

Finance and Resources Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 27 August 2015

Contract Award for Homeless Prevention – Domestic Abuse Services

Item number	7.18
Report number	
Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	All

Executive summary

The commissioned services referred to in this report help the City of Edinburgh Council meet a range of statutory duties relating to women who are suffering from the effects of domestic abuse and are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The purpose of this report is to seek approval to award seven contracts, for the duration of a pilot, to third sector organisations that currently provide support to women suffering domestic abuse.

The Domestic Abuse work stream of the Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan includes visiting housing support and temporary accommodation. This workstream forms part of a wider programme of collaborative working to achieve significant savings and rebalancing of services towards homelessness prevention.

Overall savings of £196,690 have been achieved, reducing the annual budgeted expenditure from £1,173,298 to £976,608 from November 2015.

Links

Coalition pledges	P8, P13, P14, P30, P32, P36
Council outcomes	C09, C10, C11, C13, C14, C16, C23, C25, C26
Single Outcome Agreements	S02, S04

Contract Award for Homeless Prevention – Domestic Abuse

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Finance and Resources Committee:

- 1.1 Notes that overall annual equivalent savings of £196,690 have been achieved through reducing the annual budgeted expenditure from £1,173,298 to £976,608 from November 2015.
- 1.2 Notes the collaborative work with service providers and other stakeholders, carried out to date, for the delivery of services to women who have suffered domestic abuse within Edinburgh.
- 1.3 Approves the award of three contracts to provide visiting housing support to women who have suffered domestic abuse for the duration of an 18 month pilot (with an option to extend for a further six months to allow services to be re-procured). The organisations to be awarded contracts are: Edinburgh Women's Aid, Shakti Women's Aid and Saheliya. The total annual value of the contracts from November 2015 is £240,168 up to a £480,336 for 18 months plus extension.
- 1.4 Approves the award of four contracts to provide temporary accommodation in the form of three refuges and one hostel for the duration of an 18 month pilot (with an option to extend for a further six months to allow services to be re-procured). The organisations to be awarded contracts are Edinburgh Women's Aid (2 contracts), Keymoves Cranston Street Women's Hostel, Shakti Women's Aid refuge. The total annual value of the contracts from November 2015 is £739,440 up to a £1,478,880 for 18 months plus extension.
- 1.5 Notes the review process for the pilot as outlined in section 3.14 and 3.15 of this report.

Background

- 2.1 On 6 September 2011, the Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan (the Plan) was agreed by Policy and Strategy Committee. This sets out the need to prevent homelessness wherever possible. The Plan was developed after extensive consultation and is part of the City of Edinburgh Council's wider City Housing Strategy 2012-2017.

- 2.2 On 27 January 2015, the Health, Social Care and Housing Committee considered a range of options to procure homeless prevention services for women suffering domestic abuse. Having considered the risks, Committee agreed the preferred option was to undertake a collaborative pilot with the current providers of services and referred the report and its decision to Finance and Resources Committee.
- 2.3 The report also noted that the specific services within this work stream are only for women and their children. Other services are available for men suffering from or fleeing domestic abuse, including the Caledonian Project, Safer Families and Male Domestic Abuse Support Service. All services commissioned by City of Edinburgh Council are being reviewed as a joint project between Services for Communities, Children and Families and Health and Social Care.
- 2.4 On 3 February 2015, following consideration, Finance and Resources Committee noted the report and decision of the Health, Social Care and Housing Committee.
- 2.5 On 13 February 2014, as part of the annual budget setting process, the City of Edinburgh Council agreed savings in the Revenue Budget Framework of £2.3 million from the Commissioning budget between 2014/15 and 2016/17. The savings required from the domestic abuse services have been met through the proposed contracts.

Main report

- 3.1 The services included in this report help the City of Edinburgh Council meet a range of statutory duties towards women who have suffered domestic abuse and provide:
- Accommodation to people who are assessed as homeless,
 - Support to people assessed as homeless and requiring housing support.
- 3.2 Service specifications have been co-produced by service users, service providers and the Council. They will achieve savings and deliver reshaped services that were approved by Health, Social Care and Housing Committee on 27 January 2015.
- 3.3 Key changes to Domestic Abuse Services are:
- Adoption of a new criterion to prioritise access to the service that determines those most in need due to their current circumstances.

