
SUPPORTING PEOPLE SERVICE FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Veronica Copeland,
Adult Services Portfolio**

Responsible Director - Murray Rose, Director of People

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval from Council to waive Contract Procedure Rules to allow officers to re-contract with the existing contractor, Family Help, for the provision of Housing Related Support in the refuge, for victims of domestic abuse. To facilitate the re-modelling and improvement of services through negotiation and by setting predetermined outcome focussed targets.

Summary

2. During 2010 the Supporting People Team carried out a strategic review of services, funded through the Supporting People Programme, for victims of Domestic Abuse. During this review, extensive consultation was undertaken with service providers, clients, voluntary organisations working with the clients and statutory agencies.
3. Family Help, a local third sector organisation, have delivered this essential and discrete accommodation based provision for many years in the borough. The service offers good value for money and is of a high standard. Based on the current information available regarding costs, service outcomes and benchmarking, there would be no financial gain in putting this service through a tendering process. Added to this is the fact that the refuge delivers holistic support to its clients and Supporting People is only one of a number of funding streams going into the project. Within Darlington the project has a very good reputation and has over the years forged very strong links within the community and the agencies working within the borough. Having taken this into consideration it is proposed that officers should negotiate with Family Help to re-contract for the provision of Housing Related Support within the refuge.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) Members accept the strategic findings of the review and agree to waive Contract Procedure Rules, thereby allowing the Supporting People Team to improve and re-model services through negotiation with the existing external support provider and re-

contract with them, for a contract period of three years, with an annual contract price of £93,662 for the continued provision of Housing Related Support.

Reasons

5. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-
- (a) To obtain good quality, value for money services for victims of Domestic Abuse.
 - (b) Reflect the outcome of consultation to remodel the services through negotiation.
 - (c) This is a specialist secure service that does not benefit from normal procurement providing value for money and quality of services are maintained.

Murray Rose
Director of People

Background Papers

- (i) A Strategic Review of Supporting People Services in Darlington
- (ii) Supporting People Commissioning Strategy

Denise Rudkin : Extension 2284
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S17 Crime and Disorder	Contributes to providing safe and secure accommodation for vulnerable women.
Health and Well Being	The provision of housing related support for victims of Domestic Abuse extends their potential for independent living.
Carbon Impact	There is no carbon impact associated with the re-modelling of these services.
Diversity	The Council's duties arising from its statutory obligations, under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations and Sex Discrimination Acts have been complied with.
Wards Affected	Individuals accessing services funded by Supporting People could be from all wards.
Groups Affected	Victims of Domestic Abuse.
Budget and Policy Framework	The report does not propose changes to the budget or policy framework but requires Council approval
Key Decision	This is not an executive decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an executive decision.
Efficiency	The services delivered as a result of the service review will give continued value for money, maintaining frontline support and having support focussed on positive outcomes
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The re-modelling of services contributes to the Healthier and Safer Darlington themes.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Background

6. The current Refuge, which supports women who are or have been victims of Domestic Abuse, has been in operation in Darlington for over 34 years. The scheme moved to its' current building in 2003, which was purpose built on the site of the original refuge. Family Help, a local charity, is the organisation which provides the refuge support service. The organisation is well known throughout the town and has an excellent reputation with its key stakeholders.
7. The current contract for the provision of housing related support to victims of Domestic Abuse ends in March 2011. As part of the strategic review that was undertaken in 2010 by Supporting People, a number of options were examined in relation to the re-commissioning of services. The key findings from the review were that services for victims of Domestic Abuse should:-
 - (a) Be available to all victims and should have the ability to work as a cross boundary service.
 - (b) Have eligibility criteria, which would result in services being directed to the people who need them most.
 - (c) Be flexible, address diverse needs, promote equality and inclusion and be sensitive to people's needs.
 - (d) Provide good value for money.
 - (e) Be outcome focussed.
8. The review was reported to the Supporting People Commissioning Body, made up of Senior officers from Adult and Children's services as well as representatives from health, probation and the third sector, who accepted these findings and a number of recommendations were made. These were to:-
 - (a) Continue to financially support the provision of a refuge within Darlington.
 - (b) Work with providers to develop service descriptions, which are uniform and easily understood.
 - (c) Consider alternative options to the tendering process having regard to the specialist nature of the services where appropriate, including seeking a waiver to Contract Procedure Rules and negotiating with existing providers.
 - (d) To ensure that services deliver Value for Money
9. As a result of these recommendations, a new service specification has been developed by the Supporting People Team, which can be used as the basis of any future negotiations with the service provider.

Service Delivery and Outcomes

10. The refuge supports women and their children who are victims of Domestic Abuse. They have a wide support network which is made up of paid staff and volunteers.
11. The refuge currently has 8 units of accommodation. However, due to the way in which the building was designed, where necessary it can accommodate slightly more women if required. In the year 2009/10 the refuge accommodated 69 women and 84 children. The household units were occupied 2909 nights out of 2920.
12. Using the outcome data provided the refuge achieved the following in 2009/10:-
 - (a) **Move on:** 90% of the clients accessing the service achieved positive move on when they left the refuge.
 - (b) **Utilisation:** There was 99% utilisation of the service.
 - (c) **Economic wellbeing:** 75% of clients identified maximising income as their key support need, and 93% of clients had this need met.
 - (d) **Enjoy and achieve :** 70% of clients identified making links with external groups as one of their key support needs, and 90% of clients had this need met.
 - (e) **Being Healthy :** 59% of clients identified Physical Health needs as their key support need, and 83% of clients had this need met.
 - (f) **Staying Safe :** 75% of clients identified having settled accommodation as their key support need, and 80% had this need met.
 - (g) **Making a positive contribution :** 71% of clients identified more involvement in the service and wider community as their key support need. and 89% of clients had this need met.

Value for Money

13. Using regional benchmarking data, the weekly unit cost of the refuge is the second lowest in the region at £223 per week and the hourly unit cost is also in the lower quartile.
14. In reviewing the service delivered by Family Help there was consistently good feedback on the service delivered and also the Supporting People Team recognise the organisation as one which continually strives to deliver a high quality service and to improve the service and support available to its' clients.

Outcome of Consultation

15. A range of key partners and clients were consulted as part of the strategic review. These included:
 - (a) Providers of support.
 - (b) Current and past clients.
 - (c) Voluntary organisations working with clients.
 - (d) Statutory agencies, such as Health and Adult Social Services.
16. Taking all the above factors into consideration it is the view of the Supporting People Team that there would be limited benefit in conducting a tender exercise for the provision of a

refuge for the Victims of Domestic Abuse. Given the very sensitive nature of this particular service, the benefits of re-negotiating with the existing provider, who is well known and highly regarded across the borough, far outweigh any benefit which might be achieved by a tendering exercise. Using the benchmarking data available, the service offers better value for money for clients than other accommodation services in the region for this client group.

17. Under these circumstances it is more appropriate to re-contract with the existing support provider, utilising focussed outcomes and key performance indicators as opposed to undertaking a procurement exercises