

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	23 JUNE 2026
Report Title:	REMODELLING OF DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	JADE JONES – CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONING & SUFFICIENCY LEAD KIRSTY WILLIAMS - PARTNERSHIP & COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	This report requests a suspension of the tendering requirements of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs).
Executive Summary:	This report seeks Cabinet approval to directly award a 12-month contract, with the option to extend for an additional 12 months, to the provider, Safer Merthyr Tydfil, for the continued delivery of specialist domestic abuse services. The service provides recovery focused support for children, young people and women affected by domestic abuse. The proposed award will ensure continuity of support whilst a comprehensive review of future domestic abuse service arrangements is undertaken in collaboration with key partners, including consideration of integration, whole family approaches and future delivery models.

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- **Seek approval from Cabinet to suspend the relevant parts of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs) in relation to the requirement to tender for the provision of domestic abuse support services; and**

- Delegate authority to the Head of Service, Children and Family Support Services, to enter into a 12-month contract, with the option to extend for a further 12 months, with the current commissioned provider of domestic abuse services to ensure continuity of provision whilst a wider service review into future delivery models is undertaken.

2. Background

- 2.1 Children and Family Services has commissioned specialist domestic abuse support services since 2021 in recognition of the significant impact domestic abuse has on individuals and families. The service was established to provide targeted interventions to support recovery and improve outcomes for children, young people and women affected by domestic abuse in Bridgend.
- 2.2 The commissioned service includes two key elements:
 - evidence-based support for children and young people who have witnessed and/or directly experienced domestic abuse and require therapeutic intervention to recover from trauma; and
 - interventions for women who have experienced domestic abuse to support recovery, promote change and rebuild independence.
- 2.3 Following a recommissioning exercise in 2024, a one-year contract was awarded to Safer Merthyr Tydfil commencing on 1 October 2024, with an option to extend for a further 12 months. The current contractual arrangements are due to expire on 30 September 2026.
- 2.4 Domestic abuse continues to be a significant and recurring feature within safeguarding activity across the Council. Data relating to children requiring care and support demonstrates the prevalence and impact of domestic abuse within families. At 31st March 2025, domestic abuse was identified as a contributing factor in over 40% of cases where children were subject to Child Protection Plans.
- 2.5 Elements of the review have already taken place as part of a recent “Becoming Looked After” audit, that identified domestic abuse as a consistent feature across families where children enter care. The audit also highlighted limited evidence of domestic abuse services being consistently accessed or embedded within plans, indicating a gap between identified need and intervention.
- 2.6 This position is further supported through the Family Support Commissioning Strategy, which highlights the need to strengthen and improve the provision of domestic abuse services, particularly in relation to early intervention, whole-family support and reducing escalation to statutory services.
- 2.7 The Council’s Assia Service provides the Council’s core domestic abuse offer, including advice, support, and referrals into specialist provision. However, this service is primarily focused on support for adults and does not include support for children and young people. Consequently, commissioned services currently represent the main source of specialist support available to children and families impacted by domestic abuse.

- 2.8 The current commissioned contract provides delivery of three specific programmes, (Freedom Programme, Recovery Toolkit and Own My Life), offering nine programmes per year for women who have experienced domestic abuse. However, demand for support continues to exceed available programme capacity. In response, the Assia Service has supplemented provision by delivering additional face to face recovery programmes to help meet identified need.
- 2.9 Although the existing arrangements provide valuable support for survivors and children and young people, the delivery is currently fragmented. This creates challenges in ensuring a fully coordinated and joined-up approach across services, alongside limited ability to comprehensively evaluate impact / outcomes and the sustainability of interventions.

3. Current situation/ proposal

- 3.1 Given the prevalence of domestic abuse within safeguarding activity, fragmented delivery, findings from recent internal audit activity, and priorities identified within the Family Support Commissioning Strategy, it is considered necessary to undertake a comprehensive review of the current domestic abuse service before determining future commissioning and delivery models. Domestic abuse is a complex and cross-cutting issue requiring a coordinated multi-agency response to deliver integrated support pathways and improved outcomes for families.
- 3.2 The review will take a minimum of six months and require sustained commitment from partners. Through collaborative analysis of needs, trends, gaps and best practice. The review will therefore explore options to enhance and, where appropriate, remodel provision to better meet needs, while strengthening early intervention, prevention, whole-family support.
- 3.3 To achieve this, the scale and scope of the review will require sustained commitment from partners across Health, Housing, Education and the Community Safety Partnership, supporting a whole-system and One Council approach to deliver transformational change and improved outcomes for families and survivors. A dedicated project team will be established to oversee and drive the review, including the development of a future delivery model.
- 3.4 Procurement timelines indicate a minimum of nine to twelve months to reprocur services, including pre-market engagement, development of service specifications and contractual terms, and the subsequent advertisement, award and mobilisation phases.
- 3.5 The scale of ambition extends beyond a fixed review period and seeks to influence wider whole-system change, driving a more preventative model of support rather than responding at the point of crisis. Achieving this requires sufficient time and sustained commitment to enable meaningful engagement with partners and the development of a transformed approach that improves outcomes for individuals and families at risk of, or experiencing, domestic abuse.

