

Cabinet – 20 March 2019

Extension and variation of the Contract for the Provision of Domestic Abuse Emergency Accommodation Support Service

Portfolio: Councillor Andrew - Regeneration

Related portfolios: Councillor Martin – Adult Social Care
Councillor Perry - Community, leisure and culture
Councillor Wilson – Children’s and Health and Wellbeing

Service: Money Home Job

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council has a duty to assist victims of domestic abuse. In addition the Council aims to prevent revictimisation, and to help individuals gain stability in their lives, including access to suitable housing where possible. To help deliver these aims, the Council has a contract with Accord Housing Association for the Provision of Domestic Abuse Emergency Accommodation Support Service (the ‘Contract’), which has provided 160 women with emergency accommodation since this Contract commenced in April 2017.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Cabinet to:
 - extend the Contract for the period 01 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, with the additional option to extend for a further 12 months; and
 - vary the Contract to provide a domestic abuse emergency dispersed accommodation and support service, for up to 10 dispersed units.
- 1.3 The current Contract was awarded in 2017 as a Major contract under delegated authority by the Executive Director – Adult Social Care. However the extension and variation proposals in this report will result in the total contract value exceeding £500,000 and it will become a Strategic contract, for which Cabinet approval is required.
- 1.4 This is a key decision because it exceeds the threshold for significant expenditure, and affects more than 2 wards.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the extension of the contract for the Provision of Domestic Abuse Emergency Accommodation Support Service with Accord Housing Association for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, and the option to extend for a further 12 months.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approve the variation of the contract for the Provision of Domestic Abuse Emergency Accommodation Support Service with Accord Housing Association to provide an additional dispersed accommodation and support service, for up to 10 dispersed units, for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, and the option to extend for a further 12 months.

3. Report detail

- 3.1 The Council has a duty to assist victims of domestic abuse. In addition the Council aims to prevent revictimisation, and to help individuals gain stability in their lives, including access to suitable housing where possible. In turn this will provide better life chances for the victims and their children, improving their ability to study and work. To help deliver these aims, the Council currently contracts with Accord Housing Association to provide a 24-bed refuge and 3 dispersed units. Accord have provided 160 women with emergency accommodation since April 2017, and 67% of these women have had a planned move on from the refuge. This Contract was awarded following the completion of a compliant procurement process to cover the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2019. The Contract contains provision to extend for the period 01 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, and to extend for a further 12 months. It also contains a provision to vary terms of the Contract.
- 3.2 This existing service is funded through existing Public Health budgets, which would continue to fund the extended service.
- 3.3 It is also proposed to vary the Contract, to include an additional element of support to pilot a dispersed accommodation and floating support service (the 'pilot'), to run alongside the existing service. Accord's proposed £45,000 cost of the pilot (for one year) will be externally grant funded. The Council was successful in attracting funding through a regional 18/20 Fund for Domestic Abuse Services bid led by Solihull MBC, to run a 12-month pilot of a dispersed 10 unit service, with the funding covering the cost of up to 2 additional floating support workers. The varied service will help specialist/complex victims, specifically those who are:
 - Older;
 - with older male children;
 - Black and Minority Ethnic (BME);
 - Mental Health;
 - Substance Misuse.
- 3.4 The pilot will include the flexibility where appropriate to allow households using the project to be able to remain in the dispersed properties and receive secure tenancies – giving them greater security and sustainability in their home and life. Accord will then provide a new property for the project. This will only be an option where it is safe for the household to remain in the same location, and there have been no tenancy issues during their stay at the property.

- 3.5 Discussions have been held with Accord who have indicated they are willing and able to deliver this extended service and pilot. The Council is presently reviewing its strategy relating to Domestic Abuse and is in conversation with its partners to review and agree priorities and next steps. This pilot will contribute to informing the most appropriate way of providing these services in future, prior to a recommission of emergency domestic abuse services.
- 3.6 This emergency domestic abuse accommodation support service works alongside a number of other services, including working closely with:
- The Housing Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA), which is also externally grant funded by the 18/20 Fund for Domestic Abuse Services;
 - 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.

