



19 April 2021

Agenda Item: 6

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

COMMENCEMENT AND THE FIRST YEAR OF THE DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORT SERVICES 2020/2021

Purpose of the Report

A new contract for Nottinghamshire Domestic Abuse Support Services commenced in April 2020. As part of the work programme for the Finance and Major Contracts Management Committee a review of this contract was requested. The purpose of this paper is to provide:

1. A summary of the Domestic Abuse Support Services progress during 2020/21 and the flexibilities provided by the contracting arrangements.
2. Inform Committee of the finances to be received from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to deliver the domestic abuse duty.

Information

Background

3. The objective of the domestic abuse services is to reduce the impact of Domestic Abuse in Nottinghamshire through the provision of appropriate, high quality services and support for women, men and children who are experiencing domestic abuse or whose lives have been adversely affected by domestic abuse. The Finance and Major Contracts Committee requested a review of the progress of the contract for the Nottinghamshire Domestic Abuse Support Service that was awarded in April 2020.

Strategic Context

4. Tackling domestic abuse is a strategic priority for both the Safer Nottinghamshire Board and the Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board. The Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee gave approval in April 2019 to tender for Domestic Abuse services.
5. Domestic Abuse services are funded and jointly commissioned by Nottinghamshire County Council and the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to a value of £1.4m per annum on a four-year extendable contract. The annual contract investment from the Authority is £970,259.

Outcome of procurement process in April 2020

6. The outcome of the procurement in April 2020 saw Domestic Abuse Community Service provision awarded to Nottinghamshire Women's Aid (NWAL) and Juno Women's Aid (Juno). Both providers established independent contracts with Equation to provide a community men's provision. There was also a direct award for the 24-hour Helpline to Juno.
7. A "framework agreement" contract was established enabling flexibility for the authority to commission additional services as capacity and funding allowed.

Service delivery

8. The services mobilised during the first wave of Covid-19. As contractual arrangements had been completed together with the expertise, competence and local experience of the providers, this resulted in the new contracts commencing on time with continuity of provision.
9. The service delivery model includes the administration of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)¹, the Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) providing individual support for high risk women, the local 24-hour Helpline, specialist support for children as victims of adult-to-adult abuse, as well as, support as victims in their own teenage relationships. Also, localised refuge provision and a range of promotion and prevention awareness raising support, and training provision for professionals.
10. New Covid-secure virtual models of service delivery were rapidly put in place, along with the necessary IT equipment for staff to commence home working and to adhere to government guidelines and maintain staff safety. The majority of service provision moved to virtual (non face to face) operating models wherever possible. These models have included the MARACs successfully switching to a secure on-line offer; support services delivered over the phone; and group dropins set up on Microsoft Teams/Zoom. The switch to virtual working has enabled an increase in the number of survivors being supported.

Outcomes

11. Between April 2020 to the end of December 2020 the community domestic abuse services supported over 1,900 survivors, 99% of whom were women.
12. With access to other support routes curtailed due to Covid 19, survivors have relied on the commissioned local helpline for advice and support during the lockdowns. Graph 1 shows the increases in calls to the Nottinghamshire/ Nottingham Juno 24-hour free phone helpline in 2020 compared to 2019. Additional emergency Covid-funding enabled Juno to improve capacity to avoid missed calls. The other provider NWAL, refuge services and other community domestic abuse services have also managed direct calls for support.

¹ A Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a partnership meeting where high risk cases are discussed to improve survivor safety.

Graph 1 Juno 24-hour free phone domestic and sexual violence and abuse helpline 2019 and 2020



13. Equation have led a cross organisation promotion group to support the consistency of media messages. The messages were: exiting an abusive domestic environment takes precedence over the 'lockdown' restrictions, local help is readily accessible, and a range of different support options are available.

The Contract and Contract monitoring

14. The framework contract has enabled additional resources to be incorporated within the contract encompassing the national emergency funding. A block contract provided the organisations financial reassurance that payments would not be jeopardised by incorporating new flexibility to the service offer.

15. Six monthly reporting on the contracts' performance is provided to Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee. Partnership sectoral oversight of the providers is provided by the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Executive (DSA Exec), chaired by the Director/Consultant of Public Health. The DSA Exec is a sub-group of the Safer Nottinghamshire Board.

16. Public Health contract review meetings provide the performance oversight for this contract. Performance reports from providers are received in advance of each meeting. These review meetings are organised jointly between the Authority and the OPCC along with the three service providers. The open format facilitates engaged discussion, supports problem solving and sector wide quality improvements.

17. In January 2021, a joint virtual quality assurance meeting was held between all three providers and commissioners (NCC and OPCC) which focussed on safeguarding. In addition to the overall oversight discussions with each of the provider's chief executives, smaller virtual meetings were held with staff to share their experiences of delivering the service during Covid-19, as well as the challenges experienced from the survivors.

18. As part of continuing improvement it has been identified that within the children's provision, some children initially choose not to access the virtual support, opting to wait for face to face

tailored provision. As the services developed, however, with the electronic offer becoming well-tailored to their specialist needs, services have seen increasing numbers of children engaged. In terms of the advocate court service, the full range of support immediately prior to a hearing has not been possible. Importantly also, the survivor group support initiative, 'the Freedom Programme' whilst developing a virtual offer, has seen many women choosing to defer the offer until group face to face is resumed. This has led to an expanding waiting list. Similarly, the preventative and engagement initiatives with young people in schools has not been possible. Public Health commissioners are working with services to develop these offers as social distancing requirements allow.

New Domestic Abuse Bill 2021

19. The Domestic Abuse Bill will place new duties on NCC for which Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has provided funding to the value of £1,540,091 in the first year. A report on arrangements for discharging this new duty will be brought to Adults Social Care and Public Health Committee later in 2021.
20. The domestic abuse duty and this 2021/22 MHCLG financial grant provides an opportunity to strengthen domestic abuse support provision in safe accommodation for Nottinghamshire. The first step towards this will be to undertake an assessment of the need relating to the provision of safe accommodation which will inform the development of a commissioning plan.

Reasons for Recommendations

21. To update Committee, as requested, on the progress of the Domestic Abuse support services contract
22. To inform committee members of the finances being received from MHCLG

Statutory and Policy Implications

23. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

24. The Public Health annual budget available to invest in the Domestic Abuse Support Service is £1.4m (£970,259 from the authority), with further funding to be invested as part of the new mandated duties (£1.54m).

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is RECOMMENDED that Committee:

- Comment on the progress made by domestic abuse providers during 2020/21 and the flexibilities provided by the contracting arrangements.
- Acknowledge the receipt of the financial allocation to deliver the domestic abuse duty.
- Consider any further actions

Rebecca Atchinson
Senior Public Health and Commissioning Manager
Rebecca.atchinson@nottscc.gov.uk

Sue Coleman
Public Health and Commissioning Manager
Sue.coleman@nottscc.gov.uk

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Michael Fowler
Category Manager, Procurement
T: 0115 9774360
E: michael1.fowler@nottscc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (EP 26/03/2021)

25. The Finance and Major Contracts Management Committee is the appropriate body to consider this report. If Committee resolves that further actions are required it should ensure that such actions are within its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (DG 30/03/21)

26. The original budget for this service was £1.44m (NCC contribution £0.97m). MHCLG have allocated £1.54m to NCC for the provision of safe accommodation, in relation to the new statutory duties.

Background Papers and Published Documents

27. Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.