- 3.6 Maintaining the current provider during the review period is considered necessary to ensure continued access to specialist support whilst future arrangements are considered. This report therefore asks Cabinet to suspend the Council's Contract Procedure Rules in relation to requiring tenders to be sought and in particular CPR 8.2.3 which requires, in relation to contracts for services which are over £100,000 in value, a minimum of three quotations to be requested from businesses, preferably registered on Sell2Wales.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions.
- 4.2 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, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 A summary of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 assessment is listed below:

Long-term	The service focuses on sustainable recovery and improved long-term outcomes for families impacted by domestic abuse. Therapeutic interventions for children and young people help address the lasting effects of trauma, while support for women promotes resilience, independence and stability, reducing likelihood of repeat crisis intervention and longer term dependency on statutory services.
Prevention	By providing early support and targeted interventions, the service seeks to prevent the escalation and intergenerational impact of domestic abuse. Supporting children and young people at an early stage helps mitigate adverse childhood experiences and reduces the risk of future harm, poor mental health and involvement with statutory services.
Integration	The service forms part of a wider domestic abuse support system and operates alongside statutory and voluntary sector services. The proposed extension will enable continued alignment between these services. The review period will provide an opportunity to assess how services can be better integrated across partner agencies and pathways, with a focus on improving accessibility, reducing duplication and strengthening outcomes for survivors of domestic abuse.

Collaboration The proposed continuation of the service will support continued collaborative working between the Council, the commissioned provider and key partner agencies in responding to domestic abuse. The review of the future service model will be undertaken with key partners to ensure that future arrangements are informed by shared priorities, local need, evidence of effectiveness and opportunities for joint working.

Involvement The review of the future domestic abuse service model will seek to ensure that the views and experiences of survivors, children and young people are considered in the development of future commissioning arrangements. Continuation of the existing service will also ensure that current service users remain supported and able to contribute feedback on service effectiveness and emerging needs during the review period. Engagement with practitioners, partner agencies and community organisations will further support the development of a future model.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 6.1 The proposed continuation of the commissioned domestic abuse service is not anticipated to have any direct adverse climate change or nature implications. Continuation of the existing service model will maintain current levels of delivery and operational activity, with no material increase in emissions, resource consumption or environmental impact.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 The service plays a significant role in supporting the Council's safeguarding responsibilities by providing specialist interventions for children, young people and women affected by domestic abuse. The support delivered to children and young people contributes to reducing trauma, improving emotional wellbeing and promoting recovery from adverse childhood experiences.
- 7.2 Continuation of the service will ensure that vulnerable children and families continue to have access to timely, evidence-based support whilst the wider review of future service provision is undertaken. The service also supports early intervention and prevention activity, helping reduce escalation of risk and the potential need for more intensive statutory intervention.
- 7.3 The Council, in its role as Corporate Parent, recognises that care experienced children and young people may be disproportionately affected by domestic abuse and trauma. Continuation of specialist support services therefore contributes to the Council's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare, stability and wellbeing of children and young people, including those with corporate parenting status.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The current annual contract value is £181,035. The total value over the full contract period is £362,070.

- 8.2 Funding options for 2026-27 and 2027-28 are currently being explored, including the use of Children's and Communities Grant funding and Housing Support Grant funding. Should external funding not be secured, any resulting shortfall will be met from existing Social Services and Wellbeing directorate budgets.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Approve the suspension of the relevant parts of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules to enable the award of a further 12-month contract to Safer Merthyr Tydfil, with the option to extend for an additional 12 months if required.
- Delegate authority to the Head of Children and Family Services, to approve the final terms of the Contract on behalf of the Council.
- Note that an options appraisal will be developed, with any future decisions subject to further approval in accordance with the Council's governance processes.

Background documents

None