

Delegated Officer Report

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| Decision Maker: | Gerard Jones, Managing Director Children and Young People |
| Date of Decision: | 2 August 2022 |
| Subject: | Strengthening domestic abuse support offer |
| Report Author: | Bruce Penhale, Assistant Director Family Connect |
| Ward (s): | N/A |

Reason for the decision: The purpose of the report is to create additional capacity in the Domestic Abuse team in order to better meet the needs of victims of domestic abuse and their children. The proposals particularly strengthen support for those who are not identified as being at “high” risk, for whom the support offer is currently under-developed creating a risk that domestic abuse will recur and/or escalate. The proposals also seek to strengthen the support offer for victims of so called honour-based violence.

Summary: The review of Oldham’s domestic abuse offer by the charity SafeLives during 2021/22 identified a gap in the support offer for victims assessed in risk assessments as “Standard” or “Medium” risk. While the Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) provide support for “High” risk victims, the under-developed support offer at lower levels of risk means that other victims potentially do not get sufficient advice and support creating a risk of abuse recurring or escalating.

To address this, it is proposed to:

- Delete the current post of Customer Support Officer (Grade 4) in the Domestic Abuse Team;
- Create three new posts of Domestic Abuse Engagement Officer (Grade 5) in the Domestic Abuse team (in addition to one existing post so that there will be 4 FTE Engagement Officers). The existing Customer Support Officer would be slotted into an Engagement Officer role.

The Engagement Officers will deliver the Domestic Abuse duty function, passing high risk victims on for support by the IDVA team and through Multi-Agency

Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs), and providing advice and guidance, including safety planning, to other victims of domestic abuse. Having four staff in this role will also offer greater service resilience.

There is currently one post of specialist IDVA supporting victims of so-called honour-based violence and forced marriage. Having a single post delivering a role creates a vulnerability for service continuity, and there is also a need to develop the skills and knowledge of other professionals in relation to these issues. It is therefore proposed to replace the Grade 7 Specialist IDVA post with a Grade 8 Senior IDVA role, which would both deliver casework but also deliver training and support to other professionals - so building capacity within the Domestic Abuse team and across the wider Partnership in meeting the needs of victims of so-called honour-based violence and forced marriage. This will reduce dependence upon a single post. The post-holder had been seconded into a Greater Manchester post developing approaches to honour-based violence and forced marriage and returns in September 2022, and has already been operating at this level for several years.

Being safe from domestic abuse is one of the 10 priority outcomes in the Government's Supporting Families programme. As well as improving the support offer for victims and their children, a strengthened response to domestic abuse is necessary in order to meet the challenging Government targets for families successfully supported by the programme.

What are the alternative option(s) to be considered? Please give the reason(s) for recommendation(s):

Option A - Do not create the additional Domestic Abuse Engagement Worker posts
There would continue to be a gap in provision for victims of domestic abuse who are not identified as being at high risk. This increases the likelihood that domestic abuse will recur or escalate because there has been insufficient preventative support.

Option B - Do not increase the grading of the post delivering support for victims of so called honour-based violence and forced marriage
While casework on these issues would continue, the service offer would be fragile because it depends upon a single post. The offer would not be strengthened by delivering training and advice to other professionals, building greater capacity to address these issues across the Partnership.

Option C - create the additional temporary capacity

Option C is recommended. This will strengthen the support offer for victims of domestic abuse and so-called honour-based violence and forced marriage.

Consultation: including any conflict of interest declared by relevant Cabinet Member consulted.

There has been consultation with the Children's Services Management Team.

Recommendation(s):

Option C Create the additional capacity in the Domestic Abuse Team by:

- Deleting the current post of Customer Support Officer (Grade 4);
- Creating three new posts of Domestic Abuse Engagement Officer (Grade 5), slotting in the existing Customer Support Officer to one of these roles.
- Deleting the current post of Independent Honour based violence specialist (Grade 7); and
- Creating an additional post of Senior Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (Grade 8) with a specialism in so-called honour based violence and forced marriage, slotting in the current postholder on return from their secondment to GMCA.

Implications:

*What are the **financial** implications?*

This report is seeking to create additional capacity in the Domestic Abuse Team cost centre 61214 as detailed in **Option C**.

The funding for these posts will be undertaken by a drawdown of reserve from the Reform Investment Fund. The costs of these posts have been included in the forward plan profiling of the use of this reserve over the next 3 years.

Sufficient balance is available, and no additional cost will be incurred by the council.

The table below summarises the posts in scope with a total annualised cost of approx. £0.147m including on costs, all to be met from the reform investment fund.

The profiling of the spend is as follows (assume start September 2022):

2022-23 £0.147m
2023-24 £0.150m
2024-25 £0.153m

| Post | Grade | Total £ |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Engagement Officer | Increase to GRD 5 | 33,200 |
| Engagement Officer | GRD 5 | 33,200 |
| Engagement Officer | GRD 5 | 33,200 |
| Snr IDVA | Increase to GRD 8 | 47,500 |
| Total | | 147,100 |

Vicki Hayes – Senior Accountant/Sadrul Alam
Finance Manager

What are the **legal** implications?

There is always a litigation risk associated with organisational re-design but providing the councils policies and procedures are followed, this risk should be minimised. R Aggarwal Principal Employment Solicitor.

What are the **procurement** implications?

n/a

What are the **Human Resources** implications?

The deletion of the Grade 4 post to be replaced by a Grade 5 posts has been discussed and there are potentially different ways of progressing this depending on the details of the roles and the circumstances

- Regrade
- Organisational change consultation potentially leading to slot in
- Recruitment to the new posts

At this point the service prefer the organisation change option so if approved it is likely this will be the way forward.

It is understood that there is already an agreed Grade 5 Domestic Abuse post so no issues anticipated. The additional posts create new opportunities and should ensure manageable workloads to meet increasing needs.

In relation to the propose re-grade of the Grade 7 Specialist IDVA post a new/amended job description should be developed and submitted for evaluation.

Kate Jolley
HR Strategic Lead

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment attached or not required because (please give reason)

The proposals will not have an adverse impact on any section of the population, and will help prevent any adverse impact on vulnerable victims of domestic abuse and their children

What are the **property** implications

n/a

Risks: Not implementing changes risks leaving some victims of domestic abuse, honour-based violence or forced marriage without sufficient support.

Co-operative agenda The Domestic Abuse team provide support to families which builds their capacity to be in control of their own lives.

Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? Yes

Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? Yes



Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? No

Reason(s) for exemption from publication:

List of Background Papers under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

There are no background papers to this report

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| Report Author Sign-off: | |
| Bruce Penhale | |
| Date: 2/08/22 | |

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| In consultation with Managing Director of Children & Young People, Gerard Jones | | | |
| Signed |  | Date: 2/8/22 | |
| In consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive, Sayyed Osman | | | |
| Signed |  | Date: 25/08/22 | |