



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and date of Committee	<b>Cabinet: Wednesday 24 March 2021</b>
Report Number	<b>Agenda Item No. 13</b>
Subject	<b>Countywide Domestic Abuse Support Service</b>
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr Marilyn Davies Cabinet Member for Communities Email: <a href="mailto:merilyn.davies@westoxon.gov.uk">merilyn.davies@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Heather McCulloch Community Wellbeing Manager Tel: 01993 861562 Email: <a href="mailto:heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk">heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Summary/Purpose	To consider continuation funding for 2 years for the co-commissioned countywide Domestic Abuse support service contract managed by Oxfordshire County Council
Annexes	<a href="#">Annex A</a> - Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Referral process <a href="#">Annex B</a> - Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Pathway
Recommendations	(a) That the report be noted; and (b) That approval be given for contributions to the Countywide Domestic Abuse contract to continue for a further two years
Corporate priorities	The continuation of the Domestic Abuse contract will provide the support residents need to live safely and will achieve progress in the policy priorities outlined in the Council Plan 2020-24.
Key Decision	Yes
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	None

## **I. BACKGROUND**

- I.1. At a Cabinet meeting on 18th October 2017 funding of up to £35k per year for three years commencing in April 2018, was approved, towards a countywide contract to deliver domestic abuse services in Oxfordshire
- I.2. The background to this decision is that in 2014 Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) agreed a programme of savings that included reducing the budget for domestic abuse services from £337,000 to £200,000 from April 2015. Given the challenge this would cause, OCC agreed to continue funding the current level of service until a detailed review of domestic abuse was completed. This review was completed in October 2016 and recommended bringing together the disparate services being delivered across the County to ensure that services were joined up and easily accessible, as domestic abuse is present in all areas of the County
- I.3. As part of this joined up approach, the review recommended that the various funding streams being spent on domestic abuse services should be brought together to enable the co-commissioning of a range of services to meet local need, while reducing complexity and allowing for the increasing volume of need. This approach would also, importantly, bring consistency in quality of approach across the county
- I.4. The Council had made no contribution to Domestic Abuse services prior to April 2018 whereas other District Councils had funded their own outreach worker posts
- I.5. Initially there had been some challenges in terms of letting a contract for the work but eventually a three year contract with the options to extend for 2 years, was awarded to the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service (ODAS) delivered by A2 Dominion.
- I.6. The original three year contract period comes to an end on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. OCC has agreed to extend the contract for a further 2 years.

## **2. MAIN POINTS**

- 2.1. The UK government's definition of domestic abuse is "any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional."
- 2.2. Key facts:
  - One in four women and one in six men will suffer domestic abuse at some time in their lives.
  - Almost one in three women aged 16-59 will experience domestic abuse in her lifetime
  - Two women a week are killed by a current or former partner in England and Wales alone
  - In the year ending March 2019, 1.6 million women experienced domestic abuse
  - 62% of children in households where domestic violence is happening are also directly harmed
  - 85% of those experiencing domestic violence sought help from professionals an average of five times before they received effective help to stop the abuse
- 2.3. The countywide contract provides an Access and information service including Helpline, Outreach and IDVA services including 1:1 counselling, Refuge accommodation; Complex needs service for those with multiple issues, and specialist support groups for victims of domestic abuse. An advantage of a countywide contract which is co-commissioned is that the service in each area is delivered to an agreed standard consistently. It also provides

economies of scale around recruitment, training and the management of overheads and coverage for sickness and leave.

### 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE TO DATE

#### Access service

- 3.1. The Access service provides a single point of access for victims, friends and family and professionals seeking advice and support – eg Helpline. It also has a pathway co-ordination function and staff provide limited ongoing support to meet the needs of ‘Standard risk’ victims from Oxfordshire.

Number of victims accessing the service			
Oxfordshire	West Oxfordshire	Oxfordshire	West Oxfordshire
Year 2	Year 2	Year 3 (to end Qtr 3)	Year 3 (to end Qtr 3)
1892	95	1330	97
Countywide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher proportion of women than men accessing the service - 87% women in year 2 and 91% women in year 3</li> <li>Largest proportion of presentations where known are in the age group - 25 to 49 year olds – 598 (32%) year 2 and 748 (56%) year 3 (3 quarters reporting to date)</li> <li>Self-referral is the most likely way people into the Access/helpline service with 901 (48%) referring in Year 2 and 723 (54%) in Year 3 (3 quarters reporting to date) selecting this route</li> </ul>			

#### Outreach and IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor)

- 3.2. Outreach and IDVA floating support is available to people who are 16+ living in Oxfordshire who have been assessed as Medium or High risk.

