

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

20 OCTOBER 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, and develop 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.

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 contributes £17,808 to the Children and Young Persons' service. Other partners include Welsh Government and the Police and Crime Commissioner who make a financial contribution to support the provision of domestic abuse services in Bridgend.
- 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. There is no further scope to extend the existing contract. Arrangements are required to be put into place to improve accessibility and reduce duplication of services for those living and working in Bridgend. Longer term there is a commitment to explore the modelling and commissioning of regional services across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Region and Bridgend.
- 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. Bridgend now comes within the revised Cwm Taf Morgannwg regional footprint and as such scope for regional planning and commissioning is in its infancy. It is noted that there are areas of concern in relation to the current delivery model in Bridgend and that this needs to change to ensure victims are in receipt of the best services possible.
- 4.2 In line with the The VAWDASV Act and subsequent commissioning guidance an independent assessment of need was commissioned in 2019 by Safer Merthyr Tydfil on behalf of the Bridgend VAWDASV partnership, the Bridgend VAWDASV Needs Assessment, 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, the Review of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence services in Bridgend, commissioned by BCBC.
- 4.3 Both the needs assessment and the review of existing provision were carried out by the same independent Domestic Abuse Consultant.

- 4.4 The findings of the review of existing provision were reached after consultation with key professional stakeholders, analysis of the Bridgend's VAWDASV population needs assessment and commissioning guidance. The review provided an overview of current VAWDASV provision in Bridgend County. It provided recommendations on future VAWDASV commissioning based on academic research and evidence of good practice nationally.
- 4.5 The review also provided background briefing information on good practice in commissioning from national VAWDASV sector quality standards and Government endorsed commissioning guidelines. Sector standards and ensuring safe, effective practice will remain a key consideration for this proposal.
- 4.6 As the review of existing provision is considered commercially sensitive it was not widely shared. However it was shared with the existing service provider and with members of Cwm Taf Morgannwg Commissioning teams.
- 4.7 The methodology for the VAWDASV needs assessment was informed by the guidance and checklists in the Tackling Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: A Collaborative Commissioning Toolkit for Services in Wales, issued by Lloyds Bank Foundation in August 2016, and supported by Welsh Government and the more recent Guidance for the Commissioning of VAWDASV Services in Wales, issued by the Welsh Government in December 2018.
- 4.8 Fifteen interviews were held with specialist providers in Bridgend and neighbouring regions and public sector representatives and commissioners in Bridgend. This included representatives from Calan DVS, New Pathways, Barnardo's, BAWSO, Supporting People Commissioning Team, the local authority Independent Domestic Advisor team, Housing and Homelessness, Family Support Services, Children and Families teams, the MARAC Chair, sector colleagues in England and Wales, Welsh Women's Aid and the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance.
- 4.9 Interviews and focus groups were held with 17 service users from Calan DVS (who currently provide the Integrated Domestic Abuse Services contract) and New Pathways, the largest independent, specialist sexual violence support services provider in Wales. An online and paper survey for survivors and individuals was also circulated via these and other voluntary and statutory sector agencies in the area.
- 4.10 Forty-one people responded to the survey, only three of which had not accessed support services themselves. The majority of respondents had experienced domestic violence, coercive control and psychological abuse.
- 4.11 The Bridgend Needs Assessment was shared with the Bridgend and Cwm Taf Morgannwg VAWDASV steering groups.
- 4.12 The Bridgend Needs Assessment together with the Needs Assessment for Cwm Taf Morgannwg (ie RCT and Merthyr) were used to inform the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Commissioning Strategy Advisory Report.
- 4.13 The Bridgend Needs Assessment and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Commissioning Strategy Advisory Report were approved by Bridgend Community Safety

Partnership at their meeting on 10th June 2019 and by Bridgend Public Services Board at their meeting on 17th June 2019.

4.14 Membership of these boards covers all the agencies outlined in the VAWDASV Act.

4.15 For the purposes of this report the key findings from the Bridgend Needs Assessment and the review of existing provision , 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 PPN 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 disparity between the level of awareness of policies and procedures, safe practice and, as a result, differing levels of support and low staff morale. The separation of teams 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 IDVAs are trained to have an understanding of the criminal justice system and family law, the impact of domestic violence and abuse and act as the victims advocate. The separation of the roles i.e. IDVAs and Support Workers can create a hierarchy of knowledge and as such a hierarchy of provision to service users.
- The separation of services and roles can cause duplication, communication gaps and inconsistent service provision.

4.16 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.

- 4.17 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, trauma informed qualified and experienced team that is managed in-house by BCBC.
- 4.18 This will provide the opportunity to reduce duplication and seek to ensure that pathways to other services are strengthened to improve victim experience.
- 4.19 The new service will provide a single point of contact and assessment for victims with one worker supporting the victim through their journey irrespective of level of risk.
- 4.20 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.
- 4.21 The current BCBC IDVA provision has received 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.
- 4.22 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 the service in this way will ensure better communication, less duplication and an equal quality of service for all survivors. Service users will be allocated a worker who will provide a package of support designed to meet their needs. That worker will remain with the service user until their safety plan is complete.
- 4.23 The aim will be for increased engagement and support as there would be fewer referrals between organisations. One team would also ensure parity of pay across the team and attainment of IDVA and other relevant qualifications as a condition of employment for all workers, ensuring high quality provision.
- 4.24 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.
- 4.25 Details on job descriptions and person specifications for the new roles are still under consideration. It is proposed that the roles will have a more generic title, for example Domestic Abuse Prevention Advisor (DAPA), to reflect the breadth of skills and experience needed to undertake the role. 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.

- 4.26 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 section 8.4 below.
- 4.27 It should be noted that this proposal only relates to the Assia Suite elements of existing provision; a separate commissioning exercise will be undertaken for the other elements of the 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.
- 4.28 The proposed in-house service will be established in line with the sector specialist quality standards to maximise safety and access to support for victims. In-house provision and subsequently commissioned services will be expected to demonstrate adherence to the relevant standards.
- 4.29 The reviews of provision detailed above have highlighted other gaps in provision, such as specialised services, including for victims of sexual violence and for members of the BAME community and other minority groups. These gaps are being considered on a longer term basis and will be considered as part of our work with local and regional VAWDASV Strategic Partnerships.
- 4.30 Discussions are ongoing to identify scope for a regional approach to the provision of support to people who are less likely to access support, including older people, male victims, LGBTQ, Gypsies and Travellers and BAME Communities . A proposed model includes outreach workers located in each of the local authority areas. In this way, survivors of less-common crimes such as trafficking, FGM, forced marriage and so called 'honour'-based violence, can access specialist support regardless of where they live.
- 4.31 Other joint regional commissioning arrangements for services for victims are being explored. These will include sexual violence, and child sexual abuse in particular, as these commonly impact on survivors' mental and physical health across the life course.
- 4.32 The proposed service will be delivered in house whilst the discussions outlined in sections 4.29 to 4.31 in relation to a regional approach to commissioning are undertaken.

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 section 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 (HSG) 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 shown in the table above, in total BCBC currently 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 Equiv 37 hours	BCBC Grade	Proposed Salary including on costs 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 (including the drop-in and floating support/support in the community service, out reach surgeries) service for victims of domestic abuse that will be delivered in house by staff employed by BCBC,.

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Background documents:

The Bridgend Needs Assessment

The Review of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Services in Bridgend,