4. Council Corporate Plan priorities

The emergency domestic abuse accommodation support service will contribute to the Council's priorities as follows:

- 4.1 Economic growth for all people, communities and businesses – homelessness and lack of access to settled and supported housing remains a key barrier to accessing employment, and so the proposed Service can help increase employment prospects.
- 4.2 People have increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities – preventing homelessness and advice and support in maintaining a tenancy can promote independence and can improve mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- 4.3 Communities are prospering and resilient with all housing needs met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion – ensuring that victims of domestic abuse have the right housing to meet their needs, and that they are able to remain in these homes or be rehoused, sustain tenancies and be part of their community.

5. Risk management

- 5.1 Access to properties – it will be challenging to ensure that there are enough appropriate properties to house these individuals. However, Accord have a broad property base and have experience of sourcing dispersed properties for support contracts e.g. Housing First.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The current two year contract running from April 2017 has a cost of £377,740. Based on current levels, the additional value of the contract due to a one year extension for 2019/20 is £188,870. Along with the estimated £45,000 cost of the contract variation, the total cost for the three year period will be in the region of £611,610.
- 6.2 If a further 12 month extension covering the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 was also required, a further annual cost of £188,870 would bring the four year contract value to £800,480. If the contract variation is successful and continues in 2020/21, this could increase by an additional £45,000 to £845,480.
- 6.3 The costs arising from extending the Contract will be met from the existing allocated Public Health budget. The cost of the £45,000 pilot will be met from additional external grant funding from the 2018/20 Fund for Domestic Services.
- 6.4 There are no additional financial implications.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The proposed extension and ability to vary the Contract were both provided for within the Contract and will be in accordance with any legal and/or procurement advice, in a manner that is compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Rules

8. Procurement Implications

- 8.1 The service was tendered in compliance with the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Rules.
- 8.2 Procurement have advised that the proposed Contract extension and inclusion of the pilot will be within the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Rules.

9. Property implications

There are no property implications for the Council.

10. Health and wellbeing implications

The principles and actions contained within this report are in full accordance with the Marmot objectives. The prevention of homelessness and support to households helps to ensure that individuals have the best environment to maximise their potential. The security of a roof over their head, and associated support, helps provide households with stability to engender a better environment for study, training or employment. Preventing and relieving homelessness contributes to the likelihood of a healthier environment for households to live in.

11. Staffing implications

There are no direct staffing implications for the Council as all staff engaged in providing the relevant services are employed by Accord Housing Association.

12. Reducing inequalities

An Equality Impact Assessment is attached at **Appendix A**.

13. Consultation

- 13.1 Consultation was carried out prior to the original procurement exercise, and it should be noted that there was only 1 bidder.
- 13.2 Additional discussion has been held with the current provider, Accord, regarding the continuation of the existing service and additional pilot dispersed service.
- 13.3 A focus group was held in February 2019 with current service users and demonstrated a general support for dispersed accommodation and for the existing refuge type setting. Service users felt more dispersed units were better for some families especially those with older male children and the need for a hub / refuge setting was also needed so the right support could be attained for those who needed more help.

Background papers

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James Walsh
Executive Director for
Resources and Transformation

20 March 2019



Councillor Andrew
Portfolio holder Regeneration

20 March 2019

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	Money Home Job		
Service	Money Home Job		
Responsible Officer	Neil Hollyhead		
Proposal planning start	11/02/2019	Proposal start date (due or actual date)	01/04/2019

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 MHJ contract
	Procedure		
	Guidance		
	Is this a service to customers/staff/public?		
	If yes, is it contracted or commissioned?		
	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 Housing Association to provide a 24 bed refuge and 3 dispersed units through the Domestic Abuse 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 contains provision to extend the contract for the period 01 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 and to change the contract under contract clause 30.</p> <p>The Council was successful in attracting funding through a regional bid led by Solihull MBC, to run a 12 month pilot of a fully dispersed 10 unit service, with the funding covering the cost of 2 additional floating support workers. As part of a review of a Domestic Violence (DV) services, this pilot will inform the most appropriate way of providing DV services in future, and so the existing block refuge service needs to be continued extended whilst this pilot takes place, prior to a recommission of DV services commencing 20/21.</p> <p>The 12 months dispersed pilot is detailed as below and the contract will be varied to include this</p>		

- '£45,000 to fund 2 posts (in financial year 2019/20) to develop up to 10 dispersed refuge units for specialist/complex victims and will include an opportunity to widen access for:
 - Older people who may not wish access a refuge due to the stigma attached or not willing to move from settled accommodation
 - Customers with older male children, at the moment those with older male children cannot be allowed access to the refuge
 - Black and Minority ethnic households
 - Those with Mental Health whose needs could not be met for refuge accommodation
 - Those with Substance Misuse and require more suitable accommodation.

