

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	18 th November 2024
Subject:	The procurement of the provision of Domestic Abuse Services for Slough residents
Lead Member:	Councillor Ishrat Shah- Equalities, Public Health and Public Protection
Chief Officer:	Tessa Lindfield – Director for Public Health & Public Protection
Contact Officer:	Lisa Spall – Community Safety Manager
Ward(s):	ALL
Key Decision:	YES
Exempt:	Part Exempt – Appendix A is exempt as it contains the following category of exempt information as specified in Paragraph 3, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, namely: “Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)”
Decision Subject To Call In:	NO
Appendices:	Appendix A exempt - Bid scores Appendix B – Example Performance Targets Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report seeks to award the contract for the provision of Slough Domestic Abuse Services to Cranstoun following a public procurement process and to extend the existing contract with Hestia Housing and Support for a short period, at a value of £63,425. This will ensure sufficient time to successfully mobilise the new service and prevent a gap in service provision during mobilisation.

1.2 The contract with Cranstoun will be for three years commencing in April 2025, with two options to extend for one year each, subject to satisfactory performance.

1.3 The purpose of this contract is to provide support and advocacy for victims/survivors of domestic abuse living in Slough. This includes supporting victims/survivors in court proceedings, those seeking refuge after fleeing domestic abuse, those in need of support and signposting and those at high risk of significant harm due to an intimate or interfamilial relationship.

1.4 The total value of the contract is £1,254,755.00 (£250,951.00 per annum). This will be delivered from within the general fund with an annual budget of £253,700 for up to 5 years.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- (a) Approve the award of the contract to Cranstoun for a period of three years, with an option of two further extension periods of one year each subject to satisfactory performance, at a value of £250,951.00 per annum and total contract value of £1,254,755.00 over the five-year contract period, to be funded through the council's general fund for this specific purpose.
- (b) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Public Health and Public Protection in consultation with the Lead Member for Equalities, Public Health and Public Protection to finalise and enter into the contract with Cranstoun.
- (c) Delegate authority to the Director of Public Health and Public Protection in consultation with the Lead Member for Equalities, Public Health and Public Protection to extend the existing domestic abuse services contract with Hestia Housing and Support for a period of 3 months from 1st January 2025 until 31st March 2025 at the current agreed contractual rate to prevent a gap in service provision during mobilisation of the new service.

2.4 Reasons

2.4.1 To ensure continuity of care for SBC residents accessing domestic abuse services.

2.4.2 To support vulnerable residents as victims/survivors of domestic abuse living in Slough.

2.4.3 To align with Slough's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and SBC corporate plan.

2.4.4 To align with the Slough Domestic Abuse Strategic Plan which reflects the strategic priorities of the Safer Slough Partnership.

2.5 Commissioner Review

This report has been reviewed by Commissioners and there are no specific comments to add.

3. Report

3.1 National Policy Context:

3.1.1 In 2021 the Domestic Abuse Act came into force. The Act's purpose was primarily to:

- Strengthen the support for victims of abuse by the statutory agencies;
- Raise awareness and understanding about the devastating impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families; and
- Further improve the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice.

3.1.2 The Act also created a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, controlling or coercive and economic abuse.

3.1.3 In 2019 The Home Office published a [report on the economic and social costs of domestic abuse](#). This report estimated the cost of domestic abuse in England and Wales for the year ending 31 March 2017 to be approximately £66 billion. Of this, an estimated £14 billion arose from lost output due to time off work and reduced productivity as a consequence of domestic abuse. Whilst recognising that although this represented the most comprehensive estimate available, it was likely to be an underestimate.

3.1.4 In terms of local costs to councils, the following are considered relevant:

- The costs of carrying out a single Domestic Homicide Review varies, between £10k and £20k minimum.

The estimated cost to councils of domestic abuse cases is:

- Homicide - £1.4 million
- Single victim - £34,015

3.1.5 According to a study by SafeLives entitled 'Safe at Home', approximately 13% of all repair works and 21% of all repair costs were potentially related to domestic abuse, costing approx. £8.4 million.

3.2 Local Context:

3.2.1 The provision of domestic abuse services meets the following Slough Borough Council and partnership priorities and objectives:

3.2.2 Slough Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Priority one – Starting Well: Improve the health and wellbeing of young people in Slough.

Priority two – (a) Increase life expectancy in Slough and (b) Increase the number of people who are managing their own care and support needs.

Priority three – Strong, healthy and attractive neighbourhoods - This priority is an area where the Slough Wellbeing Board will directly lead on the work being done.

