

APPENDIX A

Ref No.51/20

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for Policies, Procedures and Services

Proposal name	Extension and variation of the Contract for the Provision of Domestic Abuse Emergency Accommodation Support Service		
Directorate	Customer Access Management		
Service	Money Home Job		
Responsible Officer	Neil Hollyhead		
Proposal planning start	01/12/2020	Proposal start date (due or actual date)	01/04/2021

1	What is the purpose of the proposal?	Yes / No	New / revision
	Show which category the proposal is and whether it is new or a revision.		
	Policy	Yes	Extension of an existing contract for up to 6 months
	Procedure		
	Guidance		
	Is this a service to customers/staff/public?	Yes	
	If yes, is it contracted or commissioned?	Yes	
	Other - give details		
2	What is the business case for this proposal? Please provide the main purpose of the service, intended outcomes and reasons for change?		
	<p>The Council currently commissions Accord HA to provide a 24 bed refuge and 3 dispersed units through the Domestic Abuse (DA) Emergency Accommodation Support Service contract. This contract was originally awarded following the completion of a compliant procurement process, by approval of Paula Furnival, Executive Director Adult Social Care on 06 March 2017. The original procurement process and contract contained provision to extend the contract for the period 01 April 2019 to 31 March 2021 and this was agreed by Cabinet in March 2019.</p> <p>The Domestic Abuse Bill was heard in the house of lords 5th January 2021 and is currently in progress towards future statute legislation. The current draft bill makes provision in relation to domestic abuse and will place new burdens on the council along with other partner agencies. This report seeks to extend the contract by a further 6 months whilst a Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment is formulated and consideration of alternative options of domestic abuse services are realised in line with the council's transformation approach.</p> <p>In 2019/20 a total of 84 service users utilised the refuge and a further 32 utilised the service between April 2020 to September 2020. In 2019/20 74 service users moved on in a planned way and for the first 2 quarters of 2020/21, 27 service users moved on in a planned way either returning back to their homes or by securing accommodation in the social or private rented sector.</p>		

The Housing and Welfare services in 2019/20 assessed 1,101 households and 1,097 (99.6%) were households assessed as owed a duty.

From the 1,097 households which were owed a duty:

- 537 households were threatened with homelessness and were owed a prevention duty and domestic abuse accounted for 6.7% (36 cases).
- 560 households were homeless and a relief duty owed and domestic abuse accounted for 94 cases (16.8%).

A further analysis was done over the period 2018/20 of a total of 73 households presented to the council with a domestic abuse need and who required help with housing either to a refuge or other provision in Walsall or outside of Walsall. It is noted this figure is not for the total DA housing need presented for Walsall and the 73 households are for those that presented to the Housing and Welfare advice service and required help to move to a place of a sanctuary.

The current commissioned service is a significant 'net importer' of DA victims into Walsall, with 83% of all households assisted through the contract in 2019/20 coming from out of Borough and for the first 2 quarters of 2020/21 81% were households from outside of Walsall. It is of course acknowledged that the nature of domestic abuse can result in victims needing to leave the immediate area for their personal safety, which results in households from out of borough needing to use the refuge.

3 Who is the proposal likely to affect?

People in Walsall	Yes / No	Detail
All		The provision is aimed at those families and individuals fleeing domestic abuse. We recognise the current provision is primarily for females and households where there are male children under a certain age, as male children over a certain age will not be accommodated due to various risk factors. However, the 3 dispersed units can be used for families with older male children, male victims, our Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities and those with complex needs and who may not be suited to a refuge setting.
Specific group/s	Yes	
Council employees		
Other (identify)		

4 Please provide service data relating to this proposal on your customer's protected characteristics.

In the year ending March 2019, an estimated 2.4 million adults aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse in the last year (1.6 million women and 786,000 men).

The prevalence of domestic abuse has reduced from 8.9% in the year ending March 2005 to 6.3% in the year ending March 2019; this indicates a gradual, longer term downward trend. (Domestic Abuse Bill 2020)

Figures submitted to MHCLG show that out of 1097 acceptances of a homeless duty in 2019/20 for Walsall and in total (including prevention and relief) 130 were for Domestic violence. Key data includes:

- 1097 households were initially assessed (eligible) in Walsall 2019/2020, this compares to

Dudley 2197, 2173 Wolverhampton, 1234 Sandwell.