- A new coordinated referral route for all of the commissioned accommodation under this work stream. Places will be allocated in collaboration between the services and Homelessness Assessment and Temporary Accommodation.
 - Payments focussing on occupancy rates and the outcomes individuals achieve, rather than block contracts for accommodation or the hours of support provided by visiting support. This will give providers greater flexibility to give women the support they require and deliver the sustainable outcomes to help them avoid becoming homeless.
 - Standard rates for similar accommodation and for all visiting housing support services.
 - The introduction of standard referrals and case management across providers.
 - A simplified reporting process to be submitted to Services for Communities, Health & Social Care and Children & Families services, focussing on the outcomes that people achieve and minimising time spent on administration.
- 3.4 The proposed approach will involve coordinated work between commissioned homelessness services and the Council's Homelessness Assessment and Temporary Accommodation services. The pathway will prioritise services to women in the most critical need and this may result in some women who are less in need receiving support from mainstream accommodation and support services. The proposed services will form a coordinated pathway through two delivery mechanisms that include:
- Temporary accommodation,
 - Visiting housing support.
- 3.5 These delivery mechanisms will work in close partnership through the pilot. Visiting housing support services will begin to work with women before they move out of commissioned accommodation. This will ensure a coordinated transition between services, ensuring continuity of support resulting in more women sustaining a tenancy when they leave supported accommodation.
- Accommodation**
- 3.6 The accommodation services will provide support that will be tailored to the women's needs. Support will include:
- Short-term accommodation for women in domestic abuse crisis.
Support or mediation is provided to help them understand their options

and make an informed choice as to whether or not to return to their existing home,

- Medium term accommodation for women suffering domestic abuse who are homeless and cannot return to their existing home,
 - An environment where the women feel safe,
 - Housing options advice, and assistance to gain and move into settled accommodation.
- 3.7 Where it is safe, and the woman is happy to do so, support and mediation services will be provided to ensure that she can return to her own home. It is expected that the pilot will result in a reduction in length of stay for women staying in temporary accommodation, prior to finding a settled home.
- 3.8 The services will help to prevent homelessness by providing women with support to gain independent living skills and moving them into sustainable settled accommodation.
- 3.9 Accommodation providers will be paid, based on both the occupancy rates at the accommodation and the outcomes that they support women to achieve.

Visiting Housing Support

- 3.10 The visiting housing support service will ensure sustainable outcomes by:
- Resolving and preventing homelessness and providing support as required by the Housing (Scotland) 2010 Act.
 - Developing women's independent living skills (as set out in the Life Skills Matrix).
 - Supporting women to enter training, education and employment.
 - Signposting women to specialist services to provide advice on matters such as:
 - Benefits advice (including changes due to Welfare Reform),
 - Housing options (including private renting, social renting, owner occupation, shared ownership, mid-market rent, supported accommodation, sharing, subletting, and managing moves due to changes in welfare benefits),
 - Developing financial and budgeting skills,
 - Tenancy issues (including leases, repairs, deposits, notices and encouraging responsible behaviour as a tenant).

- 3.11 Women will be able to access visiting housing support through self-referral or following a referral from third sector or Council services. This includes women moving out of hostels or refuges into settled accommodation.
- 3.12 Visiting housing support will be provided to women who are either living in their own tenancies but are at risk of becoming homeless, or to people in temporary accommodation to help them get a home.
- 3.13 Providers will have the flexibility to provide support in the way that best meets the needs of the individual and will focus on the outcomes the women will achieve.