3.2.3 Slough Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024-2026

The prevention of domestic abuse and the protection of victims lies at the heart of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Domestic Abuse and sexual violence, including forced marriage and honour based abuse, can have a devastating effect on the health and wellbeing of those victims involved, as well as their families, friends and wider society.

The Safer Slough Partnership has made it a **key priority** to tackle domestic abuse in Slough.

3.2.4 As further set out in section 5.2.3 of this report, the Council recognises the requirement for a wider strategy to cover accommodation-based support and SBC will need to work with Housing to ensure compliance with the Council's specific statutory duties around safe accommodation under the Domestic Abuse Act. SBC will also commit to working with the new supplier, Cranstoun, to develop the approach locally.

Background

- 4.1 The Domestic Abuse Service contract currently provided by Hestia ends on 31st December 2024. This service was commissioned on a 3 year plus 2-year extension basis from 2nd April 2018, and was subsequently extended until 31st December 2024, pending a more detailed review of the domestic abuse strategy, and to ensure those at risk of serious harm/homicide continue to receive domestic abuse services. Its current purpose is summarised as to:
- a) increase the safety of identified high risk victims and their child (ren).
 - b) work from a point of crisis to address and reduce risk, offering short to medium term support.
 - c) ensure the increased health and well-being of identified high risk victims and their child (ren) and other vulnerable associates.
- 4.2 The current service consists of (a) three High Risk – IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advocates) Service; (b) Assertive outreach (medium risk clients and step down from high risk) and the delivery of a psycho-educational programme.
- 4.3 Procurement of the new contract to commence following expiry of the current contract was approved at the Cabinet meeting in April 2024 by way of inclusion on the procurement forward plan submitted to Cabinet.

4.4 Stakeholder Engagement

4.4.1 Market engagement: a virtual on-line market engagement event was carried out to assess the market conditions and readiness for a revised service specification during June 2024. This event was attended by 12 providers with others requesting further information. Opportunity was given to providers for feedback on operating models and opportunities for transformation and technological options.

4.4.2 Service user consultation: service user consultation took place in October 2023 and both a paper-based survey and an on-line questionnaire were offered. Feedback from service users highlighted the following gaps and need for improvement in the following areas:

- A need to reach the communities within Slough (Polish/ South Asian)
- A need to better understand the complexities of multi-generational families
- Understanding of young people in relationships
- The issue of child on parent violence
- Support for children as victims.

4.4.3 A new service specification has been developed and includes all the service improvement areas that were highlighted during this engagement.

4.5 Procurement Process

4.5.1 The procurement was undertaken in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

4.5.2 Consultation from potential providers was sought via market engagement events. Notification of the tender was issued through the electronic shared tender portal Intend.

4.5.3 As part of the tender response, bidders were required to respond to a quality questionnaire, as well as a separate pricing schedule alongside their required declarations and other contractual documentation returns. Bidders were advised that the evaluation would be based on an 80/20 quality/price ratio.

4.5.4 During the clarification phase all clarification queries were raised and answered.

4.5.5 By the deadline of 12 noon on the 31st July 2024, all bids were submitted and then evaluated. The pricing matrix was validated by Finance. 8 bid submissions were received by the bid due date. All 8 bids were evaluated, and the top 4 ranked bidders delivered presentations to the panel.

4.5.6 The procurement evaluation panel considered and approved the scoring on 02/09/2024.

4.6 Quality Evaluation

4.6.1 Bidders were required to complete 5 questions in relation to the quality of the service. Bidders were informed within the guidance notes provided of the weightings applied to each question and how the overall tender would be evaluated and awarded.

4.6.2 The weighting that was applied was 80% quality and 20% price.

4.6.3 An evaluation panel comprising of four officers, one from Public Health, two from Community Safety, one from the Integrated Care Board and one from Slough Children First, undertook independent scoring of the quality method statements.

4.6.4 The pricing schedules were validated by Finance.

4.7 Evaluation Outcome

4.7.1 The final scores awarded are detailed in Exempt Appendix A.

4.7.2 Officers recommend following the procurement evaluation process, that the contract is awarded to the highest scoring provider, therefore our preferred supplier is Cranstoun.

4.8 Market Conditions

4.8.1 There was significant interest from mainstream service providers and there were also opportunities to consider tenders from local, smaller organisations and those new to the market.

4.9 Preparation Next Stage

4.9.1 Further to approval of the recommendation to award the contract, commissioners will work with Cranstoun to deliver the implementation plan set out below.