The pilot will include the flexibility to allow households using the project to be able to remain in the dispersed properties and receive secure tenancies in certain circumstances – giving them greater security and sustainability in their home and life. Accord will then provide a new property for the project. The key benefit of this approach is that vulnerable households do not have the disruption of moving on a number of times and with the right level of targeted floating support the households are able to sustain independent living.

3 Who is the proposal likely to affect?		
People in Walsall	Yes / No	Detail
All		<p>The provision is aimed at those families and individuals fleeing domestic abuse. We recognises the current provision is primarily for females and households where there are male children over a certain age they will not be accommodated due to various risk factors.</p> <p>Walsall Council receives requests for assistance from approximately 2,500 households per annum. People affected by debt, low incomes households, care leavers, or people receiving out of work benefits covering all protected characteristics are at greater risk of homelessness.</p> <p>From 1st January 2018 to 31st December 2018 97 service users came through the refuge. The majority of these females came with families. There was also a large number of 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 was also 47 service users who were declined access this was due to a number of reason including previous</p>
Specific group/s	Yes	
Council employees		
Other (identify)		

		arrears, no recourse to public funds and affordability.
4	Please provide service data relating to this proposal on your customer's protected characteristics.	
<p><u>Age</u></p> <p>The homelessness review 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%).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Data from service users accessing Aven house show a mixed age range of people. However, there is some evidence nationally which states older people can be put off the use of places like refuges and would consider wither remaining in their own homes or a planned move to another property. This area of work will develop as we have a better understanding of those who are more suited for dispersed accommodation.</p> <p><u>Disability</u></p> <p>The Aven house facility has 3 accessible units for those with a need. Although over the last 12 months the units have not been filled for those with mobility issues necessarily but there is an option for service users where a need may arise.</p> <p><u>Race, Religion or Belief</u></p> <p>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).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The dispersed units will look to meet the needs of these communities by providing an alternative to refuge accommodation which is usually stigmatised.</p> <p>There is no specific data or information on whether religion or belief impacts upon prevalence of homelessness.</p> <p><u>Sexual Orientation and Gender Reassignment</u></p> <p>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</p>		

homelessness strategy would have a negative impact upon individuals with these protected characteristics.

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.

During 2016/17, 94.2% of lone parents with dependent children were female, and 5.7% were male lone parents with dependent children. 54.7% of one-person households were female, and 45.2% were male. This confirms that, in Walsall, women are more likely to experience homelessness than men.

The number of households with dependent children being homeless or threatened with homelessness has reduced by 47% between 2012/13 – 2016/17. During the same period, lone parent households have increased by 10%, one-person households have increased by 46%, all other household groups (e.g. couple with no dependent children) have reduced by 16%. It is worth noting that the levels of one-person households becoming homeless has almost doubled during the past five years.

There are a number of national data sources which can help inform the discussion:

- One woman in four experiences domestic violence in her lifetime

[Office for National Statistics](#) (2016) *Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2014/15*

- Two women are killed each week by a current or former partner in England and Wales

[Office for National Statistics](#) (2016) *Compendium – Homicide (average taken over 10 years)*

- In the year ending March 2016, 1.2 million women reported experiences of domestic abuse in England and Wales

[Office for National Statistics](#) (2016) *Domestic Abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2016*

- In 2013-15, four times more women than men were killed by their partner/ex-partner

[Office for National Statistics](#) (2016) *Compendium – Homicide (average taken over 10 years)*

- Women experience domestic violence with much more intensity – 89% of people who experience four or more incidents of domestic violence are women

[Walby and Allen](#) (2004) *Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*

- Despite the fact that women are three times more likely to be arrested for incidents of abuse, Crown Prosecution Service data shows that 93% of defendants in domestic abuse court cases are male, and 84% of victims are female

Walsall council, The Homelessness Review 2017:

Violent breakdown of relationships is one of the main cause of homelessness. The local housing authority continues to fund a refuge, alongside a range of community based provisions funded by the local children services authority. Whilst levels are below a peak, they are higher now than compared to five years ago. Continued funding at current levels for domestic abuse services will be required for the foreseeable future. Whilst a relatively low number of people become homeless due to racial violence, the fact that this is higher now than five years ago should be looked at further.

