

**REPORT OF THE TEMPORARY GROUP MANAGER SAFER AND ENGAGED
COMMUNITIES****DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – SUPPORTING CHILDREN****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval from Members to reassign £40,000 of Grant Aid from the budget provision that funds support work for children in Women's Refuges to the budget provision that supports children in the community who have been affected by Domestic Violence.

Information and Advice

2. When Domestic Violence Services were re-commissioned by the County Council in 2012, the number of providers was reduced from six to two in order to improve service delivery, simplify pathways for services users and reduce overhead costs. All the existing providers were consulted about the commissioning process, and all landlords agreed to provide their buildings to the successful bidders following this process. However, when the outcome was published, Nottingham Community Housing Association withdrew their offer on two of their buildings and allowed the two of the existing providers: Newark Women's Aid and Midland Women's Aid, to remain in their buildings and offer a service without county council funds.
3. Senior Officers and Legal Services colleagues made strenuous efforts to challenge this decision and resolve the situation which was potentially harmful to vulnerable victims and certainly undermined the Council's commissioning processes. However, the situation has remained as described and we now have two independent women's refuges in Nottinghamshire as well as two that were commissioned successfully and are working closely with other partners for the benefit of their residents.
4. There is a sum of money in the grant aid budget to provide each women's refuge with a children's worker. (This finance of £20,000 per refuge is separated from the main refuge support funding because of previous ring-fencing by government that did not allow child support to be funded from Supporting People Budgets.) As Midlands and Newark Women's Aid are operating outside the commissioning process, it was agreed that they should not be awarded the £20,000 grant aid. Instead, this sum of money was awarded to the two successful contractors (from the commissioning process) and ways were sought to provide appropriate support for the children in the independent refuges. After much negotiation it was agreed that the finance would be used to pay for seconded staff to work with the resident children in each of the independent refuges.

5. Unfortunately, both Midland and Newark Women's Aid have rejected the secondment proposals.

6. In response to this situation the following proposal is recommended:

The grant aid as currently intended is withdrawn, since there is no workable method for delivery of a children's worker in the independent refuges available. The funds of £40,000 are reassigned within the grant aid budget to existing providers of Domestic Violence Children's Outreach to support work with children affected by domestic violence and living in the community.

7. There is already funding totalling £89,000 per year for Domestic Violence Children's Outreach in the contracts held by Women's Aid Integrated Services and Nottinghamshire Women's Aid. However, this part of the contract has been identified as seriously under-funded by commissioners with referrals in the first six months of the contract totalling more than twice the capacity that has been funded. An additional £40,000 spread across the whole county would significantly improve capacity and provide a service which can be accessed by residents of the two independent refuges if they are referred by school, health visitor or their parents.

Other Options Considered

8. Consideration was given to the option of paying the grant aid directly to the independent refuges, however this option was not pursued as it would potentially undermine future commissioning processes.

9. Consideration was also given to the option of withdrawing the finance and holding this for a different use altogether. However, this would be a significant loss for a vulnerable group of children that have been identified as a priority by national Government and local Children's Services.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

10. This proposal maintains the integrity of commissioning processes whilst at the same time allows the County Council to maintain the existing level of support for a vulnerable group of children. Many of these children have been subject to safeguarding procedures and now form part of the Troubled Families cohort that is a priority for Children's Services. There is clear evidence that children affected by domestic violence when they are young are at greater risk of becoming victims and perpetrators in the future.

Statutory and Policy Implications

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

12. Grant Aid funding of £20,000 awarded to Women's Aid Integrated Services to provide a Children's Refuge Worker in Broxtowe is reallocated for the provision of an additional Children's Outreach Worker to support the existing Domestic Violence Children's Outreach Team in South Nottinghamshire

Grant Aid funding of £20,000 awarded to Nottinghamshire Women's Aid to provide a Children's Refuge Worker in Newark is reallocated for the provision of an additional Children's Outreach Worker to support the existing Domestic Violence Children's Outreach Team in North Nottinghamshire

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Constitutional Comments (NAB 28.03.13)

The Grant Aid Sub-committee has authority to approve the recommendation set out in this report.

Financial Comments (RWK 28/03/2013)

The report proposes a reallocation of funding within the existing 2013/14 revenue budget allocation for grant-aid. There are therefore no additional financial implications arising from the proposals in the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

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.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All

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