Review of the Pilot

- 3.14 There will be a review of the domestic abuse services pilot. The purpose of the review will be to:
- Review the number of women who get support and the outcomes providers help women achieve.
 - Ensure payments by outcomes are challenging, but do not make services financially unviable.
 - Identify good practice.
 - Inform the development of service specification for the re-commissioning of services after the pilot.
- 3.15 The review will take account of the performance of the service and external monitoring by the Care Inspectorate. The review will also include feedback from other services, a full range of stakeholders and service users.

Measures of success

- 4.1 Reshaped services in the pilot will:
- Prevent homelessness by:
 - Achieving 95% occupancy rate across accommodation for women who have suffered domestic abuse,
 - Supporting at least 70% of the target number of women worked with to access or keep settled accommodation,
 - Supporting at least 70% of the target number of women worked with to achieve core skills as outlined in the Life Skills Matrix;
 - Supporting at least 70% of the target number of women worked with to improve the Empowerment Star score by an average of 4 points.

- Support at least 480 women during the pilot period.

Financial impact

- 5.1 On 13 February 2014 as part of the annual budget setting process, the City of Edinburgh Council approved a reduction in the budget for externally commissioned housing advice and support services. This totalled £2.3 million over three years between 2014/15 and 2016/17.
- 5.2 Following a small efficiency saving of 1.1% applied to contracts for 2014/15, budget reductions of around 13.5% have been built into the domestic abuse services contracts for visiting housing support for the duration of the pilot. Revised rates have already been agreed with the providers.
- 5.3 The total equivalent annual value of the contracts currently awarded under this work stream is currently £1,173,298. From November 2015 the total annual value of the contracts will be £979,608 delivering savings of £192,640. If contracts for the 18 month pilot are extended for a maximum of six months to allow re-procurement, the total costs associated with the contracts over 24 months will be £1,959,216 delivering savings of £385,280.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The proposals for reshaping domestic abuse services are part of the implementation of the Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan that was approved by the Policy and Strategy Committee on 6 September 2011.
- 6.2 The contracts for the pilot have incorporated savings of £192,640 in the first year and contain a clause that allows further savings to be applied with appropriate notice, in the event that further reductions are required. Negotiations have taken place with providers to ensure savings are achieved in line with the strategic goals of the City of Edinburgh Council.
- 6.3 The previous report to Finance and Resources Committee, on 3 February 2015, identified the risks associated with the Committee's favoured option to work with existing providers rather than tender the contracts.
- 6.4 There is a risk of challenge against the awarding of contracts which have not been tendered. Such challenges could come from providers interested in delivering a similar range of services. However, this should be minimal because the proposal is to pilot new services for a relatively short timescale, with the intention to tender reconfigured services following the review. Additionally, Finance and Resources Committee agreed the approach on 3 February 2015 and no challenge against the approach has been made.

- 6.5 If the pilot is not progressed new risks will be created. Providers have negotiated to date in good faith and there is a risk of reputational damage if the Council now decides to go out to tender.
- 6.6 Delays in commissioning increases the risk that efficiencies will not be achieved. Without the realignment to the proposed model there will be an increased risk of a reduction in the amount of support women who have suffered domestic abuse get and a greater risk of services becoming financially unviable.
- 6.7 A Check Point Group, which involves providers, service users, trade unions and other stakeholders, is in place to oversee the consultation and communication of the Homelessness Prevention and Commissioning Plan. The group met in March 2015 to commence oversight of the consultation process for domestic abuse services. In July 2015 the group approved the consultation that had taken place to date in the Domestic Abuse work stream. The group will continue to have oversight of all of the work streams in the Plan.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 An Equalities and Rights Impact Assessment (ERIA) was completed for the Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan and a further assessment has been carried out in respect of the proposals for the Domestic Abuse work stream.
- 7.2 This pilot will have a positive impact by helping women who have suffered domestic abuse to retain a home and access support to recover from the trauma of abuse. This will apply to all women with protected characteristics.
- 7.3 If current services are decommissioned, there is potentially a negative impact on service users. However, this risk could be mitigated by supporting service users to find alternative provision or to make the transition to new commissioned services. This would impact across all protected characteristics.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The proposal in this report will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh and will impact positively on local communities and businesses. The services will also have a positive impact on social cohesion and inclusion, and promote personal wellbeing through the proposals to prevent homelessness and enhance independent living skills.