4.9.2 Mobilisation timetable

Overview of implementation plan	Actions	Timescales
Mobilisation Project Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm domain leads and staff roles for implementation • Establish internal implementation group and meetings schedule • Commissioner checkpoint meetings • Meet with outgoing provider to agree transition plan • Monitor and progress implementation plan and milestones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following standstill • Ongoing throughout mobilisation period
Buildings and Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify partner office spaces, as well as appropriate community spaces, to meet victim-survivors throughout Slough, for assessments and key working. • Make sure workers have the right equipment for hybrid/outreach style working. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2024 • November 2024
IT and Data Systems and Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Iizuka Case Management System • Agree IT requirements, install and on board staff • Create reporting route with domestic abuse data analyst 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing from November 2024 • November 2024 and January 2025 • December 2024
Operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with key referral partners to discuss and agree shared protocol • Implement and schedule psycho-educational programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing through November/December 2024
Quality Assurance Governance and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm performance management framework and audits • Confirm risk assessments and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing through November/December 2024
HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit for the services roles • Onboard staff • Follow TUPE for incumbent provider • Complete training needs analysis and induction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2024 • December 2024
Marketing and Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with commissioners to confirm internal and external communications plan • Engage with existing victim-survivors to provide reassurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2024

4. Implications of the Recommendation

5.1 Financial implications

5.1.1 The value of the new contract with Cranstoun is £250,951 per annum which is within the current General Fund budget of £253,700.

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 There are a few significant pieces of recent legislation that have passed through parliament, in particular the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 that has introduced the Serious Violence Duty.

5.2.2 The objectives of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 are – promoting awareness, protecting and supporting victims, holding perpetrators to account, transforming the justice response and improving performance.

Alongside the Act, statutory guidance has been provided, the objectives of which are – to provide clear information on what domestic abuse is, provide and signpost support to those organisations who need to respond, and convey standards and best practice for agency and multi-agency response.

- 5.2.3 Whilst the domestic abuse support and advocacy services support SBC's duties, they do not provide any accommodation and SBC as a relevant authority must assess the need for accommodation-based support in the area and must publish a strategy for the provision of support in this area in partnership with Housing. The Safe Accommodation Strategy will involve input from all providers of domestic abuse support services including those commissioned to provide IDVA support. The provision of domestic abuse advocacy and support services is a pivotal part of the system in providing the necessary support locally to this provision.
- 5.2.4 On the basis that the contract has been procured in line with the requirements of The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR), the public procurement principles (namely equality of treatment, transparency, non-discrimination, and proportionality) and the Council's internal Contract Procedure Rules, the recommendations in this report are supported.
- 5.2.5 The Council must maintain an audit trail documenting the procurement process undertaken and how the award decision was arrived at. The Council is required to notify the contract award decision to all economic operators that have submitted a tender and observe the standstill period of a minimum of ten clear calendar days, during which time the contract cannot be concluded. Following the expiry of the standstill period, the Council should enter into a written contract with the successful supplier, record the contract in the Contract Register and advertise the contract award on the Find a Tender Service, within 30 days of the award of contract in accordance with Regulation 50 PCR.
- 5.2.6 The provisions of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) may apply on award of this contract. If TUPE is deemed to apply, it will apply as a matter of law.
- 5.2.7 The existing contract with Hestia Housing and Support can be extended for the three-month period under Regulation 72(1)(e) of the PCR, which states that contracts may be 'modified' (which covers extensions) without a new procurement procedure, where the modifications, irrespective of their value, are not substantial within the meaning of paragraph (8). Having reviewed paragraph (8), the Council is satisfied that the short-term extension to ensure a safe mobilisation of the new services and to prevent a gap in service provision, does not meet any of the conditions set out in paragraph (8) and therefore the modification is not substantial.

5.3 Contract Monitoring

- 5.3.1 The Council's Community Safety Manager will manage the new contract with Cranstoun. Contract performance will be measured against high level performance objectives consisting of clearly defined targets by the Safer Slough Partnership, an example of current collected information is contained in Appendix B. Targets will be reviewed annually and reported to the Slough Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and benchmarked against regional and national comparators to reflect changes in trends, strategy and performance.
- 5.3.2 These key performance indicators will evidence minimum standards around the Services' delivery and monitor the provision of an inclusive service with the full breadth of interventions available. Contract performance will be assessed via quarterly monitoring meetings. As the contract progresses, further monitoring requirements will be developed with Cranstoun as changing needs will be addressed.