Homelessness prevention activities for victims of domestic abuse are excellent. A comprehensive range of provision is operated by Black Country Women’s Aid, which is commissioned by Walsall Council. A range of services are offered from the Cedar Centre, including the nationally recognised Independent Domestic Violence Advice service, which helps keep victims and their children safe. Alongside this a programme to help perpetrators to change their behaviour. Typically, a family is supported for 16 weeks, getting help to access a GP, improve the safety of their property or access refuge accommodation and much more. 90% of people report their overall situation improves after receiving support from Black Country Women’s Aid.

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

	<p>There has been a variety of consultation as part of the development of the Homelessness Strategy which impacts Provision for those who require housing via this route:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interviews were carried out with stakeholders from key council services such as Children's and Adults, housing and support providers, and the voluntary sector. • a stakeholder questionnaire was sent to 90 individuals, with 20 fully completed responses received. • the consultant spent a day interviewing 12 service users from our temporary accommodation and street homeless projects. • a stakeholder workshop on 8th February 2018, which was attended by elected members, third sector, housing associations, key council services • MHJ has as part of on-going quarterly monitoring assessed the outcomes of service users • A Focus Group with current service users February 2019 which included some service users who had accessed the refuge a number of times and some who were new customers. 			
6	<p>Concise overview of all evidence, engagement and consultation</p>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Aven House – A Focus group in February 2019 showed a need for both a hub style service and support for dispersed accommodation. The outcome of the focus group included discussion on how some customers had to leave older children with other relatives due to refuge rules, how returning customers felt sometimes intervention work was difficult when there were people with addictions on site and a need for a possible step down approach for 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	<p>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.</p>			
	<p>Characteristic</p>	<p>Affect</p>	<p>Reason</p>	<p>Action needed Yes / No</p>
	<p>Age</p>	<p>positive</p>	<p>The under 35's are a group which are</p>	<p>N</p>

			<p>affected by a number of welfare reforms and receive reduced levels of benefit. They are therefore more likely to be affected by homelessness. 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>	
	Disability	negative	<p>28% of all customers in poverty have a disability (report commissioned JR Foundation 2016) https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2016/august/half-people-poverty-are-disabled-or-live-disabled-person</p> <p>Disabled people are therefore more likely to become homeless than non-disabled people. Further data can be collected on need where a customer has a disability work is done to ensure their needs and aspirations are met.</p>	Y
	Gender reassignment	neutral	<p>No information is available and so the impact is not currently known.</p>	Y

			However, there are limited refuge spaces available nationally and there is an opportunity to use dispersed accommodation for this group where needed.	
	Marriage and civil partnership	neutral	No information specific data is available and so 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 issue normally will only be an issue if the service user wants to divorce (this is likely after permanent housing is secured)	Y
	Pregnancy and maternity	neutral	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.	Y
	Race	Positive	31% of children from Asian and Black backgrounds live in low income households compared to 11% of white households. Black ethnic groups make up 7% of the homeless but are only 2.4% of the resident population.	Y

			The delivery of these services have been sought with the requirements of taking into consideration key race, religion, cultural and disability.	
	Religion or belief	neutral	No information specific data is available and so the impact is not currently known The delivery of these services have been sought with the requirements of taking into consideration key race, religion, cultural and disability.	Y
	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.	Y
	Sexual orientation	neutral	No information specific data is available and so the impact is not currently known. The delivery of these services have been sought with the requirements of taking into consideration key race, religion, cultural and disability.	Y
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 also externally grant funded by the 18/20 Fund for Domestic Abuse Services. The IDVA role will help move those service users who are ready for independence onto their own accommodation. 			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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
01/04/2019	Continue to collect equality data on protected characteristics 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 How many people have sustained tenancy

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Update to EqIA	
Date	Detail

Contact us

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Inside Walsall: [http://int.walsall.gov.uk/Service information/Equality and diversity](http://int.walsall.gov.uk/Service%20information/Equality%20and%20diversity)