

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

15 SEPTEMBER 2020

REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF OFFICER - FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE

AN IN-HOUSE SERVICE FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to bring the drop in provision and floating support / support in the community elements of Bridgend County Borough Council's (BCBC) funded domestic abuse provision in-house, to be delivered directly by BCBC.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objective / objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-

1. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
2. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 BCBC currently funds a range of domestic abuse services through an externally commissioned contract. The Integrated Domestic Abuse Services contract comprises the following provision:

- Women's refuge
- Move on accommodation
- Drop in provision part of BCBC's 'Assia Suite'
- Floating support / support in the community
- Children and Young Persons Service – this element of the service is an annual option. A decision is made by December each year as to whether provision will continue in the following financial year.

- 3.2 Inclusive of the Children and Young Persons' Service the current annual contract value is £420,371.45. The Integrated Domestic Abuse Services contract is primarily funded by BCBC's Housing Support Grant. The Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate contribute £17,808 to the Children and Young Persons' Service.
- 3.3 Following previous approval from Cabinet on 17th September 2019 to continue service delivery, the current Integrated Domestic Abuse Services contract expires on 30th April 2021.
- 3.4 In addition to the above services, BCBC also directly employs three Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs), who work alongside the external provider of the Integrated Domestic Abuse Services contract as part of the 'Assia Suite'. Two of the IDVAs are funded via BCBC's Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Grant and one funded via BCBC's Housing Support Grant. BCBC IDVAs are managed by a Domestic Abuse Coordinator, funded by the VAWDASV Grant. The team are supported by a Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Coordinator, funded by BCBC through the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Grant.
- 3.5 The current set up allows for IDVA staff to support those victims who are deemed to be more 'high risk' victims of domestic abuse, whilst commissioned provision supports all other referrals.

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 Provision for victims of domestic abuse is key in meeting BCBC's duties under the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 ("the VAWDASV Act"). As detailed above the current externally commissioned contract will come to an end on 30th April 2021. There is now an opportunity to consider how services are delivered and what provision is necessary to ensure provision is of high quality and meets the needs of citizens in the area.
- 4.2 In line with the The VAWDASV Act and subsequent commissioning guidance an independent assessment of need was commissioned in 2019, to help inform need and future commissioning. In addition, a second piece of independent work was completed in early 2020, which reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of existing provision. For the purposes of this report the key findings from these reviews, in respect of the Assia Suite, are detailed below:
- Accessibility of the existing drop in provision at the Assia Suite could be improved. Although suitable for some there could be improvements to privacy and confidentiality. In addition whilst there are some positives to co-location, its Civic Centre location may limit access to some.
 - The current provision is based on levels of risk with high risk Public Protection Notices (PPNs) referred to the IDVA service for intensive support and medium and standard risk PPNs referred to first point of contact / support in the community service delivered by the external provider.

In practice this can mean victims have multiple referrals between the two teams as their assessed level of risk changes. Very few standard PPNs referrals result in individuals taking up an offer of support. In addition the administration of PPNs is extensive and can stretch staff capacity.

- Communication and support between the staff teams in the Assia Suite can be improved.
- There is a lack of awareness of policies and procedures. The separation of team's means there is also not always consistency in this respect.
- Because the IDVA and Support in the Community provision is delivered by different organisations there is limited ability for staff to cover each other, for example to allow for team meetings.
- There are inconsistencies in the knowledge / training of staff. For example IDVA's are experts in the criminal justice system and family law. The separation of the roles i.e. IDVAs and Support Workers can create a hierarchy of knowledge and as such a hierarchy or provision to service users. It should be noted that a BCBC IDVA's salary is approximately £6,000 per year higher than other Support Workers in the Assia Suite.
- The separation of services and roles can cause duplication, communication gaps and inconsistent service provision.

4.3 As can be seen from the points above, the findings from the independent reviews suggest that improvements can be made in the provision delivered through the Assia Suite. Further, some of these issues are caused due to service delivery being undertaken by two separate organisations, with staff of varying roles, experience and knowledge.

4.4 In order to help address these issues and to be able to deliver a needs led, consistent and high quality service it is proposed that the IDVA and current externally commissioned drop in provision and floating support in the community teams are brought together to form a holistic specialist, qualified and experienced team that is managed, in-house by BCBC.

4.5 The current IDVA provision has excellent feedback from service users and stakeholders, who are positive about the service provided. All IDVAs hold the Safe Lives Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) qualification which is recognised as the industry standard.

4.6 Whilst in one team there may be specialisms staff will be able to offer tailored support to high and medium risk survivors based on their need, as well their risk level. Delivering one service will ensure better communication, less duplication and an equal quality of service for all survivors from trained specialists.

4.7 The aim will be for increased engagement with support as there would be fewer referrals between organisations. One team would also ensure parity of pay across

the team and attainment of IDVA qualifications as a condition of employment for all workers, ensuring high quality provision.

