

## **DELIVERING THERAPEUTIC SUPPORT TO SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE**

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To outline the Nottinghamshire approach to deliver therapeutic support to domestic abuse survivors (women, men, and children) and to gain approval for the procurement process and awarding of contracts to ensure therapeutic support is available across the County.

### **Information**

#### **Background**

2. The [Domestic Abuse Act \(2021\)](#) was established to help transform the response to domestic abuse, helping to prevent offending and protect survivors by ensuring they have the support they need. There is a statutory duty on local authorities in England to provide safe accommodation and support to survivors of domestic abuse and their children. . Within the Domestic Abuse Act and the subsequent [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance \(2022\)](#) there is an expectation that therapeutic support will be available to support survivors on their recovery journey.
3. Therapeutic support is required due to the complex trauma survivors of domestic abuse experience throughout and after their relationships end. This trauma is often deep rooted and affects how survivors see themselves and experience the world. Therapy requires survivors to be at the right time and place in their recovery journey to address the impact of the abuse on their emotional health and to move on positively with their lives. This helps survivors engage in self-reflection and growth in a safe space, allowing them to heal.
4. There are many different types of therapeutic support available including;
  - Counselling
  - Group programmes that are evidence based
  - Creative and play for children and young people
  - Singing and yoga.
5. All programmes focus on recovery and are built around the survivors' needs.

## **Nottinghamshire's approach**

6. Therapeutic support is a developing area of the County's domestic abuse support commissioning intentions. Within the County, Nottinghamshire Women's Aid, Juno Women's Aid and Equation are commissioned under the Domestic Abuse Support Services Framework 2020-2028 to provide domestic abuse support services. The Framework approach allows direct contracting of activity which aligns with the Framework.
7. Domestic abuse commissioned services have recognised the importance of delivering trauma informed therapeutic approaches within their services and have been encouraged to expand these with the additional Domestic Abuse Duty funding. For full details of the existing commissioning please see Appendix A.
8. A grant funded process was implemented in 2022/23 to inform Public Health commissioners of additional need and provide further therapeutic support to men, women, and children for a 6-month period. This was to assist in the reduction of waiting lists for counselling services that had developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. A light touch, competitive process was developed to award funding under a grant process which provided funding for six months only. Two organisations were successful;
  - We are Here delivered the women and children and young people programmes.
  - Nottingham Counselling Service delivered the men's programme.
9. The grant funding was restrictive and could not be extended, requiring Public Health commissioners to develop a long-term commissioning plan for counselling services. In developing the approach a [Mental Health Deep Dive](#) was commissioned by Public Health and delivered by Professors in Gender Violence at Sheffield University in March 2023.
10. The Mental Health Deep Dive was conducted over a 12-week period and predominantly a qualitative approach with focus groups and one to one sessions with local stakeholders. The aim was to gain an overview of current provision and to identify gaps and challenges to inform future commissioning. The research identified four key findings:
  - Interpretation of the Act (part 4)- there was a lack of clarity on the term 'safe accommodation' and the influence this has on services available to survivors.
  - Commissioning of Services – too little over too short a space of time which does not meet the increasing demand for services.
  - Understanding client need and responding – there are gaps in the current provision and a diminishing group of providers particularly for children and young people. Services for men and women within statutory providers such as the NHS have extensive waiting lists and are not always appropriate.
  - Providing trauma-informed care – understanding trauma informed care and what is offered locally could result in better outcomes for survivors.

11. In 2024/5 Public Health commissioners then developed a long-term plan to procure Counselling services to address the identified gaps in service provision and allocated £200,000 from the Domestic Abuse duty funding.

12. Following discussions with colleagues in Procurement, Legal and Finance it was agreed that a standard open tender process would be required to procure these services at the stated values and contract length, set out below in Table 1. A specification has been drafted for each service to reflect the needs of each of the survivor groups. The intended start date for these contracts is 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025.

13. Table 1: Therapeutic Support Services to be procured in Autumn 2024.

Service to be commissioned	Timeframe	Allocated Funding
<i>Therapeutic support for women</i>	<i>2024 – 2028 (2+2 years)</i>	<i>£80,000</i>
<i>Therapeutic support for children and young people</i>	<i>2024 – 2028 (2+2 years)</i>	<i>£80,000</i>
<i>Therapeutic support for men</i>	<i>2024 – 2028 (2+2 years)</i>	<i>£40,000</i>
<i>Total contract value</i>		<i>£200,000</i>

14. The services will enhance the existing services provided by the Domestic Abuse Commissioned Services and will be evidence based and quality assured.

