

**Wiltshire Council**

**Health Select Committee**

**8 September 2021**

**Cabinet**

**14 September 2021**

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**Subject:**                    **Allocation of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funding for domestic abuse support in Wiltshire**

**Cabinet Member:**   **Cllr Simon Jacobs**

**Key Decision:**        **Y**

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**Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to:

Seek authority from Cabinet to support the proposals outlined in the paper for use against the MHCLG funding for 2021-22.

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has determined under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 that a grant of £125 million should be paid to the local authorities.

Wiltshire Council were allocated £830,051 for 2021-22.

This payment has been awarded to enable Council's to fulfil the functions of the new 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.

**Proposal(s)**

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Accept the £830,051 from MHCLG for 2021-22 and approve the proposals for allocating the grant outlined in paragraph 12.
2. Agree that any underspent grant is allocated to an earmarked reserve.
3. Agree 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.

**Reason for Proposal(s)**

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).

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.

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.

Following extensive engagement and public consultation, Sections 57-61 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 underpinned by this guidance introduce new requirements on local authorities and more accountability in the local delivery of domestic abuse support in safe accommodation.

**Professor Kate Blackburn, Director of Public Health**

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Health Select Committee**

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**Subject: Allocation of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funding for domestic abuse support in Wiltshire**

**Cabinet Member: Cllr Simon Jacobs**

**Key Decision: Y**

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### **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to:

1. To seek agreement from Cabinet to the proposals outlining the use of the MHCLG funding to fulfil the functions of the new 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 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. 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. In spring 2018, the Government conducted a public consultation on Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse which attracted over 3,200 responses.
5. The Government response to the consultation and a draft Domestic Abuse Bill were published in January 2019. The Government response set out 123 commitments, both legislative and non-legislative, designed to:
  - i) promote awareness of domestic abuse.
  - ii) protect and support victims and their families.
  - iii) transform the justice process to prioritise victim safety and provide an effective response to perpetrators; and
  - iv) to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas, agencies and sectors.
6. Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a duty on relevant local authorities in England, to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within refuges and other forms of safe accommodation.
7. The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has determined under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 that a grant of £125 million should be paid to the local authorities.
8. As such, Wiltshire Council were allocated **£830,051 for 2021-22**.
9. This payment has been awarded to enable Council's to fulfil the functions of the new 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**.
10. MHCLG have outlined a criteria for how this funding should be allocated. The full criteria can be located in [MHCLG Statutory guidance for LA's for delivery of support to victims of DA, including children in DA safe accommodation services](#).
11. In summary it can be used for the:
  - **Provision of support in 'relevant accommodation'** which includes refuges, specialist safe accommodation e.g. BAMWE, 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

12. Using the criteria defined [MHCLG Statutory guidance for LA's for delivery of support to victims of DA, including children in DA safe accommodation services](#). The proposals for the grant are listed in the table below:

| Proposed Area of Spend  | Provider | FTE cost per unit per annum | Total Cost Proposed |
|---|----------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Resettlement workers x3</b><br>Supporting the move-on needs across the current provision in contract   | Splitz   | 33,000                      | 99,000              |
| <b>Specialist IDVA x1</b><br>Supporting male victims/complex needs  | Splitz   | 33,000                      | 33,000              |
| <b>Children's Support Workers X4</b><br>Working across the current Refuge & Places of Safety Provision  | Splitz   | 33,000                      | 132,000             |
| <b>Manager Support x1</b><br>To oversee and support additional staff within the contract - focussed on supported accommodation  | Splitz   | 40,000                      | 40,000              |
| <b>Provision of Therapeutic Support across refuge &amp; places of safety</b><br>Incl. play therapy for children & arts, mindfulness etc for adults  | Splitz   | 10,000                      | 12,000              |
| <b>Provision of Counselling support for adults accessing refuge, places of safety &amp; move on</b><br>Currently not in scope for current contract , would provide additional emotional and wellbeing support         | Splitz   | 12,000                      | 10,000              |
| <b>Engagement Role - to work with communities that are not engaging in specialist support services X1</b><br>incl. LBGTQ+, male victims, gypsy & traveller groups etc   | Splitz   | 34,000                      | 34,000              |
| <b>Accommodation support work - focused on working with the military personnel x1</b><br>to support military Cotswold Centre and those behind the wire where perpetrator may have moved into single accommodation etc | Splitz   | 33,000                      | 33,000              |
| <b>Sub Total</b>  |          |                             | <b>393,000</b>      |

