

VAWG and Youth Safety Commissioning
222 Upper Street
N1 1XR

Report of: Corporate Director Children and Young People

Date: 9 February 2023

Ward(s): all wards

Contract award for a Core and Targeted Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) Service

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. This report seeks approval for the contract award for the Core and Targeted Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) service in accordance with Rule 31.1 of the Council's Procurement Rules.

The Core and Targeted IDVA service will provide support and advocacy for survivors of domestic abuse (all genders), domestic abuse counselling and specialist IDVA posts embedded within Mental Health services, Housing, Children Social Care, and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. To award the contract for Core and Targeted IDVA to Solace Women's Aid for a period of two years starting 1 April 2023 with the option to extend for three years, plus three years (total length of contact will be eight years). With full match funding in place, the annual contract value will be £435,000. If external match funding is not extended, the annual contract value will be reduced to £343,000 per annum.

3. Date the decision is to be taken

- 3.1. 9 February 2023

4. Background

4.1. Nature of the service

4.1.0. This Core and Targeted IDVA service will:

- Deliver a needs led service that provides anti-racist, intersectional, inclusive, non-judgmental, and non-oppressive support service to survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and domestic abuse (DA) in Islington
- Prioritise the voices of survivors and their children
- Meet the survivors' needs including supporting them to improve their health, autonomy, resilience, and stability
- Demonstrate exceptional social value improving economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of survivors and their families during and post their engagement with the service
- Work collaboratively with partners and when needed hold partners accountable to maintain and uphold the rights of survivors and their children to remain safe
- Raise awareness and build skills within communities and host services to support better prevention, identification, and response to VAWG and DA
- Deliver VAWG and DA services that are embedded within partnership settings including police, housing, health, and children services
- Deliver services that contribute to local implementation of relevant national, regional, and local strategies

4.1.1. The council's VAWG Procurement Strategy 2023 -2032 was approved at the Executive meeting on 13 October 2022. The Core and Targeted IDVA service will deliver half of the VAWG procurement strategy objectives. The rest of the objectives will be covered in two separate procurements.

4.1.2. The service will:

- Safeguard survivors and their children
- Enable survivors to cope and recover from experiences of violence and abuse
- Aspire to end violence against women and girls
- Ensure survivors and their families have the opportunity to attain their full development and advancement, and lead happy and fulfilling lives

4.1.3. The Core and Targeted IDVA service will work in partnership with council services and other VAWG support organisations including refuges, Black, Asian and minoritised women, LGBTQ+ and services supporting disabled survivors. The service will also establish co-locations and shared working arrangements with those services.

Core IDVA service:

Core advocacy and assessment service will be supporting survivors who don't require a targeted provision. The service will work closely with Islington's Police supporting training and partnership working with officers and liaising with Highbury Magistrate Court supporting survivors accessing the Criminal Justice System. The service will provide a Police IDVA role co-located at Holborn Police station.

Targeted services:

Targeted advocacy services will be based in co-locations in:

- Health settings including Islington mental health services
- Housing Needs and Tenancy departments
- Children's services including Children in Need, Child Protection and Early Help based IDVA roles who will be working with families supported by Islington's Children's services
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub providing short term support to high-risk through the Daily Safeguarding Meeting and supporting Islington's perpetrator panel and Journey to Change perpetrator intervention service

4.1.4. The service will work toward the delivery of the council's VAWG strategic objectives to:

Create and deliver a coordinated community response

- Share the commitment to ending violence across organisations and communities so that no form of VAWG is tolerated and women and girls feel safe in their homes, schools, workplaces, public places and on public transport
- Ensure that all victims/survivors can be confident that they will be believed if they report VAWG and that their disclosure will trigger immediate actions to support their safety and the safety of their families whilst also holding the perpetrator accountable
- Develop education, training, awareness raising and communications campaigns to create a common language and understanding of VAWG and the services and support available to survivors, families and perpetrators

Prevent violence and abuse from happening

- Develop public awareness campaigns to prevent harassment and sexual violence in private and public spaces, to include targeted age-appropriate messages and messages specifically targeted at perpetrators
- Educate children and young people about VAWG and healthy relationships with specific focused interventions with boys and young men in schools as well as in other settings working with children and young people
- Support the development of the VAWG Community Champions scheme to empower local communities and provide a network of peer-to-peer support and community educators including information for perpetrators

