

Finance & Resources Committee

10am, Thursday, 12 August 2021

Waiver to Extend Contracts for Domestic Abuse

Item Number
Executive / Routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Finance & Resources Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Approves the request to extend current domestic abuse contracts due to the impact of Covid.

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Waiver to Extend Contracts for Domestic Abuse

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report seeks approval to extend the Council's current domestic abuse contracts for 12 months from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- 2.2 These contracts have an annual value of £1,091,889 and are provided by three Service Providers – Edinburgh Women's Aid, Four Square Scotland and Shakti Women's Aid.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan (the Plan), approved by the Policy and Strategy Committee on 6 September 2011, set out the need to prevent homelessness wherever possible and, where people do become homeless, for services to help people to resolve their homelessness as quickly and effectively as possible.
- 3.2 The Plan also set out the requirement to provide a range of services which are flexible and effective for people with a range of needs.
- 3.3 Therefore, the Council requires services to assist women and children who have experienced domestic abuse to access accommodation and support services to overcome the trauma they have experienced and lead safe independent lives, free from abuse.
- 3.4 In January 2016 the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee agreed the Domestic Abuse re-design project – to develop a co-ordinated community response to domestic abuse in Edinburgh, including a city-wide review of all statutory agencies, grant provision and commissioned services.
- 3.5 Co-production from this project resulted in Edinburgh's Domestic Abuse Strategy and Improvement Plan, which was noted by the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee in February 2017.
- 3.6 This identified key themes from service user and staff feedback in relation to Edinburgh's response to domestic abuse and reflected national and international research and best practice.

- 3.7 As part of this project, in September 2017, the Finance and Resources Committee agreed the award of contracts from November 2017 for two years plus a 12 month extension. Two subsequent extensions were granted;
- 3.7.1 in March 2020 to extend until 31 March 2021 to bring contracts in line with financial years,
 - 3.7.2 in July 2020 to extend until 31 March 2022 due to the impact of the Covid 19 global pandemic.
- 3.8 The pandemic has placed significant pressures on these services, initially to provide support remotely, but laterally how to safely return to face to face services in line with Scottish Government guidelines.
- 3.9 Covid restrictions have also exacerbated abusive situations for women and children and the number of cases is expected to increase significantly once women have more freedom to access services.

4. Main Report

- 4.1 In June 2020, a Prior Information Notice (PIN) was published on Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) to invite Service Providers with an interest in providing domestic abuse accommodation and/or support, to express their interest. Eighteen organisations have responded, to date.
- 4.2 Due to Covid restrictions, co-production events have not been possible. In July 2020, two surveys were distributed;
- 4.2.1 To all current service users - via the service provider engaging with them,
 - 4.2.2 To over 200 stakeholders - who directly or indirectly work with women and children who have experienced domestic abuse.
- 4.3 The purpose of these surveys was to feedback on current service provision and offer suggestions for future improvement. Initial feedback suggested that co-production surveys at this time might be completed hastily and may not merit meaningful results due to;
- 4.3.1 Service users experiencing heightened anxiety - due to Covid19, and a reduction in the accessibility of services,
 - 4.3.2 Stakeholders being under significant pressure - due to determining the logistics of returning to 'normal' service provision,
 - 4.3.3 The time of year being holiday season and therefore less people being available to contribute. The deadline for completion was therefore extended until the end of August 2020,
 - 4.3.4 Eighty-eight responses were received and analysed, and this feedback will be used to reshape future services.

- 4.4 Current providers are expecting an increase in cases after restrictions are eased, due to the realisation of abuse suffered during these conditions, plus women having more freedom to access services again.
- 4.5 Granting a 12 month extension to all three current service providers would provide;
 - 4.5.1 Stability for service users currently being supported, and those expected imminently,
 - 4.5.2 Ample time to meaningfully coproduce new documentation for future contracts,
 - 4.5.3 Additional time for interested parties to determine lessons learned during the pandemic and how support services can be safely delivered once restrictions have eased to Level 0,
 - 4.5.4 Additional time for interested parties to submit comprehensive tenders.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Subject to approval contract extension documentation will be prepared and issued to all three current service providers to cover 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- 5.2 In line with the Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015, the Council will procure new contracts starting from 1 April 2023.
- 5.3 Current monitoring of all domestic abuse contracts will continue and be managed by a Commissioning Officer from Homelessness & Housing Support: Partnership & Planning Service to ensure best value and accountability of public funds, including community benefits and achievement of key performance indicators.

6. Financial Impact

- 6.1 The value of extending these contracts (as detailed in Appendix 1) is £1,091,889 over 12 months. This will be allocated from the Partnership & Planning Service block contracts budget.

7. Stakeholder / Community Impact

- 7.1 Consultation and engagement have been undertaken by way of two questionnaires to both service users of the existing contracts, and stakeholders who directly or indirectly work with women and/or children who have experienced domestic abuse.
- 7.2 Further consultation will be undertaken once restrictions have eased further.
- 7.3 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed and all recommendations have been, and will continue to be, addressed throughout the process.

7.4 The outcome of awarding these contract extensions would be to ensure future contracts will be coproduced and procured during a timeframe that merits meaningful engagement.

8. Background Reading / External References

- 8.1 [Domestic Abuse Re-design Project - Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee, January 2016](#)
- 8.2 [Edinburgh's Domestic Abuse Strategy and Improvement Plan - Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee, February 2017](#)
- 8.3 [Contract for the Provision of Domestic Abuse Services – Finance & Resources Committee, September 2017](#)
- 8.4 [Contract Extensions for Domestic Abuse Contracts – Policy & Sustainability Committee, August 2020](#)

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1: Financial Breakdown of Current Domestic Abuse Services

Service Provider	Services include;	Annual Value
Edinburgh Womens Aid	Refuge Accommodation, Childrens Service and Support & Advocacy	£480,667
Four Square Scotland	Refuge Accommodation and Community Support	£300,122
Shakti Womens Aid	Refuge Accommodation, Childrens Service and Support & Advocacy	£311,100
Total		£1,091,889