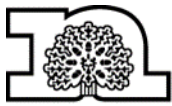
15. Commissioners are seeking approval to start the procurement process and award contracts to the successful bidders in the winter 2024. Commissioners are keen to start and complete the procurement before the new Procurement Act 2023 comes into effect on 24 February 2025 to avoid having to restart the process and due to the high demand for this provision.

### Options Appraisal

16. The following table outlines the options considered during the scoping of this procurement project.

Table 2: Options Appraisal

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
A) Do Nothing	Financial saving by not providing further counselling services for survivors	Survivors may struggle to access counselling services and waiting lists may increase as demand grows. This could delay recovery, put further strain on other health services and increase costs to the system.



<p>B) Commission a new service.</p>	<p>Secures counselling provision for a longer period enabling more survivors a greater level of access and choice to the therapy and counselling they require. Supports smaller specialist providers by enabling them to apply for the contract, sustaining the diminishing pool of counselling providers in Nottinghamshire.</p>	<p>Time and costs associated with conducting an open tender exercise.</p>
<p>C) Undertake a new short-term grant funded approach.</p>	<p>Shorter process to gain new provision for a limited time period.</p>	<p>Can only be for a short period of time for up to £25,000. This is not a long-term option. Difficult to mobilise and there is no sustainability for service provision.</p>
<p>D) Issue further funds to existing commissioned providers under the framework agreement to offer more counselling hours.</p>	<p>This can be done quickly so will save time and provide opportunity to the existing providers.</p>	<p>The existing providers may not have the ability to expand their provision. Does not offer a different service option or choice for survivors. There is a limit to how much additional value can be added under the framework agreement.</p>

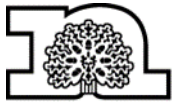
**Reason for Recommendations**

17. To provide a greater level of choice and access to counselling for women, men and children who are survivors of domestic abuse to enable them to recover from trauma and move on positively with their lives.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

18. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health is asked to;

- 1) Acknowledge the progress and need to deliver therapeutic support programmes for domestic abuse survivors.



- 2) Approve the commencement of an open tender process and subsequent award of contracts for the provision of the services detailed in paragraph 13 of the report for a period of up to four years.

**Constitutional Comments (LPW 18.09.2024)**

19. The recommendations fall within the remit of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health by virtue of their terms of reference.

**Finance Comments (PAA29 13.9.2024)**

20. As set out in paragraph 13 of the report, a sum of £200,000 has been allocated to meet the cost of these therapeutic support services over the next four years. This is to be met from the Council's Domestic Abuse Duty funding allocation from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government which for 2024/25 is £1,604,968.

For further information please contact:

**Rebecca Atchinson**, Senior Public Health and Commissioning Manager

[Rebecca.atchinson@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:Rebecca.atchinson@nottscc.gov.uk)

**Tracy Lyon**, Public Health and Commissioning Manager

[Tracy.lyon@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:Tracy.lyon@nottscc.gov.uk)

**APPENDIX A**

Table 1: Therapeutic delivery within commissioned domestic abuse support services

Commissioned services therapeutic delivery pre-DA duty	Expansion using DA duty funding
<b>Nottinghamshire Women's Aid</b> had an established general counselling programme for women.	Programme expanded through additional investment of £160,000 between 2021-2028.
<b>Nottinghamshire Women's Aid</b> began to deliver services in line with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)	Nottinghamshire Women's Aid and other services were offered the opportunity to roll out via a train the trainer approach the Routine Enquiry to Adversity in Childhood (REACH). Funding to implement REACH £20,000
<b>Nottinghamshire Women's Aid</b> began to deliver evidence based "Recovery Toolkit" a holistic therapeutic group work programme for women	Programme expanded and further staff training funded to enable accelerated delivery across the North of the County. This programme is delivered after Freedom to help women rebuild their lives within modern society. Funding from 2023-2026 £25,000
<b>Juno Women's Aid</b> began to deliver evidence based "Own My Life" to provide a holistic therapeutic group work programme for women	Programme expanded and further staff training funded to enable accelerated delivery across the South of the County. This programme is delivered instead of Freedom to help women rebuild their lives within modern society. Funding from 2023-2026 £25,000
<b>Juno Women's Aid</b> interested in taking forwards 1:1 counselling service in the South of the County.	DA duty has funded activity to support with the development of 1:1 Counselling services in the South of the County. £220,000 to be invested between 2024 – 2028.