

VAWG and Youth Safety Commissioning
222 Upper Street
N1 1XR

Report of: Corporate Director of Children's Services

Date: 20 March 2023

Ward(s): all wards

Contract award for a Black, Asian and minoritised women Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) Service

1. Synopsis

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

The Black, Asian and minoritised women IDVA service will be independently developed, led and delivered by a 'by and for' Black, Asian and minoritised women partnership, promoting social and community cohesion. The service will respond specifically to the needs of Black, Asian and minoritised women who have experienced domestic violence and will reach communities and individuals who face multiple barriers to accessing statutory and other voluntary services.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To award the contract for Black, Asian and minoritised women IDVA to Samira Project, a partnership of IMECE Women's Centre (IMECE), Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA) and Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation (KMEWO) 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 £148,000. If external match funding is not extended, the annual contract value will be reduced to £88,000 per annum.

3. Date the decision is to be taken

3.1. 20 March 2023

4. Background

4.1. Nature of the service

4.1.0. This Black, Asian and minoritised women IDVA service will:

- Advocate for Black, Asian and minoritised women escaping abuse acknowledging the fact that Black, Asian and minoritised women experience repeat victimisation in the form of racism and discriminatory cultural stereotypes that minimise their experiences of violence including oppressive and harmful practices like Female Genital Mutilation, forced marriage and human trafficking.
- Ensure that Black, Asian and minoritised women are able to fully access support services which from they may have been previously excluded from or not engaging with due to unfamiliarity, information gaps in service provision, cultural/religious incompatibility and a lack of appropriate language services.
- Increase the reporting from and support offer to Black, Asian and minoritised women. Ensure that the diverse population of Islington is represented across the support offer.
- Prioritise the voices of survivors and their children
- Meet the survivors' needs including supporting them to improve their health, autonomy, resilience, and stability.
- Raise awareness and build skills within communities and host services to support better prevention, identification, and response to VAWG and DA for Black, Asian and minoritised women
- 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 Black, Asian and minoritised women service will lead on the 5.1 Challenging inequality and vulnerability strand of the VAWG procurement strategy objective. The service will also work in partnership with other VAWG providers to deliver the remaining objectives of the strategy.

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 Black, Asian and minoritised women service will work in partnership with council services and other VAWG support organisations including refuges,

targeted IDVAs, LGBTQ+ and services supporting disabled survivors. The service will also establish shared working arrangements with those services.

- 4.1.4. The service will work closely with Pan-London based services providing support to women of ethnic background not directly supported by the service when required in example when specific language or ethnic background IDVAs are required.
- 4.1.5. The service will increase the engagement of women from Black, Asian and minorities backgrounds with VAWG advocacy services and aim to reduce the risk associated with all forms of VAWG
- 4.1.6. The service will work toward the delivery of the council's VAWG strategic objectives to:

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

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

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

4.1.7. 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.

4.1.8. In 2020/21, Islington VAWG services supported over 1,500 survivors. We also increased investment in specialist 'By and For' services working with Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities in Islington. As a result, the targeted Black, Asian and minorities women project exceeded its annual support target by 68%.

4.2. Estimated value

4.2.0. The Black, Asian and minoritised women 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 £1,184,000 over the maximum 96 months term of the contract with full match funding in place. This is

based on £148,000 per annum. If external match funding is not extended, the annual contract value will be reduced to £88,000 per annum.

- 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 from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic backgrounds.
- 4.2.3. The need: Black, Asian and minoritised survivors supported by Islington services:
- Have stated that they would only engage with a specialist 'by and for' provider. 44% stated that they did not feel like they were able to access standard provision if it doesn't provide specialist language and cultural support.
 - Were more likely to be referred to the Daily Safeguarding Meeting due to visible high risk or escalation of violence. 57% of survivors referred to DSM were Black, Asian and minoritised women.
 - Were more likely to experience violence from their adult children. 72% of adult child to parent cases referred to the DSM were Black, Asian and minoritised women.
- 4.2.4. Outputs: in 2021/2022 financial year, over 2,008 survivors were supported by the Islington IDVA services. 65% of all survivors supported were Black, Asian and minoritised women. In 2021/2022 Black, Asian and minoritised IDVA service outputs included supporting:
- 24 women experiencing harmful practices
 - 67 women who had no recourse to public funds or unsecured immigration status leading to them experiencing poverty and destitution
 - 81 women at risk of / or who were homeless at the time of referral
 - Most of these survivors have been identified with multiple and complex needs, this is in addition to the significant language barriers they experience when trying to access key services, especially housing
 - Most survivors supported had issues accessing services and support due to language barrier and did not feel comfortable to access generic translation service to support with liaising with services like housing and police
- 4.2.5. Impact: Islington Black, Asian and minoritised IDVA service provide exceptional outcomes for survivors of VAWG. The high impact, targeted delivery combined with a well-established partnership approach means that Islington survivors feel significantly safer after engaging with services. In 2021-2022 survivors who engaged with the service stated that:
- 95% were feeling safer
 - 74% high risk survivors did not experienced repeat violence following engagement with the service / the violence ceased or reduced
 - 88% experienced an increase in their self-confidence and self-esteem
 - 93% are better able to recognise abusive behaviour
 - 47% secured safe accommodation
 - 98% have better knowledge of their rights and options (including immigration)
 - 65% have improved financial situation

