

Report for: Cabinet Member Signing – 29 September 2022

Title: Variation and Extension of Housing Related Support Contract - Domestic Abuse Service - Floating Support and Refuge Provision

Report authorised by: Gill Taylor, Assistant Director – Communities and Housing Support (Interim), Adults, Health and Communities, gill1.taylor@haringey.gov.uk.

Lead Officer: Zahra Maye, Strategic Lead - Homelessness and Vulnerable Adults (Acting), Adults, Health and Communities, Zahra.maye@haringey.gov.uk.

Ward(s) affected: All

Report for Key/ Non Key Decision: Key Decision

1. Describe the issue under consideration

1.1. This report seeks Cabinet Member approval to implement Contract Standing Order 10.02.1b, to vary and extend the existing contracts under the original contract terms and conditions for the Domestic Abuse Refuge and Floating Support Services, provided on the Council’s behalf by Solace Women’s Aid.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

Not applicable.

3. Recommendations

The Cabinet Member is recommended:

3.1. To approve the variation and extension of the current contracts for domestic abuse services to January 2025, held by Solace Women’s Aid, as allowed under Contract Standing Order 10.02.1b as follows:

- Floating Support - from 1 February 2023 to 31 January 2025 at a cost of £302,765.
- Refuge Provision - from 1 February 2024 to 31 January 2025 at cost of £97,728.

3.2. To note that the aggregated value of the full contract period is as follows:

- Floating Support - from 1 August 2020 to 31 January 2025 will be £642,866
- Refuge Provision – from 1 August 2020 to 31 January 2025 will be £398,775.

3.3. To note that the funding for this extension will be from the Council’s Housing Related Support general fund budget, in Adults and Health.

4. Reasons for decision

- 4.1. The current contract with Solace Women's Aid has 2 services:
 - (a) A 60-unit floating support service which is ending on 31 January 2023.
 - (b) A 15-unit refuge provision which ends on 31 March 2023.
- 4.2. It is in the Council's overall interest to continue to provide these much-needed domestic abuse services in Haringey. An estimated 3 in 10 women will experience domestic abuse at some time in their lives; in Haringey over 3,000 women are currently experiencing domestic violence and over 20,000 women are living with the legacy of past abuse.
- 4.3. The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) places new duties on local authorities to provide 'safe accommodation' and support to victims of domestic abuse. The Council is currently developing new 'safe accommodation' in the borough to fulfil these duties at Burgoyne Road (N4) an element of which will be Council run and is expected to be completed by October 2024. As such, an extension of the current contracts will allow the Council's Housing-Related Support Team adequate time to fulfil these duties and then to review and refresh all contracts and services needed to address domestic abuse going forward.
- 4.4. Further the requested contract variation and extension will provide sufficient time to explore sourcing models, service delivery pathways and then, if required, to carry out a tender process for new services.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1. Do nothing. This option was discounted as the Council has a statutory duty to provide safe accommodation and support to survivors of domestic abuse; refuge provision is one of the key services that fulfil this duty and floating support is a key preventative response.
- 5.2. In-house delivery of the provision was considered and was found not to be feasible at this time; there is not currently an established approach or delivery model for this type of specialist service within the Council. This will be explored again during the contract extension period, as part of refreshing the sourcing and delivery model for domestic abuse services.
- 5.3. Consideration was given to the completion of a procurement exercise via an open tender process. However, this option was discounted because the Council is currently developing new services which will impact on strategy, commissioning, and delivery approaches from 2024. It is therefore not considered an effective use of available resources to procure a new service for such a short period of time.

6. Background information

- 6.1. The Housing-Related Support programme funds supported accommodation, floating support, health, and specialist advice services for housing vulnerable people in Haringey. There are currently over 60 contracts for a wide range of

resident groups including: older people; people with mental health needs; learning and physical disabilities; young people; survivors of domestic violence; people with substance misuse issues; those at risk of re-offending and those at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.

