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| Subject: | Domestic Abuse Act Strategy and Funding Award Options | | |
| Date of Meeting: | 10 March 2022 | | |
| Report of: | Executive Director Housing Neighbourhoods and Communities | | |
| Contact Officer: | Name: | Anne Clark | Tel: |
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| Ward(s) affected: | All | | |

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1: PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

1.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the Act) reached Royal Assent in April 2021. Brighton and Hove City Council were awarded £606,000 New Burdens funding for the year 2021/22 to provide support for survivors and children in safe accommodation. The Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee (TECC) considered reports relating to the funding provided by Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) - now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) during meetings in September and November 2021 where proposals for spending £606, 288 were agreed. This is set out in *appendix 1*. It should be noted that £241,000 of the original £606,000 allocation was repurposed to fund the refuge service. However, there remains a sum of £240,712 to be allocated. This report sets out further recommendations for spending this funding.

1.2 In February, the Council was notified that a further £607,996 has been allocated for 2022/23.

2: RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That\ Committee agrees to allocate available funding as set out in paragraphs **4.5 to 4.9 of this report**.

2.2 That Committee notes the Government allocation of £607,996 Domestic Abuse Duty funding for 2022/23.

3: CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1. The Act placed a requirement on local authorities to develop a local Domestic Abuse Strategy for the provision of accommodation-based support in its area. The development of the Pan-Sussex Strategy for Domestic Abuse Accommodation and

Support 2021-2024 (the Strategy) was led by the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner and has identified strategic priorities and commitments for all TIER 1 local authorities in Sussex.

3.2. The Pan-Sussex Strategy for Domestic Abuse Accommodation and Support 2021-2024 was published in January 2022 and is underpinned by **6 strategic priorities**:

- **Consistent and Collaborative**- providing multi agency and partnership commissioning and working to ensure a consistent offer across Sussex
- **Diverse and Appropriate** – providing a wide range of appropriate and safe accommodation and support options
- **Accessible and Inclusive** – Ensuring all services are accessible to all victims/survivors and meet the specific needs of those with a full range of protected characteristics
- **Responsive to Multiple Disadvantage**- Establishing specialist provision to support victims/survivors with Multiple Complex Needs
- **Victim Centered**- Empowering victims/survivors to remain in their own home through choice
- **Trauma Informed** – Embedding trauma informed practice in practice in service and practice through training and specialist knowledge

3.3. The strategy includes several key findings relating to inconsistency and gaps in provision across Sussex. Many of the pan – Sussex gaps and inconsistencies identified for support in safe accommodation require considerable funding and require significant development including further pan- Sussex consultation and market engagement and commissioning.

3.4. In October 2021, DLUHC published its *Statutory Guidance for Delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse safe accommodation service* which clarified on what constitutes support in safe accommodation. Support includes:

- Support with day to day running of safe accommodation services
- Advocacy support
- Domestic Abuse prevention advice
- Specialist support for victims/survivors with protected characteristics
- Services specifically designed for victims/survivors with additional/complex need
- Children's Support
- Housing Related Support
- Advice service
- Counseling and therapy

4. New Proposals

4.1. This document outlines the proposals for the funds totalling £240,712. This sum constitutes the repurposed funds from the 2021/22 New Burdens funds which were allocated for the refuge contract.

4.2. It is proposed that an expanded and enhanced **Safe Accommodation Domestic Abuse Support** offer which includes **advocacy and support** is developed for those affected by DA to support them to safety, maintain their accommodation and prevent homelessness.

4.3. The proposals have been informed through a range of processes which include consideration of the DLUHC Guidance, the recommendations from the of the Pan Sussex DA Strategy and align with its strategic priorities, specifically:

- **Diverse and Appropriate** – providing a wide range of appropriate and safe accommodation and support options
- **Accessible and Inclusive** – Ensuring all services are accessible to all victims/survivors and meet the specific needs of those with a full range of protected characteristics.

4.4. The proposals seek to address needs identified by the Strategy and takes into account the revised definition of domestic abuse within the Act which includes children and young people under 16 years of age as victims in their own right.

4.5. The following table briefly outlines the proposed additional activities/spend and method of procurement that are recommended for approval.