5.4 Risk management implications

- 5.4.1 The recommended decision will ensure continuity of care for our residents in a new and strengthened service offer that meets the requirement of the Slough Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024-2026.
- 5.4.2 The contract monitoring in place will ensure that the Council will have the opportunity to raise concerns if performance does not meet expectations and seek remedial action.
- 5.4.3 Domestic Abuse and sexual violence, including forced marriage and honour based abuse, can have a devastating effect on the health and wellbeing of the people involved, as well as their families, friends and wider society. The Safer Slough Partnership has made it a priority to tackle domestic abuse in Slough and therefore efficient mobilisation of this service is very important.
- 5.4.4 Impacts on service - risks and mitigations

Risk	Assessment of Risk	Mitigation	Residual Risk
Mobilisation will not take place on time	High	<p>SBC entering a 3 month contract extension with the existing supplier, Hestia Housing and Support, to allow additional time for mobilisation.</p> <p>SBC seeks to waive call-in, meaning that subject to approval of the recommendations in this report, the standstill letters can be issued the day after the Cabinet meeting.</p>	Remains High
Existing partnership could be lost if a new provider wins the tender	Low	The mobilisation plan will include engagement with all existing partners, and this will be facilitated by both the existing provider and local authority officers in line with the terms and conditions of the existing contract.	Low
Poor performance outcomes	Medium	There will be clauses in the contract terms and conditions covering breaches in performance.	Low

5.5 Environmental implications

5.5.1 During the procurement process, bidders were requested to submit a copy of their environmental impact assessment and impact management measures. The measures committed to by the provider are as follows:

- Environment: Delivering Sustainable Outcomes - the provider is undertaking Green Mark Sustainability Certification, aiming for accreditation by early 2025, to implement sustainable services and develop an environmental management plan.
- Carbon reduction measures will be set for each service, including introducing/enhancing sustainable initiatives, and a minimum of 1% reductions year-on-year in electricity/gas usage.
- To save transport miles, the provider will implement a hybrid working model. The provider will prioritise community delivery satellites accessible by public transport, and with bike racks/storage, encouraging uptake of their cycle-to-work scheme.

- The operation of their Green Car Scheme which incentivises electric cars, by providing the highest tax/national insurance benefits for leasing low emission vehicles.
- Slough's services will include a local environmental champion, who will introduce additional low-carbon measures (e.g. green-tariff energy providers).

5.6 Equality implications

5.6.1 Please see the Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix C.

5.6.2 The bidders were required to set out how they will meet equalities requirements through the tendering process. This includes meeting the diverse cultural and language needs within the borough and seeking to recruit people with a lived experience.

5.7 Corporate Parenting Implications

5.7.1 There are no direct implications in relation to corporate parenting however domestic abuse can impact on children in the family setting.

5.8 Procurement Timetable

Action	Date
<i>Tender Evaluation Report to Procurement Board</i>	<i>17.10.24</i>
<i>Cabinet approval for contract award</i>	<i>18.11.24</i>
<i>Notification of Contract award</i>	<i>19.11.24</i>
<i>Standstill period</i>	<i>19.11.24 - 29.11.24</i>
<i>Confirm contract award</i>	<i>02.12.24</i>
<i>Start of mobilisation period</i>	<i>02.12.24</i>
<i>Service commencement</i>	<i>01.04.25</i>

5.9 Workforce implications

5.9.1 There will be staff TUPE implications through the transfer to the new provider, which will need to be managed during mobilisation to meet the needs of the new service.

5.9. Property Implications

5.9.2.2 Cranstoun will be required to deliver the services from their own facilities, So there are no direct property implications for the recommendations stated in the report.

5.10 Social Value

- 5.10.1 Bidders were asked to submit a method statement around social value and how they would generate it within the contract. The successful supplier will generate social value, impact, and innovation across Slough, beyond contract requirements, aligned with local priorities, including improving the social, economic, and environmental well-being of Slough's citizens.
- 5.10.2 Their social value strategy aims to embed all our services within the local economy and community, to deliver a locally tailored, coordinated response, and value for money. The supplier's strategy will deliver social value in Slough across three domains:
- Investment (Economic): Investing in the local economy by employing residents,
 - supporting local businesses, funding innovation projects, and generating additional income,
 - Involvement (Social): Empowering/involving people in initiatives to improve skills/wellbeing/reduce isolation,
 - Influence (Economic & Environmental): Growing local capacity, developing community assets, and delivering sustainable, low-carbon outcomes.
- 5.10.3 The supplier will define all measures/data collection at contract start and create an annual Social Value Impact Report based on SROI (Social Return on Investment) principles, reviewed with domestic abuse (DA) commissioners.
- 5.10.4 The social value implications of this contract will be in the direct support to victims of DA in the Slough community, by supporting individuals to remain economically and socially active parts of their community. The wider impact on economic and social costs to the locality both in terms of impact on victims, societal costs and in services costs to deal with DA homicide, demonstrate the social value of commissioning support services to prevent these outcomes.

6. Background Papers

None.