

REPORT OF: HOUSING, HEALTH AND ENGINEERING SERVICES
MANAGER

TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

DATES: 25th JULY 2019

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**PENDLE WOMEN'S REFUGE – OUTCOME OF TENDER PROCESS
AND DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES CONSULTATION**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To update Policy and Resources Committee of the outcome of LCC procurement process in relation to women's refuges (inc Pendle Women's Refuge).
2. To advise Policy and Resources Committee of the recently launched consultation in relation to Domestic Abuse Services and proposed responses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That Policy and Resources Committee note that Lancashire Refuge Service are the chosen provider for women's refuges in Lancashire following the Lancashire County Council tender process.
- (2) To receive an update report following discussions with Lancashire Refuge Service regarding how the refuge service will be taken forward,
- (3) Policy and Resources Committee is recommended to agree to the response to consultation questions set by Government.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that Policy and Resources Committee is fully informed regarding developments in relation to the tender process and how the refuge service will be taken forward following transfer of the service.

To ensure that the Council's views are considered as part of consultation by MHCLG on proposals for a new approach to support victims of domestic abuse and their children in accommodation-based services in England

ISSUE

Further to the 18th December 2018 Policy and Resources report regarding the LCC procurement update in relation to domestic abuse refuges (inc Pendle Women's Refuge), the tender process has now concluded. LCC propose to accept the offer from Lancashire Refuge Service (LRS). LRS includes SafeNet as the lead provider who intend to subcontract certain elements of the services to West Lancashire Women's Refuge Limited as The Liberty Centre and Fylde Coast Women's Aid. LCC have also confirmed that LRS are planning to use Pendle's refuge building.

SafeNet (formerly East Lancashire Women's Refuge Association – ELWRA), provides services across Lancashire for victims of domestic violence and abuse. It is a registered charity and joined The Calico Group in April 2011. At present, SafeNet works in conjunction with Pendle Domestic Violence Initiative (PDVI) to provide safehouses in Pendle. Further, SafeNet manages two refuges and safehouses in Burnley along with refuges in Preston, Lancaster and Blackpool. West Lancashire Women's Refuge Limited as The Liberty Centre and Fylde Coast Women's Aid manage refuges in their respective areas.

Potential Impact on Pendle

Officers will work with LRS to ensure a smooth handover of the Pendle Women's Refuge service from September 2019. This will include:-

- TUPE transfer of existing refuge staff to the new service
- Negotiation with regards the refuge building, which will be offered to LRS on a lease basis for 'nominal rent', for the term of the LCC contract, subject to its use being restricted to a women's refuge. The contract on offer from LCC is for the period September 2019 to September 2022, with an option to extend to September 2024. *The PDVI office, which forms part of the refuge building, is not being offered for lease.

It is thus hoped that there will be no negative aspects to the transfer of service but rather a positive impact on Pendle as the new provider, having charitable status, may be in a better position to attract additional funding to the service.

Domestic Abuse Services – MHCLG Consultation

On 13th May 2019, Government announced a [consultation](#) which seeks views on proposals for a new approach to support victims of domestic abuse and their children in accommodation-based services in England. Government would like to hear from victims and survivors, service providers, local authorities, police and crime commissioners and other public agencies, as well as other professionals who support victims and their children. Deadline for responses is 2nd August 2019.

The proposals would place a new, statutory duty on Tier 1 local authorities (in this instance, County Councils, Metropolitan and Unitary Authorities and the Greater London Authority) to convene a Local Partnership Board for domestic abuse accommodation support services. This Board should include representation from Police and Crime Commissioners, health bodies, children's services and housing providers, along with specialist domestic abuse service providers. The Board would be required to assess need for domestic abuse services, develop and publish domestic abuse strategies, decide what support services are required and commission these accordingly and report progress back to MHCLG.

Tier 2 local authorities in two-tier areas (District, City and Borough Councils) which includes Pendle, will have an important role to play in contributing to needs assessments, strategy development and reporting on progress on outcomes. In some cases, it will be Tier 2 authorities which commission the support services in line with the wider strategy for the area. Tier 2 authorities would be subject to a statutory duty to co-operate with the Local Partnership Board.

Proposed response to Consultation

Proposed responses are provided in Appendix 1. This includes response to the question set (question1), whether in two tier areas, should the upper tier authority hold the funding? As per proposed response to Question 1 of the consultation, it is believed that the Council as a Tier 2 authority, as delivering body, would be able to take a much more localised, coherent approach to assessing need for support for victims and their children in our area. The Council is best placed to understand local needs, in particular the inter-connection between housing and health issues within the borough. Working with local stakeholders to deliver a bottom up approach, will help drive transparency, quality and value for money from providers in the area.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy

There are no known policy issues arising from this report.

Financial

Policy & Resources Committee have previously agreed to the women's refuge building being offered to the successful bidder for 'nominal rent'.

The Refuge is mainly funded from the existing LCC grant and housing benefit payments for the occupants. There has been lower than anticipated occupancy of the Refuge in recent years due to the number of high needs cases that have had to be turned away. The impact of the transfer of the Refuge to LRS in September 2019 will be a cost of £28,490 in 2019/20 (to be funded from within existing budgets) but a saving of £19,680 in 2020/21. There is less than a 2 year payback period for the change to the delivery of the service.

Legal

It will be necessary to agree a lease for LRS to occupy the Refuge building for the period of the Contract, with restrictions imposed on it being retained in its current use.

Risk Management

Officers will work with LRS to ensure that the transfer of the Pendle Women's Refuge service is managed smoothly in order to ensure the continued safety of residents within the refuge, that existing staff due to transfer into the LRS service continue to receive support during this process and that the new service commences successfully. Failure to achieve a smooth transition could result in poor publicity and risk to reputation.

Health and Safety:

There are no known health & safety implications arising from this report

Sustainability:

As it is anticipated that as a 'refuge' service will continue in Pendle, there are no known sustainability issues.

Community Safety:

Continuation of a refuge service will help to ensure the safety of women and their children who at risk of or are experiencing domestic abuse in Pendle.

Equality and Diversity:

There are no known equality and diversity issues arising from this report.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Domestic Abuse Consultation – Proposed Response – July 2019