- 82% have improved physical and mental health
- 87% were feeling less isolated

4.2.6. Women's Aid Evidence Hub DA report demonstrated the financial value of DA services as they estimated (based on national research) that the 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 Samira Project partnership 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 23 December 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 2 February 2023. 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. Two bids were received. One bid did not pass the Selection Criteria. The qualifying bid 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 exceeded the minimum requirements for two of the award criteria and added significant value in the other four award criteria (including the proposed approach to social value) scoring top marks of five out of five. Overall, Samira Project achieved a score of 67% 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:

- Police community liaison officer
- Two Experts 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, Samira Project set out their approach to providing additional social 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:

- Wellbeing support
- Partnership counselling in number of languages
- Employability support
- Support in seven languages reducing therefore the need for translation services when liaising with other partners including housing and police
- Community awareness workshops

4.6.1. The social value offer is also specific to each of the organisations who are part of the partnership including:

- Access to specialist minoritised women refuges including play therapy sessions for children residing in the refuges
- LGBTQ+ support for Latin American Women
- Female Genital Mutilation and Harmful Practices training to professionals
- The providers will also work with the Council to share and embed good practice around working with Black, Asian and minoritised women

4.6.2. Samira project partners are committed to working with transgender women. Providers who decline to support transgender women were excluded from applying for the tender as unable to deliver the service specification required.

4.6.3. Samira project partners IMECE, KMEWO and LAWA have excellent reputation Pan-London and Nationally. The project also receives excellent feedback from survivors supported:

- "I left the house with empty hands. I have no cash with me, and I am 6 months pregnant. You are providing me with knowledge I did not have, and I feel hopeful. Thank you very much for your support from my heart."
- "I was totally broken and had a feeling that I am losing everything. I was worried if my ex or his family found out that I am not in the UK, they will send someone to kill me. The experience that I got was beyond belief. They didn't let me feel that I am alone, they supported me by dealing with children social services, the police officer, filled in my daughter's admission forms and at the end I got a temporary travel document and I arrived at the UK and reunited with my children."
- "Ever since I met [my wife], she has always been depressed. I was afraid the first time we had an argument, as she shouted a lot and was aggressive, but I thought to myself that maybe she wasn't like that. I needed [The Samira Project] help with housing and benefits, as well as with the divorce proceedings and with keeping custody of my child. I'm in a better place now, thank you to [The Samira Project] support"
- "I met you at a time when I felt I had no choice and was about to go back to my abusive husband. I had a disabled child and was NRPF, I was completely dependent on him. You helped me get a secure immigration and helped me apply to welfare. You helped me communicate with social services who found a safe house for me and my children to live a new life."

4.7. **Business risks**

- 4.7.0. There is a possibility of reduced funding after year two and five. Samira Partnership will prepare for this by delivering awareness raising to community members and organisations/groups to increase their understanding of domestic abuse and harmful practices, and capacity building.
- 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 were 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 for Black, Asian and minoritised women Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) to be awarded to Samira Project, 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 £1,184,000 over the maximum 96 months term of the contract with full match funding in place. This is based on £148,000 per annum. If external match funding is not extended, the annual contract value will be reduced to £88,000 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	<p>A full options appraisal was included in the procurement strategy report.</p> <p>See paragraph 4.4</p>
<p>5. Consideration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social benefit clauses; • London Living Wage; • Best value; • TUPE, pensions and other staffing implications 	<p>The provider scored 20% (max score) for Social Value</p> <p>See paragraph 4.5.1</p>
6. Award criteria	<p>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%.</p>

	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 £148k per annum, of which £60k is external MOPAC funding. The net cost to the Council is £88k and is budgeted for. In the event that MOPAC funding falls away the contract value will reduce to £88k per annum.

5.2. Legal Implications

5.2.1. The Council has the power to provide Black, Asian and minoritised women 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 Samira Project 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 Samira Project 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 Black, Asian and minoritised women Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) to be awarded to Samira Partnership, as outlined in this report.

Samira Partnership tender scored 97% 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.

(The following section is to be left blank, and then completed at the point the decision is taken and re-submitted to Democratic Services)

Signed by:

Corporate Director Children's Services

Date: **Date the decision was taken**

Appendices:

- N/a

Background papers:

- Islington VAWG Procurement Strategy

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