|  |   |        |                |
|--|---|--------|----------------|
| <b>Training - for staff on Mental Health/Suicide Prevention / Disability to enable staff to better prepare to support vulnerable clients</b>   | External Training                       | 5,651  | 5,651          |
| <b>Sub Total</b>   |   |        | <b>10651</b>   |
| <b>LA Housing - Move-on Support Workers to support x1 worker</b>   | LA Housing                              | 38,000 | 38,000         |
| <b>LA Children's Services - 4 x Family Support Workers</b><br>To provide additional support needs at an early intervention level, working alongside the work of the families staying in supported accommodation                            | LA Children's Services                  | 38,000 | 152,000        |
| <b>LA Project Support x1</b><br>To oversee the funding and how the projects have been delivered and the collect outcomes to inform the future evidence and MHCLG return  | LA PH                                   | 44,400 | 44,400         |
| <b>Sub Total</b>   |   |        | <b>234,400</b> |
| <b>CBT intervention to support change in mood, anxiety and stress X3 workers</b><br>Person-centric approach, providing low-level interventions through CBT focusing on root causal issues impacting on mood, wellbeing, anxiety and stress | Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living | 32,000 | 96,000         |
| <b>Sub Total</b>   |   |        | <b>96,000</b>  |
| <b>Specialist Substance Misuse Support worker (focus DA) x1 worker</b><br>To enhance support to victims with complex needs including substance misuse whilst in support accommodation  | Turning Point                           | 32,000 | 32,000         |
| <b>Sub Total</b>   |   |        | <b>32,000</b>  |
| <b>Specialist Support worker x2 to support increased provision offer through Julian House Contract (4 bed house &amp; 2 bed House)</b><br>Work can support learning around additional move-on, whole-house support                         | Julian House                            | 32,000 | 64,000         |
| <b>Sub Total</b>   |   |        | <b>64,000</b>  |
| <b>Provision of Sanctuary Scheme</b><br>to support DA victims and their families to stay safely in their homes   | Wiltshire Bobby Van                     | 5,000  | 5,000          |
|  |   |        | <b>830,051</b> |

13. The proposals are underpinned by the work and evidence base gathered as part of the health needs assessment for both supported accommodation and the wider needs and demands of DA on our local populations. Additionally, as part of the capacity-building grant Wiltshire Council received in 2020/21, further qualitative work was undertaken to

gain feedback from both service-users and ex-service users of local supported accommodation. This has been used to develop the proposals.

14. Whilst the proposals provide opportunity for some innovation within the confines of the above criteria for the conditions of how we use the funding; there is still a need to be realistic about how the money can be spent in-year. Additionally, where possible look to enhance offers for support within existing relationships that as a local authority already have established, to enable rapid mobilisation and delivery.
15. Whilst there is a commitment from central government to provide funding to local authorities for the next three years as part of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021; funding for future years is uncertain (although thought to be less than year 1) and will not be announced until late 2021/ early 2022 for April 2022 (yr 2). Therefore, we cannot use this short-term (yearly) funding to develop significant change e.g. to the current offer in terms of shifting to more independent (self-contained) provision offers, with support etc. due to the uncertain funding position from government over the coming years.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

16. This paper was produced following a collaborative discussion between the Corporate Directors for People; Corporate Director for Resources; Director for Legal and Governance and the Director for Public Health. The Cabinet member for Public Health Cllr Jacobs has also been consulted with in advance.
17. 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**

18. 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**

19. 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.
20. 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.
21. 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.
22. 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**

23. 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.
24. 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.
25. 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.



26. The Strategic Procurement Hub 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**

27. 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**

28. 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**

29. The funding will not get allocated and therefore additional support to those victims and their families who have fled domestic abuse and residing in supported accommodation will not be available.
30. The new statutory duty on Local Authorities for this area of business, requires an annual report to MHCLG on the work that is being delivered to support victims and their families who have fled domestic abuse and in supported accommodation.

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

31. As this is one-year funding, recruitment for short-term posts may be challenging from a potentially finite pool of specialist support services to add value.

### **Financial Implications**

32. There are no major financial implications, as the proposals are supported using an external government grant, using a criteria to determine its allocation. It is anticipated the funding will be spent across 2021/22; 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. We are aware that MHCLG anticipate announcing the next years funding in early 2022, so once this has been released, we will review the landscape going forward.

### **Legal Implications**

33. The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has determined under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 that a grant of £125 million should be paid to the local authorities. As such, Wiltshire Council were allocated £830,051 for 2021-22.
34. This proposals 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.
35. 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.

### **Workforce Implications**

36. None

### **Conclusions**

37. 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).
38. 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.
39. 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.
40. Following extensive engagement and public consultation, Sections 57-61 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 underpinned by this guidance introduce new requirements on local authorities and more accountability in the local delivery of domestic abuse support in safe accommodation.

41. The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has determined under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 that a grant of £125 million should be paid to the local authorities.
42. Wiltshire Council were allocated £830,051 for 2021-22.
43. This payment has been awarded to enable Council's to fulfil the functions of the new 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.

## **Proposal**

Cabinet is recommended to:

42. Accept the £830,051 from MHCLG for 2021-22 and approve the proposals for allocating the grant outlined in paragraph 12.
43. Agree that any underspent grant is allocated to an earmarked reserve.
44. Agree 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.

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

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Report Author: Hayley Mortimer, Consultant in Public Health  
[hayley.mortimer@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:hayley.mortimer@wiltshire.gov.uk),

22/07/2021

## **Appendices**

(List any appendices referred to in your report.)

## **Background Papers**

[MHCLG Statutory guidance for LA's for delivery of support to victims of DA, including children in DA safe accommodation services](#)