

## **Divisions Affected -N/A**

### **CABINET**

**DATE: 15 July 2022**

## **Provision of Services for Adults and Children Affected by Domestic Abuse**

**Report by Corporate Director for Public Health & Wellbeing**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**

- a) Agree the proposed commencement of a procurement exercise for Oxfordshire domestic abuse services, including IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocates) and Perpetrator provision in 2022.**
- b) Agree the progress of the statutory duties set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, including the Needs Assessment and Overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022**

### **Executive Summary**

- 1 This paper highlights the intention to commission Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse services, in time for a contract start date of April 2023. These include provision for safe accommodation and support, specialist support from the IDVA service and Perpetrator support services to assist in the prevention and reduction of harm for individuals and their children affected by domestic abuse.
- 2 The paper highlights recommendations from the consultation of the Overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy due for publication later in July 2022. The strategy will be launched in a stakeholder workshop in September to commence the implementation of the associated action plan.
- 3 Future commissioning arrangements will be informed by this strategy and the previously published Safe Accommodation Strategy and Needs Assessment, highlighting the evidence of effectiveness of interventions, what has been working well and the gaps in service delivery that need to be addressed in future commissioning. The aims are to improve safety, health and care outcomes for adults, young people and children affected by domestic abuse and address inequalities of provision in line with national guidance and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

## Corporate Policies and Priorities

- 4 The proposals in this paper support the vision and priorities values of the Council's Strategic Plan, in particular "tackling inequalities in Oxfordshire" and "prioritising the health and wellbeing of residents". There is a focus on ensuring that individuals and families from deprived communities have easy access to domestic abuse prevention and support services wherever they live in Oxfordshire.
- 5 Additional IDVA and emergency accommodation resource will be commissioned to support the needs of people with protected characteristics wherever they reside in Oxfordshire who may be affected by domestic abuse and support access to meet their wider health and care needs from NHS and Care services.
- 6 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires each Tier 1 local authority to develop a strategic partnership board with prescribed members from a range of organisations, including Tier 2 local authorities and people affected by domestic abuse. The Oxfordshire Domestic abuse Strategic Board accepted these responsibilities in 2021. The Board is required to oversee the development of a local Needs Assessment and Safe Accommodation Strategy to ensure appropriate support for adults, children and young people affected by domestic abuse. The DLUHC requires the Board to provide annual reports on spend from the dedicated grant for domestic abuse and annual updates on performance against strategic objectives. Annual funding from DLUHC (£1.14m in 22/23) has been allocated to support delivery of these duties
- 7 Oxfordshire County Council currently co-commissions domestic abuse support and emergency accommodation services for adults, children and young people, jointly with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), City and District Councils in contracts due to expire in March 2023. This partnership approach to commissioning is viewed very positively and set to continue with the new proposed arrangements.
- 8 The future re-commissioning approach will align domestic abuse provision across the system to include existing emergency accommodation and support, specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA) provision and Perpetrator services. The new contracts will be partly, or wholly funded from the DLUHC grant and co-commissioned with the District Councils, with a value of over £500k. The future recommissioning of Perpetrator contracts and IDVAS will continue to be discussed with the PCC as they plan their future arrangements across the Thames Valley with additional funding from the Ministry Of Justice (MOJ) for this work referenced in the national Domestic Abuse Plan.

## Key Priorities

- 9 This new Overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy is an addition to the Safe Accommodation Strategy published in December 2021 which together set the direction for changes introduced by the Domestic abuse Act 2021.

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- 10 The new Overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-25, due to be published later in July, sets out Oxfordshire priorities and approaches to preventing and responding to domestic abuse. It outlines Oxfordshire's multi-agency response across the whole pathway from prevention, to the provision of high-quality support for victim survivors, including children and young people and work with Perpetrators of domestic abuse. It will help inform key decisions about the future of Oxfordshire's domestic abuse response and services.
- 11 This Overarching Strategy is based on a local need assessment including data and evidence from a range of national and local sources, asking professionals and people with lived experience for their views on what is working, gaps in services and recommendations for improvements to help define proposals for future provision. This information was incorporated into a consultation document corresponding to the 4 national priorities published on the Oxfordshire Let's Talk website to finalize the recommendations. The consultation also included dedicated feedback from children and young people in addition to adults with lived experience of domestic abuse.
- 12 The vision of these strategies is that Oxfordshire has a co-ordinated community response across all services and partnerships informed by consistent and aligned policies, shared system leadership from the domestic Abuse Strategic Board and allocation of resources.
- 13 Key recommendations in the Overarching Strategy were either agreed or strongly agreed by over 50 respondents from members of the public across the 4 priorities: Prevention, Provision, Pursuing and Partnerships (See Appendix document 1). They have also been presented to the Domestic Abuse Strategic Board in May for further refinement. Good progress is being made to ensure the publication and launch dates will be on target.
- 14 This information will be used to inform the service specifications for the new domestic abuse contracts, which include provision for safe accommodation, a range of prevention, early intervention, and specialist support services to include IDVAS for adults, children, and young people. Many of these services are co-commissioned with the City and District Councils and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- 15 The plan is also to explore opportunities to commission Perpetrator programmes, not currently provided in Oxfordshire for the whole population (apart from existing provision in Family Solutions Plus (FSP) for families requiring statutory interventions for Child In Need or Child Protection. This service is provided by Elmore, funded by Children's Services, and is gaining valuable local experience about the challenges and benefits to inform future commissioning. The intention is to make evidence -based perpetrator services more universally accessible, as part of the wider commissioning of Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Services and ensure alignment with the FSP service.