Protect survivors and families and provide support to help them to repair and recover from the violence and abuse they have experienced

- Deliver services across the Islington partnership that are both gender and trauma informed, victim and family centred, and which recognise the impacts of coercive and controlling behaviours
- Provide a prompt coordinated multi-agency safeguarding response to survivors and families at risk of serious harm and/or domestic homicide through Islington's DA Daily Safeguarding Meeting
- Support children, young people, and families to help them to process what has happened and to recover through innovative recovery-based services and counselling/therapeutic support

Challenge inequality throughout the delivery of or VAWG services and approach to prevent discrimination and address the impacts of intersectionality

- Equip and support our services to be survivor voice led and able to recognise the impacts of intersectionality so that they are able to work with survivors experiencing discrimination and multiple disadvantage
- Work collectively to combat racism and all forms of discrimination recognising that a one size fits all approach doesn't work including the ring fencing of funding for specialist VAWG services working with Black and minoritised communities
- Provide targeted work and resources to improve engagement and increase provision for other under-represented groups including LGBTQ+ communities, older people, and people with disabilities

Make perpetrators visible and accountable

- Work in partnership with services offering interventions and support to people using violence in their relationships where they have expressed a desire to change their behaviour and demonstrate self-awareness and insight into what they have done
- Work together with our statutory partners to improve criminal justice outcomes for survivors of all forms of VAWG including rape and sexual violence where offences have been reported
- Advocate for survivors ensuring that perpetrators will be visible and accountable in safety planning and work with families and services to acknowledge that they pose the primary risk to children in child safeguarding arrangements

4.1.5. In preparation for this procurement the pre-tender assessment information was gathered and was informed by the Islington VAWG Strategy 2021 – 2026, which was launched in November 2021 and sets out the borough's commitment to make Islington a safer place to live, work, travel, have fun and visit for women and girls. In 2020/21, Islington VAWG services supported over 1,500 survivors. We also increased investment in specialist VAWG Services in 2020-21, funding new IDVA roles and establishing one of the first multi-agency DA Daily Safeguarding Meeting (DSM) in London, to provide a much faster, whole-system response to address the perpetrators behaviours and address the needs of survivors and their children.

4.2. Estimated value

4.2.0. The Core and Targeted IDVA service is part funded by MOPAC's London Crime Prevention Fund (LCPF). The LCPF grant is allocated every three years. Current funding has been confirmed for April 2022 until March 2025. Due to the external match funding, the contract length will be initially awarded for two years with the possibility of extension in line with the LCPF funding. The full length of contract will therefore be issued for two years with the option to extend for three years plus three years (total length of contact will be eight years).

4.2.1. The estimated maximum total value of this contract is £3,480,000 over the maximum 96 months term of the contract with full match funding in place. This is

based on £435,000 per annum. If external match funding is not extended, the annual contract value will be reduced to £343,000 per annum.

Solace Women's Aid received their board approval to commit additional £33k per annum match funding towards the core delivery of the project in Islington using the donations received to Solace Women's Aid to provide 14 staff. This is in addition to social value offer described in paragraph 4.6.1.

4.2.2. The provision of a successful IDVA and support service through this contract provides excellent value for money and crucial support to improve the safety of survivors and their children.

4.2.3. Outputs: in 2021/2022 financial year, over 2,008 survivors were supported including:

- 194 survivors supported to access safe accommodation and prevent homelessness
- 93 survivors and their families supported to improve safety of their properties and enable them to remain in their accommodation and prevent re-location
- 271 survivors supported to access welfare benefits
- 107 survivors supported to access education, employment and/or training
- 688 survivors supported to access civil and legal protection orders against their perpetrators

4.2.4. Impact: Islington IDVA services provide exceptional outcomes for survivors of VAWG. The high impact, targeted delivery combined with well-established partnership approach means that Islington survivors feel significantly safer after engaging with services. Key outcomes delivered in 2021-2022:

- 74% of Islington survivors feel safer after engaging with IDVA services (this is 9% higher than London average and 13% higher than National average according to *A Patchwork of Provision; How to meet the needs of victims and survivors across England and Wales - Domestic Abuse Commissioner's report*)
- 72% of Islington survivors feel more in control after engaging with the IDVA services (this is 12% higher than London average and 13% higher than National average according to *A Patchwork of Provision; How to meet the needs of victims and survivors across England and Wales - Domestic Abuse Commissioner's report*)