- 6.2. Domestic violence and abuse has been identified as a key strategic priority nationally and locally. The Borough Plan (2019-2023) make a clear public commitment to ensuring a safe borough with stronger communities and partnerships where all adults and children can be healthy and achieve their potential. As part of achieving these priorities, the Council is taking action to help eradicate domestic abuse and launched a 10-year Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy in November 2016.
- 6.3. According to Haringey's Borough Command Unit, there has been a 35% increase in domestic abuse reports across the boroughs of Haringey and Enfield combined. The Met Police North Area (Enfield and Haringey) data shows a sharp increase in both non-crime domestic callouts and substantive offences.
- 6.4. Non-crime domestic callouts are incidents where the police are called, either by the victim or perpetrator or by a third party, but on police arrival, no offences are alleged or apparent and therefore it is not possible to take any further action. The total number of non-crime domestic callouts between March - September 2020 was 6926 and the average was 989 per month. This average is 11.17% higher than the average for the four months preceding lockdown (November 2019 to February 2020) and there is a clear month-on-month increase in 2020.
- 6.5. Substantive offences occur when an allegation is substantiated through evidence at the scene or victim or witness statements and the police can commence an investigation. The total number of substantive offences during this period was 4361 and the average was 623 per month. This average is 28% higher than the average for the five months preceding lockdown (October 2019 to February 2020).
- 6.6. In the immediate period following the lockdown in March 2020, Children's Services Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) saw an increase in the severity of the contacts being made, with a much higher percentage of contacts leading to a referral and statutory service involvement. Children's Services specifically noted a significant increase in instances of domestic abuse being noted in the contacts.
- 6.7. Domestic abuse services in Haringey supports survivors, victims of domestic abuse over 16 with or without children, preventing homelessness and risk of harm, and providing advocacy and advice to enable them to sustain independent living in the community, working closely with other statutory and community services.
- 6.8. A combined contract was awarded to Solace Women's Aid for floating support and refuge provision from 1 August 2017 for 3 years with an option to extend for 2 years. The service was tendered as 2 separate lots. The aggregated cost for the 3 years was £673,233.

- 6.9. The contract currently consists of 15 units of refuge provision and 60 units of floating support services. Refuge accommodation is offered for periods of up to two years, but a typical stay is between 9-12 months. Haringey refuges are 100% utilised with demand outstripping supply. The floating support service offers tenancy sustainment support for people who have moved on from refuge provision and has helped to reduce the number of survivors re-presenting as homeless within the borough.
- 6.10. In October 2020 the Assistant Director for Commissioning approved a new award from 1 August 2020 to 31 March 2022. The floating support service until 31 March 2022 and an option to extend the refuge service for a further year, until 31 March 2023.
- 6.11. In January 2022 Cabinet approved variation and extension of the floating support service until 31 January 2023 and the refuge service until 31 January 2024. The provider was offered a 5% uplift for this period.
- 6.12. There was an error in the calculation of contract value in the January 2022 report to Cabinet. The contract value was understated by £19,438. This report has corrected the error by adjusting the contract extension value by £19,438.
- 6.13. In preparation for and in response to the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) the Council is investing significantly in accommodation and support services for survivors of domestic abuse. A major feature of this investment is the acquisition and re-development of 158 Burgoyne Road (N4) which is a £2m capital development project to create 'safe accommodation' for single women or pregnant survivors of domestic abuse.
- 6.14. This scheme will become a hub for commissioned domestic abuse accommodation and floating support services in the borough, and our intention is to align the commissioning of our current generic DA contracts to enable this transition to take place smoothly.
- 6.15. It is anticipated that the Burgoyne Road service will be ready to open in October 2024, as such we are looking to align current contracts end dates (hence the need for contract variation) so that we are in a position to tender for a single pathway of provision, in one contract, in 2023/24.
- 6.16. With Burgoyne Road included in the service, we will potentially have an additional 5/6 units of refuge provision which will enhance our statutory duty to provide safe accommodation and support to survivors of domestic abuse.
- 6.17. The current provider, Solace Women's Aid, has established close working relationships with a range of key statutory and voluntary partners in Haringey which are beneficial to survivors of abuse who require their support. The provider has the necessary expertise to carry out this area of work, with the Housing-Related Support Service within Adults and Health directorate undertaking regular contract monitoring and performance reviews to ensure that quality standards are met, the service delivers value for money and requisite outcomes are delivered for residents.

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 7.1. The service directly links to **Priority 2** – *Enable all adults to live healthy, long and fulfilling lives:*
- All residents will be as healthy as possible for as long as possible.
 - Health related quality of life will improve over time (including mental health and wellbeing)
- 7.2. The service directly links to **Priority 4** - *strong families, strong networks and strong communities nurture all residents to live well and achieve their potential:*
- Strong communities where people look out for and care for one another
 - all children will be happy and healthy as they grow up, feeling safe and secure in their family, networks and communities

8. Statutory Officers comments

8.1. Finance

- 8.1.1. The report seeks approval to extend contracts to Solace Women's Aid for the provision of Domestic Abuse Refuge and Floating Support Services.
- 8.1.2. The original contract awarded to Solace Women's Aid for the provision of both Domestic Abuse Refuge and Floating Support Services in October 2020 at a value of £374,018 as stated in paragraph 6.11. The contract was varied and extended by Cabinet in January 2022 at the costs of £267,127 as stated in paragraph 6.11.
- 8.1.3. The current extension being requested for the Floating Support Service is for 24 months starting 1st February 2023 to 31st January 2025 at a total cost of £302,765. The extension to the Domestic Abuse Refuge Provision is for 12 months from 1st February 2024 to 31st January 2025 at a total cost of £97,728.
- 8.1.4. The estimated total costs of the contract extensions is £398,775 and it will be funded from the approved general fund budgets for Housing Related Support as stated in paragraph 3.3.
- 8.1.5. The total aggregated contract value from 1st August 2020 to 21st January 2025 will be £1,401,640.
- 8.1.6. The extension of the contracts should not present additional budgetary pressures to the council.

