioner</b>	Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner	283,850	120,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>982,711</b>	<b>795,011</b>

33. The total pooled budget shows a reduction from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. This is reflective of the disaggregation of the domestic abuse and sexual violence elements of the contract, with a proposal that they are procured separately and the OPCC leading the sexual violence support alongside funding from NHSE/I and therapeutic support commissioned.
34. Separate to the funding outlined above is ring-fenced grant funding to the Council to meet new statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to provide support to victims and their children who have fled domestic abuse and in safe accommodation. Grant funding is over 3 years. In year, 2021-22, Wiltshire received £830,051, with allocations for years 2 and 3 yet to be announced.
35. As highlighted in this report demand for specialist domestic abuse support remains high in Wiltshire. Services will be procured in alignment with the needs identified in the need assessment.
36. Additionally, investing in an early intervention model could positively contribute to reducing the risks associated with future domestic-related homicides. In the event of a domestic-related homicide there is a statutory duty to undertake an independent Review, which has a financial cost associated on average £10,000 per review.

## **Legal Implications**

37. Future domestic abuse services procured will ensure the local authority fulfil its 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. Any procurement exercise should be conducted in accordance with the requirements set out in Part 10 of the Council's Constitution, the SPH Manual and the Public Contract Regulations (2015). Legal Services will need to be engaged throughout this process, with the relevant legal and procurement advice sought.
39. Wiltshire Council's Legal Services must draft a robust Contract and legal documentation for this matter. Legal Services will need to be consulted to review the final documentation before execution.
40. Cabinet should delegate authority to enter into the Contract and any other legal documentation to an appropriate individual.

## **Workforce Implications**

41. None

## **Conclusions**

42. Domestic abuse continues to pose significant harm to the health and wellbeing of Wiltshire populations that are living with its impacts. Evidence reported in the latest health needs assessment continues to place high demand on the need for support for adults and child victims of domestic abuse, as well as give greater consideration of the causal factors to support behaviour change for those perpetrating.
43. Over recent years the local authority and partners have remained committed in their approach to tackling domestic abuse and their investment in specialist services to support and protect those in need. Enabling service users to move on and live a life free from abuse.
44. Supporting the proposal for work to commence on the procurement of future domestic abuse services in Wiltshire will ensure that there is continuity of the local service offer, with no gaps in provision.

## **Proposal**

Cabinet is recommended to:

45. Agree that a procurement process is undertaken to enable the provision of future domestic abuse support services in Wiltshire.
46. Delegate authority for awarding the contract to the new service provider/s to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, Leisure, Libraries, Facilities Management and Operational Assets, Corporate Leadership Team and the Director of Public Health

**Kate Blackburn (Director - Public Health)**

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