- 4.8 With the aim of improving accessibility the new service would provide a flexible approach, with support offered in a variety of venues including community settings and the BCBC Early Help Hubs where possible, together with a focused awareness raising campaign and a variety of access points to the service.
- 4.9 In order to facilitate this change staff from the externally commissioned provider would be transferred to BCBC in line with TUPE arrangements to create a new team, alongside the existing IDVA staff.
- 4.10 The staff in the new team would have the job title Domestic Abuse Prevention Adviser (DAPA). A VAWDASV Service Delivery Manager would replace the existing Domestic Abuse Coordinator post to become the team's operational manager. This post would be funded by the VAWDASV Grant. The existing MARAC Coordinator post will remain and provide administrative support to the team. This post will continue to be funded by the PCC Grant. The proposed staff structure is set out at section 8.4 below.
- 4.11 If the proposals in this report are approved communication to the current externally commissioned provider will take place immediately and the current externally commissioned staff part of the Assia Suite will be offered the opportunity to become BCBC staff. The new team will begin service delivery on 1st May 2021. A restructure will then be undertaken to move all support staff to the DAPA role and the creation of the team structure as set out at 8.4 below.
- 4.12 As this proposal only relates to the Assia Suite elements of existing provision, a separate commissioning exercise will be undertaken for the other elements of existing domestic abuse provision, including accommodation based services / refuge and provision to children and young people. This exercise will allow for continued service delivery of these elements from 1st May 2021.
- 4.13 The reviews of provision detailed above have highlighted gaps in provision, such as specialised services, including for victims of sexual violence and for members of the BAME community and other minority groups. Provision of this nature will be considered on a longer term basis, when funding opportunities arise.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 There is no effect on policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics and an EIA status of low priority is considered appropriate at this stage. As there will be continued provision to service users there will be no expected negative impact in this regard.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 This proposal demonstrates the sustainable development principle by ensuring that by meeting the needs of the present it does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs this is evidenced through the 5 ways of working:
- Long term – the proposal seeks to understand and mitigate the long term implications of domestic violence on victims and their children
 - Prevention – delivering a service based on need as well as risk offers longer term support to prevent future incidents of domestic abuse. It will also help prevent medium and standard risk victims escalating to high risk
 - Integration – the project contributes to the wellbeing goals: an equal Wales, a healthier Wales and Wales of Cohesive communities and to the Wellbeing objectives Supporting communities in Bridgend to be Safe and Cohesive, and Reducing Social and Economic Inequalities and the BCBC corporate priority helping people to be more self reliant
 - Collaboration – the success of the service depends on collaboration with partners, in particular south Wales Police, National Probation Service, Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board
 - Involvement – the independent needs assessment and review referred to at 4.2 included extensive consultation with stakeholders and victims of domestic abuse

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 Whilst included as part of a larger contract, the approximate current spend on the drop in and community based support elements of the Integrated Domestic Abuse contract is £209,000. This is funded via BCBC's Housing Support Grant allocation.
- 8.2 Table 1 below summarises the current staff expenditure on the Assia Suite.

Table 1 Current Cost for Assia Suite		
Expenditure	Amount (including on costs)	Funding Source
Drop In and Floating Support elements of externally commissioned contract	£209,000	HSG
DA Coordinator	£45,224	VAWDASV Grant
IDVA	£32,883	VAWDASV Grant
IDVA	£32,883	VAWDASV Grant
IDVA	£32,883	HSG
MARAC Coordinator	£17,175	PCC Grant
Total Expenditure	£370,048	

- 8.3 As above, in total BCBC spends approximately £370,048 per annum.
- 8.4 Table 2 below shows the cost of the proposed staff structure, following externally commissioned staff being transferred to BCBC and staff moved to a Domestic Abuse

Prevention Adviser (DAPA) Grade, which has been evaluated by BCBC's Job Evaluation process.

Table 2
Proposed Staffing Structure / Funding

Position Title	Contracted Hours	Full Time Equivalent 37 hours	BCBC Grade	Proposed Salary (including on costs at 30%)
Manager	37	1	10	£40,782
DAPA	37	1	8	£32,884
DAPA	37	1	8	£32,884
DAPA	37	1	8	£32,884
DAPA	37	1	8	£32,884
DAPA	37	1	8	£32,884
DAPA	37	1	8	£32,884
DAPA	37	1	8	£32,884
DAPA	37	1	8	£32,884
DAPA	37	1	8	£32,884
Admin/MARAC Coordinator	37	1	5	£25,420

Total Costs (including on costs at 30%) £329,274

- 8.5 As can be seen above, the cost of the proposed new structure does not show an increased expenditure on this part of the service and current predictions show that there will be a reduction of £40,774 in costs to BCBC's Housing Support Grant allocation. This relates purely to the current expenditure on the Assia Suite.
- 8.6 BCBC Human Resources Team have reviewed information provided by the current externally commissioned provider to assess any implications in relation to TUPE and have confirmed that the process will be achievable, to allow for the new team to start provision by 1st May 2021.
- 8.7 As detailed above a tender exercise will need to be undertaken for other elements of delivery, including accommodation based services / refuge and children and young person's services. These costs will not be known until a tender exercise is completed, and there is a risk these could be higher than currently. Further reports will be brought back to Cabinet as appropriate.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Approves bringing the drop in provision and floating support / support in the community service, which is currently part of the Integrated Domestic Abuse Services contract, in-house; and
- Approves the development of a new needs led first point of contact / support in the community service for victims of domestic abuse that will be delivered in

house by staff employed by BCBC, which the drop in provision and floating support/support in the community service will form part of.

Gill Lewis

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Background documents: None