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- 16 The plan is to commence a procurement exercise in September 2022 for domestic abuse services for the population of Oxfordshire, subject to Cabinet approval, commencing with a market engagement event in June, as the current contracts terminate in March 2023.

### Financial Implications

- 17 In 2021/22 a grant of £1.14million was awarded to OCC by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now known as Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities-DLUHC) for delivery of the duties under the Act. This grant is non- ringfenced. Tier 2 local authorities in Oxfordshire additionally received grants in the region of £33k each to implement their safe accommodation duty. These grants have been awarded again in 2022-23 to local authorities for the same value, following publication of the Oxfordshire Safe Accommodation strategy and on-going commitment to implementing the statutory duties. This additional money has funded a new need's assessment and safe accommodation strategy, added capacity to services in addition to expanding funding to local organisations and councils to increase their capacity to support victim survivors.
- 18 Funding for IDVAS across Oxfordshire and Thames Valley is currently provided by a range of OPCC and OCC grant awards to ensure appropriate coverage for specialist adult, young people's and Court advocacy functions. Future recommissioning will ensure a planned, system wide approach for Oxfordshire to ensure seamless referral pathways between services for adults, children and young people requiring specialist interventions.
- 19 The Joint Commissioning Subgroup including Tier 1 and Tier 2 local authorities are working together with the OPCC to develop a new partnering agreement to include respective contributions for the ODAS contract in Oxfordshire. This continued co-commissioning arrangement will help to ensure a system wide approach to providing an effective referral pathway for victim-survivors of domestic abuse, from emergency safe accommodation to more long-term sustainable housing including appropriate support services.
- 20 The OPCC are reviewing and reconfiguring all their commissioning for domestic abuse and perpetrator services across the Thames Valley. This is in line with potential opportunities to bid for additional funding from the Ministry of Justice later this year to support implementation of evidence-based Perpetrator interventions in line with the recommendations in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The OPCC is keen to work with Oxfordshire to consider these opportunities requiring additional funding from local authorities and pilot interventions across the Thames Valley in line with statutory duties to reduce violent crime.
- 21 In 2022/23 the DLUHC grant funding of £1.14million will be used to continue existing domestic abuse services in Oxfordshire, pending recommissioning. The new services will be partly or wholly funded by future DLUHC grants and existing local authority funding in a partnering agreement, awarded on an

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annual basis until 2024. There is no confirmation of future grant funding via a separate income stream beyond that date from the Ministry, although they have confirmed a verbal commitment to ensure Councils will be able to continue to implement their statutory duties for domestic abuse. Future procurement will include reference to potential changes in funding which could require reconfiguring contract requirements in consultation with service providers, to mitigate this impact.

- 22 There is a national requirement for all Tier 1 Local Authorities to submit an annual return to include local data from Tier 2 authorities on availability of safe accommodation and use of this grant income, in addition to published strategies and needs assessments. This is a new requirement and ensures close co-operation between Tier 1, Tier 2 authorities, and service providers to submit this collated information.

Comments checked by: Thomas James, Finance Business Partner

### **Legal Implications**

- 23 The Council has a statutory duty to provide domestic abuse services pursuant to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as detailed earlier in the report.
- 24 The procurement of these services will be conducted in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 as applicable.

Comments checked by:

Jayne Pringle, Interim Principal Solicitor (Contracts & Conveyancing)

### **Staff Implications**

There are no OCC staff implications

### **Equality Implications**

- 25 An Equality Assessment has been conducted which demonstrated compliance with planning, delivering, monitoring, and evaluating the strategy and commissioning arrangements that equality and diversity issues were being appropriately considered against the Council's statutory duties under the Equalities Act 2010. Due regard has been made to ensure that people with protected characteristics take part in public life and steps have been taken to meet the needs of disabled people in access to services for domestic abuse. This includes groups and communities living in areas of deprivation and members of the armed forces who will have additional support included in the domestic abuse overarching strategy and future commissioning arrangements for domestic abuse services.

## Sustainability Implications

26 A Climate Impact Assessment report has been completed and demonstrated that Climate Action Implications have been considered in developing the strategy and future commissioning arrangements which will have a positive impact on the carbon footprint for the Council, service provider arrangements and wider communities in Oxfordshire. The intention is to continue this to progress this work through the procurement and implementation stages of the new contract arrangements.

## Risk Management

| Risk   | Action  |
|--|---|
| <b>Data:</b> The safe accommodation needs assessment highlighted the difficulty in collecting data which helps to identify specific need. This data is required on a n annual return to DLUHC  | The Safe Accommodation Working Group, have been tasked with identifying and addressing this challenge, and met the deadline of completing the DLUHC return by the deadline of 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2022. |
| <b>Funding stability:</b> future services will be commissioned assuming ongoing DLUHC funding, which is only confirmed on a year by year basis.  | This will be considered during the commissioning process, and contracts will reflect suitable exit clauses.   |
| <b>Market stability:</b><br>Small specialist organisations affected by change in funding arrangements. By funding this from the grant we may be disrupting alternative funding for DA services | Ensure new tender has lots designed to enable smaller organisations are able to continue to bid for funding   |

## Consultations

27 The Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy and Overarching Domestic Abuse Strategy have both been subject to public consultation on Let's Talk and comments included in the final versions of these documents. This includes qualitative reports from victim -survivors of domestic abuse in addition to reports from children and young people who may have witnessed domestic abuse and are regarded as victims under the new statutory duties in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

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Background papers:

Appendix 1 Safe Accommodation Strategy 05.01.2022

Appendix 2 Climate Action Impact Assessment

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July 2022