- 1093 households in Walsall were assessed as owed a homelessness duty and accepted (99%) compared to Dudley (80%). Nationally around 95% of applications are accepted.
- In Walsall 55% of those owed a duty accepted have a support need with the top 3 reasons being mental health, support for domestic abuse victims and young people.
- In the main Walsall customers accessing the service were living with family, living in the private rented sector or those who stated no fixed abode.
- The top 3 reasons for homelessness in Walsall in 2019/20 were family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate, end of a private rented tenancy (assured short hold) and domestic abuse. These reasons are similar to those across the Black Country and England.
- Similar to the Black Country and England the single applicants were mainly male and those who are single parent households tend to be female plus child.

In 2018/19, 96 service users came through the refuge. This figure fell in 19/20 to 84 a decrease of 12.5%, the key factor to this was due to referrals managed better and void turnaround were slower. Just over half of the referrals (45) were females with families. Meaning 39 referrals were single females some with time limited immigration statuses. Over the 12 month period 75% of service users were moved on in a planned way. There were also 47 service users who were declined access this was due to a number of reasons including previous arrears, no recourse to public funds and affordability. For the first 6 months of 20/21 there were 32 referrals into the service, compared to 46 in the first six months of 19/20. This shows a decrease in referrals for 3 consecutive years. However, it is noted that for 20/21 quarters 1 and 2, the COVID situation had an impact as customers were unable to move on from the refuge and sign ups were restricted.

Age

The homelessness review 2017 identified that almost half of all homelessness applicants to whom a duty is accepted, are aged 25 – 44 years of age, just over one-third being aged 16-24, just over one-tenth are aged 45-59. Those aged 60 years and older equal about 4%. During the past five years, applications from those aged 25-44 have increased by 6% and those aged 16-24 have increased by 47% (falling in the past 12 months by 16%).

When compared to population data the age profile of homeless applicants suggests that young people are disproportionately impacted by homelessness compared to other age groups.

Data from service users accessing the refuge show a mixed age range of people. In 2019/20 the largest age group which accessed services was 21-39 year olds, this is also the same for the first half of 2020.

Disability

The refuge facility has 3 accessible units for those with a need. In 2019/20 we had 3 service users with a need for an accessible unit, however to date in 20/21 we only have 1 service user requiring the facility.

Race, Religion or Belief

Walsall's Homelessness review identified that people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds are more likely to experience domestic abuse than other groups; (Just over three-quarters (77%) of people accepted by the local authority as being owed the main housing (homelessness) duty, were of a white ethnic origin. The remaining one-quarter

(23%), were from black or other minority ethnic origins. Compared to the overall population of Walsall, for which 81% are of a white ethnic origin and 19% are from black or other minority ethnic origins, the persons of the latter type of ethnic origin have a disproportionately higher likelihood of becoming homeless).

Persons of a white and Asian or Asian British ethnic origin being homeless have increased (by 10% and 36% respectively) during the past five years, where persons from black or black British, mixed, or other ethnic origin have reduced (by 17%, 18% and 100%) during the same time-period.

In 2019/20, 29% of homeless applicants were from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, however for the same period 46% of referrals into the refuge were from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. The first half of 2020/21 is pretty consistent with 43%.

The dispersed units will look to meet the needs of these communities by providing an alternative to refuge accommodation, which is usually stigmatised.

There is no specific data or information on whether religion or belief impacts upon prevalence of homelessness.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Reassignment

The homelessness review did not specifically review sexual orientation or gender reassignment of homeless applicants. There is no reason to consider that the proposed actions held within the homelessness strategy would have a negative impact upon individuals with these protected characteristics. There have been no known cases to date.

Marriage, Civil Partnership, Gender, Pregnancy and Maternity

The Walsall Homelessness Review concluded that women are more likely to experience homelessness than men.

Applicant households consisting of a lone parent with dependent children, is the most common household formation, this is followed by one-person households, and then couples with children (a small number of other household formation also are recorded). It is worth noting that there are almost four-times more lone parent households with dependent children than there are couples with dependent children.

All of the households in the 24 unit block refuge are female. In 2019/20 54% of the refuge's households were women with children. A slight increase in the first half of 2020/21 shows 56% of women have children.

5 Please provide details of all engagement and consultation undertaken for this proposal. (Please use a separate box for each engagement/consultation).

Consultation has taken place with key stakeholders, partner agencies and the provider of the service. The feedback received has supported the extension of the service for a period of 6 months until a more informed position can be ascertained from the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment and the results of the transformation work stream.