- 8.2 The impacts of this report have been considered in relation to the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties. Relevant City of Edinburgh Council's sustainable development policies have been taken into account.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Initial consultation was carried out with service providers and stakeholders between August 2014 and June 2015 to identify the services that women who have suffered domestic abuse use, their needs, the context, gaps in service provision, and potential types of services that can help women avoid becoming homeless. The consultation was used to develop the broad direction for services that was subsequently approved by Health, Social Care and Housing Committee on 27 January 2015.
- 9.2 There was extensive co-production to develop the service specifications between August 2014 and June 2015. Staff and service users from all of the current services played a key role in the co-production. Staff from Health & Social Care, Children & Families, Homelessness Assessment and Temporary Accommodation were integral to the co-production of service specifications.
- 9.3 A number of methods were used to engage stakeholders throughout the co-production to ensure it was inclusive. These included a drop-in session and a questionnaire. As a result, all of the components of the service specifications were co-produced including;
- Entry criteria for services,
 - Descriptions of the type of support to be offered,
 - Measurements of the effectiveness of services,
 - Targets for the number of women to receive services and achieve outcomes,
 - Payment rates.
- 9.4 The co-production was overseen by the Check Point Group, which includes service users, providers and stakeholders from the third sector and across the City of Edinburgh Council.

Background reading/external references

[Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan, Policy and Strategy Committee, 6 September 2011](#)

[Homeless Prevention Commissioning Plan, Health, Social Care and Housing Committee, 27 January 2015 – Domestic Abuse Services](#)

[Homeless Prevention Commissioning Plan, Finances and Resources Committee, 3 February 2015 – Domestic Abuse Services](#)

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Links

Coalition pledges

P8. Make sure the city's people are well-housed, including encouraging developers to build residential communities, starting with brownfield sites.
P13. Enforce tenancy agreements (council and private landlord) with a view to ensuring tenants and landlords fulfil their good conduct responsibilities.
P14. Strengthen Council housing allocation policy to give recognition to good tenants and to encourage responsible tenant behaviour and responsibilities.
P30. Continue to maintain a sound financial position including long-term financial planning.
P32. Develop and strengthen local community links with the police.
P36. Develop improved partnership working across the Capital and with the voluntary sector to build on the “Total Craigroyston” model.

Council outcomes

C09. Edinburgh residents are able to access job opportunities
C10. Improved health and reduced inequalities
C11. Preventative and personalised support in place

	<p>C13. People are supported to live at home</p> <p>C14. Communities have the capacity to help support people</p> <p>C16. Well-housed – People live in a good quality home that is affordable and meets their needs in a well managed</p> <p>C23. Well engaged and well informed – Communities and individuals are empowered and supported to improve local outcomes and foster a sense of community</p> <p>C25. The Council has efficient and effective services that deliver on objectives</p> <p>C26. The Council engages with stakeholders and works in partnership to improve services and deliver on agreed objectives</p>
Single Outcome Agreement	<p>S02. Edinburgh’s citizens experience improved health and wellbeing, with reduced inequalities in health</p> <p>S04. Edinburgh’s communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric</p>
Appendices	<p>Appendix 1: Contract Awards and Values</p>

Appendix 1: Contract Awards and Values

Visiting Housing Support

Provider	Contract Type	Annual Equivalent Value (from Aug 2015)	Maximum Value (18 months plus 6 month extension)
Edinburgh Women's Aid	Visiting support	£30,869	£61,738
Shakti Women's Aid	Visiting support	£169,107	£338,214
Saheliya	Visiting support	£40,192	£80,384

Accommodation

Edinburgh Women's Aid	24 hour refuge	£208,000	£416,000
Edinburgh Women's Aid	Shared refuge	£177,840	£355,680
Keymoves	Women's hostel	£249,600	£499,200
Shakti Women's Aid	Refuge	£104,000	£208,000
Total		£979,608	£1,959,216