In addition, following intervention from the IDVA services:

- 78% of Islington survivors reported feeling more confident and reported improved self-esteem
- 96% of Islington survivors reported being able to recognise abusive behaviour
- 87% of Islington survivors reported that their support networks have improved

4.2.5 Women's Aid Evidence Hub DA report estimated (based on national research) found that annual cost of domestic abuse in Islington was £25.7 million:

- £8.5m (33%) – lost economic output
- £7.7m (30%) – physical and mental health care
- £5.6m (22%) – criminal justice
- £1.7m (7%) – civil legal services
- £1.35m (5%) – social services
- £0.9m (4%) – housing and refuges

4.3. **Timetable**

4.3.0. The current contract for this service expires on 31 March 2023. Due to Solace Women's Aid being the current provider TUPE will not apply.

4.3.1. The new contract is due to commence on 1 April 2023.

4.4. **Options appraisal**

4.4.0. Four potential procurement options were assessed in the procurement strategy report including the option to bring the service in-house. The recommended option was to carry out a procurement via a competitive tender process.

4.5. **Evaluation**

4.5.0. The contract notice was published on Find a Tender service, Contracts Finder and the London Tenders Portal (LTP) on 9 November 2022. Eleven suppliers expressed an interest and had access to the documents via the LTP. The deadline for bidders to submit their response to the invitation to tender was 12 December 2022. The tender was promoted by Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and a number of National and Pan-London VAWG networks.

4.5.1. Only one bid was received. The responses met or exceeded the requirements of the suitability assessment questions and the method statements and pricing were evaluated. The contract is being awarded to the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations. MEAT for this contract is quality 70% and cost 30%. Quality made up of:

- Proposed model of service and staffing 20%
- Proposed approach to social value 20%
- Proposals on meeting the needs of a diverse client group and promoting the voice of survivors 10%
- Proposed approach to managing risk and safety 10%
- Quality assurance, service monitoring and continuous improvement 5%
- Proposed approach to partnership and multi-agency working 5%

The successful bid met the requirements for one of the award criteria, exceeded minimum requirements for two of the award criteria, and added significant value in the other three award criteria (including the proposed approach to social value) scoring top marks of five out of five. Overall, Solace Women's Aid achieved a score of 60% for quality and 30% for cost.

4.5.2. The commissioning model was designed to ensure thorough oversight from a contractual, budgetary and performance management perspective, whilst still meeting need and demand for specialist services and best achieving economies of scale. The successful provider demonstrated a commitment to ensuring that services are focussed on the needs of survivors of VAWG.

4.5.3. The evaluation panel consisted of:

- VAWG Workforce Development Officer (Children and young people specialist)
- Daily Safeguarding Meeting Operations Manager (High risk victims specialist)
- Journey to Change Officer (Perpetrator work specialist)
- Expert by Experience, and
- VAWG Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Panel chair)

4.6. **Key Considerations**

4.6.0. In addition to the holistic proposed approach towards meeting survivors needs, reducing the risks and managing partnership approach, Solace set out their approach to providing additional value of activities that they propose to deliver beyond the contractual obligation including how those activities will improve the social, economic, and environmental outcomes of the local area. Those include:

- Access to 24/7 domestic abuse online advice tool
- Fully accessible website providing advice and resources
- Safety and awareness workshops for young people
- Legal surgeries
- Specialist briefing sessions
- Support into work CV workshops
- Discretionary funds
- Community group sessions with activities such as:
 - Coffee mornings
 - Yoga classes
 - Mental health/resilience courses

4.7. **Business risks**

4.7.0. There is a possibility of reduced funding after year two and five. Solace will prepare for this by using the first two years of the contract to establish strong partnership working, create effective referral pathways e.g. through reciprocal training, and operate information/awareness campaigns, enabling efficiencies in subsequent years.

4.7.1. Resurgence of COVID-19 resulting in difficulties accessing our service and lower volunteers for support services (compounded by higher levels of domestic abuse). By optimising our use of online delivery where possible, e.g. where service users have access to TEAMS/Zoom/FaceTime, we have been able to continue operating

in lockdown, providing increased capacity through reduced commuting time, and greater flexibility.