8.2. Procurement

- 8.2.1. The services which are the subject matter of this report would fall within remit of Schedule 3 of the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) 2015 if at threshold.
- 8.2.2. As the contract is sub threshold the requirements of the PCR do not apply. The contract variation and extension sought is permitted under Contract Standing Order 10.02.1b. The Provider is providing a much-needed service particularly considering the increased incidence and current profile of violence against women and girls.

- 8.2.3. The variation and extension will enable commissioning to put in place an appropriate strategy to meet future need and carry out a tendering process aligned to the opening of a new Council provision at Burgoyne Road. As well as the Council's strategic objective outcomes including enabling all adults to live healthy lives and children to be physically and mentally well and free from harm.
- 8.2.4. The cost of the contract can be contained within the current budget envelope despite the increase in value it still represents good value for the Council as the contract value remained static for the last several years.
- 8.2.5. The Housing-Related Support Service will continue to monitor the services during the extension period to mitigate any service delivery issues, and ensure that key performance indicators and service user outcomes continue to be met

8.3. **Legal**

- 8.3.1. The Head of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) has been consulted in the preparation of this report.
- 8.3.2. Cabinet is being asked to approve the variation of two separate service provisions (Floating Support and Domestic Abuse Refuge Provision). The body of the report sets out the details of the proposed variations and the estimated contract durations and additional expenditures until the 31st January 2025.
- 8.3.3. The services are below the threshold (currently £663,540.00 for Schedule 3 services) where the rules on modification of contracts set out in Regulation 72 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 apply. The variation request is therefore governed by the Council's Contract Standing Orders.
- 8.3.4. The Cabinet may approve the variation under Contract Standing Order 10.02.1b (contracts valued at £500,000 and above).
- 8.3.5. The variation of this contract is a Key Decision as the aggregate value of the contract is over £500,000. The Council must therefore comply with the governance provisions in the Constitution in respect of Key Decisions including publication in the Forward Plan (see CSO 9.07.1 (e)).
- 8.3.6. The Head of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) confirms that there are no legal reasons preventing the Cabinet from approving the recommendations in the report.

8.4. **Equality**

- 8.4.1. The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not

- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.

- 8.4.2. The proposed decision is for Cabinet to vary and extend the current contract with Solace Women's Aid for floating support and refuge provision. The services will impact women who experience or are at risk of domestic or sexual abuse and seek access to these services in Haringey. The service is aimed to support women of all backgrounds and ages above 16, among whom women from BAME groups, particular faith groups, and lower socioeconomic backgrounds are likely to be overrepresented. It also affects those at risk of homelessness, among whom women from BAME groups, lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and those with health issues related to substance misuse are overrepresented.
- 8.4.3. The proposed decision aims to provide support through refuge and outreach provision in pursuit of a key strategic agenda of tackling domestic abuse, recognising its prevalence in the borough and the devastating impact it has on residents, families, communities, and society at large. It is anticipated that the decision will lead to improved outcomes for women affected by issues of domestic abuse, including young women who have experienced FGM, women from BAME or certain faith groups, mothers, those experiencing poverty, and women with health issues related to substance misuse. The proposed decision therefore represents a measure to address a known inequality that disproportionately affects these groups.
- 8.4.4. As an organisation carrying out a public function on behalf of a public body, Solace Women's Aid will be obliged to have due regard for the need to achieve the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty as stated above. Appropriate contract management arrangements will be established to ensure that the delivery of the service does not result in any preventable or disproportionate inequality.
- 8.4.5. The Council and Solace Women's Aid will take steps to collect demographic data on service users in order to identify any inequalities in service provision that may arise and to inform future equalities analysis.

9. Use of Appendices

- 9.1. None

10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Press Release - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-duties-for-councils-to-provide-support-in-safe-accommodation-for-domestic-abuse-victims>

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 -
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents>

The Haringey Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy -
<https://www.haringey.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health/public-health/domestic-violence-and-abuse-and-violence-against-women-and-girls/violence-against-women-and-girls/haringeys-approach-violence-against-women-and-girls#vawg-strategy>