

Domestic Abuse Mobile Advocacy Service

To: Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee

Meeting Date: 5 December 2024

From: Executive Director of Strategy and Partnerships

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: Yes

Forward Plan ref: 2024/088

Executive Summary: The Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee is asked to approve the procurement of a Domestic Abuse Mobile Advocacy Outreach Service (the Service) across Cambridgeshire.

This Service will provide support to those who are being subjected to domestic abuse, regardless of the level of risk, their sex or gender.

This Service will commence on 1 October 2025. It is expected that the Service will receive approximately 500 referrals a year.

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Approve the procurement of a Domestic Abuse Mobile Advocacy service; and
- b) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Strategy and Partnerships, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, to award and execute a contract for the provision of Domestic Abuse Mobile Advocacy, for a 3.5-years contract commencing on 1 October 2025, with two one-year extension periods.

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1. Creating a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire

1.1 The proposed Service has been evaluated against the seven ambitions set out in the Council's Strategic Framework.

1.2 This report relates to the following Council ambitions:

Ambition 2: Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable:

1.3 The Service will work with clients in a hybrid model, with remote and face to face appointments. Peripatetic Domestic Violence Advisers offer survivors the opportunity to access domestic abuse support close to their home and reduce the need for travel. Staff delivering mobile advocacy are encouraged to consider flexible ways of working which reduce the number of driver journeys, reduce the amount of car travel and increase use of public transport.

Ambition 3: Health inequalities are reduced:

1.4 Domestic abuse has a significant impact on the health of both adults and children subjected to abuse. 40% of high-risk victims of domestic abuse report mental health issues. One in five high risk victims reported repeat attendances at Accident and Emergency for injuries related to domestic abuse before accessing support ([Safe Lives report Impact of Domestic Abuse Health](#)). As part of the support to those using the Service, victim/survivors will be linked in with relevant health services.

Ambition 4: People enjoy healthy, safe and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs:

1.5 The Service will be person-centred, ensuring that bespoke support is offered, considering their needs, any barriers to support and how these can be overcome and making sure the approach is always focused on the victim/survivor and their needs.

Ambition 5: People are helped out of poverty and income inequality:

1.6 One in five women in the UK have experienced economic abuse and it is a legally recognised form of domestic abuse, leading to financial hardship and debt ([Surviving Economic Abuse: Transforming responses to economic abuse](#)). For a victim/survivor subjected to domestic abuse, this impacts on a person's employment, economic output and can lead to additional financial burdens for them. The Service will consider financial needs and benefits. The Service will include a flexible funding element, so it can reduce immediate hardship or financial challenges for survivors due to the domestic abuse they have experienced.

Ambition 6: Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised:

- 1.7 The Service ensures domestic abuse support is delivered across rural and urban parts of Cambridgeshire. Staff supporting clients will seek to connect with local links and gain knowledge of local services to develop 'allyship' to support and advocate and ensure equity and social justice for all groups/communities experiencing domestic abuse.

Ambition 7: Children and young people have opportunities to thrive:

- 1.8 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises that children are victims of domestic abuse rather than witnesses to it. Children and young people living with domestic abuse are at risk of short and long-term health problems. Domestic abuse is an adverse childhood experience (ACE), and these stressful events can lead to children who experience domestic abuse being at risk of poorer educational attainment and increased inequality during their lives. This Service will support the protective parent to increase safety and maximise opportunities for their children.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a statutory duty on local authorities regarding the provision of safe accommodation for victims of Domestic Violence. Locally, this includes mobile advocacy outreach, which is currently commissioned in Cambridgeshire until 30 September 2025. This Service is also included in the Cambridgeshire Safe Accommodation Strategy 2024-2027, which was approved by the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee in March 2024.
- 2.2 The current contract commenced on 1 October 2022 and operates across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The new procurement will be for a Cambridgeshire only service, following agreement with Peterborough City Council to undertake separate procurement exercises in the future.
- 2.3 The Safe Accommodation funding is received by the Council via a Section 31 Grant from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
- 2.4 In Cambridgeshire, there were approximately 25,000 victims of domestic abuse in 2022/23 (Crime Survey for England and Wales Domestic Abuse Prevalence). There were 3,715 incidents and 7,060 domestic abuse crimes reported to the police in the same period.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 In this context, "mobile advocacy" is referring to domestic abuse support which can be accessed by anyone regardless of level of risk, to enable them to remain safe in their own home or to find alternative accommodation. This is also sometimes referred to as outreach support.