Table 1.

| | Proposed Project | Cost | Suggested Procurement Method |
|----------|---|---|--|
| 1 | Safe Accommodation Children and Young People Domestic Abuse Pathway. This pathway consist of three elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Programme • Safe Accommodation CYPDVA (Children and Young Person Domestic Abuse /VAWG Outreach/Caseworker- • Safe Accommodation Pilot Group work for young people using violence in personal relationships who are also at risk of losing their accommodation | £20,712. £50,000 £40,000 | Invitation to Quote Invitation to Quote Invitation to Quote |
| 2 | Safe Accommodation Pathway: Domestic Abuse. Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) Capacity Building Programme | £60,000 | Invitation to Quote |

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|---|--|-----------------|----------------------------|
| | | | |
| 3 | Safe Accommodation LGBTQ+ Domestic Abuse Caseworker. | £40, 000 | Invitation to Quote |
| 4 | Domestic Violence and Abuse Specialist Support Service (includes Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) Service) | £30,000 | N/A |
| | Total | £240,712 | |

4.6. Safe Accommodation: Children /Young People Domestic Abuse Pathway.

The Domestic Abuse Act extended the definition of DA to include children as victims/survivors of DA. The Strategy identified a need to improve support for all those affected by DA. Support will be provided to children and young people who are affected by DA either as direct victims or as witnesses with both immediate and delayed reactions to trauma. This pathway consists of three elements:

- **Community Programme**

This programme is aimed at any family where there has been DA including those who have been in supported accommodation. It is aimed at children aged three and up and non-abusing parent. This model is based around a programme of sessions for children (divided into age groups so under 5, over 5, over 10) which run for two hours a week over a 12-week period. The age-appropriate programme will address several topics including validation of child experience/ understanding abuse/ reducing self-blame/safety planning/managing inappropriate expressions of anger. There is a concurrent group for mothers where parenting is supported around her/his experience of abuse. Referral could come from Health Visitors/school nurses/Social Services/Voluntary Sector/Education/ Services working with the non-abusing parent.

- **Safe Accommodation CYPDVA (Children and Young Person Domestic Abuse Outreach/Caseworker**

This element of the support would provide support young people aged 16 plus whose risk level is below MARAC threshold but who are affected by abuse. This worker will provide Outreach to Health Services including the Sexual Health/Reproductive Services / Young Peoples Substance Misuse Service and casework clients who require advice and support relating to domestic abuse and housing. Referral from all services and self-referrals. The post holder will also offer and deliver workshops and awareness sessions to Education Services including schools /colleges /University and provide drop-in sessions as required.

- **Safe Accommodation Pilot Group work/one to one programme for young people using violence in personal relationships**

Development of a pilot for young people s aged 11-18 who use abuse in personal relationships towards a partner or family members. The service would be offered to young people who want to change their behavior and understand their behavior, recognise their own agency and capacity to take responsibility in their relationships, identifying emotions, valuing their own emotions, identifying, and

reflecting on issues that are relevant to their family including the impact of DA, and find better ways to communicate other than abuse/violence. The offer would consist of one-to-one sessions with young person and parental support service and signposting to partner support for partner of young person.

4.7 **Safe Accommodation Pathway: Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) Domestic Abuse Capacity Building Programme**

The Brighton & Hove Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2021 states that 19.5% of the local population is a BAME and 1% (55,000) residents were born outside the UK. However, referrals to our MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) for BAME survivors stand at 3.4% of all referrals in 2020/21. This is significantly lower than national standard when compared with the Safelives national average of 16%. This indicates there is a need to improve how we work with communities to ensure those affected by all forms of DA are aware of the support available in B&H to ensure access to support and safe accommodation for this community. The BAME Domestic Abuse Building Capacity Programme will work with existing and new community groups to deliver advice, support, training and workshops, set up referral pathways to commissioned services and deliver Outreach where required to ensure those affected by DA are aware and able to access support. This aligns with the **strategic priority of Accessible and Inclusive** – *Ensuring all services are accessible to all victims/survivors and meet the specific needs of those with a full range of protected characteristics.*

4.8 **Safe Accommodation: LGBTQ+ Domestic Abuse Casework.**

The JSNA 2021 indicates that the LGBTQ+ community accounts for 11%-15% of the population aged 16+. However, our MARAC data shows that referrals for LGBTQ+ survivors account for 8.3% of referrals which is significantly higher than the Safelives national average of 1.5%. Through the provision of a Safe Accommodation: LGBTQ+ Domestic Abuse Caseworker, we will enhance the local offer to a community who are overrepresented in the high-risk category for serious harm and through increased prevention work aim to improve access to DA support to maintain safe accommodation to prevent loss of housing. By providing support earlier it may be possible to reduce level of harm to the individuals. This aligns with the **strategic priority of Accessible and Inclusive** – *Ensuring all services are accessible to all victims/survivors and meet the specific needs of those with a full range of protected characteristics.*

4.9 **Domestic Violence and Abuse Specialist Support Service**

For a number of years Children's Services have contributed to the contract for domestic abuse services in the city. £30k of funding was recently withdrawn but continues to be part of the committed budget for the contract.

