

**Open Report on behalf of Pete Moore,
Executive Director of Finance and Public Protection**

Report to:	Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date:	11 September 2018
Subject:	Update on recommissioning of Domestic Abuse Support Services

Summary:

This report provides an update regarding the recommissioning of Domestic Abuse Support Services in Lincolnshire, and advises on other developments that are likely to have positive implications for the county's response to domestic abuse victims in the future.

Actions Required:

Members of the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee are invited to consider and comment on the contents of this report, and the Council's role in driving forward the domestic abuse agenda in Lincolnshire.

1. Background

Lincolnshire County Council initiated the tender for the county's Domestic Abuse Support Services in February 2018. These services were tendered in two distinct lots:

- Lot 1 - Outreach Domestic Abuse Support Services
- Lot 2 - Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Services.

Within this contract, the Council invested in some new elements of service, including a Targeted Support Service for children and young people and a hospital-based IDVA provision.

The contract was awarded to a single provider, West Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Service (WLDAS). One service provider for the county means residents can now access the same support provision from the same provider, wherever they reside in Lincolnshire. The new arrangements for the Domestic Abuse Support Services commenced on 1st August 2018.

Transition to new services

WLDAS were already providing the county-wide IDVA service and two of the four allocated areas within the previous model for outreach/ floating support services, so there was minimal change in respect of those elements of the service. Nonetheless, there was much work to be done to ensure readiness for the 'go-live' date.

An operational project management team was convened with representatives from the Councils Commercial Team (both contract management and procurement), Safer Communities, Children's Services, Communications Team and Public Health. During the mobilisation period the project management team ensured progress against the project plan, risk register and communications plan. WLDAS and the two other incumbent providers were supported to ensure milestones were reached, and the full range of services would be available by the agreed timescales. All WLDAS employees received extensive training around the revised internal processes and procedures and, given the new children's element of the service, training from Children's Service staff on Signs of Safety, Early Help Assessments and Child Protection, Child in Need and Team Around the Child processes and plans.

Existing service users were advised of the change in provider and services, and all those who wanted to transition to the new provider did so. Key stakeholders/referrers were identified and a communication sent out detailing the new pathways into service and the revised referral process. To ensure these messages have been heard, referrals are being monitored and early indications are these referrals are spread across the County and from a wide range of sources.

The Safer Lincolnshire Partnership in conjunction with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, are holding a Domestic Abuse Conference in November 2018 and the intention is to work towards a full media launch of the new arrangements to coincide with that conference.

Summary of commissioned services

The following is a brief summary of the support services offered by WLDAS across the county:

Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Service:

The IDVA Service is commissioned to support victims (men, women and young people aged 16 and over) who reside within the geographical boundaries of Lincolnshire, and who have been assessed as at 'high risk' of serious harm or death, and have been referred to a Lincolnshire Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). An IDVA provides a confidential information, advocacy and advice service; assisting individuals and their families to access criminal and civil justice remedies, housing, counselling, advice, health and other support services.

Hospital IDVA:

The service aims to reduce the immediate risk of harm and homicide, and improve the physical and mental health outcomes of those affected by domestic abuse and receiving treatment. The Hospital IDVA will provide immediate support and advice on options to improve safety and advocacy, as well as link individuals and families to longer-term specialist community-based support services and serve as a link between community-based domestic violence services and local health services.

Present data suggests hospital-based IDVA services reach a different demographic of victim; including those who would otherwise be 'hidden' from services (such as the

elderly), those with particular vulnerabilities (such as those who are pregnant or suicidal) and those with complex issues and higher needs (such as those with mental health and drug and alcohol dependency issues).

Outreach Domestic Abuse Support Service - Support for Adults (Women and Men):

All referrals are triaged on access into the service to ensure clients are prioritised and managed in an appropriate and timely manner. The type of support offered will vary and will be determined by the level of risk and need identified. A comprehensive service user led safety & support plan is formulated, bespoke to the service user and their family. The nature of the support available for adults ranges from telephone support and signposting to online resources, to evidenced-based group and intensive 1:1 therapeutic interventions specifically targeting domestic abuse.

