

TO: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: PEOPLE, EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ADULT SERVICES

28 JUNE 2022

CONTRACT AWARD REPORT: DOMESTIC ABUSE REFUGE AND OUTREACH SERVICE

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to award a contract for the provision of a Domestic Abuse Refuge and Outreach Service. A refuge offers safe accommodation and intensive support to victims and their children which is tied to that accommodation. The Outreach service is available to women and men aged 16+ living in Bracknell Forest, and who are suffering from, or are threatened by, domestic abuse. The service meets the needs of domestic abuse victims and their children in line with the statutory duties. This award is following a robust and compliant procurement process.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That a contract for the Service, commencing on 1 September 2022 is awarded to Tenderer A, for an initial period of three years, with the option of two further two-year extensions to a maximum of seven years (3+2+2 years) subject to satisfactory performance.
- 2.2 That the additional expenditure of £25,213 by the Council required for this service is approved. The Strategic Procurement Plan for this service projected that the cost of this contract over 7 years would be “an estimated value of £650,000”. The successful bid was for £675,213 over 7 years (including uplifts) which is £25,213 over £650,000.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To complete the procurement process for a provider of Domestic Abuse Refuge and Outreach Services.
- 3.2 The anticipated benefits delivered through awarding the contract to Tenderer A will include:
- Ensuring continuing compliance with legislation and statutory duties
 - Providing sufficient capacity in line with the benchmark number of refuge places of one per 10,000 of the population, as advised by Women’s Aid nationally, as part of a wider range of housing options for those fleeing domestic abuse
 - Ensuring good quality and value for money domestic abuse services which focus on meeting the needs of domestic abuse victims and their children and achieving positive outcomes.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTION CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Do nothing: Current contractual obligations will lapse, there would be no adequate provision to meet our statutory duties and domestic abuse victims and their children's access to refuge and outreach services would be reduced.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 Domestic Abuse is a key determinant of public health and a priority for the Local Authority to ensure that victims are appropriately supported. Refuge provision helps victims of domestic abuse to break the cycle by finding safe accommodation.

- 5.2 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, controlling, coercive, and economic abuse. For the definition to apply, both individuals must be aged 16 or over and 'personally connected' to each other, for example, by marriage or civil partnership, or have an intimate personal relationship with one another, or had a parental relationship in relation to the same child or are relatives. 'Abusive behaviour' is defined in the act as any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse

- 5.3 Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced a new duty on local authorities to undertake a robust assessment to determine the level of need for domestic abuse support in their area for all victims (and their children) in relevant safe accommodation. This needs assessment informed the procurement strategy and helped to ensure that the Specification captures the Council's current and future needs and required outcomes for Domestic Abuse Refuge and Outreach Services.

- 5.4 The procurement was an open, single stage tender process in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The procurement was undertaken in accordance with the Strategic Procurement Plan which was approved by the Council's Executive in March 2022.

- 5.5 The opportunity was advertised on the South East Business Portal (SEBP) and Contracts Finder in March/April 2022. The deadline for tenderers to submit their tender was 29 April 2022.

- 5.6 The procurement included two evaluation stages:

- (1) entry level requirements to establish and assess the capability of bidders to provide the service,
- (2) The scoring of pricing and quality method statements.

- 5.7 In total 6 providers viewed the tender, however only one bid was received for this service. The bid was reviewed by the tender evaluation team and fully met the requirements of the specification and was confirmed as the preferred bidder, subject to final approval. The Tender Evaluation team included key stakeholders from Housing and Community Safety operational teams and the Strategic Commissioning team. Finance checks were completed to the satisfaction of the BFC finance team.
- 5.8 The bid includes two opportunities for uplifts against the total annual contract price at the end of years 3 and 5 which will be capped at 2% or CPI (whichever is the lower) for June 2025 and June 2027. Commissioning, Housing Team operational colleagues and the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator will undertake joint quarterly Contract Monitoring meetings with the preferred bidder.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

(Claire Bradford, Contracts & Procurement Lawyer, on behalf of the Borough Solicitor)

- 6.1 Full legal comments in relation to the procurement of these services was provided in the report to the Executive dated 15 March 2022. Legal are satisfied that the additional expenditure highlighted within this report does not present any significant compliance issues provided such expenditure is approved by the relevant Executive Member. The proposed award of this contract has followed an open and transparent procurement process.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 No comments received.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 An Equalities Impact Screening was completed at the outset of the procurement, as part of the Strategic Procurement Plan. This identified that a Full Equality Impact assessment was not required.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 Non identified.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 To supplement the needs analysis mentioned in 5.3, additional qualitative research was undertaken in partnership with local domestic abuse organisations including:
- structured interviews with 9 victims
 - interviews with professionals and front-line staff

Unrestricted

- engagement of key partners within and outside of the Domestic Abuse Executive Group
 - analysis of case files and records.
- 7.2 To ensure that the specification covered the key elements of a high-quality Domestic Abuse Refuge and Outreach service, and that the service designed would meet the needs of Domestic Abuse victims, the specification was completed in collaboration with Housing and Community Safety Operational colleagues, and Procurement.
- 7.3 Other local authorities who had recently commissioned Domestic Abuse Refuge and Outreach Services were contacted to gather best practice, identify challenges, etc.

Representations Received

7.4 None

Contact for further information

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