4.10 **Future Domestic Abuse Duty provision**

Committee will note that the recently announced funding allocation for 2022/23 of £607,966 is similar to the 2021/22 allocation and it is proposed that officers report back to Committee on recommended spend in line with the DA Strategy as soon as is practicable.

5 ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 The alternative option is for Brighton and Hove to wait for pan – Sussex proposals to develop but this might be a lengthy process which would mean interventions and support for some of the most vulnerable people in the community would be further delayed.

5.2 There is clear evidence of the need for funding for proposals in this report demonstrated by the findings of the needs assessment. The Council is not able to allocate the funding to proposals for which it cannot demonstrate a need.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

6.1. The Strategy was widely consulted on with the public consultation running until December 2021. The needs assessment process engaged with a range of organisations. The needs assessment identified gaps in service provision and where the money should be spent to ensure that BHCC meets its duties under the new Act. The project team engaged with people with lived experience as part of the work to complete the needs assessment.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 The Council has considered a wide range of options to meet the needs of victims and its duties under the terms of the Domestic Abuse Act. This report provides recommendations that the proposed spend meets the terms of the Act, strategic priorities of the Pan Sussex Strategy and local needs and is seeking a decision on how the award of the repurposed funds should be undertaken by officers.

8. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

8.1 The Domestic Abuse Act places local authorities under a legal obligation to provide vital support within safe accommodation to meet the needs of survivors of domestic abuse in their areas, and report back to central government that they have met these obligations. The financial implications are set out in this report and the commitments sought are in line with the funding in place.

8.2 As stated in the previous report to TECC Committee in January, it will be necessary to carry-forward the £0.241m set out in Table 1 of this report (*paragraph 4.5*) and this will be subject to P&R Committee approval in early 2022/23 as part of the council's Targeted Budget Management (TBM) Provisional Outturn report.

Finance Officer Consulted: Michael Bentley

Date: 02/03/22

Legal Implications:

- 8.3 The tendering processes outlined in this report will need to be carried out in accordance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders. The funding which is the subject of this report is Council funding and the restrictions which apply to DLUHC funding do not therefore apply. The funding which will be provided by DLUHC (£607,996) will need to be spent in accordance with the Statutory Guidance referred to in the report and in particular will need to be spent on those in 'relevant' (i.e. safe) accommodation

Lawyer Consulted: Alice Rowland

Date: 02/03/22

Equalities Implications:

Enhancing the service offer seeks to improve accessibility to services. Within both core services and any housing related offer equalities are actively considered to ensure services are available to all. It is recognised that Domestic Abuse disproportionately affects women and women with children. The findings of the needs assessment has informed the findings of Pan-Sussex Strategy for Domestic Abuse Accommodation and Support 2021-2024 which highlights equalities considerations for the region including those with other protected characteristics. A full equalities impact assessment was completed for BHCC prior to the publication of the final version of the strategy.

Sustainability Implications:

None

Appendix 1

A total spend of **£606,288** New Burdens Funding to support implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, has been agreed by Committee in 2021/22 and is detailed in Tables 2 and 3 below.

Table 2

| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| DLUCH Support in Safe Accommodation Agreed Spend September 2021 | |
| Reprovision of the refuge budget | £241,000 |
| Housing Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) This will allow those presenting as victims of domestic abuse to the housing service to be helped to access services and given support at the earliest opportunity. The needs assessment found that often survivors of domestic abuse may move out of a local authority area to a place of safety and the Act requires that those survivors are provided with ongoing support which will be provided via the Housing IDVA. | £30,000 |
| Funding to East Sussex County Council to recruit a Community Engagement Officer to work across the Pan Sussex partnership area to set up a survivor lived experience board. This to will provide training, support briefings and debriefings to representatives for the Pan Sussex partnership board. Officers will also appoint an independent chair for the Pan Sussex Partnership board. The board is a requirement of the Act. | £32,000 |
| Money was also allocated to RISE to continue work providing dispersed accommodation for LGBTQ clients experiencing domestic abuse. This amounted to | £99,962 until September 2022. |
| Interim Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence and VAWG Commissioner | £25,000 |
| Total | £427,962 |

Spend agreed by Committee in November 2021

Table 3

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| DLUCH Support in Safe Accommodation Agreed Spend November 2021 | |
| Sanctuary Scheme option Funding staff salaries and £40,000 for hardware | £70,000 |
| Floating Support Service to include: FS Move on and resettlement support to work with families and individuals as they move to independent accommodation Funding for staff salaries and management costs | £60,000 |
| Interpreters (Increased access to interpreters and BSL) | £30,000 |
| Flexible Fund | £18,326 |
| Total | £178,326 |