Number of new victims referred into the service			
Oxfordshire	West Oxfordshire	Oxfordshire	West Oxfordshire
Year 2	Year 2	Year 3 (to end Qtr 3)	Year 3 to end Qtr 3)
313	61	186	28

Outreach as a comparison with other districts		
	Year 2 (to May 2019-April 2020)	Year 3 (May 2020-Jan 2021)
Cherwell	41	32
City	87	57
South	68	34
Vale	56	35
West	61	28
Countywide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The majority of new victims referred into the service are women and white British</li> <li>The largest proportion of new victims referred is between the ages of 25 and 44.</li> </ul>		

#### Refuge

- 3.3. This Service will provide accommodation based support to women and their children who have experienced or are at risk of Domestic abuse where there are no other options to keep them safe. Refuge support will include support with safety planning to address immediate safety concerns and help to address housing needs and to develop a plan for moving on from the service into settled accommodation as soon as possible.

Quarter	2019-20 Q1	2019-20 Q2	2019-20 Q3	2019-20 Q4	2020-21 Q1	2020-21 Q2	2020-21 Q3
Bed nights available	1440	1456	1456	1456	1440	1472	1472
Nights used	1175	1297	1204	1026	1066	1063	778
Percentage used	81.60%	89.08%	82.69%	70.47%	74.03%	72.21%	52.85%
Countywide							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experienced some difficulties during Q2 to fill all the units available due in part to Covid.</li> </ul>							

### Complex Needs

- 3.4. The Complex Needs Service provides specialist support to victims of Domestic abuse who are additionally vulnerable through “complex needs” by bringing together both Domestic abuse and mental health expertise into one service.

Number of New victims referred into service			
Oxfordshire	West Oxfordshire	Oxfordshire	West Oxfordshire
Year 2	Year 2	Year 3 (to end Qtr 3)	Year 3 (to end Qtr 3)
135	12	160	5

Complex needs as a comparison with other districts	
	Year 2 (to May 2019-April 2020)
Cherwell	22
City	67
South	19
Vale	15
West	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calculation changed mid-way through Year 3 so trend data not available</li> </ul>	

### Resettlement support

- 3.5. The Community Outreach team provide a resettlement support service which is available for Service Users who require further support to settle into their accommodation when they move on from the accommodation based support services. This is provided where appropriate for a maximum of three months.

## 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The annual cost of the contract to the Council is £35k. For the past 3 years the Council has allocated £10k directly and the remaining £25k has been allocated from the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) funding allocated to West Oxfordshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP). A budget of £10,000 is in the base budget for 2021/22.
- 4.2. The contribution requested from the Council is fixed and will not fluctuate if funding from other contributors changes. It is expected that the following organisations will contribute to the countywide contract in 2021/22:
- Oxford City Council
  - Cherwell District Council
  - South Oxfordshire District Council
  - Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
  - Oxfordshire County Council

- 4.3. Domestic Abuse is considered to be a high priority for action by the Community Safety Partnership and they are requesting to commit £25,000 in 2021/22 to this contract extension. The aspiration would be for a further £25k to be allocated from the PCC funding allocated to the West Oxfordshire CSP in 2022/23. However, it should be noted that at the time of writing this report there is no confirmation of CSP funding for 2021/22 or 2022/23. There is also no guarantee that PCC funding will be allocated via District Councils in Oxfordshire in future years beyond 2021/22.
- 4.4. The financial implication therefore, is that the Council will contribute additional funding of £10k per year to domestic abuse services, but if PCC funding is denied in 2021/22 or PCC funds are distributed in a different way in 2022/23, the Council may need to contribute the full £35k for the following two years
- 4.5. Any agreement to allocate funding to the extension of the contract would be subject to clear monitoring information showing how many people in West Oxfordshire are accessing services local to them and feedback from users on the effectiveness of the service. OCC have confirmed that this information will be provided

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. None.

## **6. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 6.1. The main risk to the Council is that the Community Safety Partnership will be unable to allocate a sum of £25,000 in 2021/22 or 2022/23.
- 6.2. The Council has funding in the budget of £10,000 for 2021/22 but there is no confirmation of funding for 2022/23
- 6.3. Should Members decide not to support the continuation of the contract at the requested level this would result in residents facing an increased risk to their safety. This would put additional strain on other services including where individuals might seek alternative support.

