

## **Delegated Officer Report**

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| <b>Decision Maker:</b>   | <b>Julie Daniels, Director Children's Social Care and Early Help</b>          |
| <b>Date of Decision:</b> | <b>30 August 2023</b>   |
| <b>Subject:</b>          | <b>Appointment of two Independent Domestic Violence Advisers for 6 months</b> |
| <b>Report Author:</b>    | <b>Tanya Farrugia, Strategic Domestic Abuse Manager</b>                       |
| <b>Ward (s):</b>         | <b>N/A</b>  |

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**Reason for the decision:**

The purpose of the report is to secure agreement to secure additional Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) capacity for a period of 6 months. This would be achieved by extending an additional fixed term IDVA post for 6 months from 1/10/23 and recruiting an agency IDVA for 6 months commencing as soon as possible.

These will increase the team's capacity to provide support to high-risk victims of domestic abuse. The service currently has high caseloads, due to both high demand and sickness absence within the team. The additional staff will therefore provide capacity to meet current demand.

However the increased capacity will also enable planned changes to be implemented to the operation of the domestic abuse team, which will increase the support offered to victims at lower levels of risk with the intention of reducing the numbers escalating to high risk – and therefore lowering demand. The temporary additional capacity will therefore enable the implementation of the new operational model

**Summary:**

The volume of high-risk domestic abuse referrals has increased significantly, and the team is struggling to offer timely support to victims of abuse, cover staff sickness. There is therefore a need to increase capacity to meet current demand.

There is a plan for reducing demand based upon an improved early intervention offer delivered by Domestic Abuse Engagement Workers, together with an increased availability of courses to help individuals move on from domestic abuse. However

without reducing caseloads within the team, there is not the capacity to transition to the new model. The report seeks to create additional capacity on a temporary basis by retaining an existing fixed term IDVA for 6 months and recruiting an agency IDVA for 6 months in order to enable demand to be met, and create the space to enable the operational model to change.

This supports the Domestic Abuse Partnership's strategy to develop an improved model for earlier intervention in order to prevent repeat victimisation and the escalation of risk.

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

**Option A** Do not create this additional temporary capacity. This would mean that victims would not receive the necessary level of support, and prevent and effective implementation of a new model for supporting victims of domestic abuse.

**Option B** create the additional temporary capacity

Option B is recommended. Without introducing the additional capacity there is a risk that case load numbers will remain high, and planned transition arrangements will not be implemented in an attempt to reduce demand. This is currently impacting on staff health and wellbeing.

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

The proposal has been discussed at Children's Services Control Panel.

***Recommendation(s):***

To create temporary additional capacity in the Domestic Abuse Team, and support implementation of a new earlier intervention offer for victims of domestic abuse, that:

- An existing fixed term IDVA post (Grade 7) be extended from 1/10/22 – 31/3/23; and
- An agency IDVA be recruited for a period of 6 months

**Implications:**

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

This report is asking to create additional temporary capacity within the Domestic Abuse Team, and support implementation of a new earlier intervention offer for victims of domestic abuse.

The proposal is as follows:

- An existing fixed term IDVA post (Grade 7) be extended from 1/10/23 – 31/3/24; and
- An agency IDVA be recruited for a period of 6 months to 31.03.2024

The estimated costs will be as follows:

Extension of fixed term G7 IDVA: £24k including oncosts  
And  
Agency IDVA for 6 months at approx. £35 per hour  
£34k

Total costs of this proposal will be approximately £58k including oncosts.

The total costs are built into the reform investment fund annual allocation and profiled use of reserves for the next 2 years.

There will be no costs incurred for which there is no identified funding.

The reform investment revenue grant reserve closing balance at end of 2022-23 was £3,081,843.

Further annual contributions from the GMCA have been confirmed as follows:

2023-24 £1,573,000

2024-25 £1,698,000

Sadrul Alam, Finance Manager

*What are the **legal** implications?*

The IDVA service is an important service within the Borough. Staff face very difficult and emotionally complex situations on a daily basis. IDVA staff are often a lifeline to some of the most vulnerable individuals in the borough. Any mistakes made by the service can potentially leave vulnerable members of the community exposed to high levels of risk and harm with potentially fatal outcomes. This of course can result in not only a reputational risk to the Council by being involved in Domestic Homicide reviews, but also an emotional strain upon staff. It is important that staff are not only well supported but sufficiently resourced. Failure to have sufficient staffing in such a high-risk service area could lead to an increase in staff absence and sickness and potential further legal challenge and of course a failure to deliver the service suitably.

Specific subsequent advice should be sought before temporary staff are employed for a period of two years as per the HR recommendation.

*What are the **procurement** implications?*

Alex Bougatef - Interim Assistant Borough Solicitor.  
n/a

*What are the **Human Resources** implications?*

In relation to the extension of the current fixed term contract, consideration needs to be given to fixed term workers guidance and accrual of right to redundancy payment should the contract extend

beyond 2 years service and then be ended if for example, funding ceases.

In relation to the recruitment of an agency worker for an additional post, please use the REED framework to avoid higher costs and challenges associated with off contract agency arrangements.

Kathryn Pickford (HR Advisory Team Leader)

**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  
n/a

What are the **property** implications

**Risks:**

The IDVA service provides support to high-risk victims of domestic abuse the 6 months additional staff costs will go some way to address the pressures on the IDVA service and assist vulnerable victims at risk of serious harm. The Council needs to ensure that officer's caseloads are manageable to reduce the impact on the health and wellbeing of staff. Consideration should be given to future impact on the Council's budget following the 6-month period due to use of reserves as a funding mechanism

Vicki Gallacher (Head of Insurance and Information Management)

**Co-operative agenda**

The proposal will support a change in the operating model of the Domestic Abuse team enabling earlier intervention to prevent the recurrence and escalation of domestic abuse. This will assist individuals in moving on from abuse, preventing further harm to them and their children and reducing the likelihood they will need further support in the future

(Mahmuda Khanom, Policy Support Officer).

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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

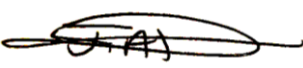
**Reason(s) for exemption from publication:**

**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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| <b>Report Author Sign-off:</b> |           |
| Tanya Farrugia                 |           |
| <b>Date:</b>                   | 22/8/2023 |

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|---|---|-------|------------|
| In consultation with Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help, Julie Daniels |   |       |            |
| Signed  |  | Date: | 22.08.2023 |
| In consultation with the Director of Human Resources, (or representative)             |   |       |            |
| Signed  | <i>K Pickford</i>   | Date: | 29.08.2023 |