

**10<sup>th</sup> September 2015****Agenda Item: 6****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH****COMMISSIONING OF SPECIALIST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE  
SERVICES WITHIN REFUGE****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to:
  - Brief members of the Public Health Committee on the background relating to specialist domestic violence and abuse (DVA) services within refuge in Nottinghamshire.
  - Inform members of the options relating to the future commissioning of specialist DVA services within refuge.
  - Seek approval of the proposed commissioning arrangements from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015.

**Background****Evidence of effectiveness**

2. Refuges provide safe temporary accommodation for women and children fleeing DVA. In addition to providing a secure place to live, specialist DVA services provided within the refuge enable women and their children to recover from DVA and to take steps to regain an independent life. With appropriate resources, refuges have the capacity to provide protection, support and help to survivors so as to avoid future abuse.
3. Studies do indicate refuge has potential for improving women's mental health, life quality, self-esteem, coping, empowerment and in some cases outcomes related to depression and trauma. A study by the New Economics Foundation found that for every £1 spent on refuge provision, a social return of £3.54 is generated.

**Current refuge provision**

4. There are currently four women's refuges in Nottinghamshire, two located in the north (Bassetlaw and Mansfield) with specialist DVA support services commissioned by NCC until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015 and provided by Nottinghamshire Women's Aid (NWA) and two in the south (Broxtowe and Newark) which are not commissioned by NCC. There is a male refuge located in Derbyshire that Nottinghamshire services refer male survivors of DVA to.
5. The two refuges located in the north provide 15 units of accommodation for women and children. Both refuges operate within a national refuge network and are commissioned in accordance with Women's Aid Federation Commissioning Standards which stipulate that

“refuge services should not be restricted to service users from specific geographical areas but should allow survivors to travel the distance needed to be safe from their abusers in order to contribute to an effective national network of refuges”.

6. The 15 units in the north of the county were well utilised being occupied 95% of the time with only slightly over the agreed limit of 5% void (5.8%) in 2014-15. During this period 67 adult females accompanied by 127 children used the two refuges and their respective services.

### **Commissioning of refuge provision**

7. In order to respond to local and national need for emergency accommodation, refuge is an important component in providing a comprehensive response to violence against women and girls. The 2008 Council of Europe minimum standards for combatting violence against women services recommend at least one family refuge space per 10,000 women. This same standard was also reflected in the former local government 2005 Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI 225). Although the BVPI is no longer applicable this remains the most up to date ratio to benchmark against today. For Nottinghamshire this equates to 34 refuge spaces based on the 2015 female 16+ population or a slightly lower 23 spaces based on women aged between 16-59 years only. Equivalent standards for men are not currently published.
8. NCC has a long history of funding specialist DVA services in refuge accommodation and refuge was a component of the DVA services commissioned in 2012. However, refuge was out of scope of the joint commissioning of DVA services undertaken by NCC and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) earlier this year. The reasons for this were partially due to unresolved historical complications with the registered social landlord (RSL) owners of the refuges, a recent non-recurrent financial investment by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) into Nottinghamshire and also an acknowledgement that specialist DVA services in refuge is different to the wider DVA support services. The DCLG funding aims to sustain, improve and enhance local refuge provision. It was therefore deemed beneficial to commission specialist DVA services in refuge separately and later than the DVA services tender so as to see how the national financial investment builds capacity locally.
9. Despite this decision to wait, local refuge arrangements remain unstable. There has been some delay in implementing the national monies and the position of the local RSLs remains unchanged. For these reasons and the fact that the current DVA services contract is due to expire on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015 a decision is required in order to ensure there is continuous provision beyond 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015.
10. Approval was given by the Public Health Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2015 to award the 2015-2018 DVA services contract to Nottinghamshire Women’s Aid in the north and WAIS in the south of the county. A clause in the Invitation to Tender documentation entitles NCC to enact a contract variation (CV) for the supply of specialist DVA services in refuge.
11. This paper proposes that the most efficient and timely course of action that will provide continuity of safe, high quality specialist DVA support services in refuge is to carry out a CV to NWA’s contract for the supply of specialist DVA services to a minimum of 15 units across two refuges in Nottinghamshire and to scope how NCC can commission and/or sustain further refuge provision in light of the recent investment made by DCLG.

## **Other options considered**

12. Doing nothing - the result of which would mean current provision would end on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015. This would essentially be decommissioning provision which would be detrimental to the needs of a very vulnerable group and contravene the standards set out by the Council of Europe / local authority BVPI-225.
13. Tender for a new provider of DVA services in refuge – this would be costly in terms of Council resource and unnecessary as the previous DVA tender documentation allowed for the addition of specialist DVA services in refuge. Furthermore, potential landlords of refuge provision may not allow another provider to deliver specialist DVA services within their refuge accommodation and this would result in a fragmented service which would be counterproductive to the recently successful commissioning of a more integrated system.

## **Financial Implications**

14. At the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2015 PHC members agreed to an overall reduction in the DVA budget of £100,000. This has led to the budget for the provision of DVA services within refuge to reduce by £19,148 from £194,000 to £174,852 per year.
15. This paper proposes £174,852 per year is committed for the period October 2015 – September 2018 (the length of the main DVA contract) in order to ensure at least the same level of refuge service provision is delivered across Nottinghamshire.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

16. The reasons for recommending the commissioning of refuge services are:
  - to ensure we have an effective and timely response to urgent requests for emergency accommodation
  - that provision is sustained at least at the current commissioned level for the next three years
  - that refuge provision is integrated with the recently commissioned DVA service

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty implications**

18. The Equality and Human Rights Commission state the public sector Equality Duty does not mean that services should necessarily be provided on the same scale for both men and women. For example, because women make up the majority of victims of domestic violence and rape it may not be appropriate for a local council to fund or provide refuge services on an equal basis for men and for women, as set out in the example in section 19 taken from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

19. If a service was provided for men and women jointly it would not be as effective and the level of need for the services makes it not reasonably practicable to provide separate services for each sex. For example, a women-only support unit for women who have experienced domestic or sexual violence can be set up, even if there is no parallel men-only unit because of insufficient demand. Further information is available at <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/private-and-public-sector-guidance/public-sector-providers/public-sector-equality-duty/general-duty-faqs-gb>

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

Members are asked to:

- Support the commissioning intentions outlined in the report.
- Approve the expenditure of £174,852 per year on provision of specialist DVA services within refuge in Nottinghamshire.

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**Director of Public Health**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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### **Constitutional Comments (AK 13/8/2015)**

Public Health Committee has authority to approve the recommendations set out in this report.

### **Financial Comments (DG 10.8.15)**

The financial implications are contained within paragraph's 14 and 15.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Details relating to the commissioning of DVA service what is in scope and not in scope and information relating to the future commissioning of refuge was published in the tender documents including the service specification in 2015

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All