## **7. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

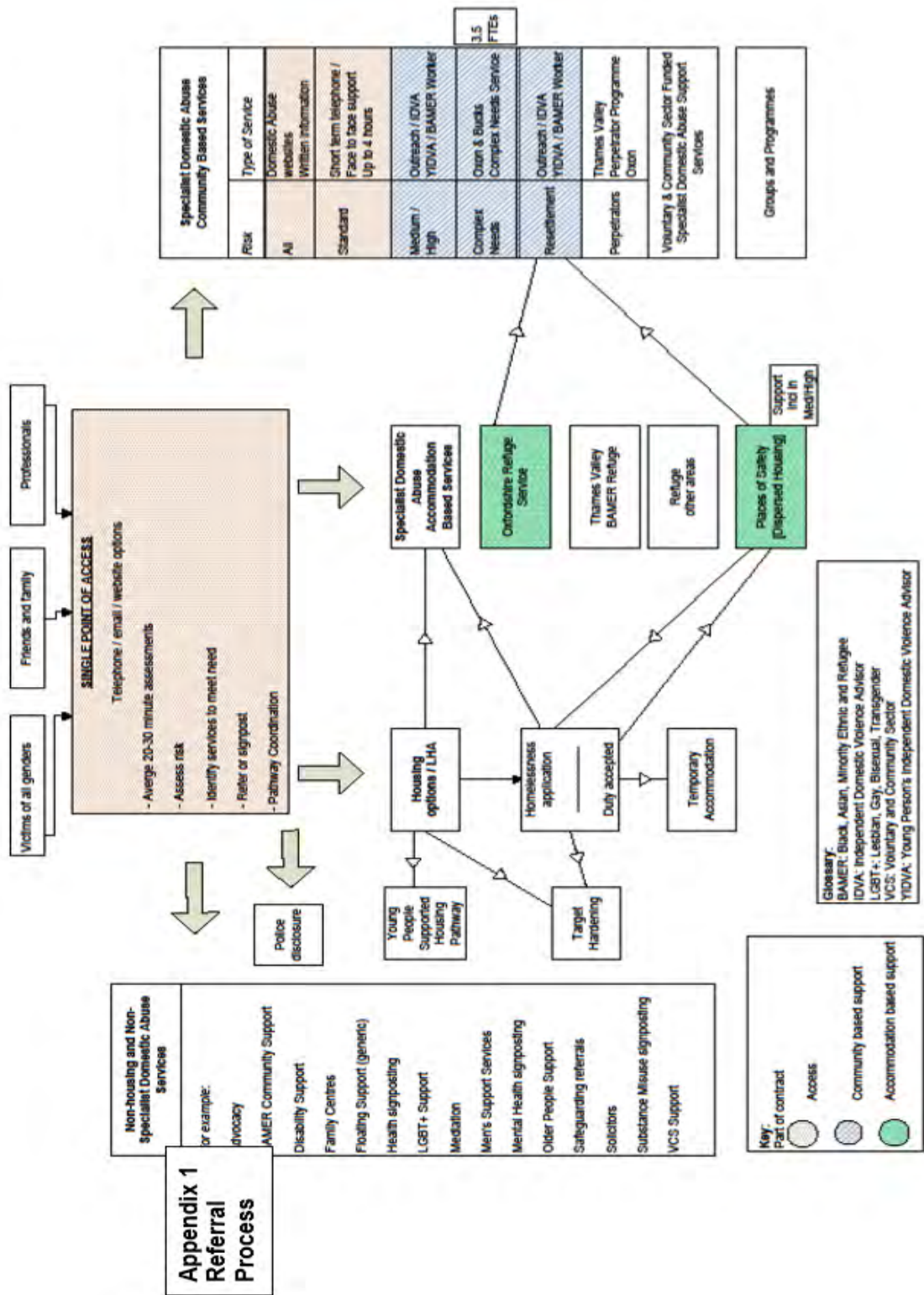
- 7.1. Responsibility falls to Oxfordshire County Council as the lead commissioner.

## **8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 8.1. The Council could decide not to extend the funding for a further 2 years which would result in the service not being available for residents in West Oxfordshire

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1. The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:
  - Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse services report to Cabinet dated 18th October 2017 and associated minutes
- 9.2. These documents will be available for inspection at the Council Offices at Witney during normal office hours for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting. Please contact the author of the report.





Annex B Domestic Abuse Pathway