- 3.2 This Service would ensure victims and survivors of any gender can access direct support. It is an independent confidential service. It is essential that those suffering domestic abuse who need a service can access support before they need other statutory help from agencies such as housing, social care or police. The aim is for the service to offer support to around 800 individuals each year.
- 3.3 This Service will be funded for a period of three and a half years, with two one-year extensions. Funding for each year of the contract will be in the region of £250,000, with a total contract value in the region of £1.375m
- 3.4 This Service is key to the delivery of the Safe Accommodation Strategy and the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy, 2024-2027. The development of these strategies followed an extensive needs assessment and consultation with partners across Cambridgeshire.
- 3.5 It is essential that those who are being subjected to domestic abuse are able to access specialist support without having to enter the criminal justice system or for them to have to make contact with other professionals. This will enable those who are concerned with their situation to access support at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.6 This Service will primarily work with those who are not at significant risk of serious harm or homicide, those cases will be referred to the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor Service, which will continue to be delivered by the Council's Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Service.
- 3.3 The current procurement plan is to issue an Invitation to Tender in March 2025, with a period of eight weeks for interested parties to submit their documentation. Award of the contract is scheduled for early July 2025, allowing a three-month transition period for commencement of the contract from 1 October 2025.
- 3.4 This will be an open tender process, as the market is limited and therefore there is no need to have a multiple staged process.

4. Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Alternative options that have been considered in formulating the recommendations contained in the report:
- (a) do nothing - this is not a feasible option as there is a statutory requirement for the Council to provide the service for those subjected to domestic abuse to be able to access support.
 - (b) go out to tender – this option is required due to the current contract ending in September 2025 and the value of the contract moving forward.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires the Council to have a Safe Accommodation strategy for the period between April 2024 and March 2027. This was approved by the Committee in March 2024.
- 5.2 A key element of this strategy is the provision of mobile advocacy to allow people to remain safely in their own homes and not needing to access alternative accommodation.
- 5.3 It is therefore recommended that the Committee approve the proposed procurement of this Service.

6. Significant Implications

Public Health Implications

Domestic violence is a public health issue at individual and population levels. The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Service and Partnership and the White Ribbon campaign will help increase awareness and understanding of this particular issue. Awareness raising is an important element for the delivery of the wider Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse Strategy.

6.2 Finance Implications

This contract will be funded using the Safe Accommodation Grant from MHCLG, with a total value of approximately £1.375m over 5.5 years.

6.3 Legal Implications

Relevant procurement legislation and guidance will be followed to ensure the process and any subsequent contract is compliant.

Pathfinder Legal Services Ltd shall be instructed to support with the procurement process and to advise and draft on the legal implications of the contract.

6.4 Risk Implications

Failure to procure a Service from October 2025 would result in the Council failing to meet key elements of its Safe Accommodation Strategy.

The procurement will be started soon after the go live date of the Procurement Act 2023 and therefore the process and timelines reflect the inherent risks involved in using a new piece of legislation.

6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence are highly gendered crimes, therefore there will be greater impact on female residents in Cambridgeshire. Any public awareness activity

should make it clear that the issue includes violence against men and boys, as well as women and girls.

An Equality, Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

6.5 Climate Change and Environment Implications (Key decisions only)

Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings. Positive/neutral/negative Status:
Explanation: Neutral, this project looks to use existing infrastructure and therefore does not have a positive or negative impact of energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Implication 2: Low carbon transport. Positive/neutral/negative Status:
Explanation: Neutral, the project does not impact either way on low carbon transport. 4.8.3

Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.
Positive/neutral/negative Status: Explanation: Neutral, this project uses existing infrastructure rather than constructing new buildings which could have a negative impact on habitats.

Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution. Positive/neutral/negative Status:
Explanation: Neutral, the project does not impact waste management or plastic pollution. By using existing infrastructure the project prevents waste from potential construction.

Implication 5: Water use, availability and management: Positive/neutral/negative Status:
Explanation: Neutral, this project does not impact water use, availability and management.

Implication 6: Air Pollution. Positive/neutral/negative Status:
Explanation: Neutral, the project does not impact air pollution.

Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change. Positive/neutral/negative Status:
Explanation: Neutral. This project is helping vulnerable people but not with climate change and is therefore neutral.