Type of engagement / consultation	Key MHJ staff and stakeholder	Date : Nov / Dec 2020
Who attended / participated?	key stakeholders, partner agencies and the provider of the service.	
Protected characteristics of participants	A cross section of staff including those from different ethnic, age, gender, disability related groups.	
Feedback	The feedback received has supported the extension of the service for a period of 6 months until a more informed position can be ascertained from the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment and the results of the transformation work stream.	

Type of engagement / consultation	The refuge	Date : February 2019
Who attended / participated?	Refuge customers	
Protected characteristics of participants	A cross section of customers including those from different ethnic, age, gender, disability related groups.	
Feedback	The feedback showed a need for both a hub style service and support for dispersed accommodation.	

6 Concise overview of all evidence, engagement and consultation

- Quarterly monitoring of existing service users – based on contract out-turns the service user data shows a number of trends including over the last year an increase in single people but also the complexity of issues increasing also.
- Consultation with the refuge– A Focus group in February 2019 showed a need for both a hub style service and support for dispersed accommodation.
- Feedback from MHJ staff – feedback from MHJ staff shows a variety of needs from women, in particular women unable to flee in cases where they have dependant older children, and the need for some families to provide a step-down approach before they are able to move to independent living.

7 How may the proposal affect each protected characteristic or group?

The effect may be positive, negative, neutral or not known. Give reasons and if action is needed.			
Characteristic	Affect	Reason	Action needed Yes / No
Age	positive	<p>The biggest age group in the refuge are 21 – 39 year olds. This age group is also shown to be more likely to become homeless. The Homeless Reduction Act (2017) is set to improve outcomes for young single people.</p> <p>Quarterly monitoring of services will help deliver the right service for the individual in a timely manner.</p>	NO
Disability	Positive	<p>28% of all customers in poverty have a disability (JR Foundation 2016)</p> <p>Disabled people are therefore more likely to become homeless than non-disabled people.</p> <p>In the first half of 2020, 1 person with a disability accessed the refuge. There would be adequate provision should there be further referrals.</p>	No
Gender reassignment	Positive	No referrals to date, however access to the refuge would be available, there are limited refuge spaces available nationally.	Unknown
Marriage and civil partnership	neutral	No information specific- data is available and so	Unknown

			the impact is not currently known – The cohort of people from previous years have not generally been in a marriage or civil partnership and tend to be single or a lone parent household. Where service users have been married, this normally will only be an issue if the service user wants to divorce (this is likely after permanent housing is secured)	
	Pregnancy and maternity	Positive	No information specific data is available and so the impact is not currently known. Where a service user is pregnant consideration is given to the household. The current availability of flats is family orientated and takes into account key areas such as family rooms and will ensure service users have access to sure start and health services.	Unknown
	Race	Positive	There is a higher proportion (46%) of Black and Minority Ethnic households accessing the refuge compared to Black and Minority Ethnic households becoming homeless (29%) The delivery of these services have been sought with the requirements of taking into consideration key race, religion, cultural and disability.	No
	Religion or belief	Neutral	No information specific data is available and so the impact is not currently known The delivery of these	Unknown

			services have been sought with the requirements of taking into consideration key race, religion, cultural and disability.	
	Sex	Positive	Women are more likely to experience homelessness than men. The refuge service is for women so all customers accessing the refuge will be female.	No
	Sexual orientation	neutral	No information specific data is available and so the impact is not currently known.	Unknown
8	Does your proposal link with other proposals to have a cumulative effect on particular equality groups? If yes, give details.			(Delete one) Yes
	<p>This emergency domestic abuse service works alongside a number of other services, including working closely with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Housing Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA), which is council funded for 20/21. The IDVA role will help move those service users who are ready for independence from the refuge onto their own accommodation. • Black Country Women's Aid who are commissioned by the Council to provide an IDVA service. The IDVA services are aimed at working with women to prevent re-victimisation, and ensure safety of their children. 			
9	Which justifiable action does the evidence, engagement and consultation feedback suggest you take?			
	A	No major change required		
	B	Adjustments needed to remove barriers or to better promote equality		

	C	Continue despite possible adverse impact
	D	Stop and rethink your proposal

Action and monitoring plan				
Action Date	Action	Responsibility	Outcome Date	Outcome
01/04/2021	Monitor all characteristics where possible of those DV victims who access service to help to inform the development of future services.	MHJ	Qtrly	Measure which clients are on project What outcomes have been achieved
	Conduct customer feedback		Annually	Look at service improvement and have feedback from Accord's residents meetings

Update to EqIA	
Date	Detail

Contact us

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