Outreach Domestic Abuse Support Service – Support for Children/ Families:

Once adults engage in the Outreach Service, families will have the opportunity to access the Family Focus programme where it is safe and appropriate to do so. The Family Focus programme consists of family group sessions with the non-abusive parent/caregiver and their child/ren together. The purpose of the support is to help the family to stay safe, assist in the rebuilding of relationships which may have been damaged or undermined by the impact of domestic abuse, and ultimately empower the non-abusive parent to meet the needs of their child/ren.

Targeted Children's Support Service:

The new service for children and young people is available to those aged 5 to 16 years, whose non abusive parent is already accessing Outreach support, as well as Looked After Children, those under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and adopted children. Young people who have been identified as having SEND and/or are a care leaver, can access the service up to the age of 25. The support is suitable for those assessed as having higher levels of need or experiencing the more serious effects of domestic abuse. Those children will be provided specialist 1:1 therapeutic support and intervention that focus on the needs of the child, taking into account factors such as age and vulnerability.

The new arrangements only went live on the 1st August so it is early days in terms of clients accessing the new interventions on offer, but some children have started the Children and Young People programme and some existing clients and their child/ren have commenced the Family Focus support programme.

Further domestic abuse related funding opportunities

An opportunity has arisen for Local Authorities to bid for funding (£18.8 million over two years: April 2018-March 2020) from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. In summary, the Fund is looking to support proposals that meet the needs of victims who are vulnerable or excluded, and for whom gaps in provision may be particularly acute or for whom access to services is difficult, including victims from isolated and/or marginalised communities and those with complex needs.

The County Council has been working in collaboration with District Councils, the Police and Crime Commissioner and providers of Domestic Abuse Services to formulate a bid that will strengthen the county's provision and enable providers to better support vulnerable victims and those with complex needs. If successful, the funding will secure additional hospital-based IDVA provision, as well as a number of Complex Needs Workers to offer intensive support for victims accessing Refuge and Outreach Services, and those identified through the Hospital IDVA service.

In addition to this funding opportunity, the Home Office is looking to award £8 million over two years (April 2018-March 2020) for projects designed to intervene early to help children who have been exposed to domestic abuse. Again, the County Council has been leading on this and the intention is to submit a bid that will strengthen its ability to undertake prevention and early intervention work within schools (primary, secondary, special schools, pupil referral units and colleges), as well as increase providers capacity to support children and young people who have been witness to domestic abuse.

Next steps

As the arrangements move to business as usual the Safer Communities Team, in conjunction with the Commercial Team, will focus on demand management and ensuring key stakeholders are aware of the restrictions into service, and support WLDAS to manage new referrals effectively in the initial stages.

There continues to be regular meetings with WLDAS to review progress and service delivery, with a clear mandate to focus attention on those areas of the county that are new to the Provider and that have historically shown a lower number of clients accessing and/or engaging with Domestic Abuse Outreach services.

Research into domestic abuse in rural areas shows that victims in those areas face a number of additional and/ or unique set of obstacles when it comes to accessing and engaging with services, including isolation, lack of amenities, reduced public transport options, lack of availability of services/ provision and cultural issues. In recognition of this, and given the very rural nature of our county, the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner will be taking part in a National Rural Crime and Domestic Abuse Research Project.

This research project has been commissioned by the National Rural Crime Network; members being PCC's from across the political spectrum, as well as other members interested in community safety and/ or rural affairs such as Crimestoppers, Countryside Alliance and Historic England. The aim of the project is to ensure rural communities, and the barriers faced by victims of Domestic Abuse, are better understood, so they can be better supported. The findings will help inform our work with victims, and assist us in making informed decisions around domestic abuse policy, practice and future commissioning of services.

2. Conclusion

Tackling domestic abuse and improving the outcomes for those exposed to domestic abuse is a core priority for the partnership and Lincolnshire County Council is a key agency in providing both funding and resources; in terms of strategic planning and

oversight, commissioning, coordination and administration. The Council has invested in additional interventions and services to support child and adult victims of domestic abuse and, dependent on the outcome of two government funding bids, these services may grow still further. However there are increasingly challenging times ahead, particularly in respect of funding, and the continued support and scrutiny of the Community and Public Safety Scrutiny Panel is both necessary and appreciated.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

Not Applicable

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

Not Applicable

4. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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