4.7.2. Low numbers of referrals, meaning we are at risk of not meeting the needs of residents. We will continually monitor referral numbers, and where numbers are lower than historic levels will implement refresher awareness/training with partner organisations, targeted communication campaigns via social media/poster, increased engagement events with local schools and community groups (as part of our social value offering).

4.8. The Employment Relations Act 1999 (Blacklist) Regulations 2010 explicitly prohibit the compilation, use, sale or supply of blacklists containing details of trade union members and their activities. Following a motion to full Council on 26 March 2013, all tenderers will be required to complete an anti-blacklisting declaration. Where an organisation is unable to declare that they have never blacklisted, they will be required to evidence that they have 'self-cleansed'. The Council will not award a contract to organisations found guilty of blacklisting unless they have demonstrated 'self-cleansing' and taken adequate measures to remedy past actions and prevent re-occurrences.

4.9. The following relevant information is required to be specifically approved in accordance with rule 2.8 of the Procurement Rules:

Relevant information	Information/section in report
1. Nature of the service	<p>To agree the contract Core and Targeted Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) to be awarded to Solace Women's Aid, as outlined in this report.</p> <p>See paragraph 2.1</p>
2. Estimated value	<p>The estimated maximum total value of this contract is £3,480,000 over the maximum 96 months term of the contract with full match funding in place. This is based on £435,000 per annum. If external match funding is not extended, the annual contract value will be reduced to £343,000 per annum.</p> <p>See paragraph 4.2</p>
3. Timetable	<p>The current contract expires on 31 March 2023. This contract should commence on the 1 April 2023.</p> <p>See paragraph 4.3</p>

4. Options appraisal for tender procedure including consideration of collaboration opportunities	A full options appraisal was included in the procurement strategy report. See paragraph 4.4
5. Consideration of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social benefit clauses; • London Living Wage; • Best value; • TUPE, pensions and other staffing implications 	The provider scored 20% (max score) for Social Value See paragraph 4.5.1
6. Award criteria	The provider was chosen to the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations. MEAT for this contract is quality 70% and cost 30%. See paragraph 4.5
7. Any business risks associated with entering the contract	As outlined in this report See paragraph 4.7
8. Any other relevant financial, legal or other considerations.	As outlined in this report See paragraph 5

5. Implications

5.1. Financial Implications

5.1.0. The budget is £435k per annum, of which £92k is external MOPAC funding. The net cost to the Council is £343k and is budgeted for. In the event that MOPAC funding falls away the contract value will reduce to £343k per annum.

5.1.1. The bidder, solace have committed to providing an additional £33k of provision in-kind on top of the annual contract value of £435k.

5.2. **Legal Implications**

- 5.2.1. The Council has the power to provide Core and Targeted Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) services under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 which enables the Council to carry out any activity that is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of their functions. The Council may enter into contracts for such services under section 1 of the Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997.
- 5.2.2. The total contract value over the maximum term of eight years exceeds the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended) (PCR) 'light touch' regime threshold of £663,540. Accordingly, this contract was advertised in the 'Find A Tender' Service and on the London Tenders Portal and a competitive tender process was carried out in compliance with both the PCR and the council's Procurement Rules.
- 5.2.3. Tenders were evaluated in accordance with the commissioning model and Solace were assessed as having submitted the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT).
- 5.2.4. The Islington VAWG Procurement Strategy 2023 – 2032 delegated the award of this contract to the Corporate Director of Children's Services following consultation with the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families and the Executive Member for Community Safety. Accordingly, the contract can be awarded to Solace as recommended in the report provided that the decision makers are satisfied that it represents value for money for the Council.

5.3. **Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**

- 5.3.0. No significant impact has been identified. Minor impacts associated with staff travel and office-based work include vehicular emissions, congestion, energy and water usage, procurement, and waste generation, all of which should be minimised by the contractor.

5.4. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 5.4.0. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
- 5.4.1. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because the proposal has a beneficial and desirable impact on people with the identified protected characteristics.

6. Conclusion and reasons for the decision

- 6.1. To agree the contract for the Core and Targeted Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) to be awarded to Solace Women's Aid, as outlined in this report.

Solace tender scored 90% providing exceptional quality submission and value for money including significant social value investment.

7. Record of the decision

- 7.1. I have today decided to take the decision set out in section 2 of this report for the reasons set out above.

Authorised by:

Corporate Director Children and Young People

Date: 21 February 2023

Appendices:

- N/a

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